

NEGOTIATING THE BORDERS OF EMPIRE: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF ACCESS ON  
KWAJALEIN ATOLL, MARSHALL ISLANDS

by

SANDRA CRISMON

(Under the Direction of J. Peter Brosius)

ABSTRACT

Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands, is the site of a U.S. Army missile testing base, where colonial relationships between Americans and Marshallese were examined through the analysis of physical, regulatory, cultural and discursive borders on the atoll. Ethnographic attention was focused on both local Marshallese and on American contract workers in this border situation. Findings include significant ambivalence and tensions among Americans, especially between military and civilian actors, regarding the U.S. colonial project on Kwajalein. In addition to Marshallese resistance to the military order, some American residents also resist the physical and regulatory borders that structure their everyday lives. It also becomes evident that discursive constructions of borders and relationships on the atoll have served to obscure other inequalities, and simplify a complex atoll history. Borders emerge as key sites at which to examine the tensions and power dynamics of colonial relationships.

INDEX WORDS: borders/border theory, U.S. colonialism/militarism, studying up

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SANDRA CRISMON

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by

SANDRA CRISMON

Major Professor: J. Peter Brosius

Committee: Alexandra Brewis  
Paul Sutter

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
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## DEDICATION

For my family, and Greg Sammer (CMI-Gugeegue)

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*Even macrohistorical processes – the building of states, the making of revolutions, the extension of global capitalism – have their feet on the ground. Being rooted in the meaningful practices of people, great and small, they are in short, suitable cases for anthropological treatment.*

Comaroff and Comaroff (1992:32-33)

The research presented in this dissertation examines the nature of the colonial relationship between Americans and Marshallese on Kwajalein Atoll, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), the site of a U.S. Army missile testing base. The focus is on the material and discursive micropolitics of the “colonizer” – American residents of the missile testing base. These Americans are engaged in complex daily power struggles on the atoll with the “colonized” (the Marshallese) and with each other, and many of these struggles are focused on borders. This analysis focuses on two major kinds of borders on the atoll. The first are “hard” borders, including physical borders (such as security checkpoints) and the multitudinous regulatory borders that govern life on a military base. The second are “soft” borders, including social/cultural categories and borders, and discursive borders.

While this research does consider Marshallese experiences of the colonial relationship and of the borders in question, primary attention is focused on Americans living on the missile testing base, an aspect of the “Kwajalein story” that has too often gone unexplored. In this sense, this research is an attempt to provide some ethnographic understanding of those John Comaroff calls the “agents of empire” (1997:165) in this colonial and border relationship. In this way, we broaden our view to see not only “the ‘foreign’ subjects of U.S. domination,” but also “the U.S. citizens who benefit from it, who are subjugated to it, and who resist it” (Kaplan 1993:14).

Another major focus of this research is on the “tensions of empire” that can be seen in the colonial relationship on Kwajalein, particularly as revealed in debates among Americans regarding particular colonial policies and practices, as well as the colonial project as a whole. These tensions include clashes between the U.S. military order and American democratic ideals, as well as those between the Marshallese social hierarchy and these same American ideals. I believe these tensions become most apparent at borders of various kinds, and in debates over access. As Alvarez notes, “In particular, borders and borderlands graphically illustrate the conflicts and contradiction in a hierarchically organized world. For it is here, on borders and borderlands that cultures, ideologies and individuals clash...” (1999:226), and we will see some of those clashes. This research also reflects the view that “The anthropological study of the everyday lives of border communities is simultaneously the study of the daily life of the state...” (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:4). Through this focus we can see how structures of power are created, reproduced and experienced (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:26), as well as contested. In addition, we see the side of greater power in a border relationship, a view not often seen in border studies (Donnan and Wilson 1999:25).

### Theoretical Framework & Applications

This research is informed by debates in several key areas of anthropological theory, including: (1) border theory, (2) the anthropology of colonialism, and (3) “studying up,” the ethnographic analysis of people and institutions of power in our own society. I will treat each briefly here in order to frame this work: more detailed theoretical analyses will be presented in Chapter 2. How these ideas are applied in this research will also be discussed.

## Border theory

As Alvarez notes, borders provide “a perfect laboratory” in which to analyze the interaction of cultures, and “There is no better place to witness the applications and limits of power” (1995:454,462). Lugo also observes that borders are ideal sites for the examination of such things as culture, identity, resistance, power, and the nation-state (1997:217). As this research shows, borders can also be prime sites at which to study the dynamics of colonial relationships, as well as the tensions and contradictions of those relationships. Anthropologists bring a number of strengths to the study of borders. Wilson and Donnan note that anthropologists are uniquely situated to study border sites because of our predominant focus on local communities, as well our orientation toward “the material and symbolic processes of culture” (1998a:3). Anthropologists can also provide fine-grained ethnographic analyses of the everyday lives of border residents, whether local populations or state agents, and link these to larger processes (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:3-4,12).

There are two major genres of border theory, labeled by Manuel Luis Martinez as “border” studies and “borderlands” studies (2002:64). Roughly defined, *border studies* have tended toward the local-level, empirical analysis of international borders, while *borderlands studies* have tended to focus more on borders in a more metaphorical and discursive sense, including examination of the borderlands of identity. Staudt and Spener describe this split as being one between “materialist and metaphorical conceptions of borders” (1998:6), with the former being based more in international relations and political economy, and the latter in literary studies. Of the two orientations, borderlands work has garnered far more attention in anthropology and academia as a whole: this is reflected in the prevalence of such concepts as “border crossing” in academic works. As Hillary Cunningham and Josiah Heyman note,

however, there are “still relatively few on-the-ground studies” of borders done by anthropologists (2004:296). Despite the amount of time anthropologists spend crossing international borders, they have spent relatively little time analyzing them, or they are more likely to use borders and associated processes as backdrops rather than the foci of study (Donnan and Wilson 1999:34).

One critique of borderlands work is that these more metaphorical border analyses don’t always map very well onto the physical realities of border life. When Pablo Vila went into the field looking to validate ideas of border crossings, hybrids, and Third Countries, he found that these concepts only partially mapped onto realities on the ground (2000:6). As he describes it, “Belonging to a generation of ethnographers highly influenced by the “crossing borders” metaphor, I went to an actual border, Ciudad Juárez-El Paso, to see how the metaphor worked – and I encountered something else” (2003:ix). In a similar manner, I went onto the field primed by a literature on transnationalism, hybrid identities, and resistance, and found instead a grinding daily reality of security guards, checkpoints, and regulatory controls. And indeed, for those who live along borders, the physical power of the state is one of the dominant themes of their lives (Donnan and Wilson 1999:1).

I have since come to agree with some border researchers that borders are more than sites of resistance and border crossing; they are also sites of border reinforcement or reinscription by the state and other entities, what some researchers call “rebordering” (Cunningham 2004, Spener and Staudt 1998a). This calls into question the notion that national borders are increasingly becoming obsolete in the context of globalization. Some researchers have suggested instead that borders may actually be selectively porous, allowing freer movement of goods than people (Sadowski-Smith 2002:1,4; Spener and Staudt 1998a:235), as well as freer movement of some

groups of people than others (Cunningham and Heyman 2004:293). Cunningham observes that the image of a “gated globe” may be a more appropriate image than that of continuous interconnection (2004). In the context of globalization, Hugh Gusterson has also advised that we heed “processes at work that are increasing the power and reach of state apparatuses, expanding the military firepower of national governments, and deepening the psychic hold of nationalist ideologies” (2001:43). The research presented here reflects this more recent concern with the ways borders and states continue to exert their power. While this analysis of borders on Kwajalein *does* ask questions about resistance and the crossing of physical, regulatory, social/cultural, and discursive borders, it is more firmly rooted in literal border studies and locally-grounded ethnographic border work.

Most border studies have focused on borders between nation-states or similar territories. In the case of Kwajalein, the primary physical border in question (the Dock Security Checkpoint on the base, or DSC) is not a true international boundary; it is the border of a U.S. military base in a “foreign” country. While this adds an element of “militariness” to the situation, this border does share some features and processes with international borders. It resembles the U.S.-Mexico border as a place where the First World and the Third World meet in extreme fashion. This border on Kwajalein also serves as an important site of state and cultural interaction, with the base and security guards frequently serving as “the face” of the U.S. to local Marshallese.

One of the goals of this research is to contribute a unique comparative case to border studies, a field that has been dominated by studies of the U.S.-Mexico border (Alvarez 1995; Donnan and Wilson 1999:14; Sadowski-Smith 2002). While the U.S.-Mexico border is the birthplace of border and borderlands studies and is a critical breeding ground of theory, it is important as well to focus our attention on other international borders and other *kinds* of borders.

This is important not only to test theories developed at the U.S.-Mexico border, but also to extend our understanding of U.S. relationships with the “Other” in the context of U.S. colonialism and imperialism.

As noted, in focusing on Americans on Kwajalein, this work is also intended to contribute to our understanding of “the side of greater power” in a border relationship, an element often missing from border and borderlands analyses, which have tended to focus on less powerful groups (Donnan and Wilson 1999:25). In this predominant focus, borders have often been reified in a monolithic sense as places of “dominance” and “resistance,” and not some more complex mixture (Johnson and Michaelson 1997:32; Hall in Castronovo 1997:203). As expressed by Wilson and Donnan, the problem is that the more scholars objectify borders in this way, the less they “will be able to trace the relationships among culture, power, and the state...” (1998a:7). As a result, we often know little about daily life at border sites, including the daily life of the state and its agents, a critical aspect in any analysis of power.

As will be seen throughout coming chapters, the examination of the daily lives of Americans and their experiences of different kinds of borders on the atoll sheds some new light on the complex events, relationships and dynamics of power on the atoll. Stereotypical assumptions about who these Americans are and what they think and do are disrupted. Indeed, I was surprised to find that many Americans actively resist the physical and regulatory borders that structure their everyday lives and those of the Marshallese on the atoll. From these discussions, interesting groups of Americans emerged as “border crossers,” challenging not only cultural categories, but physical borders as well. Focusing ethnographic attention on Americans and their viewpoints has also served to disrupt what have become hardened discursive constructions of borders and colonial relationships on the atoll. These discursive constructions,



such as that of Ebeye as “slum” versus the base as “country club” have actually served to obscure other complex relationships and histories on the atoll. However, adding American viewpoints to the mix can be contentious work, as we will see.

#### How border theory will be applied here

For the purposes of this research, I will be drawing heavily on literal border studies and locally-grounded ethnographic border work, focusing on actual borders and their concrete manifestations and associated discourses (Michaelsen and Johnson 1997:1). Hard borders on the atoll include the boundaries of the missile testing range, as well as that of the DSC and access issues related to that checkpoint. Regulatory borders on the base include those controlling movement on the atoll, as well as other aspects of life on the base, including the regulation of Americans and their families. The analysis of hard borders on the base will also include some analysis of the myriad internal borders or “microborders” on the base, which include restricted access to various facilities and areas.

Here I draw on Roger Rouse’s idea of the proliferation of border zones, and the eruption of miniature internal borders within the U.S. and Mexico (1991:17). Wilson and Donnan also note “the myriad structures of the state which establish microborders throughout the state’s domain” (1998a:3). In this view,

the border operates not only in the vicinity of the international line itself, but any place in either country where Mexican and U.S. national systems confront one another: at the entrance to welfare offices in New York, at the *aduanas* (customs checkpoint) of the international airport in Mexico City; in the treatment of Mexican workers by U.S. factory owners in both Los Angeles and Aguascalientes... (Staudt and Spener 1998:4-5).

In the context of the U.S.-Mexico border, the consensus seems to be that “The border is no longer located *only* on the international boundary, but anyplace and everyplace where Mexicans confront barriers to their full participation in U.S. social, economic, and political life” (Spener and Staudt 1998a:243). This analysis of the microborders and other hard borders of Kwajalein will also be put in the larger context of other U.S. military bases, as places of strict control of all aspects of life, including space, movement and personal lives.

Analysis of soft borders will include attention to the culture clashes on Kwaj between Marshallese and Americans, but also to those between different groups of Americans, including clashes between American civilians and the base Command. Discursive borders are also of critical importance, due to the role they play in how the base and Ebeye are perceived and experienced. This discursive element will be particularly examined in the chapter on Mobilizations, which analyses how discourses (both local and national/international) have served to limit debate on U.S.-Marshallese relationships on the atoll.

In this analysis of borders on Kwajalein, I will be continuously drawing on work by anthropologists and other scholars on the U.S.-Mexico border, “the one border to have generated a systematic and sustained body of work” (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:6). I will be utilizing this literature not only for its depth of coverage compared to other borders worldwide, but also because it is a U.S. border between the First and Third Worlds. How “dual but unequal state power” operates at borders (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:3) can be graphically seen in both locales, as well as the contradictions and paradoxes that come with that asymmetry (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:6). As the U.S.-Mexico border has been described as separating “Nicaragua versus Disneyland” (in Rouse 1991:17), the DSC on Kwaj has been described as separating “the slum” on Ebeye from “the country club” on Kwaj.

I will be drawing particularly from Vila's edited volume *Ethnography at the Border* (2003), described as an attempt, "to route mainstream border discourses...onto a specific map and history," particularly through extended fieldwork experiences on El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border (2003c:309). Particular chapters of interest here include Jessica Chapin's work on "the social operation of power through discursively produced closures" at the border, as well as her vivid descriptions of her daily border crossings (2003:4). Sarah Hill's work on the material and discursive construction of the *colonias* of El Paso is also important (2003). Another influential work is Spener and Staudt's *The U.S. Mexico Border: Transcending Divisions, Contesting Identities* (1998b), a collection that "embeds discussions of a number of symbolic frontiers, borders, and 'marginals' in the 'real' space of the U.S.-Mexico border" (1998:6).

In terms of the larger border literature, one of the intentions of this research is to provide a comparative case: many scholars have noted the need for more comparative border work with the U.S.-Mexico border. Sadowski-Smith in particular emphasizes the lack of comparative work on U.S. borders, calling for more studies of U.S.-Canadian border (2002:7). She has compiled some of this less-common but equally critical research, including: Traister's research on cross-border shopping on the U.S.-Canada border (2002); Sadowski-Smith's work on border porosity and the movement of Mexican and Chinese undocumented immigrants across the U.S./Mexico and U.S./Canada borders (2002); and Grinde's study of efforts by the Iroquois to maintain special border crossing rights at the U.S.-Canada border (2002). Other new and different border studies will also be drawn upon, including Castronovo's analysis of the internal border represented by the Mason-Dixon Line (1997). As Brah notes, "Each border embodies a unique narrative, even while it resonates with common themes with other borders" (1996:199).

This research will also join those using historical materials to examine contemporary borders (Alvarez 1995:448; Heyman 1994:47; Wilson and Donnan 1998a:5), particularly to examine how cultural relationships develop historically (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:3). As Wilson and Donnan note, borders can serve as both spatial and temporal records of relationships between local communities and between states (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:5). This historical aspect allows us to see the present borders on Kwajalein in context, revealing repeating patterns and cycles, as well as the “disconnections” and lack of institutional memory that have marked the U.S.-Marshallese relationship, seemingly dooming it to repeat history over and over again. We will also see how, while Americans on Kwaj may be able to physically and discursively separate themselves from Ebeye and the Marshallese, the two islets and peoples are inextricably linked. Border scholars have observed how borders simultaneously divide and unite: Staudt and Spener note that for local people, the shared border of the U.S. and Mexico “divides them but is also the ineluctable seam that binds them together” (1998a:251).

As noted above, it is of critical importance to see how, in this era of globalization and deterritorialization, the state continues to reassert its authority and reinscribe and police its borders. In contrast to the notion of border crossing and transgression, Spener and Staudt have put forth the idea of a dialectical cycle of debordering and rebordering, both territorial and not, meaning that “borders are never finished” (1998a:236). This dynamic resonates with my experience of access cycles on Kwajalein. In their view:

boundaries are not so much made more permeable, rendered less relevant, or done away with altogether so much as their position, function, and differential permeability in one or more of their dimensions are rearticulated as the outcome of contestation. In fact, the notion of the dialectic may be too limiting to accommodate our vision of rebordering, if

we think of the dialectic strictly as the relationship between only two polar opposites, between thesis and antithesis; contestation may actually be considerably more complex, involving multiple contradictions among several groups of opposing interests, each with its own vantage point, agenda, and amount of power relative to other groups (Spener and Staudt 1998a:236-7).

Such a focus allows us to see the simultaneous fragility and strength of the state (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:22), and in the case of Kwajalein, how the military must compete with and accommodate other forms of power at the border (Donnan and Wilson 1998a:1). In the focus on access issues on Kwajalein, we can see border crossing and transgression, but also how the state reinforces those borders in response to those transgressions, and sometimes creates new and different borders as well.

In seeing borders as “domains of contested power” (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:10), we will see how that power is contested in terms of daily events, such as those at the DSC. In doing so, we can see “both practical negotiations involved in cross-border transfers of people and goods, as well as the more abstract negotiations over meaning to which these activities, among others, give rise” (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:21). However, attention will also be paid to other major contestation events on the atoll, such as the Marshallese demonstrations or “sail-ins” on the atoll over the years, as well as the activities of Greenpeace, and media contestation of events and relationships on the atoll. This will then allow us to see the “space” Marshallese have created regarding borders on Kwajalein, particularly in forging a dialogue with the U.S. government and military. As part of the effort in “studying up,” we will see how Americans have resisted the military order as well.

## Anthropology of colonialism

This research is also heavily informed by the anthropology of colonialism. This work has been particularly important in challenging common assumptions about colonial systems, including the notion that colonialism has a single, transhistorical “essence” that requires no further examination (Comaroff 1997:192). Again, these kinds of assumptions serve to reify binary constructs of “the colonizer” and “the colonized,” or dominance and resistance, turning them into monolithic categories that hinder more complex understandings of power (Stoler and Cooper 1997:6; Stoler 1989). To counter this tendency, colonial scholars have emphasized the importance of seeing the internal complexity of both “sides” of any colonial relationship, as well as the cross-cutting contradictions and ambiguities of these relationships (Stoler and Cooper 1997, Stoler 1989).

Much in the way that anthropologists have focused on resistance and less powerful groups at borders, anthropological analyses of colonial systems have also tended to focus on the colonized to the exclusion of the colonizer. As a result, “colonizers and their communities are frequently treated as diverse but unproblematic, viewed as unified in a fashion that would disturb our ethnographic sensibilities if applied to ruling elites of the colonized” (Stoler 1989:136). In this view, the political agendas of the colonizer are then assumed to be “self-evident” (Stoler 1989:136). I would argue that without some deeper understanding of the “agents of empire,” our ability to understand the workings of any colonial system and its true impacts is limited.

In addition to examination of the internal diversity of the colonizer and the “competing colonialisms” among them (Comaroff 1997:184), colonial scholars have also paid particular attention to the creation of categories of rule (Dirks 1992; Stoler 1989, 2002; Thomas 1990). This research has found that the creation and maintenance of categories of difference in colonial

systems often had as much to do with social distinctions among subgroups of the colonizer as it did with the relations between the colonizer and the colonized (Stoler 1989, 2002).

This body of research has also been important in highlighting the internal contradictions and tensions inherent in colonial systems (Comaroff 1985; Stoler and Cooper 1997:6; Ortner 1995; Thomas 1990, 1994), what Cooper and Stoler call the “tensions of empire” (1997b; Comaroff 1997; Stoler 1989, 1997). Cooper and Stoler describe these tensions as “a group of tensions particular to European imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: between the universalizing claims of European ideology and the particularistic nature of conquest and rule” (1997a:ix). Such “universalizing claims” included “the discourses of inclusion, humanitarianism, and equality that informed liberal policy at the turn of the century” (Stoler 1997:198).

The result was a “new” colonialism, as older systems of conquest and command gave way to something new and more complicated, blending “coercive and persuasive strategies of racial rule” (Stoler and Cooper 1997:2-3). These tensions are often described in the context of conflicts between subgroups of the colonizer, but were also exploited by the colonized, through the redeployment of these dominant conceptions as a means of resistance and as a means of pressuring colonial regimes for certain kinds of rights and change (Stoler and Cooper 1997:3-4,30; Comaroff 1985). As a result of these tensions, “these colonial states were often in the business of defining an order of things according to untenable principles that themselves undermined their ability to rule” (Stoler and Cooper 1997:8).

One example of such tensions is Stoler’s work on issues of race and sexuality in colonial Southeast Asia (1997, 2002). Here, discourses of equality were in tension with discriminatory practices that served to enforce racial and sexual barriers in the colonies, with the primary

tensions being around the need to control European marriages and procreation with native women (Stoler 1997, 2002). In this sense, European racial policies were often as much about controlling European behavior as they were about those they ruled (Stoler 1989:148; 2002). As the research presented here shows, Stoler's findings resonate deeply with the situation of American men on Kwajalein who marry Marshallese women.

While Cooper and Stoler's discussion of tensions refers to particular processes from a particular historic period, arguments can be made that these tensions may still be apparent in present relationships, and as such can be applied to colonial situations in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries on Kwajalein. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, these contemporary situations have historical antecedents and there *is* continuity: the split between what is colonial and what is "postcolonial" or "neocolonial" is not always so clear. As Stoler and Cooper note, "The tensions between the exclusionary practices and universalizing claims of bourgeois culture were crucial to shaping the age of empire, and - in different form - these tensions are still present today" (1997:37).

#### How the anthropology of colonialism will be applied here

The framework described here for this analysis of the "agents of empire" draws heavily on Comaroff's research on the role of British nonconformist missionaries in early nineteenth century colonial South Africa (1997). Comaroff's examination of this subgroup of the colonizer is part of a larger scholarly effort to break down monolithic conceptions of colonial systems: "That is why we are concerned here with the tensions of empire, not merely its triumphs; with the contradictions of colonialism, not just its crushing progress" (Comaroff 1997:165). However, this focus on the colonizer is not to deny or "diminish the brute domination suffered by the



colonized people of the modern world, or to deny the Orwellian logic on which imperial projects are founded” (Comaroff 1997:165). Ultimately and “Above all, it is to treat as problematic the *making* of both colonizers and colonized in order to understand better the forces that, over time, have drawn them into an extraordinarily complex web of relations” (Comaroff 1997:165).

What does a focus on the “agents of empire” add to our understandings of these colonial systems? Comaroff asserts that “...in viewing the colonial process through their eyes – focused as they were by the ambiguities of their own social situation – we gain an especially penetrating insight into its internal struggles and inconsistencies” (Comaroff 1997:166). We can then see “competing colonialisms” (Comaroff 1997:184) or profound disagreements among groups of the colonizer regarding colonial projects and policies, as well as “practices of power” (1997:186). And we do see different “agents of empire” on Kwajalein with very different ideas of what the U.S. should be doing there. As Comaroff notes,

In most places, at most times, colonialism did (and does) not exist in the singular, but in a plurality of forms and forces - its particular character being shaped as much by political, social, and ideological contests among the colonizers as by the encounter with the colonized (Comaroff 1997:192).

In addition, some subgroups of the colonizer may serve as “the conscience of the colonizer” (Comaroff 1997:183).

As noted, this research also draws heavily on Stoler and Cooper’s work on colonial elites and “tensions of empire” (1997b). Stoler and Cooper noted in 1997 that neither history or anthropology had

sufficiently explored how the rulers of empire reexamined their own hegemony and altered their visions when faced with cleavages in their own camp and challenges from the people they were trying to rule...Closer investigation reveals competing agendas for using power, competing strategies for maintaining control, and doubts about the legitimacy of the venture (1997:6).

The view of enthusiastic participation in colonial projects by “those we have assumed were reliable “agents of empire” – planters, low-level bureaucrats, and subordinate members of colonial armies” has thus been called into question (Stoler and Cooper 1997:6).

In this research, we will also see some of the ways groups of Marshallese have responded to these tensions. As Comaroff notes,

From the perspective of the victim, their coexistence made the encounter with Europe appear contradictory and, initially at least, difficult to fathom. It is, after all, something of an irony to the colonized that those who came to rule them spend so much time fighting among themselves over the terms of command (Comaroff 1997:186).

As in British colonial Africa, there can be “new forms of empowerment in the fissures among the whites” (Comaroff 1997:186).

Bringing border theory together with the idea of “tensions of empire,” I assert that the borders of Kwajalein are a particularly good place at which to examine tensions inherent in the U.S. colonial system and how these tensions are played out on the ground. The primary “tension of empire” on Kwajalein appears to be that between American ideals of freedom, democracy and civil rights, and American military objectives and control. This tension can be seen in daily life

on the base, as well as “competing colonialisms.” This tension is then reflected back by the Marshallese as they resist the military system, and in their ambivalence toward the U.S. presence. To me, the most unexpected tension was that between American democratic ideals and the hierarchical Marshallese social system as currently configured on the atoll. All of these tensions are expressed through debates over various kinds of borders.

Both Stoler and Comaroff also emphasize the need to see the specific contours of particular colonial systems, and not *assume* we know what colonial systems are about. Stoler has observed that too often “we have taken colonialism and its European agents as an abstract force, as a *structure* imposed on local *practice*” (1989:135). Comaroff also emphasizes the need to examine each colonial system to “lay bare the hidden structures, the unspoken and undisclosed ideological scaffolding, on which its particular structure of domination rested” (1989:681). This research is intended to contribute to debates over the nature of the U.S.-Marshallese relationship on Kwajalein.

Another strength of this research is that it contributes a contemporary case to the anthropology of colonialism, which has largely been historically-oriented and focused on the “old colonial” powers. The strength here is the ability to observe interactions and tensions in the present, providing additional support to documentary sources.

### “Studying Up”

In 1969, Laura Nader called for more anthropologists to “study up,” or focus their attention not just on traditional cultures in distant locales, but also on the powerful, including institutions and elites in U.S. society. However, when anthropologists have heeded that call, they have tended to focus on the margins rather than the centers of power in U.S. society (Gusterson

1997:114). Research on elites usually consists of external critiques, or examinations of the impacts of elite activities on less powerful populations. While this work is of critical importance, it is not quite enough. Some of what it lacks is the depth provided by ethnography: we would not study traditional cultures from a distance, but that is often what we do with the powerful.

For a variety of reasons to be discussed in Chapter 2, anthropology has developed a profound unease with doing research on the powerful, particularly associated with the government or military, leading to charges of complicity for anthropologists who do such work. However, some very good reasons have been put forth over the years for doing this kind of ethnography. One of the most persuasive arguments is that we are fundamentally ignorant regarding many of the institutions that shape not only our lives, but the lives of many people around the world (Nader 1969:288). Also, by not studying elites, we mystify their roles in our society and render them culturally invisible (Rosaldo in Gusterson 1993:65; Rosaldo in Gusterson 1997:115). And as Gusterson notes,

If there is any culture that deserves to be denaturalized and exoticized, hence opened up to a fresh and potentially critical perspective, it is surely that of America's generals, admirals, nuclear scientists, and defense contractors (1993:75).

Gusterson has described a pivotal moment in his research on nuclear weapons debates when he became more interested in a weapons scientist than the group of nuclear protesters he had come to study (1996:xi). Not that he didn't care about what protesters had to say, but they were a known entity, and he was intrigued by the part of the debate he knew little or nothing about – the world of weapons scientists. I too felt this shift, as I went to Kwajalein steeped in literature critical of the U.S. and the military, and with the general orientation of an activist.

Somewhere along the way, I realized that the situation was far more complex than I had been led to believe, and that Americans on the base had some very interesting things to say about their role there, about U.S.-Marshallese relations, and about the history of the atoll. Not that Marshallese and other oppositional voices became unimportant to me; they were just joined in the debate by other voices heard less often. I realized that to understand this border situation and colonial relationship, focusing on the Marshallese alone would not be enough: I had to “study up” as well in order to even begin to understand power relations on the atoll.

So essentially this research is an attempt to “study up” in three different contexts: a border situation, a colonial situation, and a portion of the military-defense establishment. However, as some anthropologists have found, doing this kind of unconventional work is not without its dangers, and does present a number of ethical and methodological challenges. These issues, as well as an exploration of the history and practice of “studying up,” will be presented in Chapter 2.

### Research Questions

In my analysis of this colonial and border situation, a number of specific research questions emerged. The first series of questions concerns the study of Americans on the atoll, and include: (1) What does an ethnographic understanding of the “agents of empire,” or American base residents, add to our understanding of this colonial relationship? (2) How do Americans themselves experience borders on Kwajalein? (3) How have Americans in and out of the Kwajalein system challenged this system?

The second series of questions concerns border and access politics, including: (1) What do we learn about this colonial relationship by analyzing struggles over borders, including access

politics? (2) What kinds of “tensions of empire” do they reveal, both among Americans, and those brought to the fore by Marshallese? (3) Do border crosser tropes fit on Kwajalein?

And finally, a series of questions concerns issues of discursive borders, including: (1) What role have Marshallese elites and media sources played in framing how borders on the atoll are perceived? (2) What aspects and viewpoints of Kwajalein history and the current situation do these discursive framings obscure?

In addition to these specific aspects of the Kwajalein situation explored in this research, some of the larger questions raised by this research include: (1) What is the nature of this colonial relationship, and what does it tell us about larger issues of U.S. colonialism and imperialism? (2) How do borders function in this colonial relationship, and what possible insights into other border situations might this case provide? (3) What do we really know about the “agents of empire,” or powerful institutions and elites in our own society? What do we know about what these “agents of empire” do outside the U.S., and what they think about what they do?

### The Field Site

Kwajalein Atoll is located in the Central Pacific in the region known as Micronesia. It consists of 93 small coral islets on top of a fringing reef surrounding a lagoon. The atoll and the rest of the Marshall Islands became part of the U.S.-administered Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands after World War II, and the U.S. has done missile testing there since the 1960s. Most of the lagoon is used as a target site for incoming missiles. The military base is located on the southern-most islet on the atoll, called Kwajalein Islet (often shortened to just “Kwaj”).

The base itself has a number of unusual characteristics, the first of which is being located on the largest atoll surrounding the largest lagoon in the world, making it an ideal site for

splashing down missiles. It is also a Government-Owned, Contractor-Operated (GOCO) facility, which makes it a U.S. Army-regulated military base, but with few actual military personnel. The population of 2,000 is made up predominantly of civilians employed by defense and logistics contractors, and their dependents.

Approximately 1,100 Marshallese are employed on the base, most in lower-level service jobs. Most live on Ebeye Islet, three miles up the reef from the base, and ride a ferry back and forth to work. Ebeye Islet has become famous throughout the Pacific for its infrastructural and population problems and associated environmental health issues. It creates a stark contrast with the standard of living on the base, reminiscent of the U.S.-Mexico border in its asymmetry, leading to the dominant narratives of “the slum” versus “the country club” in descriptions of the atoll.

While doing my research, I lived and worked on the campus of the College of the Marshall Islands (CMI) on Gugeegue Islet, connected to Ebeye Islet by a six-mile causeway. I lived there because I was also teaching at CMI, and due to a lack of living space on Ebeye. On telling a Pacific anthropologist who is well acquainted with the Marshall Islands that I planned to do my fieldwork there, the response was “why would you want to go *there*?” Once there, I found out why it has not been a more inviting destination for anthropologists, or visitors of any kind. Ebeye has none of the conventional hardships of working in the Marshall Islands - remoteness, tiny islands and traditional foods - and all of the new ones – overcrowding, limited and/or nonexistent infrastructure, horrible health conditions, and high-priced junk food as the local diet. This starts to make the old hardships look good, and better for one’s health.

In addition, the presence of the base and associated security make movement around the atoll anything but free, and issues related to movement and access were probably the hardest and

most time-consuming part of my fieldwork. To gain access to Ebeye you have to land in the airport on Kwajalein Islet, and if you haven't been given clearance to stay on the base, you are escorted by base security to the DSC, where a ferry to Ebeye may not arrive for hours (the ferries operate on military time, the water taxis on "Marshallese time"). Leaving the atoll can be equally time-consuming and frustrating. One faces major infrastructural obstacles on the one side, and equally significant security and bureaucratic obstacles on the other.

You must have permission to access the base for any reason, and permission is not easy to get. Anyone who has spent any significant amount of time on the atoll ends up spending considerable amounts of time at the DSC, waiting, or on the Ebeye dock, waiting. In a place like this you cannot do anything "spur of the moment," and it's not easy to escape, leading to what some long-time American residents call "rock fever." I also had the additional travel challenges of living on Gugeegue Islet and traveling back and forth daily on the six-mile unpaved causeway, the condition of which varied from mediocre to impassable. Despite the difficulties, however, this daily travel and perpetual border crossing contributed significantly to my understanding of how people and things move and don't move on the atoll, and also led to many fruitful conversations and observations while waiting for some form of transport to show up, or paperwork of some kind to clear.

### Methods

This analysis is based on ethnographic research conducted on Kwajalein from October 2001 to December 2002, with additional shorter visits in 1999 and 2003 for a total of 19 months. Methods used included participant observation in a variety of contexts, as well as interviews, both formal and informal. Interviews were conducted with a diverse range of Marshallese on



Ebeye, including those of different rank, atoll of origin, and those in and out of the local administration of Ebeye. I also conducted interviews with non-Marshallese living on Ebeye, including American expatriots (such as teachers and missionaries), as well as those from other Pacific Islands and the Philippines. The topics of these interviews were wide-ranging, from outsiders' first responses to Ebeye and the military base to analyses of Ebeye's history and persistent problems. Methods used in the collection of information on food and water issues included formal and informal interviews with relevant administrators on both Ebeye and Kwajalein; interviews with Ebeye residents on food and water issues; and a series of surveys of Ebeye stores, food prices, and buying patterns.

Interviews were also conducted with a diverse range of Americans on Kwajalein, from "regular" citizens to representatives of the Command and primary Contractor. Although I interviewed a diverse range of American residents of the base in terms of background and amount of time spent on the base, particular attention was paid to long-time base residents, some whom had lived there for 15-20 years, for the depth of their experiences and insights. To be clear without specifically identifying individual speakers, quotations in the text attributed to "Kwajalein residents" and "long-timers" are those of Kwajalein residents that are *not* members of the Command and such entities as Host Nation - they are the views of individual American base residents. Where commentary is from those who are part of the Command and other similar entities, I have indicated so. I do this to avoid the confusion that the majority of views expressed in this research are those of "military speak," although "regular Americans" on the base certainly partake of this. On the whole, however, these long-timers tended to be somewhat outside the mainstream of Kwajalein life, as they defined themselves, and as will be discussed further in Chapter 5. Many fit into Marcus' category of "fringe" elites, making them more accessible, as

well as freer to speak their minds (1983b:20). I also drew opportunistically on other sources of information on Kwajalein, including former Kwajalein residents living in the U.S. and others I have met by chance over the years with “Kwajalein experiences.”

A note must also be made about language, particularly military acronyms and jargon. Most of that used in the text is based on common usage by base residents as seen in interviews. As noted in the discussion of “technospeak” in Chapters 4 and 7, this language and associated discourses can also serve as another way of erecting boundaries between Americans and Marshallese on the atoll. As such, I will try to keep such language to a minimum, although it is in many cases interwoven into descriptions of and discourses associated with Kwajalein.

I also made extensive use of archival materials, including those located in the Host Nation Office on the base. Included in these archives are the minutes of the Community Relations Council (CRC), a committee of American and Marshallese representatives that meets monthly to hash out issues related to U.S.-Marshallese relations on the atoll, including access issues and those pertaining to Marshallese workers on the base. This material provided many insights into the local dynamics of power on the atoll, as did my attendance at two CRC meetings. Other important sources of historical materials were the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Archives and the Pacific Collection at the Hamilton Library, University of Hawai’i, Manoa. I have also utilized local, regional, national and international media reports on Kwajalein, both past and present, as well as the debates surrounding those reports. Locally, the base newsletter *The Kwajalein Hourglass (Hourglass)* was an important source of information both past and present.

In focusing largely on American residents and interactions on the base, I had to be very flexible in my methods and information sources, as traditional anthropological field methods

were poorly suited to this environment. Not everyone living in a place like this wants to be interviewed, even informally, or wants to have their interview recorded on tape, due to the small community involved and the sensitive nature of some of the topics covered. As such, I engaged to some extent in what Gusterson calls “polymorphous engagement,” or interfacing with informants across dispersed sites and collecting data eclectically (1997:116). Donnan and Wilson have also noted the need for border researchers to cross methodological, theoretical and disciplinary boundaries in order to fully study the complexity of border systems (1999:59), and I believe I have done that here.

I did face some obstacles in doing formal interviews on Kwajalein, although they turned out to be fewer than I expected. One American base resident originally agreed to participate, and then changed his mind. Only later did I link this refusal to the general precariousness of life on base for some “in-between” populations, one of which he was a member. Command views and policies toward this ambiguous “border group” will be discussed in coming chapters. Another potential American informant grilled me as to my research and background, and then requested that I bring at least two forms of identification to the interview. This kind of experience was unusual for me on Kwajalein, especially considering that this resident had been recommended to me by a common friend. However, most people were well aware of what I was doing on the base, as I appeared in the April 23, 2002, issue of the *Hourglass*. And as will be discussed further in Chapter 5, even without press coverage you don’t stay unknown for long on Kwajalein, as information travels quickly in a relatively small and isolated population.

### Positionality of the Researcher

Here I examine some of my own positioning relative to this research, as “self-analysis” becomes an important part of the methodology of studying elites (Nader 1999[1969]:308). To me, this means that the evolution of one’s project, obstacles faced, and responses to it, are an integral part of the research itself. And this makes sense, as “studying up” challenges so many of our preconceived notions of what fieldwork is, who the subjects of that fieldwork should be, and what topics are suitable for anthropological focus. This discussion of ethical and methodological challenges will be extended in Chapter 2.

In some ways this research is a response to the received wisdom on Kwajalein, which I gained through background research before entering the field. As noted, this literature contains a largely black and white view of Kwajalein, as evil Army/racist Americans versus powerless and united Marshallese. In this context, access issues are easy to solve, by a simple “yes” or “no.” As will be seen, these “narrative lines” came to be greatly complicated in the course of this research. I originally came to Kwajalein to do research on water and food issues on Ebeye, with an applied focus, under the rubric of what may be called political ecology. Some of this work still stands in Chapter 8’s focus on food and water issues, and access politics on the atoll. Over time, however, I came to realize that focusing on these applied issues, while important, was like looking at the symptoms and not the disease. There were deeper issues at work here, and some of these deeper issues have meant that applied work to improve health conditions on Ebeye has often been in vain. Only then did I begin to look at something more fundamental having to do with the relationship between Ebeye and the base, access issues, and borders. Opportunities arose to have more contact and conversations with American residents of the base. This is also when I began to see more of the complications and contradictions on both sides of the Kwajalein relationship,

Marshallese and American, and some of the fundamental “tensions of empire” at the heart of the U.S.-Marshallese relationship on the atoll.

It is not enough to theorize borders from afar; it is necessary to cross them oneself as part of ethnographic research in order to begin to understand them. Having to cross base borders when arriving or departing the atoll, as well as having to cross the Dock Security Checkpoint on a daily basis to go back and forth between the Marshallese and American sides, provided plenty of opportunities for observation and personal experience of these borders. I also spent enough time on the base to acquaint myself with some of its myriad internal borders. However, in no way do I consider that my experiences approximate those of the Marshallese who cross these borders daily, for no matter where I found myself, I was still an American, with all its implied privileges. It was interesting, though, to find that these crossings did put me in a somewhat dubious classification of a “border person” for base security personnel and some American base residents - that category of a small number of American teachers and missionaries seen as crazy enough to live in substandard conditions on the Marshallese side, but who also came over to Kwajalein when authorized for various purposes. This did give me some small sense of being “a border person” who didn’t fit on either side, and who occasionally got stranded in between.

One important source of access to the base was through friendships built over the years with fellow American teachers at CMI. Those living on base frequently sponsored me so that I could come over for various purposes, such as accessing the Internet at the base library. I was also given some access to the base through an arrangement with the Host Nation office, which deals most directly with U.S.-Marshallese relations on the atoll. This arrangement gave me access to some of its archives in exchange for my help in organizing and beginning to scan those archives. This experience also provided me with daily contact with some base residents that I

might not otherwise have known. Both of these sources provided me with opportunities to talk to and develop relationships with base residents over a long period of time and observe many aspects of day-to-day life on the base.

While doing archival work at the Host Nation office, I also gained a good appreciation for the daily challenges Host Nation representatives face in serving as mediators of complex U.S.-Marshallese issues on the atoll. They deal with stranded airliners, unexpected Marshallese visitors, other unexpected visitors (Greenpeace), requests for base services from Americans on Ebeye, and requests for base services from Marshallese landowners, among many other issues. Although my relationship with the office did not survive the length of my fieldwork, I have great respect for those who tackle these complex issues day-in, day-out, and I could not have gained quite the same complex understanding of present-day Kwajalein Atoll and its convoluted history without their assistance. However, I must also stress that while I did some archival work with the Host Nation office (which required a security clearance), I was an independent researcher and was not paid by them in any way. This research and its findings are not subject to review by the Host Nation office or any other base or military entity.

When I arrived to start the main portion of my fieldwork in 2001, the atmosphere on Kwajalein was a rare one of general openness, despite the events of 9/11. By this I mean that there was a general feeling on the base that U.S.-Marshallese relations and the history of the atoll could be discussed and debated more openly, without compromising the “mission” of the base, and in fact it might make the base more secure to deal with some long-simmering issues between Marshallese and Americans, including access issues. This now seems to have been a temporary respite from restrictiveness, which will be discussed in coming chapters.

I realize that borders are very sensitive issues at this time, although they have always been sensitive issues on missile testing bases and other military establishments. I feel the need to state upfront that in no way is this research intended to jeopardize the security of the base in any way. I came to Kwajalein to do the bulk of my fieldwork a month after September 11, 2001, after which major changes to the security borders of Kwajalein were made. Much of this work reflects access conditions before those changes took place, and takes a longer historical view of access issues on the atoll. My goal is to look frankly at border interactions and power relationships on the atoll to see what we can learn from them. Also, in my discussion of access, I make a distinction between access and base *security* versus access and base *resources*. Security issues are largely non-negotiable, especially in regard to outside threats posed to the base. What I am discussing falls largely into the category of access to base resources.

Some aspects of my personal background and experience were quite helpful in understanding the borders of Kwajalein. The experience of having a career-Army father and having spent considerable amounts of my childhood on Army bases both in the U.S. and overseas gave me an understanding of how Army bases operate that was quite helpful in this research. This greatly reduced the learning curve that an anthropologist unfamiliar with Army/military bases would have experienced (although it did reduce the “exoticness” of the base). My familiarity with how Army bases work was also helpful in highlighting aspects of the base that were unusual or unique among Army bases, and as such were topics for further exploration. As noted in Chapter 2, I have found it interesting that several anthropologists doing ethnographic work on the military have also been military “brats,” spouses, or members of the military themselves, and I fit into this model as well. Pacific researcher Greg Dvorak, who has done and is doing research on Kwajalein (2004), lived on Kwajalein as a child, making him a

“Kwaj kid” and an insider in that sense. This is perhaps so because access can be difficult to negotiate on a place like Kwajalein, due to military security, and the radical difference between mainstream American society and base life.

My comfort level with military rules became very apparent to me upon witnessing the responses of several first-time American visitors to the base, some of whom described it as a “police state.” Many visitors never get beyond this first impression. In coming to Kwajalein, my experiences told me not to expect an open, democratically-run institution, as military bases, and the military in general, are anything but. I knew that despite its civilian population, Kwajalein is governed by Army regulations for the most part, which are standard on any military base.

Of course, while this Army background has its advantages, it also makes me a target for charges of complicity (among anthropologists in particular), not only in terms of the people I chose to interview and subjects I chose to cover, but also in being an “Army brat,” and hence more likely to be sympathetic to the military. If a military childhood did give me anything, it was the view of the people involved as human beings. However, this does not mean that I am an apologist for the U.S. military. I also gained perspective from a very atypical Army childhood: when overseas my family always lived off the base, “on the economy” in local communities, while many of my peers rarely left the confines of the base.

The fact that I have chosen to work predominantly with the “colonizer,” and tried to look frankly at both sides of the colonial relationship, positive and negative, may also open me up to charges of complicity with U.S. colonialism. This is one of the dangers of “studying up,” as contact is often assumed to be complicity. Also, as noted in critiques of “studying up,” this research may be seen as giving “airtime” to what are seen as hegemonic views. However, my experience, especially with long-time Kwaj residents, was that Americans had some very



interesting and unexpected stories to tell about Kwajalein. And Americans there surprised me: I found some base residents to be quite reflexive in their discussion of Kwajalein and the U.S.-Marshallese relationship, as some had spent many years on the atoll as critically-thinking, engaged, and concerned observers of the situation. Some Americans were preparing to leave Kwajalein for good after many years of living there, and they seemed very ready to discuss and distill their long experience. More about the question of their colonial complicity, including their own views on it, will be discussed in coming chapters.

As noted in Chapter 2, there are a number of very good reasons for doing research with the powerful, the most significant being that we actually know very little about these systems of power because we rarely engage them. No doubt some aspects of this engagement will be contentious, but my primary goal in doing research on Kwajalein was to achieve a deeper understanding of the colonizer in this colonial relationship, and I felt that I had a unique opportunity to do that. While some fear and mistrust this kind of engagement, Heyman notes that it “both opens up insights into the workings of organized power and brings closeness to its goals and schemes, posing serious political-ethical quandaries. Such engagements are not to be avoided, but rather treated as goads to creative thought and practice” (2004).

In addition to focusing attention on Americans on the base, this research also raises questions regarding the role of Marshallese elites in helping to perpetuate inequalities on Ebeye that are usually blamed on the U.S. government. Despite pressure I have felt not to openly discuss issues of Marshallese elites and the “misappropriation of funds” on Kwajalein, I feel that to whitewash this issue is to fundamentally misrepresent a significant part of the Kwajalein story, one that both Americans and Marshallese raised to me as a critical, yet often untouched issue. One of Ortner’s main critiques of resistance studies has been that the internal politics of

subjugated groups are frequently sanitized (1995:176-179), and I believe this has often been the case on Kwajalein. However, as will be seen, American administrators have done their work here as well, and I have done my best to examine these issues with the same critical eye.

In addition to my positionality as a researcher, something must also be said about the colonial complicity of anthropology in a larger sense. Over the last several decades, most anthropologists have come to acknowledge the colonial roots of our discipline, as the field began as the “description and analysis – carried out by Europeans, for a European audience – of non-European societies dominated by European power” (Asad 1998 [1973]:15). These origins were rendered even more suspect over the years due to “a strange reluctance on the part of most professional anthropologists to consider seriously the power structure within which their discipline has taken shape” (Asad 1998 [1973]:15).

Access is a critical part of this power, as historically-rooted and unequal power relationships give “the West access to cultural and historical information about the societies it has progressively dominated...The colonial power structure made the object of anthropological study accessible and safe...” (Asad 1998 [1973]:16-17). Beyond the structural and disciplinary issues that link anthropology to colonial systems, Edward Said’s work has been particularly important in highlighting our discursive and cultural inheritance from colonial systems, which has revealed that “not only our sources, but also our basic categories and assumptions have been shaped by colonial rule” (Dirks 1992:9).

As a result of these revelations, reflexivity is now a fundamental part of much current anthropological and ethnographic work. As Borneman notes, “Whether villains or heroes, anthropologists must begin by historicizing their present location, which means acknowledging that our work is already in the domain of foreign policy and international order” (1995:670). In

regard to the American presence in Micronesia, there has been a great deal of debate in recent decades regarding the role anthropologists have played in the U.S. administration of the Trust Territory, particularly during the era of nuclear testing. This issue will be discussed at length in Chapter 4.

I recognized very quickly on Ebeye that while I was not affiliated with the base, I carried the implied power of being an American with me to the Marshallese “side.” No matter how you might try to work through and around it, the inherent power differential is always there, as there is no escaping the “differences in power and knowledge that makes others our subjects in the first place” (Behar 1993:244). I did feel some discomfort in “studying” the Marshallese, and this discomfort was one of the reasons why I chose to “study up” as well as “down.” As noted, however, this strategy also turned out to be quite informative and productive in gaining additional perspectives on atoll events and relationships.

### Chapter Outlines

Chapter 2 provides further analysis of the dominant theoretical strains informing this work that have been briefly outlined here. Chapter 3 provides background information on the Marshall Islands, including details of traditional Marshallese life important to understanding present-day Kwajalein Atoll, including the roles of elites. Chapter 4 discusses the nature of colonialism, an often undefined term, and how the U.S. can be classified as a colonial and imperial power. Here the contours of U.S. colonial rule in the Pacific are traced, including what makes U.S. colonial relationships different from more “classic” European colonial systems. This

chapter also examines the “tensions of empire” inherent in U.S. colonial projects. The colonial history of the Marshall Islands and Kwajalein is also presented.

Chapter 5 examines life on the military base as described by American residents, highlighting the regulatory borders that structure even such things as recreation and family life on the base. Also discussed are some of the social/cultural borders between Americans on the base, and between American and Marshallese workers. Chapter 6 focuses on Ebeye Islet, including the history of American administration, its infrastructural challenges, the role of Marshallese elites, and the ever-present question: “Whose Fault is Ebeye?”

Access issues are the topic of Chapter 7, particularly access by Ebeye residents to base resources of various kinds, with the focus largely being on interactions that take place around the Dock Security Checkpoint. The impacts of access regulations on different groups of Americans and Marshallese are also examined, as well as the cycles of enforcement and “tensions of empire” that emerge in this context. Chapter 8 is a more focused look at water and food issues on the atoll, as case studies of access politics.

Chapter 9 deals with media representations of the U.S.-Marshallese relationship. This chapter explores how cultural and physical borders on the base as discursively constructed by Marshallese elites and outside media sources have structured our understandings of Kwajalein. Resistance of various kinds by Americans and Marshallese is also analyzed here, and how this resistance has served to shape the unique colonial relationship on Kwajalein. Chapter 10 provides a brief summary of findings, as well as the contributions of this research to border studies, the anthropology of colonialism, and the anthropology of militarism.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS

#### Border Theory

##### The origin of border studies and theory in anthropology

The origin of border interests in anthropology has often been linked to Fredrik Barth's edited 1969 volume *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, in which he recognizes the need to focus critical attention on "the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (1969:15), and to examine how identity is shaped and maintained at these boundaries. One of the first anthropological works of this time to study literal "hard" international borders was Abner Cohen's 1965 study of Arab-Israeli border-villages. One of the most important features of this work is that the border is not just a backdrop for a larger study (Donnan and Wilson 1999:29): as Cohen notes, as the border and the hostility around it had "become a major factor underlying the social organization of these villages, and cannot therefore be treated as a temporary, or abnormal, phenomenon any longer, nor can it be regarded as just an 'intruding factor' in village society" (1965:17).

John Cole and Eric Wolf's 1972 book, *The Hidden Frontier*, then took a newly-emerging border studies to another level, as they connected local-level analyses with larger historical and political economic currents in order to examine the persistence of ethnic identities over time, relations between ethnic groups across an international border, and the interaction of identity and

nation-building. Despite anthropological interest in the above studies, social and geopolitical borders were not seen at the time as important sites of investigation for anthropologists. In Ellwyn Stoddard's 1976 assessments of border studies, he found that borders were considered of marginal research importance in many fields, including anthropology (1976a:3), although he did note that a surge in U.S.-Mexico border studies had already begun (1976b:3,35).

### The anthropology of borders/Border studies in other fields

In recent years, a renewed interest in borders has resulted in a burgeoning literature on the topic. As part of this wider trend, the anthropology of borders has grown to include the study of a range of subjects in a range of locations, although the U.S.-Mexico border still dominates the field. Important works on the U.S.-Mexico border include those on migration and labor (Alvarez 1987; Heyman 1991, 1993; Kearney 1986, Lugo 1999, Velez-Ibanez 1996); and those on larger issues of transnationalism (Alvarez 1994; Hackenburg and Alvarez 2001; Kearney 1991, 1998; Rouse 1991, 1992; Weaver 2001) and specific transnational markets (Alvarez 2001, Alvarez and Collier 1994). Of particular importance for this research is Josiah Heyman's work on the infrastructure and bureaucracies of the U.S. Mexico border (Heyman 1995a, 2000, 2001), especially as they represent one of the few cases of "studying up" at an international border.

Anthropology's preoccupation with the U.S.-Mexico border in the past meant that little comparative work on international borders had been done (Alvarez 1995). Donnan and Wilson's edited volumes *Border Approaches: Anthropological Perspectives on Frontiers* (1994) and *Border Identities* (Wilson and Donnan 1998b) are both efforts to remedy this deficit. Specific works on international borders include, roughly grouped: symbolic analyses of international borders (Cohen et al 1988; Stokes 1994, 1998; Wilson 1994); identity and international borders

(Berdahl 1999; Borneman 1992a, 1992b; Cheater 1998; Douglass 1998; Driessen 1992; Flynn 1997; Hamilton 1999; Kopytoff 1999; Lask 1994; Lavie 1990; Rabinowitz 1998; Wilson 2000); and political-economic examination of borders (Borneman 1998; Donnan 1999; Driessen 1998, 1999; Nugent 1999; Smart and Lin 2004). Of particular importance for this research are work on border bureaucracy and surveillance in Ghana done by Brenda Chalfin (2004), as well as Avram Bornstein's discussion of Israeli-Palestinian border checkpoints (2002).

Other fields have also developed significant volumes of work on borders in recent decades, including political science (Anderson 1982, 1996; Bath 1976; Bowman 2005; Gibbins 2005); history (Asiwaju 1985, 1996; Baud 1994; Baud and van Schendel 1997; Hargreaves 2005; Martinez 1994a, 1994b; Sahlins 1989); geography (Girot 2005; Hertzog 1990; Minghi 1991; Prescott 1987; Rumley and Minghi 1991; Paasi 2005; van der Velde and van Houtun 2000); and sociology (Ruiz and Tiano 1987; Strassoldo 1982, 1982b). Particularly salient works here include sociologist Timothy Dunn's work on the low-level militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border (1996) and the border wall debate (2003). Also important is Claudia Sadowski-Smith's volume focusing on the U.S.-Canada border (2002), discussed below, and works focusing on internal U.S. borders (Castronovo 1997, Grinde 2002).

### The "postmodern" borderlands

The biggest boom in border studies came in the 1980s and 90s, when anthropology and other disciplines discovered the "borderlands," a dynamic zone of culture, identity and transnationalism, as well as the breaking down of disciplinary boundaries. As Gupta and Ferguson define it, the term "borderlands" "does not indicate a fixed topographical site between two other fixed locales (nations, societies, cultures) but an interstitial zone of displacement and

detrterritorialization that shapes the identity of the hybridized subject” (1997c:48). In contrast to the “hard” or literal borders of nation-states, “borderlands” are often referred to as the “soft” or “metaphorical extensions of borders” (Alvarez 1995:448). These more metaphorical borderlands include: (1) the rethinking of the concept of culture as fixed and bounded; (2) the creation of a new politics of identity in academia and beyond, crossing boundaries of class, race, gender, and sexuality; and (3) the acknowledgment of the de-territorialized nature of postmodernity and political economy. In all of these different ways, borders have become for intellectuals “a place of politically exciting hybridity, intellectual creativity and moral possibility” (Johnson and Michaelson 1997:3), and the use of the concept of borders (as well as borderlands, border crossings and other similar terms) has proliferated in a wide array of academic works and disciplines. As Cunningham and Heyman note, they have become “focal metaphors” tending “to overshadow the empirically and historically grounded studies of borders” (2004:290-291).

Two influential works in the establishment of this new “borderlands” genre were Renato Rosaldo’s *Culture and Truth* (1989) and Gloria Anzaldua’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). In *Culture and Truth*, Rosaldo brings the borderlands to our attention in a number of ways. He problematizes the traditional anthropological concept of culture as a bounded and uniform entity, proposing instead that “our everyday lives are criss-crossed by border zones” of race, sex, gender, age, ethnicity and nationality, among other categories, making us all residents of multicultural borderlands of various kinds (1989:207). He also notes the assumed cultural invisibility of people in motion, such as migrant workers; in traditional anthropology “...if it’s moving[,] it isn’t cultural” (1989:209). Rosaldo then uses his own Chicano identity, historically-rooted in the U.S.-Mexico border, to explore the borderlands of identity. His ultimate message is that these new borderlands “should be regarded not as



analytically empty transitional zones but as sites of creative cultural production that require investigation” (1989:208). As part of his borderlands project, he aims to find a place in academia for minority discourses, particularly Chicano/a voices and literature in American cultural studies. Rosaldo also highlights the emancipatory potential of the borderland project, praising Anzaldua’s work in particular for her depiction of “the figure at the crossroads in a manner that celebrates the potential of borders in opening new forms of human understanding” (1989:214).

Anzaldua’s 1987 work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* has become a often-cited foundational work emphasizing the emancipatory potential of postmodern borderlands, particularly in the crossing of borders of culture, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender. She sees these borderlands as a “Third Country,” a dangerous but creative cultural zone where resistance is expressed and hybrid identities are formed. Like Rosaldo, she uses her own experiences as a Chicana to analyze these borderlands of identity, which for her include her mixed racial/national identities (Mexican, Native American, Euro-American), as well as other sexual, spiritual and psychological categories. For her, these personal categories are part of a larger emancipatory borderlands project involving Third World resistance to First World domination, as she believes that the external and internal battles cannot be separated (1987:87). She describes the borderlands between the U.S. and Mexico as a literal and figurative “place where Third World grates against the first and bleeds...the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country - a border culture” (1987:3).

While she valorizes, and indeed romanticizes, her Mexican agrarian roots, she particularly grounds her Chicana identity in the “Indian woman’s history of resistance” (1987:21), pointing toward Native American roots as a source of potential liberation. Ultimately, Anzaldua believes she is forging a new borderland consciousness, that of the “new *Mestiza*”

(1987:77), who she describes as being transformed from a sacrificial goat to a “priestess at the crossroads” (1987:80). As a “new *Mestiza*,” she inhabits a dangerous border landscape of hatred and exploitation, but also of great liberatory potential, allowing those who live there to become active participants in the emancipation of humankind (1987:81).

Both of these works are rooted in the U.S.-Mexico border region, as both authors use their own personal experiences as part of the Chicano/a minority to form a new and powerful politics of identity. Indeed, many border scholars believe that through the work of scholars such as these, the U.S.-Mexico border has become the birthplace of border studies, refocusing attention on border concepts and bringing these concepts into use in fields such as literary and cultural studies (Johnson and Michaelson 1997:1,22). At an even more fundamental level, some authors assert that these works and others like them have served to disrupt and resist “master narratives of American nationalism and have transformed the U.S.-Mexico borderlands into the birthplace of hybrid subjects, such as the Mexican migrants, the undocumented, and the marginal ethno-racial subject” (Martinez 2002:53).

The U.S.-Mexico border has thus evolved into “one of the most prominent sites for analyses of border transgressions that emphasize contemporary diasporic practices of hybrid place-making and non-absolutist citizenship” (Sadowski-Smith 2002:2). Alvarez notes that the U.S.-Mexico border has become the model for both border studies and works in the borderlands genre around the world (1995:451). It has also become known particularly for its “economic asymmetry,’ and the contradictions and paradoxes that come with that asymmetry (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:6), as “No other border in the world exhibits the inequality of power, economics, and the human condition as does this one” (Alvarez 1995:451). The extreme contrast between Ebeye and Kwaj may present a similar differential.

In anthropology and other disciplines, foundational works such as those of Alzaldúa and Rosaldo have spawned a huge number of works using border imagery, including those in literary criticism, cultural studies, postcolonial studies and the literature on transnationalism and globalization. As these fields and literatures are quite broad and sometimes not very well defined, a few selected influential works and ideas relevant to border debates and theory in each area will be discussed here: some works highlighted cross over several of these fields. In general, all these fields share fundamental ideas about: (1) the postmodern reading of texts and discourses; (2) the crossing of borders of culture and identity and the embracing of hybridity; (3) the emancipatory potential of new hybrid identities and spaces; and (4) the challenging of academic boundaries, all with a backdrop provided by transnationalism and globalization. Many of these works focus on literary works and other discourses in their analysis. Many of these works also focus on the U.S.-Mexico border and Chicano/a studies, again reflecting the origins of most borderlands theory in anthropology and other disciplines.

In the field of literary criticism, one very important role of the border focus has been to bring minority voices into the mainstream, to explore border zones of identity through literature, and to stress the liberatory potential of border crossing and resistance. Foremost among border works in literary criticism is D. Emily Hicks' *Border Writing: The Multidimensional Text*, in which she describes "border writing" as a zone between U.S. and Latin American cultures in which subjects are decentered and deterritorialized, a concept she borrows from Deleuze and Guattari (1991:xxiv). Border writing here "depicts a kind of realism that approaches the experience of border crossers, those who live in a bilingual, bicultural, biconceptual reality..." (1991:xxv). According to Hicks, border writing has a long tradition in Chicano literature and is inherently subversive, as it "disrupts the one-way flow of information" between the U.S. and

Latin America (1991:xxvii). Border writers are seen here as bicultural smugglers or *coyotes*, or even shamans curing their readers, as readers of border texts may also become border crossers themselves (1991:xxxi, xxv). But border writing, as understood by Hicks, is seen to have even broader emancipatory potential, as “The global body needs to be healed. Border writing holds out this possibility” (1991:xxxi).

Another influential border work in literary criticism is Hector Calderon and Jose David Saldivar’s *Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture and Ideology*, which aims to write “a new history of American literature” incorporating often-neglected Chicano/a voices (1991:1-2). This work also has broader emancipatory aims, as it hopes to “remap the borderlands of theory” between the First and Third worlds, cores and peripheries, and the local and the global (Calderon and Saldivar 1991:7). The authors explicitly define which writers are truly Chicano (as opposed to writers who are Mexican or Spanish), and trace the origins of Chicano identity to the mid-19th century borderlands between the U.S. and Mexico, where they believe it formed from bilingual and bicultural experience of border residents resisting “Anglo-American economic domination and ideological hegemony” (Calderon and Saldivar 1991:4). This identity subsequently found its voice in the Chicano movement of the 1960s. Important early literary works here include Americo Paredes’ *With a Pistol in His Hand*, which is described as “a highly conscious, imaginative act of resistance that redefined the border” not as an Anglo-American myth, but as “a historically determined geopolitical zone of military, linguistic and cultural conflict” (Calderon and Saldivar 1991:5).

In similar work found in cultural studies, Saldivar describes his edited volume *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* as an effort to bring together Chicano/a literature and cultural studies in a way that challenges dominant models in American cultural studies

(1997). In doing so, the U.S.-Mexico border, described as a paradigm of crossing, resistance and circulation in Chicano/a studies, will contribute to the “worlding” of American studies and bring a new “transnational literacy” to American academia (1997:xiii). What Chicano/a studies offers the larger fields of cultural studies “is the theorization of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands - literal, figurative, material and militarized - and the deconstruction of the discourse of boundaries” (1997:25). *Border Matters* does this primarily by discussing how artists of hybrid art forms literally and figuratively cross the border, providing examples of resistance, circulation and negotiation (Saldivar 1997:3). Saldivar describes the U.S.-Mexican borderlands here as a wide and deterritorialized third country (1997:8) and he locates himself within this “zone of dangerous crossings with new ‘centralities’ that challenge dominant national cultures of identity and culture” (1997:19).

As in *Criticism in the Borderlands*, Saldivar explicitly states who are and aren’t Chicano/a writers and artists (1997:25). Again, there is the intimate association between Chicano/a literature and Chicano/a resistance, as U.S.-Mexico border writing is defined as a “writer’s strategies of representation whereby *frontera* subjects...produce a theory of culture as resistance and struggle, not coherence and consensus” (1997:14). Older Chicano works are described as “weapons for social change,” and Anzaldua’s work is called “border-defying” (Carby in Saldivar 1997:36-37). While this work is seen to have the emancipatory potential to counter Euro-imperialism, colonialism, patriarchy and economic and political hegemonies, it particularly challenges U.S. hegemony over the border and its uneven power relationships (Saldivar 1997:14). In reference to U.S. anti-immigrant hysteria and militarization of the border, Saldivar particularly hopes that this book “can help to undo the militarized frontier ‘field-imaginary’ in American culture by reconfiguring it within an emerging U.S.-Mexico *frontera*

imaginary” (1997:xii). Again we see the liberatory potential of the borderlands, as “border discourse not only produces power and reinforces it, but also undermines it, makes it fragile, and allows one to map and perhaps thwart the cultures of U.S. empire” (Saldivar 1997:xiv).

The literature on postcolonialism is another genre in which border ideas have played a prominent role, although with more of a focus on other colonial and neocolonial encounters besides the U.S.-Mexico border. It is another vaguely-defined field aimed at shaking up the academy and bringing Third World voices into the discussion, reconsidering the idea of culture, and theorizing interstitiality and hybridity in identities and other aspects of postmodern and postcolonial life. Despite the “post,” this literature is also often a critical examination of colonial and continuing neocolonial relationships (Bhabha 1994:8,20). Of primary importance here is Homi Bhabha’s work, where the borderlands under discussion are usually those of identity, particularly as expressed through literature and other discourses, as well as history (1994). Bhabha has described these borderlands as “Third Space” (1994:37-39), a complex and politically-productive zone of cultural interstitiality and hybridity, as well as cross-cutting contradictions and ambivalences. Similarly, Bhabha also describes the “borderline experience” that “opens up in-between colonizer and colonized,” a creative and politically-potent hybrid space that rejects binary cultural and racial oppositions and political consciousness (Bhabha 1994:206-207). In such a place,

Affiliative solidarity is formed through the ambivalent articulations of the realm of the aesthetic, the fantasmatic, the economic and the body political: a temporality of social construction and contradiction that is iterative and interstitial; an insurgent ‘intersubjectivity’ that is interdisciplinary; an everyday that interrogates the synchronous contemporaneity of modernity (Bhabha 1994:230).

In these kinds of spaces, “the truest eye may now belong to the migrant’s double vision” (Bhabha 1994:5).

Finally, the role of borders in the booming literature on transnationalism and globalization must be considered, as these two concepts have “become the leitmotif of our age” (Held and McGrew 2000:1). Globalization works generally theorize the worldwide intensification of connectedness that has occurred in recent decades, seen in the increased movement of people, goods, culture and ideas. Inda and Rosaldo describe this postmodern globalized system as “a world of motion, of complex interconnections” of people, cultures, commodities, images, and ideologies (2002:3). This intensification of connectedness is seen as having increased the porousness of borders and thus weakened the sovereignty of the nation-state. Common signs of this weakening include the power of multinational corporations, regional and international organizations and agreements, and other manifestations of civil society that cross-cut the boundaries of nation-states. Another common theme is that globalization challenges the sovereignty of states, not just economically and politically, but culturally as well, particularly in the unidirectional movement of Western media and ideas to the Third World in what some view as a form of cultural imperialism.

This global movement of people, goods and information, as well as severed ties to place in this “world of diaspora” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997c:38), are seen to result in a general state of deterritorialization. This concept is most closely tied to Deleuze and Guattari’s work, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), and has been taken up by many poststructuralist scholars who theorize that the deterritorialization of culture, people and identities as part of globalization creates new “spaces” of consciousness and identity (Bhabha 1994, Jameson 1984). The deterritorialization of culture results from a “general weakening of the ties between culture and

place” (Inda and Rosaldo 2002:11), as cultural flows disrupt national and other identities, resulting in new and less fixed identities (Hall in Held and McGrew 2000:18). Some scholars see this new interconnectedness as potentially liberatory in the “erosion of old hierarchies” and fixed political identities (Held and McGrew 2000:37).

### “Border” studies versus “borderlands”

As noted in Chapter 1, most critiques of postmodern conceptions of borders reflect a more fundamental tension between studies of actual international *borders* and the more metaphorical and discursive *borderlands* of identity, hybridity and resistance. Manuel Luis Martinez makes such a distinction between these two concepts (2002:64), and these terms will be used in this sense throughout this analysis. Staudt and Spener describe this split as being one between “materialist and metaphorical conceptions of borders” (1998:6). They describe the materialist approach as being older, more grounded in history and empiricism, and more narrowly focused on the border itself, as well as the people and goods moving across those borders. The metaphorical approach is described as a newer, broader discussion about “literary and critical ideas, rather than observable places or researchable people and things” (1998:14). Robert Alvarez describes the gap as being one between “literalists” focused on the actual problems of the border, including migration, policy, settlement, identity and labor, and “a-literalists” focusing on social boundaries and shifting identities (1995:449).

One major critique of borderlands work has been that these more abstracted border discussions don’t always map very well onto real, everyday border situations. In addition, some borderlands work uses the realities of border life as a backdrop, or as a specific starting point, but then departs into more theoretical, literary, or metaphorical pastures. This tension is particularly



important as the vast majority of works about border issues fall under this borderlands category, with studies of actual borders being much less common.

As one sign of the depth of the split between these two literatures, Pablo Vila has observed that borderlands authors have largely failed to acknowledge those who have done a different kind of border work before them:

It seems to me that the appearance of those admittedly brilliant books shifted the field so completely that the important history of border studies *before* those books' existence has almost totally been erased, and the output of scholars who were working (and still are) in a more empirically oriented vein has been marginalized and sometimes excluded from serious consideration. Along these lines, neither Anzaldua, Rosaldo, nor Hicks makes any mention of the important empirical research done in earlier border studies about the topics (race, ethnicity, identity, etc.) they cover in their books. The erasure of the past is so complete that some people falsely believe border studies and border theories were born with the appearance of Anzaldua's, Rosaldo's, and Hicks's works (2003d:308-309).

In a similar vein, Alvarez has concluded that "An irony of the new borderlands genre is the tendency on the part of anthropologists to neglect the social and historical continuity of border life. Much of our work has been ahistorical" (1995:462).

Another fundamental tension between the two approaches is more political. Some borderlands work, such as that in Chicano/a studies, is clearly an integral part of a larger political movement, focused on the empowerment of formerly disempowered groups and resistance to Anglo/U.S. hegemony. In contrast, border works may have much less overt and perhaps less inherent political aims. Some of this tension may boil down to divergent views about how best to

bring about change in situations of asymmetry, such as those commonly found at borders. While I believe that both border and borderlands work is important, the primary emphasis here will be on the former.

### Critiques of the borderlands approach

Reflecting the tensions noted above, it is necessary here to discuss some of the critiques of the dominant borderlands genre. The goal here is to look at some of the often-unexamined implications of the use of borderlands concepts as popularly conceived. These critiques are important in highlighting the need for literal as well as metaphorical border studies, and the strengths of each. In addition, the borderlands approach is the dominant and salient one, and as such needs to be examined in order to see what it is we are and aren't doing in border-related studies.

However, it is important to note that even critics of the borderlands approach do not completely dismiss its goals and methods: many border scholars are quick to acknowledge the critical importance of borderlands work. As Avtar Brah notes, “far from being mere abstractions of a concrete reality, metaphors are part of a concrete reality, metaphors are part of the discursive materiality of power relations. Metaphors can serve as powerful inscriptions of the effects of political borders” (1996:198). Even Josiah Heyman, one of the foremost anthropological critics of the use of borderlands concepts, notes in his work with Cunningham that borderlands can be “powerful political spaces that represent potential interstitial moments within the homogenizing and reifying discourses of nation, race, gender and sexuality” (2004:291).

Others are working to bridge the gap between these two genres. Staudt and Spener believe that borders function as highly contentious spaces that not only consist of physical

territory and what happens there, but also the “ongoing dialectical process that generates multiple borderlands spaces, some of which are not located very close to the official international boundary itself” (1998:4). As such, there is also talk of bridging the “metaphorical-material border gap” (Staudt and Spener 1998:6), as well as “the larger project of re-establishing borders as specific ethnographic sites that also have much to contribute to debates about power, identity, culture and state-making in the contemporary world” (Cunningham and Heyman 2004:292). In his edited volume *Ethnography at the Border* (2003d), Vila notes that the goal of those contributing to the volume was to, following James Clifford (1994), “to route mainstream border discourses...onto a specific map and history,” particularly through extended fieldwork experiences on El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border (2003c:309).

One major critique of borderlands work is that some of its concepts have degenerated into trendy postmodern catchphrases with little substance (Donnan and Wilson 1999:36; Heyman 1994; Johnson and Michaelsen 1997). Many decry its lack of focus: “The idea of the ‘border’ or ‘borderlands’ has...been expanded to include nearly every psychic or geographic space about which one can thematize problems of boundary or limit” (Johnson and Michaelsen 1997:1-2). According to some scholars, border discourses are also threatened by the extreme lack of focus in some fields with which borders are associated, such as cultural studies, with the danger being “lost intellectual focus and political edge” (Clifford in Saldivar 1997:11). Another similar issue has to do with universality versus historical specificity. Claire Fox believes that “the border that is currently in vogue in the U.S....is rarely site-specific...When the border *is* spatialized in these theories, that space is almost always universal” (1994:61). In a similar vein, Johnson and Michaelsen note that “the tensions between tendencies toward universalism and localism are not sufficiently marked” (1997:12).

There have been several focused critiques of the concept of “border writing.” While Avtar Brah notes the great potential of border writing in providing a “rich multifaceted and nuanced depiction of aspects of border encounters” (1996:204), she finds it problematic that border writing and border theory are often conflated, and that “...the move from a literary text to ‘world as text’ is much more fraught, contradictory, complex and problematic than is often acknowledged” (1996:104). While Pablo Vila initially went into the field looking to validate concepts he had acquired through the borderlands literature of border crossings, hybrids, and Third Countries, he found that while these terms may be useful in literary criticism, they may not be as useful in ethnographic work, where these concepts only partially mapped onto realities on the ground (Vila 2000:6; 2003a:ix). In a similar manner, Sarah Hill describes the shock of her first experience of border *colonias*, immigrant shantytowns inside the US. She notes

for an anthropologist drawn to El Paso at the dawn of the free-trade era by the excitement of poststructuralists’ recent discovery of the U.S.-Mexico border as the most promising metaphoric and actual site of cultural hybridity, indeterminacy, and translocality, *colonias* were sobering. I expected to find a vibrant social life that teased and defied the political boundary... (2003:141).

Vila has also observed this shift even within writings in the borderlands genre. In Saldivar’s *Border Matters*, the border is generally depicted as a realm of hybrid border crossers. However, Vila notes that when Saldivar deals with a specific border site, such as the Ciudad-Juárez-El Paso border, “a different picture emerges, and El Paso is characterized much more along the lines of the ‘border reinforcer’ trope than the ‘border crosser’ one” (2003d:337).

This loss of focus is also noted in Stuart Hall's critique of American cultural studies. He notes that while the field does theorize power in all its forms, "there is the nagging doubt that this overwhelming textualization of cultural studies' own discourses somehow constitutes power and politics as exclusively matters of language and textuality itself" (1992:286). This is not to say that discourses aren't important, but that "...there are ways of constituting power as an easy floating signifier which just leaves the crude exercise and connections of power and culture altogether emptied of any signification" (Hall 1992:286). Toward this end, border scholars stress the critical importance of seeing the concrete effects and complex lived realities of borders in people's everyday lives. In response to Jameson's call for new images through the critical reading of art in order to understand "postmodern hyperspace," Rouse asks why we need to look in art: "Given the ubiquity of the changes he describes and the profundity of their influence, the raw materials for a new cartography ought to be equally discoverable in the details of people's daily lives" (1991:9).

In a related critique, various scholars have also pointed to the need to bring more political economy back into borderlands work, which can be seen as part of Heyman's call for more empirical research on borders (1994). Lugo in particular points to the need to unite a critical global theory of multiple cultural subjectivities with a critique of late capitalist production (1997:57). Wilson and Donnan state that while the image of the borderlands has opened up new ground in social and cultural theory, "it has often done so at the expense of underplaying changes in political economy" (1998b:3). According to Lugo,

border theory itself can simultaneously transcend and effectively situate culture, capitalism, and the academy at the crossroads, but only if it is imagined historically and

in the larger and dispersed contexts of the nation and of Power (Foucault in Lugo 1997:61).

Other major critiques have focused on the definition of terms. Brah notes that despite the popularity of border concepts, the associated terms are rarely subjected to theoretical scrutiny (1996:179). For example, critics have noted problems in defining commonly-used border concepts such as “Third Countries” and other spatial-metaphorical concepts. There is also confusion regarding the exact nature of borders, and related definitions in both border and borderlands work. Most border theorists acknowledge that migration and other transnational flows have resulted in “an alternative cartography of social space” (Rouse 1991:161), where borders can no longer be seen as just lines on maps, but as sensitized areas or “border zones” where two cultures or two political systems come into contact (Rouse 1991:163). Some theorists utilize Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of colonial “contact zones” (1992), a term Saldivar transforms into the *transfrontera* contact zone between the U.S. and Mexico (1997:13-14). Other border scholars assert that transnational flows have increased to the extent in recent years that border and contact zones now extend far into the countries on either side of the border (Rouse 1991:164).

Border researchers have expressed their discomfort with the way border concepts have been romanticized in various literatures, and how they are often associated with utopian themes in border writing (Larsen 1991:xviii). One such common-cited case is Anzaldua’s romantization of a return to indigenusness (Johnson and Michaelson 1997:12; Saenz 1997). While Saenz understands Anzaldua’s impulse in doing so, he asserts that “...it is far better to acknowledge the competing cultures we literally inherit than to base our identities on ridiculous (and dangerous) notions of ‘purity’ ...” (1997:85). Simplistic dualistic thinking can be the result, with “the

European” and “the Indigenous” as the poles, with the “new *Mestiza*” in between (Saenz 1997:86). Scholars have also observed that these kinds of paradigms may ultimately buy into hegemonic colonial discourses about new “frontiers” and other similar traps. Responding to Anzaldua’s assertion that a return to indigenosity will save Chicanos from their current predicament, Saenz states that “This is no solution...To invoke old gods as a tool against oppression and capitalism is to choose the wrong weapon” (1997:86-87).

In his extended critique of this romantic tendency in borderlands work, Castronovo asserts that while literary critics, writers and academics emphasize the diversity and newness emerging along geopolitical border zones, as well as the more figurative limits of subjectivity, “...accounts of the people and texts who inhabit these liminal spaces tend to coalesce into a single, undifferentiated narrative line” (1997:195). Borderlands works (like Anzaldua’s) tend to read like classic hero stories where “...a text overcomes the impediments of being marginal to two or more cultures” undermining oppressive structures of the U.S. over Mexico, heterosexuality over homosexuality, or “...whatever the particular geography of the border in question may be” (1997:196). The latent narrative is that

...border writing is an oppositional discourse, battling tremendous odds, including [multi-national corporations], cultural imperialism, racial prejudice...But by not settling down on either side of these divisions...border texts disturb rigid constellations of power. Voices and identities situated in the in-between of a hybrid land - what Anzaldua calls a ‘third country’ - carve out spaces laden with possibilities of liberation... (1997:198).

The problem is, according to Castronovo, that this narrative line of resistance can mute another narrative in which power can and does reassert itself (1997:199). Castronovo goes on to say that this doesn't mean these narratives aren't valuable, but he contends that

this narrativization obscures other ways of thinking about the border that must be recognized if negotiations are to acknowledge not simply the celebratory potential of the contact zone, but also the ineradicable trappings of power that patrol the boundaries of any area of culture (1997:203).

As noted, the romanticization of resistance is another commonly-cited problem with many borderland works. Johnson and Michaelson assert that many works on the topic of the U.S.-Mexico border focus on resistance as a critical part of identity in an exclusionary fashion (1997:16-19). While particularly citing *Criticism in the Borderlands*, Johnson and Michaelson find this tendency to be true throughout the Chicano studies literature, where the authors set rigid boundaries on who are and aren't Chicano/a writers, with a key indicator being the extent to which an author's work resists dominant structures. However, one problem with making resistance a critical part of identity is its exclusiveness (Johnson and Michaelson 1997:16-19), not to mention the problem of defining resistance. For Johnson and Michaelson, this problem raises questions about the value of border concepts, "both as a cultural indicator and as a conceptual tool. Of what use, finally, are concepts like 'culture' and 'identity' if their invocation, even in so-called multicultural contexts, is also exclusive, colonial, intolerant?" (1997:29). Of course, it is important to recognize here that the political goals inherent in Chicano studies (as a marginalized group fighting American domination and hegemony) make it much more likely for Chicano scholars to want to see resistance as the final outcome of border encounters.



In addition, borderlands work on resistance often assumes that border positionality automatically confers political progressiveness, as well as authenticity. Vila describes this as “the tendency to construct the *border crosser* or the *hybrid*...into a new ‘*privileged subject of history*’” (2003d:307). As Sadowski-Smith notes in describing her volume on globalization and the U.S.-Mexico border, “While contributors to this section do not deny the potential for resistance, they complicate the notion that the diasporic and the transnational can always be equated with politically progressive agency” (Sadowski-Smith 2002:13). In addition, she notes that “Border positionality does not *in itself* assure a vantage point of privileged insights,...although it does create a space...” in which these insights may be revealed (1996:207). There is also, as will be discussed below, the question of recontainment of resistance by the state, as well as the links between resistance and hegemonic forces, in what can be described as complicity with colonial ideas. Sadowski-Smith notes that cultural studies, by

Often assuming that all culturally heterogeneous practices imply opposition,...has not sufficiently investigated how expressions of diaspora, rather than undermining nationalist and state-based forms of oppression, have themselves also remained shaped by the logic of nationalism and capitalism (2002:13).

In a similar vein, Castronovo notes that

As a site of contested cultural production, the border offers a shifting ground ripe for articulations of oppositional consciousness; however, this uncertain terrain is laden with ‘traps’ ... that suture homogeneity and confirm hierarchical structures (1997:196).

Borderlands concepts of resistance can also be problematic because they promote binary thinking, in reifying the categories of dominance and resistance, colonizer and the colonized. The problem, according to Wilson and Donnan, is that the more scholars objectify borders in this way, the less they “will be able to trace the relationships among culture, power, and the state...” (1998a:7). Even in their attempt to problematize ideas of the border and border theory, Johnson and Michaelson note that their edited volume *Border Theory: The Limits of Cultural Politics* includes essays that continue to address the border as the site of the encounter between a dominant culture and a resistant one,” which shows the continuing predominance and potency of this “prevailing border narrative” (1997:32).

Hall notes that while border theorists may at first seem attuned to the shifting interplay between dominance and resistance, “this emphasis falls too predominantly upon resistance as the final and sustained outcome” (in Castronovo 1997:203), resulting in a unidirectional and predictable narrative line. According to Eric Lott, this misplaced stress on resistance results in static models of interpretation where things are wholly authentic or wholly hegemonic but not a more tangled mixture (in Castronovo 1997:204).

Pablo Vila’s work has been important here in analyzing the heterogeneity of border groups (such as “Mexicans”), who have sometimes been assumed by default to be homogeneous (2000, 2003c). In a related vein, some researchers have also questioned the fact that most borderlands work has focused on peripheral minorities to the exclusion of other players (Donnan and Wilson 1999:25). This tendency also results in the reification and homogenization of the colonizer, as Vila finds that if you follow border writers’ logic, it ultimately results in “constructing Anglo or white culture as the constitutive ‘other’” (2003d:314). This highlights the

need to “study up,” or study the powerful in addition to the less powerful, in order to fully understand border situations and the power relationships around them.

Borderlands use of concepts of hybridity have also been called into question. While borderland theorists stress the importance of the transgressive power of symbolic hybrids and their ability to create the conditions for cultural change, Pnina Werbner questions whether scholars have acknowledged some of the limits and implications of this hybridity. She asks, for example, what happens when hybridity becomes routine in the context of globalization (Werbner 1997:1)? Also, if ideas of culture are seen to be false intellectual constructions, then “where does the destructive or revitalising power of cultural identities and hybridities come from?” (Werbner 1997:4). She also asserts that border theorists need to see hybridity in the powerful as well as the powerless, as “...we continue to grasp ‘whiteness’ outside history and geography, removed from any social context,” which results in the exclusion of the dominant majority from “the anti-racist project,” and denies the possibility of complex hybrid identities (Werbner 1997:11).

According to Ahmad, concepts of hybridity usually fail to move beyond the ephemeral and contingent and therefore tend to mask the social and political realities of particular places (in Werbner 1997:21). In a similar vein, Spivak asserts that too much hybridity leaves old problems of class exploitation and racial oppression unresolved (Spivak in Werbner 1997:20). In response, Werbner calls for a processual model of hybridity which looks beyond the extremes, and sees that “...strategies of co-optation, resistance or genuine fusions divide the margins to create cross-cutting ties between centre and margin” (1997:21-22). Vila also asserts that this emphasis on the hybridity of discipline, ethnicity, countries and cultures “not only *homogenizes distinctive experiences* but also *homogenizes borders*” (2003d:308).

Another major critique of borderlands work has been that in emphasizing border crossing and other transnational flows, researchers ignore the continuing power of the state, as well as the new ways in which states may exert their power. Lugo, in his extended critique on this topic, believes that borderlands work should not exclude the complexities of power (1997:46). Citing Stuart Hall, Castronovo notes that the border is not just a site of domination, but also “an ambiguous ground whose penetrable boundaries prove advantageous not only for border crossers, but for ideological formations that structure social realities,” such as the nation-state (Hall in Castronovo 1997:199-200). He notes that “Critical accounts often narrativize the conflicts emerging along and between cultural boundaries by representing border writing as a discursive strategy capable of deconstructing ossified structures like patriarchy and the nation...” (Castronovo 1997:196). However, it is important for borderlands theorists to understand that new political possibilities can and do slide back into repressive regimes (1997:202). Castronovo’s study of the Mason-Dixon line

illustrates that although crossing borders is a powerfully subversive act, its impact may be limited, capable of dismantling a construct like the nation only temporarily before the deconstructive potential of border discourse is reconstructed *back* within the very system being challenged (1997:202).

Ultimately, discursive acts that undermine the nation-state are often susceptible to recontainment and suppression (Castronovo 1997:203).

Both Castronovo and Hall agree that borderlands theorists need to see beyond heroic narratives of resistance to see power relations as a dialectical battlefield of incomplete victories; “a more ambivalent and compromised story of continuing struggle, where the forms of liberation

and escape prepared by deconstructing boundaries remain intricately linked with power” (Hall in Castronovo 1997:203). One prime example given by Castronovo of how borderland theorists resist seeing this recontainment is Saldivar’s use of a quote from Foucault in abbreviated form. Saldivar quotes “where there is power, there is resistance,” yet omits the rest of the quote, which reads “and yet this resistance is never in a position of exteriority to power,” highlighting the constant complicity between power and resistance (Foucault in Castronovo 1997:203-204). While some scholars clearly wish to see resistance as the final outcome of the border struggle, it may actually be only a temporary or illusory victory:

by its very nature, hegemony entails that any moment or expression of culture is constantly enmeshed in a network of competing social forces, so entangled and so compromised that ultimately a ‘new’ territory, a promised land of thoroughly successful opposition, can never be reached (Castronovo 1997:213).

As a result, Castronovo believes that true “border writing” in tune with the ways of power demands an ambivalent narrative without teleology, or else a series of stories that compromise and undercut each other.

Critics of borderlands concepts have leveled an even more serious charge at some authors, namely that they show signs of complicity with colonial ideas. One such critique from Castronovo is that while borderland narratives seek to undermine nationalism and the power of nation-states, they often use American nationalist ideas in their writings, particularly in references to the search for new worlds and frontiers of “fresh possibilities and innovative communities” and regions beyond traditionally mapped boundaries (1997:200). Larsen finds that border writing’s use of multiculturalism as a right to difference also runs the danger of

reinserting cultural nationalism in different ways (1991:xx). Johnson and Michaelson believe that Anzaldua and Hicks both engage “in a new but no less tired form of colonialism” by conflating the local and universal levels of analysis, “one of the crucial markers of colonialist thought” (1997:13). They also note a tendency toward the demonization of what is presumed to be white/Anglo culture, in addition to the exclusionary policing of the borders of Chicano/a-ness, a trend already noted (1997:13,16-19).

The most sustained critique based on charges of colonial complicity comes from Manuel Luis Martinez based on his research with Mexican migrants in the United States (2002). Contrary to efforts by borderlands scholars to resist and disrupt master narratives of American nationalism through hybrid, deterritorialized subjects, Martinez believes these kinds of discourses actually result in “permanently denying migrants the arrival they desire” (2002:54). In addition, these discourses focusing on transnational movement reproduce American myths of mobility and progress, “thus reaffirming ideologies of neo-individualism that act in the service of late-capitalist consumer decisionism” (Martinez 2002:54). Migrants who seek something other than a rootless, hybridized existence are then deconstructed or seen as portraying colonized false-consciousness (Martinez 2002:54). Martinez cites a study of Mexican migrants by Ernesto Galarza that found that fluidity and mobility are not seen as liberating by migrants, but as the most exploitative form of displacement (2002:58), displacement used by agribusiness and other industries to destabilize migrants to their advantage. He believes that migrants suffer double displacement, both literal and textual, as migrants are being isolated in a constantly-changing deterritorialized borderlands of exclusiveness:

In instituting permanent liminality as a political strategy, borderlands theory opens a space for the emergence of a form of culturalism (isolation and ‘resistant’ consumerism)

that may ultimately be as exclusive as Chicano...cultural nationalism of the 1950s-1970s (2002:56).

In his view, this re-enactment of the dynamics of displacement is a wholly inadequate response (Martinez 2002:65). Martinez believes that instead of expanding the boundaries of liminality, borderlands writers should be working toward social justice for migrants (2002:57). Toward this end, he also asserts that there is a greater need for borderlands to be understood “through the experience of the material in all its repressive, exploitative power” so that the real suffering of real individuals can be seen and not abstracted and romanticized (Martinez 2002:64).

#### Critiques of concepts of transnationalism/Globalization and deterritorialization

Critiques of the literature on transnationalism and globalization as it intersects with border and borderlands work come from a number of fronts. Most border theorists do acknowledge disruptions of the power of nation-states at borders, and they acknowledge that “borders no longer function as they once did, or at least not in every respect” (Donnan and Wilson 1999:3). However, one common critique is that globalization discussions tend to be too vague, and neglect the local manifestations of global processes, as well as political economy in general (Inda and Rosaldo 2002, Weaver 2001). Inda and Rosaldo note that most academic work on globalization focuses on macro-level economic, politic or cultural processes, and not on the local level or specific articulations of the local and global (2002:4).

In Sadowski-Smith’s examination of globalization theory and its connection to the U.S. border scholarship, she concludes that the fields of anthropology and cultural studies have generally espoused a view of globalization as a process that erodes national borders and may ultimately free marginalized migrant ethnic groups from oppression by state and national forms

(2002:4). However, this stress on border porosity fails to consider processes of selective porosity or border rigidity, as Sadowski-Smith notes that while borders have become more porous for goods, they have not necessarily become so for people (2002:1,4; Spener and Staudt 1998a:235). Sassen also asserts that globalization does not necessarily equal liberation, as it may actually increase structural inequalities that may be no less colonial than traditional colonial systems (Sassen in Sadowski-Smith 2002:5). Others agree that globalization can be a cover for the continuation of older patterns of economic and cultural imperialism of the First World over the Third World (Held and McGrew 2000:27).

Some researchers have also noted a need to move beyond the dualistic view whereby either transnational movements or nation-states are in ascendance, and not some more complex mixture (Sadowski-Smith 2002:3). As Cunningham and Heyman have noted in a discussion of Heyman's recent work on borders, "attuning ourselves to globalization does not involve a simple choice between mobility and enclosure" (2004:297). As noted, Cunningham believes that the image of a "gated globe" is more appropriate than that of continuous motion (2004).

In their examination of globalization concepts, Gupta and Ferguson have noted that

At a time when cultural difference is increasingly becoming deterritorialized because of the mass migrations and transnational culture flows of a late capitalist, postcolonial world...there is obviously a special interest in understanding the way that questions of identity and cultural difference are spatialized in new ways (1997b:3).

Stated another way: "the irony of these times is that as actual places and localities become ever more blurred and indeterminate, ideas of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997c:39). In their discussion of Bhabha's theories of



detrterritorialization, Gupta and Ferguson assert that “we need to theorize how space is being reterritorialized in the contemporary world” (2002:77). In line with ideas of selective porosity noted above, they assert instead that

Physical location and physical territory, for so long the *only* grid on which cultural differences could be mapped, need to be replaced by multiple grids that enable us to see that connection and contiguity - more general, the representation of territory - vary considerably by factors such as class, gender, race, and sexuality and are differentially available to those in different locations in the field of power (1997c:50).

The take-home message is that even in this detrterritorialized age, anthropologists and other scholars need to pay attention to the way spaces and places are made, imagined, contested, and enforced (Gupta and Ferguson 2002:75), a critique that applies equally well to the use of this concept in borderlands work.

Another major critique of globalization concepts that is particularly relevant to this research is that concepts of global flows often fail to see what Held and McGrew describe as the “world military order,” which cuts across nation-states and includes regional and global security/military industries and institutions (2000:12). Other researchers have called our attention to the military and security dynamics of globalization (Gusterson 2001:43): some have concluded that

organized violence and the elaboration of security cultures are also important facts of translocal life, and that...they often work in ways that entrench the state rather than

‘deterritorialize’ it or disarticulate it from the imagined community of the nation (Weldes, Laffey, Gusterson and Duvall 1999:8).

### Problems with the use of borderlands concepts in anthropology

As in many other disciplines, borderland metaphors abound in anthropology, as “the more cultural and symbolic use of borders and borderlands” has resonated strongly with anthropologists (Cunningham and Heyman 2004:290). The borderlands influence of Chicano/a writers is so much so that Ruth Behar states that “it now seems impossible to imagine doing any kind of ethnography without a concept of borderlands or of border crossings” (1993:15). Heyman has been particularly vocal in his criticisms of the uncritical use of borderlands concepts in anthropology, where he believes “momentarily satisfying but paper-thin imagery” (1994:43) has often been used in a de-localized and reductive way that risks leaving power out of the picture (1994:46; Donnan and Wilson 1999:38).

Again, a lack of focus and specificity is an issue, as Cunningham and Heyman note that many scholars “use the motif of borders to underscore the mobility of culture and the fluid, unpredictable and processual nature of social identity,” and in doing so, “de-emphasize borderlands as specific sites” (2004:290). Heyman asserts that when anthropologists use borderlands to represent “an interstitial zone of displacement and deterritorialization that shapes the identity of the hybridized subject,” rhetoric often replaces situated knowledge, and the result is superficial depictions where “the idea that two sides equals one hybrid replaces analysis” (1994:47). In response, Heyman calls for a greater grounding of borderlands concepts in local details and experience, as well as history, in a way that does not avoid “the hard labor of delineating linking propositions” (1994:46-47). Heyman has also criticized anthropology’s heavy use of dualistic images of the U.S.-Mexico border, which serve to reify and give causative force

to language-based contrasts of the two sides of the border, such as rich/poor, Third World/First World, Mexico/U.S. (1994:60).

According to Wilson and Donnan, the problem lies in the fact that “Only the idea of the border as an image for cultural juxtaposition has entered wider anthropological discourse, [which]...underplays the material consequences of state action on local populations” (1998a:6). They then point out “the necessity of complementing the seductive discourse of the new politics of person and identity with a renewed commitment to the recognizable and concrete manifestations of government and politics, at local levels and at the level of the state” (1998:2). The fear here is that anthropologists will continue to underestimate the role of the state in the lives of people on both sides of the border (1998:2), and so contribute to the “mystifying” of the border (Heyman in Wilson and Donnan 1998a:26).

One prominent example of the use of borderlands imagery in anthropology is Ruth Behar’s *Translated Women: Crossing the Border with Esperanza’s Story* (1993). While this is a powerful and important work in many ways, it does exhibit some of the problems associated with borderlands work. A biography of a Mexican woman, Esperanza, this work is focused on borderlands of identity and her negotiation of these boundaries of gender, custom, race, and class. The borderlands here are largely metaphorical, as the work includes few literal U.S.-Mexico border experiences, which are those of the researcher crossing the border. It does deal with higher-level concepts of power and asymmetry between the U.S. and Mexico, and the researcher and her subject, and how this asymmetry is woven through race, class and nationality, but, again, at a higher level. Behar also participates in the romanticization of borderlands concepts and associated ideas of resistance, which may be linked to the feminist orientation of the work. Behar praises Anzaldua’s creation of the “new *Mestiza*” and valorizes these hybrid

notions of border crossing. She also romanticizes her role as a researcher, describing herself in different places as a priestess, and as a wetback smuggling this transgressive story back across the border.

### The power of border studies in anthropology

With all of these critiques of borderlands work in place, including borderlands work in anthropology, it is important to see some of the reasons why anthropological theory and methods should be brought to bear on studies of the more physical and material aspects of borders. In general, international borders have not received anything like the attention given to symbolic borders in anthropology, which Donnan and Wilson characterize as “a history of missed opportunities” (1999:27). As noted, there are “still relatively few on-the-ground studies” of borders (Cunningham and Heyman 2004:296).

Why should anthropologists study borders? As Alejandro Lugo has observed, borders are ideal sites for the examination of such things as culture, identity, resistance, power, and the nation-state (1997:217). Robert Alvarez describes borders as “a perfect laboratory” in which to analyze the interaction of cultures, and notes that “There is no better place to witness the applications and limits of power” (1995:454,462). The effects of globalization become much more visible at these locations as well (Sadowski-Smith 2002:1). As this research shows, borders can also be prime sites at which to study the dynamics of colonial relationships, as well as the tensions and contradictions of those relationships that become particularly apparent at borders.

What do anthropologists have to contribute to the study of borders? According to Wilson and Donnan,

Perhaps more so than colleagues in other disciplines, anthropologists are well placed to view borders from both local and national perspectives...Anthropological theories and methods enable ethnographers to focus on local communities at international borders in order to examine the material and symbolic processes of culture...The anthropological study of the everyday lives of border communities is simultaneously the study of the daily life of the state, whose agents there must take an active role in the implementation of policy and the intrusion of the state's structures into its people's lives (1998a:3-4).

### Anthropology of Colonialism

While Caulfield observed in 1969 that anthropologists had failed to offer any comprehensive theories of imperialism and colonialism, the development of colonial studies in anthropology over the last two and a half decades has done much to remedy this. Much of this work has focused on the need to pay more attention to the colonizer in colonial relationships. Bernard Cohn was one of the first in anthropology to call for the analysis of the colonizer and the colonized together in a unified field (in Stoler and Cooper 1997:15), and such a shift took place in the field in the 1980s and early 1990s (Cooper and Stoler 1997a:viii). Previously, "the colonizer" had largely been seen as a monolithic entity opposed to "the colonized."

This breaking down of monolithic and dualistic images of "the colonizer" and "the colonized" has been a major contribution of the anthropology of colonialism. In 1989, Stoler took anthropologists to task for taking "the politically constructed dichotomy of colonizer and colonized as a given, rather than as a historically shifting pair of social categories that needs to be explained" (1989:136). Numerous colonial scholars have since stressed the need to see the internal complexity and historically-changing nature of these categories (Comaroff and Comaroff

1991; Cooper and Stoler 1997b; Dirks 1992; Stoler 1989; Thomas 1990, 1994). Important here has been the recognition that “the colonizers” have often been deeply influenced by encounters with the colonized, which provides support to the idea that “the colonial experience shaped what it meant to be ‘metropolitan’ and ‘European’ as much as the other way around” (Cooper and Stoler 1997a:vii). In addition, “Colonial cultures were never direct translations of European society planted in the colonies, but unique cultural configurations” (Stoler 1989:136). In this context, dualistic ideas of dominance and resistance do “not capture the dynamics of either side of the encounter or how those sides were drawn” (Stoler and Cooper 1997:6). As Stoler and Cooper noted in 1997

Despite anthropology’s successful efforts to move away from isolated community studies of earlier generations, it has been harder than expected to get beyond treating colonialism as an abstract process, to take apart the shifts and tensions within colonial projects with the same precision devoted to those who were made their objects (1997:6).

Part of this work has involved analysis of the internal complexity of “the colonizer.” As Stoler noted in 1989, “even where we have probed the nature of colonial discourse and the politics of its language, the texts are often assumed to express a shared European mentality, the sentiments of a unified, conquering elite” (Alatas and Todorov in Stoler 1989:135). Stoler’s work has been particularly important in highlighting the internal complexity of the colonizer and how this internal complexity affects colonial institutions and policies (1985, 1989, 1997). Other scholars have also documented how internal class and racial tensions among the dominants have shaped colonial policy (Comaroff 1997, Cooper and Stoler 1997b, Thorne 1997). Stoler and Cooper observe in this regard that “the apparatuses by which conquering states ruled and by

which they tried to impose their systems of order and knowledge were built by people who came from different classes and, as women and men, conceptualized their own participation and goals in distinct ways” (1997:24)

Colonial scholars have also played an important role in complicating our understandings of the colonized. Too often depicted, much as elites have been, as an undifferentiated, monolithic entity either resisting domination or being consumed by it, many colonial theorists have emphasized the need to recognize the internal heterogeneity of the colonized, including divisions based on rank, gender, ethnicity and class (Kaplan 1995:16,70-71; Ortner 1995; Sahlins 1981, 1985) and that the colonized have their own complex politics that must be considered in any colonial relationship (Ortner 1995). In addition, many scholars have called for more attention to the importance of local politics to counter deterministic tendencies in the analysis of both colonial and capitalist systems (Ortner 1995, Stoler 1989).

However, it is extremely important to see, despite domination by colonial powers, “how people met the challenge not to be consumed” (Stoler 1995:xx), and anthropologists have focused here on the creative agency of the colonized in appropriating and transforming ideas of the colonizer (Comaroff 1985; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1997; Kaplan 1990:14, 1995; Ortner 1995:190-191). Again, many scholars stress the importance of going beyond simple ideas of dominance and resistance to highlight the interpenetration of resistance and hegemony in colonial power relations, such as that commonly seen in hybrid cultural spaces (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:xii,11; Ortner 1995:182).

This focus has drawn colonial scholars into larger debates regarding hybridity. As Kaplan asks, “How are anthropologists to understand encounters, conjunctures, domination, asymmetries of power, beyond first contact moments into the complex societies of a connected colonial and

post-colonial world?” (1995:1). Some colonial scholars have proposed that the complex articulations of the colonizer and colonized open up new cultural and political spaces for the creation of new forms of agency and practice (Comaroff 1985; Cooper and Stoler 1997b; Kaplan 1990, 1995; Kaplan and Kelly 1994; Stoler 1995). Kaplan describes new articulations in ritual politics in colonial Fiji seen in the Tuka movement – articulations “neither indigenous nor colonial, they are both and neither” (Kaplan 1995:16). According to Kaplan, this kind of creativity “reflects one of the most interesting kinds of agency possible in colonial societies, as the colonized look at multiple systems of power and create new articulations – a product of structure, but not reducible to, or completely dependent on those structures” (1995:209).

In this way, many anthropologists and post-colonial scholars have moved beyond the notion of hybridity as simple blending to emphasize the complex and contested nature of this hybrid space (Comaroff 1985; Cooper and Stoler 1997b; Kaplan 1990, 1995; Kaplan and Kelly 1994; Stoler 1995). This so-called “hybrid space” is often characterized by ambivalence and contradiction, as the colonized attempt to navigate the complex politics of colonialism (Comaroff 1985, Ortner 1995, Stoler 1995). While authors acknowledge this dynamism, many anthropologists of colonialism insist on grounding the more theoretical and ephemeral notions of hybridity seen in the post-colonial literature, such as Bhabha’s Third Space (1994), in concrete colonial practices and experiences.

In addition to highlighting the ambivalence in the roles of many actors on both sides of the colonial relationship, colonial scholars have also noted the inherent internal contradictions of, and tensions in, colonial systems (Comaroff 1985; Comaroff 1997; Stoler and Cooper 1997:6; Ortner 1995; Thomas 1990, 1994), or what Cooper and Stoler call the “tensions of empire” (1997b; Stoler 1989; Stoler and Cooper 1997). As noted in the introduction, Cooper and Stoler



describe these as tensions that emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries between universal claims regarding human rights and particular colonial power structures (1997b:ix). Mary Louise Pratt also describes a legitimization crisis that took place in the late 1700s as the human impacts of European colonialism (including mass displacements and enslavement) became less acceptable at home in Europe, and as ideals of democracy and equality at home clashed with domination abroad (1992). Colonial powers responded to this crisis with new legitimating ideologies, such as “the civilizing mission, scientific racism and technology-based paradigms of progress and development” (Pratt 1992:74).

As Stoler and Cooper note, the result was a “new” colonialism, as older system of conquest and command gave way to something new and more complicated, as “the rationalizing, accumulating, and civilizing tendencies of European expansion both built on and could not escape the violence of militarism as that expansion blended coercive and persuasive strategies of racial rule” (Stoler and Cooper 1997:2-3). As part of this shift, European elites in the late 1800s began “taking pains...to reassure each other that their coercion and brutality were no longer frank attempts at extraction but reasoned efforts to build structures capable of reproducing themselves” like stable governments, systems of commerce, and wage labor. Brutality “did not disappear, but it expressed itself on a shifting terrain in which violence was condemned unless it could be linked to some kind of progressive reform” (Stoler and Cooper 1997:31). Thus we come to see seemingly-benevolent colonial projects promoting science, progress, rationality and modernity (Stoler and Cooper 1997:17, Thomas 1990), what Jane Samson calls “imperial benevolence” (1998).

In the colonies, the “colonized” also brought their own visions into play (Stoler and Cooper 1997:30), exploited these tensions, and redeployed these universal notions to push

colonial regimes for change (Comaroff 1985). As a result, “these colonial states were often in the business of defining an order of things according to untenable principles that themselves undermined their ability to rule” (Stoler and Cooper 1997:8). However, the specific contours of particular colonial systems are important here, as “Colonial projects were fundamentally predicated on a tension between notions of incorporation and differentiation that were weighted differently at different times (Stoler and Cooper 1997:10).

Stoler’s work explores one of the most basic “tensions of empire”- “how a grammar of difference was continuously and vigilantly crafted as people in colonies refashioned and contested European claims to superiority “(Stoler and Cooper 1997:3-4). Stoler’s research on issues of race and sexuality is particularly important here, particularly her work on how discourses of equality were in tension with “exclusionary, discriminatory practices” that served to enforce racial and sexual barriers in colonies in Southeast Asia (1997:198; 2002). Such tensions had real impacts:

Identifying the competing agendas of colonizers and analyzing how cultural boundaries were maintained are not academic exercises in historical refinement. Social taxonomies allowed for specific forms of violence at specific times. How a person was labeled...could open and close down the possibilities for marriage, housing, education, or pensions. At the same time, the criteria used to determine who belonged where underscored the permeability of boundaries, opening the possibilities for assertion among interstitial groups of “mixed bloods” and “poor whites,” as well as those more squarely identified as “the colonized” (Stoler and Cooper 1997:6).

The anthropology of colonialism is also known for its use of the everyday as a tool to better understand colonial relationships. However, this task has been made more difficult by the fact that much of this analysis revolves around historical records of past colonial systems. While anthropologists have developed many creative ways to work around the limitations presented by these historical documents (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Kaplan 1995:xvi; Stoler 1995:viii, xxiv; Stoler and Cooper 1997:16-17), this mode of inquiry does present obstacles in the analysis of complex colonial systems, particularly in resurrecting the everyday lives and practices of ordinary people (Adas 1998:67-69; Comaroff 1985:13; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Stoler and Cooper 1997:17-18). This project will provide an opportunity to draw on the insights gained from both ethnographic work in the present and historical documents in the examination of a *contemporary* colonial relationship. The everyday is an important part of this research, as it is through the mundane aspects of everyday life that colonialism makes its most fundamental transformations (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997:16). The everyday is also a key site, both materially and symbolically, of colonial struggle (Comaroff 1985:12; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997:267); and while often assumed to be an “apolitical” realm, it is in fact highly political (Comaroff 1985:261).

Another significant advancement in the anthropology of colonialism has been the view of colonialism as not just a political and economic system, but a cultural one as well (Cohn 1996; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997:16; Dirks 1992; Thomas 1994). Said's work has been particularly important here in highlighting the discursive and textual aspects of colonial systems, as well as its cultural and ideological guises (1993). These cultural impacts include the transformation of everyday life and culture as part of the colonial process (Comaroff 1985, Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1997), and the incorporation of local people into capitalist systems, or "conquest by consumption" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997:219). It is also important to recognize the ways in which, as the cultural forms of subordinate groups were transformed and reconstructed, these have then affected the colonizers' understandings of race, nationalism, class and gender (Dirks 1992, Thomas 1990). The work of these scholars has also been important in revealing how cultural aspects of colonialism "transformed domination into a variety of effects that masked both conquest and rule" (Dirks 1992:7). As noted, these trends are part of the historical shift seen in justifications for colonial rule.

### "Studying Up"

Stoler's call for more studies of the colonizer, as well as those noted above in border studies, brings into focus a deficit in anthropology in substantive studies of "the powerful" and associated institutions. Laura Nader's article "Up the Anthropologist - Perspectives Gained from Studying Up" is the commonly-cited first call for American anthropologists to study the powerful (1969). While this call has been heeded by some anthropologists, ethnographic studies of elites in our own society are still rare. When power does come into the picture, it is usually in

the study of its effects, or its examination from a distance. However, there are very good reasons, many noted below, for anthropologists to utilize their strengths – ethnographic field methods – to provide in-depth analyses of elites in the same manner in which we have studied non-elites. However, because it steps outside the bounds of “traditional” anthropology, this kind of work is not without complications for the anthropologists who undertake it. “Studying up” gets to the heart of anthropological debates about the ethics and politics of fieldwork, including issues of power and colonial complicity. It also inverts traditional power relationships, and disrupts traditional notions of “the field.” This type of work also presents significant methodological challenges.

While it is now not unheard of to do anthropological research with the U.S. as one’s primary field site, Gusterson has noted that most of this work involves “studying across or down more than studying up” (1997:114), and that “appeals for a critical repatriated anthropology...remain substantially unrealized” (1997:114). He elaborates by saying

if one looks at the kinds of repatriated ethnographies that have been written, in many cases anthropology’s traditional taste for the marginal and exotic has not so much been transgressed as imported and transposed upon American society, leaving us with more studies of scientologists and crack dealers than of federal bureaucrats and corporate executives (Gusterson 1997:114).

In addition, the discipline still preferentially rewards anthropologists who do their primary fieldwork in exotic locales (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b:13-14).

Among anthropologists, there is some disagreement regarding how much “studying up” is being done. Generally, the term “studying up” has been defined very loosely in American

anthropology, and commonly includes work on the *impacts* of more powerful institutions and their policies on less powerful populations, as well as external *critiques* of these entities. It has also commonly included the analysis of textual representations and *discourses* associated with powerful entities. And if this work is done, it has also tended to be a more peripheral part of ethnographic work focused on more traditional populations. If we adhere to this looser conception, than many anthropologists have been and are engaged in “studying up.” However, some very good arguments have been made as to why this work is not enough. Most importantly, such work is limited in its analysis, and is a form of “study from a distance.” As such, anthropologists don’t bring to bear their strongest tools and techniques to the study of the powerful – ethnographic methods. As a result, this work is often left to other disciplines.

Some researchers have also observed that anthropologists have not spent enough time studying the highest of U.S. elites. Gusterson has particularly called for more studies of U.S. government bureaucrats, corporate executives, and military elites (1997:114). Marcus has generally called for more anthropological studies of bureaucrats and institutional contexts, as well as “elites at the national level of complex societies, or elites whose organization must be defined internationally” (1983a:37). In an attempt to quantify the situation, Robert Rubenstein, in an examination of funding for anthropological projects, found that from 1995 to 2001, only 3.53% of National Science Foundation research grants in cultural and linguistic anthropology were made for projects that “study up” (2003:21).

Of course, the next question would have to be why anthropologists have developed this predominant tendency to study “down” rather than “up.” Some of this an obvious legacy of anthropology’s traditional focus – “traditional,” local, small-scale societies. But it can also be expressed as a particular kind of preference: as Nader explains it, “anthropologists value

studying what they like and liking what they study and, in general, we prefer the underdog” (1969:303). In line with this tendency, while anthropologists are a diverse group, the predominant orientation of the field has been that of social criticism and concerns for social justice. This has particularly been the case since the 1960s and 70s as issues of the discipline’s colonial complicity and other power issues came to the fore. Some of this profound un-ease with the powerful is also a legacy of events that took place during the Cold War concerning government and military use of anthropologists, discussed below. As Winkler frames it, “elites are commonly leaders of established social institutions. Social scientists are often, in varying degrees, social critics” (1987:138). As a result, “...elite research gets done at arm’s length or in a library” (Winkler 1987:138).

“Studying up” in anthropology has been resisted on a number of fronts. As noted, it challenges deeply-held anthropological ideas of what constitutes “the field” (Shore 2002:11; Gupta and Ferguson 1997a), as well as who and what are suitable subjects for anthropological inquiry. Some anthropologists have asserted that institutions and agents of power in our own society are not suitable subjects for research because they are not “foreign” to us, and as such don’t provide enough contrast for anthropological study. McLeod and Wilson call this the problem of “similarity, familiarity, and presumption” in studying U.S. institutions (1994:282). However, Nader counters that indeed it might be “more bizarre” for an fledgling anthropologist to study a law firm or corporation (1999[1969]:301). She concludes that “We anthropologists have studied the cultures of the world only to find in the end that ours is one of the most bizarre of all cultures...” (1999[1969]:302). Traweek adds that “there is plenty of strangeness within the United States” resulting from regional, class, ethnic, religious and occupational differences (1988:15).

There is also the argument that anthropologists focus on the less powerful because they are the ones that are less likely to be heard. As a result, studying the powerful results in more attention being paid to what is already the hegemonic view, and so the “subjugated knowledges” of less powerful people deserve our primary attention (Gusterson 1993:61). Resistance is also encountered because of the “romance factor,” as powerful institutions and associated processes offer much less potential for exotic adventure than traditional anthropological fieldwork. However, as Heyman observes, “we cannot and should not avoid bureaucratic phenomena, tiresome and unromantic as they often seem” (2004).

### Why study elites?

Anthropologists have put forth a number of good reasons why ethnographic methods should be used to study the powerful. Some cite scales of impact: Nader emphasizes the importance of studying the powerful due to the “reach” they have in modern life, epitomized by her famous quote that “never before have so few, by their actions and inactions, had the power of life and death over so many members of the species” (1999[1969]:284). It is also important to consider the impacts these institutions have on our own lives as members of state-level societies. Another stated aim of “studying up” is to “get at the mechanisms whereby faraway corporations and large-scale industries are directing the everyday aspects of our lives” (Nader 1999[1969]:288). Britan and Cohen also note the ways our lives are increasingly affected by bureaucracies and their constraints as reasons for their study (1980b:9).

Another reason to study the powerful is our fundamental ignorance of major institutions and entities of power in American society. This ignorance is reflected in the tendency to see institutions of various kinds as “black boxes” (Lewis 2003:220) or “faceless bureaucracies,”



without any understanding of what exactly it is that happens within those institutions, or to understand how bureaucracies “vary in form, function, or process in different social and cultural settings” (Britan and Cohen 1980a:2). On the whole,

There are relatively few studies by anthropologists of elites in bureaucratic or institutional contexts. Also lacking are anthropological studies of elites at the national level of complex societies, or elites whose organization must be defined internationally (Marcus 1983a:37).

Winkler notes that because social scientists often assume elites are unapproachable, they are less likely to study them, and as a result, social scientists “commonly do not know what elites actually do” (1987:129). Nader also notes the critical importance of getting “behind the facelessness of a bureaucratic society” (1999[1969]:288). These arguments resonate with those below regarding the “cultural invisibility” of elites.

Some researchers assert that this increased knowledge ultimately has democratic aims, of using knowledge of elites to benefit non-elites. Hertz and Imber note that benefits of studying elites include exposing the reach of power, in the hope of helping those under it understand the system or influence policy (1995:viii-ix). Albert Hunter sees the study of political elites as “...a political act insofar as researchers attempt to acquire knowledge from and about elites and to distribute it more broadly in a public domain to the masses” (1995:151). Nader also emphasizes the “democratic relevance” of this work in increasing the American public’s knowledge of and access to public institutions in a democratic society: “It is the anthropologist who, by virtue of his populist values, may be able to define the role of citizen-scholar – a science of man for man” (Nash 1999[1969]:293). Wolf also noted in 1969 that anthropologists needed to pay more

attention to the powerful “not only as a learning experience for ourselves, but also as a responsible intellectual contribution to the world in which we live, so that we may act to change it” (1999[1969]:262).

As noted, anthropological coverage of the powerful tends toward critiques from outside, or studies of impacts on the less powerful. As Heyman notes, “Critical stances abound, but in most cases remain vague about the practical workings of organized power” (2004). We also make assumptions “that we already know what elites are about” (Marcus 1983a:19).

Anthropologists also tend to define what we know about elites by our work with non-elites (Marcus 1983a:36-37). The assumption is that because, in essence, we know what elites are about, we don’t need to study them closely. As Kenneth MacDonald has observed, “Organizations are not considered ‘foreign’ to us and consequently we assume an understanding that we do not really have. Or we assume that organizations do not ‘demand’ the same degree of understanding as say the communities that many of us have worked with” (forthcoming:33). As such, the practices, ideas, and intentions of elites

remain largely mysterious to both social scientists and a lay public who are deeply impressed nonetheless by the notion that elite cultures are more than a figment of the imagination. The mystery is less a consequence of existing gaps in widely disseminated knowledge of elites than of inadequacies in the concepts and methods developed by those social scientists who have studied them (Marcus 1983a:4).

As a result, studies of the powerful have often been left to other disciplines:

While elites have been central concerns of sociologists, historians and political scientists for much of the past two centuries, anthropologists have paid relatively little attention to them and still less to the theoretical debates they have generated concerning power, the nature of class society, and modern forms of governance (Shore 2002:10).

Anthropology's concern with elites has largely been confined to the study of "other peoples' rulers," which "represents a considerable shortcoming for a discipline that claims to study all of mankind...Once again anthropology would seem to be in danger of passing the buck..." (Shore 2002:12). Nader expresses this idea in terms of "scientific adequacy," and questions anthropology's ability to develop adequate theory and description without studying "up" as well as "down" (1999[1969]:290). Ostrander asserts that research on elites is essential "to complete our understanding" (1995:150). Britan and Cohen note that bureaucracies, while neglected by anthropologists, play a crucial role in many of the major transformations that anthropologists study, and also serve as crucial testing ground for social theory (1980b:10,24).

In general, Marcus concludes that "an ethnographic approach is sorely needed in order to enrich the existing sociological literature on elites" (1983a:4-5). Other significant theoretical benefits to be gained from studying up include the ability to use new theoretical tools we have been given in recent decades to study them, such as Foucault's theories of power (Gusterson 1997:114). Schwartman also notes that the study of elites can provide a way to link micro-level processes (anthropology's traditional concern) with macro-level structures (Schwartman 1993:4); a critical need in anthropology's attempts to study such things as globalization and other "multi-sited" topics.

The study of the powerful has also been part of a larger critical analysis of anthropology and its practices that has taken place since the 1980s. One important work in this regard is

Marcus and Fischer's *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, in which the authors called for a "repatriated" anthropology "to study home societies with as much detail and rigor as comparative 'other' societies" (1999[1986]:xviii, 113-117). As part of this critical reevaluation of the field and as a way to study non-localized processes, some anthropologists have called for the use of multi-sited ethnography, where ethnography is conducted at multiple field sites, which can include "studying up" (Marcus 1995, 1998). Such reevaluations of anthropological practice have disrupted traditional anthropological conceptions of "the field" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a), as has "studying up" in general.

Powerful arguments have also been made for "studying up" as a way of "de-colonizing" anthropology. Starting in the 1970s, anthropologists began to pay increasing attention to the colonial origins of the discipline of anthropology (Asad 1973), and to how our contemporary field methods and relationships are a legacy of those colonial relationships. As Nader noted in 1969,

Anthropologists might indeed ask themselves whether the entirety of field work does not depend upon a certain power relationship in favor of the anthropologist, and whether indeed such dominant-subordinate relationships may not be affecting the kinds of theories we are weaving (1999[1969]:289).

Regarding why anthropologists have not done more ethnographic work on the powerful, MacDonald notes that

Much of the reason, of course, can be found in the privileged position held by researchers in the places they have studied. Often it is that privilege that has provided access to the

site, and access to the knowledge that gets translated into text, or it conveys the possibility of instrumental gain to those granting the access. Privilege and instrumentality, however, often fade when studying organizations. If anything, organizations challenge the privileged status of the ethnographer. This often translates into a discomfort in confronting power where it resides (forthcoming:33).

As such, “studying up” “...may offer an important counterweight to the elitism of anthropology itself” (Shore 2002:1). Forsythe notes that this shift in power relationships is important, as it “provides one with an opportunity to encounter the reality of doing ethnographic research in the absence of anthropological privilege” (2001b:131).

Other scholars have focused on the unintended consequences of anthropology’s tendency to study the less powerful. The most serious charge in this regard is that by not studying elites, we mystify their roles in our society (Gusterson 1993:75; Ostrander 1995:133). Rosaldo describes the powerful as being “culturally invisible” (1989:198; see also Rosaldo 1988). Gusterson notes that this invisibility of elites “is as much a part of their privilege as their wealth and power, and a democratic anthropology should be working to reverse this invisibility” (1997:115).

Our traditional focus on the less powerful can also have serious implications for those we have traditionally studied. Gusterson has noted the risk we bring to peripheral groups by studying them, as we provide information which then allows them to be controlled. He notes that “However noble and sincere our intentions to legitimate these voices of the periphery in the center, we also become, at least potentially, the eyes and ears of the center in the periphery” (Gusterson 1993:66). It also has implications for the relevance of the discipline as a whole:

however much it may be intended to redress the marginalization of antinuclear groups, the asymmetric focus on these groups ironically and backhandedly may help to perpetuate a twin marginalization of both antinuclear culture and anthropology. Given anthropology's history as an apologetic documentation of disappearing peoples being crushed or transformed by the imperial forebears of the people who now control nuclear weapons, there is a sense in which anthropologists implicitly place antinuclear activists at the end of a long genealogy of powerlessness and foredoomed otherness by singling them out for study. At the same time, we reinforce stereotypes of anthropology as the sentimental but largely inconsequential study of the periphery rather than the center (Gusterson 1993:64-65).

Anthropologists have particular strengths to bring to the study of elites and institutions, including "rich ethnographic evidence" (Gupta 1995:376), as "the anthropological technique of intensive field observation yields descriptions of behavior that is greater in depth and detail" (Baba 1986:3). As Britan and Cohen note, anthropological analysis also provides a "holistic framework for integrating formal roles, informal organization, and environmental constraints in the analysis of everyday bureaucratic life" (1980a:4). This kind of work provides insights we can't gain from elite accounts of their own actions (Winkler 1987:130), or documentary sources (Heyman 2004). Brewer also notes that ethnographic research is also uniquely suited to the study of "controversial topics in sensitive locations" due to its long-term, rapport-based, and holistic field methods (1993:130). As Robbins notes,

such investigations into institutionalized knowledge and power should do far more than idle denouncing of official knowledges and cultures...instead it must do the kind of difficult, time-consuming, careful ethnographic work that is a hallmark of good cultural

and political ecology...In so doing, it allows an ethnographic symmetry between all players that suggests more careful and controlled method, revealing the partiality of all accounts of nature, including and especially amongst the most authoritative agents of power. The simple and sometimes romantic stories of 'good' and 'bad' players here give way to accounts of process, structure, and history that tell far more forceful tales (2002:1511).

### Issues of ethics & methods

"Studying up" does present some significant ethical and methodological challenges to anthropologists. According to Gusterson, studying the powerful brings with it "extraordinary problems of method, ethics, psychological stability, and writing" (1993:67). Shore has noted that the anthropology of elites "challenges both our assumptions about what constitutes the 'field' as well as some of our most deeply held notions about research ethics" (2002:11).

Access is one such issue. As noted above, there are practical reasons why it is easier for anthropologists to study "down" than "up": the less powerful are often more accessible to anthropologists. In contrast, Nader notes that "The powerful are out of reach on a number of different planes: they don't want to be studied; it is dangerous to study the powerful; they are busy people; they are not all in one place; and so on" (1999[1969]:302). According to Hertz and Imber, "Few social researchers study elites because elites are by their very nature difficult to penetrate. Elites establish barriers that set their members apart from the rest of society" (1995:viii). And as Gusterson has so succinctly expressed it, "The Pentagon, large corporations, and nuclear weapons laboratories...do not readily welcome strangers with notebooks" (1993:63).

Such organizations are often expert at the control of information, access to which is often controlled by "gatekeepers." As Thomas notes, "Even welcome visitors encounter inner lines of

defense: public relations departments, “official spokepeople,” and whole levels of management trained in how to represent the company to the outside world” (1995:5). As such, negotiating access to elites and elite organizations may take a great deal of time, energy, and persistence (Winkler 1987:135), and may require constant renegotiation. Of course, the reason these access obstacles exist is because the power calculus between researcher and researched has fundamentally shifted in this kind of research.

In trying to gain access, researchers may face suspicion from elites regarding the motivations behind their research, with the concern that permitting access will somehow compromise their organization or status. This concern is not completely unwarranted. As Adler and Adler note, “Ethnographers, with their capacity to unearth deep and hidden data, are the most likely of all researchers to discover taboo information that might pose a political danger” (1993:259). There may also be perceived danger in ethnographic research exposing “the human side” of an institution, which may not be the kind of image they want to portray publicly (Brewer 1993:142).

While personal contacts and professional affiliations can be helpful in gaining initial access, “They are not likely to open doors unless accompanied by a compelling reason as to why someone should see you” (Thomas 1995:9). This often requires that fieldworkers have “something to offer” those institutions or entities being studied. As one way of resolving this access issue, some researchers work for the institution they are studying, blurring the lines between “participant” and “observer” (Forsythe 2001b:123-124). Despite its complications, Forsythe asserts that this can actually provide for “the possibility of deeper understanding of complex social and technical processes. This in turn provides a more solid basis for critique...” (2001b:124-125). However, these mixed roles can raise a host of personal and professional



issues (Forsythe 2001b), including questions of role switching and independence of research findings (Rosen 2000), as well as questions of potential complicity with those we study.

Marcus has suggested that one way to deal with this access issue is study the “less-visible” or “fringe” members of elite groups, “because they, the marginally important or retired members, are most accessible as informants, and from these individuals it is easiest to obtain direct views of elite praxis and culture” (1983a:20). He also notes that “It is among elites in decline or of marginal importance in their fields of activity that ethnographic research can most likely be done” (1983a:38).

Others assert that obstacles of access have been over-emphasized in studying elites. Nader noted in 1969 that the proposition that obtaining access to non-elites is easier than obtaining access to elites in the US “has not been adequately tested. Anthropologists have had problems of access everywhere they have gone” (1999[1969]:302). Ostrander also asserts that “the difficulties of gaining access and establishing the rapport necessary to study elites have been exaggerated, whereas the difficulties of protecting the research and the researcher have rarely been discussed” (1995:135). Winkler also cites this problem of assumed unapproachability (1987:129).

Issues of power are also central to “studying up.” When doing this kind of research, those being studied may have considerable amounts of power over the fieldworker (Forsythe 2001b:122), a power relationship quite different from traditional fieldwork relationships. In addition, “Elites are usually of higher social class than those who research them. Elites are frequently older men,” bringing gender issues into play as well (1987:137). With this power shift, “The status of the inquiring anthropologist changes accordingly, from a knowing, benevolent visitor, backed by technical and political power, to a tolerated, perhaps amusing,

marginal presence” (Traweek 1988:5). Again, employment by the institution one is studying also puts the researcher into a subordinate position (Traweek 1988:5; Forsythe 2001b:123-125).

Despite external perceptions “that organizations do not ‘demand’ the same degree of understanding as say the communities that many of us have worked within” (MacDonald, forthcoming:33), gaining access and credibility in these contexts may actually require a significant amount of preparation, and researchers may encounter those wanting to test their qualifications (Thomas 1995:6-7). Some researchers have observed that they have been held to a higher standard of knowledge and understanding than more traditional field situations, as one’s informants may have more education and technical expertise.

There are also other issues of control. As Ostrander notes, “Elites are used to being in charge, and they are used to having others defer to them” (1995:143). They may seek to control interview situations and other aspects of research (Ostrander 1995:144-145), including which aspects and areas of a topic or organization an ethnographer can examine. They may also seek to control over the final products of research: Traweek notes that “The anthropologist no longer has the last word in the dialogue of fieldwork” (1988:6). Some organizations and institutions allow access “only on condition that the organisation retains a veto on what can be published” (Shore 2002:11). Such arrangements raise more questions of complicity, as do cases where the anthropologists works for the organization/elites in question. According to Ostrander, “Whereas compromise in terms of timing of the release of publications may sometimes be necessary, the researcher should not compromise the integrity of the work by allowing elites to have a voice in determining what is published or where” (1995:149). Protection of identities may also require “self-censorship,” not writing on certain topics, publishing only in certain venues, and delaying publication (Adler and Adler 1993:253-254, 250).

Whether or not organizations have veto power, when “studying up,” “our subjects are powerful and literate, and they read what we say” (Gusterson 1997:117). As Forsythe notes, “Far from being unaware of how I represent their work in print, my informants are highly interested in this question. Intelligent, highly trained people, many of them read what I write about them. Sometimes they contest it” (2001b:123). Even if elite subjects make no effort to censor an ethnographer’s findings, Shore asks the question “How far should the fact that they are likely to read what we write about them temper our analysis?” (2002:11).

Other major obstacles to the study of elites are the ethical issues raised by fellow anthropologists. As noted, some of this is rooted in the general orientation of the field toward “the underdog” and issues of social justice. Hinshaw notes that anthropologists “are the most egalitarian of the social scientists” (1980:508). Gupta and Ferguson also comment that

Since anthropology departments continue to be among the few places in the Western academy not devoted exclusively or largely to the study of the lives and policies of elites, they constitute potentially important nodes for politically engaged intervention in many forms of symbolic and epistemic domination (1997:36).

However, as Michael Dove notes, this orientation is “a predisposition, but not an incapacitation” (1999:239).

This orientation toward social justice masks deep theoretical debates “about the aims of social science, which since the 1960s and 70s has included significant resistance to the study of groups working against progressive social change” (Esseveld and Eyerman 1992:218). However, Gusterson argues that our inability to remove ourselves from this activist orientation can obscure our vision. He asserts that “In holding tightly to one side’s politics, [anthropologists use] new

kinds of analysis to reinforce entrenched political positions rather than to reorient the terms of the debate” (Gusterson 1993:72). He continues by stating that no matter who our subjects are, it is of critical importance that anthropologists be able to “map out bitterly contested cultural and political terrains without surrendering that impulse to understand and humanize the Other, which is the basis of our best ethnography” (Gusterson 1993:76). Without doing this kind of work, “it is hard to see what, apart perhaps from our impenetrable jargon, makes us anthropologists rather than activists or partisan journalists” (Gusterson 1993:70).

Resistance against “studying up” can include backlash from one’s peers. Gusterson has observed that some of this backlash stems from the difficulty of displaying cultural relativism toward powerful in our own society (1993:67-68). Regardless of one’s findings (or even personal attitudes), just the fact that an anthropologist has studied an elite group can result in a general assumption of contamination. According to Winkler, “By extension, what one does research on and who one does research with become indicators of the researcher’s values. Elite research is interpreted as colluding with, not just learning about, the enemy” (1987:138). Marcus notes that this atmosphere “creates special problems for ethnographers – if not for them personally, then for how their work is received...Working empathy for one’s subjects can be misconstrued as ideological sympathy...” (1983a:23).

What has been described as anthropology’s fear of power can also be traced to the discipline’s experiences during the Cold War, although some of these issues have a much earlier genesis (Fluehr-Lobban 1998:174-175; McFate 2005). These issues will be discussed below under the Anthropology of Militarism. However, the concern is not just about complicity with the military, but complicity with any powerful institution or entity, whether government,

corporate or other. Of course, this creates substantial tension around the work of applied anthropologists, who often do their research in these contexts or are employed by these entities.

But there is another question of ethics here - that of the ethics we apply to studying the powerful. The root issue is whether powerful informants deserve the same respect and protection we commonly recognize that we owe to our less powerful informants. Nader identifies this issue as a form of confusion over whether there is “one ethic for studying up and another for studying down” (1999[1969]:304). Forsythe notes that “informant bashing” is sometimes accepted by anthropologists in the context of “studying up” (2001b:130). In her view, the same ethics apply to “studying up” as “studying down”:

doing fieldwork involves an ethical obligation to treat our informants with respect, whether or not we share their point of view. We who investigate elite people and agencies should remember that the possession of power alone does not justify willful damage (2001b:131).

Along these lines, Gusterson asserts that “it is not acceptable to enter into confidential relationships with informants and then deploy the fruits of those relationships against those who have trusted us, no matter what our own political commitments” (2003:26).

“Studying up” also requires methodological adjustments. As some researchers have noted, the “participant” part of participant observation may be limited in some settings (Nader 1999[1969]:306), unless one works for the organization in question (which, as noted, has its disadvantages). Anthropologists may also have to adjust their methods to accommodate the study of elite organizations that may be incredibly complex in structure (Gusterson 1993:63-64; Schwartman 1993:47). But as noted, anthropologists are increasingly having to adapt their

ethnographic methods in many other contexts as well, as traditionally bounded field sites give way to multiple locations and connections, including those of transnationalism and globalization.

In these contexts, Moyser and Wagstaffe recommend that social scientists use a combination of traditional methods (1987a:15), while others call for a more eclectic approach using a variety of sources and methods (Gusterson 1997:116; Serber in Nader 1999[1969]:308). Researchers also stress that regardless of the particular methods used, that the material be approached holistically, culturally, and reflexively (Nader 1999[1969]). Nader asserts that anthropologists should not feel lost just because they cannot do traditional participant observation in elite contexts. Ultimately, “We may have to give higher priority to traditional anthropological values such as using our knowledge of others as a mirror for ourselves and allowing questions to lead us to methodology (rather than vice versa)” (Nader 1999[1969]:308). She also notes that “self-analysis” becomes an important part of studying elites, including examination of how “a social scientist is perceived, run around, enculturated, and described in the veiled and not-so-veiled encounters with informants and the members of organizations and the like whose job it is to deal with outsiders” (Nader 1999[1969]:308).

### Anthropology of Militarism

I am using the category “anthropology of militarism” to encompass what are sometimes disparate anthropological works on the military, defense industries, and manifestations of militarism in wider U.S. society. While studying up itself is not very common in anthropology, studying up and focusing on military and defense issues is even more rare. Rubinstein has determined that during the years 1999 and 2000, of grants given by the Wenner-Gren Foundation

for Anthropological Research, only 1.25% were for projects related to military and defense topics worldwide (2003:23). While there are anthropological critiques of various aspects of the military-industrial complex and descriptions of its consequences, “little anthropological work engages them from the inside” (Rubinstein 2003:16). As Simons observes, “the effects of militaries and militarization – on masculinity, gender roles, and civilian populations – attract attention. But military ethnographies are rare” (1999:74).

As noted in the discussion of studying up, anthropologists’ primary focus has always been the underdog, the less powerful, and the marginal, part of a “broader preference among American ethnographers for the margins rather than the centers of American society” (Gusterson 1993:60). In addition, the methodological issues raised above in “studying up” become even more severe when turning one’s attention to the military/defense establishment due to military secrecy and security, as well as the political sensitivity of some topics. As noted above, there are inherent difficulties of access and ethics in doing work on military bases or about the military (Gusterson 1993:63). Other issues arise for anthropologists in attempting to navigate between independent research findings and military sponsorship of that research (Harrell 2003a). Even for those without issues of military sponsorship, there are, again, “extraordinary problems of method, ethics, psychological stability, and writing” (Gusterson 1993:67).

While anthropology has never really had a problem with studying violence and war in other societies, the examination of military establishments in industrialized countries and associated processes of militarization has largely been avoided (Simons 1999, Greenhouse 1986, Mandelbaum 1986). As Ben-Ari notes

To be sure, anthropologists have long been aware of the power of state security forces (including the military), but anthropological analyses of the state’s use of force or

violence have tended (in congruence with the discipline's partiality toward the underdog) to focus almost exclusively on the victims of state actions or on movements of resistance against the state (2004:345).

Anthropologists display what has been described as "severe discomfort" with the idea of studying the people or institutions that form the military-industrial complex or the defense community (Rubinstein 2003: 16). This discomfort ranges from a general apprehension to believing that working with anyone in the military establishment is tantamount to "pandering to warmongers" (Harrell 2003: 7). These topics are also fraught with danger because of the discipline's view of war as pathological and morally wrong (Greenhouse 1986:49), and the fact that these discussions are often highly emotionally and politically charged (Mandelbaum 1986:314). As a result, anthropological discussions of militarism and the military/defense establishment often have strong moral and political undercurrents that determine the focus of the discussion, what will be examined, and the light in which it is examined.

This discomfort usually is traced to the "painful fiasco of anthropology's secret involvement in Vietnam," which has resulted in "an allergic reaction to security issues in many anthropologists" (Gusterson 2001:430). However, these debates have deeper roots, as evidenced by events surrounding Franz Boas' condemnation of anthropologists who served as government operatives in World War I (Fluehr-Lobban 1998:174-175; McFate 2005). This "painful fiasco" from the Cold War era includes revelations regarding Department of Defense plans to use social scientists in Project Camelot in the mid-1960s in support of U.S. counterinsurgency efforts in Latin America (Alcalay 1992, Wakin 1992), as well as U.S. counterinsurgency campaigns in Thailand (Wakin 1992). Of such alliances, Project Camelot is the most infamous: Wakin states



that “The word ‘Camelot’ served as a shibboleth for all that was to be avoided in social science involvement with government contracts” (1992:27).

It was in the wake of the Project Camelot scandal that the American Anthropological Association drafted its first statement on anthropological ethics in 1967 (Fluehr-Lobban 1998:175). This was followed by the formation of a Committee on Ethics, which drafted and put forth its first code of ethics (the Principles of Professional Responsibility) in 1971, which forbids secret or clandestine work (Fluehr-Lobban 1998:176). Other documented Cold War collaborations include anthropologists working for the CIA’s Human Ecology Fund, and Clyde Kulckhohn’s secret interactions with the CIA and other agencies (Price 1998). McFate also describes the work of anthropologist Gerald Hickey, who worked for the RAND Corporation and served as an advisor on Vietnamese cultural issues to the DoD (2005). The question of the complicity of American anthropologists with U.S. military activities in Micronesia during the Cold War will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The end result has been the “almost total absence of anthropology in the national-security establishment” (McFate 2005). As noted by McFate, “These guidelines reflect a widespread view among anthropologists that any research undertaken for the military is defacto evil and ethically unacceptable” (1995). And these are not just issues of historical interest, as evidenced by the recent heated debates over proposals for CIA recruitment and funding of undergraduate and graduate anthropology students to aid the Iraq war and the larger War on Terror (Anthropology Today News 20(4):29; Anthropology Today 21(3):25-26; Anthropology Today 21(4):19-21; McFate 2005).

While the above arguments are clearly strong enough for many anthropologists in terms of their ethical, moral and political beliefs in selecting research topics, many researchers believe

there are serious ramifications to *not* studying the military establishment, much as there are for not studying elites noted above. Carol Greenhouse asserts that the bias toward the underdog has meant that critical questions relating to the military and militarism in our society have been obscured (1986:49). By neglecting these topics, anthropologists “compound our ignorance about the military mechanics of war” (Simons 1999:89). According to Ben-Ari, “Without such a focus, the analysis of sites and victims of suffering does not inform us about what moves military organizations to participate in inflicting suffering and what makes different publics accept the perpetration of violence” (2004:341). Through our ignorance, we also perpetuate stereotypes of defense establishment members as macho and one-dimensional (Rubenstein 2003:page, 17). He also notes that

in failing to treat the military and other components of the defense establishment as sites for serious ethnographic research, we fail ourselves. To members of defense communities, our critical commentaries often seem uninformed and unconnected to their reality; and thus the potential for anthropology to make a difference in that reality is diminished (2003:16).

Again, Gusterson notes that in predominantly studying down, there is the ironic risk that we are normalizing the military/defense establishment and exoticizing the culture of activists (1993:65). As with other elites, this non-examination contributes to the power of those in the military and defense establishment by “reinforcing the mystique that is part of their power” (Gusterson 1993:75), and “If there is any culture that deserves to be denaturalized and exoticized, hence opened up to a fresh and potentially critical perspective, it is surely that of America’s generals, admirals, nuclear scientists, and defense contractors” (Gusterson 1993:65).

Lesley Gill has recently made some illuminating comments regarding issues of complicity and her research on political violence in Latin America. She states

...I was not prepared to like [School of the Americas] officials and the Latin American military trainees. Yet empathy was necessary in order to grasp their perspectives and to avoid one-dimensional caricatures of them. This did not mean excusing...It meant trying to understand them by connecting across chasms of disagreement, mistrust and incomprehension... (2004:12).

In contrast, she found that empathizing with activists was not difficult, due to shared sympathies. The difficulty in the case of working with activists was maintaining a critical distance in order to examine divisions and disagreements within activist circles. Gill notes in this context that “Although empathy remains central to anthropological research, it can, if left unproblematized, obscure the complex political relationships and struggles that anthropologists should be clarifying” (2004:12).

Ben-Ari’s comments on maintaining reflexivity and critical distance in his study of the Israeli military while also being a member of it are also helpful in this context (1998). Interestingly, Ben-Ari also finds that studies of militarism have been skewed in their focus toward combat soldiers: “As a consequence, very little attention has been devoted to the many administrators, clerks, and support troops who staff military institutions” (2004:346-347). He also stresses the importance of understanding the relations of “warriors with various significant others” of this type. This research on Kwajalein will hopefully contribute something of interest here in its focus on employees of defense and logistics contractors.

What all of these scholars are saying is *not* that anthropology should shift its focus from the less powerful and their resistance to colonizing and hegemonic forces. Neither should we abandon strong moral and political views on issues related to war and peace in our society; guarding against co-optation and colonial complicity in our research is critical. However, to let these things keep us from engaging reflexively with these aspects of our society is ultimately damaging to the conversation we are trying to have on issues such as war and the military.

For me, Hugh Gusterson's ethnographic work at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory with nuclear weapons scientists opened my eyes to the possibilities of both "studying up" and studying U.S. militarism (1996). Other works of interest here include Gusterson's continuing work on nuclear weapons scientists (1999, 2001), as well as Joseph Masco's work in a similar vein on Los Alamos National Laboratory (2002, 2004), and Carole Cohn's research on the discourses used by defense intellectuals (1987). Of particular interest for this research will be Masco's work on how post-Cold War changes in defense work have affected communities in New Mexico that are part of "America's own ethnic borderlands" (1999:204).

There is also a body of ethnographic work in recent decades focusing on "military culture" and similar topics. This includes research by Rubinstein on peacekeeping forces (2003a & b, 1998b); Katz on Army drill sergeants and their spouses (1990); Simons on Army Special Forces units (1997); Randall's outsider perspective on U.S. military life (1986); Brassett's work on strategic thought among military elites (1988); Pulliam on the military culture of Navy wives (1988); Frese (2003) and Harrell (2003b, 2000) on military spouses; Hawkins on Cold War stresses on soldiers and their spouses in Germany (2001); and Moon on military prostitution (1997). Other important work not on the U.S. military includes Ben-Ari's ethnographic work on the Israeli military (1998). While most of these works focus on the social dynamics and attributes

of military groups (or “military culture”), which may seem tangential to this research as Kwajalein contains very few military personnel, these works do offer some insights as “the base” on Kwajalein Islet is an Army base, and some of the same factors that create “military culture” operate on the base. Also, many of these works deal with the difficulties civilians encounter in adapting to military life, which is one of the major “tensions of empire” on Kwajalein.

This research will also draw on studies of militarism focusing on larger issues and impacts of militarism on American society, or what Lutz calls the need to link “global and national histories” of militarization to local ethnographic locations, as well as to the “people involved in the militarization process” (2002:725). This work particularly includes Lutz’s historical work on the militarization of Ft. Bragg, North Carolina (2001) and her other writings on militarism (2002, 2004), as well as Ferguson and Turnbull’s semiotic analysis of the military presence in Hawaii (1999). Both works are important in highlighting how militarization is intimately tied to inequalities in race, gender, and class, as well as the normalization and invisibility of this militarization in our society. Enloe’s work on how militarization has affected gender relations has also been useful here, particularly her discussion of prostitution near military bases overseas, or “Base Women” (1989).

## CHAPTER 3

### MARSHALL ISLANDS BACKGROUND

#### Geography

The purpose of this chapter is to provide environmental and sociocultural context for the following discussion of access issues and borders. It also provides details of traditional Marshallese life important to understanding present-day Kwajalein Atoll, including the traditional land tenure system and the roles of chiefs and other elites.

The Marshall Islands are located in the Central Pacific, north of the equator and west of the 180° meridian. The 29 atolls and five table reefs are grouped in two northwest to southeast trending chains, the western Ralik or “Sunset” chain and the eastern Ratak or “Sunrise” chain. Culturally, there are minor linguistic and sociocultural differences between the two chains (Mason 1947:5). These chains are separated by a distance of approximately 150 miles (Mason 1947:3). The total land area is only 70 square miles in a total sea area of 375,000 square miles (Mason 1947:5).

In making these areas understandable to Americans, the area of the Marshall Islands is often described in reference to comparable land areas of the U.S.: Mason notes that the total sea area is roughly one and one-half times the size of Texas, and the total land area is about one-twentieth the size of the state of Rhode Island (1947:4). Hanlon has drawn attention to this “mapping hegemony” seen in frequent comparisons of the size of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TT) to the size of the continental U.S. (1998:3). Both serve as good examples of

how U.S. borders are used as reference points for an area that many Americans have no knowledge of. They also contrast our “substance” in terms of land to their relative lack of it, another contrast brought to the fore by Pacific scholars, who have shown that Pacific Islanders did not necessarily view their world in this way (Hau’ofa 1993).

The Marshall Islands are made up of 1,100 islets and single islands (Mason 1987:5). All of the atolls consist of rings of low coral islets surrounding a lagoon, formed when volcanic cones subsided over time, and coral grew around those cones at sea level (Fosberg 1988:7). These atolls rise only a few feet above sea level (Mason 1947:5). In terms of climate, the Marshalls have generally high and uniform temperatures (around 80°F) and high humidity. There is a north-south-trending gradient of rainfall in the Marshalls, with some northern atolls receiving less than 60 inches per year (Bikini) to atolls in the south receiving as much as 160 inches per year (Arno) (Alkire 1978:11-12). Kwajalein lies roughly in the middle of the north-south rainfall gradient. This rainfall varies by season, with near-drought conditions becoming more likely during the winter months (Mason 1947:1). Seasonal variation throughout the Marshalls consists largely of differences in rainfall and wind (Mason 1947:2). Occasional droughts of longer duration were not uncommon in the northern atolls (Fosberg 1988:10).

There is no surface water on atolls: freshwater from rainfall percolates through the porous soil to form a lens of freshwater that floats on top of heavier seawater in the interior of most islets of sufficient size (Fosberg 1988:13). In addition to minimal rainfall, the northern atolls have relatively poor soil cover, while the southern atolls have richer soils and more luxuriant vegetation (Kiste 1974:12). Despite these differences, however, atoll soils are generally quite poor for agricultural purposes (Mason 1947:6).

Eastern Micronesia is periodically affected by tropical storms and hurricanes, although not as frequently as the western Pacific (Fosberg 1988:9), particularly in the area known as the “typhoon belt.” Micronesia serves as a spawning ground for typhoons, usually starting in Chuuk and heading northwest to the Marianas, less frequently affecting the Eastern Carolines and the Marshalls (Rainbird 1994:294). Despite being less common in the Marshalls, the ones that do occur there can have devastating effects on local people and resources. As just one example, a typhoon hit Majuro in 1918 with considerable loss of life and damage to property and atoll resources (Spoehr 1949).

### Prehistory

The ancestors of most Pacific peoples entered the Pacific around 3,500 years ago, moving from Southeast Asia into Melanesia, which had already been populated for 30,000 years or more by Papuan language speakers (Kirch 2000:86-87). These new colonizers, known as the Lapita, spoke Austronesian languages, and have been linked by archaeological and linguistic evidence to Southeast Asia, including Taiwan and the Philippines (Kirch 2000:91-92). Early Lapita archaeological sites, often identified by their distinctive dentate-stamped pottery, reveal that these people were accomplished seafarers, living in coastal villages (Kirch 2000:90). In addition to their exploitation of marine environments, the Lapita were also horticulturalists who kept domesticated animals, including pigs, dogs and chickens.

The mixture of these people and preexisting Papuan populations in Melanesia resulted in the diverse populations seen there today (Kirch 2000:93). The area around Melanesia then served as a “voyaging nursery” for the development of the navigational skills that would allow the Lapita to colonize the remote island Pacific (Irwin 1992:31). Around 1200 B.C., the Lapita begin



this trek as they moved into Fiji, Samoa and Tonga (Kirch 2000:93-96). According to Kirch, “These were not merely voyages of discovery by itinerant sailors who came for a brief period and then returned to a homeland in the western Pacific. Quite the contrary, these were purposeful voyages of discovery and colonization” (2000:96). Evidence of this includes the fact that the Lapita voyagers brought women with them, and all animal and plant species needed for permanent colonization (Irwin 1992:7).

Micronesia is now believed to have been settled in at least two separate colonizations. Western Micronesia, particularly the Marianas and Palau, was settled directly from Southeast Asia approximately 3,500 to 4,500 years ago (Rainbird 2004:99). Another group of settlers moved north into the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati) and Marshall Islands from what Rainbird calls “long-standing communities” in Melanesia (2004:99). Kirch states that the first settlement of central and eastern Micronesia likely came from “the region of the initial Lapita expansion, somewhere between the Bismarcks and the southeast Solomons-Vanuatu region” (2000:167). Irwin has used computer simulations, taking into account prevailing winds, to show that direct colonization of eastern Micronesia from both the Solomon Islands area and the Vanuatu/Santa Cruz area are quite possible using sailing canoes (1992:120-122). These early Micronesians reached the northern Marshalls around 2,000 to 2,500 years ago, and then moved on into the eastern Carolines (Rainbird 2004:100). Beardsley notes that linguistic evidence suggests that the Marshalls were colonized from the south from Kiribati and Tuvalu “about the time sea level stabilized and the coral islets became fully emerged” (1994:21). Folktales provide additional evidence that the Marshalls were colonized from northern Kiribati (Rainbird 2004:225).

It should be noted here that the term “Micronesia” (literally “tiny islands”) is part of a somewhat artificial tripartite European classification of the Pacific Islands that many researchers

have called into question. Of the three culture areas – Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia – Polynesia holds together best in terms of linguistic, biological and archaeological evidence. Micronesia is quite diverse in all of those respects, hence Rainbird’s discussion of Micronesian “macrofusion” (2004:1-12).

For many years, Micronesia was the “neglected backwater of Pacific archaeology” (Davidson in Rainbird 1994:296), although it has received more attention in recent decades. While archaeologists had theorized that the high islands of Micronesia, with their more plentiful resources, were settled before the low atolls, archaeological finds from Bikini and Kwajalein Atolls have challenged this assumption (Beardsley 1994; Rainbird 2004:88; Shun and Athens 1990). Charcoal from cultural deposits on Bikini has been dated to approximately 2,800 to 3,500 years ago, although these dates are controversial (Rainbird 2004:86). On Kwajalein, Shun and Athens have dated deposits to around 1,800 years ago (1990), and Beardsley’s more recent work there has documented a 2,000-year habitation sequence, including a possible garden site and earth ovens (1994). Both have found evidence of coral pavements on Kwajalein (Beardley 1994, Shun and Athens 1990). According to Rainbird, these findings from Kwajalein are roughly contemporaneous with the settlement of the high islands of the eastern Carolines (2004:86). Rainbird notes that archaeologists have “achieved only minimal success in elucidating further the sequence of prehistoric occupation” of the Marshall Islands (2004:227).

In the past, archaeologists have used the presence of coral stone architecture (including tombs and house foundations) as an indication of chiefly hierarchies in the Marshalls, and the coral paving finds noted above may be evidence of that. However, Carucci has argued that the lack of evidence for this paving prehistorically suggests that this “highly hierarchical society

only developed in the Marshalls as a product of European intervention” (in Rainbird 2004:229). Carucci’s theory will be discussed in more detail below in the discussion of Marshallese chiefs.

### Atoll ecology

Despite its lush appearance, Alkire has summarized coral atoll ecology as:

a delicate environment that yields to human occupation only with the application of diligence and skill...The soils are thin and poor in nutrition; fresh water is often scarce and may virtually disappear even when, in the words of the Ancient Mariner, water is everywhere. The low-lying islands are wracked by storms of great fury that destroy what man has wrought and often take much of the human population with them (1978:vii).

Atoll ecosystems are strand-like in character and support relatively few plant species, most of which must be both salt- and wind-tolerant and “possess root structures capable of rapidly absorbing rainwater” (Alkire 1978:10). The salinity that all organisms must be able to tolerate comes from both saltwater and salt spray (Fosberg 1988:9). Freshwater is the most limiting resource in atoll environments for human settlement (Rapaport 1990:4). The sole source of fresh water on atolls is the freshwater lens noted above, which rises and falls with the tides (Alkire 1978:10). According to Alkire, “The purity of the water depends on the amount and frequency of rainfall and the size of the islet...An island less than 350 feet by 350 feet in area apparently is too small to develop a permanent Ghyben-Hertzberg lens” (1978:10-11).

How much rainfall an atoll receives has a pronounced effect on the number of plant species that may be found there (Manner, Mueller-Dombois and Rapaport 1999:95). In addition, atoll soils are composed almost entirely of calcium carbonate and magnesium carbonate, posing severe limitations to horticulture (Rapaport 1990:6). While the most obvious vegetation throughout the Marshalls is the coconut palm, Fosberg notes that no record remains of the “true original Marshall Islands vegetation” (1988:13). In terms of island biogeography, atolls host few species of plants and animals due to their remoteness from continental areas, as well as their small size, high salinity and low nutrient status (Fosberg 1988:19-20). Despite the paucity of plant and animal species on coral islands, coral reefs themselves are highly productive, with a large diversity of fish, invertebrates and aquatic species (Nelson 1999:110). Birds are the most prominent group of naturally-occurring fauna in the Marshall Islands, including 70 species of sea and land birds (Fosberg 1988:39-40). While Fosberg (1988) and Mason (1947) note that the Polynesian rat, *Rattus exulans*, is the only mammal indigenous to the islands, Spennemann provides a good argument for the rat having been brought by Islanders to the islands intentionally as a food source (1997).

Aside from salt, the two main sources of environmental stress for human and other organisms living on atolls are typhoons and droughts. With 100 mile-an-hour winds and accompanying waves, typhoons can

destroy vegetation, raise sea level 15 to 20 feet above normal and thus displace the fresh water lens, and seriously erode islets. Even in those areas of high rainfall it may take the vegetation of a coral island six to ten years to recover completely from the damage of a severe tropical storm (Alkire 1978:14).

Droughts are also common on coral atolls in some parts of the Pacific, resulting in islets with low or irregular rainfall being able to support only the hardiest, most salt-resistant strand species (Alkire 1978:11). Both typhoons and droughts of long enough duration could result in starvation for prehistoric populations or the need to abandon an atoll permanently.

Military use of the Marshall Islands has had an intimate relationship with the science of coral atoll ecology: some of the most important studies of this ecology were conducted in preparation for nuclear testing in the northern Marshalls (Rapaport 1990:2-3), including work done by Eugene Odum, known to many as the father of the science of ecology. Charles Darwin's theory of atoll formation was confirmed by deep drilling done on Bikini and Enewetak Atolls as part of the nuclear testing program (Fosberg 1988:8).

### Subsistence

Most subsistence crops and land mammals were those brought with the original settlers of the islands. However, due to the minimal rainfall and poor soils, the northern atolls could support only three subsistence crops: coconut, pandanus and arrowroot (Kiste 1974:12). Coconut has always been the mainstay, providing food, drink, fuel, and materials for construction and textiles (Rapaport 1990:6). Pandanus was also of critical importance as a food source and as a source of weaving materials for mats, baskets and canoe sails. Marshallese selection for certain pandanus characteristics ultimately resulted in the production of at least 123 named varieties in the Marshalls (Merlin et al. 1994:35).

The richer soils and more luxuriant vegetation in the southern atolls enabled the cultivation of breadfruit and taro in addition to the northern food crops (Kiste 1974:12, Mason 1947:2). However, salt-sensitive crops such as taro must be protected from salt spray and

saltwater, so they had to be planted in the interior of larger islets in the southern atolls (Mason 1947:6). Of course, exploitation of the marine environment for fish and marine invertebrates was a critical part of Marshallese subsistence practices. Some of the far northern atolls (including Bikar and Bokak [Taongi]), were not inhabited due to water scarcity, but were used as game reserves for sea turtles and nesting seabirds (Tobin 1952:23).

The availability of water for human use is largely dependent on rainfall. Shallow wells were also dug down to the freshwater lens on most islets of some size, although a lack of rainfall could make these brackish. In the north in the historic period during the winter months, cisterns often ran dry, and residents often had to resort to saltwater wells. However, drinking water was not a problem, as the Marshallese depended almost exclusively on the liquid from green coconuts (Mason 1947:3). Interestingly, there is no evidence of the prehistoric production of alcoholic beverages in Micronesia, despite the fact that coconut sap can easily be fermented for that purpose (Marshall 1979:35-37). In addition, neither kava nor betelnut, drugs common in other parts of the Pacific, were used in the Marshall Islands prehistorically (Marshall 1979:35-37).

Despite the numerous environmental limitations noted above, Alkire notes that atolls with high enough rainfall can support “surprisingly high” population numbers, supported by horticulture alone (1978:29). And indeed, in the Marshall Islands, population density has always been much greater in the south. However, population regulation has always been an issue for atoll populations (Alkire 1978:31); in the Marshall Islands, infanticide after a third child was noted in early colonial European reports (Spennemann 1993:117-118), as well as birth spacing. Other social practices used to balance population and resources included *tabus* by local leaders

on certain resources or areas of an atoll. In addition, entire islets may have been reserved for the production of canoe building materials, bird nesting, and religious purposes (Rapaport 1990:7).

The size and distribution of native settlements varied from atoll to atoll. On smaller ones, most of the population lived on the largest islet, while the others were used for food and copra production and as fishing sites. On larger atolls, the population would be spread over several islands, although one or two islands would support more people (Mason 1947:18-19). Some of the Marshallese atolls are quite large compared to those in the Carolines, allowing for multiple villages on the larger islets of some atolls (Alkire 1978:132).

### Kinship

The Marshallese are traditionally divided into a number of matrilineal clans called *jowi* (Ralik) or *jou* (Ratak) (Mason 1947:32). A number of *bwij*, or matrilineages, are grouped into a clan according to a tradition of descent from a common ancestress (even if the exact genealogical connections are not known). Members of these clans are scattered throughout the islands. Clans were exogamous and traditionally functioned as “a medium of hospitality: islanders were obligated to provide food and shelter for a fellow clansmen, even if strangers” (Kiste 1974:38). In historic times, these clans were headed by paramount chiefs, which were usually the senior male by primogeniture and maternal descent of the highest-ranking family (Mason 1947:32-33), although challenges to chiefly authority by other family members or other chiefs was common. These individuals held title to the group’s landed property and exercised authority over those who lived there (Mason 1947:32), although they had obligations to the people as well. With the elimination of civil war during the German administration, the relative ranking of the clans was frozen, and some then became extinct (Mason 1947:32-33). Subclans were ranked according to

two principles – relative chronological age and seniority of generation (Kiste 1974:38). Lineage segments, lineages in a subclan and the members of any sibling set were ranked by age as well, according to the relative ages of the sisters who founded them (Kiste 1974:38).

The *bwij* is a matrilineal descent group into which a person was born and membership was inalterable (Kiste 1974:38). These localized matrilineages were headed by an *alab*, a male who was the oldest, most capable and most senior of his brothers and sisters (Mason 1947:24). The *alab* was usually male, although a male with an older sister becomes the de facto *alab*, while she remains the de jure *alab*. Old, feeble and incapable males are passed over. These descent groups tended to fluctuate in size (Kiste 1974:38). If a whole *bwij* became extinct, the *alab* (or *iroij*) position could be inherited patrilineally for one generation, then revert to the matrilineal line of succession (Tobin 1952:6). In this matrilineal system, the most significant relationship in inheritance of rank, titles and property was between the mother's brother and sister's child (Mason 1947:32). The most important function of a *bwij* was land-holding, as Pollock notes that members hold inalienable rights of access to specific named plots, usually within one atoll (1970:25).

Cross-cousin marriage was traditionally preferred by the Marshallese (Mason 1947:30). However, a comparative study of exogamy on Bikini and Arno Atolls in the historical period found that such categories could be somewhat flexible (Kiste and Rynkiewicz 1975). Due to its small population and isolation in the northern Marshalls, cross-cousin marriage was common on Bikini, and Bikinians' category of marriageable cross-cousins covered a broader range of kinsmen to increase the number of possible partners. In contrast, Arno had a much larger population and more contact with other atolls, leading to a larger pool of potential marriage partners, and fewer cross-cousin marriages (Kiste and Rynkiewicz 1975). In addition to affecting



the pool of mates from which marriage partners could be selected, north-south population differences also ultimately resulted in significant differences in culture contact (Kiste and Rynkiewicz 1975:211).

According to Tobin, atoll exogamy was common traditionally, as the Marshallese had been marrying Marshallese from other atolls for hundreds of years (1952:8). In pre-mission times, polygyny was practiced by chiefs and the most prominent males, particularly sororal polygyny (Kiste 1974:49). Residence after marriage was neither strictly patrilocal or matrilocal, although matrilocal residence was considered more desirable (Tobin 1952:8). Pollock describes postmarital residence as being extremely flexible on Namu, with young couples changing residence frequently (1974:104).

In terms of behavior, Kiste reports for Bikini that relations among siblings were formal and restrained, with older siblings receiving deference from younger siblings (1974:48). The greatest restraint was found among siblings of the opposite sex. The relationship between the mother's brother and sister's child was also marked by formality, with special deference toward the mother's brother (Kiste 1974:48). Relations of cross-cousins of the opposite sex were marked by extreme familiarity, and sexual relations between cross-cousins began in adolescence (Kiste 1974:49).

Adoption (*kokajiriri*) was common in the Marshalls, and this adoption almost always took place between close relatives. This reciprocal exchange of children among kinsmen served to reinforce kinship ties (Rynkiewicz 1976:106), and did not alienate the child from its birth parents and land rights. Adoptions also served to replace children lost to death or migration, provide children for childless adults, and recruit new household members (Rynkiewicz 1976:111).

In the discussion of U.S.-Marshallese relations on Kwajalein, Americans often make reference to the Marshallese “extended family” system. This term generally seemed to refer not to a specific kinship structure per se, but rather to the flexibility of Marshallese kinship, and the fact that Marshallese households on Ebeye and other locations can be composed of many “relatives” of various kinds, providing a stark contrast to the “nuclear family” American ideal.

### Land tenure

One prevalent aspect of traditional Marshallese social and political life was a concern over the distribution and acquisition of power, influence, privilege and control, not only in terms of land but also other resources deemed to be of worth (Kiste 1974:5). However, social status giving authority over land was always the supreme prize, as rights to land defined the most important political and economic relations among individuals and groups (Kiste 1974:5). Kiste noted in 1974 that even significant foreign influence had not altered this competitive aspect of Marshallese life (1974:5). Land is the fundamental basis of Marshallese culture and society (Mason 1987:4) and its importance to the people cannot be underestimated. As described by Hess, Nero and Burton, “being a Marshallese is having land from the first moment you draw breath” (2001:93).

The *bwij* is the primary kin unit associated with landholding. It is headed by an *alab*, usually the oldest male in a *bwij*, but sometimes a female, as noted above. Matrilineage members trace descent to a common ancestress (*alab*) for purposes of land rights. Lineages then split into associate lineages descended from sisters ranked by age. The senior sibling of this unit is *alab*, followed by surviving brothers and sisters in order. According to Tobin, every Marshallese was a potential *alab* (1952:5).

The typical land-holding was a *wato*, a named strip of land stretching from the ocean to lagoon (Tobin 1952:2) that averaged one to two hectares and provided landholders with the full range of atoll ecosystems and resources (Mason 1987:5). A matrilineage could have several *wato* on different islets on an atoll (Hess, Nero and Burton 2001:93). According to Mason, on Kwajalein Atoll, each of the smaller islets is usually a single *wato*; Kwajalein Islet has 36 separate named *watos* (Mason 1987:5). *Bwij* members might live on a *wato* or use it for food production (or copra production in the historical period). Most Marshallese lived on this land, on which was built a cook house and one or more sleeping houses and a copra shed (Tobin 1952:2). The sleeping house area was covered with small white coral stones from the beach in order to keep the yard neat and well-drained (Tobin 1952:2).

There were several categories of land. The first was family land (*lamoren* and *kabijukinen*) or the ancestral holdings of the maternal *bwij* (Tobin 1952:20). The next was *ninnin*, or land allocated from parent to offspring. However, this type of land ultimately belongs to the *bwij* and the children have only *dri jermal* or worker rights to it. The last category is divided land (*imonaie* or *burij in aje*), which is land given by the *iroij* for nursing him as a child, caring for him when ill, or taking care of or adopting one of his children. In pre-contact times, land might also be given to a warrior for bravery in battle, and other types of property besides land could also be given: (Tobin 1952:20).

While the land tenure system was governed by strict rules, it was also characterized by great flexibility, evolving in response to the needs of the Marshallese (Mason 1987:4-5). Pollock notes that while the Marshallese social system may at first glance appear “to be rigidly structured, ... the number of options available and the readiness with which these are utilized, particularly in the process of obtaining food, reveals the system to be very flexible” (1970:27).

Pollock describes the multiple avenues open to individuals in procuring access to land, which included: the flexibility of postmarital residence; inheritance rights through both consanguineal and affinal relatives; and the right to prepare copra at various sites (aided by the amenability of arboriculture to use by many people in quick succession) (1974:103). Other flexible aspects of the system included the number of small land parcels that were more easily manipulated than larger ones. Also, access to land could be inherited through either parent, or acquired from a paramount chief. All of these mechanisms provided “alternative mechanisms for the land-poor to increase their rights” (Pollock 1974:114). Some land use rights were inherited patrilineally; however, individuals usually forego usufruct rights before many generations have passed. According to Tobin “the system operates to equalize land rights, prevent over-crowding and serves primarily to strengthen the in-group” (1952:7).

Individuals with inherited rights in *bwij* land have unquestioned usufruct rights and may become *alab. Ajiri*, or those with paternal rights, have fewer rights. Adopted children have fewer rights than both (Tobin 1952:8). Members of the *bwij* worked this land, although sometimes others were allowed to use it. The head of the lineage or *alab* was in charge of the land and workers, and a share of food production and money collected through copra production (in the historical period) was collected by this individual. He then represented the lineage to the *iroij* or paramount chief, who also received a portion. Offerings of “first fruits” or *ekkan* were also presented to the *iroij* (Tobin 1952:4). While the *alab* has authority over the division of food and work assignments, he must consult with his *iroij* and *bwij* on issues concerning land division (Tobin 1952:4).

According to Pollock, a lineage retains its land use rights in fealty to one or more paramount chiefs (*iroij*) (1970:25). This individual retains the “ownership” rights to this land and

he alone can alienate it. In pre-contact times, the *iroij laplap*, or senior ranking member of the senior lineage of the ruling clan, was the owner of all land and moveable property in a socio-economic system that was compared to the feudal system of medieval Europe (Tobin 1952:13). However, subjects could not be evicted by the *iroij* without reason, and the more commoners an *iroij* had under him, the more power he had (Tobin 1952:13). The concept of *iroij* ownership of land was unquestioned until Japanese times, when the idea was introduced that the *iroij* owned the land and the *kajur* or commoners owned the trees growing there. Tobin notes that this was probably done to facilitate the acquisition of land needed for military installations, and that in 1952 the predominant view among the Marshallese was that land was “owned” jointly (Tobin 1952:14).

Concerning other atoll resources, reefs were sometimes claimed by *iroij* as *emo*, or *tabu*, if fishing was good in the area, and every atoll contained *emo* fishing sites (Tobin 1952:12). *Emo* areas could also be those producing other highly valued resources, such as coconut crabs. In 1934, the Japanese broke with this tradition by declaring the reefs open to everyone. Property rights extended out to waist-deep water until the Japanese declared all marine areas up to the high water mark as the property of the Japanese government (Tobin 1952:12). This allowed the administration to claim flotsam and jetsam, such as logs, barrels and lumber, which were highly prized in the pre-contact period (Tobin 1952:12).

As noted above, the northern Ratak atolls of Bikar, Bokak (Taongi), Toke, the island of Jemo and the islands of Erik and Luj on Erikub Atoll were used as pre-contact game reserves for sea turtles and nesting birds (Tobin 1952:23). Tobin reports that a ritual language was used on all of the bird islands, as well as other ritual associated with the first food gathering expedition of the year to these islands (1952:24). These islands were not inhabited due to water scarcity. The

Germans used this to justify the taking of Bikar and Bokak, which the Japanese then took possession of, although the Marshallese from northern Ratak continued to use them. The U.S. then took possession of these islands (Tobin 1952:12), although disputes continue today over Marshallese assertions of their rights to these atolls.

In the historic period, an exception to the general pattern of land tenure could be found on Likiep, which was purchased by two Europeans from the *iroij laplap* of northern Ratak in 1877. Tobin notes in 1952 that this land was worked by “mixed-blood descendants,” and there was some friction between them and the “owners” (1952:4). Mason also notes that land in both chains was sold by the *iroij* to foreign commercial interests, mainly on the southernmost atolls of Ebon, Namorik, Jaluit, Arno, Majuro and Mili, the same atolls that produced most of the copra in the Marshalls in the late 1800s (1987:15). However, the biggest single impact on the traditional land tenure system was the German ban on warfare, which removed the flexibility in the older system and froze the landholdings of each paramount chief and *bwij* (Mason 1987:15).

In the early days of the Trust Territory administration, various formulas and means were used to compensate Micronesians for land taken for public use (Mason 1984:23). The Japanese tradition of distinguishing between rights to land and rights to the trees on the land was abandoned in land use agreements from the 1950s onward (Mason 1984:23). As we will see, the methods of U.S. land acquisition on Kwajalein, as well as the distribution of land lease payments for those lands, have both been contentious issues on the atoll.

As a sign of the importance of land to the Marshallese, Tobin noted in 1952 that land disputes were a major cause of family quarrels, and that “people are always plotting to obtain more land by marriage today and by warfare, marriage and black magic (*ekabel*) in the past” (1952:13). Mason described the court system as being “overloaded” with disputes over land

rights and titles (1987:26). In 1952, Tobin noted that even though the Marshallese had been under three different colonial powers, they still possessed most of their land, unlike other indigenous groups around the world (1952:1). This is partly due to a policy forbidding the sale of land to non-Marshallese based on traditional law (Tobin 1952:1). However, Mason noted in 1987 that it was not uncommon for land to be rented or leased in urban areas or sold outright, sometimes by *alap* without *bwij* knowledge or the approval of the paramount chief, which results in disputes (1987:27). Younger people are also less likely to adhere to the customary system.

The retention of the majority of their land is one of the reasons Marshallese still have the power that they do today, as will be seen on Kwajalein. Tobin also noted in 1952 that steps were being taken to return lands taken by the U.S. military during the war and to pay retroactive rent for their use (1952:1). As noted above, the issue of land taken for military purposes is still a major issue in the Marshalls and on Kwajalein. However, while the continuation of traditional land tenure practices has been their strength in many ways, it has also presented serious obstacles to economic development (Carroll 1986).

In this research on Kwajalein, Marshallese and Americans both often use the term “landowners” when describing elites, as do many U.S. documents concerning the atoll. In using this term, they usually mean people at the *alap* level or higher.

### Chiefs & the Marshallese social hierarchy

The traditional Marshallese class system and land tenure system were closely related and functioned as an inter-related system that was the basis of social life. In historic times, each clan had a number of chiefs, who served as local leaders on each atoll. Where more than one clan existed on an atoll, the chief with the strongest following exacted tribute and respect from lesser

chiefs (Mason 1947:32). These chiefs held title to any landed property that the group possessed, and exercised considerable authority over the people who lived on that land.

Traditionally, the *iroij laplap* (or *iroij-elap*), or paramount chief, was the head (*alap*) of the highest-ranking matrilineage of a clan (Mason 1987:11). Like the *alap* of the lineage, he was the senior *bwij* male, having inherited the title from his mother's brother or older sibling. This individual was conferred with a great deal of sacred power and authority, and there were many *tabus* associated with his physical person and presence (Mason 1987:11). Aboriginally, some foods were prohibited to non-chiefs and his servants were chosen from the commoners (Mason 1947).

In pre-contact times, all dry land, as well as the reefs and lagoons, were controlled by 18 to 20 independent paramount chiefs (Mason 1987:11). Some chiefs ruled over a number of atolls, while others were limited to part of one atoll. Mason notes, however, that in no case did a chiefdom include portions of both chains (1987:11). Kiste notes that some atolls, like Bikini, due to factors of geography and environment, remained outside the domain of any paramount chief until contact (1974:20). Carucci also notes that chiefs of some isolated atolls had to live on the same piece of land as those that provided them with a living, resulting in a more egalitarian system than in locations where chiefs could live at a distance from their subjects (1997c:202). Reflecting these tendencies, decisions on Bikini were often made by an island council in historic times (Kiste 1974, Alkire 1972).

These chiefdoms were constantly shifting due to strategic maneuvering and warfare. It was not uncommon for a junior line of the *iroij bwij*, led by an ambitious younger brother or sister's son, to challenge the reigning paramount chief in battle or attempt an assassination (Mason 1987:11). Kiste notes that conflict within chiefly lineages was common (1974:20).



Knowledge of magic, medicine, navigation and canoe building were all jealously guarded and transmitted within the *iroij*'s group or to individuals designated by the *iroij* (Tobin 1952:18,29).

In addition to north-south differences in chiefly authority, there were slight differences in chiefly authority between the two chains as well (Mason 1987:12). In the Ralik chain, rights and obligations were between the paramount chief and the *alap* of each *kajur* lineage under his control. In the Ratak chain, there was the intermediate relationship of the *iroij erik* or lesser chiefs, with each lesser chief having responsibility for a number of *kajur* lineages, and the *alap* of each lineage answering to the *iroij erik* (Mason 1987:12). In the Ralik chain, the two-class system distinguished between the *iroij* or upper class and the *kajur* class or lower class/commoners (Mason 1987:10-11). Members of this upper class, in addition to having special dress, ornamentation and tattooing, had rights to special foods, the better parts of some foods, and the best land on an atoll (Mason 1947:54). The upper class was divided into the *iroij* proper (glossed as "royalty") and the *bwirak* ("nobility"). In terms of the ranking of matrilineages: a *bwij* that traces its ancestry to a woman of *iroij* class is *iroij*. Children with both parents of true *iroij* class were *bwio*. If an *iroij* man marries less than *iroij*, his children are *bwirak*. The daughters pass this status on even if they marry into a lower social class, while sons who marry below themselves lose this *bwirak* status (Mason 1987:10-11).

These traditional rank distinctions were strictly observed and Mason noted in 1987 that they were still recognized especially by the older generations (1987:11). Traditionally, it was rare for a woman of high rank to marry an inferior, but a woman's status as *leroj* (the female form of *iroij*) or *bwirak* would be retained by the lineage and its descendants as long as the female bloodlines were kept pure. It was impossible for a *kajur bwij* to move upward or for a *bwirak* matrilineage to regain *iroij* rank (Mason 1987:11).

In terms of the relationship between the classes, the system has been described at times as a relationship between “owners” and “users,” although Mason believes it is a more complex system of rights and obligations than these terms would imply (1987:12). Tobin describes this relationship as a form of “joint ownership” (1952:14), but also compared it to the European feudal system (Tobin 1952:4). In this relationship, *kajur* lineages were expected to maintain the productivity of the land and provide material goods and services to the *iroij* (Mason 1987:12). These include *ekkan* offerings of breadfruit, pandanus and other foods, as well as mats and other materials. These goods were to be given to the chief whenever he visited the area. *Kajur* also provided communal labor and men for battle (Mason 1987:12).

In return, the *iroij* was obligated to provide leadership, relief from natural disasters, and wisdom and knowledge in special areas, such as navigation, sorcery, medicine, legends and genealogical history that was the privileged knowledge of the chiefly classes (Mason 1987:12). Carucci describes local people and chiefs as co-dependent, based on the old saying that “the chief’s strength is his/her *kajur* (commoners, also meaning strength)” (1997c:200). According to Kiste, the amount of power and influence a paramount chief had was in direct proportion to the number of atolls and islands in his domain and the number of *kajur* under his authority. The chief maintained control by his success and reputation as a war leader (Kiste 1974:20). Commoners could improve their status through success in battle, for which they were usually awarded land or other goods by the paramount chief (Kiste 1974:20).

In looking at the effects of colonial contact, it is important to acknowledge that Pacific Islanders were not necessarily passive subjects of colonial domination, and that they had complex politics of their own which were brought into the colonial encounter. In a discussion of

the socio-political development of the Carolines, which would apply equally well to the Marshalls, Petersen notes that

When Europeans arrived on the scene, with their histories of imperial expansion, their technologies of domination, and their lusts for subordination, they did not encounter people who were unfamiliar with the possibilities of empire. Rather, they found populations who were not only committed traders but already possessed fairly sophisticated concepts concerning the possibilities of overlordship, well-developed commitments to making use of it, and skills and tactics for resisting it (2000:26).

The traditional roles of paramount chiefs began to change with contact, as the introduction of European goods, such as weapons, tools and ships, allowed some chiefs to consolidate their realms (Carucci 1997c:202-3). As one example of this impact, the Russian explorer Kotzebue gave tools and weapons to the chief of Aur Atoll, who then extended his control over other atolls (Carucci 1988:37). In the period before 1885, when the Germans created the Marshall Islands Protectorate, war among chiefs was common. Strongholds of what Mason calls “feudal aristocracy” were located at Majuro, Arno, Jaluit, Maloelap and Ailinglapalap (Mason 1947:11). One of the biggest contact events affecting the chiefly system was the prohibition on warfare put in place by the German colonial government in the late 1800s, with the support of missionaries. This served to freeze political positions in their late 19<sup>th</sup> century form (Tobin in Carucci 1988:35). Similar prohibitions regarding murder meant that commoners could no longer depose despotic chiefs (Carucci 1997c:203).

Carucci has asserted that ideas of “traditional” chiefs have been colored by European conceptions of these systems as being similar to those of feudal Europe (1988:34). This creates

problems in trying to reconstruct pre-contact social orders, as these representations may obscure “the shape of chieftainship in various places and at various times” (Carucci 1988:34). These preconceptions can be seen in ideas of land “ownership”: Carucci proposes that “the idea that the chiefs actually owned the land is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century idea that developed as chiefs and Westerners worked together to shape a new concept of the chief” (1988:39). In traditional Marshallese life, “Many goods could...be appropriated by [a chief] without implying that he actually ‘owned’ all land” (Carucci 1988:37). Carucci’s conclusion is that the idea of a Marshallese “chief” after contact became “a pliable ideological construct that derives from a comparison of local hierarchies and largely European ideas of ‘the chief,’ perhaps with Japanese notions incorporated as well” (1988:33). The idea of the “paramount chief” is one that was particularly “created and supported by Europeans” (1988:35).

In the following discussion, proposals are put forward regarding how chiefly power was altered in Micronesia and the Marshalls by colonial contact, including the seemingly contradictory processes of chiefs losing and gaining powers simultaneously. However, it is clear that while they lost certain *kinds* of traditional powers, colonialism also presented opportunities for *some* chiefs to gain new powers, or to mitigate their losses by gains in spheres of opportunity presented by colonizers, including the “need” of colonial administrations for easily-identifiable “kings” and “queens.”

In evaluating the impacts of colonial powers on the chiefly order, Mason notes that German rule signaled “the beginning of the erosion of their powers” (Mason 1947:12). Others have noted that colonial rule both weakened *and* strengthened the authority of traditional leaders (Petersen 1999:174). This is an important point: Petersen in particular notes that “Authority vested in leaders may have been increased or decreased, or both may have occurred

simultaneously, in different social spheres” (1999:175). In terms of the Marshall Islands, the loss of some powers for some chiefs was balanced by gains in others, particularly in the control of trade (Dye in Beardley 1994:13-14). Because it is difficult to know with any certainty what Micronesian political systems were like pre-contact, it is also difficult to chart changes that occurred postcontact (Petersen 1999:175).

In the context of the Marshall Islands, Carucci notes that “Contact with the West not only elevated high chiefs, it “fossilized” and extended their positions of power...” (1997c:203). While researchers have connected the development of paramount chieftainships to the more productive and populous central and southern atolls in the prehistoric period, Carucci believes that this was also a historical development as a result of greater contact with Europeans in these areas (1988:38). Chiefs on these centrally-located atolls also gained power by positioning themselves as intermediaries in the copra trade (Carucci 1988:40, Carucci 1997c:203). Kwajalein Atoll was one of those centrally-located atolls where paramount chiefs emerged in the colonial period:

The sailing vessels that Europeans gave Kabua on Jaluij in exchange for his cooperation in extending copra production throughout the Ralik chain...enabled him to consolidate his rule of the southwestern Ralik chain and to extend his influence to the atolls to the north. Moreover, when homicide was discouraged by missionary teachers, then outlawed by German decree, primordial checks on autocratic abuse were eliminated (Carucci 1997c:203).

In addition to banning warfare, the German administration formally recognized chiefs and made them the legal owners of the islands and atolls they controlled (Kiste 1974:21). The Germans (and then Japanese) also further defined the rights and obligations of Marshallese

paramount chiefs, which included their right to a percentage of copra harvests from lands under their control and the obligation of paying taxes levied on their subjects (Kiste 1974:21).

Peattie asserts that chiefly authority continued to erode during Japanese times, as the Japanese continued to adhere to policies of their Spanish and German predecessors (1988:75). However, he also notes that these effects were “greatly moderated on the remoter atolls of the Carolines and Marshalls, where there was no official Japanese presence” (1988:77). Chiefs often became minor functionaries in the Japanese bureaucratic structure (Peattie 1988:76).

In addition to their role in the copra trade, Marshallese chiefs also became intermediaries between colonial powers and local people, which served to increase their power (Carucci 1997a:229). However, these new roles altered the traditional views of some chiefs as powerful and sacred beings, surrounded by *tabus*: chiefs have lost some of this sacredness by “dirtying their hands” in the world of mundane things such as business (Carucci 1997c:202). Europeans encouraged these new roles, under the assumption that it was a feudal system, as “It left no doubts in European minds about who controlled the land. The chiefs became a small intermediary group with whom traders could deal – a much easier task than having to organize an entire labour force” (Carucci 1988:40).

Respect for chiefs has also diminished as chiefs gained financial advantage, yet did not necessarily share or redistribute the wealth in the traditional manner. As Carucci notes, “From the chiefs’ perspective...the situation has changed. Since the money they now control did not come to them from the commoners, they have no reason to ‘re-’ distribute it (1997c:209). In response, tribute has not always been given to chiefs by commoners, because they fail to reciprocate (Carucci 1997a:29). In general, the trend has been that “Marshallese chiefs today...have sacrificed their rank to increase their power” (Carucci 1997c:209). However, this is not to say

that chiefs today are powerless by traditional standards, as “the continued deference paid to them gives evidence of the potency of the idea of proper chiefly demeanor in the Marshall Islands today” (Carucci 1997c:199). As one indication of this continuing power, traditional Marshallese leaders often hold high political office and other government positions (Carucci 1997c:205). However, they are clearly much more contested and complex figures than they have been in the past (Carucci 1997c:201).

With the American administration of the Marshall Islands, “while some American decisions undercut chiefly power, the overall trend was to increase it” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:285). This was aided by the fact that Americans used chiefs as intermediaries in the copra trade, where the Japanese had used their own traders. This allowed chiefs and those representing them to “handle much of the copra trade, at times to their own benefit” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:285). Also, “American attention in the form of official events and publicity opportunities gave some traditional leaders a head start in gaining influence in the new order” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2002:285). However, determining who was “the chief” in Micronesian was not always clear-cut: rank was often disputed, or those that ascended were not always the highest local leaders. Poyer, Falgout and Carucci note as one example that in Chuuk the Navy appointed leaders as “chiefs” with no way to confirm their actual social ranking (2002:284). As a result of this kind of selection in the Marshalls, “high-ranking Marshallese strengthened their land rights for decades after the war, as American officials formally recognized them as key negotiators between landowning groups and the government” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:285).

American administrators were fundamentally uncomfortable with the power given to and demanded by chiefs in the traditional system: Carucci notes that Americans were “dissatisfied”

with the chiefly hierarchy in the Marshall Islands (1997c:205). Despite their “ideological objections,” however, these administrations needed chiefs as intermediaries to communicate with and organize local people, and so “they could not live without them” (Carucci 1997c:206). As Carucci notes, “Marshall Islanders, therefore, continued to have powerful chiefs not because Americans liked them, but because Americans needed them” (Carucci 1997c:206). This tension was also expressed in the fundamental conflict between the American policies of trying to respect “custom” while also promoting democracy (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:283). This American discomfort with the chiefly hierarchy is a very important “tension of empire” on Kwajalein Atoll.

The American focus on a simplified feudal system was reflected in Navy administrators’ notions of native “kings” and “queens” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2002:285). This was the case of Kwajalein as well, as the *iroij laplap* often had an identification badge describing him as the “King” of the atoll. And as noted in Chapter 6, there were also cases where administrators on Ebeye had trouble figuring out who exactly the “King” of Ebeye was. Such a focus was undoubtedly attractive to the U.S. military as a hierarchical organization. American residents of Kwaj told me that they also felt that in general, the American administration had not wanted to “deal with” the complexities of Marshallese culture as revealed in land negotiations and compensation issues: hence a focus on “kings” and “queens.” But there were costs for simplifying a complex system: Tobin noted in 1952 that while the Marshallese land tenure system may seem “overly complex, it has developed to meet the needs of this particular groups of people and is an integral part of the culture. Any radical change by outsiders would disturb the society and do irreparable damage” (1952:1).



When land negotiations got complicated, the U.S. military on Kwaj often condemned land, while noting that compensation would be negotiated at a later date (Host Nation Archives 1968a:6). In addition, a simplified scheme by which land lease money for military use of Kwajalein is given to upper level leaders to distribute to those under them has created an inequitable payment system. As noted above for the Marshalls in general, the failure of chiefs and other leaders of Kwajalein to distribute land lease money and other goods has undermined in some ways the traditional relationship between elites and commoners. As chiefs have been reified as owners of the land, "...local people often feel disenfranchised when the chiefs or land heads do not redistribute goods in line with the reciprocal responsibilities that are considered appropriate for chiefs" (Carucci 1997a:31). However, despite being more complex and conflicted figures, they remain powerful in many ways on Kwajalein, in a traditional sense (especially for older generations), as well as politically and economically. Carucci also notes that while

the United States was accused of devaluing chiefs in favor of a more populist approach to governance in the late 1940s, the ill-focused and unmonitored monetary infusions that began in the late 1960s and intensified in the "post-colonial" era have produced the seeds of 'class' as a reification of rank sans recursive controls (1997a:420).

In a sense, allowing certain elites to control major decision-making processes was "one such policy of expedience" on the part of the U.S. administration (Carucci 1997a:420).

Issues of distribution are particularly important in the story of Kwajalein Atoll because the failure by some *alabs* and *iroijs* to distribute land lease money to those under them has left some populations on Ebeye with little to live on and nothing to fall back on, including some Mid-Atoll Corridor Islanders. Problems regarding the distribution of Kwaj largesse were

identified by both American and Marshallese in this research project as one of *the* core issues on Kwajalein Atoll. Marshallese, particularly left-out landowners and commoners, have appealed to the U.S. government to put a more equitable system into place, but the U.S. usually responds that it cannot interfere in such sovereign matters. And in many ways the U.S. government handed the dilemma over to the RMI government with the signing of the Compact, further complicating the situation with the addition of other inter-atoll power issues, noted below. While this is a contentious subject that many avoid, it is absolutely essential to discussions of other issues on the atoll. As Hanlon notes, “A history of colonialism in American Micronesia must account for these sad conflicts as well; there is no simple story that is only about external efforts at domination and local means of resistance” (1998:13).

#### Inter-atoll relationships & politics

In terms of the cultural and social differences between atolls, “...inter-atoll differences appear to be differences of emphasis, such as the relative power of paramount chiefs and nobles in the social order, rather than basic qualitative differences in culture” (Spoehr 1949: page). Atolls were intimately connected to their neighbors by shared clan affiliations, and intermarriage. These linkages were critical to survival on atolls, particularly in the event of a typhoon or drought.

In terms of inter-atoll travel, with some of the most technically advanced sailing canoes in the Pacific, such travel in the Marshalls was frequent, although most contact was between atolls that lay in the same chain (Alkire 1978:132). In her 1970 analysis of economic life on Namu Atoll, approximately 25 miles southeast of Kwajalein Atoll, Pollock noted that visiting between atolls such as these was not a new phenomenon for the Marshallese (1970:40). She also

notes that large sailing canoes used to travel between the islands carrying war and trading parties. More extensively, trade was regularly conducted between the drier northern atolls that grew arrowroot and some turmeric and the wetter southern atolls with more breadfruit, taro and pandanus (Pollock 1970:40).

As another sign of the traditional mobility of the Marshallese, Hezel notes that the population of Ebon in the 1850s was always changing, as portions of the population would arrive or depart with *iroij* and their entourages as they made their rounds collecting tribute and conducting other kinds of business (1983:202-203). These patterns of movement began to change in the colonial period: inter-atoll traffic and was discouraged by both German and Japanese administrations (Mason 1947:7). In a kind of feedback loop, the decline in such travel led to a decline in the use and construction of outrigger canoes, and over time increased dependency on colonial transport, and eventually Western-made boats and gasoline.

In terms of political control, Alkire notes that a chief of Ailinglaplap was able to gain control over most of Ralik chain, minus the atolls farthest north, Enewetak and Ujelang (1978). While the chain was divided into two “districts,” and the paramount chief then made the rounds of these atolls in order to collect tribute and maintain control, he and his successors rarely traveled north of Kwajalein, because “they were too impoverished to provide any worthwhile tribute” (Alkire 1978:133). This resulted in a fairly centralized system, providing a wider exchange of people and goods across these environmental zones. The Ratak chain was never unified under a single paramount chief. Maintaining control of large areas was difficult because of a “tendency toward fission” as local chiefs challenged their authority (Alkire 1978:134). In regard to the relationship between the Ralik and Ratak chains: “In former times, dialectic and cultural differences existed between the Ratak and Ralik chains, but today these differences are

not sufficiently marked to serve as social barriers” (Spoehr 1949). As noted above, there were some minor social differences between the two chains, particularly in the order of the chiefly hierarchy.

As noted, most inter-atoll interaction was with other atolls in the same chain. In addition, no chief was able prehistorically to extend his control over portions of both chains (Mason 1987:11). Mason notes that in the early-to-mid-1800s, a chief of the Ratak chain was able to repel an attack from the Ralik chain, and “since that time the peoples of Ralik and Radak have remained politically independent of each other” (1947:154). It did become very evident to me in doing this research that there is a very fundamental split between the RMI government in Majuro and Kwajalein landowners. While some Marshallese and Americans felt that this was a result of power struggles over the money generated by the American presence on Kwajalein, other Marshallese felt that it was a result of traditional tensions between the two areas politically. The nature and history of this split and its modern-day impacts on Kwajalein Atoll clearly deserve further attention.

## CHAPTER 4

### COLONIALISM, HISTORY & MISSILE TESTING

#### Pacific History & Strategic Use

This chapter will provide historical context for the more focused discussion of the U.S. role on Kwajalein. It will also examine the nature of “colonialism” and “imperialism,” two commonly-used but often undefined terms, and debates over whether the U.S. was and is a colonial and imperial power. Clearly, the U.S. does not quite fit the pattern of “old” colonial systems of economic exploitation and settlement, epitomized by the British Empire. So this chapter asks: Are we a colonial power in the Pacific and Micronesia, and if so, what kind of colonial power are we? Are we a colonial power in the Marshall Islands today and on Kwajalein Atoll? What emerges are some fundamental “tensions of empire” in these U.S. relationships in the Pacific that have parallels on Kwajalein Atoll. Historical context on the Marshall Islands and Kwajalein Atoll will also be provided.

Contact between Europeans and Pacific Islanders was initiated in 1521, when Magellan’s *Trinidad* landed on the southern coast of Guam (Hezel 1983:1). Though first sighted in 1525, contact between the Marshallese and the Spanish did not take place until 1529, and contacts were brief (Hezel 1983:13,16-17). The Marianas Islands in western Micronesia were the first to experience sustained contact with Europeans: by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they had already been under Spanish control and missionary influence for several decades (Hezel 1983:47).

In the colonial Pacific, different periods are marked by the ascendance of various European powers, each with its own set of strategic and economic interests. The Spanish navy dominated the Pacific throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, drawn mostly by the lure of Indonesian spices and the Orient trade (Hezel 1983:4). After the Spanish, the Portuguese and Dutch come to dominate the spice and China trade. The British entered the Pacific in force in the late 1700s, soon to be followed by American whaling interests (Hezel 1983:60). Between 1815 and 1840, French and Russian scientific expeditions also appear in the Pacific (Hezel 1983:88).

Over time, European and other outside economic interests in the Pacific would range from the collection of sea cucumber, sandalwood and shell for the China trade, to sugar plantations in Hawaii and Fiji, and phosphate mining on Nauru and Anguar (Denoon 1997:154-159). By the late 1800s, coconut oil was dominating Pacific commerce: this trade and subsequent copra production were major Micronesian exports (Hezel 1983:210-216).

The United States entered the Pacific in 1783, in the form of a ship, the *Harriet*, filled with ginseng and bound for markets in China (Hezel 1983:83). American activities in the Pacific then expanded over time to include those of “missionaries, New England whalers, and naval officers” (Hanlon 1994:110). American whaling interests were particularly prominent in Micronesia in the 1840s and 1850s, with Ponape and Kosrae serving as stopovers for “wood, water and women,” as well as fresh foods (Hezel 1983:132-133). These contacts had devastating impacts on Micronesian populations, with smallpox and venereal disease doing particular harm (Hezel 1983:141-142). In the 1850s, American missionaries began to appear in the Pacific, with the twin goals of winning idolatrous Islanders over to Christianity, and saving Islanders from the “licentious commerce” of Western influence (Hezel 1983:142).

On the whole, U.S. interests in the Pacific have been focused primarily on military and strategic uses. This orientation makes any discussion of U.S. “colonialism” somewhat different from “traditional” European economic colonialism, usually best characterized by British rule in India and Africa. This strategic interest in the Pacific began at an early date, as

Both American Samoa and Guam were coveted by the U.S. Navy as strategically located coaling stations in the south and far western Pacific, and while economic concerns (particularly the sugar industry) were involved, the strategic value of Pearl Harbor figured into American calculations (Kiste1994:227).

The U.S. began its colonial rule in the Pacific with the acquisitions in the 1800s of Alaska, the Midway Islands, Samoa and Hawaii, in what Johnson describes as the “prelude to empire” (1995:129). However, these acquisitions were not uncontested at home, as “Most of the arguments over imperialism that would be brought forth later in connection with the Spanish-American War ... were given preliminary airing at this time” (Johnson 1995:142). Over the years, the U.S.’ Pacific acquisitions have come to be seen as “an anomaly of American foreign policy,” which makes their entangled histories “a revealing window through which to view very characteristic and mainstream currents of thought in the histories of U.S. foreign relations, American expansionism, and American exceptionalism” (Friedman 2001:146).

Debates over U.S. rule in the Pacific came to a head with the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893 by a group of American plantation owners. Critics particularly questioned the legality and morality of this act. As Johnson describes the debate, “Annexation of noncontiguous territory, for example, was assailed as a violation of traditional and sound national policy by one group and upheld as its logical extension by another” (Johnson 1995:142). This debate ultimately

focused attention “on the fundamental question of imperialism, its morality, and its compatibility with American institutions...” (Johnson 1995:143-144). This fundamental question is one that has created tensions for Americans both past and present in the Pacific.

Despite these earlier territorial acquisitions, the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898 is often seen as *the* real beginning of American expansionism. As Johnson notes, over an 18-month period in 1898-1899, the U.S. took control of Hawaii, Wake Island, Guam, the Philippines, and the eastern islands of Samoa in the Pacific, and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean (1995:145). Combining idealistic notions

with the crassest of material motives,” Johnson notes that “What made it more remarkable was its achievement by a nation that was itself a former European colony and had more than a century of anticolonial rhetoric in its political tradition (1995:145).

The acquisition of the Philippines has been a particular source of controversy, particularly in regard to the brutal fashion in which the nationalist “insurrection” was put down by the U.S. Filipino nationalists originally welcomed U.S. assistance in removing the Spanish colonial presence, but soon came to find that independence was not what the U.S. had in mind (Rafael 2000:10). Developments in photographic technology during that time resulted in “an explosion of photographic images,” and photographs of dead Filipinos contributed to debates in the U.S. over the brutality of the war (Rafael 2000:76,87). Despite such evidence, William Howard Taft described the crushing of the nationalist movement in the following manner: ““there never was a war conducted, whether against inferior races or not, in which there was more compassion and restraint and more generosity...”” (in Rafael 2000:20).



The acquisition of Wake Island (Enen-Kio) is also a subject of debate. In its history of Wake Island, the Kwajalein base newspaper, the *Kwajalein Hourglass*, noted that “Americans first landed on Wake in 1899, claiming it as a territory and building a military base on it” (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Nov. 29, 2002:5). However, the history of its acquisition is actually a bit more clouded. Dirk Spennemann has particularly called the legality of the American annexation of the island into question. After the acquisition of Guam and the Philippines, the U.S. desperately needed a submarine cable relay station for communications between its new Pacific conquests and the mainland. The U.S. “claimed” Wake Island, although no documents concerning its official annexation have ever been found (Spennemann 1998). Prehistorically, “There can be little doubt...that Wake was already known to and used by the Marshallese” (Spennemann 1998:1). Carucci notes that oral accounts from Enewetak recount chiefly battles for control of Enen-Kio (1997a:3). Legally, it should have remained with the rest of what became the TTPI and be part of the Marshall Islands today (Spennemann 1998). This is another bone of contention in U.S.-Marshallese relations, as the island has been used for a variety of strategic and military purposes, including its use in theater missile defense systems testing in coordination with Kwajalein.

Hawaii has also been central to U.S. strategic ambitions in the Pacific. Despite debate over the ethical and legal issues involved in its acquisition, Hawaii was finally (and reluctantly) annexed in 1898. From 1900 to 1941, five major American business interests controlled all aspects of life in the islands, “repressing the political rights and personal freedoms of native Hawaiians and increasing the numbers of Asian immigrants brought to work the sugar plantations of the territory” (Hanlon 1994:110). Included in the repressions were efforts to suppress Hawaiian culture and language (Silva 2004:2-3). By this time, native Hawaiians had

been dispossessed of most of their land (Linnekin 1997:206-207). Militarization of the Hawaiian Islands began in the 1930s, eventually resulting in the military sector overtaking agriculture as the mainstay of the Hawaiian economy (Kiste 1994:250).

World War II marks another turning point in U.S. strategic interests in the Pacific. While Guam has been of strategic interest for its location and its harbors since Europeans first came to the region, its strategic importance to the U.S. increased after it was recaptured from the Japanese in 1944, when its militarization began. It then remained under U.S. naval administration after the war. In 1950, the U.S. Congress passed the Guam Organic Act, making Guam an unincorporated territory of the U.S., and its residents U.S. citizens (Kiste 1994:242). Guam then served as an air base for the U.S. wars in Indochina, and as the main communications station in Asia and the Pacific, as well as the main nuclear weapons storage location (Gale 1979:141).

Emerging from the war as an economic and political superpower, the U.S. then “embarked on an imperial course to guarantee its security in the postwar Pacific” by acquiring the Micronesian islands formerly controlled by Japan (Friedman 2001:page). This acquisition was important because it “represents the only region of the world where the United States deviated from its wartime political pledge not to obtain direct physical control over foreign territory” (Friedman 2001:xxv). That the U.S. would take a colony, especially at a time when anti-colonial independence movements were taking place all over the world, was also a source of controversy. Micronesia would then become “one of the latest, largest, and longest-held colonial acquisitions in the modern world” (Falgout 1995:99).

This acquisition of Micronesia, and the retention of other Pacific holdings, resulted in accusations that the U.S. was attempting to turn the Pacific Basin into an exclusive American

strategic preserve, or an “American lake” (Friedman 2001:1). Friedman notes that such accusations were not without merit, as there were plans to “blanket the entire Pacific Basin with American bases” (2001:17). As a sign of the U.S.’ new superpower status in the region, early postwar discussions by the U.S. of establishing these military bases “largely failed to discuss the ease or difficulty of obtaining use rights from other sovereign powers” (Friedman 2001:23).

Taking control of Micronesia after World War II did make strategic sense, as the acquisition of the Philippines and Hawaii in the late 1800s left the area in between them as a strategic weakness (Johnson 1995:156). These strategic needs became central to most of Micronesia (except Guam) becoming the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI or TT) in 1947. The TTPI was created as a United Nations “strategic trust,” the only one of its kind (Kiste 1994:229). Under the terms of the trusteeship agreement, “the area could be used as the United States considered necessary for defense” (Kiste 1994:229).

While the primary motivation in the acquisition of Micronesia was that of “strategic denial” to other powers, particularly the Soviet Union, the TTPI also served a variety of other strategic and military uses in postwar era. In the Marshall Islands, Bikini and Enewetak Atolls were used as nuclear testing sites, and Kwajalein Atoll was and is used for missile testing. Since serving as the base from which the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings took place (Kiste 1976:63), the Northern Marianas have served a variety of military purposes. From 1951-1962, Saipan was used by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency as a guerrilla training base for Chinese Nationalist troops (Kiste 1994:230; Lutz 1984a:4; Gale 1979:8). Among many other current uses, the U.S. operates a live-fire bombing range in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, reportedly the only such range for U.S. use in the Pacific (Whitman 2002:18).

Strategic use by outside powers has affected more than just Micronesia. As in many other parts of the world, with contact, the islands of the Pacific became a focus of strategic squabbling between European powers. As noted above for the TTPI, islands have been claimed at times solely for the purpose of denying them to other nations, in what Donald Johnson calls “preventive imperialism” (1995:160). In many cases, these powers did not even know what resources or people these islands might contain, or what economic or strategic interests these islands might ultimately serve, leading to acquisition followed by justifications for acquisition after the fact (Johnson 1995). Regardless of the motivations for acquisition, every island in the Pacific had come under colonial rule or influence by 1900 (Chappell 1999:138).

While the colonizing powers in question and their strategic needs have changed, this instrumental use of various Pacific islands has been a constant over time. In addition to the U.S., new contestants entering the fray over time included Japan, Australia and New Zealand, the latter two ironically being former colonies like the U.S. As a result, many island groups in the Pacific have been governed not just by one or two colonial powers, but by a succession. The Marshall Islands, for example, were successively colonized by the Spanish, Germans, Japanese and Americans, each with its own needs and justifications, both strategic and economic, for being there.

These strategic uses have had far-reaching and long-lasting effects for the islands involved. As Firth notes,

The strategic needs of external states had played a large part in determining how the islands would be divided and redivided between colonial powers in the first half of the [20<sup>th</sup>] century, and they were to be just as significant in influencing the character of decolonisation... (1994:301).

Many former powers continue to influence island nations, either through their continued physical presence in places such as French Polynesia and Kwajalein Atoll, or through the ties of foreign aid. As a 2002 issue of *Pacific Magazine* focused on regional security issues observed, many Pacific Island nations still remain “in the orbit” of particular powers, with the Marshall Islands clearly remaining “in the orbit” of the U.S. (Whitney 2002:13-17).

The physical geography of the Pacific Basin has also played an important part in its strategic usefulness. While the remoteness of some locations, such as Enewetak and Bikini Atolls in the Marshall Islands, delayed contact and intensive European impacts, this remoteness also made them perfect sites for Cold War nuclear testing (Firth 1987:2-3). In addition to their remoteness, these atolls were chosen because of their small populations, their lack of political power (Firth 1987:2), and their conduciveness to military secrecy (Barker 2004:17,19). As such, colonialism and nuclear testing have gone hand-in-hand in the Pacific (Firth 1997:338).

The U.S., British, and French all conducted nuclear tests in the Pacific during the Cold War. In addition to the tests conducted in the Marshall Islands (described below), the U.S. also tested nuclear weapons on Johnston Atoll and Christmas Island in the 1950s and 60s (Firth 1997:324). Tests on Johnston Atoll included nuclear tests in space using missiles (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War 1991:46). In addition to sites in Australia, the British conducted tests on Christmas Island and on Malden Island (Firth 1997:324). France used atolls in the Tuamotu Archipelago, part of French Polynesia, for above-ground and underground nuclear testing starting in 1966 and continuing until 1996, despite regional and international protest (Firth 1997:324). The French presence continues to be a source of controversy in the Pacific for its secrecy regarding the environmental and human health effects of its nuclear tests (Firth 1997:338-355; Firth 1994:314-316).

Despite a tendency to separate discussions of missile testing from discussions of nuclear testing, the two were an intimately connected part of the Cold War nuclear arms race, with missiles serving as the critical long-range delivery mechanism for nuclear warheads (Wilkes, van Frank and Hayes 1991:4-5). In the Pacific, the U.S. has conducted missile tests in the Hawaiian Islands (Jones 1993) and on Johnston and Kwajalein Atolls, among other locations. Alaska has also become a more recent testing site. Johnston Atoll is also the only known site where missiles have been tested with nuclear warheads in the Pacific (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War 1991:46). The Soviet Union and China also conducted missile tests in the Pacific during the Cold War (Firth 1987:viii). While missile testing has proven to be less immediately damaging to humans and the environment than nuclear testing, it has had other devastating and far-reaching impacts on island communities, some of which are the subject of this research.

Johnston Atoll has also served a variety of military purposes. Claimed by both the U.S. and the Kingdom of Hawaii in 1858, and annexed by the U.S. in 1898 (Pendleton 1998:44), the atoll has been used for both nuclear and missile tests, as noted. The atoll has most recently been used for the storage and destruction of chemical weapons, although those operations on the atoll are now complete and the Johnston Atoll Chemical Agent Disposal System has been closed. According to an EPA website, the majority of the chemical weapons stored on Johnston had been moved from Okinawa in 1971, as well as materials from Germany and the Solomon Islands (EPA Waste Programs website). Environmental concerns were raised particularly after a series of fires and accidents in the mid-1990s, as well as a typhoon (Pendleton 1998:45). In a bizarre but common U.S. twist, Johnston Atoll is also a National Wildlife Refuge administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It has been known particularly as a refuge for seabirds (on the

parts of the atoll not used for military purposes), and been visited by endangered species such as the green sea turtle and Hawaiian monk seal.

Despite the end of the Cold War, the Pacific in general and Micronesia in particular have remained strategically important to the U.S. military. This continuing interest in places such as Kwajalein is reflected in the terms of the Compact of Free Association between the U.S. and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, which came into force in 1986 and was recently renegotiated. As Kiste observes,

The freely associated governments have authority over their internal and foreign affairs except as they might interfere with American strategic requirements...in the last analysis, the United States has the final authority to determine what does and does not constitute a matter of defence (1994:234).

Other U.S. holdings have remained strategically important as well. On Guam, while Japanese tourism has become an increasingly important part of the economy, the military sector still predominates (Kiste 1994:242). In the mid-1990s, the island regained strategic importance with the loss of bases in the Philippines and the threat of closures in Okinawa (Whitman 2002:18). Guam has again become an important military training area, as well as a supply and deployment hub for the “war on terrorism” in Asia (Whitney 2002:14, 18). As a sign of this renewed importance, military construction funding on Guam since 2000 has totaled over \$300 million (Whitman 2002:18). While tourism has replaced the military in recent decades as the primary industry of Hawai’i, the military runs a close second (Ferguson and Turnbull 1999:1-2). As just one indicator of the militarization of the Hawaiian Islands, military landholdings on Oahu alone are estimated to include 16% to 23% of the total land area (Ferguson and Turnbull 1999:1).

### Common themes in U.S. Colonialism in the Pacific

In looking at the acquisition of territories in the Pacific by the U.S. and their subsequent administration, some common themes emerge, and some of these themes have also played themselves out on Kwajalein Atoll. One theme is the tendency to acquire territories with little knowledge of the place in question, no particular strategic or economic justification for acquiring it, and no unifying policy for administration. Justifications for U.S. acquisitions in many cases came after the fact. In regard to the acquisitions of 1898, “the policy makers of 1898 knew little about the area and the actual interests of Americans there...” (Johnson 1995:146). Acquisition could hinge on pressure from small interest groups: the acquisition of the Philippines was promoted by a small group of influential American men (Johnson 1995:147). The strategic rationalizations for the taking of the Philippines were developed after American troops had seized the islands, not before (Johnson 1995:156). As a result, “in the absence of any preconceived plan for governing the Philippines, no one knew what U.S. policy was or should be” (Johnson 1995:149).

This is important, as the U.S. has also been charged with a failure to have a coherent policy for Micronesia: as Glassner notes, “the empire of the United States was acquired enthusiastically but administered absentmindedly” (in Peterson 1999:146). Gale notes that “In many instances, American policy has been as much the result of ‘effective non decision-making’ as it has the result of conscious, coherent, deliberative policy” (1979:17). Kiste has linked this lack of policy to the myth of American exceptionalism. He states, “In contrast to Great Britain at



the zenith of its empire, a nation that does not perceive itself as a colonial power will neither create a colonial service nor develop colonial policies” (Kiste 1993:68). This denial also created problems during Micronesian status negotiations, as Petersen notes that “Never having acknowledged that its status in Micronesia was in fact that of a colonial power, the U.S. has seemed unprepared to decolonize the area” (1995:77). As noted in Chapter 6, long-time American residents of Kwajalein have also come to the conclusion that many problems on the atoll stem from the failure to have a long range plan for the U.S.-Marshallese relationship, or if there is a plan, to follow it.

The alienation of land has been another major theme in U.S. colonialism in the Pacific, as the establishment of military control was often followed by land confiscations, condemnations, or other wholesale alienation of land from Islanders. After the Americans took Guam from the Japanese in 1944, the indigenous Chamorro anticipated being able to return to their lands, “but the military had different ideas. New security threats required new approaches to island defense, and massive land expropriations must be expected for future bases, the Navy concluded in 1945” (Maga 1988:187). As Friedman notes, “the Navy had final say in all cases of land appropriation and wartime claims to damages” (1997:54). The naval governor of Guam had the authority to confiscate land, including “2,850 acres of the island’s finest terrain” (Maga 1988:193). Chamorro land was thus acquired without regard to land rights or ownership, and these disputes have still not been resolved (Kiste 1994:241). Land acquisition issues are also central to tensions in the U.S.-Marshallese relationship on Kwajalein Atoll.

Issues of race have been another continuous thread in U.S. colonial relationships in the Pacific. With the 1898 acquisition of the Philippines, Americans “brought to the Philippines their own brand of intense racial prejudice of the time” (Ramos 2002:xi). As McFerson notes, “Racial

practices and classifications, which evolved in the United States, were transported to the overseas colonial territories,” and Filipinos “were regarded as both Asian and ‘akin to negroes’” (2002:24). The U.S. brought this same racial baggage to postwar Micronesia. Several authors have noted the racial overtones in American dealings with Islanders in the post-war era, and the perceived inferiority of Islanders (Hanlon 1994, Friedman 1997), who were often described as children. Such devaluations were a critical part of the justification for military control of Pacific islands, as “American planners denied that the Pacific Islanders were capable of self-rule in any aspect” (Friedman 1997:49). Even today, issues of race have emerged as a major theme on Kwajalein, where the Marshallese in some cases appear to serve the role normally assumed by African Americans in the U.S.

Intimately connected to ideas of race, discourses of Americanization and “benevolent assimilation” have also been prevalent themes in U.S. colonial practices in the Pacific. In 1898, the U.S. announced a policy of “benevolent assimilation” in the Philippines, commingled with racial ideas of Filipinos as savages in need of civilization (Camacho 2002:65). However, benevolent policies and military control have often gone hand-in-hand: as Diokno notes for the Philippines, “Along with the promise of American benevolence...and in that very same proclamation, came the order extending U.S. military control over the entire country” (2002:75).

Colonial actions also often clashed with larger American ideals of human rights and freedoms. After crushing the nationalist uprising in the Philippines, the U.S. deported all remaining nationalists affiliated with the independence movement, and enacted a law “punishing any form of advocacy of independence, including peaceful means, with death or long imprisonment” (Diokno 2002:76). The colonized were quick to note this contradiction, as Diokno notes that “...the irony achieved its intended effect and gave American rule its

distinctive image – colonialism with a heart” (2002:75). Rafael provides further elaboration of the mentality of the times. Containing its own justifications, “The allegory of benevolent assimilation effaces the violence of conquest by construing colonial rule as the more precious gift that ‘the most civilized people’ can render to those still caught in a state of barbarous disorder” (Rafael 1993:185).

Friedman has observed that “American strategic control in the post-war Pacific included ‘cultural security’ over the region, or the ability to assimilate certain islands by ‘Americanising’ their populations (2001). As in the Philippines, Americanization then became a strategic concern. It also allowed the U.S. to argue to international critics that it was a benevolent world power (Friedman 2001:137). This Americanization included economic as well as cultural aspects:

To be absolutely sure about postwar security, American officials sought physical control in the region not only through military means but also through the economic penetration of the area and the imposition of American cultural values on the inhabitants of the region (Friedman 2001:143).

Along these lines, Kiste has observed that “In retrospect, it is apparent that the programs implemented in the 1960s were designed to both Americanize and make Micronesians dependent on the United States so that the latter could maintain its hegemony over the area” (1974:197). As such, the U.N. trusteeship “virtually amounted to unilateral annexation, economic integration, and cultural penetration” (Friedman 2001:xxvii). Ballendorf calls it “hegemony without annexation” (in Friedman 2001:Foreword). Some have asserted this kind of cultural hegemony is one of the most powerful methods of colonization:

‘the biggest weapon yielded...by imperialism...is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in the capacities and ultimately in themselves’ (Thiong’o in Silva 2004:2).

Jane Samson uses the term “imperial benevolence” to describe the complex and often contradictory motivations in British imperial enterprises in the South Pacific, ranging from deeply humanitarian ideals focused on protecting and advancing Islanders, to the use of islands and Islanders purely for economic and strategic benefit (1998). The rise of these kinds of ideas also reflected a shift over time in justifications for European colonial enterprises, from purely instrumental justifications to a shift at the end of the 1800s toward the incorporation of ideas of humanitarianism and ideas of equality into the colonial project (Stoler and Cooper 1997:31; Stoler 1997:198). Ideas of “imperial benevolence” have been prominent in the U.S.-Marshallese relationship, and in those relationships on Kwajalein: I believe this intertwining of military and humanitarian strains is one of the fundamental “tensions of empire” on the atoll. As one recent and graphic example of “imperial benevolence” in the Marshall Islands, in August 2005 a very large U.S. military warship paid a visit to Majuro Atoll (Johnson 2005). Dwarfing all island buildings with its sheer size, the ship came with sailors on board who then fanned out over the atoll to work on humanitarian projects, such as the provision of medical services and the rehabilitation of schools. One stated goal of the exercise was to “strengthen relations” between the U.S. and RMI (Johnson 2005).

Returning to the past, Pacific Islanders coming under U.S. control have often expected democratic governance, and have experienced disillusionment when they discover that these democratic ideals may or may not apply to them, or when military control takes precedence over

such rights. The experience of the native Chamorro of Guam is particularly illustrative here. In the postwar period, Guam was controlled by the U.S. Navy and administered by a naval governor. Anthropologist Laura Thompson “likened the U.S. naval administration of Guam to that of a battleship,” and depicted American rule there as more ostentatious and oppressive than centuries of Spanish rule (Hanlon 1994:118). In discussing Maga’s research on Guam in the post-war era, Friedman notes that “the American sense of justice and fair treatment was seriously lacking in many respects when it came to according equal political treatment to non-whites on a strategically located island base” (1997:54). Military control took precedence over civil rights, and traditional rights to land. Hanlon has observed that

From the beginning, the American naval presence on Guam suffered from the contradictions and tensions between the rights of the people and the strategic interests of the U.S. Navy. In the event of tension or conflict, however, the primacy of naval strategic interests would prevail (1994:112).

This contradiction “between American domestic democracy and American colonial rule on Guam did not go unnoticed by the people of the island,” who continuously pressed the U.S. government for civil liberties and U.S. citizenship (Hanlon 1994:112). While some of Guam’s naval governors were more democratic (Hanlon 1994:112), strategic control was the predominant theme. Military restrictions on Guam were not lifted until 1962 (Kiste 1994:243).

Cases of military and strategic objectives being placed above human needs are common in the Pacific, and can be seen graphically below in the U.S. use of Marshallese atolls for nuclear testing. In a larger sense than just Kwajalein, I believe that the primacy of strategic and military objectives over other American ideals is *the* major contradiction and “tension of empire”

affecting U.S. relations with its Pacific holdings. The problem comes, in many cases, from the U.S. military serving as “the face” of U.S. in direct contact with Islanders. As on Guam, other Pacific Islanders quickly noticed the discrepancy between fundamental American ideals and freedoms and the non-democratic, hierarchical and control-based military order they were forced to submit to. This tension has played out in dramatic fashion on Kwajalein Atoll in the clash between Marshallese culture and military culture, and even in the clash between U.S. civilian culture and U.S. military culture. With regard to American humanitarian motives in the Pacific, I agree with Petersen, who espouses E.H. Carr’s “harmony of interests” view of international relations: “I believe that American policy makers have had Micronesians’ best interests in mind only when these have not interfered with American interests” (1999:192). Of course, the viewpoints of individual Americans have been a different matter.

### Colonialism and Imperialism – Definitions

In the following, I frequently cite the *Report of a Fact-Finding Mission/Analyses of Colonialism and Chinese Rule in Tibet* (hereafter the *Tibet Report*), and I do so because it contains the best discussion I have found of the issues around the terms “colonial” and “imperial,” as well as the best examination of the contours of “strategic colonialism.” In academic discussions of asymmetrical power relationships, it is not uncommon for the U.S. and other powerful nation-states to be referred to as imperial, colonial or neo-colonial powers, with little discussion of what exactly those terms mean. As the *Tibet Report* notes, “...descriptions are based on the assumption that colonialism is a well-defined concept which needs no further

explanation” (Chapter 2). The terms colonialism and imperialism are also often used interchangeably (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 2). In terms of anthropological understandings of colonialism, Pels notes that anthropologists most commonly think about colonialism in three ways: “as the universal, evolutionary process of modernization; as a particular strategy or experiment in domination and exploitation; and as the unfinished business of struggle and negotiation,” or a combination of all three (1997:164). One of the challenges of defining these terms is that “states have carefully refrained from defining colonialism” and often deny colonial ambitions, past or present (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 2). While I don’t assume to definitively decide these complex matters here, not all colonialisms are alike, and the nature of U.S. colonialism deserves closer examination.

Beginning with general definitions, the idea of asymmetry is often key in definitions of colonialism and imperialism, with the degree of asymmetry often playing a role in whether a relationship is seen as colonial/imperial or not. Friedman defines imperialism as “an unequal political relationship in which a great power attempts to acquire control over a less powerful nation, region, or people in order to satisfy some perceived interest. This control does not necessarily have to be direct or even territorial in nature...” (2001:xxvii). Friedman labels U.S. postwar actions in the Pacific as imperialistic “because the relationship with the inhabitants of the Pacific Basin was so glaringly unequal” (2001:xxvii). Kiste has noted that, “If colonialism is defined as ‘control by one power over a dependent area or people,’ the United States is undeniably a colonial power” (1994:229).

The *Tibet Report* defines colonialism as the political, economic, and social domination of an area by a foreign metropolitan state and the presence of settlers, with no requirement that the satellite state must be geographically separated from the metropolitan state (*Tibet Report*,

Chapter 2). The *Report* also notes Michael Doyle's definition of colonialism as "one of the possible outcomes of imperialism, which in turn is the process of establishing 'a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society'" (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 2).

The *Report* goes on to describe the common features of colonial systems, many of which find parallels on Kwajalein Atoll, so I will list them here. These features include: (1) most colonies are established by military conquest, followed by occupation and annexation; (2) the first visitors may be missionaries; (3) colonial officials tend to be temporary residents who rarely spend more than a few years in the territory; (4) scientific missions were usually a part, and technical experts were recruited from the metropolitan state to set up and maintain various development projects; (5) many colonies are established on the basis of unequal treaties or protectorates; (6) the metropolitan power may govern by indirect rule, attempting to secure the loyalty of local leaders; (7) colonial rule is seen as foreign by the people colonized and settlers see themselves as outsiders; (8) the metropolitan state justifies its rule by saying the colonies are not capable of governing themselves and need help and protection; (9) skilled labor tends to be performed by experts recruited from the metropolitan state, while the local people provide unskilled labor; (10) the language of the colonial power is the language of administration and the colonizers rarely learn the local language; (11) mediators from the local population tend to receive their education in the metropolitan state, where they are exposed to other aspects of the state; and (12) cultural exchange is asymmetrical, with local people adopting more metropolitan aspects than vice versa (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 5). Another defining feature of colonial systems that is particularly salient to this research is that borders often divide local communities, and that



administrative borders within one colony are often drawn with total disregard to the original community structures (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 5).

In regard to item #8 above, justifications for colonial possession often emphasize that colonial systems are for the benefit of those colonized, whether for protection, because they are incapable of self-government, or because they lack the benefits of civilization (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 5). Inherent in these justifications are assumptions regarding the colonizer's superiority, sometimes based on race alone, but usually based on race commingled with other elements.

As noted in Chapter 2 by both Stoler and Cooper and Mary Louise Pratt, European colonialism experienced a crisis of legitimization that ultimately resulted in increasingly benevolent justifications for imperial rule. The *Tibet Report* also notes this shift, as in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many colonial powers with exploitation colonies "started to justify their colonial rule in terms of economic development...these colonial powers depicted themselves as benefactors who brought welfare and economic development to their poor colonial subjects" (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 1).

The *Tibet Report* also notes that all colonial regimes have had to deal with resistance of various kinds. Reactions to this by colonial powers is usually based on strategies to eliminate dissent, which can include violent suppression as well as "the (partial) accommodation of the grievances of the colonised subjects without relinquishing political control..." (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 5). Colonial powers tend to curtail or violate the civil rights of local people who protest, and suppression in these cases is often seen as necessary to protect the general population from a few "rabble-rousers." Maintenance of colonial control often involves a permanent military presence; the police force is often entirely or partly local, while soldiers are nationals of the metropolitan state (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 5).

In recent decades, Said has complicated our notions of what colonialism and imperialism may include. Many scholars now recognize that “Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations...” (Said 1993:9). As Said defines the terms, imperialism is the practice, theory and attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory: colonialism, a common consequence of imperialism, is the settlement of a distant territory (1993:9). He believes that while direct colonialism has largely ended, “imperialism...lingers where it has always been, in a kind of cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices” (1993:9). According to Michael Doyle’s definition,

Empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire (Doyle in Said 1993:9).

Donald Pease provides another definition of imperialism:

As an ongoing cultural project, U.S. imperialism is thus best understood as a complex and independent relationship with hegemonic as well as counterhegemonic modalities of coercion and resistance. When linked with the more inclusive project of global imperialism, U.S. cultural formations manifest themselves as heterogeneous and unevenly developed modes of internal colonization in complex relations with Second and Third World nations... (1993:23).

By these definitions, the U.S. does clearly appear to be a colonial and imperial presence in the Pacific, both past and present.

In looking more closely at the different “varieties” of colonialism, research on colonialism has focused largely on classic European varieties of colonialism in Africa and Asia, with little attention paid to the general “mechanics of colonial systems and their ideological underpinnings” (*Tibet Report*, Preface). According to the *Report*, two kinds of colonialism are defined in the literature: settlement colonialism and exploitation colonialism (Chapter 1). Attributes of settlement colonies include the settlement of metropolitan citizens who eventually come to identify themselves with the colony. These settlers take land, control central administration, and set up infrastructure and economic systems to serve their own needs, resulting in poverty and structural dependence for the original inhabitants, who then lose the independent means to provide for their own subsistence (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 1).

In exploitation colonies, territorial possession is of secondary importance to economic and strategic interests. With exploitation colonies,

the interests of the colonisers tend to be economic, political and strategic: metropolitan settlers manage and supervise the exploitation of resources or safeguard the geo-political interests of the metropolitan state...Frequently, the geo-political and/or strategic significance of colonial possessions is equally if not more important to the metropolitan state than their economic profit (*Tibet Report*, Chapters 1 and 5).

While some colonies fall easily in one category or the other, there are those that fall somewhere in between the two extremes. The *Tibet Report* categorizes French Polynesia as one such case, which has a significant population of French settlers, but has also been used primarily

for nuclear testing. The former TTPI is placed in the category of exploitation colonies, representing a “strategic trust” that had very little to do with the interests of local people and everything to do with the global balance of power of the members of the UN Security Council (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 5).

The definition of exploitation colonies is quite similar to Firth’s characterization of both French Polynesia and the Marshall Islands as being “strategic value economies,” in which the French and U.S. “pay” Islanders for strategic benefits (1994:307). Firth’s definition is an important one in linking created economic dependency to military and strategic use of Island territories, an argument that seamlessly links past colonialism with present postcolonial dependencies. Firth compares the Marshall Islands to French Polynesia in this regard, saying that

Even if French Polynesia were one day to follow the Marshalls’ example and enter some form of free association with France, the power relationship that derives from dependence on military money would continue for as long as the French wanted to make use of its military facilities in the territory (Firth 1994:308).

With the flow of aid money from former colonizers in particular, “the consequence has been a massive inflow of aid to the region since the mid-1970s, making the Pacific Islanders, per capita, the recipients of the largest amounts of overseas development assistance in the world” (Firth 1994:308).

Other Pacific scholars have also noted that the creation of a relationship of economic dependency has been critical to American strategic control of Micronesia (Hanlon 1997, Kiste 1974, Johnson 1984). Hanlon in particular has stressed that seemingly-benign programs of development have served as a means of colonial domination:

A seemingly more benevolent, well-intentioned program of rule, the promotion of economic development presented a process of change no less disruptive and destructive than other colonial initiatives in its effects upon the peoples, places, and cultures of the area called Micronesia...By promoting the process of development, military and later civilian leaders were able to address certain humanitarian concerns about progress and betterment while at the same time ensuring that Micronesia would be remade in ways that served the strategic interests of the larger American state...Economic development would be one of the techniques of power, one of the dividing practices, employed to rationalize American domination of the islands (Hanlon 1998:3, 10-11).

Again, Stoler and Cooper assert the continuity of these situations by noting that “such processes did not begin or end with decolonization” (1997:33). In this way, “Development is only a recent entry among a series of constructs that make ethnocentric claims in universalistic language” (Stoler and Cooper 1997:35).

The outcomes of colonialism can include decolonization or integration with the metropolitan state, although there are many intermediate forms (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 5). According to the *Report*,

In some former colonies, the former colonising power retains considerable economic, cultural, political or military influence. This phenomenon is generally referred to as ‘neo-colonialism’: the continuation of a colonial relationship after formal decolonisation (Chapter 5).

Particular outcomes are influenced by external factors such as political pressure from the international community, as well as by internal factors such as the wishes of local people (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 5).

Overall, the *Tibet Report* finds colonialism to be a complex phenomenon with many political, cultural, economic and social aspects, and that in order to understand colonialism in all its complexity, it is necessary to “look beyond the well-known cases and types of colonialism and identify the essence of colonialist systems of government” (Chapter 5). Comaroff echoes this call, emphasizing the need to examine each colonial system to “lay bare the hidden structures, the unspoken and undisclosed ideological scaffolding, on which its particular structure of domination rested” (1997:192). This research hopes to contribute in this regard to debates over the exact contours of the U.S.-Marshallese relationship, or the particular *kind* of colonialism practiced here.

### U.S. Colonialism Debates - Outposts of Empire?

According to the definitions of colonialism and imperialism used by the *Tibet Report*, the U.S. has been and continues to be a colonial and imperial power in Micronesia and the Marshall Islands, primarily through the use of various islands as exploitation colonies. Many elements of the definitions above will resonate with anyone who has studied the American presence in the Pacific, even beyond Micronesia. It is important here to see some of the arguments regarding U.S. colonialism, as well as the arguments that the U.S. *used* to be a colonial power, but is no longer. We will see some of these debates reflected in American views of the Kwajalein situation.

When annexation of the islands of Micronesia was proposed after their capture by the U.S. in World War II, officials with the Department of State were adamant that the U.S. should not annex the area, with annexation being seen as a highly inappropriate action for the U.S. to take in an era of decolonization. The War Department was for annexation. In arguing for the acquisition, Secretary of War Stimson is famous for stating that

Acquisition of (Micronesia) by the United States does not represent an attempt at colonialism or exploitation. Instead, it is merely the acquisition by the United States of the necessary bases for the defense of the security of the Pacific for the future world. To serve such a purpose they must belong to the United States with absolute power to rule and fortify them. They are not colonies; they are outposts (quoted in Kiste 1993:69).

That the “outposts” will be ruled with “absolute power” says a lot about the motivations behind this viewpoint.

The compromise between these government agencies was the creation of the unique U.N. “strategic trust” described above, whereby the U.S. could use the area for defense purposes, broadly defined. In accepting the trusteeship, however, the U.S. also promised to promote the economic, social, educational, and political advancement of the inhabitants of the territory, with the ultimate goal of self-governance or independence, depending on the wishes of the people (Dever 1978:iii,26-28). Many Pacific scholars have asserted that these promises have never been upheld, or their goals have been subsumed to other U.S. strategic needs. Part of the problem has been identified as a general lack of awareness on the part of the American public regarding the Pacific, as well as the continuing power of some prevalent myths about the U.S.

This lack of awareness became apparent to me in a number of different ways when I began working in the Pacific. Few of the many people I talked to about the Marshall Islands had any knowledge of the Pacific beyond the existence of Hawaii and possibly Guam. Few had any knowledge of the history of U.S. involvement in the region. (Most were quite surprised to learn that the U.S. tests missiles in the middle of Pacific on Kwajalein.) Indeed, as Glassner has noted, “Few American citizens have been or are now aware of the empire” (in Peterson 1999:146). Even our government representatives may not be immune, with the most famous and possibly true example being the case where a reporter asked a congressman what he thought of Micronesia, and the congressman responded ““Mike who?”” (Rampell 1989:31).

Of course, this is not helped by the fact that many maps show nothing in the Pacific Basin except the larger island groups, with an occasional sprinkling of dots to denote the other various islands and atolls. Older Americans may know the Pacific from Pacific battles in World War II, one of which took place on Kwajalein Atoll, but this knowledge of the Pacific rarely includes Islanders. In general, the logic that follows from this is that “we can’t possibly be an imperial power in the Pacific if we don’t know about it.” Seeing colonialism and imperialism requires looking beyond the literal borders of the U.S., which many Americans fail to do.

Feeding into this general lack of knowledge is the perpetual myth of Pacific paradise, fueled by the travel industry, where all Pacific Islands are assumed to be similar and ideal tropical vacation spots. Several researchers have examined this “Pacific as paradise” discourse and how these notions can serve to erase the history of many of these places. Of particular note here is Teresia Teaiwa’s analysis of “bikini” as sexualized exotic tropicalness versus “Bikini,” the location of nuclear testing and its aftermath (1994).



But there is another myth more central to this research, one that serves to “obscure American thinking and understanding of the island region...” (Kiste 1993:67). This is the myth that because the U.S. was originally a colony that engaged in a revolutionary struggle for freedom from British oppression, it is then incapable of being a colonial power itself. This has been called the myth of “American exceptionalism” (Friedman 2001:146), or the idea that “U.S. culture is inherently anti-imperialist” (Kaplan 1993:12). This myth is “deeply ingrained in the psyche of the American people and [has] obscured their understanding of their nation’s role in the Pacific and the larger world” (Kiste 1994:228). Central to this view is the idea that “Colonialism is an evil committed by others” (Kiste 1994:229).

Another argument is that the U.S. has not taken new territory since the Spanish-American War, and is hence a former colonial power. As Wiliam Appleman Williams notes, “One of the central themes of American historiography is that there is no American Empire. Most historians will admit, if pressed, that the United States once had an empire. They then promptly insist that it was given away” (in Kaplan 1993:3). Colonialism, then, represents “a mere episode in American foreign policy” (Schwabe in Kaplan 1993:12). This has also been referred to as the idea of empire “as a momentary psychological lapse” (Kaplan 1993:14). As described by Kaplan, this denial fits with “...the American historiographic tradition of viewing empire as a twentieth-century aberration, rather than as part of an expansionist continuum” (1993:17). American foreign policy discourses also support this myth. Williams has described “a double dynamic whereby displacement accompanies denial: ‘World Power’ not ‘American Empire’; ‘discovery’ not ‘imperium’; ‘global power’ not ‘imperialism’; ‘unipolarity’ not ‘hegemony’” (in Kaplan 1993:13). Hanlon has also observed “...that a nation’s misrepresentation of the past to its citizens, subjugated peoples, and a larger world audience constitutes an important prerequisite

for the justification of colonialism” (Hanlon 1998:5). With the end of the Cold War, “the disavowal of American imperialism persists in the opposition to new ‘evil empires’” (Kaplan 1993:12).

In a similar way, smaller historical myths have been perpetrated regarding American actions overseas. In the case of the Philippines, as noted above, a struggle for independence is rewritten as an “insurrection,” which is then but a footnote in American history books. In the recent book *Aloha Betrayed*, Noenoe Silva refutes a similar myth that native Hawaiians “passively accepted the erosion of their culture and the loss of their nation” (2004:1): an ancillary myth attached to a larger one regarding the acquisition of the Hawaiian Islands by the U.S.

Another element that has aided in the “denial of empire” is the failure of the U.S. to fit the older pattern of the classic colonial powers described above. In her discussion of the absence of the U.S. from studies of imperialism in postcolonial studies, Kaplan asserts that this is because

The history of American imperialism strains the definition of the postcolonial, which implies a temporal development...that relies heavily on the spatial coordinates of European empires, in their formal acquisition of territories and the subsequent history of decolonization and national independence (1993:17).

Because it doesn’t fit the model, the U.S. actions abroad are often labeled as “neocolonial” or as “something other” than colonial.

If colonial ambitions *are* acknowledged by Americans, they are often a source of great ambivalence. Glassner notes that “the United States is ambivalent at best and perhaps even embarrassed at having a colonial empire....” (in Peterson 1999:146). The idea of having colonies

sits rather uneasily for other former colonies as well, such as Australia and New Zealand (*Tibet Report*, Chapter 1). This American ambivalence can be seen in 1898 debates over the acquisition of the Philippines, as “Americans were uncomfortable with the kind of colonialist image they would project on the world scene” (Calata 2002:90). Andrew Carnegie and Mark Twain were particularly vocal opponents of acquisition at the time. Carnegie could not reconcile the contradictions in U.S. rule there:

‘With what face shall we hang in the school-houses of the Philippines our own Declaration of Independence, and yet deny independence to them? Are we to practice independence and preach subordination, to teach rebellion in our books, yet to stamp it out with our swords, to sow the seed of revolt and expect the harvest of loyalty?’ (Calata 2002:90).

Researchers have also connected the denial of external colonialism to the denial of internal colonialism, including the U.S. subjugation of Native Americans and the alienation of their land, and the slavery of African Americans (Hanlon 1998:21; Kaplan and Pease 1993; Kiste 1993:68). Despite the myth that the U.S. remained isolationist up until World War I or even World War II, Borneman notes that the U.S. always had an active foreign policy: “Its ‘foreign’ during this period of isolation was primarily the Indian” (1995:666). Seen this way, one can no longer maintain “the simple chronology that plots the U.S. empire emerging full blown at various stages of the twentieth century to step into the shoes of dying European empires...” (Kaplan 1993:17). In line with colonial scholars in anthropology, Kaplan believes that examining external colonialism is also essentially the process of “examining the empire close to home,” as

“imperialism as a political or economic process abroad is inseparable from the social relations and cultural discourses of race, gender, ethnicity, and class at home” (1993:18,16).

While not always examined explicitly, concepts of U.S. borders and frontiers are an inherent part of any debate regarding colonialism. Gale observed in the late 1970s that while Frederick Jackson Turner declared in 1920 that American colonization was at an end with the disappearance of the Western frontier, “It was a somewhat premature assertion. Today, the ‘outer edge’ of the frontier, as Turner called it, is in the western Pacific” (1979:10). Richard Drinnon has asserted that the U.S. merely exported its “past ‘metaphysics of Indian-hating’ and Indian-fighting into new frontiers abroad and across new borders” (in Kaplan 1993:17). And if we wonder how far those borders stretch today, American Samoa has received money from the U.S. for “homeland security” (Whitney 2002:14). In general, the practice of reifying U.S. borders (however widely defined)

leaves national borders intact instead of interrogating their formation. That is, American nationality can still be taken for granted as a monolithic and self-contained whole, no matter how diverse and conflicted, if it remains implicitly defined by its internal social relations, and not in political struggles for power with other cultures and nations, struggles which make America’s conceptual and geographic borders fluid, contested, and historically changing (Kaplan 1993:15).

Despite these static conceptions, U.S. national narratives are always in the process of ongoing border negotiations, as the boundary lines distinguishing what is American from what is not must be continually negotiated and reinforced (Pease 1993:30).

When the myth of American exceptionalism is occasionally questioned, justifications for various kinds for U.S. actions in the Pacific then follow. One common justification for the taking of Micronesia in the postwar era was the “blood on the sands” argument, which rests on the idea that the U.S. paid in American lives for the liberation of the islands in World War II, and hence deserved some kind of return on that sacrifice (Kiste 1993:69; Wiesgall 1994:311). Another is the “imperial benevolence” justification described above. Kiste recounts an episode at a conference where discussions were taking place regarding the Compacts of Free Association between the U.S. and Micronesian nations. In one of these discussions where the issue of U.S. colonialism was raised, an American ambassador argued that “the U.S. had never been a colonial power because it always gave its territories the option of independence (the Philippines) or integration with the U.S. (Alaska and Hawaii)” (1993:68). However, many of the arguments above strongly counter these justifications.

In the “lesser of two evils” justification, American rule in Micronesia in the immediate post-war period was often justified as being an improvement in treatment of the Micronesians over the Japanese pre-war administration, and much better than their likely treatment under Soviet rule. There were also related justifications based on the realities of the Cold War. In this light, activities such as the use of Marshallese atolls for nuclear testing by the U.S., and Marshallese people as nuclear test subjects, might be justified as the means needed to achieve the larger ends of the Cold War. As Petersen has noted, “In the context of the Cold War, the U.S. denied, abrogated, or ignored nearly every principle it claimed to stand for” (1995:80).

The presence of relatively small populations in Micronesia has been used at various times as one of the justifications for American military use, with the logic that negatively affecting fewer people with nuclear testing and other military activities is more morally justifiable than

affecting larger numbers. (Of course, this argument fails to recognize that those few are not American citizens, and that negative effects are shifted outside the U.S.) The presence of small (and powerless) populations in the northern Marshalls was one of the arguments used in the original selection of sites for nuclear testing. As Kiste noted in 1974,

The future of Micronesia does not appear very promising, and the American attitude toward the area and its people may well have been summed up by Presidential advisor (now Secretary of State) Henry Kissinger: ‘There are only 90,000 people out there. Who gives a damn?’ (1974:198).

Similar sentiments were put forward by U.S. Navy Admiral William Blandy after the announcement of plans for the first nuclear tests in the Northern Marshalls: “‘We wish to acquire...a few miserable islands of insignificant economic value, but won with the precious blood of America’s finest sons, to use as future operating bases’” (in Weisgall 1994:311). Micronesia’s extreme marginality by distance, remoteness and small population size is reflected in Hanlon’s note that these islands are “‘considered by some to be among the more peripheral of the peripheries” (1998:1).

In terms of the continuance of American rule in Micronesia, some might argue that developments such as the Compacts of Free Association with Micronesian countries mark the end of the colonial period. However, several colonial scholars have noted that the separation of the colonial past from the present relationships is not always so easily marked (Stoler and Cooper 1997:33; Dirks 1992:23; Hanlon 1998; Pels 1997:164). As noted, continuing relationships of economic dependency can serve to perpetuate colonial relationships (Hanlon 1998). Continued military use and control of areas of Micronesia also give support to the idea of

the U.S. as a continuing colonial power in Micronesia. This research is intended to contribute to these debates.

### American Anthropology & Colonial Complicity

As many anthropologists now acknowledge, anthropology developed in the context of European colonial systems overseas, and was a critical part of these colonizing efforts (Asad 1973). As a result of this and other later revelations, discussed in Chapter 2, self-examination has become routine for many anthropologists, who are constantly on guard to avoid complicity with colonial projects and other misuse of our work by the powerful. This has fostered a general awareness of power issues at all levels, and the need to examine our colonial inheritance in the subfields and regions in which we work. In this light, debates over issues of colonial complicity in Micronesian anthropology must be examined here. As noted, these issues are also a critical part of debates over “studying up.”

Because of the complete removal of everything Japanese from Micronesia after World War II, Americans took control of the region “in a virtual vacuum of knowledge of either the places or the people who were now their wards” (Falgout 1995:101). Anthropologists were to play an important role in filling this vacuum, particularly those in the recently-established field of applied anthropology. But anthropological involvement actually started years earlier. As Kiste and Falgout note, soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor, George Peter Murdock of the Yale University Cross-Cultural Survey began assembling information on the Japanese controlled islands of Micronesia. Within a few years, he was producing military handbooks for the postwar administration of the area by the Navy (1999:11,17).

As the U.S. became a superpower in the wake of World War II, “anthropologists accompanied this global reach, especially to the Pacific” (Lurie in Borneman 1995:666). The scale of the enterprise was unprecedented, as “more American anthropologists are estimated to have studied Micronesia during the wartime-postwar era than any other area of the world in the history of the discipline” (Falgout 1995:99). During that time, an observer noted that one could ““go anywhere out in the bush on these islands and you’ll step on a Ph.D.”” (Alcalay 1992:185). In the early postwar period when security in Micronesia was tight, anthropologists were “among the few civilians allowed entrance into Micronesia by the United States government” (Falgout 1995:99).

Military-affiliated anthropological work in Micronesia really began with Laura Thompson’s work on Guam in late 1930s (Kiste and Falgout 1999:13), although more attention has been paid to postwar anthropological work under U.S. Navy administration for the U.S. Commercial Company, Coordinated Investigation of Micronesia (CIMA), and the Scientific Investigations of Micronesia (Falgout 1995:104). Starting in 1949, the U.S. government also began hiring anthropologists as field consultants to the TTPI (Falgout 1995:104).

In terms of their influence on colonial systems, anthropologists have been described as being “intensely involved in imperial policies” both during and after World War II (Borneman 1995). Borneman cites in particular the work of David Schneider in Micronesia, noting that anthropological research on depopulation was intimately tied to Navy and other government objectives. In Ira Bashkow’s account of Schneider’s anthropological work as part of the Harvard Yap Expedition, he describes how Schneider, despite his best attempts, found it nearly impossible to separate himself, particularly in the minds of the Yapese, from his Navy sponsorship and associated power relationships (1991). Bashkow also asserts that George



Murdock's vision and the Yale Cross-Cultural Survey File were integral "in establish[ing] the post-war framework of colonial rule in Micronesia" (Bashkow 1991:179). As Gale notes, these early anthropologists had an even greater impact because "their reports form the core of our present knowledge of Micronesian life and the researchers themselves have sent their graduate students back to do further research" (1979:78).

In his analysis of the colonial complicity of the discipline as a whole, Asad has asserted that anthropology, while it had its weaknesses, was not "merely the handmaiden of colonialism" (1998 [1973]:16). Evaluations of the colonial complicity of American anthropology in Micronesia also present a more complex picture as well. In Falgout's evaluation, anthropological work done for the Navy in the years 1945-1951 included reports critical of Navy administration, and the majority of the work had little impact (1995:104). Gale has also noted that many of those who worked on the CIMA project "were convinced that their work had little impact on the Navy's administration..." (1979:78). There was also perpetual friction between administrators and anthropologists due to the "difficult betwixt-and-between relationship of anthropologists vis-à-vis the American administration and the Micronesians" (Falgout 1995:105). Douglas Oliver reported tensions because "much of the reporting was critical of the Navy's lack of attention to the island's economic recovery" (Gale 1979:76). This relationship was "further complicated by the fact that the colonial agenda changed with different United States Administrations" (Falgout 1995:100). These continuous tensions were reflected in the fact that the TTPI ended the employment of anthropologists as consultants in 1960 (Falgout 1995:108).

One of the ways anthropologists were used instrumentally by the U.S. administration, despite their best intentions, was in documenting traditional land tenure systems. In many cases, the information collected reflected the views of only some chiefs and leaders; froze in time what

were previously fairly flexible systems; and suffered from a lack of thorough investigation. In this way, "...American anthropologists participated with the Administration, willingly or not, to create and codify Micronesian customs" (Falgout 1995:108). And there is no mistake about the ultimate aim of such work: "The administration's goal in researching land tenure was clearly to codify data to use as a guide for court decisions" (Falgout 1995:107), including those used to justify military land acquisitions. However, in the defense of these anthropologists, Falgout also notes that the agenda was largely already set: "Equally important, the use of these data on Micronesian custom was by this period destined to serve only as minor amendments to overwhelmingly American concepts, and furthermore used within American-based institutions" (Falgout 1995:108).

Debates over the colonial complicity of Micronesian anthropologists came to the forefront around the time of the Vietnam War, as anthropological opposition to the war and other U.S. policies led to a "backlash" by a younger generation of anthropologists (Kiste and Falgout 1999:42). Their feeling was that "anthropologists had been at best naïve and unwitting collaborators of an effort to perpetuate the subordination of Micronesians" (Kiste and Falgout 1999:42). Glenn Alcalay was particularly vocal in his criticism of anthropologists, noting "a conspicuous silence on the part of most American anthropologists concerning the horrific and disastrous consequences of U.S. imperial policy in Micronesia" (1992:195), and finding anthropologists in the Marshall Islands complicit in nuclear weapons testing there (1992:184). He also criticized the more recent work of anthropologist Thomas Keene on Kwajalein, as Keene

is currently under contract with the U.S. Army at Kwajalein to enhance community relations between SDI personnel and the nearby ten-thousand Marshallese on Ebeye, known regionally as the 'slum of the Pacific' ...anthropology currently serves the

Pentagon in helping to extinguish indigenous protest while missiles continue to hurl into the strategic lagoon... (1992:196).

On the whole, he concluded that the role of anthropologists in Micronesia was “disturbing at best, and damnable at worst” (1992:193).

Petersen has responded to Alcalay’s charges by saying that “this perspective misapprehends the degree to which anthropologists in Micronesia were in fact aware of the contradictions of working there and took pains to communicate their concerns” (1999:149). For example, the work of John Useem and John Embree provides “clear evidence that anthropologists in Micronesia have long been concerned not only with the study of political processes in the islands, but also with the politics of the American presence” (Petersen 1999:149). For example, Useem in his work noted the contradiction that “a colonial power ruling by fiat could even pretend to be in position to introduce democratic institutions,” and found that democracy was used more as a manipulative symbol rather than a human value of worth (1952 in Petersen 1999:160). Embree found that both military and civil administrations were totally subordinate to military concerns (in Petersen 1999:150). Gale has also defended anthropologists such as Leonard Mason for his role in bringing the starving Bikinians on Rongerik to the attention of the TT government (1979:78).

Anthropological work after this time shows a much greater awareness of issues of colonial complicity. Kiste’s work on the DoD Pacific Cratering Experiments (PACE) on Enewetak is just one example of anthropologists (both independent researchers and those working for the Trust Territory) doing what they could to show the impacts of the military in Micronesia, and to make sure their work as anthropologists was not co-opted (1976). Other projects critical of the American administration and the impact of its policies included the work

of Alcalay (1984), Alexander (1978, 1984), and Lutz's edited 1984 volume *Micronesia as a Strategic Colony*, among many others. Holly Barker's recent also includes a section discussing the role of anthropologists, both past and present, relative to the American administration of Micronesia and the nuclear testing program in the Marshall Islands (2004:25-28).

As noted in Chapter 1, this research and its focus on Americans on Kwajalein may open me up to charges of colonial complicity. However, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, some very good reasons have been put forward for doing this kind of work, despite its departure from traditional anthropological territory.

### Marshall Islands History

#### The colonial period

The following sections put Kwajalein Atoll into larger historical perspective, including early colonial influences in the Marshall Islands, changes wrought by World War II and the American presence, and the impacts of nuclear and missile testing on the area. In describing the general pattern of colonization in Micronesia during the colonial period, Hanlon has noted that "Each of the dominant colonial powers would have its particular mode or vehicle of domination" (Hanlon 1994:98), whether economic, strategic, or some more complex combination, as seen in the Marshall Islands. Another general trend has been that

Each colonizing nation would attempt to justify and enhance its rule through rituals of possession, denigrating descriptions of Micronesian societies, the usurpation of indigenous political authority, and the promotion of alien, disruptive systems of religion, education, and economy (Hanlon 1994:93).

Prior to 1941, most knowledge of the Marshallese and their culture was gained from the accounts of explorers, traders, missionaries, and colonial administrators (Mason 1947:9). It was Russian Otto von Kotzebue's expedition in 1817 that provided the first detailed geographical and cultural information on the Marshall Islands (Hezel 1983:88), and initiated trade with the Marshallese. The Spanish took possession of Micronesia in 1594 under the Treaty of Tordesillas, although they had relatively little impact on the area. By and large, the Marshalls were avoided into the 1850s after developing a reputation for violence (Hezel 1983:198).

Missionaries were the first to have sustained contact with the Marshallese: by 1857, the America Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had Protestant missionaries on the southern atoll of Ebon (Mason 1947:14, Carucci 1997a:234). They had been able to gain entry through an alliance with Kaibuke, a local chief (Hezel 1983:201). These missionaries had a significant impact on Marshallese culture, especially in discouraging traditional religious practices and promoting European ways of life, while also discouraging Islanders from drinking alcohol and acquiring firearms (Hezel 1983:205). Missionaries also had significant impact through the establishment of mission schools (Hezel 1983:207). In addition to bringing trade in Western goods, European traders brought disease, including venereal disease, and alcohol, both of which had devastating effects on the Marshallese (Hezel 1983:206,298).

German and Portuguese traders entered the Marshalls around 1865, and the area soon became "one of the most productive areas for copra in Micronesia" (Mason 1947:13). In 1885, the Germans created the Marshall Islands Protectorate, with Jaluit Atoll as its administrative center. In 1906 Jaluit also became the center of mission work in the islands, which was still largely a Protestant operation: Mason noted in 1947 that the only Catholics to be found in the Marshalls were part of the small inter-married Marshallese and German population on Likiep

Atoll (1947:14). Major changes in the German period included restrictions on warfare between chiefs, and the movement of population toward centers of copra production and other activity, such as Jaluit. Chiefly power also shifted toward the more populated and accessible central atolls as a result of the copra trade (Carucci 1988:40).

The Japanese seized Micronesia from Germany in 1914 with the outbreak of World War II, eventually holding them under a League of Nations Mandate (Mason 1947:12). With Japanese rule, the intensity of contact increased. As Peattie notes,

Where the Spanish had neglected, and occasionally tyrannized, the islands, and the Germans had seen them as little more than remote trading stations...the new rulers, after some initial miscues, set about administering their mandate with an intensity of attention, purpose and industry unrivaled elsewhere in the Pacific (1988:68).

The economic element was an important part of Japanese administration, focused particularly on copra, as well as other minor industries. However, unlike the Germans, the settlement of Micronesia was another major goal: in 1925 more than 5,000 Japanese had moved to the Marianas; five years later this number was 15,000 (Peattie 1988:155). While the Marshalls felt less of the Japanese presence than other parts of Micronesia, their influence was greatest on Jaluit, which again served as the population and administrative center of the Marshalls. It was during the Japanese era that the Marshallese began to depend heavily on Western products such as flour, rice, cloth and metal tools (Mason 1947:13-14). This increased dependence was accompanied by the loss of many traditional technologies and traditions, and the continued erosion of chiefly privileges (Mason 1947:13-14). Mobility was also affected, as the Japanese

discouraged inter-island voyaging (Mason 1947). The Japanese also established schools throughout Micronesia (Peattie 1988:90-96).

During the early 1900s, Japan and the U.S. jockeyed for strategic advantage in the Pacific (Peattie 1988:35). The strategic value of Micronesia then greatly increased in the 1930s due to developments in military technology such as “the advent of the flying boat, the land-based bomber, the carrier-borne dive-bomber, and the flight interceptor” (Peattie 1988:231). The strategic value of the Marshall Islands also increased for these reasons, and due to the ease of building airfields on flat coral atolls (Peattie 1988:231). In 1937, the Japanese began to fortify the Marshalls and “greatly restricted native freedom of movement and civil rights” (Mason 1947:12). The Japanese set up military installations on five Marshallese atolls and population dislocations occurred as the residents were removed to other areas (Mason 1947:16-17). In addition to land seizures at this time which occurred throughout Micronesia (Hanlon 1994:109), Marshallese were conscripted as laborers.

## World War II

As Tess Uriza Holthe has so eloquently noted, “When the elephants dance, it is unsafe for chickens” (2003): during World War II, the Marshall Islands and other Pacific Islands found themselves caught in a deadly struggle between the U.S. and Japan. Among the Marshallese atolls used by the Japanese for military bases, Kwajalein was particularly important “as a nerve center for the surrounding bases and as a funnel through which all shipments of men, weapons, and material flowed into the Marshalls” (Peattie 1988:259). The American campaign in Micronesia began in 1944 with plans to attack Kwajalein, as well as the unfortified atolls of Majuro and Enewetak, and to bypass the other atolls on which the Japanese had military bases:

Jaluit, Mili, Maloelap and Wotje (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:118). During these operations, some Marshallese served as scouts, doing reconnaissance and reporting on Japanese activities on the bypassed atolls and other locations (*Kwajalein Hourglass Special Edition*, Feb. 5, 1994:18). On atolls invaded by the U.S., food supplies never ran out “because battles there were swift and decisive – and American largesse then replaced Japanese sources” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:171). Living conditions for the Marshallese on the bypassed atolls were much more difficult, as Islanders had to feed themselves and the Japanese military presence (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:171-174).

In June 1944, American troops captured Kwajalein Atoll. After the seizure of Enewetak Atoll, the Japanese presence in the Marshalls was largely neutralized (Hezel 1995:227). The U.S. military then began building American military bases on Majuro, Kwajalein and Enewetak, and providing basic services to Marshallese (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:241). Labor camps were set up on Majuro and Kwajalein to assist in the cleanup of war debris and the building of these new bases (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:241).

For the Marshallese, the events of World War II provided the first images of Americans, and these images were largely those of power, wealth and generosity. As one example, while the taking of Majuro from the Japanese had been bloodless, it provided Marshallese on Majuro with “an unforgettable glimpse of U.S. military power” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:119). As Handel Dribo notes in the video *Home on the Range*, local Marshallese did not think that the Japanese and their military power could be defeated, and were surprised when this occurred (1990).

In addition to sheer military might, Marshallese also saw the huge amount of goods supporting the U.S. military (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:244), images that were



particularly powerful in the context of the importance of food sharing in the Pacific. As Poyer, Falgout and Carucci note, “It is not surprising that many stories of the invasion dwell on the distribution of food in great quantity and variety, reflecting both the privation of war and the important symbolism of food in Marshallese culture” (2001:243). While Americans saw these gifts of food as gestures of goodwill, “they were less aware that Marshallese also interpreted them as the customary distribution of chiefs – very powerful chiefs with a seemingly unlimited source of goods” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:245). That the Americans did not demand tribute and often discarded food and gifts Marshallese gave them in return added to these powerful images: in response, some Marshallese stated that ““such is their strength, they do not need them”” (Carucci 1989:87). In a similar story from a later date, a Kwajalein *alap* described a trip he took to Ft. Knox, Kentucky, with his father. This *alap* noted that ““My father witnessed the destruction of worn-out bills which authorities were putting into the fire...When my father saw this, my father commented ‘the U.S. is so rich, they have money to burn’” (CRC Minutes, Aug. 27, 1992). This *alap* then noted that after seeing this, his father had difficulty understanding the need for budget cuts by the U.S. government.

As we will see in the case of Kwajalein, “The political implications of this abundant initial generosity would emerge later in the American administration” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:245). Micronesians and Marshallese were also treated well by American troops, and “Equality with the common U.S. soldier and sailor sharply contrasted with the Japanese ethnic hierarchy” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:273). There were good feelings in the other direction as well, as “American responses to Marshallese were overwhelmingly positive, perceiving them as mild, pro-American Christians” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:237).

Environmentally, the legacies of war included damage to Japanese infrastructure, and damage to food-producing resources, both from the destruction of the war, but also from the construction of military bases, including damage to the marine environment (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:316-317). As any visitor today quickly realizes, World War II in Micronesia resulted in a “junkyard of American and Japanese war materiel which, despite repeated efforts, has not yet been fully cleared” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:319). On some islands, including Kwajalein, unexploded ordnance from World War II is also a continuing danger.

The war also resulted in the destruction of many Japanese records, including those regarding land tenure, as well as information regarding lands taken for military use by the Japanese (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:320-321). In addition, many landmarks marking land parcels were lost, and some land parcels were significantly reshaped or completely obliterated (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:321). It was in this environment that the U.S. began its rule. Needing access to land quickly, there was no time to explore land tenure issues (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:322). As a result,

After the war, American land needs led to new, confused, and quasi-legal arrangements, some of which created lasting problems. Furthermore, with the disappearance of the Japanese – and often, all their records – old land feuds could be revived, giving the new administration the headache of conflicting claims (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:321).

Throughout Micronesia, “the legal niceties were dealt with after the military fact, and perceived injustices in compensation and military control of land continue to be contested in federal courts” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:323). This was also the case on Kwajalein Atoll.

The war and its aftermath also inaugurated major shifts in population which would have lasting consequences. As Poyer, Falgout and Carucci note, “Access to imported goods and opportunities for wage labor formed nodes of plenty at the new American bases or in the urban centers of bypassed islands at U.S. MilGov headquarters” (2001:269). This general shift in population would continue throughout the postwar period, with outer islanders relocating to Ebeye on Kwajalein Atoll and to Majuro Atoll, where the U.S. administration was based.

#### American administration

As noted previously, after the capture of Micronesia, various elements of the U.S. government debated the future status of the area. The U.S. State Department wanted to place Micronesia under a UN international trusteeship overseen by the UN General Assembly, while the military argued for the outright annexation of the area for military purposes. In a compromise, Micronesia became a “strategic trust” overseen by the UN Security Council, allowing the area to be used by the U.S. government for military purposes. The trusteeship agreement was signed in July 1947, making the Marshall Islands part of the U.S. TTPI. In terms of U.S. military views about the purposes of the TTPI in the immediate postwar period, one Kwaj document notes that: “Under the terms of the Trusteeship Agreement the United States not only has the right to establish defense installations in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, it has the responsibility” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:4). Despite the official UN sanction in 1947, the U.S. military had already begun nuclear testing in the northern Marshalls in 1946.

The U.S. Navy administered the TTPI in the immediate postwar period. Navy work in the region began with the deployment of teams to establish security, deport Japanese, dispose of unexploded ordnance, and “implement military government operations” (Host Nation Archives

1968a:1). Control of the TTPI was shifted to the Department of the Interior in 1951. As Kiste notes, there was much squabbling over which governmental department would administer the islands, with Interior ultimately winning the contest (1993:69).

The overall strategic policy of U.S. in Micronesia in the post-war years was that of “strategic denial” of access to the area by any other nation, particularly the Soviet Union. A former Navy officer who went on patrols of Micronesia in the early post-war period told me that there was also concern about Japanese economic and political interests “slipping back into the area.” U.S. strategic interests were largely concentrated on the western and eastern perimeters of the TTPI, a pattern that would become important during the negotiation of the Compacts of Free Association (Kiste 1993:71).

The initial period of U.S. Navy administration from 1945-1947 has been characterized as a time of a “hands off” policy in terms of administering the islands, with Micronesians largely managing their own affairs (Falgout 1995:103). Researchers have noted, however, that “For islands that had been under colonial rule for one hundred to several hundred years, ‘normal self-sufficiency’ was a relative concept” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:301). Others have noted that this “policy” was less of an intentional state of affairs than a general state of “bureaucratic inertia” (Gale 1979:8) or “benign neglect” (Kiste 1993:70). Critics of Navy administration have noted that when Interior took over administration in July 1951, it took over not a trust territory but a ‘rust territory’ (Hanlon 1998:51).

Navy administration was hampered by a lack of financial resources, a lack of cultural knowledge, and the inability to communicate with Islanders in many locations (Falgout 1995:103). As former Japanese administrators of Micronesia had either been killed or repatriated, and as most records had been destroyed, the U.S. military “started from scratch, with

little colonial experience and little knowledge of the territory” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:265). In addition, decisions were often made from the U.S. mainland with “little or no knowledge of the islands” (Kiste 1993:70). The result was the use of the area for military and strategic purposes, with no coherent or unified policy for the administration and development of the area (Kiste 1993:70; Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:277). Useem summarized the problems of the American administration as being those of

insufficient personnel, incoherent foreign policy, disjuncture between official policy and strategic need, inexperience in governing foreign peoples, and ‘the inapplicability of traditional American concepts and attitudes to the area’ (in Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:313).

During this period, the U.S. military inscribed the borders of the TTPI by restricting all access to the area: even U.S. citizens were required to have security clearance to enter the TTPI. Movement within the area was also restricted: Marshallese were not allowed to move around freely “as a consequence of the official policy of keeping people within the boundaries of their islands” (Heine 1974:56). Heine also noted that Micronesians were not encouraged to travel outside of Micronesia, and “obtaining a passport was very difficult” (1974:57). While some of these restrictions were a function of security, Gale notes that “Islands which were not off-limits for security reasons were often closed on a de facto basis because of bureaucratic red tape and a lack of scheduled transportation” (1979:8). These access restrictions also meant that few economic interests, domestic or foreign, were allowed into the area. This, coupled with a lack of policy addressing economic and political development, would have serious ramifications for the

economic and political future of the area (Kiste 1993:71). Heine also notes that “Micronesia until 1960 was virtually closed to outside news media” (1974).

This general closure of the area led some Micronesians to conclude that the TTPI was “...a sort of a government ‘museum’ in which only authorized persons were allowed to make visitations and tours. Those usually allowed to visit were usually anthropologists or nuclear scientists” (Heine 1974:20-21). In addition to this “museum” imagery, Heine also describes this time as being one of a “zoo” mentality, due to the restricted movement of Islanders and their study by anthropologists and others (1974:56). This comment has led to the idea of the TTPI as an “ethnographic zoo,” an idea usually associated with Heine (Kiste 1993:71). I believe that this idea of the “ethnographic zoo” is one reflection of the major “tension of empire” in the TTPI, that between American ideals of individual freedoms versus the reality of military control. Lazarus Salii described this tension in terms of the U.S. being both “liberator” and “conqueror” of Micronesia (in Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:289).

Another tension was that between the administration’s policy of respect for traditional ways, while simultaneously promoting democratization and other American ideals (Falgout 1995:102; Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:283). In keeping with a “hands off” policy, American administrators preferred indirect rule: “the United States seemed little interested in close involvement with indigenous life, preferring to administer what it regarded as the basic elements of good order through local chiefs or ‘kings’” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:242). However, this policy was in direct contradiction of policies of Americanization: Petersen has referred to this an effort to simultaneously change and preserve local cultures (1999:page). Mason also notes this “dilemma of cultural conservation versus cultural imperialism” (1989:6). Initial hopes that American policies would result in an “experiment in enlightened

administration” were soon disappointed (Falgout 1995:108). As a result of all of these tensions, a “complex agenda” emerged, which was often contradictory, encouraging political development (to a point) but discouraging economic development (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:289). This agenda was also complicated by continuous changes administration and staff, as well as the realities of “actual governance” (Falgout 1995:102).

As in other areas of the Pacific under U.S. administration, another fundamental tension was that surrounding race. Useem noted that while Micronesians were equal to Americans in principle, “practice differed” (in Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:311). Also, wartime unity between Americans troops and Micronesians soon gave way to increasing physical and cultural separation of American and Micronesian populations (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:312). This was reflected in the fact that “Until the Peace Corps arrived – with the exception of a few missionaries and anthropologists – Americans in Micronesia lived lives quite separate from those they governed and did not usually learn the language” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:313).

For Micronesians, another contradiction of American rule had to do with those perceptions of wealth and generosity noted above. The early postwar Navy days were good ones for some Micronesians, including those on Kwajalein Atoll. Many Marshallese experienced “unlimited work opportunities, low prices, and an endless supply of goods,” although this was more the case for those located near military bases (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2002:290-291). This began to change, however, as the Naval military government was replaced in 1947 by the Navy civil administration (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:276). As military resources were pulled out of Micronesia, “no new resources replaced them...Once the war was won, the new American obligations dropped suddenly and dramatically on the list of funding priorities” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:307). Micronesians experienced great confusion in dealing

with “an administration that first overwhelmed with its wealth and might, then pleaded poverty and manifested its ignorance of local culture” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:283).

While these times are known for occasional plenty, tight security, and a lack of unified economic or other policy, they did bring some things of value to Micronesians. According to Poyer, Falgout and Carucci, “Micronesians agree on two areas in which U.S. naval administration was more successful than the Japanese colonial order: health and education” (2001:296). Overall, however, while the strategic value of Micronesia has never been disputed, “the discussion of American obligations to the people of Micronesia turned into a long and ultimately unresolved one” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:313). As will be seen, this question of American obligations and responsibilities has been a constant debate in the history of Kwajalein Atoll.

### Population impacts

The American administration also resulted in major demographic changes in the Marshall Islands and other parts of Micronesia. One of these changes was a major shift in population from the outer islands toward administrative centers, a movement begun earlier in the colonial period (Tobin 1952:2-3). Mason particularly notes a 1965 policy that favored the provision of services primarily in urban centers as a cost-saving measure (1989:9). As will be discussed, there were also population relocations associated with U.S. military use of various Marshallese atolls.

During the postwar period, the lure of good wages, improved education and healthcare, and modern amenities attracted many outer islanders (and other Micronesians and Pacific Islanders as well) to the urban centers of Majuro and Ebeye, where many became dependent on family members for support. Gorenflo and Levin report that between 1930 and 1980, the



populations of Ebeye and Majuro grew from being 0.2% and 7.4% of the total population to 20% and 38.2%, respectively (1989:97). This movement of Marshallese from rural to urban areas disrupted outer island life and traditions, as many adults were absent from these populations, leaving only the oldest and youngest. Mason notes that with the absence of middle-aged people, many *alapships* were left functionally empty (1984:26).

In addition to changes in population distribution, internal rates of population growth were also extremely high, due to improvements in healthcare associated with the American administration (Gorenflo and Levin 1994:100). As a result, the population of the Marshall Islands went from a population of about 10,000 in 1935 to 43,000 in 1988 (Gorenflo and Levin 1994:94). The 1999 Census reported a surprisingly low total population of 50,840, and a reduction in the population growth rate from 4.2% to 1.5% annually (*Marshall Islands Journal* 1999a). This reduction is largely due to out-migration to the U.S. (*Marshall Islands Journal* 2000). In addition, the age structure of the Marshallese population has changed, with children aged 0-9 no longer representing the largest sector of the population (RMI 1999:15). Of the total RMI population in 1999, approximately 68% lived on either Kwajalein or Majuro (RMI 1999:15).

#### Nuclear testing & relocations

In 1946, the U.S. government announced that Bikini Atoll had been chosen as a testing site for atomic weapons, resulting in the removal of the Bikinians from the atoll (Hezel 1995:272-273). Appealing to the Islanders' Christian sensibilities and the need for their atoll for the good of all humanity, the residents of Bikini were removed from their atoll in 1946. After the first nuclear tests at Bikini in 1946, Eniwetok was selected as a larger alternative site for testing

(Kiste 1976:64) due to its larger land area and lagoon (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War 1991:73). However, while Bikini and Enewetak were ideal sites for military use due to their remoteness and small, relatively powerless population, “The extreme shortage of land, the fragility of the environment on which people depend for a living, and even the weather made the Marshall Islands an unsuitable place to test nuclear weapons” (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War 1991:75).

Between 1946 and 1958, the U.S. military tested a total of 66 atomic and hydrogen bombs on these two atolls, “including the most powerful and contaminating bombs in the history of American testing” (Firth 1997:326). In the context of the U.S. nuclear testing program as a whole, “Nearly 80% of all the atmospheric tests ever conducted by the United States took place in the Marshall Islands” (Barker 2004:20-21). Overall, the amount of radioactive iodine released by the tests in the Marshall Islands was 42 times that released by atmospheric testing in Nevada, and 150 times that released from the Chernobyl nuclear accident (*Marianas Variety* May 3, 2004).

The 1954 Bravo shot was particularly damaging to the Marshallese and their atolls. Equivalent to 1,000 Hiroshima bombs, the test was also designed to produce as much local fallout as possible (Barker 2004:23). Islanders downwind were not evacuated prior to the test, despite the fact that planners were aware that winds were blowing in their direction (Barker 1997:295-296; Barker 2004:23, 39-40). Rongelap Atoll was particularly affected, and islanders were not evacuated from the contaminated atoll for two days. They were then moved to Kwajalein Atoll where they were made part of medical research on the human effects of radiation exposure (Barker 1997:295); this study continued after they were returned to their contaminated

atoll. The test also contaminated a Japanese fishing vessel in the area, the *Lucky Dragon*, and one fisherman died as a result.

While the U.S. government has traditionally only recognized four radiation-affected atolls (Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap and Uterik), documents released in the 1990s under a Department of Energy (DOE) Openness Initiative reveal that others were heavily contaminated during the nuclear testing period, and all of the Marshalls received fallout from various tests (Barker 1997). These revelations have led to attempts to renegotiate nuclear compensation agreements, such as those under the Compact (see Barker 2004).

Hardships for various Marshallese populations included not only damage to their bodies and their atolls, but also relocations of whole populations. The Bikinians have been repeatedly relocated, suffering starvation in some locations (Neidenthal 1997). In 1969, a plan was in place for the resettlement of Bikini, and several families returned there in 1972. In 1975, U.S. radiological tests discovered higher levels of radioactivity than expected in local foods as well as the people. As a result, the TTPI evacuated the population in 1978 (Neidenthal 1997:33). After this removal, the Bikinians received million-dollar settlements from the U.S. government in the form of trust funds, as well as a settlement to provide for the cleanup of Bikini and Eneu Islets on Bikini Atoll (Neidenthal 1997:34). Bikinians observed their 50<sup>th</sup> year in exile in 1996, with portions of their population in a variety of locations, including the U.S. As of 2005, cleanup is still ongoing, although there are debates over how to proceed, with Bikinians wanting all of Bikini Islet's soil to be replaced, while scientists favor putting potassium fertilizer on some areas to take up the Cesium-137 from the soil (Neidenthal 1997:35). It must be noted that only *parts* of the atoll are being rehabilitated, as complete rehabilitation would be too expensive: this has been the case on other affected atolls as well.

The people of Enewetak were removed to the much smaller and more distant atoll of Ujelang in 1947. In addition to the 30 nuclear tests conducted there, parts of Enewetak were also used as an impact area for missiles fired from California until 1968 (Firth 1987:34). As a result of these activities, “Three islands had been completely obliterated; huge craters scarred the reef and portions of other islands” (Kiste 1976:65). To add insult to injury, the DoD was then planning to use the atoll for the PACE cratering experiments, intended to provide ground motion studies allowing scientists to see how U.S. missile silos would be affected by enemy missiles (Kiste 1976:66). Assuming that there would be no resistance from Enewetakese, some of the islands had already been stripped of topsoil in preparation for PACE before real approval was granted (Kiste 1976:67).

Robert Kiste’s article on Enewetakese resistance to the project and examination of the Americans involved is one of the few examples of “studying up” and the U.S. military in the Pacific. Kiste also describes Marshallese sentiments about the tests: while they had once accepted U.S. rhetoric about the need to use their atoll to “help protect the free world,” they no longer did so. As one Marshallese leader noted, “Has not Eniwetok done enough for your testing? ... We have sacrificed enough...” (Kiste 1976:70). Kiste also questioned numerous Americans involved in the project. He discovered that, in general, Americans “did not seriously entertain the notion that the values and wishes of the islanders were of any significance for future decisions because ‘...local opposition is a fact of life in so many military projects’” (Kiste 1976:69). One American involved noted that military planners

‘start with the assumption that when the United States deals with minorities in our own country and people from other parts of the world that we will fuck it up. After you start with that basic assumption, you go out and do your job’ (Kiste 1976:69).

In terms of individual responses to the Enewetak protests, some Americans involved did come to sympathize with the Marshallese. One, however, said ““to hell with them, we’ll go ahead anyway”” (Kiste 1976:72). Surprisingly, the Marshallese protests were successful, and the project was discontinued. In 1980, some Enewetakese returned to their ancestral home, of which parts were safe for resettlement, although some then returned to Ujelang because of food shortages (Simon 1997:11,12).

The Rongelapese also have a complex nuclear history. After delayed removal after exposure to fallout from the Bravo shot in 1954, the residents of Rongelap were relocated to Majuro. In 1957 they were returned to their atoll with assurances that it was safe, despite U.S. studies showing high levels of contamination (Barker 2004:45). Rongelapese were then made part of DOE medical research program that, due to information more recently released by the DOE, has lead to charges that Marshallese were intentionally used as human “guinea pigs” for nuclear effects research (Barker 2004:41-44). Alarmed by effects on their health and questions regarding the contamination of their atoll, the residents of Rongelap requested that they be evacuated in 1983. Because the U.S. was unwilling to do so, the Rongelapese were evacuated by Greenpeace to Mejjatto Islet on Kwajalein Atoll in 1985 (Simon 1997:13). Some Rongelapese have remained on Mejjatto, but portions of the population found it to be too isolated and moved to Ebeye. As Barker notes, “It was not until the 1990s that the U.S. government officially recognized that Rongelap remains too contaminated for human habitation” (2004:46). In 1996, the Clinton Administration approved a \$45 million settlement for the rehabilitation and resettlement of Rongelap (Simon 1997:17).

The nuclear testing program has had a direct and lasting impact on the health of the exposed Marshallese, including large numbers of thyroid cancers, other forms of cancer and birth

defects (Barker 2004). Indeed, the distinctive neck scars of those who have had surgery to remove thyroid cancers are common in the Marshallese population today. Barker has used an analysis of the “radiation language” affected Marshallese use to document the environmental and health effects of nuclear testing, particularly the reproductive health effects on women (1997, 2004).

Under Section 177 of the Compact, the U.S. was to provide compensation for nuclear damages, in exchange for RMI abandoning all claims in U.S. courts (Barker 2004:24). However, only the four recognized nuclear-affected atolls were given compensation and access to health care. A Nuclear Claims Tribunal was established to hear individual claims of damages from other parts of the Marshalls, but the \$45.75 million given for that purpose has been recognized even by government officials as being “manifestly inadequate” (Barker 2004:34).

Nuclear settlements have also created significant differences among affected populations: while the four recognized atolls have greater political power and influence (and the assistance of lawyers), other affected communities can only appeal to the RMI government for assistance (Barker 2004:35-36). Another problem is that definitions used to determine affected communities does not take into account visiting family members who were exposed to fallout, but are not covered under compensation schemes (Barker 2004:36). There was also a failure to acknowledge victims who may not have been directly exposed to fallout, but spent years using contaminated resources on their home atolls, as well as Marshallese involved in radiation clean-up efforts on various atolls (Barker 2004:36-37). As noted above, documents released in the 1990s have led to Marshallese petitions to the U.S. government for more compensation for those not previously acknowledged, under the “changed circumstances” provision of Section 177. Efforts in this regard are continuing.

Environmental damage has been extensive on Bikini and Enewetak, and has included the vaporization of some islets, creating large craters. On Enewetak, radiation-contaminated equipment was dumped into one such crater, which was then filled with concrete, creating a large, permanent dome on Runit Islet. Other lands and resources have been rendered uninhabitable or unusable due to high levels of radioactivity. One particular problem has been the uptake of Cesium-137 by coconut trees, coconuts from which are then consumed by coconut crabs, a highly-prized food. Paradoxically, while parts of Bikini Atoll are not safe for use, marine life on the atoll has thrived without the human presence, making it a prime scuba diving spot in recent years. It is also a prime wreck diving location, due to the battleships at the bottom of the lagoon, sunk during one of the early tests intended to evaluate the effect of nuclear weapons on the Navy.

While it seems reasonable to return safe atolls to the original residents, the huge expense of cleanup operations have been an obstacle in all cases, and an unwillingness on the part of Congress and the American people to pay this price. Marshallese have made the powerful argument that while each missile test at Kwajalein costs in the neighborhood of \$100 million dollars, the RMI can't get money from the U.S. government for nuclear testing compensation and clean-up. There have also been problems in regard to policies regarding cleanup and resettlement of the various affected atolls:

The problems of restoring these islands to habitability and moving back the inhabitants have been controversial. The policies at Bikini have been different from those at Enewetak, and both of those have been different from those at Rongelap. The reasons for adopting different standards had to do with military preparedness, cost, varying

standards, and possibly other considerations (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War 1991:79).

What many Americans seem to want to forget is that for the Marshallese, nuclear testing is not a historical event of the Cold War, it is a current event, as they continue to deal with the huge environmental and human health costs. Their views of this are quite similar to sentiments of the Enewetakese, who expressed the view that World War II didn't end in 1945, as U.S. militarization continues. According to some Enewetakese, the war "has never ended; it has only moved from place to place" (Carucci 1989:76). While the Marshall Islands paid the majority of the price, the U.S. "achieved global superpower status as a result of its weapons testing in the Marshall Islands" (Barker 2004:xiii).

Another legacy of the nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands is a great deal of understandable fear and suspicion. After being returned to contaminated atolls such as Bikini and Rongelap, many Marshallese do not trust the intentions or the word of the U.S. government. Marshallese I knew on Ebeye from Rongelap and Bikini want solid assurances by independent scientists that it is safe for them to return to their home atolls, and that resources are safe for their daily use. Other atoll populations are concerned with the effects of fallout that have only recently been acknowledged by the U.S. government. Some Marshallese (and other Pacific Islanders as well) asked me on more than one occasion whether I thought Kwajalein was radioactively contaminated, both from past nuclear tests and from current missile testing.

Aside from continuing fears regarding the state their bodies and lands, other impacts are more social and cultural. It is difficult to measure the true social impacts of continuous relocations and dislocations in their loss of ties to their land, especially for younger generations that have never known their home atolls. In their report for the Nuclear Claims Tribunal on



Rongelap, Rongerik and Ailinginae, Barbara Johnston and Holly Barker have attempted to capture what it has meant to Marshallese populations to lose their lands and way of life (2001). In many cases, members of relocated communities are now scattered in multiple locations in the Marshalls and in the U.S. As one example of the cultural impacts of nuclear-related health problems, many Marshallese who had thyroidectomies where the vocal cords were not carefully avoided report that they can no longer sing as they once did, a great cultural loss to these individuals (Barbara Johnston, 1999, personal communication).

In terms of other cultural impacts, Carucci has shown how images of power in the form of exploding bombs and missiles have become a part of Enewetakese Christmas celebrations (1997b:35). This was also my experience on Kwajalein (see also Alexander 1978). Carucci has also traced new understandings of power in myths featuring the trickster, *Etao*, which have been modified to include his movement to the U.S., where he is trapped in a bottle until he agrees to help the U.S. government build bombs, missiles, and other military equipment (1989:92).

### Post-war funding bonanza

During the period of benign neglect, the U.S. provided almost no money for development and infrastructure in the Marshalls, and the UN Visiting Mission reports in the 1950s offered only mild criticism of this policy (Johnson 1984:7). However, the 1961 UN Visiting Mission harshly criticized the U.S. for its failure to promote development in areas such as education, health, economics and politics. The U.S. was also criticized for the poor living conditions on Ebeye Islet on Kwajalein (Johnson 1984:7). In response, President John F. Kennedy began to increase the TTPI budget and federal programs available to the area. As Kiste notes,

Within two years, the annual budget was doubled to \$15 million. By fiscal 1984, the territory's budget was over \$114 million, and about another \$35 million was available in federal programs. These represent incredible sums for a small Pacific Islands territory with a population of less than one hundred sixty thousand individuals at the time (1993:71).

In 1962, Kennedy appointed economist Anthony Solomon to head an investigative commission to report on the state of the TTPI. The Solomon Report recommended increased economic development and other improvements. As Kiste notes, however, discussions regarding the TTPI's future political status were classified, and critics charged that the Report "was nothing less than a plan to manipulate Micronesians into a permanent relationship with the United States" (Kiste 1994:231). This period, beginning in 1961,

is best characterized by an accelerated effort to bring the Trust Territory into the American orbit through administrative inclusion, vastly increased budgets and a massive education program. It became American policy to remedy the neglect of the previous decade and to create conditions favorable to a sentiment among Micronesians for permanent affiliation with the United States (Gale 1979:8-9).

During the 1960s, security restrictions were lifted in the TTPI, except on Bikini, Enewetak and Kwajalein. There was only intermittent military activity in Micronesia during this period, except on Kwajalein Atoll and Guam (Gale 1979:9). Gale marks 1969 as the beginning of renewed military interest in Micronesia (1979:9), coinciding with the beginning of political status negotiations throughout the TTPI. Guam also grew in strategic importance as the U.S.

military pondered the possible loss of Okinawa for U.S. military uses, as well as Guam's supporting role during the Vietnam War (Gale 1979:10).

Also in the mid-1960s, the Peace Corps began sending volunteers to Micronesia. The U.S. government had previously argued that Micronesia was not 'foreign enough' to receive Peace Corps volunteers, but then changed its mind (Gale 1979:117). The move may also have been a form of public relations damage control, as Gale notes that while

It has not been possible to retrace the sequence of events that led to a reversal in the government's position ... one element in the decision seems to have been to use the volunteers as a means of counter-acting bad publicity stemming from a critical report from the World Health Organization in 1965 and to take attention away from what was expected to be another critical report from the Trusteeship Council's visiting mission to Micronesia (1979:117-118).

A huge number of volunteers were sent: at its peak, there were 940 volunteers in the Trust Territory, or one for every 100 Micronesians (Gale 1979:119). Many of these Peace Corps volunteers became teachers working on outer islands, and some would devote the rest of their lives to Marshallese education and other related efforts. Volunteers also emerged as critics of the American administration in many places: they have been one group of "American dissenters" on Kwajalein, discussed in Chapter 9.

By the late 1970s, 166 separate federal programs were operating in the TTPI, often not coordinated, as "well-intentioned but poorly informed members of the U.S. Congress" made residents of U.S. territories eligible for the benefits from a variety of federal programs, including food aid and employment programs "mostly designed for urban America" (Kiste 1994:231-232).

Many of these programs also turned out to be highly inappropriate for Micronesian Islanders and even “culturally and socially destructive” in their effects (Kiste 1993:72).

While monetary aid increased substantially during this period, there was no unified plan for economic development, so that all of this aid merely served to increase Marshallese dependency on the U.S. rather than to encourage economic and political independence (Johnson 1984:7-8). Kiste has termed this the creation of a “massive welfare state” (Kiste 1994:232). On the whole, Lutz concluded in 1984 that “Micronesian societies are less socially and economically healthy and self-supporting now than they were before U.S. policies were implemented” (1984a:4). Hanlon believes that “development proved to be a belated, condescending, grossly insufficient form of compensation” for the negative impacts of the U.S. presence, such as nuclear testing (1998:16).

As can be imagined, this period of increased funding was also a period of rapid Americanization in Micronesia (Falgout 1995, Mason 1989). Despite these negative effects, however, Marshallese and other Micronesians noted to me that this era was important in introducing American education to the TTPI. Heine notes this as one of the bright spots in this era: “American education has been the most revolutionary of all the influences operative in Micronesia since the end of World War II, and indeed since the imposition of Western rule” (Heine 1974:37). Of course, this can be seen as a mixed blessing: like development, education can be a powerful tool of Americanization (Calata 2002).

### Compact of Free Association

In 1965 the Congress of Micronesia was created. Soon after, the Congress established a political status commission to evaluate four possible options for the TTPI’s future: (1) free

association; (2) independence; (3) integration into the U.S.; and (4) continuation as a UN Trust Territory. Negotiations with the U.S. began in 1969 and continued for more than a decade.

Many observers have noted that while one of the implied goals of UN trusteeship was to prepare Micronesia for eventual independence, the U.S. government never allowed serious consideration of this option. Those who still assumed that it was an option were surprised to discover in 1982 that “The State Department now says if free association is defeated in August, the 35-year-old trusteeship status will be resumed” (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Jul. 1, 1982). From the outset, the goal of the U.S. was to maneuver the TTPI into a permanent relationship with the U.S., primarily for military and strategic purposes (Petersen 1995:69-70). Firth calls this process one of “staying while leaving” (1987:49). According to Lutz,

It is clear that the choices which the Micronesians have recently had to make as to their political status have been free choices only in the most technical sense of the term: They have been as free as those of boat passengers who are told they can either swim the 50 miles back to shore or remain on a boat whose itinerary is not entirely their own (1984a:5).

While the intent was originally to keep Micronesia together as a single political entity, there were large differences between various island groups, both in terms of contact history and strategic importance. Areas of particular strategic importance lay on the eastern (Palau and the Northern Marianas) and western (Marshall Islands) edges of the TTPI, giving those areas more bargaining power in the negotiations (Kiste 1994:233). The Northern Marianas were the first to break away, becoming a commonwealth of the U.S. in 1975. The strategic location of Palau and the Marshall Islands also gave them greater leverage in the negotiations, resulting in demands

that they be considered as separate entities. This resulted in the TTPI being divided into the “haves” with strategic advantage, and the “have-nots” (Kiste 1994:232-233). The “have-not” countries of Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap eventually became the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), with their own Compact of Free Association with the U.S.

In 1979, both the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and the FSM formed constitutional governments; Palau did the same in 1981. Each entity then began negotiations for a Compact of Free Association (Compact) with the U.S. These agreements provided financial support, access to government programs, and immigration rights in exchange for U.S. military and strategic use of the islands. The Marshall Islands Compact also included a section (177) on the provision of compensation for those atolls affected by U.S. nuclear testing. The Compacts were to have a duration of 15 years, at which time they would be renegotiated. The Compacts were “front-loaded” in terms of financial support, with most financial benefits coming in the early years, to be replaced by revenue generated from developing businesses over the period of the Compact. This was seen as a way to “wean” Micronesia off its financial reliance on the U.S.

The Compacts were voted on in 1983, and were approved by a majority of voters and by the FSM and RMI governments. Both Compacts were approved by the U.S. Congress in 1985 and signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1986. There were complications, however, with Palau’s Compact. In 1971, the U.S. announced plans for the possible military use of large parts of the area around Palau. However, in 1979, Palauans passed a constitution (approved by 91% of population) banning the storage, testing and disposal of nuclear materials in its territory (Lutz 1984a:4) and allowing the presence of nuclear materials only with the approval of three-fourths of the population in a referendum. This constitution clashed with the terms of the Compact, which required that the U.S. be given the option of bringing in nuclear armaments and

materials in cases of emergencies. Despite American pressure, Palauans voted against the Compact in 1983, “despite the sudden influx of \$439,000 of U.S. funds for ‘voter education’ just before the election...the funds were spent primarily for the printing and dissemination of pro-Compact materials” (Lutz 1984a:4). Subsequent votes also failed to reach the three-fourths majority required, and there was continuous political turmoil associated with this issue, including intimidation, suicide and murder. In 1992, Palau’s constitution was amended so that a simple majority would allow the Compact to be approved. In 1993, the majority voted for Free Association, and the Compact went into effect in 1994 (Firth 1997:335-336). While Palau’s Compact was ultimately approved, critics have noted the fact that the U.S. kept holding the vote over and over, until the desired results were achieved (in Johnson 1984:10).

The U.S. government also encountered resistance to the Marshallese Compact on Kwajalein Atoll. The demonstrations of 1982 and 1986, although also fueled by other issues, were also protests by Kwajalein landowners against the terms of the Compact and the associated Military Use and Operating Rights Agreement (MUORA) for the use of Kwajalein. Organized protests of this kind by Marshallese landowners began as early as the late 1960s, and all involved Marshallese returning to their home islets in the Mid-Atoll Corridor (MAC) hazard zone as a form of protest. These demonstrations have often been called “sail-ins” because Marshallese returned to their home islands via small motor boats. By occupying the MAC (and occasionally Meck Islet, one of the major missile launch sites), these demonstrations have threatened or forced the U.S. to cancel missile tests. Some demonstrations have also included occupations of parts of Kwaj Islet and Roi-Namur Islet. These demonstrations will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.

Despite assertions that the Compacts are tools for the eventual independence of Micronesia, Hanlon sees them as a continuation of policies of economic dependency (1998:16). This relation of dependence and dominance was brought home to me graphically as I worked at CMI in the fall of 2001. It was after September 11, and American flags were appearing all over the base and on Ebeye as well. One day a large American flag appeared on the wall of my classroom on Gugeegue, with the words “God Bless America” written underneath. A day later, some smaller writing appeared underneath the words “God Bless America,” saying “god also bless marshall islands” (Figure 1).



Figure 1. “God Also Bless Marshall Islands.”

## Compact II

In recent years, the Compact has come up for renegotiation. While some questioned whether the U.S. would continue to “need” Micronesia with the end of the Cold War, Peter



Black observed that “U.S. strategic and foreign policy interests in this region have changed since the negotiation of the Compacts, but they have not evaporated” (1998:12). A major part of this strategic interest is in Kwajalein Atoll. The Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2003 was signed in December 2003, and will provide \$3.5 billion to the RMI and FSM over a period of 20 years, as well as allow for the continued use of Kwajalein Atoll for military purposes. Called Compact II, the official word was that it

continues key U.S. economic assistance to facilitate capacity-building and self-sufficiency in the FSM and RMI with new accountability controls; strengthens immigration provisions and protects the right of FSM and RMI citizens to migrate freely to the U.S. for work, education, and residence; addresses the impact of migration on affected U.S. jurisdictions, including Guam, the CNMI and the State of Hawai’i; and provides a 50-year lease extension for U.S. access to Kwajalein Atoll in the RMI, home of the Ronald Reagan Missile Testing Facility (Pacific Islands Report Dec. 18, 2003).

Compact II includes new accountability controls lacking in Compact I, instituted to prevent a repeat of the misappropriation of millions of dollars of Compact I money. While this issue will be examined in greater detail with regards to Kwajalein in other chapters, it is important to note here that while some Marshallese and Micronesians were angered by what they saw as a violation of sovereignty in this regard with Compact II (*Marshall Islands Journal*, Nov. 8, 2002), American residents of Kwajalein argued that it was the only way to get U.S. money into desperately-needed infrastructural improvements on Ebeye and to the intended beneficiaries of those improvements, the Marshallese underclass.

Landowner protests have also taken place around the newer Compact agreements as well, although none to date have included sail-ins. In 2000, Kwajalein landowners filed suit against the RMI government, saying that they were the only ones who should be negotiating on Kwajalein rental issues (*Marshall Islands Journal*, Jun. 23). They also asserted that the prices paid for Kwajalein land did not represent fair market value. Lands leased by the U.S. are considered private property, so the RMI must lease these lands from Kwajalein landowners. In 2002, landowners threatened not to sign the needed Land Use Agreements with the RMI government (*Marshall Islands Journal*, Jul. 12, 2002). In May 2004, a proclamation from 4,000 Marshall Islands landowners stated that the \$15 million annual rent was too low, and requested an increase to \$19.1 million (Rowa 2004). Landowners asserted that if this proposal was rejected, they would reclaim their islands on Kwajalein when the current lease expires in 2016. Landowners cited poor living on Ebeye as the reason for requests for higher rent. RMI officials responded to landowners by saying that they were focusing instead on reforming the Kwajalein Atoll Development Association (KADA) so that \$1.9 million in “impact funding” for problems on Ebeye could be made available. They also requested that they be given a longer time frame (past 2016) so that projects aimed at improving living conditions on Ebeye, like the Ebeye-Gugeegue causeway, could be completed (Rowa 2004). Threats of new demonstrations if lease payments are not increased and other issues are not resolved have been a continuous refrain on the atoll.

### Current situation

The RMI continues to encounter many of the issues other small Pacific Island nations are also facing, including aid dependency, import dependence, urbanization, and population problems. Reasons for that dependency include

the narrow resource base, limited domestic revenue generating capacity, small domestic markets, prohibitive distance from larger markets, high degree of dependence on external assistance and imports, the prominence of the public sector as a source of employment, and vulnerability to external shocks (Naiker 2001:10).

As a sign of what was to come, Heine observed in the early 1970s that, despite massive inputs of cash, “Micronesia’s economic potential has remained unchanged. Our second largest export still remains scrap metal from World War II, and our largest export is copra...” (1974:146).

Economically, aid from the U.S. and other sources continues to be the major source of income in the RMI, despite hopes that the Compacts would encourage private economic growth, making aid unnecessary. According to a 2004 International Monetary Fund report, almost 60% of GDP has come from external assistance since 1986. Employment had not increased since the late 1980s, and economic growth was due to government spending made possible by increased aid flows (IMF 2004). Of course, as noted above, some feel that economic independence was never a true goal of the Compacts. As one indicator of the impact of compensation money on the economy, the 1999 Census reported that the highest median annual incomes in the RMI were on Kwajalein, Enewetak, Majuro, and Kili (where a population of Bikinians live) (RMI Office of Planning and Statistics 1999:60).

Import dependency has always been high. Lutz observed that in 1981, tinned fish, tobacco and beer accounted for 61% of all imports into the Marshall Islands (1984a:3). In 1994, Kiste noted that “Imports account for over 90 per cent of the food supply, and in 1991 the nation’s president reported that two-thirds of Marshallese children suffer from malnutrition” (1994:236). The public sector has also remained the largest source of employment and cash

income (Saito 1995:20). In 1995, the RMI Office of Planning and Statistics estimated that about 75% of RMI's budget came from the U.S. government (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Oct. 26, 1999:3). Other major sources of income at the time included lease money for the military use of Kwajalein and nuclear compensation payments (Saito 1995:20). Structural impediments to economic development that have been identified include: (1) the communal landownership system which prevents the sale of land for business purposes; (2) undeveloped financial systems; (3) poor domestic transport and communications; (4) high international transport costs; (5) a small entrepreneurial class; (6) shortages of skilled labor; and (7) high wages (Saito 1995:8).

Aside from strategic location, the RMI has few resources to exploit. Mason noted in 1947 that the Marshallese atolls were too poor in resources to provide above a subsistence level, and that copra, handicrafts, and perhaps fishing were the only real possibilities for commercial development (1947:7). More recent economic reports also emphasize the narrow productive base of the islands, and that the limited land area and poor soil quality inhibit agricultural development (Saito 1995:12). As such, copra and fish have always been important exports. In more recent years, while tuna harvesting by other countries has generated some revenue, problems of underreporting catches and the difficulties in enforcement have been major problems. One source notes that RMI tuna catches on a commercial scale were non-existent before 1992 (Adams, Dalzell and Ledua 1999:371). Vast seabed mineral deposits have been considered another major resource, as well as the potential for the development of tourism (Saito 1995:12). Tourism is hampered, however, by the remoteness of many of the atolls and a lack of infrastructure, including reliable transportation. From time to time, the Republic of the Marshall Islands has also entertained plans to accept contaminated soil as landfill and to use some remote

atolls and lagoons to store nuclear wastes from the U.S. and Japan (Hanlon 1998:188; Mason 1989:38-39).

Population has been another continuous concern for the Marshallese, including the continuing in-migration to Majuro and Ebeye, and high internal growth rates. Interestingly, the 1999 census revealed that population had declined somewhat, largely due to out-migration to the U.S. (*Marshall Islands Journal*, Dec. 17, 1999:3). As Hess, Nero and Burton note, the Marshallese have always been highly mobile, they have just “incorporated new regions into their social geography” (2001:95). Since the Compact came into effect in 1986, allowing Marshallese to migrate freely to the U.S., thousands of Marshallese have taken advantage of this opportunity to work or go to school. In 2001, researchers estimated that 3,000 to 4,000 Marshallese were living in the continental U.S., with another 2,000 in Hawaii (Hess, Nero and Burton 2001:89). Younger Marshallese able to meet entrance requirements are also increasingly opting to join the U.S. military. The *Hourglass* reported that in 2003, 77 Marshallese were serving in the U.S. military (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Jan. 3, 2004:6). In August 2004, a record number of Marshallese, 21, were sworn into the U.S. Army (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Jan. 5, 2005:7).

### Kwajalein Atoll History

#### Kwajalein geography

Kwajalein Atoll is the largest atoll in the world, with the largest lagoon. While the atoll’s total area is 839.30 square miles (Mason 1947:6), it contains only 6.33 square miles of land (Fosberg 1988:5). Crescent in shape, it is 75 miles from tip to tip, and about 30 miles wide at the widest part. The atoll consists of 93 separate islets or motu, ranging from sand bars with little

vegetation to Kwajalein Islet, which has an area of 1.2 square miles. Kwajalein Islet is the largest islet at the southern tip of the atoll, with other large islets on the northern tip (Roi-Namur) and western tip (Ebadon). Ebeye Islet is a long narrow islet two miles north up the reef from Kwaj Islet.

Kwajalein receives 2,710 millimeters of rainfall annually, much of it falling between May and November (Shun and Athens 1990:232). In terms of its position in the north-south rainfall gradient, Mason notes that the ability to grow crops such as bananas, papayas, limes, breadfruit and taro largely disappears in latitudes north of Kwajalein and Likiep (1947:2). Strong northeasterly to southeasterly winds blow from December to April (Shun and Athens 1990:232).

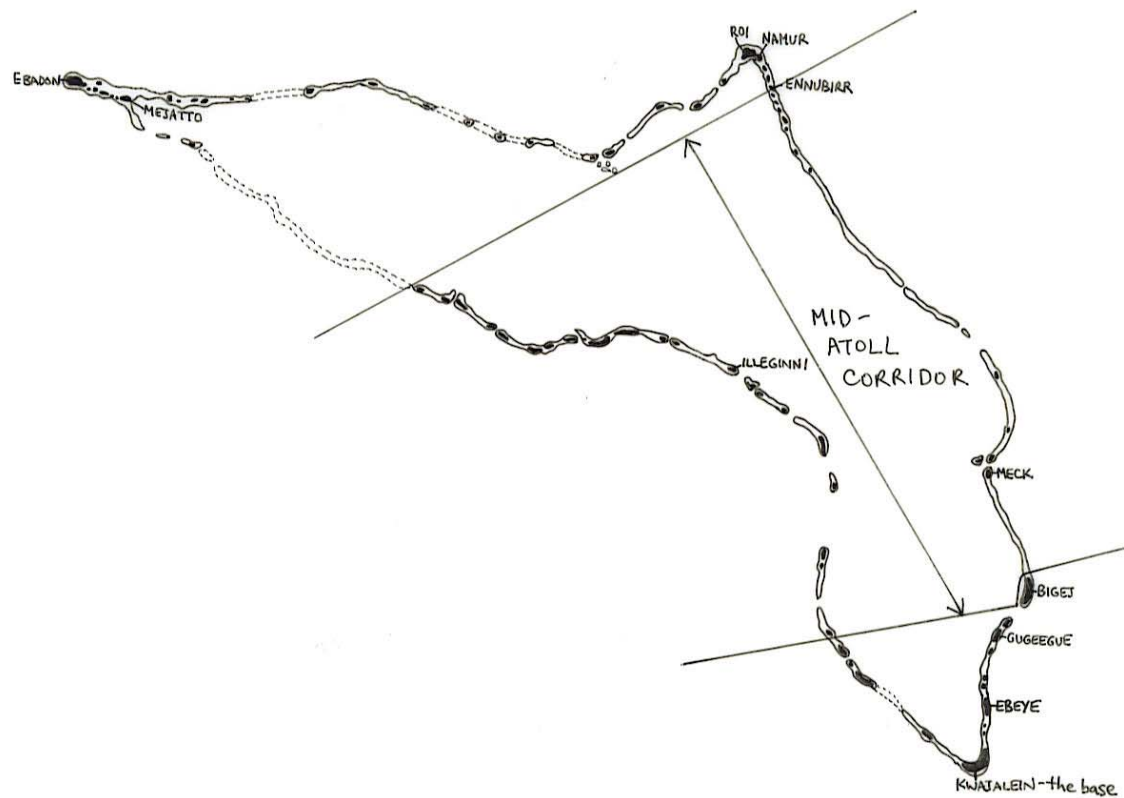


Figure 2. Kwajalein Atoll.

### Kwajalein prehistory

Shun and Athens were the first to conduct archaeological investigations on Kwajalein Atoll, as part of improvements to the base airfield (1987). Due to the devastation resulting from the battle for Kwajalein Islet in World War II and extensive landscape modification by the U.S. military, it was previously thought that any evidence of prehistoric and early historic sites would have been obliterated (Shun and Athens 1990:234). However, these archaeological investigations on the atoll in recent decades have been productive, including charcoal, faunal remains, shell and other artifacts in the prehistoric layer (Shun and Athens 1990:235). In the upper prehistoric layer they found “coral pebble and cobble paving” extending over an area as wide as 200 meters (Shun and Athens 1990:235).

More recently, Beardsley undertook the first major archaeological investigation on the atoll (1994). Significant findings included the documentation of a 2,000-year habitation sequence on Kwajalein Islet, and a tentatively-identified gardening layer, indicating that *Colocasia* taro was among the food crops brought to the atoll by the original settlers (1994). Other finds included deposits containing earth ovens, faunal remains, middens and coral pavements, as well as a shell thatching needle, a new artifact type. More recently, Beardsley found coral fishhooks on Kwajalein, an exciting find because they have not previously been seen in the Marshall Islands (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Aug. 27, 2002:3).

Prehistorically, Kwajalein Islet was the primary habitation site on the atoll, with the other islets being used primarily for food gathering purposes (Athens in Beardsley 1994:18). In his work on traditional land use on the atoll, Carucci has noted that Kwajalein Islet served as a gathering place and the residence of local chiefs (1997a:201-202). Being the largest and most ecologically-diverse islet on the atoll, it provided residents with resources not available to the

same extent on other parts of the atoll (Carucci 1997a:253). With Ebadon and perhaps Roi-Namur, Kwajalein was one of the few locations on the atoll where taro could be grown, which is just “one index of the islet’s richness. With such richness, breadfruit, papaya, and bananas grew with ease, and even pandanus and coconut were found in far greater supply than on other islets” (Carucci 1997a:253). It was also known to be a good fishing site (Carucci 1997a:255).

### Colonial history

The British “discovered” Kwajalein Atoll in 1804 (Hezel 1983:82): by 1892 a mission outpost had been established on Kwajalein Islet (Carucci 1997a:234). Kwajalein Islet was also the center of activity on the atoll during the German and Japanese administrations: Population figures from the Japanese era showing that Kwajalein Islet was home to a little more than half of the atoll’s residents (Carroll in Carucci 1997:254).

The beginnings of the Japanese military build-up in the early 1940s mark major changes for the residents of Kwajalein Islet. Since that time, the islet “has not been continuously occupied by Kuwajleen people with any degree of freedom” (Carucci 1997a:192). This is also when major land alterations begin, as Kwajalein Islet became the central Japanese military base in the Marshalls (Carucci 1997a:247). Changes included the building of an airfield, a fuel pier, and housing on the northern end of the islet for Japanese military and support personnel (Carucci 1997a:248). The Japanese also blasted out areas of reef for rock for construction purposes: these craters are now known as the “Japanese swimming pools” (Sims 1993:37). Eugene Sims also notes that the Japanese had a railroad running between Kwaj and Ebeye which operated at low tide (Sims 1993:40). Local Marshallese did suffer food shortages as productive land was taken



for military use, resulting in increased dependence on the Japanese for food, but they did not experience the starvation that occurred on other atolls (Carucci 1997a:249).

## World War II

According to Morison, the attack on Kwajalein was “one of the most complicated amphibious campaigns in history: landings on thirty islets, fights on ten, lengthy battles on four” (in Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:121). The battle for Kwajalein Islet itself was particularly difficult, as American soldiers faced 4,000 Japanese soldiers, most from combat units (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:121). At the end of the week-long campaign to win the atoll, the American dead numbered 372, the Marshallese dead 200, and the Japanese dead 7,870 (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:121). Kwajalein Atoll then became a “stepping stone” in the Central Pacific from which to launch attacks on other Japanese holdings (*Kwajalein Hourglass Special Edition*, Feb. 5, 1994:16).

The experience was a harrowing one for atoll residents. It was also devastating to the islet itself. The Battle for Kwajalein has also become known for the sheer amount of bombs and shells dropped on it (Hanlon 1998:23). Army photographs showing how completely obliterated Kwaj Islet was: one sees a smoking lunar landscape, with few remaining trees (*Kwajalein Hourglass Battlefield Images*, Nov. 11, 1999:4). After the battle for Kwajalein Islet, surviving Marshallese were moved to less-damaged Ennylabegan Islet, where they were housed in Japanese barracks and clothed and fed (*Kwajalein Hourglass Special Edition*, Feb. 5, 1994:8). After the battle, U.S. forces bulldozed the entire surface of Kwaj Islet flat, using debris as fill (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Aug. 27, 2002).

On my first trip to Kwajalein in 1999, I met an old Air Force pilot on the flight to Honolulu. He was going there for a reunion of ever-dwindling fellow survivors of World War II in the Pacific. He told me that he had been to Kwajalein only once, very soon after it was liberated. As his plane had landed, he had seen a large hill at the end of the runway. He was confused at first, as he knew that atolls were usually flat. As they got closer, he could see that it was a pile of dead Japanese soldiers. Other sources told me that because of sheer numbers and health issues (and undoubtedly some animosity), the bodies of Japanese soldiers had to be buried quickly wherever they could be buried on the islet. As a result, it is not uncommon to encounter Japanese remains when digging for construction purposes on Kwajalein. Beardsley notes that

Bomb craters and surface irregularities became instant disposal sites for all debris-pre-war Japanese and Marshallese materials brought to the surface during the bombardment, battle debris, human skeletal remains, vegetal matter-which in turn became the foundations for the military facilities (1994:17).

Hence the surprise of archaeologists when intact cultural deposits were found on Kwajalein Islet.

After Kwajalein Atoll was captured, Seabees and Army engineers rebuilt the airfield in less than 30 days (*Kwajalein Hourglass Special Edition*, Feb. 5, 1994:8). At that time, there were 10,000 soldiers (Army, Navy and Marine) on Kwaj, with an additional 5,000 Navy personnel on Ebeye (*Kwajalein Hourglass Special Edition*, Feb. 5, 1994:8). Soon after the invasion, the Navy hired Marshallese to serve as laborers on Kwaj, for which they were paid and fed (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:271). Alexander reported that 300 Marshallese were originally employed, recruited from various outer islands (1978:36). Many things, such as food and clothing, were provided for free or were very inexpensive, leading some Marshallese to recall that “ ‘during the

navy times it was ‘a free life’” (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:269-270). Americans were also less rank-conscious than the Japanese, as Marshallese recall that

‘...we worked side-by-side with the Americans. The Japanese would never let us drive trucks, but with the Americans, if you knew how to drive better than one of the soldiers, you could drive, and that American guy would just ride because s/he did not know (how to drive). It is as if we were all the same’ (Carucci 1997b:250).

However, as Carucci notes, even though they were living on the same islet in relative harmony, Marshallese were physically separated from Americans “a practice which became more marked in 1950 when the Marshallese camp was moved to [Ebeye]” (Carucci 1997b:250).

The proximity to Americans was also a mixed blessing, as Marshallese recalled that U.S. servicemen on Kwajalein “‘They really damaged the [Marshallese] women” (Carucci 1997b:250). In addition, the availability of cheap beer and the social camaraderie of drinking with American soldiers began patterns of behavior that have become very destructive today, as will be discussed in Chapter 8.

### Post-war American administration

As noted above, the Marshallese workers’ camp on Kwajalein Islet was moved to Ebeye in 1950. This was necessitated by the expansion of facilities on Kwaj Islet. Around this time there is also a shift in the base population from being primarily military to being primarily civilian (Alexander 1978:39). Despite these needs, there are also indications that Navy administrators were concerned that the Marshallese community was becoming too dependent on the Americans. That the camp “presented a squalid, shantytown appearance” at the time it was

moved (Tobin 1954:3) was undoubtedly also a factor. A new camp was then built on Ebeye that would accommodate 370 people (Tobin 1954:3). DoD records call this camp a “model village” built under Navy supervision, consisting of housing and infrastructure for 70 families (the 250 workers and 300 dependents that were relocated). This same document states that “agreement was reached in 1951 that Ebeye would be the responsibility of TTPI...and that the community should be managed to be self-sufficient, if possible” (Pac Coll, Fact-finding Report 1977:5).

With the expansion of American military facilities on Kwaj came major alterations to the islet itself, which included the removal of most of its natural vegetation (Beardsley 1994:17). In addition to the postwar clearing away of war debris and flattening of the islet, additional land was added to both ends of the islet. In 1964, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ contractor began a dredging project in the Kwaj lagoon that added 55 acres of land to the western end of Kwaj Islet, and 35 acres to the northern end (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994:4). The size of the islet increased by a third: it went from 2.2 square miles before World War II to 3.1 square miles after (Beardsley 1994:7). The extent of fill can be seen on maps in Beardsley’s work (1994:9). In addition to lagoon dredging, Americans continued the Japanese pattern of mining reef rock for reconstruction and expansion of the base after the war (Sims 1993:38).

Several decades later, Carucci’s analysis of traditional land use on the atoll provides a particularly graphic and illuminating display of the fundamental changes that have taken place on Kwajalein Islet and local people’s relationship to the landscape (1997a). One can see how current base functions cover over local meanings; for example, in the way the base laundry now rests on top of a former chief’s residence (Carucci 1997a:218). One can also see how reference points were lost. Carucci notes that a highly *tabu* cemetery with remains of chiefly families, is believed to be

near the current location of Building 1009 (Range Operations Building) or 1010 (Range Command Building) according to two consultants. The remaining consultant recalled that this graveyard was further west, on the lagoon side of Building 1129... (Carucci 1997a:216).

This also highlights the complexity of identifying land parcels and determining land rights on the islet, which has lost many of its traditional features and has even increased in size.

### Missile testing

Prior to its use as a major U.S. missile testing base, Kwajalein served as a support base for U.S. nuclear testing on Bikini and Enewetak, and for the Korean War (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994:5). It had largely become a backwater when it was selected in the late 1950s as a launch site for anti-ballistic missiles (ABM) targeting inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBM) launched from what was soon to be Vandenberg Air Force Base in California (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994:2-3). Kwajalein then became part of the Pacific Missile Range and a key area for the testing of defense technologies against possible missile attacks from Communist countries. As a result, the late 1950s and early 1960s were times of rapid growth on Kwajalein:

The Navy needs help in a big hurry in 1958 as the first technical contractors begin bringing in engineers, scientists, and administrators, many with families. Almost overnight there is a big demand for schools, housing and stores...A logistics support contractor called Transport Company of Texas is contracted to come to Kwajalein... (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994:3).

During the Nike-Zeus missile tests of the early 1960s, the U.S. military selected a broad ocean area (BOA) near Lib Atoll as the hazard area for those tests. As a result, in 1961 the residents of Lib were moved to Ebeye. They were relocated to a six-acre area of Ebeye, where infrastructure had been built for their use.

With the demonstrated viability of this technology with the first successful intercept of an ICBM using the Nike-Zeus intercept system (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994), the U.S. Army took over the administration of Kwajalein Atoll from the Navy in 1964. The first Logistics Support Contractor (LSC or Contractor) under Army administration was Global Associates. By the mid-1960s, the American population on Kwaj was approximately 4,000 people (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994:5). Launches took place from Mt. Olympus on the southwest end of Kwajalein Islet. A history compiled by a Kwaj Eagle Scout candidate reported that the Mt. Olympus launch site was closed after a Zeus missile malfunctioned and “came almost straight back down” (Reed 1982:3).

Around this time, the Kwaj lagoon was determined to be a better target area for incoming ICBMs than various BOAs, due to the shallowness of the lagoon for the recovery of test components, and for the possibility of placing instrumentation on nearby islets (Host Nation Archives 1968a:22). The area in question included the central portion of the atoll, in what has come to be known as the Mid-Atoll Corridor (MAC). Over the years, this function of the MAC has been often described as that of a “bull’s-eye” or a “catcher’s mitt.” For safety purposes, the Marshallese residents of islets in the MAC were moved to Ebeye in 1965. The details of the removal of the MAC Islanders, compensation for lands taken, promises made to MAC Islanders at the time of removal, and their difficulties in living on Ebeye have been a major source of conflict on the atoll since that time. These issues will be discussed further in Chapters 6 and 9.

As the BOA near their home atoll was no longer a missile testing target, the residents of Lib were returned there in 1966, after the military had constructed a replacement “village” for them on the atoll (Host Nation Archives 1968a:22).

In terms of Kwaj’s importance in larger Cold War missile testing schemes, the DoD announced plans in 1967 to deploy interceptor missiles at strategic sites throughout the U.S. as part of the Sentinel program for defense against enemy missile attacks (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, July 2, 1994:5). This came after revelations concerning the possibility of Chinese ICBMs being able to reach the U.S. or Europe. However, missile testing has not been the sole function of Kwajalein Atoll: surveillance is another. Programs in the 1960s included Project PRESS on Roi-Namur, which was “a complex radar retrieval program watching Russian ICBM flights over North Pacific Ocean areas” (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, July 2, 1994:3). Again, it is important to note that while missile testing is sometimes discussed as a different issue from nuclear testing, one of the major objectives of missile testing was the delivery of nuclear weapons over long distances. As such, it is considered by many to be an integral part of the nuclear arms race, and an integral part of the “nuclear politics of the region” (Firth 1994:300).

In the early 1970s, launch facilities were also built on Illeginni Islet (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994:6), which was also later used for missile impact tests (Pacific Collection 1977b). Meck Islet later became the primary ABM launch site. The base population peaked at over 5,000 residents in the early 1970s (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Jul. 28, 2000). After this point there was a lull in missile testing, with a concomitant reduction in population and base facilities. However, Kwaj became a hot spot again as it became a critical part of Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), commonly referred to as Star Wars, in the 1980s, with a concomitant

increase in funding. In 1986, the Command was redesignated U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll (USAKA) (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994:12).

While other BOAs are currently used for missile tests as well, the MAC is still an important missile testing target area, and remains uninhabited. The primary mission of Kwajalein continues to be the testing of ballistic missiles and ballistic missile interceptors, or ABM systems. Currently, Kwajalein Atoll is home to the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site, often shortened to Reagan Test Site (RTS). RTS possesses “the only treaty-approved launch site from which the U.S. can test, due to extended flight distances, ‘operational’ Strategic ABM interceptor missiles” (SMDC 2005). Range instrumentation, which is located on eight of the eleven islets leased from the Marshallese by the U.S. government, includes complex radars, optical sensors, telemetry receiving stations and “impact scoring assets” (SMDC 2005).

RTS is under the Command of the Strategic Missile Defense Command (SMDC) located in Huntsville, Alabama. U.S. ballistic missile defense as currently conceived includes National Missile Defense (NMD) to shield U.S. from limited long-range missile attack, and Theater Missile Defense (TMD) to neutralize attacks on U.S. armed forces and allies by destroying incoming short-range missiles. RTS has served and continues to serve as a major testing site for both kinds of systems. RTS is currently testing what are called “Ground-based Mid-course Defense systems.” Surveillance functions continue as well. In addition to NASA space operations and experiments, the range also supports near earth and deep space surveillance, which includes satellite tracking and “new foreign launch coverage” (SMDC 2005).

Missile testing on Kwajalein Atoll has reentered the news in recent years, largely because of tests conducted in support of the NMD system. Intercept tests of this system have been described in the media as “hitting a bullet with a bullet” (Wolf 1999), and successes and failures



of these tests have been avidly followed by both supporters and opponents of NMD policies. Of great concern to critics is that NMD will violate international arms control treaties, like the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

As can be seen in the preceding paragraphs, missile testing in general and Kwajalein Atoll in particular are awash in acronyms, and these change as systems change over time. The range was originally named Kwajalein Test Site (KTS), but this was changed to Kwajalein Missile Range (KMR) in 1968 when it was separated from the Pacific Missile Range (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994:5). As noted above, the range has now been renamed RTS, although it is sometimes still referred by its older names.

The U.S. military establishment has been very frank about the value of Kwajalein to U.S. military and strategic interests. According to the Pentagon, Kwajalein is the only place suitable for both full-scale testing of long-range missiles and testing of ballistic missile intercepts outside the atmosphere (Wolf 1999). The large and shallow lagoon is ideal for the retrieval of test components, and the very deep surrounding ocean provides “secure disposal of objects not to be recovered” (Wolf 1999). According to the DoD, “the requirements of our missile defense and space surveillance programs, combined with the uniqueness of Kwaj’s location, infrastructure investment, and real world treaty restrictions...” make Kwajalein invaluable (Reuters Feb. 3, 1999). In addition, “Virtually every ICBM in the U.S. arsenal was test fired at Kwajalein” and it is the only location where the U.S. can conduct exoatmospheric tests of long-range missiles (Woodard 1999). According to the SMDC, the value of the range is based on “its strategic geographical location, unique instrumentation, and unsurpassed capability to support ballistic missile testing and space operations” (SMDC 2005). The relatively uncluttered airspace around

Kwajalein is also a plus. In sum, the \$4-billion complex on Kwaj is seen as a key strategic resource in ballistic missile testing, ABM testing, and space and intelligence gathering functions.

Although not often noted in discussions of Kwajalein, Wake Island and Aur Atoll are also functionally linked to the atoll's missile testing activities. Wake Island, discussed above as the Marshallese Island Enen-Kio, is "a functional adjunct to RTS, providing a launch site for intermediate range NMD and TMD target missiles" (SMDC 2005). Facilities on Wake are currently being upgraded to support upcoming TMD tests (SMDC 2005). The advantages of this site include the fact that "The location allows for a safe launch and trajectory over unpopulated ocean with open space for intercepts, when called for" (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Oct. 1, 2002). Aur Atoll, in the central part of the Ratak chain of the Marshalls, is also an adjunct site: it "is a minimally improved site suitable for tactical launch systems that do not require significant infrastructure" (SMDC 2005). Taongi, Bikar, and Maloelap Atolls are also listed on the SMDC website as "other sites under consideration for support of TMD test activities" (SMDC 2005).

In terms of the diversity of testing done on Kwajalein, for long-range missile tests, missiles are still launched from Vandenberg: shorter range missiles are launched from other locations in Hawaii or the Pacific. Missiles are also not just fired from land-based launchers: in May 2004 a test missile was dropped from an aircraft, ignited, and flew to its target (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Jan. 5, 2005:6). It is important to note that in discussing the impacts of missile testing, test areas do not just include the expected path of the missile or ABM. They often involve hazard areas covering Broad Ocean Areas, which may occasionally include inhabited parts of the Marshall Islands. While the odds of these areas coming into play are rare, it has happened. A 1970 edition of the *Micronitor* reported that rocket debris had fallen on Mejit Atoll,

located in the north central portion of the Ratak chain (1970:1). According to this source, Kwajalein officials confirmed that a

missile had been fired from California, wandered off course and exploded high over the island. Sources at Mejit said the 350 people were initially frightened, believing the missile parts were radioactive. However, [a Kwajalein official] assured the people the missile was merely ‘testing atmospheric conditions.’ He told the islanders the incident should not have happened and would not happen again...Nevertheless, sources at Mejit say similar missile parts have washed up on the island’s shore before last month’s incident took place (Micronitor 1970:1).

Other testing not associated with missile systems has also taken place on the atoll over the years, contributing to Marshallese fears for their health and environment, despite official explanations. For example, in 2004, the *Hourglass* noted that a “strange glowing cloud” in night skies over Kwajalein was part of a NASA project studying the ionosphere (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Jan. 5, 2005:7).

In terms of the American administration of Kwajalein Atoll, there are two commanders; one being the commander of RTS, and the other being the commander of USAKA. The USAKA commander is the one in closest contact with base residents and local Marshallese, and is a very important presence on the base and atoll generally. While the job of USAKA commander used to be an end-of-the-line assignment, this is no longer the case. As one indication of this, the commander of USAKA now serves as the representative of the Marshall Islands to the Commander-in-Chief Pacific (CINCPAC), and is an important player in negotiations between the U.S. and Marshallese governments.

In terms of the everyday functioning of the base, a primary Logistics Support Contractor (LSC or Contractor) provides most personnel and services on the base, including technical services related to missile testing, and other basic services, such as “procurement and supply, power, water, facility and housing maintenance, schools, recreation, retail...telecommunications and sea and air transportation” (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Sep. 27, 2002:1). As noted, while the base on Kwajalein Islet is a U.S. Army base, it is also what is called a Government Owned Contractor Operated (GOCO) facility. The logic behind GOCOs is that a Logistics Support Contractor is more motivated to be efficient, productive and profitable than government employees would be (Chernitzer 2002a:3). They began springing up around the world around the 1960s as a way to “free up” military personnel from having to deal with the logistics of military facilities (Sims 1993:121). One of the downsides of this arrangement is that “...military staff officers suddenly found themselves in a position of administering a bunch of civilians that many times didn’t agree with the so called ‘Army or Navy way’” (Sims 1993:121). I found this to be one of the fundamental “tensions of empire” on the atoll. There are also “specialty contractors” operating on the base, such as the Technical Contractor (Sims 1993:122), and a range of subcontractors. As Sims notes, there has been much more consolidation in base logistics in recent decades, with Raytheon Co., the Contractor from 1994 to 2003, taking over “much of the Range operation previously done by a host of other contractors” (1993:124).

To return to larger missile testing concerns, the issue of missile testing and Kwajalein Atoll raises some very interesting questions regarding borders. One particularly interesting angle is the way that changes in weapon technology and capabilities have changed conceptions of borders and defense. The increased ability of some countries to launch long range missiles has led to ideas of missile defense protecting not just the literal boundaries of our country, but also

our allies and the “theater” in which the U.S. military operates, which can be global. The extension of those security borders into space is a particularly ripe topic for study.

But the increased reach of technology has had other border effects as well. Due to technological advances in recent years, it is no longer necessary for some jobs to be staffed by Americans on Kwajalein, as they can be done remotely. A recent remoting project, called the Kwajalein Modernization and Remoting (KMAR) program, has helped move this forward, and there has been talk of the “migration of most jobs from Kwaj to the states” (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Jan. 5, 2005:9). The ideal seems to be a Kwajalein with fewer and fewer Americans physically present to operate it. How these changes will affect the base and local Marshallese remains to be seen, although the loss of many service jobs (in support of Americans physically present on the base) will likely have a major impact on Marshallese employment.

As noted, the borders of missile testing include not just the path of a missile and its target, but large hazard areas, including BOAs and occasionally other islands and atolls. This has resulted in the need for some island populations to “take cover” for particular test events in approved shelters or even evacuate to Ebeye overnight. As noted, this has also resulted in the relocation of populations such as those in the MAC. As a result, missile testing on Kwajalein Atoll affects not just access to Kwaj Islet and the other leased islets on the atoll, but also the entire MAC. As a result, for most Marshallese the borders of free movement on the atoll are within the crowded borders of Ebeye and a few other islets. While access to the MAC has been much more open in recent years, allowing MAC islanders to enter during “range downtime” to visit their islands and harvest crops (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Nov. 6, 2001:1), this has not always been the case. While they can harvest crops, they are prohibited from building anything but

temporary shelters on these islets, and must adhere to USAKA schedules. They also must have their own transportation to and from these islets.

Clearance of the MAC for missions, of course, requires communication between USAKA and the Marshallese, which has not always been a clear connection. Cases of Marshallese being in the MAC hazard area (both intentionally and unintentionally) have been frequent. Various warnings systems have been used over the years, including a red flag being raised on Ebeye when the range is “up,” and more recently, announcements on one of the few television channels (although if Ebeye is without electric power, this may not work). Aside from infrastructure deficiencies, I believe one of the major barriers to communication on the atoll is the “technospeak” used by the base. The language used in hazard announcements in the *Hourglass* is a case in point, which includes terms such as “egress” of all air and sea vehicles from the “hazard area” as supervised by “clearance personnel” (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Nov. 30, 2001:8).

These linguistic, bureaucratic, and infrastructural barriers were brought home to me by a warning printed in the *Hourglass* in the Fall of 2002. It stated that “A hazardous condition has been identified in the vicinity of the islands of Gugeegue and Ningi” (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Oct. 1, 2002:3). The response of many Marshallese and other Pacific Islander residents of Gugeegue was that there must be something radioactive on the islet. Americans on both the base and “the Marshallese side” assumed that a piece of a missile had ended up on the lagoonside reef. After numerous questions from Gugeegue residents, I called the Command Safety Office for more information, as instructed by the notices. (I knew before I called I would probably not be given any useful information, but I had to try.) When I explained that people on Gugeegue were worried about their safety and asked what the hazard was generally, the safety officer said that he

was “not at liberty to reveal the nature of the hazard.” I then asked if people should continue to boat and fish in those areas, and he hesitantly said, “sure.”

I then went and asked some male residents of Gugeegue if they had any idea what it was, and they responded very quickly that it probably referred to the container of dynamite that had been sitting on the northern end of the islet for years. It was leftover from the building of the causeway from Ebeye to Gugeegue, and had been partly buried at the end of the islet by the contractor. Since then, some of the dynamite had been used by Gugeegue males for fishing and other purposes. Apparently, someone from Kwaj heard about it, came to see it and realized it was highly unstable. Demolition teams were very promptly flown out from the U.S., who then proceeded to blow the cache up in 100 pound increments over a period of a few weeks, with each explosion rocking the islet. I asked someone involved what the impact would have been had the whole container exploded, and this person indicated that significant portions of Gugeegue would have been destroyed.

Interestingly, the *Hourglass* notice stated that “All personnel are cautioned to remain clear of these islands...” meaning that base residents should stay away, including boaters, but says nothing about what Marshallese and other residents of Gugeegue should do. While this seemed prejudicial at first (it seemed that Gugeegue residents should at least have been warned to avoid the northern end of the islet), a Marshallese source told me that the RMI government had opted for secrecy because the episode was embarrassing, and to avoid panicking Gugeegue residents.

Another set of issues regarding the U.S. presence on Kwajalein Atoll has been those related to the environment. Several islets on the atoll were modified for use by the Japanese military, and then devastated during the battles of World War II. As noted above, U.S. land

modification activities on Kwaj Islet have included extensive modifications and the enlargement of the islet after the war. Rock fill needed for construction projects usually consisted of reef rock blasted out of oceanside reef flats. At some point, the islets of North and South Loi, located now on the causeway between Ebeye and Gugeegue, were leased by the U.S. government for quarrying purposes, despite Marshallese concerns that the islets might sink (Host Nation Archives 1968a:6,10). Other islets on the atoll were also cleared and modified for the installation of launch facilities, radar facilities and associated infrastructure, as noted above.

Ocean dumping has also been an issue. After the war, Sims notes that “thousands of tons of steel from tanks, boats, coils of wire, vehicles, and other war time materials from all over the Pacific were dumped into the area on the southwest end of the island” in the area now known as the “Shark Pit” (1993:39). A former U.S. Navy serviceman noted to me that ocean dumping of surplus equipment and goods was very common in the Pacific in the postwar period. A 1970s document details this practice on Kwajalein (Pacific Collection 1976). In a CRC meeting in July 1992, a base representative noted that scrap metal and refrigerators were no longer being dumped into the ocean (CRC Minutes, Jul. 30, 1992). Concerns were also expressed by member of KMR Women’s Club at a 1980 Inter-Island Community Relations Committee Meeting that the *Tarlang* ferry was dumping its garbage into the Kwaj lagoon. Others present at the meeting also noted water quality problems associated with pollution of the lagoon (TTPI Archives 1980a). There have been much more concerted efforts in recent years to recycle and conserve on the base. However, occasional nonsensical statements are still made regarding environmental issues: the *Hourglass* noted in 2005 that “In an effort to create a positive legacy in the Marshall islands, KRS implemented and will continue to foster a program called sustainable development”



(*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Jan. 5, 2005:9). However, very little about American activities on Kwaj is sustainable.

Questions about the environmental and human health consequences of electromagnetic radiation (EMR) have also been raised as an issue on Kwaj, due to the presence of powerful radars (such as the one resulting in safety guidelines prohibiting residents of the base from climbing above a certain height). A protective fence was necessary to protect base residents from another powerful radar: “Without the fence, the entire island would have been evacuated every time the radar operated” (Reed 1982:5). According to one base resident, the Army has countered charges of high levels of EMR with the assertion that surely thousands of educated Americans would not live on Kwaj if these things had significant health effects. One source links high levels of EMR to high rate of cataracts on Ebeye (Hughes 2001). While this angle has yet to be thoroughly studied, there may be other factors at play as well, including Kwajalein’s location on the equator and vitamin C deficiencies on Ebeye.

While Marshallese and other Pacific Islanders did express concern to me that the lagoon and associated lands on Kwajalein might be radioactively contaminated by missile testing, nuclear warheads appear not to have ever been part of those tests. As noted above, the only such tests on record took place in the atmosphere above Johnston Atoll. However, concern has been expressed in various venues regarding the possibility that the lagoon might be contaminated by depleted uranium used in test missiles as ballast, which then ends up in lagoon as test components break up (Johnson 1984:25). There have also been concerns in other areas of the world regarding the environmental impacts of depleted uranium in other U.S. munitions as well, which are often left in war debris for the receiving country to deal with.

Concerns have also been raised regarding contamination of lagoon waters by missile testing by-products, such as fuel and perchlorate. Fuel contamination of both land and water may be a significant environmental concern. Extensive clean-up of Gugeegue Islet, a former fuel pier, was required before it could be returned to Marshallese use (Pacific Collection 1978). As noted above, while the Command and Contractor are much more environmentally-aware in recent years than in decades past, fuel is still a threat, as evidenced by two oil spills in the Kwaj harbor in 2003 (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Apr.15, 2003:1,5). Also, two locations on base have been posted as “no fishing” areas in recent years – the reef area near the landfill and the harbor area in between the main pier and the fuel pier (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Jan. 5, 2005:7). There is also concern regarding leaking oil from the sunken ship *Prinz Eugen*, a remnant from nuclear testing on Bikini, although Command representatives often state that this problem primarily falls under the RMI’s jurisdiction.

Regarding compliance with relevant U.S. environmental regulations, I did notice during my time on Kwaj that efforts are made to hold public meetings and make environmental reports available for public (American and Marshallese) comment. However, the military/technical/scientific/legal language used in those reports raise significant communication barriers for non-practitioner and non-native English speakers. As such, there are likely to be few comments on complex and convoluted legal documents even base residents would find difficult to understand.

While the focus here has been on direct environmental effects, there is also the issue of indirect environmental effects on the Marshallese population, namely, the creation of environmental conditions on Ebeye as a result of relocations and other factors, including restrictions on movement around the atoll. Such effects are manifested in environmental health

problems on Ebeye caused or exacerbated by the U.S. presence. These less direct but no less important factors will be discussed at length in coming chapters.

## CHAPTER 5

### KWAJALEIN ISLET, THE BASE

The GOCO base on Kwajalein "...is run as a military facility, but day-to-day operations are tempered to coincide with needs of a civilian population" (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994:4). While the base population has risen and fallen over the years depending on the cycles of missile testing funding and support, the total population in recent years has hovered around 2,000, including around 20 military personnel, 77 civilians working for the DoD, and the rest consisting mostly of Americans working for defense contractors (Chernitzer 2002a). As noted, the base is overseen by a commander, an Army colonel with a two-year tour of duty. There is also a range commander of the Reagan Test Site (RTS), but this individual is much less involved in the daily life of residents and workers and the issues I will be addressing here.

Most personnel and services on the base are supplied by the Logistics Support Contractor (LSC or Contractor), although the post office is currently run by the military, and other services, such as security, are supplied by smaller subcontractors. In addition, various defense contractors have workers on the base, which in the past have included MIT, Lockheed, and Boeing. On my first trip to Kwajalein, the Contractor was Raytheon Co., which was then replaced by Kwajalein Range Services (made up of Lockheed Martin, Bechtel National and Chugash Development Corp.) in a long, messy process that resulted in many long-time Americans residents of the base leaving permanently for the U.S.

While most base residents work on the base itself, some work on the islets of Roi-Namur (Roi) and Meck, and take an airplane or boat there daily. Some workers, particularly single American males (and now some Marshallese), live on Roi, which has its own Ebeye of sorts in the form of Ennubirr, a Marshallese community a few miles away from Roi by boat. The majority of the American population on Kwaj are single males, known to the Command as “unaccompanied personnel.” There are also couples and families with children living on the base, classified as “accompanied personnel,” or those with “dependents.” At some point in the past, the majority of people hired to work on Kwaj came from Huntsville, Alabama, the home of the SMDC, although the population at the time of my fieldwork was more diverse in origin.

The base is also staffed by approximately 1,100 Marshallese workers (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Apr. 23, 2002:1,4), who fill many of the lower-level service jobs on the base, although some have risen to higher-level positions, as will be discussed in Chapter 7. While a few Marshallese now have housing on the base, the majority live on Ebeye and take a 20-minute ferry ride on an Army LCM to get to work daily. The few Marshallese housed on base include the RMI Representative to Kwajalein, and a few other select Marshallese, including some workers with unusual hours.

Base housing consists lots of blocks of bachelor’s quarters (BQs), many trailers (on the portion of the islet called “Silver City”), and some “hard housing.” The latter is usually reserved for members of the Command, higher-level contract employees, families, and those residents who have lived on the base for many years. There are also some more recently constructed dome houses on the north end of the islet.

The base is divided into areas with military/mission/support functions, housing areas, and recreation areas. Amenities available on the base include beaches set aside for swimming, a

marina for boaters, tennis courts and other recreational facilities. One particular area that has received a lot of attention over the years is the base golf course, which takes the form of nine holes next to the runway, which has often been featured in representations of Kwajalein as “the country club,” versus Ebeye as “the slum.”

While the concerns of American residents about the deprivations of life on Kwaj may seem very trivial compared to the concerns of Marshallese on Ebeye, I tried not to dismiss these concerns offhand, and to see that base residents are living in a fashion not unlike most of us in the U.S., with certain expectations for health conditions, services and amenities that are part of our generally privileged condition. Also, as several residents stressed, no American would come to work and live on Kwaj if a certain standard of living wasn’t maintained and certain amenities weren’t provided, especially to compensate for the deprivations of living on a small island in the middle of the Central Pacific.

Most American residents I interviewed were civilian employees of the Contractor, some with high-ranking jobs in the system and some with low, and a few were engineers or the spouses of engineers. The length of their experience on the base ranged from a few years to around thirty years, although I did many more interviews with “old-timers” than new residents. Some of the American residents I interviewed described themselves as being somewhat outside the Kwaj mainstream, and had either arrived with those orientations or had gained them over their long experience on Kwaj. Some of them definitely seemed to be a group apart from most Kwaj residents, and were known for being sympathetic to the Marshallese, although they would emphasize, not naively sympathetic. Some were also known as the type to “tell it like it is,” even to the Command and other administrators. Of course, some of these “outsider” qualities fit well with resident descriptions below of Kwaj “not attracting your average American.”

I believe their accounts of life on the atoll are important because these voices have seldom been heard in debates regarding Kwajalein. In addition, many of these residents had been observing interactions between people there for years, and were well aware of the contradictions and complexities of the U.S. presence on the atoll. As John Comaroff has observed, “Consequently, in viewing the colonial process through their eyes – focused as they were by the ambiguities of their own social situation – we gain an especially penetrating insight into its internal struggles and inconsistencies” (1997:166).

This examination hopes to be a departure from most depictions of Kwajalein, which don’t penetrate very far behind descriptions such as “country club versus slum,” or “Marshallese versus Americans,” which does little to expand or enrich our understanding of what has happened on the atoll. In addition, I believe that this non-examination is part of the mystification of Kwaj that is part of its power. This failure to examine this aspect of Kwajalein has also led to a prevailing assumption that all American residents of the base have the same views and are enthusiastic members of the military-industrial complex. Residents also reported that they had heard assertions that all Americans on Kwaj were racists, which they thought was an unfair and inaccurate characterization, although they all acknowledged that Kwaj has its share. Here they discuss life on Kwaj over the years, their experiences of the multitudinous borders of Kwajalein, and their experiences of the “tensions of empire” there, which have included clashes with the Command and Marshallese elites.

### Kwajalein Past & Present

Overall, residents’ constant refrain was that Kwaj is a highly unusual place. As one resident noted: “Well,...I talk to people who’ve been everywhere and done everything. And one

thing they tell you is, this is a horse of a different color.” In addition to its geography and its status as a GOCO, unique aspects noted by residents included the question of exactly how to classify Kwaj: “...management and the military can call on Hawaii state law, military law, the whim of whoever is the commander, they can call on a lot of different things to set up rules and regs here, whereas they can’t in other places.”

Base residents also described many of the hardships of living on the base over the years, most of which are caused by the base’s remote location. As one long-timer noted:

We were isolated. We were extremely isolated. Now, we could go back to the real world every six months, though, which made the tension on this island less. But...there’s people who have never been able to live like that, so they didn’t last long here...everybody gets to that point out here. It’s called ‘rock fever’...And then there are other people that were like, ‘oh well.’

Many noted that they had not come to Kwaj intending to stay for longer than a few years, and ten to twenty years later, they were surprised to find themselves Kwaj “old-timers.”

“Living with less” or living without certain items has always been a part of Kwaj life, although residents noted that shortages were much more acute in the past:

It really was like night and day, a big difference between how it is now and how it was then. It was pretty dismal. There just wasn’t anything you wanted...Well, when we got here, there was no fresh fruit or vegetables. Once a week, a small amount, a very small amount. And you had to queue up and line up. Same thing with milk.



In terms of other non-food items as well, “we just did without, and sent back things when we were off-island.” The most commonly-cited deficiencies were in water supplies due to drought, and in food supplies, as will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Housing was another hardship. A resident who was on Kwaj for one of its population peaks in the 1980s noted that “This was all trailers. This was trailers from the first row, where housing is now, from the Snack Bar over at Emon Beach, all the way through. This was nothing but trailers. That’s why we had such a huge population. Trailers everywhere.” As part of the 1964 enlargement of the islet, the northern end was extended to create more housing space, which now includes “Silver City.” Residents noted that media comparisons of life on Kwaj and Ebeye often place photos of less common “hard housing” on base next to the worst of shacks on Ebeye, which doesn’t show you the best housing on Ebeye, and the worst on Kwaj. One resident also noted that a trailer is still a trailer no matter how well it is landscaped. In addition, trailers very quickly deteriorate in Kwaj’s hot, salty and humid environment, and can be fire hazards; one long-timer had lost two friends in trailer fires. In addition, many unaccompanied residents live in BQs, some with two to four people to a unit, with no kitchen facilities and communal bathrooms and showers. As one resident recalled,

they had a bed, maybe a footlocker and sheets separating these people. That was the Global workers, that was their living quarters, and they maybe had this much room, with a bed, maybe a footlocker, showers down the hall. We all have lived in two man rooms... Living conditions weren’t that great here neither, but, hey, you’re overseas.

“Hard housing” has always been a scarce and fiercely contested resource. One resident recalled that in the early 1980s “you had to be at a certain level to get into a house, because

houses were scarce...So everybody was in trailers.” Like everything else on Kwaj, housing has gone through boom and bust cycles. Many residents recalled times when the base population was reduced, but housing was abundant, and it was in the best interests of the military and contractors to fill as much housing as possible. At these times, housing upgrades might be offered to residents in less-desirable quarters, and housing might also be offered to more American men married to Marshallese women, and Marshallese workers. As discussed below, however, this has led to problems when populations rose again, or funding was cut, resulting in certain groups of people losing housing privileges on the base. One resident noted that more housing was available on Roi-Namur because high-powered engineers they initially intended to attract did not appear, and the recent “remoting” project had meant that quite a few American workers were no longer needed there and had returned to the U.S.

The Cold War was felt rather intensely by residents of Kwaj, and those doing mission-related work during that time often worked long hours. As one “Kwaj wife” noted,

We got here on a Friday, [my husband] went to work on Saturday, and I didn’t see him again until Tuesday...We had things called ‘the Pony Express,’ which would have been a new foreign launch by somebody...and the siren would run, and it didn’t matter what time of day or night, the husbands had to go to work.

One resident recalled that “we were running three shifts during the Safeguard System – Spartan and Sprint missiles we first tested out here...[and] they just pretty much wanted you to work six days a week.” Many residents also recalled seeing Russian spy ships (nicknamed “Brand X”) in the area:

You have to remember that the Russians were right out there, this was the height of the Cold War, and you could stand on the rocks right out here and wave to them, and the husbands would go down in [airplanes] with the doors open and take pictures. They were our big enemy.

Residents also found evidence of the Russian presence washing up on the base's shores. One "Kwaj kid" found a medicine bottle belonging to a Russian sailor. Other evidence included

hats and stuff that would drift up from their bilge waste. We lived with the Russians out there, for years. ...they were spying on us, we knew they were spying on us, we knew that they had the ability to tap the phones. And things were not shared with the community. They just didn't share it.

One resident recalled that "you would see them, they'd be right out on the ocean, real close, sometimes. It was kind of a joke." Reports in 1989 revealed that a Russian mini-sub may have entered the Kwajalein Lagoon in 1987 and stolen parts of a test missile (Rampell 1989:31).

Strict secrecy also made base life interesting. According to one resident, little information of any kind was disseminated on local issues or events: "we were in our own bubble. We did not get that kind of information, that was not disseminated." This closed-mouth atmosphere, based on military ideas of only sharing information on a "need to know" basis, extended to the most mundane aspects of life. According to one resident:

It was like weather was a secret. When the [19]82 typhoon came in, it came across...the [local television station] scroll that the Continental flight had been cancelled. That was Thursday, and that was the night the Continental flight was cancelled because of the

typhoon, and we were all like, what typhoon? Because there was no satellite imagery and weather maps...because there was no Net at that point...Oh *they* knew. They only told us because the Continental flight had been cancelled, because it was sitting on the ground in Ponape. And I was always just, the typhoon was expected to hit us in three hours, and we were like, what typhoon? The weather was weird, but that was how secret information was.

Several residents noted that, in the 1970s and early 1980s, information on things such as cholera and typhoid on Ebeye and other locations was also not disseminated: “The reason you don’t do that is because that will scare people...that would be an Army control issue.” As a result, more informal information networks among residents and “the rumor mill” in many cases became the primary information source on the base. However, as public sector communications improved over the years, the borders of secrecy on Kwaj could not be as rigidly controlled. As one resident recalled:

Yeah, I can remember the Delta mission that I called [my husband] up. He was on Roi, he had been up there for two days for this mission, and I said ‘oh, I see it went successful.’ He’s like, ‘I can’t talk about it,’ and I said ‘well... it was just on CBS Evening News with Dan Rather.’ And he was like, ‘oh for heaven’s sakes.’

Of course, this control of information has been further eroded by access to the Internet, which has become much more available and reliable on the base in recent years.

Communication with the outside world by telephone was also much more difficult. As one resident noted, “We’re remote now, but not nearly as much as then. In order to make a phone

call, you had to call the operator, and if you were lucky, several hours later they would call back, and made your connection.” Another resident recalled that

you had to queue up. So you would call the operator and say I’d like to make a call to Philadelphia, or New Jersey, and she would tell you that you pretty much had eight hours before your call went through, and then you knew to judge, because if you missed your time, they would double ring you back, and that would be your call. And if you missed your time, you had to queue up again, unless it was an emergency.

Surprisingly, residents reported that phone service was somewhat primitive even into the 1990s. One woman recalled calling her husband on Kwaj from the U.S. in 1996, “and I actually had to call an operator to get [my husband’s] extension, and then I could get [my husband]. You could not dial direct. By the time I got out here [in 1997] you could dial direct.” In order to get a connection to the U.S. from the base, “sometimes you’d redial for 20-30 minutes.”

While phone service from Kwaj to the U.S. over the years has been somewhat primitive, phone service between Kwaj and Ebeye has been minimal to non-existent. Several long-timers noted the irony that it was (and still is) often easier to call the mainland U.S. than it is to call Ebeye. In his analysis of the 2001 base telephone directory, Dvorak notes that it “offers no guidance whatsoever” on how to contact Ebeye (n.d.:2). Reasons for this communications gap include infrastructural problems on Ebeye, but residents also saw it as a sign of the base’s literal and symbolic separation from the home of most Marshallese on the atoll. Even the Command at times in the past did not always have a good communication link with Ebeye. In fact, for many years, radios at the Coast Guard station on the southern end of Ebeye were the primary means of communicating with the Marshallese and TT on Ebeye regarding clearance of the MAC for

missions. Even today, people traveling on boats or ferries are often the best means of communicating between Kwaj and Ebeye.

Television programming, introduced in the 1970s, was limited for many years (and may still be considered limited by US standards), and for many hours of the day all that residents could view was “the scroll” of island announcements. Programming was and is provided by the American Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS), a service aimed at military servicemembers overseas, which includes military and geographic “factoids” and newsbriefs instead of commercials. In an interesting twist on Kwaj being the land of the “haves” and Ebeye being the land of the “have-nots,” one resident reported that in the early 1980s

the Marshallese on Ebeye...had television that they would beam over to us, ...from Los Angeles, three weeks delayed, so that was a real treat for us...we had AFRTS at that point, but it came on at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and played until 11, and then the scroll was on for the rest of the time...They [the Marshallese] had their own tapes and they would beam them over to us, and we paid \$35 a month, but it was nice to do that, because we had real television...[It stopped because] An entrepreneur [on Ebeye], didn't make enough money and couldn't afford the tapes, I guess. It just kind of petered out by '84.

Another resident recalled a humorous episode from that time when Ebeye broadcast the controversial movie *Jesus Christ Superstar* without previewing it. This was then followed by an apology and an announcement that it would not be shown again, even if requested.

The availability of retail goods on the base was also very limited. This has changed in recent years: “now that you can shop over the Internet. The fact that Ten-ten or Macy's doesn't have something that I want doesn't bother me nearly as much. If there's something I want I can

order it. For many years that wasn't the case." While residents seemed to focus more on food and water issues, one resident noted the perpetual lack of such basic supplies as underwear and bed pillows (decorative pillows seem always to have been in abundance). Long-time residents reported shortages of such necessities as toilet paper (everyone took it from work) and toothpaste. Some residents knew from long experience that when certain items arrived, they had to be stockpiled: one resident had 20 bags of cat litter in her bathroom at the time of our interview. According to one retail manager, many of these stocking problems occurred in the past because those in charge of the retail system had little retail experience. All residents noted substantial improvements in recent years in those respects, but one resident noted that, in general, the lack of certain retail goods is one of those "facts of life" on any military base. However, occasionally there were truly bizarre retail decisions as well, such as the time in the mid-1960s when there was a fur coat sale at Macy's! Because these coats could not be worn on Kwaj, and residents were concerned about preservation, the furs were stored at the refrigeration plant (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Jul. 2, 1994:5).

While Internet shopping has become very popular in recent years on Kwajalein, residents still must rely on the postal service to deliver ordered items, which, over the years, has taken anywhere from a few weeks to a few months. In experiences familiar to anyone who has lived overseas and received mail, residents report packages and other mail being accidentally sent somewhere else, lost, pushed aside for other cargo, and appearing in a state of almost total destruction. In 2003, mail intended for Kwaj was being sent to Korea.

Dealing with the ups and downs of military defense contracts can also be trying, with the upheaval caused by rebids and changes in Contractors being particularly traumatic. While several residents described the most recent contractor change as the most traumatic of the several

they had experienced, a more recent resident observed that “you know, I have a feeling it’s probably like this no matter who comes in, because I’ve talked to enough people that have been through this before, and it’s always horrible for the first couple of years...” My response to this comment was “For the first couple of *years*?” The disruption includes not only that of the rebid itself (which can take over a year) and not knowing whether you will have the same pay, the same job, or even *a* job when the dust settles: then you have to deal with a new team of managers coming in who may have little practical knowledge of the base and its complexities. Residents said this problem was often compounded by incoming managers assuming that running Kwaj would not be particularly difficult or complex.

One resident was pleasantly surprised that a newer manager was able to deliver on his promises: “Because everybody comes in, new managers, and says, oh, we’re going to get you this and we’re going to provide this, and then they get into the system and realize it’s not so easy to do that, and probably shouldn’t have promised that.” Residents observed that one new site manager was quoted in the *Hourglass* as saying that the base could not be any harder to run than an aircraft carrier, with which he had experience as a former Navy commander. In fact, he noted that the base was bound to be easier to run because Kwajalein doesn’t move. In response, residents commented that aircraft carriers also don’t have civilians with families on them, and they don’t have a Marshallese population attached to them on a neighboring boat.

Base commanders are another major factor affecting everyday life on Kwaj. According to several sources, the job of being commander of Kwajalein used to be an “end-of-the-line” assignment, and colonels were not particularly well-prepared for the role. This has changed dramatically in recent years. According to one long-time resident,



They used to be...they'd send a colonel out here that was ready to retire, so you give him a command out here, and most of them were more worried about the fly problem on the island, how are we going to get rid of the flies, than what was going on, what we were doing. They are, I would say, much more technical now.

According to another resident, Huntsville now sends

more career people, more educated people, rather than gung ho military commanders...which was a very different attitude, you know, the guy who built the concertina wire [during the 1982 demonstrations], and he was like 'they're going to invade,' this kind of mentality. Whereas the people that have come since have been more prepared, because it's a very difficult position.

Serving as commander on Kwaj is difficult because "it's not your typical Army position. It's a lot of politicking, it's a lot of diplomacy, and you know, dealing with civilians. Everything they have not been taught to do, and they have to come and be able to handle it here."

Despite being better prepared, personalities of base commanders have varied greatly, affecting work and living conditions on the base. While two or three-year assignments are often standard in the military, residents felt it was a problem on Kwaj because it takes about a year for the colonel to begin to understand the complexity of Kwaj and the U.S.-Marshallese relationship, "and the second year he's getting ready to leave." In talking with residents about how new commanders deal with complex issues with complex histories, one replied

He doesn't know. That's what happens, every two years we have someone who doesn't know anything, comes in and a lot of them are not even willing to listen. They have their

little agenda which they want to get done, and luckily, we've been lucky with the last two or three, but we've had some really inappropriate commanders. They made very silly decisions.

In terms of the short tour-of-duty, if the commander was a good one, two years was too short: if he was a bad one, it was too long. As one Marshallese resident of Ebeye commented in regard to the commander that put the concertina wire at the north end of the island in 1982, "he didn't last long!" (We then laughed, because none of them do.) Certain past commanders have become famous for their personal eccentricities, including one who required base residents riding bikes at night to do so holding a flashlight. This colonel was also well known as being "the one that stopped the smoking and raised the price of booze."

Good, bad or mediocre, this turnover in commanders is part of the larger perpetual turnover in personnel on the base as a whole and what residents described as the perpetual "reinvention of the wheel." As one long-timer observed:

That is a problem all over Kwaj – everybody's reinventing the wheel *all* the time. We get a new commander and he wants to paint every building. He looks at [an annual work plan] and says, yeah, this is all well and great, but while I'm here, I want to do A, B, and C, and so that plan is scrapped while he does something that *maybe* we really do need out here, but maybe we don't...one commander closes the Rich[ardson Theater], another one opens it. I mean, we do that out here *all* the time.

While some described commanders as doing the best they could with the limited information and time they have, others were very critical of this perceived weakness in the

system, especially as it affected local Marshallese. Others believed it simultaneously provided both barriers and opportunities for Marshallese, but either way it was a guarantee of constant upheaval in their lives.

So why do Americans want to come here to work and live? The most commonly cited reasons were financial: American working on such overseas contracts don't pay U.S. income taxes, although they do pay a 5% income tax to the RMI government (which has been the focus of much controversy over the years). In addition, housing is provided rent-free, and residents don't pay for utilities or maintenance. Because there are no personal automobiles on the island, no money is spent on gas or car repairs. Others noted that their contracts paid for all moving expenses, and included health insurance. One long-timer also noted that in the past, "everything was cheap." Yearly vacation and medical leave were also usually part of their contracts.

Some Americans come out for a few years to save money or pay off debts, and in some cases those years turned into decades. According to one former resident, even those who were thoroughly sick of Kwaj tended to stay if they could stand it because of the financial perks, and that it was "pretty idyllic" in that sense. Some residents described their general career plan as one of working for the U.S. government in various overseas locations because of the myriad financial advantages, despite other hardships. Other residents were sent out by particular defense contractors for various periods of time, such as those from MIT "who are sent here and are well-reimbursed for it." As for military personnel who come to Kwaj, it is generally considered a "hardship assignment," because of its isolation (Chernitzer 2002b:3).

Residents also observed that being an unusual place, Kwaj attracts unusual people:

There's also another very big draw to get people out here...People are looking for, the average person isn't out here. Your average, normal person is at home doing average,

normal things...Talk particularly to some of the old bachelors who've lived out here for 30 years...People are looking for a little adventure...

Even those in service-level jobs come because “they’re independent, they want to see the world, they want to do something different. And for most of us, the work out here is easy,” due in large part to the fact that there is so much transition. Several residents also mentioned that being on Kwaj had given them the opportunity to travel to other parts of the Pacific and to Asia. Scuba diving, fishing, and boating were lures to some residents. Another advantage of base life was the “island casual” work attire that allows workers to wear shorts and sandals to work.

But despite these perks, quite a few residents noted that it takes a certain kind of person to survive long-term on Kwaj:

You know what, my husband always says that to successfully work out here, you have to be skilled in two areas. You have to be skilled in what actual job you’re doing, and you have to be skilled in how to do that job on Kwajalein. And strangely enough, they are either equal in importance, or sometimes, how to do the job on Kwaj is almost more important. And we see that all the time, when people come out here TDY [Temporary Duty]...and they may be a hot-shot in what they do, but they can’t do it on Kwaj. Because you have to, like for example...to order three screws for a building, it takes like 22 different steps...[people say that normally] it takes a minimum six months to learn to do your job on Kwaj.

One aspect of this system that can be beneficial to the career development of residents is the ability to work one’s way up or into new positions. One residents observed that “Kwaj is known for, what do they say? ‘You come a janitor and leave a doctor.’ You get into fields you’d never,

and without necessarily having any training.” While some do well in these new situations, it can add another element of uncertainty to base life as the newly-promoted learn their jobs.

### Recreating 1950s America – “The hometown you can’t go home to”

Because some Americans live on the base for many years and raise children there, Kwaj has become “home” to many people over the years. However, as any “Army brat” knows, this is not your ordinary hometown. I remember my surprise when discovering that at the age of 23 I no longer had access to Army bases, access to which had become an assumed part of my life. This feeling can be even more intense for Kwaj kids who may have spent their entire childhoods in this one place, when they realize that they can’t return freely to their hometown without being sponsored by a base resident, and pending approval by the Command.

What else makes “the hometown you can’t go back to” different from most American hometowns? Like other military bases, this place is not a stable institution, as a new Contractor may come in and replace or fail to rehire workers, or military cutbacks may force the reduction of population. This results in residents having to leave, no matter what their personal wishes are. During the most recent change in Contractors, some residents who had lived there for 20 to 30 years were not rehired by the new contractor, or were not offered equivalent contracts, and had to return to the U.S., despite the fact that they wanted to stay and strongly felt that this place was their home. Pacific researcher and “Kwaj kid” Greg Dvorak has explored some of these constructions of home in the context of his own experience on Kwaj (2004).

As a “home,” Kwaj has always been characterized as being a prototypical 1950s American town. According to one resident who had traveled but never lived outside of Alabama, “really, it just seemed like ‘Smalltown USA.’” In a 2001 magazine article on Kwaj, one resident

noted that whenever he was on Kwaj, he felt like Beaver Cleaver. These idyllic depictions focus on factors such as a closely-knit community and a lack of crime, and the fact that everybody rides around on bicycles and plays softball in the evenings. Incidentally, as of February 2004, Kwaj had its own 4-H Club (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Jan. 5, 2005:4).

Also, this sense of “hometown Kwaj” was enhanced by the fact that in the past, the majority of Kwaj residents used to come from around Huntsville, Alabama (which one long-time resident called “Kwaj 2”). And after working or serving on Kwaj, many people return to that area to work on similar projects or retire. In doing research on the atoll, you quickly learn that some of these former residents continue to think of themselves as part of the Kwaj community; there are still many personal and professional links between the base and Huntsville. As a sign of enduring identity, former residents have set up popular websites devoted to their experiences on Kwaj, and a newsletter is published to keep former Kwaj residents apprised of recent events having to do with the base and its former residents.

Several residents noted that there used to be much more of a sense of community on the base, but it declined rapidly with the advent of television. (Interestingly, Marshallese also mark the beginnings of regular television service on Ebeye as one major factor in the erosion of Ebeye “community.”) One Kwaj resident reported that “We had movies 7 days a week because we didn’t have much television. There was much more, I would think, community spirit.” Others described frequent block parties, “And now you don’t see any of that.” Although sports remain popular on base, sporting events were even more frequent during these times as after-work and weekend activities. Another resident noted that in the past, there was much more support for wives left alone when their husbands were TDY, and they linked this to the sense of community that was much more prevalent before the reign of television.

One resident noted the irony that this “1950s community” is created and maintained by military order and regulation. In the past, this presence was easier to ignore, as military personnel often wore civilian clothes and base security guards and police did not carry guns. Several residents noted that because of this and other factors, the base felt less like a military base in the past. Of course, September 11 has had a significant impact on this aspect of base life and appearances.

As several residents noted, these kinds of depictions of “smalltown USA” have also been encouraged and used by the Command to attract Americans to work there, particularly engineers with families. However, these depictions have often been turned back against the Command and Contractors, particularly in the media, as these depictions present such a glaring contrast to Ebeye. In addition to being one of the “paradoxes of Kwaj” to be discussed further, these stereotypical media images have also served to limit more complex understandings of the base and relations on the atoll.

It is interesting to note that the Command and Contractors, in addition to playing up the idea of Kwaj as “Smalltown USA,” have also emphasized Kwaj as “Pacific paradise.” It’s slogan for many years was “Kwajalein: Almost Paradise,” a catch phrase that was parodied by American residents during the 1982 demonstrations (detailed in Chapter 9). In his analysis of some of the images used to represent the base, Dvorak has found that these images are often presented as “fantasies of paradise in the tradition of touristic postcards” (n.d.:3). These images are used to distract residents “from the harsher realities of military base living...” (Dvorak n.d.:3), much in the way a recreation map of Kwaj from the 1980s, also shown in Dvorak 2004, shows an islet dominated by recreational and leisure activities; an island free of equipment, giant radar dishes and radomes, and a runway that takes up a significant portion of the islet (General

Information for Visitor and TDY Personnel, n.d.). However, a Command brochure from the 1990s is more realistic, describing Kwaj as “warm sunny days, palm trees swaying with the trade winds, blue water with white beaches, and magnificent sunrises and sunsets coexisting with high-tech instrumentation and communications, radars, and optical tracking systems” (USAKA n.d.:8).

The role of women in “Kwaj as Smalltown USA” is seen as a fundamental part of this 1950s America ideal. One resident noted that even in the 1980s “I always thought it was about 1956... Women did not work here. Only a few wives worked.” In the past (and present as well), if wives worked on the base, they usually worked as on-island (or dependent) hires in service jobs, with fairly low status, pay, and fringe benefits. Over her long experience, one resident observed that the base’s distance from the states

tends to be a disadvantage for women, and a terrific advantage for men. This is the perfect place for men...because they all get to be five years old, wear their shorts to work, ride their bicycles, and play softball. They don’t have to do house upkeep [and don’t have to pay for it.] So it’s a wonderful place for men. It’s very hard on women. Because number one, women are in limbo out here. If you have any kind of career, it’s on hold... So, we’re non-people. Plus, if you notice how many women managers there are out here.

While the smalltown-esque situation is good for creating a sense of community on Kwaj, it can be stifling to some individuals. Much like in traditional Pacific small-island communities, everybody knows your business, and they know it intimately. As one resident observed



Nothing happens on Kwaj that we don't know about. We know what other people make, we know what their benefits are, we know everything there is to know about everybody. We know who sleeps with who, we know their kids, we know who drinks too much, we also know the positives. We know everything.

Rumors are also common, and can serve as an important source of information, especially when other sources are not available. According to one long-timer:

The Kwaj rumor is famous. They always say if you go out to the Shark Pit and whisper something in someone's ear, and you get on your bicycle and ride as fast as you can to Macy's, you can hear it on the porch. But I have found over the years that prevalent rumors, when they are really prevalent...are usually based in truth. Now, they get the details messed up, but they are definitely based in some truth.

Several residents noted that everyone on island knew that the current Contractor had won the contract a year before it became official, through the rumor mill.

Long-time residents also observed a tendency among the American population on Kwajalein to erect perceptual boundaries between Kwaj and Ebeye, seen in a prevailing sense of separateness and self-containedness on Kwajalein. One resident described the situation as Kwaj being in its own "bubble" quite separate from Ebeye, especially in the past. Twenty years ago, there were far fewer cultural exchanges between Kwaj and Ebeye, and no real encouragement of contact with Ebeye. According to one long-timer, "only a few people went. The missionary people, but the regular population did not." Several residents observed that they had known Americans who had lived on Kwaj for decades, but had never once gone to Ebeye. While

arguments can be made that the Marshallese have also affected/changed Americans on Kwaj, I believe that part of American power on Kwaj is the ability not to be affected: Americans have the power to stay inside “the bubble” if they choose. Or they are able to maintain the illusion of living in a bubble, despite everyday actualities – this is a benefit of power as well. Marshallese often have no choice but to engage with Americans and the American system.

As part of his work on Kwaj, Dvorak has done a discursive analysis of the Kwajalein telephone directory, and shown how Kwaj is semiotically removed from its actual location in the Marshall Islands. This becomes part of a larger military project “dis/locating the island and centering it virtually in the United States, devoid of any meaningful connection to the Marshall Islands, [through which] the ideology of American security is justified” (Dvorak n.d.:2). Elements of Marshallese culture found the base, such as the Marshallese Cultural Center, serve merely as “exotic decoration for an American community bored by its own officialdom” (Dvorak n.d.:4). And “goodwill” projects for the Marshallese are presented as “an interesting diversion from the everyday for people with altruistic tendencies” (Dvorak n.d.:3).

One long-time resident felt that many American residents *liked* to maintain the illusion that Kwaj was isolated and self-contained, with distinct impermeable boundaries. However, many long-time residents found this to be a wishful fiction: many recalled events that brought home to them the fact that Ebeye and Kwaj were and are intimately connected. In some cases, it was health issues that made them realize the connection,

...because we had a symbiant relationship. Anything that happened on Ebeye, even though we had few workers here, happened here too...Many times the PDR [dining facility] workers would come down with hepatitis, and we’d all have to go to the hospital and get gamma globulin shots. We did that, I believe, three times between 1980 and 83,

once a year. ... So we don't live in a closed system – whatever happens on Ebeye happens on Kwajalein, always has been.

One commander gained a lot of respect from an old-timer when he stopped some “bellyaching” from Kwaj residents about continuously having to help with infrastructural problems on Ebeye by saying, “Their problems are our problems.”

Residents also pointed to the unexamined and less desirable realities of Kwajalein as 1950s hometown. One of the orientation booklets for new residents produced by the Command (undated but from the 1990s), includes a large color photograph on the inside cover showing the classic nuclear family with their bicycles, gazing out over the lagoon at sunset (USAKA n.d.). However, on the base one quickly notices the prevalence of single males and the small population of single or married females, making images of Kwaj as a predominantly family-oriented atmosphere somewhat misleading.

Kwaj also displays some of the problems common to military bases with large populations of single males, including high rates of alcohol use and abuse: CRC minutes from the early 1970s state that “There are drinking problems in both communities” (TTPI Archives 1973a). This document also noted that the problem was more prevalent in the Marshallese community because Americans with serious drinking problems were often sent home. During my fieldwork, several residents (including two teenagers) noted to me that drinking among teenagers on base is a problem (as is drinking by American teens on Ebeye, as will be seen in Chapter 6). As a sign of greater openness in the local media in recent years, the December 2001 *Hourglass* includes an article on the “underground drinking culture” known to exist on Kwajalein (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Dec. 7, 2001:1,4). And like other military bases around the world,

prostitution is a serious problem, particularly of Marshallese girls and women in the BQs, which will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

In looking at Kwaj as a bounded community, it must be noted that many of the elements described above parallel those experienced by those living on Army bases around the world, although Kwaj is not a typical military base. In his description of life on Army bases in Germany, Hawkins describes many of the features noted above for Kwaj (2001). In a chapter titled “Living in a Fishbowl,” he discusses the gossip and claustrophobia that can come from living in a small, closely-knit community (2001). Hawkins also describes sense of isolation military personnel encounter while serving on Army bases overseas, in a chapter he calls “Islands of Isolation” (2001). I would argue that this sense of isolation can be magnified on Kwajalein, as it really *is* an island.

### Kwajalein Regulation

Border scholars have pointed our attention to other borders aside from the most obvious ones found at security checkpoints and international borders. Wilson and Donnan describe “the myriad structures of the state which establish microborders throughout the state’s domain, such as airports, floating customs and immigration checks, post and passport offices, armed services installations, and internal revenue installations” (1998a:3). In addition to its security checkpoints, Kwajalein has many such “microborders,” including those restricting access to various base resources, as well as layer upon layer of regulations controlling life on the base. This control has significant impacts on American residents, extending even into the home and family. While the impact of various Kwaj regulations on the Marshallese population is more commonly recognized (and is more severe), I believe it is important to see here the ways that American civilians endure

and resist this regulation as well. In his total exasperation with both one day, an American friend of mine described Kwaj as “total control” and Ebeye as “total chaos.” While Ebeye may just seem that way to Americans, or appear so only in contrast, Kwaj can indeed feel like “total control”: of people, movement, access, and even landscape. While some regulations are for personal safety reasons, others are for safety related to the base’s mission and equipment. Base residents told me that in recent years they had received a notice warning them not to climb above a certain height on the base, due to the possible effects of powerful radar equipment installed there in recent years. As such, the base’s borders are not only horizontal, but vertical as well.

The contrasts in this respect between Kwaj and Ebeye are legion. One example is management of coconut trees on Kwaj. Marshallese workers are employed in the Grounds Department on Kwaj to cut coconuts off the base’s many fruiting trees. The purpose is to keep residents (as well as distinguished visitors) from being injured by falling coconuts, and the Marshallese workers doing the cutting are also guarded against injury with harnesses, hard hats and other gear. I couldn’t help but notice the contrast on “the Marshallese side,” where coconut trees (usually on other islets, there are few trees on Ebeye) are free-climbed in the traditional manner (although some Marshallese noted that not everyone knows how to do this anymore). As an indicator of these different orientations, in a 1991 document, extensive discussion of safety issues regarding ferries and Marshallese passengers ends with the understatement that the “Boundaries of liability are not clearly defined on Ebeye” (CRC Minutes, Document Jan. 11, 1991).

Another telling difference is that on Kwajalein, dogs must be on leashes, and owners are required to pick up after their dogs. On Ebeye, dogs run free and defecate wherever, although this is sometimes swept up. While I was dog-sitting for an American friend on base, a

Marshallese woman, a former student of mine, saw me picking up dog feces with a plastic bag, and found it both highly amusing and highly disgusting, and never let me forget about the incident. This struck me as quite interesting because it is regulations such as this that make the base look so good, but they are not regulations most Marshallese, or even most American civilians, would be willing to follow.

One amusing case of the chaos of Ebeye spilling over into Kwaj, and American attempts to control it, is that of the “reefwalkers.” They are a small group of mentally-impaired Marshallese men who wander Ebeye and are known to steal things. The Marshallese have no institution in which to place these individuals; they are cared for by their families on Ebeye, and looked after and fed by many other community members. They also have a habit of walking the reef from Ebeye to Kwaj during low tide, and then appearing in base residents’ homes, or are found wandering the base with such things as watches and money. Despite residents’ protests, the Command could do little about them, as they are Marshallese nationals, and had not been charged with particular crimes (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Oct. 1, 1999:3). The reefwalkers were sometimes sent back to their outer island homes, but always returned after a period of time. At some point, the Command was encouraging the Ebeye police to “keep an eye on them” during low tide, which was not always effective. At one point one of the reefwalkers was caught riding a bicycle around Kwaj, wearing a policeman’s uniform (CRC Minutes, May 19, 1989). One of the reefwalkers began regular visits again while I was in the field, and an article in the *Hourglass* noted that while his motivations were unclear, one official speculated that ““He may just be hungry... Sometimes we find him with fruit”” (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Oct. 8, 2002:8).

One interesting inversion in this regulatory divide has had to do with the dress code on Kwajalein. While military personnel now wear uniforms when on duty, civilian personnel often

wear casual clothes to work, including shorts for both males and females. Outside of work it is not uncommon to see Americans wearing beach garb on base. In a 1982 issue of the *Hourglass*, patrons of the Yokwe Yuk Club are reminded that swimsuits and bare feet are not proper attire for club facilities (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Jul. 21, 1982). Interestingly, though, this situation has also created some friction with Marshallese leaders, as the dress code on Ebeye is very conservative by American standards, particularly for females. A Marshallese leader noted to me that he felt it was “disrespectful” for Americans to dress in this casual fashion in their country and on their lands.

Even recreation is highly regulated on Kwaj: despite depictions such as the “recreation map” noted above, the borders of recreation areas are sharply delineated, as are the rules for use. According to one long-timer, “I can remember arriving and being just amazed by going to the beach, which had a huge sign with about 30 rules about how to use the beach...Everything had a sign....Everything had rules.” Another resident recalled that

...I had the first windsurfer on island, and two hours of getting it out, I was being pulled back in by the local police, because more than anything, there were no rules for this sort of thing. So before you went out, they had to be able to come up with appropriate rules.

More recently, a resident had complained in the *Hourglass* that he was ticketed for snorkeling without a flotation device. When he stated that he was an adult who could take care of himself, and that he had rights, a member of the Command responded that ““As far as rights are concerned, someone has the right to come here and the right to leave. Some other rights will have to be left at the door”” (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Apr. 30, 2002:3).

Then there is the golf course, the inclusion of which has often surprised outsiders, and contributed to the comparison of Ebeye as “the slum” and Kwaj as “the country club.” When I arrived, I expected to see 18 holes of rolling green hills, although I wasn’t sure exactly where it would fit, and was surprised to see that the golf course is rather flat, small, and adjacent to the airport tarmac. Some former and current residents defend the existence of these resources as being necessary to attract American workers to Kwaj, and to provide outlets for the large number of single Americans coming to Kwaj (Sims 1993:123). Eugene Sims has observed that in the 1960s, “it was hard to convince someone to come to work on Kwajalein,” which resulted in the promotion of Kwaj as tropical paradise, with great fishing, golfing and free movies (Sims 1993:37). Of course, these are attractions largely for single males. One more recent resident also noted that when you are trying to attract *engineers* to a place, things like golf courses are necessary.

Interestingly, viewing missile tests has always been a form of entertainment on Kwaj, although it has always been officially discouraged. Long-timers recalled getting out lawnchairs and generally turning launches into parties. Sims recalls that in the early 1960s when launches took off from Mt. Olympus on the southern end of Kwaj Islet, many residents would be outside to watch, even though “we were not supposed to be outside our concrete houses, just in case something might fall out of the sky” (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994:15).

Even slightly more relaxed Roi has its share of regulations, often perpetually concocted to deal with situations as they arise. As one resident noted, residents at one point had pigs and geese,

and then the Army stopped that for some reason. They came up with some new rules. We had motorcycles, motor scooters, about 100cc was the highest they had, and then they



made a rule that they're illegal, oh, then how come you issued a license for these, you know? You've got to understand, that's the typical way, you like it or leave it...

But as Hawkins has noted for Army bases overseas (2001), regulation extends into the realm of what most Americans would consider the personal and the family, particularly in regard to the type of individuals that can come to work on Kwaj, as well as family members that are allowed to accompany them. A 1973 letter from a general in Huntsville to the High Commissioner of the TTPI lays out the restrictions regarding who can reside on Kwajalein (TTPI Archives 1973b). Large families, defined as having more than four children, are not to be sent to Kwaj, as are persons "with medical or dental problems requiring frequent or special treatment" due to the limited medical facilities. (Interestingly, personnel with electrical or mechanical aids "that could be affected by the presence of high frequency equipment" should not be assigned to Kwajalein without coordination with the Command.) Dependents with handicaps or special educational needs are also restricted, as are children over the age of 21 (TTPI Archives 1973b).

According to a 1971 KMR regulation regarding "Entry of Dependents to Kwajalein," the Commander must approve the presence of all dependents, particularly children in the 18-to-21-year-old range, and no dependents can remain after the age of 21, except in limited circumstances. It follows that "Dependent children who get married will automatically forfeit their privilege to reside at KMR" (TTPI Archives 1971a). Individuals recruited by the contractor are offered contracts that may or may not allow them to bring dependents, or acquire them along the way. As stated in an undated document:

Acquisition of dependents while at Kwajalein does not alter the agreements or employment status of the individual. Introduction of dependents to Kwajalein is not

authorized except as provided in the contracts with the U.S. Army (Host Nation Archives, n.d.).

In 2001, I met a young couple who had been working for Raytheon and had recently had a child. They were leaving the base (hence the PCS [Permanent Change of Station] sale I attended at their trailer) because Raytheon refused to transfer them to accompanied status. The couple said this situation rendered their child a “non-entity” and not qualified to use base resources, and so they had decided to return to the U.S.

One important point that must be made about this control of people and families and numbers: Population has always been seen as the culprit in terms of the living conditions on Ebeye, whether internal or external. In contrast, Kwajalein regulates population to the extreme both internally and externally. This tight control is one of the reasons Kwaj looks like it does, a factor often left out of the Kwaj-Ebeye debate. This control has its advantages (maintenance of a high quality of life), but also significant disadvantages (constraints on personal freedom and the possibility of losing access to your “home”). Kwaj is seen as the ideal place to live on the atoll, but people are not free to come and go as they wish, a situation in which many Americans (and Marshallese as well) would not want to live. Personal timetables and desires are not necessarily taken into consideration: the population of Kwaj changes over time, but in connection with the needs of the contractor and missile testing, and the funding of both, and these things have fluctuated greatly over the years.

This control of people and families is one of the reasons American men who marry Marshallese women are such a dubious and ambivalent category for the Command and the Contractor. They introduce a population factor difficult to control in the form of Marshallese “extended families,” with relatives migrating toward successful family members (such as those

with jobs on the base) and other means of swelling family numbers such as frequent adoption of relatives' children. This creates access issues that the Command has struggled with for years.

As one example, American residents described situations where American men with Marshallese wives or girlfriends, when allowed access to the base, ended up hosting a “revolving door” of relatives, including “tons of kids,” and a sheer total number of visitors that most Americans said they personally would not be able to tolerate. The presence of a limited number of such families on the base was not seen as a problem, but increased access to housing was seen as potentially problematic. This is part of the “slippery slope” American residents describe in terms of access, to be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. In terms of the regulation of this sub-population, however, suffice it to say that a 1968 Command document noted that American men who wanted to marry Marshallese women needed to receive permission from the Army, the Contractor, and the TT (Host Nation Archives 1968b).

Aside from outright rules and regulations and their enforcement, there is also a distinct element of surveillance on Kwaj: I was told that fellow base residents could and would report other residents to the Command for failure to mow their grass, and for not picking up after their dogs when out on walks. I was told that bachelors in the BQs would report other bachelors who brought Marshallese girlfriends into the BQs, causing them to be cited by base security. Family social control is also common on military bases, where if a child breaks a rule or gets in trouble, their parent in uniform is then reprimanded, and a somewhat similar dynamic can be seen on Kwaj. A Command brochure from the 1990s notes that “Parents are totally responsible for the behavior of dependent children, and families with children who exhibit destructive behavior have been evicted from Kwajalein” (USAKA n.d.:9). In addition to the control of families, Hawkins describes this kind of surveillance as one of the things civilians new to the military find most

oppressive (2001). This surveillance may be even more pronounced on Kwajalein because you are living on a small island in close proximity to security personnel and members of the Command, including the Commander.

Some bachelors over the years have found Roi to be somewhat of a haven from this kind of surveillance: residents remarked that they moved up there from Kwaj because there were fewer people meddling in one's life, fewer women and children, and no military brass. In addition, regulations concerning the little details of life were not as strictly enforced on Roi. According to one Roi resident, "it's just a nicer, quieter island. Nicer beaches, no kids running around, old ladies. You live down here, and you go to work the next day and someone says 'my son seen you out staggering home last night.' I don't have to hear that up there."

While differences in regulatory control and order may seem like a simplistic distinction to make between Kwaj and Ebeye, these differences are critical. Kwajalein is an artificial community whose numbers are tightly controlled: this is one of the primary reasons that it looks the way it does, and has the resources that it does. Kwajalein is made a "country club" by extreme regulation of population and other aspects that few Pacific Islanders would tolerate and few Americans find democratic. For many Americans, this is not truly a recreation haven, Pacific paradise (perhaps that's why it is "Almost Paradise") or 1950s hometown, and while it has many amenities, it has a far greater number of regulations. And while regulations may restrict and regulate residents' behavior, the constant refrain from long-timers is that this is "part of the deal": "you've got to understand you're on an Army base."

However, it must also be noted that the weight of regulations does not fall evenly over the atoll. In an interview, I asked a more recent American resident when she had really started to feel the restrictions of living on a military base, and on a military-controlled atoll. In a very

telling comment, she noted that she felt it fairly quickly, but didn't feel its true weight until she started going back and forth on a daily basis from Kwaj to Ebeye, through the Dock Security Checkpoint. The process of crossing the border made all those regulations very apparent, and the ways they restrict Marshallese movement. No matter how much Americans feel the weight, the Marshallese feel it most.

### The Clash of Cultures

Here social and cultural borders of Kwajalein are discussed, although they are all intimately tied into the internal and external borders described above. One of the unique aspects of Kwaj is what I have always seen as a clash of cultures – Marshallese, military, engineer and civilian – in a variety of combinations, as well as the issues and debates generated by those clashes. Many of these clashes are rooted in contrasts between military control and democratic ideals, noted previously as one of the fundamental “tensions of empire” on Kwaj. I was also not surprised to find the base has an informal hierarchy of sorts apart from the military hierarchy. But I was surprised to find that there is also a very interesting clash occurring on the atoll between the democratic ideals of base residents and the hierarchical Marshallese social order as currently configured on Kwajalein.

### The American “caste system”

When I asked a long-timer if there was a hierarchy of American residents on the base, her response was “Ooooh, my goodness, yes! There is a huge caste system on Kwaj.” In this hierarchy, employees of certain defense contractors are ranked by prestige, salaries and benefits, with MIT and other larger contractors on top. Residents also distinguished a parallel hierarchy of

wives on the base: “There’s definitely the military wives, and the MIT wives, and the Lockheed wives...and some of them branch out and are friends with others, and some of them are really [exclusive].” There are also distinctions made between mission and non-mission personnel. According to one resident, “I’ve heard a lot of ladies say that’s a big problem, because if their husbands are not mission-related, they’re not mission-related, the wives are really snotty to them, there’s definitely a difference.”

In addition, there are fairly distinct separations between military and non-military personnel. As one example of the clash between these groups, in an article in *Stars and Stripes*, military personnel stationed on the base described the culture shock they experienced on coming to the base and having to live and work with a largely civilian population (Chernitzer 2002b). This military-civilian split functions at different levels, with one resident noting that at higher levels of management, “The military doesn’t like the contractors, contractors resent the military. So it’s not just the Marshallese.” According to a former resident, in the mid-to-late 1980s, there was a separate room in the Yokwe Yuk Club on base reserved for military members only, but this practice was ended after other residents protested this kind of “segregation.” Others noted that on a lower, more individual level, military personnel are involved in various activities and events that serve to set them apart from other base residents, including those aspects of training that are part of their military duties. Compared to other divisions that seem less intentional, military members noted to me that it was important to maintain their separateness in a sea of civilians. In particular, it can be difficult to draw the line concerning fraternization with civilians, in order to maintain “some of their military bearing” (Chernitzer 2002b:3).

Another major division in the Kwaj social order is that between single and accompanied residents. As one resident observed, “*That’s* a group, I’ll tell you, unaccompanied versus

accompanied, and like families versus people without kids. I'm amazed at some of the things I've seen in the paper, letters to the editor." According to one married resident, there were tensions between these two populations regarding access to resources, with single residents feeling that some residents with dependents had an attitude of superiority, and wanted everything on base to be family-friendly, which, of course, is not necessarily the orientation of single residents.

Because of the large single male "bachelor" population on the island and scarcity of American females, bachelors with Marshallese (or Micronesian) girlfriends have been a source of tension on the island for many years, in a similar manner to American men married to Marshallese women. As such they are part of a dubious border category in the base social order, resulting in perpetual uncertainty and shifts in policy. As noted above, bachelors have at times been cited for having Marshallese women in the BQs, sometimes causing friction with roommates or neighbors who might report them. During certain periods, Americans were not allowed to stay overnight on Ebeye either, leaving these individuals with few options. Over the years, this has resulted in repeated requests from bachelors to "decriminalize" these relationships.

However, while Americans emphasized the "caste system," they also noted that there were aspects of the base that promoted other, more positive, cross-cutting relationships between base residents. The presence of children and the ties between them was noted as a factor in bringing adults from disparate backgrounds together. In addition, sporting and other base clubs also served to cut across these boundaries. In this way, it appeared that non-work-related activities on the base did sometimes serve to break down some of these social borders, largely based on occupational hierarchies.

### Race & other prejudices on Kwaj

Kwaj also displays some interesting dynamics with regard to race. According to one long-timer,

The thing that makes it so interesting about the Marshallese is because there is almost no prejudice on Kwajalein. If there is prejudice on Kwaj, it is *way* hidden. This is the only place in the world where someone can move from Huntsville, Alabama, where they have lived their entire life, and the first year they're here, let their daughter go to prom with a black guy. Nobody blinks. This is probably one of the least prejudiced places I've ever been, as far as race goes.

However, another resident noted that racial effects are less pronounced because “a lot of the African-American people out here are with the military” and in positions of power, and that there are also so few African-Americans (and other minority groups) “that it doesn't even become a factor.” This reduced focus on race has also been observed as a general phenomenon in the military, and in particular on Army bases. As Hawkins observes,

Black or White, Hispanic or of other origins, those attached to the Army often delighted in the task of making equality work. They found the Army and its communities to be less racist and more diverse than the circumstances of their previous lives (2001:19).

Tolerance on Kwaj seemed to be extended to issues of homosexuality as well. According to one resident,



I've never seen so much tolerance as far as you've got gays and heterosexuals, you've got clearly a big group of homosexuals on island, too, that all kinds of people are friends with, and I don't think they would be friends with if they were anywhere else, to hang out with.

This is a function of island life on Kwaj

because it's such a small place, you don't want to step on anybody's toes. And these people are in all kinds of different positions, and you don't want to make them mad, because then you won't be able to get something you want later, from them. So, yeah, I think there's probably a little bit more tolerance just because it's such a small community and you see these people all the time, and you don't want to get in a fight with somebody, or say something that would offend somebody and have to live with it later...

On Kwaj, this phenomenon does seem to be a kind of "small island border effect," where divisive issues are subsumed by a need for cooperation in a small, interdependent and isolated community. In this way, communities like those on Kwaj mirror traditional small island communities in the Pacific, where a high value is placed on the smoothing of social tensions and the avoidance of direct confrontation.

However, the racial situation is very different in relations between Americans and Marshallese. I quote from one resident at length:

Americans to Americans, or Americans to Filipinos, or Americans to wives of other Americans...and even strangely enough, if a guy is married to a Marshallese woman,

you're not going to see much prejudice against her or their kids. But by god, let them work at the Snack Bar...let them be a [Marshallese] worker, rather than being married to someone. If you're a Kwaj resident, the amount of prejudice you're going to see in your life is slim to none. If you are not, if you are an Ebeye resident, the amount of prejudice you're going to see is going to be pretty blatant. It's almost like people have to have prejudice against somebody, and since they can't be prejudiced against other people on island, they pick the Marshallese." While more racist behavior might be expected "from regions of the country that have traditionally had prejudice problems, you would think that would come with them, but it doesn't. They leave that on the plane, except for the Marshallese."

#### Americans on the border – American outsiders & “the relative problem”

As noted above, one group of Americans on the base that has never fit neatly into the social and physical confines of the base are those American residents who have married Marshallese women. One reason for this is that they create access dilemmas, which will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter 7. However, as one resident noted, “The Commander doesn't know what to do with them. And one of the reasons is because it's the relative problem, it's the kid problem...There are all kinds of innate problems.” While some of these other problems included the “instability” of some of these marriages, including alcohol and physical abuse, “the relative problem” was seen as the root problem even in stable marriages. One resident noted the difference in marriages to Marshallese versus marriages to members of other populations by saying “you go to the Philippines, you get a wife, you bring her here, she doesn't come with 125 relatives.”

These “innate problems” have resulted in changes in policy over the years in regard to housing and access to other base resources. More than one resident noted that American men with Marshallese wives might be nervous about talking to me about their experiences on Kwaj, in case this research project was in any way controversial: “They purged about twelve families out here, and except for one, everyone of them had a brown wife...All these people with Marshallese wives...including people who have been here for ever and ever.” While some viewed these housing changes as racially motivated, other long-timers cited a different cause, but with the same results. I quote one resident at length:

Ones living here now, a lot of them were asked to leave just recently, and it's the Army doing that, it's not the company. And what happened was there was something back in Pan Am time, they were trying to convince the Army that we needed housing, and when they had a lot of empty trailers and a lot of empty houses, and they were trying to convince the Army that we needed new housing, they had all these empty trailers...they were giving guys like say myself – ‘hey, you want a house? Bring your wife over and live here.’ Then Army came out with a regulation saying we're only going to give the contractor X number of houses. So these guys were low-level bosses. Sorry, guys, you're going to lose your housing. That happened to a bunch of them. And they just happened to be married to Mese...It's not because they're prejudiced or anything like that. They have allocated so many houses. Obviously, if you're an engineer, and a big boss, you're going to get housing or you wouldn't be here. But the Army says you can only have X number of houses. That's the way the contract has been. So they had to make a decision, and obviously the decision is, hey, you've got to cut down on your housing. So these people were told to either pack up, or send the wife back to Ebeye or whatever. That's the way things are out here. That's the way things are.

Another group of residents that surprised me were those that questioned the whole aim of Kwaj – missile testing. While it has sometimes been assumed that everybody living and working on Kwaj is an ardent supporter of the U.S. military and missile testing, this is not always the case. While the general population on the base was characterized to me as “pretty conservative,” some residents didn’t fit this mold, or “the military mindset,” including some engineers. According to one long-time resident,

...a paradoxical footnote, in regard to missile testing, would be that we would philosophically be against it as well, and there are a number of long-timers who have enjoyed working here, find meaningful work, and yet if they came to voting whether this was worthwhile for the U.S. to do, would be voting against it, and I include in that several engineers. So some very, very interesting contradictions in what keeps people here, their political viewpoints.

Others saw more complicity in this silence regarding missile testing:

A remarkable amount of people don’t [believe in it], but you don’t actually know that unless you actually talk to those people. Because the people who do not buy into whatever, also don’t have any real desire to make any changes in it, they just keep their mouth shut...I talk to people all the time who say what a boondoggle this place is, what a huge waste of money this is. And they’re very honest about it, and yet, we all keep taking our little paychecks, you know.

Even engineers are not necessarily enthusiastic supporters of missile testing. I quote from one long-timer at length:

...an engineer told me the other day, he was getting ready to PCS, he said, ‘you know what? We’ve spent 20 years testing these, these missiles...at hundreds of millions of dollars,’ he said, ‘and in 20 years we’ve reached the point where if we know when they’re launching them, and the weather is perfect, and we know exactly the path they’re going to take, we can hit them half the time...’ And he said, ‘everybody knows that death is not going to come in a missile, it’s going to come in a suitcase...but the government never catches on.’

#### Marshallese culture versus military culture

As seen in the discussion on regulation, there are many, many ways that Marshallese culture conflicts with military culture, with one of the glaring ones being fundamentally different orientations toward time. Marshallese are known to operate on “Marshallese time,” a much looser conception of time shared in many Pacific Island cultures. I often observed the frustration of American civilians when an event on Ebeye scheduled for 7 p.m. did not start until 9 p.m. And this is just American time versus Marshallese time: military time is something altogether different. It was a source of amazement to me that so many Marshallese make the military-timed ferries on a daily basis, although this may also be a function of years of practice and necessity. I also noticed that events on Ebeye to which the Commander or his representatives were invited seemed more likely to start on time than other events (undoubtedly this has been an issue in the past). However, the timing of meetings seems to have been a constant source of tension, seen in

comments by members of the Command that “As usual, Marshallese time was well in force...” (TTPI 1986).

Now I would like to focus on some other details of daily life on Kwaj where these smaller conflicts emerge, including what might be interpreted as small forms of resistance to the military order (larger forms of resistance will be discussed in Chapter 9). Of course, some of this can be a function of interpretation: while some Americans might see a casual act, another might see an intentional flaunting of base regulations. However, regardless of motivations, it is interesting in itself to note that these events happen in the controlled environment of Kwaj.

While it may seem like a minor and unimportant detail, more than one resident noted the casual manner in which some Marshallese on Kwaj tossed chicken bones on the ground after eating. Residents felt it was one small and persistent way Marshallese flout the control of landscape on Kwaj. Long-time residents also noted a persistent refusal to adhere to any organized bike management system on Kwaj. It was kind of surprising on such an orderly base to see the large and disordered “bike graveyard” near the DSC. The unsightliness of this area was a continuous source of complaints by American residents in the *Hourglass*. (During my time on Kwaj, the base police started a formal bike registration program to remedy this.) Another chronic aggravation was the Marshallese “borrowing” of Americans’ bikes when they needed to get to the dock or to work in a hurry. In a “crime-free” atmosphere where many people left their bikes unlocked, and expected them to be exactly where they had left them, this was a constant source of tension. (It must be noted, however, that American residents were not always model citizens in regard to the bike issue: constant complaints appeared in the *Hourglass* about haphazard parking of bikes in front of the post office and in other locations, including right outside the hospital emergency room.)

Several long-time residents also observed that there were quite a few workers who had worked on Kwaj for decades, yet had not learned or did not use more than rudimentary English. While they noted that some Americans residents viewed this as a sign of mental deficiency, these residents believed this was also a potent form of resistance. One long-timer felt that on occasion Marshallese would appear to “not understand” in order not to have to follow orders of some kind. (Some Marshallese also suggested to me that this could be “shyness.”) Others suggested that while absenteeism from work had many causes, one of those might be resistance to having to tolerate certain work situations, or that absenteeism, whether from meetings with the Command by Marshallese representatives, or from work by Marshallese workers, might be a form of protest against certain policies and events.

Other interesting cases of resisting Kwaj order have involved the ferries (LCMs) that carry Marshallese workers and others back and forth to Ebeye everyday. One perpetual problem has been Marshallese smoking and drinking on evening boats, despite regulations against it. Over the years and also while I was there, there were instances when riders failed to cooperate with the requests of pilots, (or as one resident noted, there had been “standoffs”) and pilots had to threaten to return the boat to Kwaj if riders did not cooperate. Base security has also been known to ride on these boats to ensure order. Of course, the question of motivations here is important, as some residents noted that these events usually took place on late night boats with inebriated passengers. However, other Americans felt that it was during times of tension between Marshallese and Americans, whether because of demonstrations or other issues, that there tended to be unruly and confrontational behavior on ferries. An incident in 2001 involved such a confrontation between the crew and passengers which resulted in a broken window, after the

captain turned the ferry around because of drunken passengers (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Jan. 17, 2001:3).

While these are all assorted ways that Marshallese *may* challenge regulations of various kinds, it must be noted that the Marshallese don't have *a* set of regulations to adhere to – in the past, regulations have continuously changed, much to the confusion of Marshallese and Americans alike. While this will be explored more fully in Chapter 7, a few reasons for this situation will be noted here. One major problem in this regard noted by residents is a lack of institutional memory as a result of chronic turnover in base personnel. One resident felt that this situation was exacerbated by Americans who were not particularly interested in what had happened there in the past: “Just think, these people change every two or three years, and some of the guys haven't even been interested in finding out what's going on...It just goes on every two years, same thing, and there's no continuity.” As a result, there have been few American administrators who know the issues and people well, and have any real grasp of the complex history of the place. While I did find other members of the Command to be much more engaged and interested, I conducted an interesting interview with a military member of the Command who clearly had no interest in issues I was asking about, related to the Marshallese and access to base resources. Afterward when I mentioned this interview to other base residents, I was informed that he was leaving soon, and was thus unlikely “to give a damn.” (This was one of those interviews where what *wasn't* said and what *didn't* happen were as informative as what was said and did happen.) However, even those individuals who are more engaged may only be there for a limited number of years.

Several residents noted that the Marshallese also had to deal with a lot of inconsistency in enforcement of regulations, particularly access regulations. Some of this was due to changes in



regulations based on particular events, small and large, but also the perpetual turnover in base personnel. According to one resident, “One has to deal with the huge amount of people coming and going who are Kwaj residents. That happens in every office; that happens with Americans. Every person who takes a job out here reinvents the damn wheel!” These changes, combined with other uncertainties and stresses related to contract changeovers, represent just some of the aspects of the Kwaj order that the Marshallese must adapt to. However, residents also noted that while these inconsistencies can definitely harm the Marshallese, they can also be used to some advantage.

#### American-Marshallese relationships

In this discussion I must note a distinction between higher-level relationships, such as those between the U.S. government/military and Marshallese regarding higher-level political issues, and lower-level relationships between the two groups on the base. Here the discussion is focused largely on lower-level human relationships. The idea presented by the Command in 1968 that “Marshallese and Americans...work together in complete harmony at Kwajalein” is clearly not always the case (Host Nation Archives 1968a:28).

In terms of cultural understanding, Americans over the years seemed to score very low in terms of making some attempt to understand another way of life. Residents reported that one common assumption was that the Marshallese were “simple people.” A long-time resident reflected on the process she went through in discovering the Marshallese were not so simple:

It’s funny, the Marshallese are a fascinating people to me, because when you first move to Kwaj and you first start meeting Marshallese you think about them as being very uncomplicated people. They don’t plan, although they have an incredibly complicated

social and caste system, but you think about them as being, they have a remarkable attitude...they have a wonderful inner dignity that I admire. They have a humor about them...in fact, there's lots of admirable things about the Marshallese. But then you start to get to know them a little more and you start to realize they are *terrifically* complicated.

Residents also noted that many Americans failed to understand some of the passive-aggressive aspects of Marshallese culture, which might be reflected in such practices as seeming not to understand English, or in absenteeism from work. Long-timers noted in this regard that passive-aggressive forms of resistance and conflict resolution are a necessary feature in traditional small island communities where conflicts cannot always be out in the open. And because Americans don't tend to see this aspect of Marshallese culture,

Americans underestimate them all the time. Americans have a tendency to think that anyone who's not an American is basically not as smart as we are. We're awfully arrogant, and the Marshallese are *plenty* bright. But the fact that we have Marshallese who have worked here 30 years, and barely speak English...that tells you how passive aggressive they are. I think that communal living teaches that.

Long-time residents also had many stories about "clueless Americans" that Marshallese must perpetually endure. One recalled a cultural exchange, where an American was practically yelling at a Marshallese woman:

She was talking to her like she was stupid and deaf, and I was like, she's not stupid and she's not deaf! And it makes me very conscious and...I hope I would never do that,

because I was so embarrassed, ...and she had a Marshallese muumuu on and she hangs out with them all the time. And I was thinking, they must just think she is an idiot, because these are ladies that understand [English].

Another aspect of American rudeness has to do with the American assumption that Marshallese lands were somehow open-access for purposes of recreation. In addition to freely using and taking resources from various islets in the MAC, shelters Marshallese maintain there had been broken into by American visitors. Because of this, the TT at some point was forced to regulate American access to islets other than Kwaj, with the Command's consent. During my fieldwork, there were complaints from the people of Lib Atoll about Kwaj residents coming there to fish and engage in other recreational activities, and using resources, without doing more than waving at the people who lived there. An article was then published in the *Hourglass* advising residents to be more respectful. The issue of drunken behavior of Americans on Ebeye has also been a problem over the years, resulting in restrictions on access to Ebeye in the early 1970s. In a 1972 issue of the *Hourglass*, Ebeye visitors are reminded to dress appropriately, especially if they are female, and to show respect "by not peering into private homes without invitation" (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Jun. 15, 1972). Of course, the frequent turnover in American staff means that often these are lessons that have to be continuously relearned.

While some small percentage of base residents have significant interactions with Marshallese, residents reported that the majority of American residents made no effort at interaction. One resident echoed the thoughts of several other residents when she observed that "I still end up being amazed that there are people who have been here as long as we have, who have been over to Ebeye maybe not at all, or maybe once or twice, and have no interest at all in

maintaining or establishing a relationship.” In response to a question regarding how many Americans don’t make that effort, one long-timer said,

I think a huge amount, and I wouldn’t even hazard what percentage of people *never* get a clue. They don’t give a damn, they never ask, they don’t care. Marshallese are simply the people who work at the Snack Bar. And the Marshallese are simply the people who don’t work the way you want them to, and don’t come in on time, and don’t come in, period. That’s a horrible problem here.

This resident noted, however, that some of this separation is part of a huge difference in work cultures, discussed below, as this difference meant that for many Americans “the Marshallese are really frustrating for people to work with.”

Some long-time residents noted a significant change over time in the nature of American-Marshallese relationships: in the 1970s and earlier, the Marshallese women who served as maids and nannies “were part of the family...there was more respect in both directions,” whereas in recent decades that relationship had become less close. But there are qualifications, as the relationship is a bit more complicated than that. One resident described this change as being similar to the differences in relationships between white and black Americans in the U.S. North versus the U.S. South historically. She observed: “I think today we don’t care how high Marshallese get [in terms of employment and power] but don’t get too close, and in those days we didn’t want them to get high, but you could get close!”

When asked about the best and worst times in American-Marshallese relationships, the best times were usually the 1970s and earlier, which were characterized as “more open” times when Marshallese had freer access to the base. Several noted that before 1982 they were able to

buy food and other items for Marshallese they were close to, to take back to Ebeye: "...we did have our favorite people that didn't abuse it, so you did. A party coming up, or Christmas, you might give a ham or a turkey. But people didn't go wholesale buying..."

The worst times were usually marked as being around the time of the 1982 demonstrations, although these were not seen as uniformly bad times, and were not marked by animosity between all Marshallese and all Americans. As will be shown in Chapter 9, some Americans felt closer to Marshallese who were demonstrating than other American residents and the Command at the time. In general however, the demonstrations of 1982 and the Compact were seen in many ways as difficult times in these relationships.

Some residents also marked a more recent turning point in the history of U.S.-Marshallese relationships, that marked by decreasing sympathies toward Marshallese requests (especially by landowners) for more monetary compensation for the U.S. use of Kwajalein lands. This issue will be discussed further below and in other chapters, but as an introduction to some of the issues, one resident noted that

I'm not a social activist, but most Americans, the workers I know, one way or another, they think we've sent plenty of money to [Ebeye] Marshallese, one way or another. And the consensus generally is that they don't spend it right. And so, there's *not* a lot of sympathy. I mean, you don't want people starving over there, but...And it's quite different now. I mean, they have, how many Marshallese workers are there now? There are thousands. And there were two dozen back then, so, in that sense they are *way* better now... And that's good because it's the average guy over there, can get a job at KMR. Whereas, they didn't get anything before, because the money didn't go to the average guy.

### Interactions with Marshallese workers

The roles and numbers of Marshallese working on the base have changed dramatically over the years, and with those changes, American-Marshallese relationships. One American resident recalled that in the 1970s, there were few Marshallese working on the base. The only Marshallese workers at that time were “maids and houseboys” and a few other select positions: “all the other guys, the truck drivers, the crane operators, they were all...mainly Hawaiian guys,...Filipino, and American guys in general.” Looking at the employment situation of Marshallese today, “we’ve come a long way from that.” Residents reported that these early workers were generally paid fairly well, and relations were good (although this is a very general observation, as will be seen in Chapter 7).

Major changes happened after 1982 with the implementation of the Compact, when the base started hiring many more Marshallese workers into service-level jobs. According to one resident:

That was part of the deal of the Compact to employ more and more Marshallese. What happened during the sit-ins and sail-ins was that the Marshallese fought for more employment rights. But that also was a double-edged sword, because by the time they got more employment rights, that swelled the population up more...So there’s a big boom in the jobs they get...

But also after the Compact,

They go back to the minimum wage of the Marshalls... Well, it was the Marshall Islands government trying to stop the influx of more and more people into Ebeye because they didn't have the infrastructure for them. It didn't work, because by then everybody had intermarried and brought more and more relatives, so there was a double-edged sword to that, that just didn't, it didn't do what they wanted it to do.

One significant tension among Marshallese workers (and between Marshallese workers and the U.S. administration) is that Marshallese employed by Kwaj before the Compact came into effect were grandfathered into the new system at their American-level wages and access benefits. As noted above, workers hired since that time have wages on par with the Marshallese government and other businesses, and reduced access to health care on Kwaj. However, several American residents noted that while Americans are often blamed for this discriminatory system, this system was requested by the Marshallese government to try to make Ebeye less of a draw to outer islanders and other Pacific Islanders. These contentious issues will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

There is considerable tension between Marshallese workers and Americans in what can be considered a clash in work styles and behavior, already noted. Probably the biggest frustration for Americans is chronic absenteeism. One long-timer, however, thought that there were good reasons for this:

they get screwed royally in salary, and I've never understood that, and never accepted that everyone says 'it's their government,' that makes no sense to me... they live too close together and too many in a house, so they don't sleep well, they have lousy nutrition, and they have poor health...and sometimes they don't have power and water,

and it's difficult to get on the boat, and just getting to work is a pain in the ass. Plus, they're in dead-end jobs where they make crappy money, and a lot of times they are not treated well. Those are all legitimate reasons for not showing up for work.

In addition, workers have traditional obligations, such as those surrounding deaths in the family, that require them to be absent, as well as elaborate preparations for some community events, including those around Christmas. But she also noted that even those with very good jobs and very good treatment may still be absent a lot, and while there are “a lot of reasons why they miss, I understand that, ....it drives Americans *nuts*.”

In the context of the clash of work cultures, I found it quite humorous that one manager, quoted in the *Hourglass*, said that part of the clash is due to the fact that the Marshallese have no cultural understanding of “customer service” (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Apr. 16, 2002:5). One resident described it as a lack of anything like an American work ethic: “That’s another problem. You know, they will take days off for a death. Well, we don’t do things like that. And they think nothing of taking all their [Paid Time Off] time right at the very beginning of the year when they get their new three weeks, and then don’t understand why they can’t take off for a *kemem* [celebration of a child’s first birthday] or a death, or anything else.” And managers have had to be stricter on absenteeism “Because as they come more and more into this workforce, we rely on them more and more.”

Other tensions are evident: one resident related a conversation she had had with a Filipino construction boss on Kwaj. He had observed that he was glad that on his current project he had “the right culture mix” of people.



He said he had to have the right people in the right jobs, because a guy from one family is not going to take orders from a guy from another family. He lives in fear that someone will quit or get fired and ruin his mix. He said they were enormously difficult people to work with within a crew. I asked why is that? He said the Marshallese have a terrible situation for themselves. Not only their social/cultural setup doesn't work in modern society, but they don't like taking orders, period, which is bad. And they don't have much initiative of their own either, so they're screwed. Because they don't want you to tell them what to do. But they're not too interested in thinking it up on their own, either. So, he said, it's hard. It's really hard for them, and it's really hard for us.

Despite “cultural disconnects,” American residents readily admit that there has also been a great deal of mistreatment of Marshallese workers, some through cultural misunderstanding, but some from outright discrimination. As one resident noted,

I guess I'm surprised there's not more resentment by the Marshallese against us...because the truth of the matter is, so many of the Americans are not good to the Marshallese. They're rude, they're condescending...because the Marshallese are passive aggressive, only work one way, and it's not the American way. You've had a lot of Marshallese here who have gone through a lot of abuse at the hands of Americans, I think. A lot of job abuse here, I know there is...

When asked if there was discrimination toward Marshallese workers, one long-timer responded:

Lots. Lots...It shows itself because the Americans don't really ever bother to learn the Marshallese culture. And they don't realize that the Marshallese are masters of passive

aggression. And that if you yell at a Marshallese, that just sets you up for your own fall. They're a kind, loving, gentle people and they are not stupid, because most Americans forget that English is a second language to them, so as you raise your voice, it doesn't mean that a Marshallese is going to understand you any more than when you were speaking at a normal level.

As just one example, for quite a long period of time there was an abusive dispatcher working in the Marine Department, who regularly insulted Marshallese trying to load supplies and get onto the ferry to return to Ebeye. This didn't stop, despite reprimands, until the day the dispatcher failed to notice that the Commander was waiting in line to board the ferry to Ebeye and made some nasty comments. I never heard him there again. The issue of harassment and mistreatment of Marshallese workers has been a recurring topic in CRC Minutes and other outlets in recent decades, with investigations by the Command and Contractor resulting in some cases (CRC Minutes, May 16, 1988; CRC Minutes, Letter Feb. 2, 1994; CRC Minutes, Aug. 31, 1995; *Kwajalein Hourglass*, Nov. 30, 2001:1). These problems were also the source of a 1994 resolution by the RMI legislative body, the Nitijela, regarding the mistreatment of Marshallese workers (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Dec. 14, 1999:2). In 1999, an ombudsman position was created specifically to deal with grievances by Marshallese workers (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Dec. 14, 1999:1-2). However, even if issues are substantially addressed at a particular time, turnover in American contract workers on the base ensures that a new crop of Americans with little to no cultural or historical knowledge of the Marshallese, and with their own racial baggage, will soon be working alongside or in charge of Marshallese workers. It seems to me that while Kwaj administrators perpetually recreate the wheel, inter-cultural relationships suffer the same fate. Marshallese workers must suffer this in order to work on the base long-term.

Residents had plenty of other stories about American insensitivity. In one department on base, a Marshallese worker died suddenly at the age of 32, and his American co-workers cried all day, collected money for the family, and then all went to the funeral. According to one of those co-workers,

Now, all that sounds pretty standard – you lose a co-worker, you collect some money, and you go to the funeral, pretty standard. People on Ebeye were *amazed*...the widow kissed the director's hand...[Americans] can work 20 years next to a Marshallese, and he drops dead, which most of them do in their 40s, and they don't go to the funeral.

In what she saw as a telling sign of American “cluelessness” and insensitivity to Marshallese, one resident recalled that she knew a Marshallese maid who showed up to work one day only to find a note saying that the family she worked for was going to be off-island on vacation for five weeks and she wouldn't be paid for that time. This resident found this behavior completely insensitive, as no warning had been given and this maid's family depended on this income.

One resident observed that even with greater numbers of Marshallese on the base and greater dependency of the base on them, attitudes on the part of Americans did not seem to have changed much over the years:

I'm sure they worry about that...You know, when the Marshallese didn't come on island [on 9/11], this place pretty well does shut down...You don't think for one minute that the manager at the PDR [dining facility] is actually going to stand there and flip burgers? Or

pick up trash? They do the jobs we don't want to, and so therefore, we want them here.

But we just want them to do, to be like us, but content with a crappy job.

### American residents versus Marshallese elites – “The boot and the flipflop”

One significant tension that emerged in conversations with American residents was that between American residents of the base and “Marshallese elites.” This seemed to reflect a larger “tension of empire” between American ideals of democracy and the “traditional” Marshallese social hierarchy as currently manifested on the atoll. And in an interesting contrast, some of these same Americans also objected to the less democratic, hierarchical aspects of the Command. These tensions between American civilians and Marshallese elites will reemerge in other chapters, particularly that on Ebeye.

Some residents noted that their original sympathies when they arrived on the atoll were anti-military and pro-Marshallese. However, over time these feelings were complicated by what they saw and experienced on the atoll. As one resident noted:

I was aware of the situation, and I came out here strongly biased against the whole situation, viewing from the outset as an apartheid community. And having difficulties understanding why that would be the case. With the years, I think I understand a little bit more the historical complexities and the social/political challenges to come up with something that works...

Some of this complexity emerged as residents begin to see the differences among the Marshallese, including extreme class and status differences, and differences in treatment that went with those class and status differences. Several residents recalled an pivotal incident in the

mid-1970s when an *iroij* of Kwajalein, living on the base at the time, beat his wife so badly that she died in a hospital in Honolulu soon after. According to a report in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, he was then acquitted of charges of involuntary manslaughter after a domestic dispute (King 1976:A-7). Residents were disgusted that nothing was ever done about it, and that traditional leaders often have “immunity...from everything.” That the incident had happened on Kwaj rather than Ebeye seemed to make the injustice stronger, from the point of view of long-timers.

In many cases, residents noted that a less positive view of elites had emerged over recent decades as large quantities of money and other goods intended for Ebeye infrastructure never made it to their intended destinations. Another problem noted was the failure of some leaders to distribute the proceeds from land lease payments to those below them in the traditional manner. In general, sympathies had shifted to the Marshallese underclass on Ebeye, who American residents observed had to live with the results of that inequitable distribution of resources.

Several residents were also profoundly uncomfortable with a social system in which lower-class Marshallese could not freely and publicly express their views for fear of retribution. Some recounted episodes in which they had “gone to bat” for lower-ranked Marshallese in this regard. All expressed some hope that this situation would change over time. One noted

I have this theory, that if you stand with your foot on someone’s neck long enough, they’re going to wiggle around at some point and chew your foot off...Except the Marshallese aren’t wiggling...They’ve got the American boot on their neck, they also have their own leaders’ flipflops right next to it! ....Again, culturally, it is so ingrained that you don’t make waves, because they live communally...

One military person of color made some powerful remarks to me regarding what he saw as a kind of double domination on Kwajalein. After discussing the generally poor treatment of Marshallese by Americans on the base, he added that Marshallese leaders should be equally “ashamed of how they treat their people,” as he felt there was no excuse for the difference in living conditions and resources between Marshallese elites and commoners on Ebeye, and for the money and materials diverted in various ways.

In terms of elites, another noted that “Ebeye has not crawled out from under that...let’s face it, [some local leaders] have total control: ‘you leave my island,’ and they’ve told the people once before.” Some residents placed their hopes in newer leaders, as well as less-highly-ranked Marshallese who have gotten the opportunity to rise through the American system. However, one resident noted that some of these individuals are likely to go make their lives in the U.S., and not come back and challenge the status quo. However, other residents noted that it was not just local leadership:

But I will say, I think that the U.S. Army and the whole Kwaj thing has been enormously damaging to the Marshallese in many, many ways. I think we are guilty of many things, but as guilty as we are, that has to be shared equally by the [RMI] government. They have enormous power here. Obviously, the U.S. wants...these islands, because I think it’s five or six of them, very badly. We just signed a new Compact, and I am appalled that the Marshallese government didn’t do anything to help these people [on Ebeye].

One very interesting debate that was raging while I was there was over an RMI proposal to increase the 5% tax on base income. Apparently this has always been a sore subject: Americans reported “We fought in courts back with the first 3% they started off with. They

raised it to 5%, so we all got a 3% raise just to cover it.” Other residents said they wanted to know exactly where the 5% they already gave went. When Kwajalein leaders proposed raising the income tax again in 2002, the American response on Kwaj was immediate. A common refrain was “no taxation without representation,” and one Kwaj employee even started a flyer campaign. In the *Hourglass*, one resident commented that

As for me, I did not come out here to support the few who would steal the future of their own people (i.e., \$300,000 missing from the RMI Embassy and \$641,000 from the College of the Marshall Islands). If the RMI wants more money, they should try plugging all the holes in their own treasury (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Oct. 1, 2002:2).

Some residents saw this whole thing as less of a ploy to deprive American of more of their income and as more of a negotiating tactic for higher land lease payments. However, it was very interesting to see the nerve it touched with many Americans.

## CHAPTER 6

### EBEYE ISLET

#### Introduction

Here I want to briefly discuss first impressions of Ebeye by outsiders, as these impressions are an important part of how Ebeye is perceived and portrayed. In asking Americans for their first impressions of Ebeye, whether they were visitors, new residents of Kwaj, or long-timers, most responded that they were “shocked” and “horrificed.” First there were the smells, the flies, and the garbage. Many noted their surprise in seeing so many children and even toddlers playing in the streets (getting hit by cars is not uncommon) and playing in the lagoon and ocean unsupervised. Young children take care of younger children in stair-step fashion. Several noted how many children walked around in the streets with bare feet (although they generally seemed clean and well-dressed). Others noted seeing kids scavenging in the open dump at the north end of the islet.

Several Americans recalled being approached by one of the “reefwalkers,” particularly one often trying to help newcomers with their bags, who had open and oozing sores on his arms. Others recalled their confusion in trying to find someone’s “house” in the labyrinth-like alleys of shacks off the main roads, especially in contrast to Kwaj’s numbered, ordered and even name-labeled abodes. In general, to most American visitors, Ebeye is perceived as a dirty, crowded and chaotic place, particularly in comparison with Kwaj: the sheer number of people alone is extremely disconcerting.



Americans with no previous experience of “Third World” living conditions were particularly horrified, as they had little to compare it to. Other Americans were more prepared. According to one couple, when they showed up around 1980, Ebeye had no sidewalks and was “trashier,” but

it still looked better than a lot of places, a lot of other Third World places we’ve been elsewhere. A lot of people had gone over there and said it was terrible, we went over there, and you know, gee, compared to urban Mexico City, there guys are doing pretty well. We have a fair amount of Third World experience elsewhere. I don’t think we were quite as hit about how terrible it was as some folks were.

I also asked Ebeye residents from places like the Philippines and other Pacific Islands about their expectations of and first impressions of Ebeye. Several said that they had assumed that because Kwajalein was controlled by Americans, Ebeye would be like Hawaii. One Filipino worker had come most recently from Saudia Arabia, and in comparison Ebeye was quite a shock. Many of these individuals (who came to Ebeye to work in retail stores or in the hospital) recalled that they had gotten off the airplane on Kwaj, liked what they saw, and thought that that was where they were going to live. They were then quite surprised to discover that they were not “home” yet. Upon getting off the ferry and seeing Ebeye for the first time, they recalled general feelings of shock and dismay, and the thought “I have to live *here*?” Some said they would have left on the next plane if that had been possible. Even with a different cultural sense of personal space from most Americans, these individuals perceived Ebeye as being *very* crowded.

Pacific Islanders emphasized that Ebeye really has no parallel in the Pacific. All Pacific Islanders said they were thoroughly dismayed at the lack of availability of fresh traditional foods,

including coconuts and fish, to supplement store-bought foods. They were horrified at the prices of the store-bought foods they now had to rely on. They also found the high, boarded privacy barriers around houses and shacks on Ebeye to be very unlike their home communities. Some were also shocked to discover that young male Ebeye residents might not know how to climb a coconut tree and that adult residents might not be able to swim. They were also surprised to hear about the high suicide rate among young men on Ebeye. Pacific Islanders were also often warned by their relatives that Kwajalein Atoll, like the rest of the Marshall Islands, was “poisoned” because of nuclear testing. While they continued to be somewhat concerned about this possibility, the daily realities of Ebeye soon set in, and the daily effort of getting food, water, and electric power soon replaced less visible concerns about radioactivity on the atoll.

Many different terms have been used over the years in the academic reports and the media to describe Ebeye. These terms have included “labor camp,” “ghetto,” and “concentration camp,” although the most common term is “slum,” often placed in contrast to Kwaj as “country club.” David Hanlon has characterized Ebeye as a “dumping ground” for people in the way of U.S. military activities in the Marshalls (1998:187). Giff Johnson has repeatedly asserted that the U.S.-Marshallese relationship on Kwajalein Atoll is one of apartheid, or “Apartheid, U.S. Style” (1976). A 1976 article in *Pacific Islands Monthly* called Ebeye “The U.S. Army’s Ghetto Islet” (Malone 1976). Of course, the comparison of Kwaj and Ebeye is an inevitable one, as one can’t help but notice “the phenomenologically blatant and pervasive contrast between life on Ebeye and life on Kuwajleen” (Carucci 1997a:193). However, I believe the prevailing focus on the Kwaj-Ebeye dichotomy and the “slum versus country club” narrative has masked some other interesting processes and events that have occurred on Ebeye and on the atoll over the years.

One aspect of Ebeye that often gets lost in “slum” discussions is that there *are* some good things about Ebeye, recognized by both Americans and Marshallese. I was, of course, more surprised at the positive things Americans saw in Ebeye. Americans and Marshallese both noted that, despite the demands of life on the islet, aspects of the Marshallese “extended family” system are still strong there. This was most often expressed by Americans as Marshallese continuing to “take care of each other.” That food sharing still exists at all on Ebeye was seen as one sign of this. Other evidence includes the way many Marshallese feed and take care of the mentally disabled residents (like the “reefwalkers”) who wander Ebeye, and that the Pacific practice of adoption is still strong. American long-timers particularly recounted episodes where Marshallese families had adopted children whose families could not take care of them. Because of these persistent cultural strengths, one American noted that “it’s a different kind of poverty I think.”

That the Marshallese appeared to be “generally happy people” despite conditions on Ebeye was a subject of amazement to Americans as well. One American long-timer noted that this generally positive attitude, and the lack of truly desperate begging on Ebeye,

all these things that in other Third World countries have been sort of...an indication that there is real poverty, I have never really gotten quite than sense with the Marshallese, because of the extended family, you know, they pretty much take care of each other... There’s not that sense of utter poverty and desolation.

Of course, many noted the resilience of the Marshallese as well, often linked to their ability to survive in precarious and remote atoll environments in the prehistoric period. This resilience can be seen in the comments of a Marshallese woman who told me “...all these things,

all these years, no water, no power, this is not new to us, but we still have life.” Americans also noted as a positive factor that the Marshallese language is alive and well on Ebeye; you don’t hear a lot of English spoken, which some Americans found surprising and healthy, considering the proximity and influence of the base. (However, a few Marshallese and American I spoke to felt that this was an indication of the inadequacies of education on Ebeye.) Americans were also surprised at how clean and well-dressed most children and adults were, despite prevailing health conditions on Ebeye. This view is reflected with occasional observations in the media that Ebeye is an island of “affluent paupers” (Kluge 1968:32).

In terms of other positive aspects of Ebeye, most interesting to me was the ways that Ebeye has provided “relief” to some Americans over the years from the control of life on the base. Some Americans have found Ebeye to be a refreshing antidote to Kwaj’s “lack of diversity,” or “white bread” atmosphere. One American resident observed in the *Hourglass* that “I love coming to Ebeye...The Marshallese are the most interesting thing out here” (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Mar. 2, 2001:5). In the past, Ebeye has also occasionally been the place where Americans have gone to carouse in ways they cannot on the base, resulting in protests by the Marshallese and strict access regulations by the Command in the early 1970s. A letter from Ebeye officials included with CRC minutes from 1989 noted serious problems with drunken Americans on Ebeye; the letter states that Kwaj residents “consider Ebeye their private playground where ‘anything goes’” (CRC Minutes, Letter Dec. 28, 1989). Ebeye apparently has also provided a haven at times for underaged American drinkers from Kwaj: a crackdown on Ebeye in 1990 resulted in the arrest of several teenagers from the base (Johnson 1990:45). Problems with American males (sometimes called “Ebeye Rangers”) going to Ebeye to have sex

with young Marshallese women has also been an issue over the years, and was part of the restrictions in the early 1970s preventing Americans from staying overnight on Ebeye.

Of course, visiting Ebeye is quite different from having to live there (although some Kwaj residents married to Marshallese women have chosen to live there in the past), and most Americans who saw its advantages were happy enough to experience these positive aspects of Ebeye without having to endure its daily infrastructural realities. However, I find it interesting in itself that Americans see positives *at all* amid the negatives of Ebeye. As one former American resident of Ebeye noted, “I like it, although people say it’s dirty.” Robert Barclay, a former “Kwaj kid” and author of the (historical) novel about Kwaj called *Melal*, observed that “It always amazed me that for all its horror (so many suicides, diseases, sewage nightmares, overcrowding, confinement) in the eighties, Ebeye could still be a peaceful and sometimes even pleasant place to be” (2002, personal communication). And it is also important to remember, as a Marshallese student once reminded me in a CMI class discussion about Ebeye, that while many people consider Ebeye to be a “slum,” it is also their home, filled with the people they love.

### Ebeye as border town

In examining the border literature, one cannot help but see similarities between U.S.-Mexico border dynamics and those between Ebeye and Kwaj. Indeed, one new American resident of Kwaj who went on the “island orientation” tour of Ebeye, observed that Ebeye reminded him of border towns in Arizona, and that he wasn’t surprised by the living conditions he saw there (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Mar. 2, 2001:5). In this way, Ebeye can be seen as another case of the meeting of First and Third Worlds in dramatic contrast. One can also see Ebeye in Sarah Hill’s descriptions of “*colonias*,” impoverished settlements of Mexican immigrants

located near U.S. border cities (2003). Scenes such as children playing in yards filled with garbage, and residents dipping water from a barrel that says “not for storage of potable water” are just a few images that resonate (Hill 2003:155). And as will be seen for Ebeye,

It is not for want of government effort that *colonias* have sustained themselves as sites of border transgression on the edges of U.S. border cities...Since *colonias* first came to prominence in the late 1980s, hundreds of millions of dollars have poured into border counties to halt growth of *colonias* and to provide the public works infrastructure necessary to keep *colonia* residents from living mired in their own wastes (Hill 2003:142).

The relationship of Kwaj and “Ebeye as border town” would also easily fall into Oscar Martinez’s border typology as an “interdependent borderland,” a category exemplified by the U.S.-Mexico border. Defining features of these kinds of borderlands include a relationship that is strongly “asymmetrical in nature, [but] none the less yields proportional benefits to each side” (Martinez 1994a:5). The degree of interdependence

is contingent upon policies pertaining to the national interests of the two neighbors...Concerns over immigration, trade competition, smuggling...compel the central governments carefully to monitor the border, keeping it open only to the extent that it serves the agenda of the nation-state (Martinez 1994a:5).

There is a large volume of documents dealing with Ebeye and its problems, and its history is quite complex. Here I will provide a brief history of postwar Ebeye, focusing on a few

major issues, from angles not always seen. I will then focus on the contradictions and dilemmas Ebeye presents, often found in debates over the question “Whose fault is Ebeye?” I see Ebeye history as a series of boundaries being drawn and reinforced, both physically and bureaucratically, over time. Because of the asymmetry in power, Americans have often had the power to draw these boundaries (and live inside “the bubble”), while Marshallese have had to live with the results.

One thing that must be noted up front is that the problems of Ebeye are extremely complex. This may seem like a self-evident statement, but blame for Ebeye is often simply assigned, with the U.S. military taking the blame most frequently, although these charges are often countered by Americans blaming the Marshallese “extended family” system. Also, many Americans over the years have come to the atoll thinking they know how to “fix” Ebeye, but as one American long-timer noted, “there are no quick fixes to Ebeye,” and some fixes meant to be permanent have ended up being very temporary. This theme was a continuous thread in discussions with American long-timers: everyone wants to “fix” Ebeye, and a lot of money and time has been spent over the years to do so, but without some understanding of the complexity of underlying issues, that money and time has often been spent in vain.

### Ebeye’s Postwar History – Drawing the boundaries

The early postwar period on Kwajalein Atoll, under U.S. Navy administration, is often described as one “of generosity and relative togetherness” (Carucci 1997a:192). Despite this “togetherness,” however, the Marshallese community was already physically separated from the American community on Kwaj Islet (Carucci 1997a:250). They were set apart into what is sometimes called the “Kwajalein labor camp,” consisting of Marshallese with land rights to

Kwajalein Islet, as well as a variety of workers (Marshallese and other Micronesians) drawn to the area for work. Most were employed as laborers in the rehabilitation of the war-destroyed islet.

This segregation “became more marked in 1950 when the Marshallese camp was moved to [Ebeye]” (Carucci 1997:250). This physical separation, as well as the difference in living conditions, has frequently led to charges of “apartheid” against the U.S. administration. However, as Carucci notes,

While the separation and economic difference were, and are, elements of the social dilemma on [Kwajalein], clearly the egalitarian treatment that islanders received after the war, their political rights both prior to and since independence, even the conception of Marshall Islanders as human beings, made the system under which Ebeye Marshallese lived quite different from apartheid in South Africa (Carucci 1997:252).

As part of this 1950 move, the Navy constructed housing on Ebeye for laborers, and provided daily transport by boat to Kwaj (Mason 1989:5).

Marshallese recall those early years on Ebeye as good ones, when there were still lots of trees on Ebeye, and the population was a true community where everybody knew each other. Access to the Kwajalein Islet was fairly open; Marshallese particularly noted that they “used the hospital free” during those times. While some Marshallese and Americans stated that access to the base was completely open before 1982, other individuals (and a large volume of documents) indicated that while 1982 *was* a watershed year in terms of access and other changes in US-Marshallese relationships, access was by no means open before that time.



In 1947, the TTPI (TT) was formed, to be administered by the U.S. Department of Interior, although Kwajalein Atoll stayed under Navy administration until 1951. The advent of TT administration on Ebeye marked a new complexity in local relationships with local Marshallese, which resulted in perpetual low-level conflict over the years between the TT administration and the Command. As we will see, this conflict centered on who was responsible for conditions on Ebeye and who would pay for the resources needed for its improvement.

While the postwar years were those of neglect in most parts of “the rust territory,” Ebeye’s proximity to Kwaj during this time seems to have balanced this deprivation to some extent, although it also served as a strong magnet to outside populations. While TT officials never saw the resources provided by the base to Ebeye as enough, a considerable amount of goods did flow at times from Kwaj to Ebeye, both from the Command/Contractor and from organizations and individuals. As just one example, Marshallese recalled that the majority of teachers in Ebeye schools during that period were volunteers from Kwaj: Kwajalein has continued to provide a steady and important source of volunteer and paid teachers over the years. However, while this did benefit the local Marshallese population, it also served as part of the magnet for others to come to Kwaj for educational purposes.

Also during this period, a U.S. Coast Guard station was set up on 12 leased acres on the southern end of Ebeye (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994). The presence of the station drew criticism over the years for taking up space on Ebeye that was badly needed by the growing population, and it was eventually closed. That land now contains the power plant and a park that is not very intensely used. Hanlon also notes that early in this period, the Navy retained rights over 39 acres on the north end of Ebeye for a transmitter: it agreed to return those acres in 1959 as the population grew (1998:191).

One of the dominating issues in the history of Ebeye is that of population. William Vitarelli summed up the situation as “congestion by choice plus congestion by forced migration and congestion by natural birth” (TTPI Archives 1967b:2). Gorenflo and Levin report that Ebeye had a population of about 20 in the 1940s (1989:92). The Army notes that prior to 1951, there were fewer than 200 people living on Ebeye, which then increased to about 800 when the Marshallese labor camp was moved there (Host Nation Archives 1968a:36). Tobin reported a population of 981 in 1954 (in Alexander 1978:61).

Alexander notes that during this period, of the 226 Marshallese employed on the base, only 32 were from Kwajalein Atoll, “indicating a predominance of outer islanders, presumably a result of the Navy’s recruitment from the outer islands” (1978:62). Tobin also noted in 1972 that two-thirds of the population of Ebeye was from the outer islands or other parts of Micronesia, which was causing a considerable amount of friction (Pacific Collection 1977a:Appendix). Statistics like this reveal that some of the more recent Marshallese animosity toward “outsiders” on Ebeye may have early beginnings. At the time of Operation Exodus in 1965, the population was around 3,500, which then grew to 4,500 in 1966 (Host Nation Archives 1968a:15). In terms of total population, by 1980 the population had risen to 8,000 on less than 78 acres, making it one of the most densely populated places in the world (Gorenflo and Levin 1989:92).

As Vitarelli noted, reasons for the population increase were multiple. Reflecting the larger trend in the Marshalls as a whole, Ebeye had very high internal rates of population growth during the postwar period, and changes in the population structure toward an increasingly young population (Gorenflo and Levine 1989:102-103). Efforts by the TT to implement “family planning through voluntary educational methods” appears to have been ineffective (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 23).

Population also increased on Ebeye due to the “the magnetic attractiveness” of Kwajalein (Carucci 1997:252), with one of the main attractions being the possibility of getting a relatively high-paying job on the base. Outer islanders also came to Ebeye for better healthcare and better education. This latter was the case in spite of the fact that Ebeye did not have a high school for many years, a source of contention in access issues with Kwaj: Ebeye’s first high school graduation took place in 1986 (CRC Minutes, Jun. 5, 1986). Other attractions included better access to American goods and the excitement of urban life. Even as living conditions on Ebeye deteriorated and jobs became scarce, these magnetic attractions kept people coming to the atoll.

The flexibility and mobility of the Marshallese kinship system resulted in many outer island Marshallese migrating to Ebeye to live with relatives who had gotten jobs on Kwaj. This has resulted in large dependent households that may rely on a single employed individual for support. As the population grew, Ebeye households became increasingly dependent on high-priced store-bought foods, as there was little to no backup available in terms of traditional subsistence sources.

Many people from other parts of the TT were drawn to Kwajalein as well, particularly for jobs on Kwaj. While the presence of these non-Marshallese Micronesians has been a source of resentment among Marshallese, it appears to have been one of the Catch-22s of life under the trusteeship. Under the TT agreement, all Micronesians appear to have had certain rights of free movement and consideration for employment throughout the TT, and as such the base could not discriminate against them. In documents pertaining to the base, workers are often classified during this time as “Micronesians.” These Micronesians and other “outsiders” also frequently married into Marshallese populations on Ebeye, making it hard to dislodge them at a later date.

As one American long-timer noted concerning a Kosraen friend who came to Kwaj to work and married a Marshallese woman; “how are going to send him back?...you know, he has nine children.”

Another major factor in population growth on Ebeye has been the relocation of Marshallese populations due to U.S. military activities in the Marshalls. Marshallese from several nuclear-affected atolls have migrated to Ebeye over the years, both temporarily and for longer periods of time, including populations from Bikini and Eniwetok. After the Rongelapese were evacuated from their atoll by Greenpeace in 1985 and settled on Mejitto Islet on Kwajalein, a portion of this population also migrated to Ebeye.

Populations were also relocated to Ebeye as the borders of U.S. missile testing on the atoll changed over time. As noted previously, the population of Lib Atoll was relocated to Ebeye for several years in the 1960s. However, despite the return of 234 Marshallese to their home islet in 1966, more than 100 of these people returned to Ebeye soon after (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 11). Then in 1964, the boundaries of the missile testing range were redrawn to include the Mid-Atoll Corridor (MAC) as a target (Host Nation Archives 1968a:22). Due to this change, 395 Marshallese inhabiting 13 islets in the central portion of the atoll were relocated to Ebeye in 1965 for safety reasons (Host Nation Archives 1968a:23). To accommodate this influx of population, the DoD funded a \$7-million dollar Ebeye Improvement Project, which included 28 new apartment units (Host Nation Archives 1968a:23).

However, the details of this move have long been a contentious topic on the atoll. The original MAC census taken by the TT in 1963 had counted a total of 158 people, and the “Evacuation of 395 instead of 158 people immediately created crowded housing conditions in the 28 new apartments on Ebeye” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:24). The Command noted two

possible explanations for the miscount: one was that some residents were away from their home islands when the census was taken: the other was that “opportunists from Ebeye and outer Atoll Corridor islands moved into the corridor prior to the move in hopes of establishing claims for subsistence payment and new apartments” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:24). The possibility that Marshallese custom, which involves multiple rights to land and frequent shifting of residences for purposes of “maximization,” might play a role was ignored by the Army: Marshallese were portrayed as opportunists, “rather than admitting the existence of a valid land-tenure system as an alternative to the American system of individual ownership” (Alexander 1978:38). Clearly, U.S. representatives did not want to deal with the complexities of Marshallese culture and kinship, although in one document Command representatives did note that “The answer lies somewhere between these two concepts, and the question of who and how many Mid Atoll Corridor residents are eligible for subsistence and other benefits is still being contested by Marshallese leaders” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:24).

Issues of subsistence were also complicated, as MAC Islanders found that payments of \$25 per month made to 158 people were not adequate for life on Ebeye. Additional compensation payments were then made to “family heads” for distribution to those under them. The Command noted that “All concerned thought this solved the Mid Atoll Corridor subsistence problem. It didn’t” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:25). Issues emerged regarding promises made during the resettlement regarding the amount, extent, and duration of support, as well as promises concerning employment on Kwaj. Visitation to the MAC to harvest crops for a limited number of days each year (during range down times) was another major issue. In 2002, these access policies were changed so that the MAC would be open for more than 265 days a year

(*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Nov. 30, 2001:1). However, construction of any permanent housing is prohibited, and visitors must clear the area when the range is in use.

Due to pressure from various directions to deal with the emerging population problem on Ebeye, the U.S. administration did remove a few borderline MAC islets from the missile testing hazard area, and populations were returned to those islets. In 1965, the populations of Ebadon and Arbwa were returned to their home islets (Host Nation Archives 1968a:26). Again, however, some portion of these populations returned to Ebeye to live. Problems for the MAC community on Ebeye over the years have included severe overcrowding in MAC housing due to population growth. In addition, rates of unemployment are high for this subpopulation (there are debates over whether MAC Islanders were guaranteed jobs on Kwaj), and lease money meant to be shared by landowners with the MAC community has not always been distributed according to traditional norms. As one Marshallese noted “there are some *alap* that do not share with their people.” Alexander reported in 1978 that “Most of the Mid-Atoll Corridor adults living on Ebeye choose to live off their compensation rather than seek wage employment” (1978:69): I was told this was still largely the case in 2001. Issues associated with the MAC are quite complex and deserve further study, as they are only dealt with superficially here.

As Ebeye’s total population grew, infrastructural problems worsened, including problems of water quality and quantity, electrical power, sewage treatment and garbage disposal. Health problems associated with this state of affairs also worsened. Providing adequate healthcare and education became increasingly problematic. As space on the islet became more and more crowded with housing, vegetated areas and room for gardens decreased, increasing the dependency of the population on high-priced store-bought, and generally unhealthy foods. Alexander noted in the mid-1970s that “Ebeye is totally dependent on what money can buy”

(1978:77); this is even truer today. Marshallese told me that even if there had been room to grow coconuts and breadfruit, rights to access these resources (and others on the atoll) belong to Ebeye landowners, and as the population grew, many Marshallese were living on land to which they had no traditional title or use rights. Except for near-shore fishing (with associated sewage contamination issues), traditional fishing on the atoll is limited by the need for access to boats and fuel, and can be hampered by restrictions associated with the military use of the lagoon. In terms of other economic options on the islet, a 1968 report succinctly noted that Ebeye “produces no crops and has no industry” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:36).

In the mid-1960s, as a tacit acknowledgement that Ebeye was having problems, the DoD funded what is known as the Ebeye Construction Project or Ebeye Improvement Program, intended to provide infrastructure for approximately 3,000 residents of Ebeye. The first phase of the project, built by a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contractor, included 28 apartment units for MAC Islanders, with associated fresh water and sewer infrastructure (Host Nation Archives 1968a:39-40). The next phase included 280 other apartment units, water and sewer facilities, maintenance buildings, a power plant, a warehouse, and streetlights, as well as repairs to the Ebeye dock (Host Nation Archives 1968a:39). As one Kwaj long-timer described it,

Ebeye was built, by the military, for 2500 families, for 2500 people, built X numbers of houses, I think some of those houses are still being lived in up there. They had running water and electric, bedroom, cookhouse, this that and the other thing. As Marshallese and American residents noted, this project was really too little, too late, and by the time it was finished, population had already shot past the number originally planned for.

Interestingly, the DoD funding of this project led TT representatives to accuse the Army that by funding this project they had acknowledged their responsibility for “the Ebeye situation.” In contrast, the Army saw this as discharging their responsibility for Ebeye, placing it solely in the hands of the TT.

There were also tensions between the TT administration and Marshallese elites on Ebeye. As noted previously, TT officials seemed to need to determine who was “King” of Ebeye in order to simplify land tenure issues and other negotiations. However, during the Ebeye Construction Project, a house was set aside for the “King,” but TT documents show that it was not always clear who the “King” should be, due to land and power disputes (TTPI Archives 1966a). There were also tensions between American democratic ideals as conceived by the TT and the Marshallese hierarchy. Americans working on the Ebeye Construction Project were encouraged not to succumb to pressure to do small construction projects for elites during the rebuilding of Ebeye (Host Nation Archives 1966b). Other tensions are also evident concerning who was to receive what benefits from such projects (Host Nation Archives 1966a).

Another infamous Ebeye milestone was Operation Exodus, a plan developed in the mid-1960s by the TT to try to reduce the population of Ebeye. The intent was to reduce the population to 3,000 by requiring that non-Kwajalein Marshallese and Micronesians return to their home islands, particularly those without employment, and also stop in-migration. The plan did not succeed for a variety of reasons, to be discussed more thoroughly below. While Operation Exodus has been depicted as a heavy-handed, imperial project, it appears to have been the best option administrators believed they could craft at the time to address the islet’s complex problems. However, it proved to be unenforceable for a number of reasons. Other attempts by the TT to control population through registry systems and housing regulations also proved



ineffective (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 11). TT attempts to stop private construction on Ebeye as a means of population control also did not work (Host Nation Archives 1966f).

While the 1980s are usually known as the times of the worst living condition on Ebeye, serious problems were emerging in the 1970s. A TT report from 1970 noted that because untreated sewage was being pumped into the lagoon, bacteria levels were 25,000 times the safety level set by the World Health Organization (Johnson 1984:24). A famous TT statement from the mid-1970s captures the realities of life on Ebeye:

‘As with the shortage of water, the lack of proper sanitary facilities is a major cause of the high rate of sickness on Ebeye. Additionally, foul odors and visible water pollution are part of the normal environment in which the people must live and work and the children must play’ (Dever 1978:1).

One of the most infamous cases of infrastructural breakdown on Ebeye from this time was when the islet’s decrepit sewer system collapsed, and when residents flushed their toilets, sewage gushed into their sinks (Johnson 1984:24). The 1980s are known as the times of the worst crowding on Ebeye, when population and infrastructural problems both peaked. Ebeye, with only 0.12 square miles of land, had a population density of 59,121 per square mile according to the 1988 RMI census, making it one of the most densely populated areas in the world. A taste of life on Ebeye during that time is provided by Barclay’s novel *Melal*, where he vividly describes the crowding and unsanitary conditions in which Marshallese lived at that time (2002).

However, new power and desalinization plants brought on-line in the late 1980s did improve living conditions somewhat (CRC Minutes, Feb. 20, 1987). The Kwajalein Atoll

Development Authority (KADA) was established in 1985 to focus on infrastructural development. Funding for KADA originally came from a requirement under various U.S.-RMI agreements that a small percentage of each landowner's share of land lease payments be devoted to the agency (CRC Minutes, Document, May 4, 1993). This has led to statements that "Without the landowners, there would be no KADA" (CRC Minutes, Document, May 4, 1993). However, by 2000 the funds for KADA came almost entirely from Compact funding (*Marshall Islands Journal* 2002b).

Ebeye has been the site of several epidemics over the years, including polio, typhoid and cholera. The combination of overcrowding, environmental health conditions and the state of the health care system have frequently led to the description of Ebeye in the past as "a biological time bomb" (Johnson 1984:19,20). It is actually surprising that there haven't been *more* epidemics on Ebeye. The most recent epidemics included a cholera outbreak in 2001 and a measles epidemic more recently, both acted on quickly by the CDC. Ebeye residents also suffer a variety of chronic health problems associated with poor environmental health conditions, including dysentery, hepatitis, and a variety of skin diseases. There are also the serious health issues associated with a poor diet and lack of exercise, including diabetes, with many people going undiagnosed and untreated. The problem of malnutrition in children has emerged as a major issue as well, as will be seen in Chapter 8.

A variety of social issues and problems have also surfaced on Ebeye over time. Some of these problems have been linked to adaptations required by urban life and American administration, including the shift to more nuclear households. As Mason notes, in these urban areas, 'land is dear, housing is crowded, the nuclear family prevails' (1989:26). These kinds of changes in household arrangements and other shifts as a result of urban life have been associated

with a loss of traditional customs and values, including respect for elders and traditional leaders (Mason 1989:31). Others have noted that the isolation of nuclear families has resulted in problems like domestic abuse and incest (Hezel 1999:321-322).

Some Marshallese have described the root problem as one of conflicting standards: between an old one of sharing, and new one of nuclear family households based on wage labor (Allen 1997:163-164). In interviews, Americans and Marshallese both noted the decline in food sharing on Ebeye as one of the most significant signs of social change. Alexander reported in 1978 that food sharing was in decline, as well as hospitality among clan members (1978:81). Some Marshallese linked this shift to the deterioration in community connectedness, while others noted that the high cost of food on Ebeye meant that many Marshallese could not afford to share in the traditional manner. Traditional observances of first birthdays, or *kemems*, have also declined, due partly to the expense of putting on such a celebration on Ebeye. As noted previously, traditional mechanisms of redistribution have also broken down under the cash economy, as some leaders and landowners have failed to distribute money and other goods to those under them according to traditional norms.

Americans and Marshallese have both lamented the loss of traditional knowledge and ways of life on Ebeye. Of course, traditional ways of subsistence are no longer practiced, due to overcrowding, urban life, and the fact that most people have no rights to the lands on which they live. In addition, as Alexander noted in the mid-1970s, “The loss of outer island skills and customs on Ebeye reflects the fact that life there does not require these skills” (1978:159). As one Marshallese woman described it, “Ebeye is making people spoiled.” Observers have also noted the increasing failure to follow *tabus* (Carucci 1997:226). Traditional social controls weakened as the population grew to include increasing numbers that were not subject to Ebeye’s

traditional leaders in a strict sense. In terms of living conditions on Ebeye, Marshallese noted that because people were living on land that was not theirs, they had no real incentive to take care of it, which contributed to urban decay. Marshallese also noted that due to sheer numbers, there is no one unified Marshallese community on Ebeye: it has ceased to be a place where everybody knows everybody else and a community spirit reigns. Newer social divisions include those based on religion (also noted by Alexander [1976] and Carucci [1997:238]), as well as those based on islands of origin. There is also the issue of emerging socioeconomic differences, noted below.

On the topic of cultural change, Alexander noted that those living on Ebeye have had to accommodate not just one set of behavioral norms, but several, including a variety of traditional rules, those of the TT during its time, and those of the U.S. Army (1978:160). Americans linked some social problems to the Americanization of the Marshallese on Ebeye during this time, including the influence of television, movies and consumer goods. Marshallese noted that many things changed on Ebeye after the advent of television in the 1970s, much in the way that Americans described its impact on Kwaj.

Feelings of animosity toward various groups of “outsiders” have also become evident on Ebeye over time. Tobin noted in 1954 that Marshallese originally from Kwajalein Atoll and those with land rights to Ebeye resented the presence of outer islanders coming to Ebeye for the benefits of living there: He noted at that time that only 257 of the 931 residents of Ebeye were originally from Kwajalein (in Carucci 1997:252). This resentment has also been directed toward other Micronesians coming to Ebeye for jobs on Kwaj, as Carucci noted that “the complaints have shifted to more distant outsiders [than outer island Marshallese], but the arguments over sharing or not sharing the fruits of Kuwajleen have not changed” (1997:252). In my experience

on Ebeye, there was still substantial resentment toward outer island Marshallese, although more resentment seemed to be directed toward other Pacific Islanders, including Fijians and Samoans. Filipinos were clearly the most resented group of “outsiders” on Ebeye. As Carucci has noted, some Marshallese believe that *tabus* are breaking down “ ‘...because the government has allowed free immigration of foreign peoples to our islands’ ,” with inter-marriage with Filipinos and Americans as a significant part of this problem (1997:252-253). Some Americans on Kwaj noted they had gotten the impression from talking to Marshallese that Ebeye was being “overrun” by outsiders, particularly non-Marshallese. However, they noted this was likely to be more a matter of perception than fact, and indeed the 1999 Census showed that out of a total Marshallese population on Kwajalein Atoll of 10,902, there were 72 people from the FSM, 14 from Kiribati, 4 from other parts of Micronesia, 13 from Fiji, 51 from the Philippines, and 4 from China and Japan. Americans residents of Ebeye numbered 67 (RMI Office of Planning and Statistics 1999:92,94). In discussions in a CRC Meeting in January 2002 it was also established that while Marshallese had a tendency to focus on the hiring of such “Third Country Nationals” by Kwaj as a major source of Ebeye’s population problem, this actually included a relatively small number of people (CRC Meeting notes, Jan. 3, 2002).

Problems associated with youth have been a continuous focus of attention on Ebeye, including problems of gangs, alcohol, drugs, and suicide (Alexander 1978:153-169). One major contributing factor is the loss of traditional social roles, as well as the lack of jobs and other constructive activities available to young people on the islet. Supervision of children is a major issue: several Marshallese women told me that the demands of full-time jobs, in addition to the temptations of Ebeye, made it difficult for them to adequately supervise their children. While Job Corps has been seen as a productive outlet for some Marshallese youth, its record has been

mixed. Many more options seemed to be available to youth of higher rank on Ebeye, who like their parents and other relatives are more physically mobile, and may have spent time in the U.S. and other overseas locations.

While promiscuity and teenage pregnancy are viewed somewhat differently than in the U.S., teenage pregnancy on Ebeye is still seen as a problem, especially in extremely young females and for its contribution to crowding. Other related issues include sexually-transmitted infections, and young women having sex for money with men on Ebeye and Kwaj, a pattern noted by both Alexander (1978:162) and Keene (1992:4). Suicide by teenage boys on Ebeye has been described as an epidemic, part of a larger pattern among young men in Micronesia since the 1960s (Hezel 1999:314-319). Most of those committing suicide do so after having arguments with family members. Suicides in the Marshall Islands reached a record high in 2003 (Johnson 2003). I was shocked to hear from a young Marshallese woman who had been jailed for drunkenness on Ebeye, that despite cultural prohibitions, females as well as males jailed for various reasons had most of their clothing taken away to prevent them from committing suicide while in jail.

#### Recent Situation - “Now it’s a hell hole with sidewalks”

One problem with depictions of Ebeye at its worst, such as those in the novel *Melal*, is that they are now frozen in time for many outsiders. Infrastructure *has* improved quite a bit since that time, although, as discussed below, Ebeye will always have chronic problems and reversals, such as that described below for the power situation. However, in a classic Ebeye contradiction, because some significant improvements have been made, there is also the danger of these

upgrades masking continuing serious issues on the islet. One Marshallese resident told me that while things appear to be better, she felt the health situation on Ebeye was almost as bad as it was in the 1980s. In a similar vein, a Marshallese man from Ebeye, in characteristic good humor, was quoted in a newspaper article as saying that while Ebeye used to be a “hell hole,” with improvements to infrastructure it was now “a hell hole with sidewalks” (Johnson 1993:41). But to say that Ebeye has not changed since the 1980s is also incorrect. There have been improvements, although as the history of Ebeye tells us, improvements may not last for long, or “fix” root causes or issues.

For example, I was quite surprised early in my fieldwork to discover that many people on Ebeye (especially children) use the oceanside or lagoonside reef as a latrine due to a lack of adequate toilet facilities on the islet and in homes. While the sewage outfall pipe has been moved away from the Ebeye dock and no longer dumps untreated sewage into the lagoon, the relocated outfall is still on the lagoon side: plans for an oceanside outfall have not materialized. With such knowledge, seeing children play and swim on a daily basis on both the oceanside and lagoonside reefs, and seeing men and children fish off the dock took on a whole new meaning.

The 1999 Census reported a total population of 10,902 Marshallese on Kwajalein Atoll, with a population of 9,345 on Ebeye (RMI Office of Planning and Statistics 1999:382). Interestingly, in-migration and out-migration on Kwajalein were roughly equal for the period between 1988 and 1999, consisting of about 600 people (RMI Office of Planning and Statistics 1999:35). The population density of Ebeye was calculated to be 66,750 persons per square mile, relative to Majuro’s 30,365 persons per square mile (RMI Office of Planning and Statistics 1999:iii). The average Marshallese household size on Kwajalein is nine people, down from 9.8 in 1988 (RMI Office of Planning and Statistics 1999:59).

As just one indication of the overcrowding on Ebeye, Marshallese frequently noted that there wasn't room for both the living and the dead on Ebeye: cemeteries have become so crowded that families were being encouraged to send their dead relatives to other atolls for burial. I also heard frequent commentary about the difficulty of sleeping on Ebeye because there are too many houses obstructing cooling breezes. Sleeping with windows and doors open was also complicated by the amount of noise on Ebeye at night, and theft. Some families also sleep in shifts due to the lack of space. Most housing on Ebeye is still substandard, including many shacks and decaying trailers. The main streets are now paved and drains have been installed, which worked most of the time while I was there, although they did require regular cleaning. Weekly volunteer cleaning crews cleaning up litter were also very common during my fieldwork, and in addition to the sweeping done by Marshallese women, had greatly improved the cleanliness of Ebeye streets.

While the new hospital was finally finished and opened in 2002, by 2004 it was already showing signs of decay. Despite improvements in the physical structure (and the addition of a dietary department and a morgue) compared to the old hospital, there are still serious issues related to management and the quality of service provided, and a desperate need for more trained doctors and nurses. While I was there, most of the doctors and nurses were hired from the Philippines and Fiji, and were the focus of a fair amount of resentment and mistrust by the Marshallese population. While some Marshallese healthcare administrators and workers stressed that the Ebeye Hospital was much better than it used to be, Americans noted that the bar had been set extremely low by the squalor of the old hospital, and the new hospital was deficient in many ways by U.S. standards of care and infrastructure. While healthcare has improved on the



islet with the new hospital, the basic health problems related to both sanitary conditions and diet on the islet remain.

During my time in the field, water, sewage and electric power services improved significantly for a while under management by a Samoan company, the American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA). However, there was a major crisis at the power plant in 2002, leading to blackouts and limited power supplies for an extended period of time (*Marshall Islands Journal* 2002c:1-2). Marshallese told me that there was also building resentment toward the Samoans, who were seen as opportunists trying to enrich themselves off of RMI contracts. The water situation has improved, but with caveats, which will be discussed further in Chapter 8. Garbage collection and management seemed to be improving in 2002, but then the garbage truck broke down, which led to garbage piling up on sidewalks and by the road next to the dump at the north end of the island. On my last visit in 2004, a bulldozer had been loaned from Kwaj to help clean up the road and confine the dump, and a fence around some of it had been installed. However, whether these changes will be maintained remains to be seen.

Economic issues on Ebeye during my fieldwork included a large dependent population and few available jobs. However, in the 1999 Census, Kwajalein had the highest median annual income in the RMI at \$14,195 (RMI Office of Planning and Statistics 1999:60), helping to explain the islet's continuing allure. Another good example of "affluence" of Ebeye can also be seen in the fact that Marshallese residents of Kwajalein have a high percentage of "household conveniences" such as radios, TVs, VCRs and refrigerators relative to other atolls: according to the 1999 Census, 84% of Ebeye households owned a TV (RMI 1999:386).

In terms of businesses on Ebeye, while there are tons of "mom and pop" stores, many are not run as profitable businesses, as they are stocked through bank loans or supplied by larger

businesses on terms not favorable to the small business owner. Marshallese and Americans both told me that most of these stores often don't work as businesses because the owners are obligated to share food with family members. Chronic debt is also a serious problem for both small businesses and individuals: it is not uncommon for a person to take out a large loan for a *kemem* celebration which they have no way of paying back. Some take out loans to repay loans, in an endless spiral of debt. Alexander noted the debt problem associated with loans in 1978 (1978:72-73), sources on Ebeye told me that the trend had worsened. Credit accounts at stores are another source of debt, also noted by Alexander in the mid-1970s (1978:75). The manager of one large grocery store on Ebeye stated that he no longer sold goods on credit because of the problem of residents charging huge debts they couldn't pay off. Wealthier individuals, however, were still extended credit.

The high cost of living on Ebeye does not help, and when money runs out, Marshallese don't have safety net of local resources to fall back on. Some of the most expensive aspects of life on Ebeye noted by residents were power bills, food prices, and school tuition. As mentioned previously, Marshallese workers with jobs on Kwaj (including those on lower post-Compact pay scales) usually support large dependent extended families. In 2004, the Command estimated that the average Marshallese worker on Kwaj supports ten people (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Sep. 24, 2004:6). While these workers seem on the surface to be better off than your average citizen of Ebeye, the number of relatives attracted to Ebeye to live with these workers quickly make this situation untenable. Several American long-timers noted the pressure these workers were under: several reported loaning money to Marshallese co-workers in need. They noted that many of these workers were seriously in debt for a variety of reasons, including bank loans, power bills on Ebeye, and debts to the Kwaj hospital. In discussions of conditions on Ebeye, Americans

often wondered how Marshallese could get by with so little. According to one: “What I am completely boggled by, and I have wondered and wondered and wondered, is there are only 1,400 Marshallese who work here. There are something like 12,000 Marshallese who live on Ebeye – what the hell do the rest of them do? Eat sand?”

There is also the issue identified by Mason for the Marshalls as a whole in 1989, in the development of a new class system of the rich and the poor (1989:29). Carucci also notes this split between the wealth of the chiefly ranks and the rest of “the Marshallese masses” (1997c:201). Based on his research on Ebeye in the mid-1970s, Alexander has described this divide as one between the “haves” and “have-nots” (2002, personal communication). Linda Allen has also noted the creation of new elites in Enid, Oklahoma, in the form of Bikinians who have received nuclear compensation payments from the U.S. government (1997).

In looking at the economic situation on Ebeye, there was also the issue of “brain drain” to Kwaj. I often wondered at the lack of decent mechanics on Ebeye, until someone informed me that most good mechanics are employed on Kwaj. As noted, there continue to be few options for young people, especially those of the lower classes. Education is a major issue here (Mason 1989), and the state of education on Ebeye is not good. While I was in the field, overcrowding in classrooms was a serious problem, and many students were only attending a half-day of school as a result. The 1999 Census reported that of the 3,800 children on Kwajalein Atoll between the ages of 6 and 18, approximately 20% were not attending school at all (RMI Office of Planning and Statistics 1999:112). Parents on Ebeye noted that the cost of school tuition was a major burden, with some schools on Ebeye charging as much as \$65 per month per child, and most households support several school-age children. The public school was the most reasonably

priced at around \$10 a month, but was suffering from severely overcrowded classrooms while I was there.

There are issues related to quality as well as quantity of education: as just one indicator, most students coming into the CMI campus on Gugeegue (who tended to be upper class) had very poor English skills and had to be taught basic arithmetic. Of course, some might ask why Marshallese students are being forced to conform to an American-dominated colonial education system. However, on a practical level, Marshallese young people were unlikely to be able to gain employment on Ebeye, Kwaj or in the U.S. without some rudimentary English and math skills. The quality of education has also been severely affected by mismanagement and theft: one example during my time in the field was the theft of \$641,000 (largely in American aid provided through the Compact) from CMI by the business manager. Most of those assets have been unrecoverable.

### Whose Fault is Ebeye?

As noted above, in depictions of Ebeye, the usual narrative line has been that the uncaring Army/Americans create squalor on Ebeye and force Marshallese to live there, ignoring all pleas for assistance. The Army usually gets blamed for creating the situation, and then allowing it to fester. An occasional counter-narrative from American residents is that the Marshallese themselves are to blame, as their extended family system has caused Ebeye's population problem and hence infrastructure problems. While there is some truth to both, I hope to complicate the picture a bit more.

Clearly, there have been Command representatives (and base residents) who didn't "give a damn" about the Marshallese and Ebeye. The most-often cited quote in this regard is from an early commander, who stated that the Army was there to test missiles and had no concern for the Marshallese people. Dever notes that the public health situation on Ebeye was a direct result of population relocations "and the indifference of KMR to the problems of the people of Ebeye" (1978:3), a quote then used in Hanlon's analysis of "dumping" on Ebeye (1998:199). Quotes such as this have fed the general perception that the American administration on Kwaj has never expressed anything but callous disregard for the problems on Ebeye, and have done little to respond to the problems of Ebeye.

However, documents as early as the mid-1960s indicate that there was significant amounts of concern on the part of both the Trust Territory and the Command regarding the increasing population on Ebeye and associated infrastructural issues. For example, there is a large volume of correspondence between the Command/Army and TT from the mid-1960s where representatives of both express their concerns about what is happening on Ebeye and debate how to address the situation (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 11). Included in that correspondence are letters from members of the Command concerned about overcrowding, the potential for disease, and social problems, and attempts by the Command to alert local leaders to the dangerous situation that was emerging (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 11). Of course, one can argue that some of this concern is self-serving, as negative attention to the conditions on Ebeye could result in public relations backlash toward the Army, hampering its mission. This has surely been a factor.

However, motivations for trying to alleviate conditions on Ebeye do not *always* seem to have been self-serving on the part of Command representatives, and on the part of individual

Americans on Kwaj. I believe that there has always been a range and a mixture of motivations, as well as competing notions regarding how Ebeye should be administered, both being manifestations of the fundamental “tension of empire” between military control and American ideals on Kwajalein. However, even those commanders with the best intentions were only there for two years; this was often the case for TT administrators as well. And even those commanders and residents with the best intentions, while hoping for a “fix” of some kind, ran up against some very complex and intractable issues in trying to improve living conditions on Ebeye. As Hanlon notes in his examination of Ebeye history “There is...a rich, deeply entangled history in the gap between intent and effect...” (1998:3). Debates over Operation Exodus discussed below are a good example of this gap, as well as the mixed motivations of the various players.

Before discussing what Kwaj has and hasn’t done to deal with “the Ebeye situation,” I believe it is important to look at one of the fundamental “tensions of empire” in the administration of Kwajalein Atoll; that between the Command on Kwaj and representatives of the TT. These rifts can be seen as what John Comaroff calls “the clash of colonialisms,” seen in “struggles over policy and the practices of power” among subgroups of the colonizer (1997:186). And from the perspective of the colonized, the coexistence of these colonialisms

made the encounter with Europe appear contradictory and, initially at least, difficult to fathom. It is, after all, something of an irony to the colonized that those who come to rule them spend so much time fighting among themselves over the terms of command (Comaroff 1997:186).

Many outside observers have not distinguished among “Americans” on Kwajalein. As a 1968 Army document notes, “The public, and legislative bodies, rarely note the distinct division

of responsibilities between the Army and the Trust Territory” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 11). While the local landscape changes after the TT is dissolved and the Compact comes into effect in the mid-1980s, this TT-Kwaj relationship is important because it was in place for those critical years, the 1960s and 1970s, when population was growing at exponential rates and Ebeye was on the path to the squalor of the 1970s and 1980s.

This clash of colonialisms can be seen as part of the larger “tension of empire” between U.S. military hierarchies and civilian ideals of democracy and freedom. The core of the conflict, however, was the question of who had caused the problem of Ebeye and who was to provide the resources to fix it. The Army steadfastly maintained that it had done its part (through donations and other assistance to Ebeye, and in funding the Ebeye Construction Project), and that responsibility for Ebeye rested with the TT. The main script for the Command has always been that it is there to do missile testing, and its resources are intended by the U.S. government for that purpose alone. Meanwhile, the TT was struggling to deal with very complex problems on Ebeye. TT representatives saw the ample resources available on the base and wanted access to them for Marshallese on Ebeye (and in some cases also for TT staff). When the Command did provide assistance of one kind or another, the TT saw this as an obligation, while the Command saw it as generosity.

A particularly pointed exchange is contained in a letter from the TT High Commissioner (HiComm) in Saipan to the Commander in January of 1967, in response to a letter about improvements planned for Ebeye. In the letter, the HiComm refutes a statement made by the Command that “Ebeye affairs are considered the exclusive domain of the Trust Territory.” The HiComm responds by saying that “The TT problems are the direct result of the defense program in the area” (Host Nation Archives 1967). Interestingly, the TT also asserted at this time that the

Army had admitted its primary responsibility for Ebeye by funding the Ebeye Construction Project in the mid 1960s. This view implies that any aid given by the Command to Ebeye was an admission of guilt.

In 1968, the Command pointed to deficiencies in infrastructural maintenance as a major part of Ebeye's problems, and noted that one cause of this "neglect of maintenance on Ebeye was the theory of a few Trust Territory Headquarters personnel that defense activities created Ebeye and its problems, therefore, DOD could straighten them out" (Host Nation Archives 1968a:37). However, this document also contains some tacit acknowledgement of the influence of the base and range on Ebeye: "The impact of Kwajalein Test Site on the people of the Marshall Islands and particularly the Kwajalein Atoll, has been extremely significant in terms of economics, demography, health, welfare, culture, and human relations" (Host Nation Archives 1968a:1). In general, it appears that those on the missile testing side felt their purpose on the atoll was a military one, with the needs of the local population being the sole responsibility of the TT. As this same document noted,

The presence of Department of Defense installations in the Trust Territory of the Pacific has not relieved the Trust Territory Administration from responsibility for administering the native population and native owned lands not used for defense activities (Host Nation Archives 1968a:3).

This report also stated that "The Sentinel System Command is very concerned about the welfare of Ebeye but its mission is testing missiles, not one of administering and developing an area in the 'emerging nation' category" (Host Nation Archives 1968a:37). In another interesting reflection of this rift, a letter from the Commander notes that: "My best estimate is that Mr.



Norwood's [TTPI HiComm] immediate objective is increased military support and responsibility for Ebeye...ultimately, I believe he would like to have us take over the Kwajalein Atoll. This would transfer a political and logistical headache from him to us" (Host Nation Archives 1966c).

TT representations were constantly pushing for access to Kwaj for materials and equipment needed for various TT projects on Ebeye, and there was a constant battle over how much should be supplied to the TT, how often, and who would pay for it. TT docs from the early 1980s show TT reps protesting the fact that the TT was being considered a "non-government organization" by Kwajalein in regard to charges for "services, materials, and manpower" provided to the TT (TTPI Archives 1981a). Of course, the Contractor was also a major player here, charged with operating Kwaj as a business under a competitive contract with the DoD, while being encouraged by the Command and TT to provide goods and services to Ebeye, often for free. This situation does not appear to have ever been resolved to any side's satisfaction.

In response to charges by the TT that it was uncooperative in helping to fix Ebeye, the Command on more than one occasion listed in detail the resources and services it had supplied to Ebeye over the years, some free of charge (Pacific Collection 1977a:Attachment). While some might wonder why there were charges at all, the operating principle seemed to be that because most goods provided were already less expensive due to government subsidies to the military, and to prevent the total dependence of the TT and Marshallese population on the base, payment for some goods and services was appropriate and within the TT's ability to pay. Supplies and support catalogued in a 1968 document included drinking water, foods unavailable on Ebeye, fly and mosquito control, equipment loan and repair, medical services and supplies, building supplies, and surplus goods including vehicles and household goods (Host Nation Archives 1968a:34). This document also notes that "Basically, the only limitation placed on the extent of

this support is availability without endangering the Army's mission and obligations on Kwajalein" (Host Nation Archives 1968a:31).

In 1978, due to problems on Ebeye, the Command proposed a plan whereby wholesale foods could be supplied to Ebeye through the Contractor, and that the Contractor would also assist in the rehabilitation of government housing on Ebeye (TTPI Archives 1978c). American long-timers also emphasized more recent "goodwill" efforts on the part of the Command/Contractor, including: donations and loans of equipment; technical assistance; provision of materials not available on Ebeye; support for Christmas gift-drops and cultural exchanges; and provision of surplus equipment (a mixed blessing, as this equipment usually dies shortly after it gets to Ebeye and then rusts in place). One particular project the Command helped fund during my stay was the new water kiosk on Ebeye, issues around which will be discussed in Chapter 8.

However, again, things could change quickly, and while one Commander or Contractor might be particularly generous, others weren't: programs in place one year might be gone the next. As the Commander insightfully noted in 1972,

There is no field manual on this subject and there is no high level policy guidance on what KMR should or should not be doing to insure that good relations are maintained with the Marshallese who own the land occupied by the Range. Each Commander solves his Marshallese problems armed only with his good common sense and diplomacy (Host Nation Archives 1972b).

In addition, the benefits of goodwill projects did not always make it to the intended recipients. As will be seen below in reference to the hospital, this has been a continuous problem

on Ebeye. However, it is important to note (and informants and documents amply support this) that in the face of *major* infrastructural crises on Ebeye, most commanders did not hesitate to respond with needed parts, transportation, or manpower. Where to draw the line in terms of non-essential requests has usually been the difficulty.

While the TT often took the side of the Marshallese versus the Command, the TT had its own share of conflicts in attempting to administer Ebeye. The TT was viewed and experienced as a colonial government by the Marshallese on Ebeye, who resisted some of its actions. Again, American democratic ideals also came into conflict with the Marshallese social hierarchy. For example, the TT experienced difficulties on Ebeye with local leaders trying to position themselves as gatekeepers. In addition, some elites also wanted the benefits of TT programs to be distributed in proportion to their rank, a view that clashed with TT attempts to provide benefits equally.

As Comaroff notes, the colonized can often find “new forms of empowerment in the fissures among the whites” (1997:186), and some Marshallese have been able to do this on Kwajalein, particularly in regard to the opportunities provided by the perpetual turnover in administrations, both on the TT side and on the base. For instance, in examining the CRC minutes from 1982 to 2003, I noticed a pattern of Marshallese representatives using the opportunity presented by new commanders to petition for changes in access, working conditions, and other issues, despite the fact that the same issues might have been discussed and “resolved” a month earlier under the previous administration. This same tendency can occasionally be seen with the TT administration as well, such as in 1966 when Marshallese leaders went to present a list of grievances to the new TT HiComm, although TT administrators of Ebeye were quick to try to balance these accounts (Host Nation Archives 1966a). With persistent pressure, some

Marshallese elites have been able to turn these fissures into larger spaces in regard to access and other resources, an issue to be examined further in Chapter 9.

In addition to the provision of supplies and services of various kinds by the Command and Contractor, Americans long-timers also noted the large total amount of volunteer labor and donated goods given by Kwaj individuals and organizations over the years. Americans and Marshallese particularly noted contributions of labor and materials that have gone into various incarnations of the Ebeye hospital, as well as Ebeye schools. Organizations like the Kwajalein Women's Club have sponsored numerous cultural exchanges and fund-raising activities to provide funds for such things as education on Ebeye and throughout Micronesia.

In a sense, all of these actions might be seen as acts of "imperial benevolence," a term Jane Downing uses to describe humanitarian (but still imperial) actions taken for the benefit of Pacific Islanders by the British Navy in the 1800s (1998). Here the question of motivations comes into play. Some acts are very well-exploited for their public relations benefits (usually by prominent stories in the *Hourglass*), such as holiday gift drops and cultural exchanges, and cases where the Commander's wife volunteers for various activities on Ebeye. But while the Command does advertise some of its goodwill activities, some of this has clearly been an attempt to counter the larger media images of the Command as a heartless enforcer of a system of apartheid.

These acts can also be seen as conscience-salving efforts by guilty Americans. While they can't escape their imperial context, it is to the credit of Kwaj residents and organizations that there are *many* cases of goodwill efforts that are not publicized for strategic ends. American long-timers noted that it was common for some base residents to see a need on Ebeye, and then respond as best they could to address that need. Several Marshallese also defended these kinds of

projects undertaken by Americans on Ebeye over the years, including one Marshallese woman who observed that her education in the postwar years was largely a result of American teachers volunteering in Ebeye schools.

There are also many stories of naïve and idealistic Americans coming to Kwaj, seeing Ebeye, and deciding they know exactly how to fix everything that's wrong with it. This naiveté was described as being similar to that seen in managers and commanders new to Kwaj who come in thinking they know how to fix Kwaj as well. According to base residents, both soon found out that the issues were much more complicated than they appeared on the surface. One of these complications was that benefits of projects might disappear quickly due to the rising tide of population or problems of infrastructural decay and a lack of maintenance. They might also disappear due to “misappropriation and mismanagement.” As one long-timer observed,

...the power plant. I don't know how many times how many times the Americans on this island as volunteers rebuilt that power plant, before ASPA took over the brand new one. Or the hospital...the Women's Club in '84 had a drive on this island where we redid the entire hospital and bought needed equipment, autoclaves. We asked our hospital what that hospital needed. We spent I think almost \$50,000, plus donations of sheets and curtains and paint from this island, and within two years, it was all gone. I still don't understand why an autoclave would walk away. Who needs an autoclave?

As another example, Kwaj residents recalled instances where funds donated for educational purposes on Ebeye were used to finance vacations for Marshallese administrators instead. Several long-timers said it took them years to figure out ways to make sure that the benefits of a project or funds for a certain purpose would get to those they were intended for, and

last for the longest time possible. One long-timer noted that vitamin donations to Ebeye schools in the past had often “disappeared” and not reached their intended targets, malnourished schoolchildren. As a result, in a recent donation project, donors of vitamin gum made sure the donations were handled by individuals who the donors knew would make sure the vitamins were distributed as intended.

One of the charges against Kwaj related to healthcare issues in the past has been that “an attitude of indifference” prevailed on Kwaj regarding Ebeye’s health problems, both at the official level and at the level of regular hospital personnel (Dever 1978:2). In addition, any Kwaj medical personnel who did want to volunteer were forbidden from doing so by the Command (Dever 1978:2). While they couldn’t speak to the situation in the 1960s and 70s, Kwaj medical personnel who had worked at the hospital from the early 1980s to the present stressed that there had been no such restrictions during their tenure. Instead, volunteers encountered other obstacles:

...a lot of us have gone to help there, and gotten totally discouraged, because, you know they get people here who have been here as long as us that just can’t handle the lack of care from the people who are actually hired and being paid to do it...it comes to a point where I think you have to say ‘You need to figure out what’s important.’ And a lot of those people that are running things are very well educated and they know what’s important and how to get there.

Another Kwaj resident noted that

Yeah, there were a lot of people from the Kwaj hospital who would go and volunteer at the Ebeye hospital, and many of them just found it too frustrating. It wasn’t a matter of

just not having things, it was just a matter of poor planning and poor administration in a *lot* of cases. Not ordering what they're supposed to...Not planning ahead, not using resources the way they should. A lot of it is wasted, a lot is misappropriated.

One American nurse reported that she had recently offered to volunteer at least half-time at the hospital, knowing they were badly in need of qualified nurses in many departments. She was frankly told by a hospital employee that her services wouldn't be needed because she "knew too much." She understood this to mean that her standards of care were too high, and having her there might highlight deficiencies in care. This did not surprise her, as she had known other nurses who experienced the same response, that their badly-needed services were not wanted because they would press for improvements in care and management. While some Americans and Marshallese both defended Ebeye administrators by saying they should not be judged by American standards, some Americans countered that Marshallese regularly demand American standards of healthcare through access to Kwaj, and so the Ebeye hospital would inevitably be judged by U.S. standards. In addition, Americans noted that many charges of discrimination on the base have focused on the different standards of healthcare on the two islets: issues of why the Ebeye hospital "doesn't work" are then a critical part of the discussion. Of course, there are also complex infrastructural issues at play here, including the cost of American-style healthcare, and elite access to American healthcare, both discussed in Chapter 7.

Americans emphasized that while there are base residents who don't care, there are some who do, and have formed close and lasting relationships with Ebeye residents. Some of these individuals had spent years volunteering and working on Ebeye, despite the difficulties and complications of doing so. One long-timer I spoke to was fighting to stay motivated in her work on Ebeye, despite increasing and "depressing" revelations of financial mismanagement. While

she had never been a “flag-waving American,” the waste and misappropriation of funds meant for the neediest people on Ebeye made her angry. She noted that “If I knew the money was going to the right places, I’d help them fight for every penny.”

### Proposed “fixes” and why they haven’t worked

In looking at possible “fixes” that have been proposed for Ebeye over the years, I was surprised to find a 1977 DoD document which frankly stated “It is considered unrealistic and unwise to deliberately lower living standards on Kwajalein in an attempt to reduce the disparity of living conditions” (Pacific Collection 1977a:7). This option, while rarely considered to be in the realm of possibility, is based on the assumption that without a certain standard of living and a diversity of base amenities, few Americans would choose to come to live and work on Kwaj. The document concludes that conditions on Ebeye have to be improved instead, a logical conclusion. However, there is always a catch in improving conditions on Ebeye, namely that improvements serve as a greater magnet for more people to migrate to the area. Here we will review some of the major proposals to “fix” Ebeye over the years, and why they have largely failed.

As noted above, Operation Exodus was a plan developed in 1965 by the TT to deal with overpopulation on Ebeye, with the support of the Command and local Marshallese leaders. The intent of the plan and its associated TT regulation was to identify outsiders and non-Kwajalein Marshallese, particularly those unemployed, and return them to their home islands (HN Archives, TT-Marshallese Relations 1968a:Tab 23). Preventing further in-migration was also a critical part of this plan. Members of Marshallese extended families who had come to visit and never left were also to be sent home. Return travel was to be paid for by the TT. The ultimate



goal was to reduce the population of Ebeye from its level of 3,500 to 3,000, which was felt to be a sustainable population size for the islet (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 11).

As a Command document notes, however, while 100 people were returned by Marshallese leaders to their home islands as part of this program, and the populations of Ebadon, Arbwa and Lib were resettled on their home islands, “In the year following its publication, the population of Ebeye increased to over 4,500 people” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:15). The DoD reported that 400 people had returned to their home islands, although some only temporarily (Pacific Collection 1977a:5). The plan ultimately failed for a variety of reasons. One reason was that TT representatives could not enforce the regulation: as one TT document notes, “Although legal means will be used to effect Operation Exodus when necessary, the approach will be cooperation and not coercion” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 23); the TT “had no authority to keep people out of Ebeye” (TTPI Archives 1972a). The Command for its part noted that it had no power to enforce population regulations either, its role was only to assist the TT (Host Nation Archives 1968a:16). The plan also violated rights to free movement found in TT regulations (Pacific Collection 1977a:6).

While a key part of the plan involved recruiting Marshallese leaders to encourage people to leave Ebeye, Marshallese stressed to me that for cultural reasons associated with hospitality, leaders did not feel they could make people leave, or refuse requests from others wanting to come to Ebeye. Another complication was that many “outsiders” had married into the local Marshallese population. Operation Exodus was also strongly protested by Marshallese from Ebeye and elsewhere because it disrupted traditional Marshallese patterns of visitation of relatives, and their rights to free movement. In a letter to the TT HiComm, the Likiep Atoll Magistrate protested the regulation because it meant that Marshallese could not visit their

relatives on Ebeye. The writer asserted that “The reason there are too many people on Ebeye is because they resent your dictating to them through your orders what they (Marshallese people) ought and ought not to do” (TTPI Archives 1968a). This individual also noted that the recent influx of people to Ebeye was largely composed of those unable to arrange return transportation, and that “...by improving transportation and shipping schedules you would not have to concern yourself too much about a minor problem which could be very easily solved this way” (TTPI Archives 1968a).

According to some Marshallese, the plan did not work because custom was stronger than the will of leaders to deal with the problem. As one Marshallese noted, “our *iroij* didn’t stop people to come.” In addition, Marshallese noted that the pull factors attracting people to Ebeye were also stronger than any countervailing force, including the will of local leaders and American administrators combined. One American long-timer felt that the continuation of population growth after the mid-1960s was really “their own government’s fault” for not acting at a pivotal time in Ebeye’s history. Jack Tobin noted that strict immigration controls would never work because of “the widespread network of kinship ties that exist in the Marshall Islands,” and noted that it might be doable with some type of military organization, but that that would create “serious problems” (1972:8). Alexander also noted another possible negative consequence of forcibly controlling Ebeye’s population – the creation of a “discriminatory two-class system – the rich city folk of Kwajalein Atoll and the poor country folk of the rest of the Marshalls” (1978:189).

Also as part of Operation Exodus, TT representatives proposed that identification cards be made for all Ebeye residents in an effort to better keep track of outsiders, which would have paralleled the system of identification badges on Kwaj, but this plan never came to fruition

(TTPI Archives 1967b:8-9). However, identification of “outsiders” could be complicated, as some had married into the population, and there were also differences in opinion concerning exactly who should be made to leave. A TT document from 1966 notes that various *iroijs* and the Ebeye magistrate wanted to remove people from Ebeye who were not their people in order to maintain “their position and assure jobs for their ‘subjects.’” However, this document also notes that “their people” could come from more than a dozen other atolls in the Marshalls (TTPI Archives 1966b). Clearly the definition of who was an “outsider” could change based on viewpoint.

In the mid-1970s, a new version of Operation Exodus was put into place (Alexander 1978:64). In the first phase, approximately 300 unemployed people had been returned to the outer islands, encouraged to leave by their *iroijs*. Around the time that Alexander left the field in 1976, the TT was compiling lists of other people to be removed, but because some people were refusing to go, the program was in doubt (Alexander 1978:65). Because I have found no mention of this “new” Operation Exodus in other documentary sources, it appears not to have gained much momentum.

Operation Exodus has often been singled out as a particularly imperial way of dealing with population issues and infrastructure on Ebeye. Hanlon describes it as “One of the most ironic, perhaps racist episodes in the nuclear history of Kwajalein Atoll” (1998:201). It was problematic because it went against rights to free movement guaranteed by the TT, larger American ideals and freedoms, and Marshallese traditions of mobility and hospitality. But from examination of documents from that time, it also appears to have been the best plan that the TT could devise at the time to deal with some very complex issues, none of which offered easy solutions. In 2002, I frequently heard Marshallese talk about the need for portions of the

population not employed or not from Kwajalein to be sent back to their home islands: these sentiments clearly also existed in the mid-1960s as population grew (TTPI Archives 1966b). However, no one had a simple plan for how this might be accomplished, except that I should be done by “the government” or “*iroij*s.” But considering the cultural conflicts noted above, this is unlikely to happen.

Either way, the political will was not there to get it done, and I believe it is actually to the TT’s credit that they did not force anyone to leave. The program didn’t work, because TT administrators refused to make it a truly imperial project of control. But regardless, as several long-timers noted, the TT was damned if they did and damned if they didn’t: the U.S. administration is blamed for allowing population to explode on Ebeye, but it is also blamed for trying to control it. When I mentioned to American long-timers that Operation Exodus has been seen as an example of the US administration misusing its power, and as unwarranted interference, one long-timer responded that “All of it is interference – building a hospital, building a gym...”

Aside from Operation Exodus, there were other efforts by both the TT administration and the Command to control Ebeye’s population, in addition to occasional temporary closures due to overpopulation and drought. As noted, these included restrictions on new housing on Ebeye (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 11), which also proved to be unenforceable. Due to the pull factor of jobs on Kwaj, the Command has often used the method of controlling employment on Kwaj as a way to control in-migration to Ebeye. In a statement of its power in this regard, a 1968 document noted that “The Army is blamed for crowded housing on Ebeye but has no control over the situation except through control of the employment of Marshallese on Kwajalein” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:12). As one example of population control by regulating employment, in

1966 a ceiling of 500 Marshallese employees (they don't mention other Micronesians, but they are assumed to be part of this total) was agreed to by the TT and Command to control immigration (Host Nation Archives 1968a:13; Pacific Collection 1977a:5). However, also in 1966, Marshallese workers on Kwaj began to be covered by the 1966 amendments to the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act, and minimum wages rose from .45 cents an hour to \$1.25 an hour (Pacific Collection 1977a:5). This increased the magnet to come to Kwaj, even though employment had been frozen.

As an indication of the magnetism of the base throughout Micronesia, this document also noted that pay from base jobs made up "almost 20% of the national income of the entire Trust Territory" (Host Nation Archives 1968a:12). The Command summarized the attraction as

A combination of comparatively very high wages (three times greater than Trust Territory wages, which are higher than private enterprise wages), valuable on-the-job training, the feeling of participating in something new, and modern living conditions on Ebeye has made it very difficult to limit the Ebeye population to an acceptable level (Host Nation Archives 1968a:14).

There were also other contradictory forces at work. In 1968, the Command noted that a ceiling of 500 was in place and would have to be lowered if population issues on Ebeye were not resolved. However, the Command also noted that there were pressures from the TT administration (including the High Commissioner), Marshallese leaders, and American expatriates of various kinds to increase employment (Host Nation Archives 1968a:15-16). As a "carrot," this document noted that if the Ebeye population could be reduced to 3,000 people or lower, an Army representative "completely agrees that immediate action should be taken to

ensure full employment of all Ebeye residents capable and willing to work at Kwajalein” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 11). At the same time, there has also been considerable pressure on the Command and Contractor to hire only Kwajalein Marshallese, and some Commands have been receptive to those ideas (Host Nation Archives n.d., BMSCOM Management Goal). However, there were complications with that idea as well, as will be seen in Chapter 7, and, as noted, there are differing views on who should be covered under this category.

In looking at the population issue, American long-timers also noted a general failure to control internal growth rates. As one American resident noted,

I’m not quite sure whose fault it is anymore. Whether under the [Compact] immigration should have been halted in its tracks, would have been a good time to keep the population down, but the birth rate in the Marshalls is tremendous. So, they’re still practicing the traditional birthrate with more improved healthcare.

As noted, TT efforts at controlling internal population growth rates were also ineffective.

To say that the U.S. administration did nothing about population on Ebeye is incorrect. That they failed to find an effective way to tackle the issue is indeed the case. Operation Exodus was definitely the most concerted effort of the TT period, but enforcing the program would have brought even stronger protests from various quarters concerning Marshallese sovereignty and rights. Of course, some reading this will find it ironic that while the U.S. military/government felt free to move entire populations for nuclear and missile testing, they resisted tampering with the population of Ebeye. It is possible that this reflected the general orientation of the TT

administration (relative to military leaders), or that it reflected changing ethical standards in the U.S. administration due to internal and external criticism.

Some Americans have observed that Ebeye's problems will never be fixed until the base and missile range close. Despite rhetoric from Marshallese leaders that they would prefer this closure and a return to traditional life, many Americans felt that in most cases, this was political rhetoric, and that realistically, there is no "going back" to traditional life – the changes have been too profound. Most Marshallese and Americans I knew, while they did acknowledge that closure of the base would "fix" Ebeye, did not think the removal of the U.S. from Kwaj was a good thing.

#### "The Gugeegue solution" & other schemes

Hopes for the resolution of "the Ebeye situation" have shifted to other potential solutions in recent decades. One type of effort has been to return relocated populations to areas drawn out of the missile testing hazard area. The first example of removal was the return of residents to Lib Atoll, followed by the removal of Ebadon and Arbwa Islets from the hazard area and the return of residents. These relocations have usually been relatively small in number relative to the total population of Ebeye, and of limited utility, as portions of these resettled populations have returned to Ebeye.

Other major efforts have involved plans to resettle substantial numbers of people from Ebeye to other islets of the atoll. One attempt and its outcome was described in the *Hourglass*:

As part of a good will development program, the Army agreed to build a 2,000-foot runway on Ebadon Island in the northern sector of the Kwajalein Atoll. The task was done by the logistics contractor using labor and equipment from Kwajalein. It was hoped

that many of the Marshallese might move from Ebeye to Ebadon, this reducing the population which now stood at almost 8,000 people. While the construction project was a success and Air Marshall Islands did make scheduled flights to the island for a time, the hoped-for movement of the Marshallese from Ebeye failed to materialize (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994:100).

Tobin also noted the possibility of resettling part of the Ebeye population on Ebadon (Tobin 1972:6). In more recent years, Ennylabegan Islet (also called Carlos), across the lagoon from Ebeye, has been resettled, with a population of around 100 (six families) in 2001. Again, the numbers of people involved were relatively small compared to the total population of Ebeye, and larger resettlements were hoped for.

A more substantial solution has focused on resettling a significant portion of Ebeye's population on Gugeegue Islet, an islet six miles up the reef from Ebeye. The plan was to relocate one third of Ebeye's population there, facilitated by the building of a causeway linking Ebeye and Gugeegue (Pacific Collection, Ebeye General Report 1982, Ebeye Resident Resettlement Project Concept; CRC Minutes, Document May 4, 1993). According to a 1990 news story, the Army had even promised to provide ferry service for Marshallese workers living on Gugeegue (*Pacific Magazine*, Jan. 1, 1990:41).

The causeway was opened in 1992 (although it was not paved at the time), and was in use while I was in the field: in fact, I traveled it daily in commuting from where I lived on Gugeegue to Ebeye and Kwaj. One of the major problems with the causeway at that time was that it had not been paved (the money was gone), and required constant grading to make it passable, especially after wave roll-overs. Grading was intermittent at best, although it would improve significantly whenever the *iroij laplap* visited his house on Gugeegue.



Because it was not paved, transportation on this road was a perpetual problem, as it is six long miles of coral chunks and potholes, and only a limited number of vehicles attempt the trip, especially on a daily basis. Taxis from Ebeye will sometimes go there, but for a high price. Some American long-timers thought that perpetually grading the road was a waste of resources, as one noted

I don't think the causeway did anything, except add more of a drain on resources, public resources. Because I don't know who's paying for that grading machine, to keep [the *iroij's*] road clear, but that's a lot of money to use that equipment. It hasn't worked.

Marshallese and Americans both linked the failure to finish the causeway to "KADA money running out," particularly because of misappropriation of funds, including such practices as putting elite family members on payrolls. Stories abound on the Marshallese side of the excesses committed with KADA funds.

Despite high hopes, the reality in 2002 was that there were fewer than 100 people on Gugeegue. There are a number of reasons why this plan failed. One American resident of Kwaj noted that the causeway was a misguided plan for population relief, as "there is no public land, and so it's all private land. And so they don't allow any building. The owners don't want any building." Indeed, it appears that only a limited number of families have been given permission to live on Gugeegue. In addition, residents I knew enjoyed the space that living there provided relative to Ebeye, and they indicated that they did not welcome more people and houses. Another obstacle to resettlement was the persistent belief by Marshallese on Ebeye that Gugeegue and the causeway were haunted, I was told by deceased relatives of the *iroij laplap*. I had taxi drivers refuse to take me there for that reason, or insist on bringing other people along for protection.

Some Marshallese residents of Ebeye told me they would not live there for that reason alone, even if given permission.

Aside from the Ebeye Construction Project, there have been other development projects on Ebeye over the years as well, large and small, although they have had mixed success. Often these efforts have been “too little, too late,” or failed to remedy problems because they don’t address root causes (Pacific Collection, Ebeye General Report 1982, Status Report Ebeye CIP Project & Summary Minutes of Ebeye Rehab Projects Review Meeting). Another example is the re-development and re-vitalization project by KADA that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s (*Pacific Magazine*, Jan. 1, 1990:30-69). There was talk of the time at Ebeye becoming a “model community” in the Pacific region (*Pacific Magazine*, Jan. 1, 1990:30). In 1999, the Asian Development Bank launched the \$11.6-million Marshall Islands Health and Infrastructure Project in conjunction with the RMI and U.S. governments, which focused on infrastructure on Ebeye. Another “revitalization” took place in 2001 with increased funding from the U.S. Department of the Interior (*Marshall Islands Journal*, 2001a).

A persistent problem with these development projects has been the failure to maintain equipment and facilities once they are in place, resulting in eventual decay and the need to rebuild infrastructure again and again. The example of the hospital is a case in point. Another major issue already noted is the “misappropriation” of equipment and resources. American long-timers expressed frustration that so many millions of dollars have gone into Ebeye over the years that never got where they were supposed to go. As one base resident noted,

you see how much money KADA has gotten, and how many years KADA has been running, since right after the Compact. How many millions of dollars for infrastructure – where is it? All of it gone. And the things that were built, like the causeway [problems

with that]...You know, I'm really, I'm much less able to tell you what the solution is anymore.

One solution to the Ebeye situation favored by Marshallese over the years has been the possibility of opening access to Kwaj to all Ebeye residents. In this vein, some Americans noted that the two islets could easily be joined by some kind of causeway, which would facilitate the joining of the two communities. Eugene Sims notes that “a land bridge” between Kwaj and Ebeye is not a completely preposterous idea, as the Japanese operated a railroad across the reef at low tide for many years (1993:40). Some have proposed that water and power lines should run along this causeway. According to one American, “I personally think that it would work out reasonably well, and would also in terms of ‘nation-building,’ integrate Kwajalein into their community, and when we finally move on out, they take over.” In fact, TT documents include a 1963 letter proposing a possible causeway and power line between Kwaj and Ebeye (TTPI Archives 1963).

Another unification plan of sorts was a proposal considered by Kwaj and the TT in 1977 (proposed by an Interior representative), to have the Contractor at the time, Global Associates, manage and maintain certain aspects of Ebeye infrastructure, such as water and power systems. Ideas were also floated at the time about having the Contractor manage *all* the infrastructure of Ebeye, as it might be easier to do that rather than have to continually respond to infrastructural crises on Ebeye. A TT representative responded that while “this would be the quickest and easiest way to solve the problems of Ebeye,” there was also the possibility that the U.S. might be “accused of trying to colonize Ebeye” by use of the “company store” (TTPI Archives 1977c). It appears that the plan was seriously considered by both the TT and the Contractor, as seen in 1978 documents (TTPI Archives 1978b).

Another serious problem with this concept, however, was that Contractors change on Kwaj, and there would be no guarantee that future Contractors would embrace this idea, or that changing Commands would either: as one TT representative noted, "...it is possible [Global] may lose the contract for Kwajalein Island. Understand this house keeping contract comes up for bid every year" (TTPI Archives 1977b). The question of who would pay for construction, maintenance and services provided were also issues, as American administration of these utilities would likely be expensive. The "company store" fears were likely to have become reality, as the Contractor's quality of services to Ebeye would not be cheap, and payment of bills would not have been optional, as has sometimes been the case on Ebeye. In addition to perpetually-changing Contractors and Commands, the fortunes of Kwaj rise and fall with changes in and budgetary support for missile testing, making it inherently unstable as a source of support for Ebeye.

I see these ideas of unification and management by Kwaj as part of latent American desires to control Ebeye in the same manner that Kwaj is controlled and managed. But long-time American residents knew from experience that it would be easier said than done. As one noted, "people propose things, [but] good luck enforcing that on Ebeye. Because to some extent Ebeye, you can control what happens here [on Kwaj], but, how much can you control what happens [on Ebeye]?" There is also the issue of what American management would mean for the eventual self-sufficiency of Ebeye. Several American residents mentioned that management by Americans may be "something that might work when so many other options have failed. But these proposals can also be considered extremely bad for Marshallese development of infrastructure on Ebeye and Kwaj Atoll as a whole when the U.S. leaves." Again, others noted that such interference

would be seen as inappropriate colonial control. Again residents felt that U.S. administrators were “damned if they do, damned if they don’t.”

Then there is the major “Catch-22” of Ebeye noted above: the more Ebeye is improved and access to Kwaj is increased, the more people will be drawn to Ebeye. This was the case with increased wages on the base in the mid-1960s, which served to attract even more in-migrants just as the TT was attempting to put population controls into place. In 1982 as a part of Compact negotiations, and promises of higher numbers of Marshallese to be employed on the base, wage levels for Marshallese were brought back down to local levels. However, the cutting of wages has also been a source of discrimination charges against the base, particularly considering the high cost of living on Ebeye. But again, these are complex problems without simple solutions.

The DoD recognized this Catch-22 when it stated in a 1977 document that “Any radical improvement in facilities or capabilities to improve quality of life must be considered carefully to insure that such improvements do not further increase the desirability of immigrating to Ebeye” (Pacific Collection 1977a:9). In this way, doing nothing can be seen as the better course of action in some cases than doing something! The history of Ebeye is full of such contradictions. Jack Tobin also recognized the intractable nature of Ebeye’s problems in a 1972 report and put it in a wider comparative framework:

I believe that no matter how many houses are built to relieve the population pressure and the overcrowding, people will crowd into Ebeye as they are crowding into urban centers throughout the world, and for much the same reasons. Ebeye is not an isolated case. There are many “Ebeyes” in this world (1972:8).

Out-migration to the U.S. has eased pressures some, but was not seen by most Marshallese and Americans I talked to as the answer to “the Ebeye problem.”

### The persistent dilemmas of Ebeye

Most Americans I spoke to felt that the only real and lasting solution to Ebeye’s problems was to make it as self-sufficient as possible, and this goal of self-sufficiency has been preached by the Command for many years. This push was particularly strong during and after the 1982 demonstrations, when the sail-in and tightened access restrictions revealed just how dependent Ebeye was on services and resources from Kwaj. And this push worked in some senses: the CRC meeting in March of 1983 included a tour of Ebeye’s new bank branch and grocery store with refrigeration and freezer storage capacity. Base representatives noted that “neither of these facilities existed six months ago” (CRC Minutes, Mar. 25, 1983).

While there has greater independence in some areas, a few Americans felt that complete self-sufficiency on Ebeye is not a realistic goal. One long-timer stated that while self-sufficiency as a goal for Ebeye makes sense on some levels,

at other levels it is completely unreasonable, I think. There’s no way there would be 12,000 people there if there weren’t Kwaj jobs...Ebeye is an artifact of Kwajalein, and I think we have to assume some responsibility for that. And self-sufficiency...look at the stuff you’ve read. How long have they been self-sufficient? You end up building something or other and it falls to pieces. Our generators are running their power right now. Sewage gets backed up, out people come on out there to help them out, and I’m not sure that that’s totally inappropriate.

In response to this question, other American residents questioned why Ebeye has so many infrastructural problems, but “Majuro usually runs fine.” Another asked why “Majuro has had cable television, running water, and electricity since [19]85,” while Ebeye has not had those services consistently, or at all. One Kwaj resident asserted that outsiders often see Ebeye out of this critical context:

Oh yeah, I keep telling the USAKA folks that they should never allow anybody like the CODEL [Congressional Delegation] or any of the Congressional people, to come here first, they must go to Majuro first and see Majuro compared to Ebeye...This is not the Marshalls. This is not the capital of the Marshalls. That place is a night and day difference from [Ebeye]... isn't it different?

One of the perpetual complications of pushing for Ebeye's self-sufficiency is that measures that may appear “heartless” in the short-term are necessary in the long-term to make Ebeye self-sufficient. Without a more complex understanding of the issues involved, this sets the Command and other Americans up for allegations of discrimination and apartheid. Examples such as those surrounding healthcare, discussed at length in Chapter 7, are a case in point.

The question often asked is “Whose fault is Ebeye?” Everyone agrees that in a larger sense, Ebeye is the fault of U.S. military activities in the Marshalls and on Kwajalein Atoll. Again, Americans noted that one of the root issues here is the failure of the U.S. to better define a long-range view of the U.S.-Marshallese relationship, as well as exactly what responsibilities the U.S. has to the Marshallese, monetary and otherwise. Reflecting this uncertainty in U.S. responsibilities, one long-timer observed that

I don't know, I don't think there's a simple answer. Well, I don't know if the American Indians are a good analogy, but...because I can't think of what we gave them, except for some of their own stuff *back*, you know. But we've, it seems to me we've certainly *given* the Marshallese a lot, and assumed they knew what to do with it, and there's some fault there. They didn't know what to do with it.

In the absence of any unified policy, colonial rule by default has been cobbled together by various and changing administrators dealing with a variety of changing issues, often with no large-scale view of what their policies mean.

One long-timer also felt that American administrators, both of the TT and Kwaj, had often failed to take culture into account. She emphasized that this was not done out of viciousness, but usually ignorance. And the U.S. administration was up against a complex political system with complex internal power struggles over land, titles, and then the benefits of colonialism. American administrators also had to deal with the fundamental tensions of promoting change while preserving tradition, and those between American ideals of equality and Marshallese notions of elite privilege. The U.S. then succumbed to the easy answer of “throwing money” at various problems on the atoll.

Several long-timers asserted that through the Compacts and other funding, the U.S. had largely discharged its monetary responsibilities toward the Marshallese, and now some of the responsibility must also be shifted to the Marshallese elites and leaders. One long-timer felt there was a sort of expiration date for responsibility:

But whose fault is it? They still point and say it's USAKA's fault, but they've been an independent country since 1987. So, that's not our problem anymore. It truly isn't, if you



think about it. That is not Ebeye, off-shoot of USAKA, that is Ebeye, Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Both Americans and Marshallese noted the failure of the Marshallese government and traditional leaders to control immigration to Ebeye at critical junctures in Ebeye's history. (Of course, this was complicated by cultural requirements of hospitality.) There is also the issue of elites profiting from the monetary and other benefits of the colonial system and failing to share those benefits with those below them on Ebeye. As evidence, one resident noted the conclusion of an American expatriate that "I contend that a major reason the island of Ebeye continues to be as squalid as it is, is due not to lack of American funds, but to the distribution of those funds" (*Marshall Islands Journal* 1984a:2).

Several long-timers noted that while Marshallese leaders didn't necessarily *create* the situation on Ebeye, they had used it to their advantage, both monetarily and in terms of access to Kwaj. To this end, leaders can always point to conditions on Ebeye and say "look what the Army has done." One stated that "It behooves them to keep Ebeye the way it is, it does. Because then they can say 'the Americans, the Americans, the Americans.'" Meanwhile, wealthy elites can escape having to live on Ebeye everyday, as they go to their homes in Majuro, Hawaii and other outside locations. These observations, however, raise very contentious questions concerning the motivations of leaders in protesting conditions on Ebeye and other injustices over the years. Generally, American long-timers noted that there was significant sympathy on their part for the original claims made by high-level elites on Kwajalein regarding land compensation matters, but that this sympathy had "dried up" as other inequalities on the Marshallese side came to the surface. Most long-time Americans saw the motivations of leaders and elites as being very mixed and complex, but with an evident result – large inequalities in the distribution of the benefits of

Kwajalein. Some Marshallese did note to me that there *were* some leaders (not all) who spoke for the people in early demonstrations, and then kept most of the proceeds for themselves, ignoring the needs of their people on Ebeye.

This debate also emerges from documentary sources. A 1964 exchange of letters between two anthropologists working in the Marshalls documents some of these concerns, particularly with significant portions of funds being distributed to a few high leaders, some of whom were disputed figures on Ebeye (TTPI Archives 1964). In addition, repeated requests have been made by other Kwajalein landowners over the years for the U.S. to use a different method and formula for distributing land lease funds; namely, instituting a more equitable distribution scheme, such as per capita system (Host Nation Archives 1986b). The U.S. government has continuously responded that it cannot interfere in this way in Marshallese affairs, as it is an “internal” matter; the RMI government has also taken that position (Host Nation Archives 1986b). However, some of these internal disputes have then become disputes between Marshallese and the U.S. government. In regard to changing payment formulas, long-timers felt that any attempts to alter it would be met with severe backlash from those benefiting most from the status quo. Again, not all Marshallese landowners fail to distribute lease money to those under them, but it is a serious problem on Kwajalein Atoll.

There is also the problem of misappropriation of funds and resources meant to improve Ebeye, both before and after the Compact. One example already noted is that of KADA funds intended for Ebeye infrastructure. One American long-timer noted that “we have seen time and time again, all the years that we’ve lived here, money just disappearing. Just disappearing. So it never quite made it to where it was supposed to be.” There was great pressure under the Compact to give Marshallese as much sovereignty as possible over money and other matters. Even after it

was revealed that some of that money had been severely mismanaged under Compact I, there were still protests regarding any kind of U.S. oversight in Compact II. As one American long-timer noted, oversight is seen as colonial control, but without some oversight, how do you make sure money gets to those who need it? As one American resident noted,

You can imagine if we had managed every dollar that was given... if we had managed it, maybe it would have turned out differently, but they didn't want that either, didn't want us micro-managing it. They wanted the money, to go to the landowners. That was the deal.

In addition to shifting some of the blame for Ebeye to local elites, Americans also stressed the importance of shifting some responsibility to the national government of the RMI. Americans and Marshallese both noted a deep rift between Kwajalein and Majuro, perhaps of older origin, now focused on money and power. One American resident noted that

Part of it is because that Ebeye feels they don't get enough of it, national support, and it probably is true in some way or another...a prime example is the fact that there is no public high school. That to me is appalling, that the second-biggest city in the Marshall Islands doesn't have a public high school.

Marshallese and Americans both noted that Ebeye has had trouble getting money and supplies from the RMI government, such as those needed for the hospital.

Some say on both the Marshallese and American "sides" that it doesn't matter who is to blame, Ebeye just needs to be fixed. But really, debates over blame are interwoven with

arguments about *how* it should or can be fixed. In terms of monetary fixes, one American resident noted, “what’s the point of giving more money, when it doesn’t get where it’s supposed to go?” The recipients, according to all Americans I talked to, should be the underclasses on Ebeye who suffer the worst of its deficiencies. Most felt that the deplorable state of health and education on the islet would remain so, as long as elites could afford to go elsewhere for critical services, such as Kwaj and Honolulu. Again, U.S. democratic ideals clash with Marshallese hierarchies.

Some Americans expressed hopes that changes in political leadership, such as the election of a commoner as President in 2000 and again in 2004 would bring badly-needed change to the atoll. Others expressed skepticism regarding the depth of these changes. One long-timer noted that “I truly, I truly hope it changes, but with the traditional leadership, and the way it is, and the money going towards supporting this, you know, the traditional way of distributing power and influence...I don’t know.” Indeed, traditional leaders still wield a huge amount of influence, in and out of political office, on stage and behind the scenes, and they are likely to continue to do so in the future.

Some Marshallese and Americans said that in the final analysis, the U.S. created this corrupt and dependent system, and is responsible to fix it. Again, there are questions of defining responsibility, and how to resolve the tensions between imperialism and sovereignty, American ideals and the Marshallese social order, in working toward some kind of resolution. No one I spoke to was clear as to how the U.S. should proceed here.

Again, there are no easy answers, despite American wishes that one might exist. Many Americans stressed the number of years that it took for them to even *begin* understanding the complexities of Ebeye and Kwaj. This long-term view was also necessary to reveal the repeating

cycles and lessons learned and re-learned. It was only recently while doing some historical research that one resident began to

fully appreciate the complexities...all this amazing amount of effort and money and interest in trying to help Ebeye and trying to fix Ebeye, *and from the very beginning*...you see the same letters, this is a dire situation...and this is when there were 2000 people on-island. Now there's 12 [thousand] and we're still saying the same thing, still trying to figure out exactly the same problems: water, housing, health, power, same, same, same, has not changed one bit.

With time and understanding came the realization that there isn't any *one* solution to the incredibly complex situation on Ebeye. The migration of Marshallese to the U.S. and reduced population pressure has resulted in some improvements on Ebeye, but again, it results in no major changes in living conditions for the lowest classes.

Some Americans agreed with Jack Tobin's assessment that "...there are no 'solutions' to the problem of Ebeye. As long as the United States maintains a military installation on Kwajalein there will be an Ebeye problem" (Pacific Collection 1977a:4). And indeed, the removal of the U.S. from Kwaj would solve many of Ebeye's problems, but the majority of Marshallese I knew wanted the opportunities Ebeye represents. The effect of closure would likely be massive out-migration to the U.S. and other locations in the Pacific that promise opportunities like those of Kwaj.

In the summary of his 1978 dissertation, Alexander concluded that Ebeye is the result of evasion of the trust the U.S. government was given to administer the TT according to UN standards (1978:173-174). The first evasion was the low priority given to funding the TT, which

had little representation at home and little political clout. The second evasion has to do with the division of labor among government departments, whereby Interior had all responsibility for Ebeye, and the Army, “the basic source of Ebeye’s problems,” none. He notes that in a narrow sense, the Army really wasn’t assigned that responsibility. (Further compounding the situation is that the Army can point to the Contractor and say an issue, such as access to the hospital, is not just the Army’s issue. Then the Contractor reminds everyone that serving the Marshallese is not in its contract.) While this scenario has changed some since TT days, some of the contours are the same. Ultimately, Alexander notes “Everyone points a finger in another direction, and, in the end, it is the Marshallese who suffer” (1978:174). And as American residents stressed, not all Marshallese suffer equally.

The consensus among Americans seemed to be that the U.S. created an extremely complex colonial situation that no one entity could fix, once the genie was let out of the bottle. Some of it was Americans working at cross-purposes and at different levels, including administrators and decision-makers in the U.S. with no awareness or consideration of the faraway consequences of their actions. It was also a failure to consider culture, and a failure to consider more than short-term and narrow goals and “missions.” Ultimately it has been a failure to have any kind of unified policy or vision, so that a series of short-term administrators have cobbled together solutions to what are, to them, temporary issues. One resident recalled a conversation he had had with Ambassador Plaisted urging the U.S. government to develop some kind of

thinktank project, just to come up with long-range ‘what should our philosophy be?’ Is it ‘make them accountable, make them self-sufficient,’ or is it ‘they’re never going to be that way, they are our cheap labor, we owe them certain sorts of things’...then to define

what sorts of responsibilities we take on. And unfortunately, I don't think, if anything close to that has taken place, I'm not aware of it.

Of course, in seeing all the complexity of Kwajalein and its history, the natural tendency can be to declare defeat in the face of an incredibly complex current situation and history. But I believe that the more knowledge we have (Marshallese and American) of the complexity of the place, the more likely it is that solutions that work can be crafted. Living conditions on Ebeye can improve, despite the larger intractable problems of Ebeye that may only be truly resolved when the base and the range are gone. Examining this complex reality, and learning from history, is the only way to begin to get there.

## CHAPTER 7

### KWAJALEIN ACCESS

#### Introduction

##### “Studying up” & access issues

Before presenting the ethnographic evidence, it is important to address some of the issues raised by this analysis of access. Why present this view of borders and access issues seen largely from the American side? One reason is that, as border scholars note, there are few perspectives of borders from the side of greater power (Donnan and Wilson 1999:25). Frequently, border analysis is focused on three aspects: (1) the view from below, (2) examination of the impacts on the less powerful, and (3) generalized critiques. As Heyman notes, “Critical stances abound, but in most cases remain vague about the practical workings of organized power” (2004).

However, there are dangers in presenting this view of borders and access, as it can be seen as “giving time to hegemonic views,” a general fear of “studying up” seen in Chapter 2. In this sense, presenting these views may be seen as a tacit *justification* for all American acts at the borders of Kwajalein, and for the U.S. colonial project there. It can also be seen as reducing the strength of Marshallese experiences of the colonial system. This analysis is not intended to do either of those things: it is intended to put these issues into some kind of larger context, including the larger American bureaucratic context. It also endeavors to complicate the larger black and white view of access commonly seen in discussions of Kwajalein – that of American dominance



and Marshallese resistance. I complicate these issues by considering the viewpoints of “the agents of empire,” those intimately involved in access debates, as well as other American residents, particularly long-time observers. I hope through this analysis to add to the debate, rather than solidify entrenched positions.

So why present this view in the context of Kwajalein? One reason is that very serious charges have been put forth, some made by Marshallese and some by American journalists, that Kwajalein is a system of “Apartheid, U.S. Style” (Johnson 1976), and a unique situation of discrimination. An article from 1977 is titled “The Natives are Forbidden to Shop on a U.S.-Administered Pacific Isle” (*Newsday* 1977). These assertions are often based on issues of access restrictions, as well as Marshallese employment policies, so the examination of these issues here will hopefully contribute to these debates. While these characterizations of Kwajalein in the media *have* been instrumental in focusing needed attention on the problems of Ebeye and other issues, my concern is that labels like this have served to limit further examination of the system, and have made a complex system simple: Kwajalein is apartheid, Americans on Kwaj are all racists, end of story. In this view, American justifications or discussions of the complexities of access issues are only thinly-disguised excuses for essentially what are discriminatory or racist policies.

So here we allow Americans to respond to these assertions, including members of the Command, as well as long-time American residents. What might we gain by doing this? We see, again, a military order clashing with other American viewpoints: I assert that this fundamental “tension of empire” already seen in this discussion of Kwaj is one source of apartheid perceptions. We also see a complex bureaucracy trying to regulate a complex clash of cultures. We see how Americans as well as Marshallese resist access restrictions. We see cycles of

regulatory tightening and loosening over time that need to be explained and serve to reinforce perceptions of discrimination. We also see some of the complications of access issues not normally seen in these debates. Often with critiques of base access policies, the assumption is that the answer is easy: allow Marshallese access to resources on the base. But this raises some complex questions, like: Who will pay for the cost of that access? Which Marshallese should have access? What effects would this access have on attempts to build infrastructure and businesses on Ebeye? As will be seen here, none of these questions have easy answers. As one American long-timer noted, while criticizing from outside is easy, fixing from inside is much more difficult.

Long-time American residents also observed to me that while the focus of debate on Kwajalein has often been particular discriminatory practices related to access, there is a much larger “unanswered question” underlying these debates, and that is the question of what Americans owe the Marshallese in a larger sense, both on Kwajalein and throughout the Marshall Islands, for what they have suffered under the U.S. administration. These residents noted that some of the confusion regarding access policies is that the two issues - the particular one of access to Kwajalein and the larger one of the debt we as Americans owe the Marshallese – are often conflated in these debates. This is important to consider throughout this discussion. Also, for some American residents, debates over access policies were seen as just another symptom of the larger American failure to have any unified policy and plan for the Marshalls and Kwajalein. In this sense, again, it is important to distinguish between surface symptoms and deeper root issues in debating access issues, although it is understandable that they are often conflated.

As part of this analysis, I compare Kwaj to other military bases. My intent here is not to lump it in with other military bases, with this lumping by default serving as justification for Kwaj's access policies. As already noted and as will be seen, Kwaj is no ordinary military base. However, it does share a basic structure and associated issues, including those of access, with other U.S. military bases overseas, and as such, I believe comparisons are warranted. In talking to American residents, many of them drew parallels with their experiences on and with U.S. military bases elsewhere. In addition, such comparison may raise larger issues of interest, including how American military entities relate to "foreign nationals" in other locations. How do we justify the military order and the inequalities it creates? How do individual Americans justify particular access restrictions?

Again, these are contentious issues, and not easy to discuss frankly, particularly because of the "underdog" orientation of anthropology and our inherent discomfort with engagements with the powerful. However, as anthropologists, it is important to engage with all varieties of human groups, including the powerful: how else are we to understand the workings of power? The obstacles should not become barriers to understanding: As Heyman notes,

engagement with the powerful both opens up insights into the workings of organized power and brings closeness to its goals and schemes, posing serious political-ethical quandaries. Such engagements are not to be avoided, but rather treated as goads to creative thought and practice (2004).

#### Borders & access issues on Kwajalein

The border literature talks about the importance of not over-emphasizing "border crossings," particularly across national boundaries, as this emphasis can sometimes obscure the

ways that borders are often reinscribed and reinforced (Cunningham 2004; Donnan and Wilson 1999; Spener and Staudt 1998a; Vila 1997). As the control of borders of all kinds (including those of access, movement and behavior) is fundamental to military order, such reinscription and reinforcement are constant occurrences on military bases, as can be seen in the access issues discussed here. Borders on Kwaj include not only the more obvious aspects of borders, such as checkpoints and other physical structures, but also internal borders, such as those presented at each and every restricted establishment where one must show an identification badge to access services. As noted in Chapter 5, Kwaj has multitudinous legal and regulatory borders that intersect with these as well.

Dealing with access issues on Kwajalein Atoll is unavoidable, even if one is just traveling to Ebeye with no business on the base, as the airport is on Kwaj Islet. The first sign that things are different is that the Continental Air Micronesia island-hopper, while it allows passengers to get off on other islands (at least pre-9/11) to buy food and handicrafts, forbids passengers from getting off the plane on Kwajalein unless they are authorized to do so. Stewardesses on some flights into Kwaj have been known to announce “welcome to the country club” upon landing (*New York Times*, Jun. 11, 2001). In terms of how this is viewed by other Micronesians, in the summer of 1999 as I gathered my things to get off the plane, the Chuukese sitting around me responded with horror that this was my chosen destination, and suggested that I come to Chuuk instead.

If you don’t have clearance to be on the base, you are kept in a holding area until security can escort you to the Dock Security Checkpoint (DSC), where you wait for a boat to take you to Ebeye. This introduction to Kwajalein security is what causes some American visitors to characterize Kwaj “a police state,” as discussed below. And new arrivals do figure out very

quickly that movement on and off the base and around the atoll is not “free and easy.” Once on Ebeye, getting back on base to make travel arrangements and the process of departing the atoll via airplane can also be complicated. Also, once you’ve traveled to Ebeye, you can’t just hop in a boat and sail off to visit other islets. It’s an understatement to say that moving around requires planning ahead, and may involve a fair amount of bureaucracy and associated paperwork. Even if you plan ahead, rules may change, and access can be limited suddenly by an increase in the base’s “threat condition level.” This can happen at any time, but restrictions are tighter around missions and in the case of events such as 9/11.

As noted previously, I believe it is important to see how movement and access are restricted not only for Marshallese, but for Americans as well. On a military base like this, it is not just about the control of “foreign nationals,” it’s about the control of everybody. For example, access to the base by both American and Marshallese visitors often depends on the rank of the visitor and their purpose on the island, and it is not uncommon for Americans on Ebeye to be denied access. During my time on the atoll, I talked to many Americans who had come to visit or live on Ebeye who were denied access to the base because they did not have “legitimate business” there. This usually disrupted assumptions that being American would automatically confer access privileges to the base. However, I must state again that while Americans may experience restrictions on their access and movement, Marshallese experience them more intensely and frequently, and this chapter will discuss some of the restrictions they have had to deal with.

In talking about borders and access, which can be touchy subjects, in no way is my intent here to jeopardize base security in any way. Also, access issues have undergone many changes since September 11, 2001, and much of this work reflects a period before those changes went

into effect. As noted, I also make a distinction between access and base *security* versus access and base *resources*. Security issues are largely non-negotiable, especially in regard to outside threats posed to the base. What I am discussing here falls largely into the category of access to base resources. In recent years, many of these issues have been publicly discussed and published in the base newspaper, the *Kwajalein Hourglass*, which is also available on the Internet on the SMDC website.

Border scholars have noted that the very presence of borders creates incentives for people to cross them (Nugent 1999:77), especially in situations where there is a large economic disparity between the sides, as there is on the U.S.-Mexico border, and as there is on Kwaj. I will begin by examining Kwaj access issues in the broader context of access issues on American military bases generally. After a general history of access, issues associated with access regulations, identification badges and the DSC will be examined briefly. I will also be looking at how access issues have affected different populations on Kwajalein, including Americans of various kinds, Marshallese elites, and Marshallese workers on Kwaj. The complications and dilemmas of Marshallese access to the Kwajalein hospital will then be examined. Throughout, I have tried to include some viewpoints from those on Kwaj who make and enforce regulations, in an attempt to see them as more than faceless “cogs” in the system. Again, viewpoints of American long-timers are front and center.

### Access Regulations in a Larger Military Context

In my discussions with American visitors to the atoll regarding their perspectives of the base, some described it as a “police state”; one described it as “fascist.” This squares well with

views of the access situation on Kwajalein as one of apartheid, or as a unique situation of American racial discrimination. And while I don't doubt that some aspects of control of access on the base have been based on racial discrimination, there seemed to be another dynamic at work here. Upon questioning those individuals further, I determined that this was their first experience with a military base of any kind, and that they were generally shocked to see how tightly access and movement were controlled, both American and Marshallese. But this is how military bases work: they are fundamentally hierarchical, control-based, non-democratic organizations, as is the military as a whole. As a representative of the Command succinctly put it: "We are on an Army installation, and the Army is not a democracy" (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Apr. 30, 2002:3). But does this make it a "police state" or "apartheid"?

Here we see the "tension of empire" reemerging between military and civilian views of the American colonial project. The particular tension here is that the institution that represents the U.S. on Kwajalein does not operate according to the core principles our nation is supposed to stand for: civil rights, freedom, democracy. As servicemembers will tell you, the military *does* serve these interests at a higher level, but not in its internal workings. However, on a place like Kwaj, it is these internal workings that outsiders experience and respond to, and looking at it from the viewpoint of an American civilian, these negative responses are understandable. As Americans experience this tension, so do the Marshallese: Hence the "culture clashes" on Kwajalein already described between American civilians and the military, and Marshallese and the military. This dynamic is not just confined to Kwajalein: in the past and present, members of the military often serve as "the face" of the U.S. abroad. "Foreigners" experiencing this military control, no matter how high the ideals behind it, may respond with anger and confusion. Soldiers then wonder "why they don't like us." There may be other reasons to resent the American

presence, but the distance between the experience of military order and power and expectations of American ideals is a common source of tension. I believe this clash is *the* fundamental “tension of empire” on Kwaj. In no way does it explain away every access policy and practice, but it does provide further evidence of “competing colonialisms” on Kwaj. And because on Kwaj, you have a military structure but a largely civilian population, this brings out more of these “tensions” than you would normally see on an Army base, where most residents are fully attuned to the “military mindset.”

In talking about military access policies, it must be noted that while I *did* do intensive research on access issues on Kwajalein, I was not able to do substantial comparative research on military access regulations across the Pacific and worldwide. However, in addition to interviews conducted on Kwaj with administrators and residents concerning both base and military policies, I did interview several retired military officers from both the Army and Navy, some with extensive military experience in the Pacific, regarding these topics. I also talked to civilian residents of Kwaj about their experiences on other bases overseas.

In the case of most U.S. military bases overseas, relations between local people and the U.S. military, and associated access rules, are governed by a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) negotiated between the U.S. State Department and various national governments. As a rule, the U.S. government and overseas military personnel deal *only* with national governments and do not negotiate with lower-level political leaders or other regional or local “foreign nationals.” These other national governments then make arrangements with local people. This is one *very* unique aspect of Kwajalein: Marshallese elites, landowners and the local government are all part of negotiations regarding the use of Kwajalein Atoll and its policies.



One aspect of access all retired military personnel stressed to me is that in their experience in the Pacific and worldwide, no local foreign national workers were allowed to use base resources, including retail and healthcare facilities, except in the case of emergencies. American civilian workers hired to work on the base were allowed access to base resources as one of the benefits of working for the U.S. government overseas, and because they could not be expected to support themselves from the local economy. Foreign nationals hired from other countries were treated in a similar manner, as access benefits would be part of their employment package, and they could not be expected (in most cases) to support themselves from the local economy. These foreign nationals from other countries were also limited in number and did not represent a significant drain on base resources, as open access to surrounding populations would have been.

According to ex-military personnel I interviewed, on none of the bases they had served on (in Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia) were local foreign nationals ever allowed to use base facilities, such as the Post Exchange (PX, a contractor-run department store), Commissary (contractor-run grocery store), or Snack Bars. That some Marshallese were given access to similar resources on Kwaj, whether elites or base workers, struck them as being quite unusual. In addition, on many bases, local foreign nationals of any kind could not use resources such as the library without a military ID card. Some facilities like this on Kwaj have always been open to any Marshallese who could gain access to the base.

Several of these military personnel (Army and Navy both) emphasized that even *they* are denied access to base resources as retired military officers, some of high rank. According to one, the German SOFA has always excluded U.S. retirees from most access to base resources, excepting medical facilities, various base clubs and some post office services (retirees could mail

letters, but not packages). Traveling retirees cannot expect to use PXs or Commissaries on bases. One individual also noted that while retiree access was greater in Italy (showing the small differences between systems), there were pressures to make it more restrictive. This point is important in showing how access is also denied to many Americans for various reasons, including those who have spent their lives in the military.

The question of justifications and motivations is important here. One major justification for restricting access to base resources, commonly used in reference to Kwajalein, is that the cost of the shipment of goods and provision of services (and their lower prices) on military bases are subsidized by U.S. taxpayer dollars. The intent is to provide servicemembers and other support personnel with the goods and services they are accustomed to at lower prices as one of the benefits of government service. Opening access to local foreign nationals in this context is seen as being a violation of this intent, or using U.S. taxpayer money to supply goods and services to foreign markets. Opening access can also mean that goods and services may not be available when needed by the population they were intended for.

Allowing access also negatively affects businesses on the local economy, with their tax-subsidized low prices creating unfair competition, and depriving the local economy of tax revenues. This is especially the case when prices on the local economy are significantly higher than those on base and the selection of goods in local stores is limited. (This is definitely the case on Ebeye.) While observers have often charged that this justification is a thinly-veiled excuse to restrict access, there is also a significant amount of documentary evidence of Ebeye merchants protesting more open access to base resources on the grounds that it is unfair competition (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 60; Host Nation Archives 1987).

As American residents noted, even limited access can be problematic, as this increases pressures to give more and more access to more and more people in the name of fairness, which can then result in “opening the floodgates.” One of the most powerful arguments made over the years for limiting access on Kwajalein is that providing access to base resources serves as one more attraction in luring more Marshallese, Pacific Islanders, and others to come to Ebeye, exacerbating already huge problems of overpopulation and overburdened infrastructure. This is also why, under the Compact, wages for Marshallese workers on Kwaj were reduced to a level comparable to those of other Marshallese on Ebeye, which has been a very contentious issue.

Put in larger context, however, former and current service members I interviewed stressed that there is *always* pressure from local people to gain access to base resources and goods, even in more “developed” countries in Europe. This is usually manifested in pressure by local people on base residents to purchase goods for them from the base. This pressure is “a fact of life” on overseas military bases, and is by no means unique to Kwajalein. In addition to these constant pressures, there is constant leakage as well, from small breaches in access to large-scale smuggling and black markets: hence the need for base border control and associated bureaucracy. In terms of motivations for access policies, those interviewed stressed that access rules may not be intended to discriminate (by race or class or nationality). However, as Bill Alexander noted to me at one point in a conversation regarding Kwajalein access policies, while rules may not be *intended* to discriminate (by race, class or any other separating mechanism), they may have that *effect*, or be perceived to have that effect (2002, personal communication). While intentional versus unintentional discrimination may be difficult to distinguish, both have clearly existed on the atoll, and both are often perceived as intentional discrimination.

The question of access policies on U.S. military bases in other parts of the Pacific is another issue. In his often-cited text, *Collision Course on Kwajalein*, Giff Johnson notes that

Military officials argue that Kwaj is no different from U.S. bases all over the world in excluding outsiders and that Marshallese businessmen insist on it. At bases in Hawaii, Guam and elsewhere, however, civilian employees *do* have the privilege of shopping on base. The Marshallese are simply accorded certain rights of U.S. citizens, such as receiving minimum wage, but not others (1984:22).

Those I spoke to asserted that civilian workers may have some access to bases on places like Guam and Hawaii as part of their contracts, but while some may be Chamorro or native Hawaiians, they are also U.S. citizens, not “local foreign nationals,” as Marshallese are likely to be classified, which makes some difference here. However, it would not surprise me at all if there *were* some idiosyncratic differences between military bases in these Pacific locations, due to their unique and complex histories. However, it is important to note that even if there are some idiosyncracies between these locations, these are rare cases indeed in the larger military system of “overseas” bases.

While this “betweenness” of Kwajalein (Dvorak 2004) has hurt Marshallese in many ways, it has also created opportunities. While local Marshallese have had to navigate and tolerate a changing, control-based system on a daily basis for decades, some have managed to carve out more access for themselves over the years than is the case with most populations near overseas military bases. Some of this space has been carved out of tensions between different factions of American administrators, such as that noted between TT representatives and the Command. Access is also carved out of constant changes in administration.

However, Marshallese must continuously apply pressure to keep from losing this access, as the Command continuously reinstates and reinscribes the borders of the base. As a result, access issues are constantly under negotiation. As such negotiation on access issues is not the norm on U.S. military bases, tensions result for the Command, resulting in *cycles* of loosening and tightening of access. At the same time, these negotiations also cause tensions and confusion for the Marshallese, as access is granted, and then denied, in what sometimes appear to be random ways, which is an important factor in perceptions and charges of apartheid. A recent major tightening in access restrictions has brought many of these issues to the fore once again. However, it is still interesting to note that despite these new restrictions, according to a Command representative, “Kwajalein is still more accessible than any other DoD installation in the world” (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Sep. 24, 2004:6). As in the case of Ebeye Construction Project, military actors see themselves as generous in this context, although few others agree.

### History of Access

Trying to trace the particular history of access to the base was quite difficult, as there have been so many different kinds of access desired and debated over time. In terms of what most Marshallese have wanted access to in recent years, my research revealed that most have wanted greater access to the base in general, especially landowners who want to visit their land, and the ability to go back and forth without so many obstacles. Others want access to cheaper, better quality products, and a better selection of products, as well as products and services not available on Ebeye. Resources Ebeye residents particularly wanted access to included: (1) retail facilities (including grocery stores, restaurants and snack bars, the department store, and the

bakery); (2) water and ice; (3) the hospital/dentist; (4) laundry facilities; (5) temporary lodging facilities; (6) the travel agency; (7) bars/clubs and alcohol; (8) base housing; and (9) base schools. In addition, the local government, the RMI government and various organizations on Ebeye have wanted access to such things as construction materials, automotive products, and surplus materials and equipment.

In addition to the sheer diversity of desired resources, it proved difficult to trace how access to particular resources has changed over the years because there have been so many changes in policy and enforcement, overwhelming even the best memories (both American and Marshallese). Documentary evidence was helpful, but finding a set of regulations from the 1970s, while informative in showing that there were access regulations at the time, did not necessarily mean these regulations were enforced regularly, consistently, or at all. The lack of institutional memory on the base was also a problem: American “short-timers” were unlikely to have a comprehensive and detailed knowledge of access issues. In reconstructing the following, I worked with long-time Marshallese and American residents, as well as a variety of documentary sources.

Both Americans and Marshallese asserted that there has been a general intensification in access restrictions over time, in addition to a few watershed events affecting access. However, upon closer examination of the evidence, it appears that access restrictions on Kwaj have gone through repeating cycles of loosening and tightening over time: loosening to improve community relations, and then tightening to “keep things from getting out of control.” Tightening events have also sometimes represented changes associated with new Commanders and Contractors, and also attempts on the part of the Command on occasion to completely “get out of the Ebeye business.” (However, as will be seen, this is not a realistic goal, due to the unique historical

relationship between Kwaj and Ebeye, and the power of Marshallese landowners to retake their lands if enough of their needs are not met.)

I was on the atoll during a loosening cycle. Since that time, access rules have undergone another cyclical tightening, to the point where Marshallese and other Ebeye residents are not even allowed to take *a* candy bar or *a* soda through the DSC to Ebeye. These changes have elicited strong protests, as most access changes do. However, these changes are much more strict than the usual tightening, and may reflect a decision by the Command and other entities to try to definitively deal with access issues once and for all, by maintaining strict and consistent policies over time. Budgetary constraints may also be playing a role. However, Kwajalein history shows that such severe reinscription of the borders of the base this has not been achievable or sustainable in the past, as will be seen.

As noted previously, the predominant Marshallese image of Americans in the early postwar years was one of great power, wealth and generosity, particularly as displayed through military might, and through the feeding of Marshallese from ample U.S. military food supplies (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:243-245, 269-270). These good times continued to some extent during the Navy administration of Kwajalein. While Marshallese and American populations were separated in 1950 with the relocation of the Marshallese labor camp from Kwaj to Ebeye, borders on the base were not yet “hardened” to include a formal checkpoint and other associated restrictions.

Marshallese recalled that during this time, access to the base was open for the most part, but that was because there were “few people” living on Ebeye at the time. Marshallese had regular hospital access, and in general, it was described as a time when it was “easy to come and go.” As a sign of closer personal relationships between Marshallese and Americans, Marshallese

told me that maids (who often served as nannies) brought their families over to the base for various holiday celebrations with American families. This was also a time when access to the MAC was not yet restricted, so local Marshallese could move much more freely around the atoll.

As this wartime and early postwar benevolence dried up, Marshallese began to form other less benevolent, more conflicted images of Americans. In some ways this may be a reflection of the era of neglect under TTPI administration. Clearly access policies changed between Navy and Army administrations, and as missile testing programs became increasingly important on the atoll. However, the change in the overall access relationship on Kwajalein was also a function of numbers. A smaller population, such as that of the Marshallese on Ebeye in the 1940s and 1950s, could be accommodated by base resources, but as Ebeye's population began to swell due to population relocations, immigration and high internal growth rates, this was no longer practical. At the same time, the American population on the base was also growing as missile testing programs expanded, and providing resources for their needs was becoming a struggle (TTPI Archives 1968e).

While a few Marshallese residents of Ebeye (and a few Americans as well) told me that the base was completely open to all Ebeye Marshallese before 1982, other Marshallese and many American residents refuted this, as did a wealth of documentary evidence. These statements may reflect a bit of idealism about the past relative to the present; both Americans and Marshallese seemed to display this kind of idealism, especially when describing the pre-television era on the atoll. While base access *was* much more open before 1982, restrictions, and resistance to those restrictions, were occurring much earlier than 1982. And there have always been access regulations of some kind, at least under Army administration, even though they weren't always enforced, or were enforced sporadically. Some Marshallese recalled that access to the base was



restricted in the 1960s and 70s, and that ID cards were required: even in those times “we still have to come on clearance.” One American noted that to access Kwaj, Marshallese had to get a pass from the TT office on Ebeye and had to request access for a specific purpose, unless they worked on the base.

As one sign of previous “tightening” cycles, a 1968 TT document protests recent base access restrictions, including restrictions on the use of the laundry; use of the Snack Bar during lunch hours; private boats being brought to Kwaj; prohibitions on gifts from Americans; and the loss of shopping privileges for the two “Kings” of Ebeye (TTPI Archives 1968d). The Command responded that such restrictions were necessary due to the increasing American population on the base and overextended infrastructure there. The question of how to allow “gifts” from base residents without allowing abuse turned into a perpetual issue (CRC Minutes, Dec. 19, 1986), resulting ultimately in detailed rules and paperwork (CRC Minutes, May 16, 1988).

While some Marshallese and Americans said there was no inspection of bags at the dock in the 1970s for those leaving Kwaj and boarding the ferry to Ebeye, other individuals contradicted this, noting that while Marshallese were allowed to take some goods off Kwaj, “things got progressively stricter.” One graphic example of pre-1982 inspections is a 1974 meeting held between the Command and Marshallese leaders, after Marshallese workers had briefly gone on strike to protest a number of issues, including searches at the DSC (TTPI Archives 1974b). Around this time, there was also a lawsuit brought against the Command by a Marshallese woman protesting searches of women’s purses at the DSC. However, the judgment was in favor of the defendant, noting that the Commander of a military base is allowed to search those coming and going from the base (TTPI Archives 1981b).

Alexander also recalled that in the mid-1970s, “Access to Kwaj by the Marshallese during that time was sporadic, with periodic crackdowns. ... There were searches that I heard about, and the Marshallese were *not* allowed to purchase things in stores” (personal communication). Alexander also noted the case of a Marshallese man who baked cakes on Kwaj, but was not able to buy one and take it to Kwaj for his own child’s birthday. However, while Marshallese were not allowed to purchase from some stores directly, such as the Surfway grocery store and Macy’s department store, American residents noted that there were ways around these restrictions. One recalled that “...it was easy. We were buying things for people on Ebeye all the time, and they could take anything through the DSC.” Some American men had Marshallese families and girlfriends on Ebeye, and regularly transported food and other supplies from the base to Ebeye for their use.

According to an American resident who arrived on Kwaj around 1980, my impression was, at least what would be the first year or two that we were here, that it was far more open. There was no checkpoint, no badges for anybody. You went to the Snack Bar and it was two-thirds full with Marshallese, especially women and children, [who] are a little bit less common nowadays. So, a little bit more open in terms of the Kwaj-Ebeye interaction.

Americans noted that especially with events like the yearly Kwaj Carnival, open on one day to all residents of Ebeye, “you really felt like you were part of a larger island community, as opposed to the fortress, the gated community that we have right now.” But even on arrival around 1980, “There was still the sensation for me that you were arriving in a restricted area...But not as restricted as it’s become.”

One American resident speculated that perhaps perceptions of openness were greater then because “We had no ID cards before ‘82, that could have been what they mean, and we had a lot of mixed families here too, so if you went with your sister who was married to an American, and went shopping, no one really said anything.” Retail stores remained largely off-limits to Ebeye residents. As one American long-timer noted,

The King would bring his entourage...He would bring his entourage and they would go shopping at Surfway. Normally, maybe once a week, and they would buy anything they wanted, and that was okay. He would sit outside and talk to the Americans as his entourage was talking to him.

American residents also recalled that base security didn’t carry guns before 1982, which made the place seem “less military and restrictive.” There were identification badges for Americans, “but it was more in your pocket, and you rarely used it.” According to one long-time resident,

I don’t know how they handled the Marshallese, because either they had badges or it was *not* enforced. There were people, Marshallese just walking all over the island. The Snack Bar was always full of people from Ebeye. There was no checkpoint per se, that I recall...It was a much easier flow, because I remember I had a lady come and help [as a maid/nanny] and I never had to go and do paperwork for her, like you do now.

Americans in the 1980s also recalled purchasing food and other supplies for Marshallese to take back to Ebeye. While some American residents noted that they only bought occasional items for close Marshallese friends, another recalled that “You know, I remember buying chicken and

sewing machines. People were always asking me for all kinds of things...[there were] none of the restrictions.”

One reason why 1982 sticks so much in people’s minds is that it was a pivotal year in U.S.-Marshallese relations on the atoll. While there had been previous demonstrations by Marshallese landowners, 1982 was the year of Operation Homecoming, a major sail-in and occupation of many islets on the atoll. These demonstrations by Kwajalein Marshallese were in protest of agreements made between the U.S. government and the RMI government regarding the use of Kwaj under the Compact, as well as issues over compensation for land taken and conditions on Ebeye. Both Americans and Marshallese marked these demonstrations as *the* turning point in regard to base access, with the years after 1982 being increasingly restrictive. However, while 1982 was a year of major changes, there are indications that access had already started to tighten even after smaller demonstrations took place in 1979.

There are indications that the Command used each demonstration as an opportunity to “stem the tide” of resources flowing from Kwaj to Ebeye, and this was particularly the case in 1982. Access restrictions in place because of the demonstration “confirmed the magnitude of the flow of food and other items from KMR to Ebeye by individuals” (TTPI Archives 1982a). Intense pressure was also applied by the Command in 1982 on the Marshallese leadership to reduce Ebeye’s dependency on Kwaj, particularly by developing banking and food storage facilities on Ebeye. In addition to the cutting off of access to the base for most Marshallese during the 1982 sail-in, regulations immediately following the event reduced or eliminated access to Kwaj for several different groups of people, including: Marshallese maids and “yardboys”; American missionaries and teachers living on Ebeye; and Ebeye merchants being supplied through Kwaj food sources and using base food storage facilities. In addition, American

men with Marshallese families were no longer allowed to transport groceries from Kwaj stores to their families on Ebeye. Americans and Marshallese both stressed that it was after this point that the DSC became a hardened structure and consistent checkpoint, including fencing and guards (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Sep. 20, 1982). Over time, it would develop to include an actual building with indoor and outdoor waiting areas.

1982 is also the year that the Community Relations Council (CRC) became formalized under the Compact. The CRC is a monthly forum in which local and national Marshallese government officials, administrators, and traditional leaders meet to talk about local issues with representatives of the Command and Contractor. Access issues are commonly debated and decided here, as well as other issues affecting Marshallese workers and lower level Marshallese-American relations. This is one of the “spaces” that local Marshallese have created, allowing them to negotiate directly with the base regarding access and other local issues. Former and current military personnel stressed to me that this kind of conversation was unique, as the U.S. government normally only negotiates with national governments.

The year 1986 is another important watershed, being the year the Compact came into effect, and as the year of another major sail-in/demonstration on the atoll. As a result of the Compact, many more Marshallese were employed by the base, but their wages were reduced to levels equivalent to others in the TT to keep from attracting more people to Ebeye, which was at its worst at this time. Americans and Marshallese I spoke to said this reduction in wage rates was something the RMI government had requested for this purpose, although it is unlikely that the U.S. government objected. Marshallese employed before this time were grandfathered and kept their higher wages and associated benefits. This disparity between grandfathered and non-grandfathered workers continues to be a source of discontent on the atoll. While restrictions were

much more strictly enforced after 1982 for Ebeye residents in general, many more Marshallese actually had access to the base after 1986 because many more now worked there.

While many of those interviewed portrayed the post-1982 era as one of progressively stricter regulation, there are indications that access, which had been fairly tight between the demonstrations of 1982 and 1986, did loosen some after the 1986 demonstrations, and has since fallen into a pattern of cyclical tightening and loosening. As one example of increased access generally, it was after 1986 that the Guest Sponsorship Program was established, where base residents can sponsor Ebeye residents to come to Kwaj for a specific period of time, including overnight stays. However, advance notice of several days and paperwork was required (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Jun. 7, 1982), and problems soon emerged regarding younger Marshallese using this access for purposes of drinking and prostitution (CRC Minutes, Jul. 3, 1996). A few Marshallese children from Ebeye were also selected on a yearly basis to enter the Kwaj school system (CRC Minutes, Jun. 5, 1986). Both Americans and Marshallese noted that there were far more *structured* community exchange programs after 1986, including cultural, holiday and sporting events. Some noted that this was partly because of the loosening of some access restrictions, but also because American-Marshallese tensions associated with the demonstrations had dissipated somewhat.

The Command has been criticized over the years for reducing access to the base during times such as the 1980s, when access to base resources was needed the most by people on Ebeye. However, long-timers noted that this was in part a function of numbers as the population of Ebeye grew exponentially, and the American population of the base was also growing at that time. One American long-timer noted that

Because their population started going up and up and up, and there was no way that our supply system could even cover another 6-7,000 people, because we had [so many] people on this island, plus a whole bunch of people on Roi-Namur. So that was the supply system for the people that lived here.

That access was reduced at the time of greatest pressure has also undoubtedly added to perceptions of apartheid.

From the late 1980s to the late 1990s, the number of access badges given to Marshallese representatives of the local and national government, and other Ebeye residents, gradually increased. During this time, Marshallese leaders from Majuro were sometimes allowed to stay overnight on Kwaj because of the crowded conditions on Ebeye and the state of hotel facilities there (this policy is now being reversed). Then, in 1997, the number of badges was sharply reduced, which resulted in many local and RMI government employees losing regular access. Some of those who lost badges were high-ranking Marshallese landowners that did not live on Ebeye.

This move provoked a strong negative reaction from the Marshallese side. Justifications by the Command for these changes included: security regulations being passed down from Huntsville; preventing the removal of goods to Ebeye; the growing population of Ebeye; and keeping under-aged Marshallese off the base. The cutbacks were also an effort to discriminate between those who had “legitimate business” on the base, versus those using it for personal or recreational purposes. The Command stressed that Marshallese could still gain access through the Daily Commute List, but these lists have set limits (100 people at one point in 2001) and often fill up fast (with rank and connections playing a role in one’s likelihood of getting on the list). The commute list also meant that Marshallese had to get on the list in advance every time

they wanted or needed to come to Kwaj. These badges were cut back again in 1999, which prompted another strong negative reaction by Marshallese representatives.

Over the years, Americans as well as Marshallese have protested access restrictions on Kwaj, particularly those having to do with the DSC. One American long-timer felt that searches of the Marshallese especially at the DSC were often “humiliating,” and she had written numerous letters of complaint to the Command over the years on this issue. There has also been considerable anger and frustration over the years on the part of American residents wanting to give gifts to Marshallese friends to take to Ebeye. Because of changing regulations, Marshallese at one time might be able to transport a holiday gift of a cake or a turkey to Ebeye, and then might not being able to do so on another occasion. American residents also protested that Marshallese were not allowed at some point to take leftover food from various events on Kwaj to Ebeye. In response to complaints such as these, regulations at some point were modified to allow gifts under a certain amount to be taken through the DSC with paperwork from the gift-giver, and the requirement that all food gifts be prepared foods. However, both Americans and Marshallese noted that this could all change at a moment’s notice.

Marshallese have protested access restrictions through a variety of mechanisms, including the CRC and threats of further demonstrations. In more recent years, access debates have also received some coverage in the *Hourglass* and in “townhall” meetings. But Marshallese have not just protested *a* system of access regulations over the years, they have had to deal with and adapt to *constantly changing regulations* that may or may not be consistently enforced. As noted by Kwaj residents, some of these changes have been a result of changes in base administration: changes in commanders have sometimes resulted in substantial and sudden changes in access rules. The lack of institutional memory has sometimes been a problem here as



well, as new administrators act on immediate needs and perceptions, often without more than a superficial understanding of the complex history behind access issues, resulting in the repeating cycles described above. As one long-timer noted,

...that's part of the problem out here, too, is that there is no institutional memory. There truly isn't. That's always been a difficulty. They will reinvent a wheel. Like this nonsense with, oh, you can't bring anything through the DSC. Well that got lax, and nobody cared, and then they slammed down again.

Another added, "Rules come and go with the colonels...its not just rules, relations go up and down with each, they have to relearn the relationship every two years."

However, conflicting Marshallese requests have also had an impact: In 1986, Marshallese representatives requested that base security conduct more inspections to keep alcohol from coming to Ebeye (CRC Minutes, Nov. 6, 1986). However, at the next CRC meeting, Marshallese representatives complained that security was going through ladies' purses and "handbags." The Commander responded that this was in response to their original request for stricter inspections (CRC Minutes, Dec. 19, 1986). As will be seen, the definition of what is a "purse" has been a perpetual debate.

Some access changes have reflected larger security issues, such as those experienced in the late 1990s with the U.S. embassy bombings in Africa, and then after 9-11. Despite various justifications, Marshallese often noted to me that changes seemed to happen "all of the sudden," with no official explanation, or not an explanation that made sense to them. Some Marshallese did recognize the cyclical nature of restrictions and stated that although these rules made their lives more difficult, "they enforce it because it's getting worse, they have to." However, despite

the explanations given, Marshallese have often found these changes hard to understand (CRC Minutes, Feb. 27, 1997).

### Access Regulations & the Badging System

Mary Louise Pratt, in her evaluation of colonial systems, has noted that, in addition to militarization, bureaucratization is another central instrument of empire (1992:35). Everyone who deals with Kwaj, Marshallese and American, has to deal with a complex and often confusing bureaucratic system that oversees such things as identification badging and access regulations. That bureaucracy has its own associated language, not unlike the “technospeak” in discussions of missile testing hazard areas. In examining access regulations over the years, they usually focus on preventing the transport of various kinds of goods from Kwaj to Ebeye by various groups of people. However, as noted, the existence of access restrictions does not mean that they were enforced, or enforced uniformly.

In regard to the language of access regulations, there is the issue of cross-cultural communication. Having read most incarnations of access regulations over the years, they would be fairly understandable to most literate Americans, but could pose a challenge to non-native English speakers. Hence I found it quite amusing that when I asked a security officer whether the Marshallese had had difficulty in understanding some recent access changes, he simply responded that “they can read the regulation.” In the case of this particular officer, I sensed that this was not just a response to get rid of me or to not have to deal with the associated issues: it seemed to have more to do with this person not realizing that there are Marshallese working on Kwaj who have only the most rudimentary English skills. This response also seemed to signal a

failure to recognize that there might be complex inter-cultural communication issues at work, whereby a regulation that seems simple to us might not be so easily understood by Marshallese.

However, there can also be difficulty in ascertaining how much “non-understanding” is a result of a complex bureaucracy, technospeak, and perpetually changing regulations; how much might be related to the low level of English skills on Ebeye; and how much is resistance in the form of “appearing not to understand” regulations. While the Command has made efforts over the years to post announcements and portions of regulations in Marshallese, this has not always been the case, or it has not been done consistently. Marshallese also told me that many Marshallese on Ebeye “don’t read,” in the sense that reading material is scarce on Ebeye (It’s hard to even find copies of the *Marshall Islands Journal* there), in English or Marshallese. As such, many Marshallese rely on word of mouth for information. While some Marshallese workers told me they did read the *Hourglass*, others mentioned that they might be read more frequently if it was more readily available at places like the DSC. (I rarely found it available there, leading me to the conclusion that it is primarily intended for base residents.)

The badging system also has a long and checkered history, as noted above. Identification badges affecting both Marshallese and Americans have been required at various times over the years not only to gain initial access to the base, but also to gain entrance to particular base facilities and restricted areas. Badges also indicate hours during which a person is allowed access to the base. While ID badges did exist before 1982, they became a much more prominent part of the access system after 1982. This is reflected in an announcement in the *Hourglass* in August 1982 that all Kwaj residents were now required to wear identification badges either clipped to their shirts or on a chain around their necks (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Aug. 27, 1982). Starting around this time, all base residents over the age of ten were required to have a badge.

By the year 2000, the badging system had grown to become a very complex system of different types of badges for different groups of people, each with very specific access rules. There were badges for different categories of Marshallese workers, sponsored American visitors to the base, TDY badges for temporary mission personnel, and Special Access Badges for various Marshallese government officials and traditional leaders. Some badges might only allow access to the Ten-Ten convenience store and a few other base facilities; a select few allowed access to Surfway. Americans noted that this complex system has “been hard to keep straight,” even for the Command who creates the rules, Host Nation who deals with the complications, and security and base workers who enforce the rules at various points. The complexity of this system, along with the complexity of various access regulations, and frequent changes in both, have added up to perpetual confusion in the past, particularly on the part of Marshallese.

Violations of access regulations can have serious repercussions for those involved: the breaking of rules by Marshallese and Americans can result in citations being given, and with enough offenses, an individual may be barred from the base, and possibly lose employment. An American resident noted that he had recently been cited for an alcohol-related offense (drinking a beer in a recreation area where drinking is forbidden), and that he had had to write a letter to the Command acknowledging his error and reassuring the Commander that the offense would not be repeated. Alcohol is not just an American issue: Command representatives told me that many Marshallese violations of base regulations in general, and access regulations in particular, are alcohol-related. Other common access violations include attempted removal of non-approved goods through the DSC to Ebeye. I was told by both Americans and Marshallese that alcohol-related issues, including attempts to remove alcohol from the base, were also major reasons by Marshallese workers lost their jobs on the base.

### Dock Security Checkpoint

The DSC is the security border all Marshallese (and others) must pass through going back and forth between Kwaj and Ebeye, and one may be searched in either direction. As the DSC is where one waits for a ferry or water taxi to Ebeye, any visitor or resident from Ebeye is destined to spend a substantial amount of time there, waiting. People coming from Ebeye may arrive at the DSC to find that their name is not on the commute list, or find that they cannot enter the base because threat levels have been raised. Marshallese also reported that in the past, they have arrived at the DSC to find that their badges had been revoked with no warning or explanation, resulting in frustration with what is perceived to be arbitrary bureaucracy.

As noted above, it was in the 1980s that the DSC became a formal border with associated physical structures to channel the movement of people coming to and from Ebeye, although some of this hardening began after the 1979 demonstrations. Some of the barriers erected during demonstrations were never removed. CRC meeting minutes from 1980 note that Marshallese workers were protesting searches at the dock as being insulting, as well as fencing and chains used to control movement through the area: “The Marshallese appear to associate chains with animals and chains connote inhumane treatment” (TTPI Archives 1980b).

In the past, the DSC has usually been manned by security personnel provided by a sub-contractor, although these officers were trained by military police. In recent years, Marshallese customs agents and security personnel have been added to DSC staff (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Sep. 27, 2002:1,5): Americans felt that this move was part of an effort to reduce the contentiousness of the DSC, as Marshallese are now on both “sides” of the checkpoint. American security

officers I spoke to felt that they were often scapegoats in contentious access issues on the base: one felt that they were often cast in the role of “the bad guys,” even relative to the Command, even though they were “just doing our job.” I believe this tension reflects the “tension of empire” described previously between military order and American ideals: security personnel are in many cases “the face” of Kwaj to the Marshallese, and this image doesn’t always sit well with American ideals of freedom and democracy.

No access issue over the years has been more contentious than the controversy over the searching of bags at the DSC. In a 1974 meeting held between the Command and Marshallese leaders after Marshallese workers had gone on strike, one issue discussed was whether or not ladies’ purses should be searched at the DSC. Marshallese representatives asserted that such searches were highly inappropriate, and the Command agreed. Command representatives also noted that “In the past...some purses were taken; the contents were dumped out. This wasn’t right. We have tried to rectify this” (TTPI Archives 1974b). However, there is a very interesting and amusing exchange concerning what exactly qualifies as a “purse”: according to base representatives, “A bag of extreme dimensions...of two feet by three feet by eight inches, is not in our estimation a thing considered to be a purse” (TTPI Archives 1974b).

Generally, Marshallese stressed that public inspections of personal belongings was embarrassing and also violated cultural prohibitions on male/female contact. It was also seen as inappropriate to search the belongings of elites. As a result of these protests, at some point during the 1970s there appear to have been “inspection booths” at the DSC so that inspections would not be conducted out in the open (TTPI Archives 1980b), but this did not last. There is a 1973 TT document suggesting that perhaps purses should be searched, but behind a “modesty curtain” (TTPI Archives 1974c). The debate over the searching of purses and what exactly would be

defined as a “purse” reoccurred over the years (CRC Minutes, May 23, 1996): in 1997 Marshallese representatives noted that the box set up at the DSC to measure purses was too small, and as a result, many purses were being searched (CRC Minutes, Document Apr. 17, 1997).

In discussions with Marshallese and Americans, it seems that some of the tension associated with searches at the DSC arose from a general feeling that restrictions were “nitpicking” and seem to have no other aim besides keeping Marshallese from taking small things to Ebeye. The confiscation of “a can of Coke” has become famous over the years as a sign of the perceived pettiness of the system. In particular, Americans and Marshallese noted that there had been other major sources of leakage over the years that were tolerated, while strict regulations were in force at the DSC. The airport security checkpoint was one major source of leakage, as it was not uncommon for marine coolers to leave the base full of steak and chicken from base stores, or large amounts of candy and baked goods, bound for Majuro or other islands. With tightened security after 9-11, in one instance security found a cooler with 25 T-bone steaks and 10 bags of candy (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Jul. 5, 2002). One American resident observed the irony of allowing coolers full of steak and chicken to leave through the airport and “Then they bust someone for having an extra can of Coke” at the DSC. However, other American residents noted that some of this was a function of numbers and volume, as many more people were going through the DSC on a daily basis than through the airport. Americans also noted that rank may also have been an issue, as Marshallese flying to other islands tended to be elites who had the means to fly.

Taken in the longer historical views of American generosity after World War II and also the importance of food sharing in creating and maintaining social bonds in Pacific cultures,

Marshallese anger over petty DSC restrictions is understandable. It has also provided ammunition in bringing charges of discrimination against the base. Newly tightened regulations have undoubtedly provoked more of this anger, as bakery products and some prepared foods are allowed through the DSC, but all else is restricted (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Sep. 24, 2004:6).

However, the Command is quick to point out that while Marshallese cannot take a candy bar or a can of Coke through the DSC, they can buy both from vending machines on the other side of the DSC to take back to Ebeye (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Sep. 24, 2004:6). Americans also noted that in general over the years, Marshallese had constantly tested the system and pushed the limits of access regulations, so that the Command and security then had to “push back” and continuously adapt to stem the flow of subsidized goods off the base.

Another major source of tension in the past has had to do with treatment of the Marshallese (and Americans on occasion) by security personnel. Most Marshallese and Americans who have spent any length of time going back and forth between Ebeye and Kwaj have stories of overzealous and insensitive security guards. Americans associated this with a high turnover in security personnel in the past, and with some culturally and otherwise insensitive guards who showed no interest in accommodating cultural differences. Tensions were also heightened by the failure of the guards to recognize Marshallese elites and accord them greater respect. Some commanders have been responsive to reports of abuse: in a 1984 article in the *Marshall Islands Journal*, a Marshallese man reported that the colonel at the time had dressed in civilian clothes in order to bust guards that were mistreating Marshallese (*Marshall Islands Journal* Nov. 16, 1984:5). The security guard in question was flown home the next day.

As noted, one major source of stress noted by both Marshallese and Americans was what seemed to be the “arbitrariness” of DSC policies. Both noted that what one could take through



the DSC on one day might change the next. Marshallese noted that they would have taken something through the DSC for years, and then suddenly one day that particular item would be confiscated. These cases were connected to perpetually changing access regulations, and inconsistency of enforcement. American residents traveling from Kwaj to Ebeye noted that when heading to the DSC, you always

had to be prepared for something to be totally different. But then they would change the regulations, and not just about going through and checking your bags, but how or when you were supposed to load on the boat, or where you were supposed to go. The two different gates – first this was in and that was out, now this is out and that ones in. And they would all the sudden get real particular about this, when they hadn't cared at all. Now you can't load until a certain time and the gates are locked, because we'd be standing right out on the dock waiting for the boat. It's always changing, it really is. Just constantly changing.

Much in the way that Americans noted the contradiction of rigidly enforced regulations at the DSC and lax ones at the airport, some long-timers also felt that not enough attention had been paid in the past to things such as smuggling and prostitution on base, relative to searches at the DSC. What border scholars call “the subversive economy” (Donnan and Wilson 1999:87) is a fact of life on U.S. military bases all over the world. Over the years, Marshallese on Ebeye have expressed concerns to the Command about beer and hard liquor from Kwaj ending up on Ebeye and in the hands of minors (TTPI Archives 1979b). There have also been consistent protests regarding the problem of Marshallese females (especially teenagers) trading sex for base access or money, particularly in the BQs. Some BQ maids are also willing to trade sex for money with

BQ residents, a pattern also noted by Alexander (1978:162). These protests have been a continuous impetus for the Command to tighten access restrictions to prevent young women from engaging in prostitution, although new access restrictions often then elicit more protests from other quarters. As one example, tightened restrictions on access by Marshallese to the BQs resulted in protests from American male residents with Marshallese girlfriends or “unofficial” wives, who then could not visit them in the BQs.

### Access Issues & Different Populations

#### American access issues

As noted, because it is a military base, Kwaj is restricted in many ways to anyone not authorized to be there, even Americans. I was very interested to meet and hear about American visitors to Ebeye who were upset that they were denied access to the base. In particular, some American visitors to Ebeye expressed anger to me that they were not allowed onto the base for Fourth of July celebrations in 1999 (or at least not without a sponsor on base, involving much red tape and advance planning, if you know someone on base and the request is approved, which may not happen - this process is the same for Marshallese and Americans). Many American visitors felt a sense of entitlement that being American would confer certain privileges everywhere, and they responded with shock and anger when they are treated like members of the local population. Kwajalein is a military base, and you can't just automatically go onto *any* U.S. military base on the Fourth of July *anywhere*, American or Marshallese.

There is an interesting parallel in comments made by a Marshallese landowner in 1976 regarding the base being closed on the anniversary of America's independence (Dever 1978:v).

The landowner noted that Marshallese were explicitly forbidden to come to the base for the occasion, and cited this instance as not only being ironic, but being clear evidence of segregation on the atoll. While long-time American residents were not familiar with the particular Command access policies in place on July 4, 1976, some noted that such an expression of American contradictions would not be surprising. However, long-timers noted that if the base was closed that day, Americans on Ebeye were likely to have been denied access as well. As such, the Fourth of July case *may be* ironic, but not necessarily discriminatory. Again, it can be seen as a reflection of this deeper tension between military access policies and American ideals. Long-timers also felt that this statement was part of a larger protest against the base, as a political statement made before the U.S. House of Representatives in 1976, intended to draw dramatic attention to access policies on Kwaj.

During my fieldwork, I encountered numerous Americans, including teachers and missionaries living on Ebeye, who were denied access to the base for one reason or another. In a few cases, American residents of Ebeye with medical problems requested access to the hospital on Kwaj, because they did not have confidence in the care they would receive at the Ebeye hospital. Some responded to denial of access (on the grounds their medical conditions were not serious and could be handled at the Ebeye hospital) with shock. Of course, if there had been an emergency, they would have been cared for, as Marshallese residents of Ebeye are cared for in emergency cases. Marshallese and Americans on Ebeye could also be referred to the Kwaj hospital if the particular problem could not be handled by the Ebeye hospital, or a particular medication was not available there. Like the Fourth of July incident described above, there seemed to be an underlying assumption of privilege on the part of these Americans; they were *Americans*, and Kwaj is an *American* base. Other American visitors to Ebeye have been upset

when they discovered that they could not use various base facilities, stay there during their visit, or if they were allowed access to base for some purpose, were denied access to certain facilities and services. Again, Americans can't necessarily expect access of this kind on *any* U.S. military base.

Marshallese also told me that it was not uncommon for American visitors to come to Ebeye for some purpose, such as business, and once they saw living conditions on Ebeye, they would request to stay on the base. This was the case even when people were warned by the RMI government about conditions on Ebeye, where they would be required to stay. As one Marshallese described it, "there are people like this, they come to Ebeye, and then 'well, we're here, but it's really hot for us,' but that's the place they came for." Americans are then surprised when their requests for base access are denied. They fail to understand, according to one Marshallese official, that "even though you are a U.S. citizen, you are entering a military base."

Historically, Americans and other non-Marshallese residents of Ebeye also lost their access to Kwaj resources after the 1982 demonstrations, including doctors, missionaries, teachers and Peace Corps volunteers. Access for TT representatives was more complex, as will be seen. Other than access to the base hospital, Americans over the years (including myself on occasion) have wanted access to base drinking water, fresh foods, laundry facilities, and access to phone, e-mail and Internet service. I did register some animosity from Marshallese toward Americans and other non-Marshallese residents of Ebeye who were able to gain some access to Kwaj (although these negative feelings were most often targeted at other Pacific Islanders and Filipinos), as they are seen as using access privileges to Kwaj that could be used by Marshallese instead.

As noted above in the case of restrictions on American drinking and overnight stays on Ebeye, I was quite surprised to find out that over the years, access to Ebeye by Americans has

been restricted for various reasons at various times, often requiring that they have passes of various kinds (CRC Minutes, Jan. 17, 1987). On some occasions this has been because of unruly American behavior, but on others it has been because of population problems and water scarcity (CRC Minutes, Jan. 17, 1987). There have also been occasional efforts to charge fees for access to Ebeye (Grace Sherwood Library Files 1994), although nothing of this kind was enforced while I was in the field. Some of this may have been “tit for tat” after the Command proposed charging a fee for visitors to Kwaj who weren’t workers or on official business.

These restrictions in themselves are interesting in that they disturb, to some extent, the assumption that the desire for access has always been unidirectional; that Marshallese want access to resources on Kwaj, while Ebeye does not have any resources Americans want or need. I was then surprised to discover that American base residents over the years have gone to Ebeye to buy such things as candy, makeup, nailpolish, fabric and dresses not available on Kwaj. Kwaj residents have also gone there to spend time with friends, eat at local restaurants, and attend church services. However, it must be noted that despite the existence of this Kwaj-to-Ebeye traffic, the relationship *is* largely uni-directional: most base residents don’t have any desire or need to go to Ebeye. However, there has always been the potential for this traffic from Kwaj to Ebeye to be much greater, with significant economic benefits for Ebeye: In December 1987, while 1,000 Marshallese shopped on Kwaj for Christmas (which has become traditional), 200 base residents shopped on Ebeye, reporting that a variety of items not available on Kwaj were available on Ebeye (CRC Minutes, Dec. 29, 1987). While “Marshallese shopping days” on Kwaj have become common, I was not aware of any other “shopping exchanges” that had taken place. The Command noted at the time the potential of this traffic for the Ebeye economy.

In regard to the TT and access regulations, TT representatives regularly protested access changes and their impacts on the Marshallese (TTPI Archives 1968b), as well as Command failures to give notice of access changes (TTPI Archives N.d.). They also ran into problems themselves regarding access regulations, frequently failing to get the proper clearance before coming to Kwaj (TTPI Archives 1979a). As noted in the chapter on Ebeye, they also pushed for access to Kwaj for materials and equipment needed for various TT projects on Ebeye, and there was a constant battle over how much should be supplied to the TT, how often, and who would pay for it. These smaller battles were part of the larger debate regarding who was ultimately responsible for Ebeye and conditions there.

But TT employees also wanted access for themselves. In a 1974 TT document, where there is a proposal to allow unlimited retail privileges to all Americans employed by the TT living on Ebeye, as well as missionaries, citing “TT concern for retention of American employees if some kind of fringe benefit was not available to them” (TTPI Archives 1974c). A July 1979 letter from the Commander informs the TT District Administrator’s representative to Ebeye that he will not be granted additional access privileges (Host Nation Archives, Jul. 16, 1979). I also found it interesting that some TT officials over the years requested that their children be allowed to attend base schools, presumably due to the severe deficiencies in Ebeye schools by U.S. standards. Some requests were successful, others were not, and they all required a certain amount of bureaucratic wrangling.

As noted previously, American base residents with Marshallese girlfriends or wives on Ebeye have always been in some sense a border group on Kwaj, and one treated with great ambivalence by base officials. One source of this ambivalence is the dilemmas they create in terms of access. Indeed, their case can be seen as one where social borders between the

Marshallese and Americans meet physical and regulatory borders, with no easy solution. A telling detail is that some American men in this category, when approached for interviews, were hesitant to speak to me. Other long-time American residents said this was likely because these men have always been in a precarious position in terms of base access, and might be more leery of doing anything to upset the Command. In the past during housing shake-ups on Kwaj, as noted in Chapter 5, they have been the first to lose housing because it was assumed that they could live on Ebeye, or they have been forced to choose between base housing and living on Ebeye.

Some of the complex access issues involved can be seen in an undated document (likely to be from the late 1960s or early 1970s) concerning charges of discrimination brought to the attention of a U.S. Senator by an American contract employee on Kwaj (Host Nation Archives, n.d.). In this case, the American employee was married to a British citizen living on Ebeye, but many of the issues hold for Americans with Marshallese wives. He charged in this letter to the senator that he was not given the same access privileges to Kwaj as other Americans living on Ebeye: however, this was because he had not yet requested and been granted permission by the Command to officially reside on Ebeye. He also stated in the letter that his pregnant wife became ill on base and was denied care at the base hospital. Later he admitted that he had not informed the hospital staff that his wife had fallen ill on Kwaj, and they assumed he had brought her from Ebeye without a referral for medical purposes (Host Nation Archives, n.d.).

In another complicated case, the American Civil Liberties Union lodged a complaint against the Command for not allowing Marshallese wives of Hawaiian men working on Kwaj to use Surfway or the hospital (Host Nation Archives 1968b). However, the Command responded that these men signed contracts as bachelors, were allowed to live on Ebeye and transport goods

there from Kwaj, but their wives, like other Ebeye residents, could not shop at the base grocery store or use the base hospital. It does not appear that in this case Hawaiian men were particularly singled out: all male residents of Kwaj with Marshallese families faced these same issues and complications.

American-Marshallese families given housing on Kwaj have always had to be careful of what residents described as “the relative problem,” or the problem of these households attracting large numbers of family members or continuous traffic of those coming over to visit. As noted previously, this extended family system violates the Command’s control of numbers and people, as well as the strict boundaries of “the American family.” This has been the case both in regard to separate housing and in the BQs. BQ residents with Marshallese girlfriends or families have been a source of friction with other Americans due to the number of children and other family members that may appear and use resources such as the BQ laundry facilities.

As noted, over the years there were attempts to restrict American access to Ebeye that have affected American men with Marshallese wives or girlfriends. One such effort is reflected in a 1967 TT letter concerning a “rash of applicants” applying for marriages in order to live on Ebeye in new housing. TT concerns were that “this new influx will gradually usurp housing that was supposed to be for the legitimate residents of the island” (TTPI Archives 1967c). This was then protested by these American men as being “discrimination in reverse” (TTPI Archives 1967d). Some of these men were very vocal in protesting restrictions on their movement, whether due to restrictions on Ebeye overnight stays or base housing regulations (Host Nation Archives 1986). They also protested a requirement in the 1970s that they had to present an official marriage license to gain unrestricted access to Ebeye: there was debate over whether more casual marriages on the Marshallese side should be regarded as marriages on the American



side, and the answer was usually no. In one later exchange over access regulations, the KMR-TT Liaison asserts that while Marshallese recognize common-law marriages “There are no common-law marriages between U.S. personnel and Marshallese” (TTPI Archives 1980b).

Before 1982, these American men were allowed to remove goods (such as food) purchased from Kwaj stores to Ebeye for their families. American men reported that there were periodic crackdowns, but that there was always some way to get things through. Because they were allowed to transport goods, they also served as scapegoats from time to time in debates over access issues, as in 1980 when Marshallese representatives asserted that “most of the people illegally removing goods from Kwajalein are not Marshallese. They are U.S. personnel with girl friends on Ebeye” (CRC Minutes).

Most of these men lost the ability to bring goods to Ebeye after the 1982 demonstrations, when many other categories of people also lost access. This was seen as a form of punishment for the demonstrations, but also provided an opportunity for the Command to stop this “leakage” of goods to Ebeye. According to one long-timer, there were estimates at the time that the 50-60 men taking goods from Kwaj to Ebeye were supporting hundreds of people on Ebeye with those resources. However, as we will see in Chapter 9, some of these men continued to clandestinely supply their families on Ebeye with goods from Kwaj, even during the demonstrations.

#### Marshallese workers & access issues

There are a large number of very complex access issues associated with Marshallese workers on the base. I include them in this discussion because access to desired base resources includes access to jobs and their associated benefits. Here I will attempt to briefly describe some of the major issues, all of which deserve much more in-depth study, as many of these issues have

led to charges of discrimination, racism, and apartheid against the base and the Command. I also frequently cite a transcript of a 1974 meeting between base representatives and Marshallese regarding a strike over access issues: because this is a verbatim transcript, it is a very revealing document about how worker and access issues have been negotiated on the atoll (TTPI Archives 1974b).

In the mid-1970s, Alexander reported a number of problems encountered by Marshallese workers on the base, including different wage scales, different fringe benefits, a lack of advancement, and the fact that “there is no such thing as a Micronesian supervisor over on Kwajalein” (1978:41). These issues resulted in workers almost universally feeling that they were being discriminated against by race. A highly-ranked Marshallese worker also testified regarding other sources of discrimination against workers: “We don’t understand why it is that we cannot live on Kwajalein in housing on Kwajalein, attend the Kwajalein schools and purchase at Kwajalein facilities for buying goods. We have not been convinced that there is any good reason for this to be denied us” (Alexander 1978:45).

The issue of pay rates has been particularly contentious. In pre-Compact times, Marshallese were often paid less than Americans to do the same job (Alexander 1978). This difference in wage scales was one topic of the 1974 strike meeting. In a tacit admission that this was a justified complaint, the Command noted that “they are working on” the issue of different pay scales, although this issue never seems to have been completely resolved, until “resolved” by the Compact. Under the Compact, pay rates for Marshallese and Micronesian employees were reduced to make them comparable with other wage rates in the Marshalls and Micronesia. I was told by both Marshallese and Americans that this requirement was at the request of the RMI government to reduce the attraction to Ebeye of large numbers of people hoping to get high-

paying jobs on Kwaj. If this was indeed the case, it is unlikely that U.S. representatives would have fought the proposal, as it offered huge savings to the contractor in hiring local workers. Marshallese workers hired before 1986 were grandfathered and allowed to keep their higher wages and benefits, including access to base health care. Those hired after 1986 no longer had pay rates approaching U.S. levels and had significantly reduced benefits. As an indication of how wages dropped, the minimum wage in the RMI in 1990 was \$1.50 per hour (*Pacific Magazine*, Jan 1990:47); it was \$2 per hour in 2001 (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Nov. 20, 2001:4). The issue of wages for non-grandfathered Kwaj workers is a continuous one in the CRC Minutes over the years (CRC Minutes, Oct. 28, 1988). During my fieldwork, there were significant amounts of tension between grandfathered and non-grandfathered Marshallese workers, because of these differences in pay and benefits. However, even in times when wages have been low relative to U.S. standards, the base has historically provided the highest rates of pay in the Marshall Islands (Alexander 1978:64), and also the highest pay rates in the TT.

Another problem addressed in the 1974 meeting was that of differential fringe benefits between American and Marshallese workers, such as paid leave time. Contractor representatives responded that fringe benefits are not always equal “because the U.S. people are required to relocate from their homes” and would not come without such benefits. Also, because most of those recruited were bachelors without families, they needed more leave time to return home to visit family. Other documents also note that the primary reason for providing recreation and other benefits on the base is largely to serve the recreation needs of such bachelors who otherwise would have little to occupy themselves with on the island, outside of work.

Another major issue has been that Marshallese were often in the lowest-level service jobs on the base, and rarely had opportunities to move up to the supervisory level (Alexander 1978).

Indeed, Marshallese have filled and currently fill many of the lower-level service jobs on the base. The main character of Barclay's *Melal* is a Marshallese man working at the sewage treatment plant, projecting an image (intentionally on the part of the author) of Marshallese as "untouchables" of a sort, doing the worst kinds of jobs for lower pay, and being mistreated by many of their American supervisors. This image is not without its real counterparts, although that image is now frozen in many readers' minds as "how things are on Kwaj." This can be problematic, as it implies a black and white situation of racism and discrimination, with no other complicating factors, and indeed there are many complicating factors here. While they do not absolve Americans of responsibility for discrimination and racism on the base, they do show that there are other factors at play here as well. The newly-appointed ombudsman dealing with worker issues on Kwaj noted in 1999 that a significant amount of complaints about the workplace were cross-cultural misunderstandings (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Dec. 14, 1999:2).

Advancement of Marshallese workers has always been an issue. It *was* common for new American contract workers to be brought in as supervisors over Marshallese who were more qualified to take those positions: In fact, Micronesian workers sometimes trained their own American supervisors (Alexander 1976:44). However, as noted in Chapter 5, there have always been complex inter-cultural issues at work on Kwaj that affect work situations. A 1971 Trust Territory document responding to concerns by Marshallese leaders regarding the lack of advancement of Marshallese workers notes that Marshallese workers did not always have the leadership qualities needed to supervise Americans, with the barrier here being cultural, as well as experiential (Host Nation Archives, May 11, 1971). Of course, these workers also couldn't gain supervisory experience if they were never given supervisory positions. However, this document goes on to note that the Contractor had case histories and statistics to support these

assertions. During discussions of these issues with American long-timers, some also noted that inter-cultural differences in styles of managing people were obstacles to having Marshallese in charge, particularly with a continuously changing American population that may have little or no knowledge (or tolerance) of Marshallese culture.

However, Americans and Marshallese both noted that this work situation has improved significantly in recent years, with more Marshallese being promoted to supervisory positions, and more training programs being put in place to allow Marshallese to improve their math and English skills, and to attain the certification necessary to advance in certain jobs (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Dec. 15, 2000:1,6; *Kwajalein Hourglass*, Apr. 23, 2002:1,4; *Kwajalein Hourglass*, Apr. 1, 2003:4). In addition, over the last 15 years, more Marshallese workers have been able to get security clearances, opening up additional employment options (CRC Minutes, Jul. 26, 1990).

In terms of general access to skilled employment on Kwaj, due to deficiencies in the Marshallese education system, many Marshallese may not have the necessary education, job-related skills (there are few places to train on Ebeye) and English skills that would allow them to be hired on the base. While Job Corps has been seen as one way to train younger Marshallese and address some of these needs, this program has only had limited success in this regard. American workers noted that this sometimes meant that the Command and Contractor had to go outside Kwajalein to find skilled workers, a source of continuous tension over the years.

Interestingly, as Alexander presented these issues at a hearing held on Ebeye by the Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives, a member of the committee commented that some of the same issues were being experienced by citizens of Guam in doing similar kinds of U.S. military contract work. The question was then raised as to

how many of these things are part of the way government contracting operates in general. Comparative work here might be revealing.

There is no doubt that Marshallese workers have been mistreated over the years on Kwaj, by American supervisors, co-workers, and residents, and that racism has often been a factor, as noted in Chapter 5. But as some American long-timers have already noted, there has also been a fundamental clash in many cases between American work culture, and Marshallese culture generally. They stressed that difficulty in communication (both language-based and culture-based) has always been an obstacle exacerbating these other factors. Again, communication factors are exacerbated by continuous turnover in American workers: As noted in Chapter 5, it takes a long time to understand the intricacies of Kwajalein Atoll, the U.S.-Marshallese relationship, and Marshallese culture, and few Americans stick around that long.

As one Marshallese worker also noted, communication was a serious problem because “There are some Marshallese that are really shy. They cannot express themselves, especially to people who are real high.” While the Command has in recent years created a liaison position between Marshallese workers and the Command, Americans and Marshallese both said this had not done as much as they had hoped to address these kinds of issues. Another Marshallese worker particularly noted the failure of the RMI government to really stand up for worker issues on the base, saying that they take taxes from workers’ paychecks, but then don’t respond to their needs. Of course, this failure may reflect the larger rift and power struggles between Majuro and Kwajalein Marshallese.

In pre-Compact times, another complicating factor in worker issues was the question of who was ultimately responsible to “fix” a particular situation, the TT, the Command, or the Contractor. As one example of the shifting of responsibility in sometimes confusing ways,

during the 1974 meeting, a representative of the Contractor stated that some of the issues being discussed were more “political” and should be directed at the Trust Territory, not the Contractor or the base (TTPI Archives 1974b).

In examining 20 years of CRC minutes, it is evident that there has also been continuous pressure on the Command and Contractor to hire Kwajalein Atoll Marshallese preferentially, both because of the obligations the U.S. government has to Kwajalein populations and the impact of the range, and to discourage in-migration of workers from outside the atoll. Such proposed hiring policies have been aimed at a number of “outsider” groups, including Marshallese from other atolls, other Micronesians, and those from countries such as the Philippines. Documentary evidence shows that several Commanders were responsive to these requests: in 1966, the Contractor “agreed that Marshallese employees hired in the future would possess a certificate from Trust Territory establishing that they are bona fide Ebeye residents” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 11). However, this system of “certificates” for “bona fide Ebeye residents” appears never to have progressed beyond the planning stages. In 1976, the base announced a policy of hiring only Kwajalein Atoll residents (Host Nation Archives, n.d.). Despite the efforts of various Commands to address this issue, there have been complications, including the problem of determining “bona fide” Kwajalein residents.

One such complication was that in the TT period, it appears that the TT could not discriminate among “Micronesians,” and neither could the Contractor in many cases. As a reflection of this, TT documents often refer to the total number of “Micronesians” employed by the base, rather than “Marshallese” (TTPI Archives 1974b). Marshallese and Americans told me that there has also been a tendency over the years for those born and raised on Ebeye to identify it as their “home” when applying for work, as opposed to their actual ancestral home island or

atoll. Another complication of “Kwajalein only” hiring policies was that not all local Marshallese have always agreed on who should be hired. In this sense, the Command and Contractor were faced with Marshallese elites who wanted to be the “gatekeepers” of Kwaj jobs, in a way that offended American sensibilities (Host Nation Archives 1966). There has also been pressure on the Command to control hiring as a method of controlling in-migration to Ebeye – the Command response has been that the local government was responsible for enforcing immigration rules on Ebeye (CRC Minutes, Oct. 30, 1997). And while various Commands have been receptive to preferentially hiring Kwajalein Marshallese, these was the issue of education and training. If the Marshallese in question didn’t have the required skills, the Contractor had to hire elsewhere.

There has been particular pressure over the years to employ more MAC Islanders, particularly because they had been promised jobs on the base when they were relocated (CRC Minutes, Aug. 7, 1997). What they were promised and for how long has been a contentious issue. The issue of employment of MAC Islanders, as well as other complex issues associated with this group, are issues that I did not specifically explore. However, there is evidence that some of the “disconnection” here appears to be that some MAC Islanders expected permanent employment without question, while those on the American side expected them to compete for jobs after a certain point. In complaints in recent years regarding Kwaj jobs going to outer island Marshallese instead of MAC Islanders, a Command representative noted that the Compact does not specifically specify that MAC Islanders should be employed preferentially (CRC Minutes, Aug. 30, 2001). In another CRC meeting, base representatives noted that the Compact doesn’t discriminate among MAC, Ebeye, and other Marshallese (CRC Meeting, Jan. 3, 2002). The problem of MAC Islanders not having the needed skills for the jobs in question has been a perpetual issue as well (CRC Minutes, Oct. 29, 1998). Regarding the obligations the Command



has toward the MAC Islanders, a Command representative noted in 2002 that while the Command was sympathetic to their needs, the RMI government assumed responsibility for them with the signing of the Compact (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Apr. 2, 2002:5).

The most common critiques of hiring policies I heard while in the field was in regard to the hiring of workers from Guam to work construction projects on Kwaj. However, CRC Minutes from 1995 note that while Raytheon had hired workers from Guam, they had done so only after they could not find qualified electricians and plumbers on Ebeye and Majuro (CRC Minutes, Nov. 29, 1995). On other occasions, the local government provided lists of Kwajalein people for preferential hiring, but base representatives noted they were not qualified for those jobs (CRC Minutes, Oct. 30, 1997). The Command also noted in this regard that while it could control hiring by the Contractor, the hiring practices of sub-contractors were much harder to regulate.

In response to protests in 1998 regarding the hiring of some Filipino workers from Ebeye, the Commander responded that the base was employing as many qualified Marshallese as possible, and it was up to the local government to set limits on who could reside on Ebeye if the local government did not want Filipinos residing there and competing for jobs (CRC Minutes, Oct. 29, 1998). On other occasions, base administrators noted that under the Compact, Americans and Marshallese had equal standing in consideration for jobs on Kwaj, and Filipinos with green cards were considered as if they were Americans (CRC Meeting, Jan 3, 2002). There is also considerable resistance to the hiring of Micronesians from the FSM. One American resident recounted a story where a construction contractor hired workers from Guam. One of those workers happened to be a Ponapean who had lived on Guam for many years. When local Marshallese found out where he was actually from “he left on the next flight.”

In looking at the multitudinous access issues affecting workers, I was struck by how even the most miniscule issues could become quite complicated. In response to Marshallese worker requests in the 1974 transcript to be able to take home ice from the base, U.S. representatives agreed that this was doable. Taking home scrap lumber, however, was a more difficult issue. This also reverberates with a 1973 letter to the *Micronitor* protesting that even scrap wood was being confiscated at the Dock Security Checkpoint. Command representatives noted that while at some point Marshallese were being allowed to take some scrap lumber, it had created problems because some Marshallese were removing wood from Kwaj and selling it on Ebeye. In addition, there was no way to make sure the base was providing scrap lumber to all Marshallese individuals fairly. Because of these complications, in the end Command representatives stated that scrap lumber would be made available for TT use on Ebeye, but not to individuals. Many access issues have such complications, but these are not often heard: the Command did not offer a public rebuttal of various charges in the *Micronitor*.

Housing on the base for Marshallese workers has always been a contentious and highly-desired resource, and it is only in recent years that some workers with unusual schedules have been allowed to live there. The continuous refrain from the Command over the years regarding this issue has been that because Marshallese workers have options on Ebeye, they do not need base housing as other contract workers brought into the area do. The case of housing for other Micronesians and Pacific Islanders has been particularly touchy. An open letter to the Commander in a 1973 issue of the *Micronitor* criticizes the Command for allowing Micronesians to live on Kwaj (including Gilbertese, Guamanians and Palauans), but not Marshallese. The Command would likely respond that these people were given housing because they could not

reasonably expect housing on Ebeye if they did not have family members living there. In recent years, most Micronesians have lived on Ebeye.

American long-timers noted that there were a number of complicating factors in providing housing for Marshallese workers on the base. As previously noted, one major concern was that the vagaries of funding and cyclical changes associated with missile testing made housing options on the base very unstable, and Marshallese given housing one year might lose it the next. The danger there would be that when housing was lost, workers might perceive it to be discrimination, when in actuality it might be a reflection of military budget cuts. And again, in providing base housing for Marshallese with their families, there have always been concerns regarding “the relative problem.” According to one resident, workers should be paid

a living wage...But don't give him housing, and the reason is he's got 125 relatives...It doesn't work, because then you have twelve Marshallese guys with their relatives in the BQs, and you can't get to the washing machine...little kids...The other thing is every time you grant somebody housing from Ebeye, I mean not actual BQ space, but actual housing, or somebody with a Marshallese wife...they adopt all the kids.

Another often-cited issue in the media regarding access discrimination has had to do with limitations on hours of access to the base by workers. For many years on Kwaj, workers could not come onto the base more than an hour before they started their shifts, and had to leave an hour after. Workers, especially those who had worked on the base for decades, felt this was unjust and unreasonable. Marshallese who work for the RMI government on Kwaj noted that due to the nature of their work, which requires their service during non-business hours, this window of access created a lot of problems for them in doing their jobs. As one noted, “We are doing our

work, I don't know why they have to limit it." While this has often been seen as a form of discrimination against the Marshallese in particular, all non-resident access on Kwaj is regulated this way. If you are given permission to come over, that access is usually confined to a certain period of time, and can be quite limited. This is also a common practice on other U.S. Army bases. However, from the perspective of a Marshallese worker who has been working on the base for 30 years or more, it is understandable that these rules seem onerous.

There have also been continuous problems with ferry schedules that have complicated the issue of access hours for Marshallese workers. Ferry schedules may not coincide with working hours, and there may be a lack of space on ferries for all workers needing to come over at a particular time. There have also been problems over the years with non-workers taking up ferry space on crowded morning runs. If a worker took a later boat and was late for work as a result, they were often given citations for this by their employers. As a result, some Marshallese workers have had to come over on very early boats and wait as long as two to three hours at the DSC before being allowed to enter the base and go to work.

As this issue was being discussed in 2001, I was amazed to find this same issue being debated in the 1974 transcript. In the 1974 discussion, Marshallese representatives note that because of the ferry schedule, some workers were having "about a 12-hour day" (TTPI Archives 1974b). In 2001, the Command decided to allow workers access to the base three hours before their shift and three hours after, at least allowing workers to enter or stay on base (where they could have a meal, take a shower, or do laundry) instead of having to wait at the DSC. However, this still meant that workers had to come to Kwaj extremely early, adding to a workday that also includes waiting time for ferries and then travel time on them. Requests for more ferries at critical times of the day have usually met with the opposition on the grounds that they may not

be economically feasible for the Contractor. In recent years, the Ebeye police have been overseeing the loading of ferries in the mornings to make sure workers have priority, which has helped somewhat.

The changes noted above were made during a “loosening” cycle. However, this regulation was modified in 2004 to allow workers to stay on base only one hour after work (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Sep. 24, 2004). As noted in the *Hourglass*, this change was being made due to some unforeseen “undesirable consequences” encountered in allowing workers to stay for three hours after their shifts, which base residents told me had to do with excessive alcohol consumption by some workers. One hour would still allow workers to do their laundry, without adding to the alcohol problem.

Use of the hospital by Marshallese on Ebeye has also always been a contentious and complicated issue. It has also been the focus of the split within Marshallese workers, as grandfathered workers are allowed to use the hospital and dental facilities, while non-grandfathered workers are only permitted to use them in emergencies. While this division was to take effect with the Compact, basic healthcare services to non-grandfathered workers were only phased out completely in 2001 (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Mar. 30, 2001:1). This gradual decrease in services appears to have been an informal effort by the Command and Contractor to accommodate all Marshallese workers until the new Ebeye Hospital was opened. In response to complaints about non-grandfathered Marshallese workers having to go to Ebeye for minor care, in recent years the Contractor established a “First Stop” clinic for workers to use for minor complaints. (I have heard a rumor more recently that it might be shut down for cost reasons.)

In talking to Marshallese workers, the general feeling was that *all* Marshallese workers on Kwaj should be able to use the base hospital as part of their work benefits, not just for emergencies. According to one worker, Marshallese workers are

allowed to use the place to eat, they pay. Allowed to use the laundry, they pay. Then the hospital should do that too...or make a planned payment for them to get medical [insurance]. I've never seen a place in the world, you're working for one company, and they don't treat you at the hospital, unless it's military rules nowadays.

However, issues of payment and other complications have arisen, and will be discussed below in dilemmas of healthcare access.

Even the provision of emergency care has been complex. Some Marshallese observed that workers may be having an emergency on the base while working, but are “scared to ask,” or assume they will be denied access. Definitions of what is an “emergency” have also been an issue. In the 1974 transcript, Marshallese representatives assert that Marshallese workers needing emergency medical and dental care have been denied access on Kwaj. It is then determined that some Marshallese workers have gone to the hospital or dental clinic, been evaluated by staff, and determined not to be having an emergency. Marshallese saw this as a denial of emergency care. There is then some debate over what constitutes a dental “emergency,” and whether a toothache might constitute an emergency. Upon being informed that a toothache is not necessarily an emergency, a Marshallese representative asks, “what about a very painful toothache?” I find this document particularly revealing in this way as a verbatim debate over where to draw the boundaries of access. And again, we see the question arising of who is responsible for deficiencies on Ebeye, where dental care has been inadequate to nonexistent. In response to

requests for access during the TT period, the Command often stated that the provision of dental and health services on Ebeye was the responsibility of the TT.

And the issue of access by workers to health care is not made any easier by Americans making promises they can't keep. Both Americans and Marshallese noted that in the most recent contract changeover, the new Contractor had been overly optimistic about the ease with which the changeover would take place, as well how easy it would be to operate Kwaj at a profit without cutting employees and employee benefits, both for Americans and Marshallese. American residents noted that managers also made promises about improving access to health care and other base services to the Marshallese, which American old-timers knew they wouldn't be able to keep (and they haven't, citing cost reasons). While one American resident described such promises as outright "lies," others responded that it may have been yet another case of overly-optimistic new managers on Kwaj, or political rhetoric associated with Kwaj contracts. Regardless of motivations, several Americans thought that raising Marshallese hopes in this way was unconscionable.

#### Marshallese elites & access issues

As already seen, there have been significant tensions on the atoll between the hierarchical Marshallese social system and American ideals of democracy. This tension comes out particularly in issues of access. In looking at access issues and Marshallese elites, I found that it was very difficult to disentangle rank from access, because in many cases, rank determines access, as members of landowning families usually have better education, better access to employment, and hence better access to Kwaj. They are also much more likely to hold government positions and offices. They are more mobile as well, in terms of access to Kwaj, but

also in a larger sense. Several Americans observed to me that sometimes you can determine rank by how often some Marshallese travel, to Majuro, Hawaii, or other locations. Travel can be linked to better education, as children of the Marshallese upper class are more likely to have spent time in educational institutions in other parts of Micronesia (especially when Ebeye had no high school), as well as Guam, Hawaii, and the mainland U.S. There are many Marshallese people on Ebeye that rarely, if ever, come over to the base, and it isn't really part of their world. To elites, mobility is part of the privilege of being elites.

As noted, local elites have been much more likely to get jobs on the base. According to American long-timers, before the Compact when few jobs were available for Marshallese on Kwaj, these jobs tended to go to members of the upper class, or prominent land-owning families. Several Americans saw post-Compact changes as a very good thing in that after that point, "the average guy over there, can get a job at KMR. Whereas, they didn't get anything before, because the money didn't go to the average guy." Other Americans believed that there were still serious obstacles in hiring; "...if you're not of a certain caste or certain family name, you're not working here."

Even in the most restrictive periods, higher-level traditional leaders have always had some amount of access to the base, as well as access to resources such as Surfway and Macy's, resources normally closed to non-residents. Alexander recalls that the paramount chief of Ebeye had a badge labeling him as "King" and allowing him access to all stores on Kwajalein (1978:78). Elites have also been much more likely to have their children admitted to the Guest Student Program on Kwaj, whereby five Marshallese children are admitted as preschoolers to the Kwajalein school system each year. This program started in 1986 (CRC Minutes, Jun. 5, 1986): monthly tuition was charged (CRC Minutes, Nov. 29, 2001). Kwaj residents said it was very



clear that those selected were almost always children of highly-ranked parents, although one resident noted that some less-highly-ranked but long-time Kwaj workers had gotten their children into the program. While the Command and various groups associated with the project have tried to emphasize that kids be selected democratically, residents noted that they could not force the issue. As one resident said, “You don’t think those kids are just off the street, do you? [They are] handpicked *by the government*.” However, as noted above regarding jobs on Kwaj, there is a sort of feedback loop going on here, as elites are more likely to be better educated and more familiar with American ways, and so their children even at young ages will have more of the skills needed to adapt to the Kwaj educational system.

While the highest-ranked traditional leaders have always had a certain amount of access to the base and its resources, things have gotten more complicated for the Command when figuring out where to draw the line. Over the years, there has clearly been tension between Marshallese elites assuming that access to the base should be based on rank, and the Command wanting to allow access only to those with the highest rank, and those with “official business” on the base. For example, access was reduced in the late 1990s for Kwajalein landowners or leaders who didn’t live on the atoll. In response to Marshallese protests to this round of cutbacks, the Command asked RMI to supply it with a list of people and the reasons they needed to come over, specifying days and times. In response, only a list of people was supplied, with no justifications. To the Command, the Marshallese had not made a good enough case for access, and the Command then considered these requests unjustified. This is a continuing pattern over time on Kwaj regarding access issues. While I was there, Marshallese local government representatives were asking the Command to give badges to all *alabs* on Kwajalein (regardless of whether they had “official business” on the base), as well as all ministers and church officials on Ebeye, as

important personages deserving the benefits of access. Requests for access for all *alabs* living on Ebeye has been a continuous refrain (CRC Minutes, May 27, 1993). That Marshallese workers and RMI employees are granted privileges that *alabs* are not has been a continuous source of tension on the atoll (CRC Minutes, Feb. 17, 1983). The Command has often noted in response that these categories of Marshallese leaders already had plenty of access through various means, and when they didn't they could always contact Host Nation (CRC Meeting, Jan. 3, 2002).

Marshallese did note to me that one of the problems of access for elites was that Marshallese are very rank conscious (Americans usually described this as being "badge conscious"), and if one person of a particular rank loses access in comparison to others of the same perceived rank (whether or not they have "official business" on Kwaj), tensions result. To the Command, providing a regular access badge for someone who doesn't even live on the atoll seems unjustified, but high-ranking Marshallese landowners feel it is their right to have access on par with their counterparts living on Ebeye. Also, unfortunately for the Command, designations of rank in Marshallese terms are not always as clear as rank is in military terms. Despite some "fossilization" of the rank order on Kwajalein as a result of colonial contact, there is still a considerable amount of "under the surface" contention over issues of rank and rights on the Marshallese side, and the Command can never hope to satisfy all of these perceived "slights" in access. In a similar manner they can never address all the perceived injustices with regard to landholding, resulting in one of the "tensions of empire" on Kwajalein, as the military seeks a simple answer to land "ownership" issues, and there isn't one. This is reflected in the selection of one "King," with an associated badge and access rights, in an attempt to simplify a complex, somewhat fluid system. Some American long-timers saw this as part of a larger American failure to understand and deal with complex cultural issues on the atoll.

As elites create tensions for Americans and their democratic ideals, they also create problems and tensions for Kwaj workers. By Marshallese custom elites must be treated a particular way, even if it breaks Kwajalein regulations. As one example, while I was there, Marshallese workers were concerned about losing their jobs for giving rides to elites in base vehicles and granting similar favors, although they also noted that they could not deny these requests. This is another good case of Marshallese culture meeting military culture, with tensions resulting for those caught in between.

Questions of elite access have also led to standoffs between base security and landowners, particular those with land parcels on Kwajalein Islet. The view from landowners I spoke with was that they should not have to apply for access to land that is theirs by right. The usual scenario was for a landowner to demand access to the base or certain base resources, saying “This is my land” and hence they should have access to the resources on it. In one particular case, a male landowner brought a child to Kwaj saying that she was sick, and that because his land made up part of the base, she should be treated at the base hospital. I don’t know how high the decision went, but someone eventually decided to allow him access to the hospital. A nurse who examined the child told me that that there was absolutely nothing wrong with the child, and that it appeared to be a political statement. On another occasion, a highly-ranked female leader parked her boat in the harbor in an unapproved location, and had a confrontation with a high member of the security team. In response to her assertion that “this is my land,” he responded that it was her land, but that the U.S. government was paying millions of dollars to use it.

The majority of Americans I spoke with did not have much remaining sympathy for elite claims to base access, particularly those from landowners getting large lease payments. As one

long-timer asserted, “they’re getting paid too good for it. I mean, they are getting paid highly for it.” Several Americans also noted that elite access to base resources had a substantial impact on Ebeye’s failure to develop adequate infrastructure, as will be seen in the case of hospital access below.

### Access to the Kwaj Hospital – “The Slippery Slope”

Here I am focusing on the issue of access to the Kwaj hospital as a good example of a critical and highly contentious access issue, with complex and far-reaching ramifications - critical because of health conditions on Ebeye, and highly contentious, as we will see, because human lives sometimes hang in the balance. Outsiders’ images of Kwajalein have sometimes been formed on hospital access issues: I recall my response, which could generally be described as outrage, to first reading about the “denial of care” incident described below. And as noted above, the hospital has also been a focus of issues regarding elite access, as well as the site of power plays between Kwaj landowners and base officials.

Generally, the late 1960s and early 1970s seem to have been a low point in US-Marshallese relations in regard to health care. The general perception on Ebeye was that there was little concern for health problems on Ebeye on the part of the Command or hospital staff, and those medical personnel wanting to volunteer on Ebeye were prohibited from doing so. In the late 1960s as a TT representative on Ebeye, William Vitarelli was concerned about the prevalence of open water catchment tanks on Ebeye, and the potential for a gastroenteritis outbreak, as these catchments were the islet’s primary source of drinking water. Vitarelli asked the Commander for covers for these catchments, or at least the materials to construct them, in

order to prevent such an epidemic. Both requests were denied, and an epidemic did occur. During the epidemic, the Ebeye hospital ran out of intravenous fluids needed for severely dehydrated children. Vitarelli took one seriously ill young girl by boat to Kwaj, but was denied access to the base by a guard. The girl died on the return trip to Ebeye. Vitarelli's requests for intravenous fluids from an American doctor at the Kwaj Hospital at that time were also denied (Dever 1978:v).

However, this era cannot be considered one of completely closed access: the base supplied Ebeye with a fair amount of medical supplies and services during this era, as noted in documentary sources. One example is a document from 1971 from a meeting between TT representatives and the Command (Host Nation Archives 1971:2). This document is illustrative because, again, we see this combative relationship between the TT and the Command, as well as the recurring debate regarding who is ultimately responsible for remedying conditions on Ebeye. One of the reasons the meeting was called was due to Command concerns that "unauthorized persons" on Ebeye (not TT representatives) were signing medical supply request forms. At the meeting, the TT doctor asked if the Command (KMR) was going to eliminate or reduce sale of KMR supplies to Ebeye. Command said no, but that they were concerned that "continued use of KMR supply channels by TT encourages TT higher headquarters to relay on KMR supplies and neglect Ebeye on the premise that KMR is here and will provide essential supplies when they are not available through the TT." Interestingly, the TT doctor agreed that "this was already the philosophy of some TT supply officials and only the shock of being cut off from KMR supplies would improve Ebeye normal supply channels." However, KMR restated that it had no intention of resorting to this drastic method (Host Nation Archives 1971:2). Here again we see the more

focused debates on who is going to provide and pay for services, reflecting the larger debate over who is ultimately responsible for “the Ebeye situation.”

Alexander noted in the mid-1970s that there was a referral system in place for Marshallese patients to be sent to the Kwaj hospital if staff or facilities are lacking on Ebeye, and that Kwaj would also take emergency cases. He describes maids employed on Kwaj being required to have a physical exam on Kwaj as a condition of employment, but having to be treated on Ebeye if anything was wrong with them. Blood tests to be processed at Kwaj were suddenly denied. The Command would not allow military aircraft to take some patients to Honolulu. When questioned about these policies, the chief of staff of the Kwaj hospital responded that “the Trust Territory should handle their own problems and that in 20 years they had not done so and, therefore, his denial of these service would tend to force them to develop their own system” (Kotrazy in Alexander 1978:55). Alexander also describes a variety of situations from the mid-1970s in which Marshallese felt that the Kwaj hospital discriminated against them, although he noted that in some of these cases, the discrimination could be very subtle (1978).

Although they readily acknowledged that denial of care may have happened in the past, Kwaj medical personnel I interviewed stressed to me that in their experience of 20-plus years, there had been no situation as bad as that described above. One noted, “When I was here, we were very liberal in accepting patients, as a matter of fact, almost got critiques by the RMI for accepting patients, because we accept them but then we charge them.” Long-time medical personnel I interviewed (as residents of the base, not in their official capacity as hospital representatives) were adamant that since the 1980s there had been no restrictions on their volunteering on Ebeye, and cooperation between the hospitals was common. During their tenure, the Kwaj hospital had regularly handled emergencies involving Marshallese workers, as well as

emergencies from Ebeye that could not be handled there. Marshallese elites of certain kinds also had regular access to the base hospital. In addition, the Kwaj hospital also accepted referrals that could not be handled at the Ebeye hospital, due to a lack of appropriately trained personnel, equipment, or particular medications. Kwaj healthcare workers described that referral and emergency system as “working pretty well.” As with anything else in this bureaucratic system, referrals from the Marshallese side had to be made through the appropriate channels, and the Kwaj Hospital had to be notified before patients are sent over. They also had to reassure those on the American side that once emergency patients are stabilized, that they will be returned to care on the Marshallese side.

One difficulty in allowing Marshallese access to the Kwaj hospital is that while the Kwaj hospital is quite good by Marshallese standards (in staffing, administration, and equipment), it is limited by U.S. standards. This was illustrated in Chapter 5 in Command prohibitions on the hiring of workers with complex medical or dental problems (or family members with such problems). Americans have often had to travel to Hawaii or the U.S. for certain kinds of medical care: until recently, women had to return state-side to give birth. While the Kwaj hospital is light years ahead of the Ebeye hospital, it is not set up to handle some of the complex, long-neglected medical problems presented by local Marshallese. According to one Kwaj healthcare worker, treating Marshallese referrals

it's a challenge, it's a tension, because you're practicing Second-and-a-Half World medicine, but you're supposed to apply First World medical principles which would be, right off the bat, these people need to go to Honolulu, to see a pediatrician or have the heart surgeon or whatever.

But sending patients to Honolulu is *hugely* expensive, and these debts, coupled with the use of Honolulu healthcare facilities by elites and other Marshallese living there, have been a major issue between the RMI government and state governments in the U.S., reflected in Compact II impact funds for locations such as Guam and Hawaii to cover some of the huge cost of providing medical care to Marshallese and other former TT Micronesians.

This brings up the issue of the cost of treatment on Kwaj as well. As Americans and Marshallese both noted, American-style healthcare is *very* expensive, and how this care will be paid for is a major issue. Marshallese and Americans noted that debts to the Kwaj hospital were a major burden to Marshallese workers on the base. As noted, many Marshallese have complex, long-standing (and often untreated) medical problems that compound the cost of treatment by American standards, a problem also noted by Linda Allen in her analysis of Marshallese hospital use in Enid, Oklahoma (1997). Debts wracked up by elites on Kwaj have also been an issue, as well as referrals: from time to time the Kwaj hospital has refused to treat anything but emergencies until previous tabs were paid off by the RMI government, although they have had a tendency to quickly reaccumulate (CRC 27 Nov 02/Access file).

As noted above in discussing worker issues, there are also complex cultural issues affecting perceptions of access and actual access by Marshallese workers to the hospital. Marshallese noted to me that some workers are “too shy” to go to the hospital even though they are having an emergency, or assume they will be rejected and so don’t go there. But again, definitions of what is an “emergency” can also be different, with some Marshallese presenting with routine problems that have to be denied by the Kwaj Hospital. There are likely many other cultural issues at play as well, particularly as many Marshallese I knew on Ebeye still use traditional Marshallese medicine instead of or in addition to hospital care. Others refuse all



hospital care: there are families on Ebeye who refuse medication for such things as tuberculosis. Linda Allen's coverage of the cultural "disconnections" between American medical personnel in Enid, Oklahoma, and Marshallese living there touches on many issues that resonate with the Ebeye-Kwaj healthcare situation (1997).

Kwaj medical personnel stressed that they had to be fairly strict with the rules concerning emergencies and referrals from Ebeye, not because they were uncompassionate, but in order to prevent dependency. They noted a recurring problem of the Ebeye hospital sending patients over to Kwaj, saying equipment was broken or the case could not be handled on Ebeye, when Kwaj staff knew quite well that certain equipment was functioning and that they could handle the case, but chose not to "because we could do it for them." There has also been the problem of routine cases being sent to Kwaj as emergencies (CRC Minutes, May 30, 1997). There were also failures to plan ahead to acquire such critical resources as oxygen. Long-timers noted that some of these supply and logistics problems were also a result of disputes between Kwaj and Majuro, as well as the assumption that the Ebeye hospital can always fall back on Kwaj. One American noted that the mentality was one of "We won't send them a surgeon for a few weeks, if they get in real trouble, they always have Kwaj to take care of them." These patterns have deep roots: A 1974 report on Ebeye Health Services noted a problematic trend whereby more and more referrals were being sent to the Kwaj hospital. In addition, requests for medical supplies from the base "indicate a lack of advanced planning." Significantly, this report notes that both of these things were significantly adding to the expense of Ebeye healthcare (TTPI Archives 1974a:13).

Several medical personnel stressed that it is of critical importance that this dependency of the Ebeye hospital be reduced: "Anyway, if there was an appreciation that, gosh, we've got to take care of it ourselves, I think things would be run a little bit differently." However, efforts in

the past to build a self-sufficient Ebeye hospital have not been successful for a number of reasons: as many American long-timers noted, much work and money over the years has gone into the building and rebuilding of the hospital, and the results soon disappear. In talking to Americans about hospital access, all noted that one of the major problems is that Marshallese elites by and large do not use the Ebeye hospital, they go to Kwaj or to Honolulu instead. In addition to the cost of such treatment, this presents a problem, as American long-timers felt that the Ebeye Hospital would never substantially improve, as long as those who would demand better care can go elsewhere. Meanwhile, the bulk of Ebeye's population has substandard care.

Some Americans and Marshallese wanted the Kwaj hospital opened to all Marshallese, but there was the sticky question of who will pay for this very expensive proposition. Even opening the hospital to all workers and their families would be an expensive proposition, and while this possibility has been suggested on occasion, costs to the Contractor are likely to be prohibitive. Some long-timers again saw the only real answer to the issue being improvements to the Ebeye hospital, and reducing access to and dependency on the Kwaj hospital to make this happen. However, they also noted that this encouragement of self-sufficiency can also be seen as a lack of humanitarian concern or even cruelty. Another attempted solution has been the support in the form of money, labor and equipment to the Ebeye hospital to improve it, but as noted in Chapter 6, these improvements have quickly fallen apart or disappeared. This is a situation with no easy answers. In discussion with American base residents about the dangers of new Contractors promising things they can't deliver, such as medical care, one responded "Yeah, I think that's exactly it. Some things are very, very appropriate, others end up being a slippery slope, and once you slide down it, it's going to be hard to crawl your way back up again."

One long-timer focused on the responsibility of the American system to the Marshallese, conjoined with Marshallese elites' responsibilities to their own people. The person noted,

[it's a] Difficult thing. Another example of someone should work through what is our role and mission? And I personally could see a very appropriate position being we don't accept any of these patients, period. And that's the kind of thing that would translate into this is a cold, harsh, cruel way of supporting it, but as long as the access is here, it leaves them, and especially the leaders...[a prominent Marshallese female leader], the one they named the [new Ebeye] hospital after – she was never at the [Ebeye] hospital! She got a cold, and she came over here! And that's not right.

In terms of American responsibility, some Americans noted that at the root of the issue, many of the complex, long-standing medical issues of many Marshallese on Ebeye (such as diabetes and heart problems) are the result of living on Ebeye for many years with a poor diet and no exercise, a situation created by American military activities in the Marshalls and on Kwajalein. In this light, opening access to the base hospital seems to be the only just and humane thing to do, but who will make that decision, and take responsibility for it? Who will pay for it? Surely not the Contractor running the base on a competitively-bid contract for the DoD. As one healthcare worker noted,

Once again, a very, very difficult thing, patients show up at the dock end up showing up at the hospital, if it ends up being open door, and on a case-by-case basis you can say it's appropriate from the humanitarian point of view, but if you look at it from the policy point of view, that's not viewed as the mission for the Kwajalein hospital, to take care of all the really, really sick people over on Ebeye.

Several long-timers noted that there has to be the political will to improve Ebeye healthcare, along with appropriate funding and administration, bottom-up from the Marshallese side. There also has to be training and retention of Marshallese healthcare workers, who often migrate to the U.S. to work for better pay.

### Dilemmas of Access

As can be seen in the case of healthcare, the dilemmas of access are many on Kwajalein Atoll. To some new American administrators on Kwaj, the answer has been a seemingly simple one at first: cut off access and force Ebeye to be self-sufficient. But then, situations arise that bring up humanitarian issues associated with the state of Ebeye, and some access is allowed. As will be seen, access has also been gained as a result of the demonstrations, through which Marshallese leaders have used their land-owning power and the geography of the atoll to forge a unique relationship with the base. To keep this access they have had to exert continuous pressure, protesting access losses, and pushing the limits of the system. These forces increase access, but then there is always a point where too much is leaving the base, or there are abuses of access policies, or there are budget cuts or a new Commander/Contractor, and access is tightened. This reduction in access is then perceived, projected and protested by Marshallese and others as discrimination and heartlessness, conditions on Ebeye are highlighted, and the cycle starts all over again.

The result is a perpetually changing system that can be very difficult to live with, and the Marshallese have to live with it everyday. It is not surprising that there are tensions around

access: for many non-residents, the “face” of the U.S. is security personnel on Kwaj. There are also tensions from the meeting of a people-based power system (the Marshallese) versus a bureaucratic power system of seeming arbitrariness and constant red tape. At some point I heard a Marshallese leader and government official state that Marshallese often had trouble with access restrictions because “Marshallese aren’t used to rules.” This struck me as odd, because there are plenty of “rules” in the Marshallese hierarchy on Kwajalein Atoll. But then it occurred to me that Marshallese traditionally are not used to this kind of impersonal regulation and control. Even American residents, new and old, chafe at this. Then there is also the tension between elite access to the base and American ideals of fairness and democracy, an ever-present tension on the atoll.

The Marshallese, through internal and external pressure, and demonstrations on the atoll, have succeeded in carving out more access for themselves (for elites and the general population of Ebeye) than is normally the case on an Army base. The dilemmas of access on Kwajalein show why the Army usually goes out of its way to negotiate only with national governments, as local and regional politics can be complicated. Certainly the Army would like to do that here, but because of Kwaj’s unique geography and history, it cannot. This is not only because of the threat of sail-ins, but also because, inevitably, there is a crisis on Ebeye, whether of water, food, or power, and not to respond to these crises would truly be heartless. Commands and Contractors have responded: not always uniformly and not always effectively, but it is important to see how some have responded.

But again, these individuals may only live on the atoll for a couple of years, at which point they are replaced by other Americans who begin the long process (if they care enough) of understanding the complexities and contradictions of U.S.-Marshallese relationships on the atoll.

And some long-time American residents have spent years trying to understand these things. Through experience they learned that no access issue is simple on Kwajalein, despite appearances. That short-term increases in access will not fix larger, deeper structural issues concerning Ebeye. And they have raised difficult questions here concerning what American responsibilities are, what Marshallese responsibilities are, and whether Ebeye can be “fixed” without the U.S. leaving Kwajalein permanently. There are no easy answers.

## CHAPTER 8

### FOOD & WATER ISSUES: ACCESS CASE STUDIES

According to Donnan, the academic preoccupation with border and borderlands metaphors “has sometimes minimized, even obscured, how the wider political economy continues to shape and inflect the lives of ordinary people” (1999:101). In contrast to this dominant view, borders

continue to be literal and concrete dividing lines with very real consequences for the lives of all who live there. In particular, they are dividing lines between different political rights and economic opportunities, and it is the imbalance between these which draws people to borders in the hope of acquiring what might not be available at home (French in Donnan 1999:101).

By the examination of such details of daily life, we can better see how “dual but unequal state power operates at borders, and how cultural relations develop historically in frontier zones...” (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:3). The question of how this kind of “dual but unequal state power” operates at the border between Kwaj and Ebeye will be analyzed here in regard to food and water, issues of significant concern for both Americans and Marshallese on Kwajalein Atoll. We can see how the issues play out differently on each side, and how Americans, while not unaffected, are again much more insulated than the Marshallese. In looking at these issues, one can again see access cycles play themselves out, starting with restricted access, which causes concerns based on humanitarian needs on Ebeye, which leads to a relaxation in access restrictions, which leads to complications or concerns over dependency and abuse, which leads

to restricted access. (Of course, mixed in there are some arbitrary changes for no apparent reason.) Again, we can see the dilemmas of access and the “tensions of empire” that are so prevalent on Kwajalein Atoll.

While some of these issues have already been touched on in the chapter on access issues, I have chosen to focus on food and water issues here because of their long and complicated history on the atoll. They are also linked to critical Marshallese health issues on the atoll, including malnutrition, diabetes and a variety of water-borne diseases. A focus on these issues also allows some connections to be made between the more micro-level of everyday life and macro-level issues of structural dependency.

It is also important to keep in mind while looking at water and food issues on the atoll that the number of human beings supported by the atoll prehistorically (without external inputs of money and Western technology) was quite low compared to current populations. Kwaj Islet was the most populous islet on the atoll due to its large size, large freshwater lens, and protected interior, and supported a population of 240 in 1930 (Carroll in Carucci 1997a:254). It now supports a population of approximately 2,000 Americans. Ebeye Islet, a narrow strip of land with a relatively small freshwater lens, had a population of 19 in 1930 (Gorenflo and Levin 1989:99). It is now home to over 10,000 people.

#### Kwajalein Islet Food & Water Issues

Again, I note upfront that American concerns regarding food and water may seem trivial in comparison to the situation on Ebeye, but this information is a critical part of presenting a more complete picture of life and disparities on the atoll. Because the two “sides” are



inextricably linked, it is necessary to see both “sides” to understand resource and access issues, and the politics of both. It also helps us understand what exactly it is that Ebeye residents want access to. Also, media images of Kwaj as the equivalent of a California suburb (Kluge 1968) assume that base residents have all the resources available to them that residents of the U.S. normally have. This is not the case today, and definitely was not the case in the past. While the base does not have the usual “commissary” and “post exchange” stores found on most military bases, it has roughly the same kinds of stores and level of support, with subsidized low prices but limited varieties (and sometimes amounts) of goods. Also, as noted in the chapter describing life on the base, it is important to remember that we as Americans have come to expect a certain quality of life in regard to food and water quality and quantity in our daily lives, and most Americans come to Kwaj with those same expectations. Residents emphasized to me that Americans would not come to work and live in the middle of the Pacific if certain basic resources and amenities were not provided. It is seen as being “part of the deal” Americans make in coming to work for military-related enterprises overseas. All of this is by way of saying that conceptions of American privilege need to be seen in a wider context that connects them (Americans on Kwaj) and us (Americans in the U.S.).

#### Kwaj food issues

Base residents described the main grocery store, Surfway, as “decent” at the time of my fieldwork, but not great by U.S. standards, and residents emphasized that it has improved significantly only in recent years. Fresh foods have always been an issue on Kwaj, and have constituted one of the focal deprivations for Americans living there. As one long-timer observed, in the past there was “Far less fresh produce, things like that, in the stores.” Fresh fruits and

vegetables were flown in once a week in limited quantities, although the planes did not always arrive as scheduled. When the plane did appear, residents would converge on Surfway to get what they could. One long-timer recalled that in the early 1980s, when the plane did appear, “everybody would start to queue up around 3 o’clock.”

Milk was also not available regularly. One resident noted that “fresh milk didn’t start coming in until about [19]85. The military had it, because they would get a supply on the [C-]141, but the civilian population did not.” There was also no fresh meat: “Surfway was just all frozen foods, frozen meats. Surfway didn’t look the way it does now.” Residents also noted that only in very recent years have healthier and specialty foods been available on Kwaj. Even junk food was in short supply in the early 1980s: “we had nothing like potato chips or candy or anything. They would have every once in a while across the scroll [on TV], would come ‘there’s M&Ms at Ten-Ten, limit one box per family. There’s potato chips at Ten-Ten, limit 2 bags per family.’” As a result, some American residents took advantage of the times when Ebeye had a better junk food supply than Kwaj. As noted previously, base residents often went to Ebeye for other items not usually available on Kwaj, including fabric, fingernail polish and makeup.

According to recent retail managers, there were also serious problems in those days in terms of stock and retail management: one noted that some former managers had no retail experience, resulting in occasional and chronic shortages of key items. One long-timer recalled “the Christmas without flour” as being particularly memorable, as was the “Thanksgiving without celery.” In terms of non-food necessities, residents noted that

we had months, we had weeks without toilet paper at one point. Stupid things...Husbands would steal it from work. Things like that. We’ve had shortages of paper towels, we’ve

had shortages of shampoo...laundry detergent, where they brought in from Supply all the little tiny boxes [from the Laundromat] into Surfway.

In a Command brochure from the 1990s, the following comment includes some commentary on the retail situation on Kwajalein: “Kwajalein is the world where...creative talents surface to replace TV...time is marked by monthly arrivals of the supply barge...costly jewelry is sometimes easier to buy than lettuce” (USAKA n.d.:9).

This lack of consistency in supplies has led to hoarding by long-timers. While managers emphasized that it was no longer necessary to stockpile, old habits die hard. One long-timer had 20 bags of cat litter stored in her bathroom at the time of our interview: she had learned from long experience that such supplies were never consistently available. Residents emphasized that this shortage of supplies of all kinds was the reason why “Surfway has always been sacred,” with access being limited for the most part to base residents. Access has usually been prohibited even to sponsored visitors of base residents, as well as Americans on Kwaj on Temporary Duty for various missions (this has changed in recent years). Few Marshallese have been given access over the years, with the exception of a select group of Marshallese elites, including the *iroij laplap* and associated family members. Residents emphasized that Marshallese and American access to Surfway had to remain restricted and should continue to be restricted in order to ensure that goods intended for base residents were in fact available to base residents when they needed them. While the Ten-Ten store has always been more open in terms of access, and residents supported this, Surfway has always been “sacred” for this reason.

In true American fashion, another deprivation felt by Americans on Kwaj has been the lack of fast food: all dining facilities are controlled and supplied by the Contractor. Residents told me that it is not uncommon for residents on leave in the U.S. to bring back Big Macs and

other fast food in coolers to deprived friends on Kwaj. As one resident noted, “you have to request it without lettuce and stuff, that gets awful after being in a cooler on a plane...they’ll stop right before they get on the plane, they’ll have a cooler, and then you get it and either eat it then, or freeze it.”

While residents had kept continuous pressure on the retail system over the years to improve, and it had improved in recent years, ultimately any American spending any significant amount of time on Kwaj had to get used to “doing without” certain taken-for-granted resources: this was one of the “facts of life” on Kwaj. Long-timers noted that those who couldn’t learn to do without didn’t last long. When I asked if residents were civil to each other when weekly produce arrived at Surfway, one resident responded that residents were orderly “for the most part, because people that have lived here for any amount of time are used to it.”

While the quantities and quality of fresh produce have improved in recent years, produce arrivals still caused somewhat of a commotion while I was on Kwajalein. According to one long-timer, “It’s supposed to come in, used to be every Saturday, which now I think that plane is coming in on Sunday, that was the big day, and Saturday afternoons, Surfway would be packed.” The quality of produce shipped by plane to the Central Pacific has also remained an issue: Residents noted that fresh produce that came in weekly needed to be consumed quickly: “anything that has to travel this way, like flowers [for holidays], they are dead like that, or bad like that, it’s just too far...Same thing with the fruits and stuff, it’s just never as fresh and it doesn’t last as long.” One more recent resident noted that after living on Kwaj and adjusting to the availability of produce there,

the first couple times I was back [in the U.S.], ...I would almost get sick to my stomach the first few times I ate [U.S. produce], not because I was overeating, but the quality of the stuff was so different. People [on Kwaj] are used to eating stuff that's not as fresh.

In discussing the availability of fresh foods on Kwajalein, the obvious answer seems to be that produce should be grown and harvested locally by Marshallese and sold to Americans. However, local tree crops like coconut and breadfruit are not eaten in any real quantity by most Americans, who do not know how to process them or want to do this. In terms of growing other crops on a small or commercial scale, it must be kept in mind that the atoll environment we are talking about is not necessarily conducive to the cultivation of water-hungry and non-salt-tolerant species, and land is scarce. In addition, those wanting to start such businesses would have to have the cooperation of particular landowners who control the land in question, which, as noted in the chapter on Ebeye, has been an obstacle in both resettlement and development projects.

In contrast, the possibility of harvesting fish and other seafood commercially for both American and Marshallese consumption seems like a more reasonable option, and this is already done on a small scale with individual fishermen on both sides. However, as with any other issue on the atoll, there have been complications. A Command representative observed to me that he thought it made no sense for fish to be imported for American consumption when better and fresher fish were available locally. This observation was then the motivation for a trade fair that took place on the base in 2003, where Marshallese businesses were encouraged to showcase their wares with the possibility of increasing business opportunities on the base (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Apr. 29, 2003:1,5).

However, while base residents who attended the fair noted that it seemed like a “great idea” for the base to buy locally-produced and harvested goods, several felt it was unlikely to ever happen. Some questioned how the high food safety standards on Kwaj could possibly be met by these businesses, especially those involving fresh seafood. Whether Marshallese businesses could supply goods consistently over a long period of time was also a concern. There was also the question of other regulatory hurdles that they might have to overcome, which had created problems in the past for Marshallese businesses hoping to do business on Kwaj, as well as American small-scale entrepreneurs. (One resident noted to me that in a Contractor-run town, individual and outside enterprise is never encouraged.) In this context, efforts to attract more Kwaj residents to shop at stores on Ebeye was seen as a much more feasible option, as noted in Chapter 6.

Several residents also observed that “not that many” of the businesses represented at the trade fair were Marshallese-owned: those proposing to supply fresh produce to Kwaj were in fact Taiwanese (although they did employ some Marshallese). Many were based on Majuro and not Ebeye. Base residents also noted that Marshallese shoppers at the fair seemed to be buying more than Americans did, reflecting the state of Ebeye’s retail infrastructure. On the whole, the feeling was that while the motivations behind the event were very good ones, the significant structural obstacles involved made its goals unrealistic, reducing the fair to a cross-cultural “feel-good” event. Incidentally, the idea of Ebeye businesses supplying such things as fish and seafood to the base is not a new one: it is one of those themes that repeat over time (CRC Minutes, May 18, 1989; CRC Minutes, Jul. 7, 1989).

Kwaj water issues

While nothing like the situation on Ebeye, drinking water, as well as water supplies in general, have been perpetual issues for the base. Seasonal and longer droughts are not uncommon in this part of the Marshalls, and any base resident who has spent more than a few years on the atoll has probably experienced one. However, as in other respects, Americans are much more insulated from these effects than other atoll residents. Some of this is a function of the base being located on the best-watered islet on the atoll. It is also a function of money and technology, as additional equipment can always be purchased or brought out to Kwaj for emergencies. Despite this insulation, I found it interesting in talking to long-timers that while Ebeye has always been first to reach a crisis point, there have been a few on Kwaj as well.

Sims has chronicled the early difficulties encountered in trying to supply water for various needs on the base in the post-war period, particularly as the population grew on both Kwaj and Ebeye, and development of the range was taking place, all in the context of occasional severe droughts (1993). This situation changed in the early 1970s with the re-discovery of the Japanese lens well system, which provided millions of gallons of freshwater to base supplies. The discovery of the well in the early 1970s was big news, as seen in a 1994 *Hourglass* retrospective recalling “the finding of the long-lost freshwater lens well used by the Japanese” (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994:6). However, the lens had to be handled carefully, as it “...was not an inexhaustible water source. Pumping a lens too fast or for too long a period could ‘break’ the lens and allow the intrusion of salt water into the fresh water” (Sims 1993:97).

One Marshallese man told me that Marshallese had always known where these Japanese lens wells were located, but had deliberately withheld that information from base administrators for many years. However, other sources seem to contradict this possibility (Sims 1993:93-95). In addition, the devastation of infrastructure and land surface on Kwaj as a result of World War II

likely obscured its original location. The lens well system would also come into play in the 1982 demonstrations, as will be seen.

In terms of the worst droughts on Kwaj, early 1973 was recorded as the driest period in Kwajalein Atoll history; the base saltwater distillation plant worked seven days a week until the drought ended in May (*Kwajalein Hourglass* July 2, 1994:7). American residents who had lived on Kwaj since the early 1980s reported that they had experienced five droughts, although only three of those were significant. According to one long-timer,

The one in '83-84 was very bad. We came within three weeks of all dependents leaving...They dried up the lens wells, and they had to bring in the reverse osmosis units. You heard about that, they're still here. And they would put drinking water in trucks, and we would have to go to Surfway to get water out of the trucks. The stuff from the tap wasn't drinkable. It was okay for showering, but you couldn't drink it. And if you did drink it, you had to boil it. We went through, you had to boil it for five minutes, and then skim off the gray scum that had come to the top. Well, we got used to it, it became part of daily living, so we didn't think anything of it. We always had big five-gallon jugs that we would take down to the cart at the end of the street.

Even barring major droughts, water shortages of various kinds were another one of those “facts of life” of living on Kwaj that residents had to adapt to. Even if the atoll was not currently in a drought, the Command and Contractor have always had to operate in preparation for the next one. As such, water conservation measures have often been enforced, both for households and for other base operations. The provision of drinking water by barge to Ebeye for many years also strained water supplies at times.



In recent years, water for base use has come from a variety of sources, with rainwater catchment being the primary source, supplemented by the lens well system (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Dec. 16, 2003:4). In 2003, a permanent reverse osmosis water treatment system replaced three temporary units that had been in use for several years, giving Kwaj greater water security in the face of droughts and typhoons (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Dec. 16, 2003:4).

While long-time base residents were fairly confident of the quality of Kwaj drinking water in regard to water-borne diseases, some residents did express concerns regarding the kinds of industrial chemicals that might be in their drinking water, particularly those associated with missile testing and its infrastructure. One resident believed there was a significant anecdotal evidence to link water quality and breast cancer rates among women living on Kwaj for long periods of time. Others noted that this would be difficult to trace, due to the turnover in base populations. Some residents likened their concerns to those in the U.S. regarding undetected and unregulated chemicals in municipal drinking water supplies, especially in communities near industrial sites.

### Ebeye Water & Food Issues

Ebeye's water and food history has always been significantly more complex than that of Kwaj due to issues of population and infrastructure. While I will touch on aspects of Ebeye's water and food history, what I will be covering here might be more accurately described as "the politics of water" and "the politics of food," as access to Kwaj has always been a factor in the availability of both to Ebeye residents. While there may be some overlap with access issues already discussed, there are other less-commonly-acknowledged factors and details to be

elucidated here in regard to food and water issues, which I hope will provide new depth to related discussions and debates.

Both food and water issues are of critical importance to the people of Ebeye, as they are linked to major health problems severely affecting Marshallese quality of life. Water-borne diseases are a major issue on Ebeye, as are those related to diet. As noted previously, I originally came to the atoll to do applied work on these issues, but found that working on “drinking water issues” and “food issues” on Ebeye seemed to be addressing only the surface symptoms of deeper root causes. These deeper issues of power, access and infrastructure keep most improvements in the food and water situation on Ebeye from lasting for very long.

#### Ebeye water issues

Both in terms of individual households and community water supplies, rainfall catchment has always been the primary source of drinking water on Ebeye. Even if the freshwater lens under Ebeye were of decent size and shape, it is unusable as a water source due to severe contamination, primarily by sewage. In the mid-1960s, the Army Corps of Engineers considered using water from the Ebeye lens for the Ebeye Improvement Program, but “dropped the idea because the narrowness of the island precluded feasibility of a good lens; Ebeye ground water was very highly contaminated; and lens water, regardless of quality, is very undependable for planned usage” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 63).

Anyone who has spent time on Ebeye quickly discovers that water quality and quantity are perpetual problems on the islet. These limitations affect not only drinking water, but also water for cooking, bathing, laundry and other household uses. As just one of many ways that water availability affects Marshallese lives daily, some Marshallese workers told me that they

took showers on Kwaj before or after work because there is so little water for this purpose on Ebeye. Workers also frequently brought containers to work with them that were then filled with drinking water on the way home. Ice was also frequently taken home. However, while Kwaj is an important source of water for the families of these workers, the number of Marshallese workers, numbering only 1,100 in 2002, is small relative to Ebeye's total population of over 10,000. However, the 1999 Census reported that more than 40% of households on Kwajalein Atoll obtained their drinking water from the base (RMI 1999:65). This seems high, and likely reflected the severe drought situation and corresponding water access rules in place in 1999, discussed below. This Census figure included those reporting that they obtained drinking water from piped water outside the dwelling (28.4%) and those who reported that they obtained drinking water from "other sources" (20.3%) (RMI 1999:65).

Other Census numbers for Ebeye Islet only show 14% using piped water inside the dwelling; 31% using piped water outside; 24.5% using rainfall catchment; 5.6% using bottled water; and 24.5% using other sources. One household reported using a well for drinking water (RMI 1999:384). I did notice over the span of years I visited Ebeye that bottled water was becoming increasingly available in stores and popular with Marshallese and other Ebeye residents. While this may be seen as a positive development in terms of health issues, it must also be noted that buying bottled water costs money, and is beyond the reach of many Ebeye residents. In addition, residents told me that there were times when soda was cheaper to buy than bottled water.

Water is scarce on Ebeye even in good times: times of drought are a whole different story. As one example of the impacts, the TT administration had to restrict entry to Ebeye in 1975 because of a critical water shortage (Host Nation Archives, Apr 1975). The direness of the

water situation was brought home to me particularly during the 1999 drought, when there was no running water available at the Ebeye hospital: medical staff were cleaning their hands in buckets of water or with rubbing alcohol only.

As in many other areas, I was always interested in the reactions of American visitors to Ebeye regarding the water situation. American visitors forced to stay in a hotel on Ebeye (when they were denied access to lodging on the base) during a non-drought period were horrified to have to take saltwater showers, or only have “a trickle of fresh water for a very brief period” during the day. One visitor described the experience as being like “camping” in the U.S., and this was when the water situation on Ebeye was not particularly bad.

Water quality has often been hideously bad, as documented by water testing done at the Kwaj hospital lab and by outside authorities such as the World Health Organization. A University of Guam study conducted in 1974 found high rates of fecal coliform in water samples collected from Ebeye Public Works drinking water sources (TTPI Archives 1975a).

Contamination by sewage is the primary problem, including cross-contamination of drinking water supplies with heavily-polluted lagoon and ocean water. As just one example of conditions in surrounding waters, a TT document from 1978 noted that fecal coliform counts south of the dock on the lagoon side were 980,000 fc/1000mL: U.S. standards for swimming are 200 per mL for swimming and 0 per mL for drinking (TTPI Archives 1978a).

As can be imagined, waterborne disease was and is very common on Ebeye, including dysentery and hepatitis. After several months on the atoll, I came to the conclusion that many Ebeye residents suffer from chronic dysentery or other intestinal ailments; in some ways this has just become “normal.” While many Ebeye residents I talked to were aware of the need to boil

their drinking and cooking water, power supply problems on Ebeye mean that the boiling of water is not always possible.

Not surprisingly, there have also been periodic outbreaks of cholera and typhoid on the islet. The most recent was an outbreak of cholera that occurred in 2001, although it was quickly contained by the CDC. This outbreak was linked to a container used by a Marshallese worker to transport water home from Kwaj (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Mar. 27, 2001:1). While initially there were fears that the source may have been base water supplies, it was soon determined that the source of the contamination was an open-top container on Ebeye, perhaps contaminated when hands were dipped into the container. After this incident, the Command tried to discourage workers from using open-top water containers.

There have always been health issues associated with household water catchment on Ebeye, as the presence of animals such as rats on roofs and other factors can be a source of contamination in run-off. Health issues associated with the containers themselves have also been an issue, and the Command has refused persistent pressures to make empty fuel drums available to Ebeye for fear they would be used for water catchment purposes. Uncovered catchments have also been problematic, and stories of dead and rotting animals in catchments are not uncommon. As in the case of open-top water jugs, household catchments are also contaminated by hands and containers being dipped into them. In the case of denial of access to the base of a sick Marshallese girl in the 1960s, Bill Vitarelli noted that the TT had constructed catchments, but was concerned about the need to cover them to prevent water-borne diseases. The Command refused to assist or even provide materials for these covers, and a gastroenteritis epidemic was the result (Dever 1978:v). In terms of more recent catchment issues, there was an organization in place for several years, started by an American resident of Kwaj, to provide roof catchment

systems for Ebeye residents, Kwajalein Atoll Relief for Ebeye. While this program seemed to have had some significant successes, the momentum for the group was lost after the founder left the atoll (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Nov. 19, 2002:3).

Even when drinking water has been supplied by some kind of centralized water system on Ebeye, quality has been an issue. A variety of equipment has been used over the years to treat water on Ebeye. In 1999 when I first traveled to Ebeye, I was told that a desalination plant had been in operation on Ebeye for several years, but that it was a product from the Middle East that required far too much in fuel and chemical inputs (as well as technical expertise) to be economically feasible on Ebeye. In addition to technological issues, there have been persistent problems with the distribution system. These have included cross-contamination of the water system by sewage, and the perpetual problem of illegal taps into water lines. Kwaj water managers noted that this illegal tapping and other infrastructural problems made it very difficult to maintain water pressure on Ebeye, which could result in backflow and contamination. In terms of other persistent infrastructural problems, Ebeye water managers also noted that the proper functioning of the utility was hampered by some residents' refusal to pay for water. Residents countered that they often paid high bills for water when there wasn't any, a situation that has occurred with the electric power system as well.

In terms of other environmental health threats associated with water on Ebeye, near-shore waters continue to be highly contaminated due to the use of both the oceanside and lagoonside reefs as toilets. They are frequently used for these purposes by children, and adults without access to functioning facilities. Contamination of lagoon waters in the past was also a result of the dumping of untreated sewage into the lagoon by the dock. While the outfall has been moved from its previous location next to the dock and sewage is now usually treated, this situation is

still not ideal. Efforts to have the outfall moved to the oceanside and farther from shore have been unsuccessful to date. While fecal coliform levels are not as high as in the past, they are still consistently high around Ebeye for the reasons noted above. As noted, knowing these things changes one's view of the multitudinous children playing in the surf and adults fishing at the dock.

During the time I was in the field, water and power systems were being managed by the American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA), which had taken over from the Marshallese-managed KAJUR in 1999, with funds provided by the Asian Development Bank. Reverse osmosis machines were being used to purify water, including a mix of rainwater from a catchment area on the south end of Ebeye and saltwater from the lagoon. ASPA had dealt with some of the persistent problems of nonpayment for water and illegal taps, and while water quality and quantity was much improved (compared to my visit in 1999), there were signs that it would not last. Marshallese told me that there was a considerable amount of resentment by some Marshallese toward the Samoans, who were seen as outsiders enriching themselves on Marshallese contracts. Also toward the end of my stay, there was a crisis at the power plant involving several generators, resulting in power outages that then affected water treatment and availability.

#### Water issues and access to Kwaj

Water has always been a central issue in debates over access to Kwaj. Drinking water and ice were and are the two most desired resources on Kwaj by Marshallese workers: threats to this access have elicited some of the strongest protests over the years, especially during times of water shortage on Ebeye. When this access to base water was cut off during the 1982

demonstrations, there was significant pressure from Marshallese representatives to reinstate access to workers. Clearly it is one of the most prized benefits of working on Kwajalein, or having access to the base by those not employed there. Workers fill their containers either on base or at water taps at the DSC, although the location of taps at the DSC has shifted over time.

As population on Ebeye grew over time, requests for water from Kwaj increased, especially during times of drought and infrastructural failure. Alexander has recalled that “water barges did come, during the ever-present droughts” during the mid-1970s (personal communication). Delivery of Kwaj water by barge to Ebeye was a common occurrence for many years, with payment made for that service by the TT and then RMI. A DoD report from 1977 reported that, depending on rainfall, 230,000 gallons per week were being barged in, with total water deliveries in 1976 equaling 13,975,000 gallons (Pacific Collection 1977a). Water requests were often not managed to the Command’s standards: a 1968 Command document states that in order for Kwaj to anticipate Ebeye’s water needs, Ebeye administrators needed to provide a “Daily Water Report” to Kwaj, with 500 blank copies of that form being included with the letter (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 63). Clearly they were expecting more water shortages to come. This demand did strain drinking water production on Kwaj at times: a series of letters in the 1970s between the Command and the TT administration on Ebeye assert that if the drought continued, Kwaj would not be able to supply water for both Kwaj residents and those of Ebeye (TTPI Archives 1977a). The Command also emphasized that barging water from Kwaj was not really a permanent solution to Ebeye’s water problem (TTPI Archives 1977a). In a particularly telling exchange between the Command and TT in 1977, the Commander states that

Although KMR officials have assured that Ebeye will be provided water, this is a humanitarian effort. It is not the solution to Ebeye’s water problem. The TTPI should be



doing everything possible to develop an independent capability to provide an adequate water supply for Ebeye (TTPI Archives 1977a).

Again, we see the tensions between the two entities in terms of who is going to provide what for Ebeye: the Command sees this as generosity, TTPI representatives appear to have seen it as an obligation. Water shipments also occurred at other times of drought in later decades (CRC Minutes, Mar. 26, 1992; CRC Minutes, Feb. 27, 1997).

In addition to barging drinking water to Ebeye, the Command and Contractor have responded on many occasions to water crises on Ebeye with the loan of equipment and expertise. Due to the amount of water-related aid over the years, some residents and administrators on the base felt that it might make more sense for Kwaj to integrate its water infrastructure with Ebeye's, or for Americans to manage infrastructure on Ebeye. However, as noted in Chapter 6, these proposals were never implemented for a variety of reasons, the most common reason being that such integration would mean that Ebeye would never become self-sufficient if such plans were put into effect.

During droughts, such as that in 1999 during my first visit to the atoll, several potable water taps were placed outside the gates of the DSC so that people could come over from Ebeye with containers to get drinking water. I was told by Marshallese and Americans that at some point previously there had been a water tap at the dock that was accessible by water taxi, but that this resulted in some Ebeye residents filling large tanks, and then selling the water on Ebeye: this is also noted in the CRC Minutes from 1998 (CRC Minutes, Mar. 26, 1998). There were also problems associated with the placement of water taps outside the DSC in 1999 and years after, due to the large number of Marshallese children (mostly male) with water jugs who were riding the ferries everyday to get water from Kwaj. This caused severe congestion on ferries, which

were full of kids and water containers, which created problems for Marshallese workers trying to get to work on already overcrowded morning ferries. There was also the issue of safety, as children were known to leap from the dock to the ferry and back, and there was always a danger one would end up in the lagoon, or crushed between the ferry and the dock. In addition, some children were missing school in order to ride the ferries.

With improvements in water services under ASPA, and funding from the Command, a central “water kiosk” was installed in 2001 with several water taps. Because of these improvements, a decision was made by the Command to move the water taps at the DSC inside the gate, so that they could only be accessed by Marshallese workers and others who had access to the base (CRC Minutes, Jun. 27, 2002). This was protested by Marshallese for a number of reasons. One of those reasons was a persistent belief that “Kwaj water is better” than anything else that might be available on the atoll.



Figure 3. Water kiosk on Ebeye, 2002.

During my fieldwork, the Command was trying to dispel that belief, even to the point of staging photo ops where Command representatives, a Samoan water manager, and government officials (including the president of the RMI) were photographed drinking water from Ebeye's water kiosk (*Marshall Islands Journal* 2002a:7). Based on history, however, Ebeye residents had good reason to be skeptical. Even though water quality was generally better and more regular under ASPA management, there were still problems with consistency: water from the water kiosk at one point was very salty. At some point after this, filters were changed and taste improved, although one can understand why Ebeye residents might be leery. In addition, from conversations with Marshallese I determined that many Ebeye residents had grown accustomed to the taste of Kwaj water, which had far more chlorine in it than Ebeye water. In a discussion I had with ASPA regarding general issues of water quality, representatives defended their product by saying that while water quality and quantity on Ebeye were certainly not perfect, they were superior to supplies at that time in American Samoa and other Pacific Islands. However, they failed to comprehend that Ebeye is not measured against the rest of the Pacific, it is measured against Kwaj, and herein lies some of the tension.

The Command was not only puzzled as to why Ebeye residents still preferred Kwaj water, but also why Marshallese children were continuing to ride the ferries to Kwaj to get water for their families (CRC Minutes, Jan. 3, 2002). I was told by Marshallese friends that some children in their families continued to go because they enjoyed it, while others were still getting water for their families because most members of these families did not trust Ebeye water sources. This traffic largely ended when the taps were moved inside the DSC. In further efforts to convince Ebeye residents to rely on their own water sources, the Command asserted on more than one occasion that water quantity was now adequate for Ebeye's population. However, many

Ebeye residents told me that this was not the case everyday, and that communication between Ebeye and the Command was clearly a problem here. A few Marshallese felt that ASPA sometimes misrepresented water conditions for the better in discussions with the Command.

In a good example of access cycles on Kwajalein Atoll, when a new commander came in 2002, Marshallese officials at a CRC meeting began requesting that the taps be put back outside the gates. At one meeting, the Commander responded that this seemed like a reasonable request (CRC Minutes, Nov. 27, 2002). On the surface, this may have seemed like a very reasonable response to a humanitarian need. Other Command representatives then had to explain to the Commander why this was a request with complex ramifications, with the “big picture” significance being that Ebeye would never develop adequate infrastructure if resources could always be obtained from Kwaj. While this effort to get the taps moved was not successful, it was an interesting example of history repeating itself on Kwajalein, especially if there had been no one there to serve as some sort of institutional memory for the Commander. In addition, it revealed a persistence on the part of the Marshallese representatives in pushing for desired ends, as well as a pattern of petitioning new commanders and other administrators when previous ones had failed to respond in the desired way. Again, the issue reflects larger access dilemmas regarding human needs versus self-sufficiency, and the complications of providing equitable access.

In another water-related issue, access to Kwaj for the purpose of using base laundry facilities has always been a key Marshallese access issue. Marshallese told me that there have been attempts to start public laundromats on Ebeye over the years, but they had not lasted due to water problems, power problems, or a combination of both. Because of the access complications it causes, the Command has frequently pressed Marshallese representatives to develop laundry

facilities on Ebeye. Such access problems have included the sheer amount of laundry brought through the DSC, and that goods from Kwaj stores could be smuggled out in large laundry bags. Searches, see-through bags, and the use of scanning equipment have been partial solutions. However, Marshallese noted that sometimes access to laundry facilities would be cut off without explanation and suddenly even workers would be unable to do their laundry there, with few options on Ebeye.

As noted in the access chapter, there was also the problem of Marshallese (including girlfriends and families of American residents) doing their laundry in the BQs. The question of whether maids could do their laundry at individual American homes has been another recurring issue. In the late 1960s, an interesting exchange took place between the Command and maids over this issue (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 63). The Command had recently decided to prohibit maids from doing laundry while they worked. (Residents past and present indicated that some Americans were comfortable with this practice, and others were not, although they felt pressured to allow it.) The maids responded with a letter of protest, citing conditions on Ebeye and the lack of water there. The Commander responded by saying that doing laundry at work was not an American practice, and that if Marshallese aspired to American standards, they would need to emulate those practices (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 63)!

Because of these same water issues, the Command has usually refused to give surplus washing machines from the base to Ebeye. As a document from 1967 notes, these machines were not being given to Ebeye because the amount of water they used, which was not seen as being sustainable in the context of Ebeye's water situation. Despite repeated requests from the Marshallese administration, the TT and Command agreed not to give these items (TTPI Archives 1967a). The Command has also declined to provide surplus stoves to Ebeye; these are also too

inefficient to be practical in the context of Ebeye's power situation (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 63). Both policies are a good example of situations which, while they may seem like simple issues of discrimination with obvious solutions, are in fact very complex ones, with convoluted histories.

#### Other issues of water politics

As noted above, water politics on the atoll have included the possible failure of the Marshallese to inform American administrators on Kwaj of the location of the Japanese lens well system on the islet, leading to its miraculous discovery by Americans in the 1970s (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Jul. 2, 1994). Another interesting case of water politics on Kwajalein is that surrounding the 1982 demonstrations. In order to increase the pressure on the demonstrators located at sites on Kwaj Islet, the Command cut off water supplies to the demonstration sites. Marshallese protested this move in the media, and also filed a lawsuit against the commander, which they won. Marshallese told me that one of the ways they forced the Command to turn the water back on, besides the lawsuit, was by starting to dig wells around the base, threatening damage to the fragile lens well system. Command documents also note this practice (TTPI Archives 1982d). At some point there were also rumors on the Marshallese side that water barges to Ebeye would be cut off, but this does not appear to be supported by the documentary evidence. It appears, however, that the general intent of the Commander was to make life as difficult as possible at the demonstration sites by cutting off water. American long-timers noted that this was laughable, as Marshallese were known for their stoicism in the face of adversity, and living on Ebeye had given them a great deal of training in tolerating physical deprivation.

In addition to cutting off water supplies, Marshallese at the time asserted in the media that health conditions at the demonstration sites on the base, exacerbated by the water being cut off, had led to cases of typhoid. However, American long-timers and a variety of documents indicate that this was unlikely. In terms of it being unique to the demonstration sites, several long-timers noted that typhoid was all over the Pacific Islands at that time, including outbreaks elsewhere in Micronesia and the Marshalls. According to one American doctor who was there at the time, “I would have trouble saying that the conditions of the sit-in resulted in the typhoid... There had been typhoid on and off in all of the islands.” In addition, there is documentary evidence that the two individuals found to have typhoid at the demonstration sites had just come from Majuro.

I was also told by a few Marshallese that these typhoid patients and others were denied care at the Kwaj hospital. American long-timers present during this time strongly denied these charges. In response to charges that sick Marshallese were denied care at the base hospital, one healthcare worker recalled that “we were regularly taking care of people who were getting sick at the bigger encampments.” Another base resident who was a patient at the base hospital at the time attested that “our hospital was full” of Marshallese patients. While it never actually happened, it appears that some members of the Command *were* proposing the possibility of denying access to emergency care for the demonstrators. In response, a TT representative strongly recommended that this not be done, stressing that it would be inhumane and unethical, and would likely have no effect on the demonstrations. In addition, most of the emergencies cases to date had involved children, and denial of services might result in the death of a child, which would be “morally indefensible” (TTPI Archives 1982g). Strategically, he also notes that any Marshallese death would create a martyr and only result in more resistance on the atoll. The

Command appears to have heeded this advice, as there is no more mention of this issue.

American long-timers were not surprised to learn of this detail, as this was the same commander responsible for the concertina wire, as will be seen in Chapter 9. However, even while the commander may have had questionable intentions, there were fortunately other Americans present to contest this proposal. Here again we see the “competing colonialisms” between the TT and the military.



## Ebeye & food issues

Dietary issues and their history on Ebeye are equally complex. In terms of major patterns, significant dietary changes started in the Japanese period, and then accelerated under the American system with the increased consumption of American-style foods high in fat, salt and sugar. (Increased consumption of beer and other kinds of alcohol, as well as tobacco in various forms, is another important development, although only briefly touched on here despite their significant impact on Marshallese health, particularly among males.)

These dietary changes have resulted in a situation of both undernutrition and overnutrition existing side by side, although in different segments of the population (Gittelsohn et al. 1998; Palafox in Gittelsohn et al. 1998). Malnutrition of children has been a long-standing problem since World War II in the Marshall Islands as a whole: A survey conducted with both rural and urban children in 1995 found that approximately 60% of children had moderate to severe Vitamin A deficiencies (RMI/Unicef 1996:27); while a 1987 survey of school children found that 35% of children were grossly underweight (Palafox in Gittelsohn et al. 1998:4). Anemia is also very common in children (RMI/Unicef 1996:27-28). More recent work has shown that these statistics have not changed significantly (Rowa 2003; Alfred 2002). These trends have been linked to a lack of diversity in children's diets, which may consist largely of such staples as white rice, bread or donuts and ramen, with occasional additions of fatty meats, and junk food. Ebeye residents reported that it was not uncommon for children to eat such things as ice cream or candy for breakfast. Consumption of these kinds of foods does increase near urban centers as a function of availability and convenience, but it also signals changing tastes. As just one indication of this, a report in 1986 noted high levels of malnutrition in children living in

more rural parts of Majuro, where fresh foods were available (*Pacific Magazine* 1986, v11n5:13). A newspaper article in 2002 noted the same trend (Alfred 2002).

Simultaneously, obesity rates in adults are described as being epidemic in the Marshalls (Palafox in Gittelsohn et al. 1998:4). A study conducted by Gittelsohn et al. in 1996 and 1997 found that almost a third of adults surveyed were overweight, with adult women being much more likely to be overweight or obese (Gittelsohn et al. 1998:22). Obesity rates were similar for urban and rural areas (Gittelsohn et al. 1998:23). The health impacts are significant: a study conducted by the RMI Ministry of Health and Environment in 1987 reported the presence of diabetes in 27% of Marshallese adults over the age of 30, and in 50% of adults by the time they reach the age of 50 (Gittelsohn et al. 1998:5). Interestingly, some of those interviewed by Gittelsohn et al. linked their diabetes to the effects of radiation from nuclear testing (Gittelsohn et al. 1998:20).

These nutritional issues are not unique to the Marshalls: an article in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 2001 was aptly titled “Spam and Turkey Tails have turned Micronesians into Macronesians” (Shell 2001). This article highlights the impacts of Western diets on the population of Kosrae: research in the 1990s revealed that in the age group of 45-to-64 year olds, 85% were obese, more than a quarter were diabetic, and more than a third had high blood pressure. Shore also notes that, among adults, 90% of surgical admissions are linked to diabetes, and many of these are amputations. Both men and women frequently have heart attacks in their late 20s (Shore 2001).

These trends have been seen as a form of colonialism as potent as other more overt forms. Such charges of “dietary colonialism” can be seen in a 1995 Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio interview, regarding the dumping of unhealthy foods into Pacific Island

countries by countries such as New Zealand and Australia. The title of the program was *Dumping More than Plutonium into the South Pacific* (1995). At some point the radio host observes, “So in a sense, New Zealand and Australia have saturated fat mountain which is being shifted to places like Micronesia and Fiji and Tokelau and other places?” The prevalence of such food items as turkey tails in Micronesia are also discussed.

What makes Ebeye different is that in making dietary choices, many people have little choice. As population soared, residents were forced to rely almost entirely on store-bought foods, and high-priced ones at that, as there is so little space to grow foods on the islet. Most importantly, there is no safety net of traditional resources for many people on the islet to fall back on when money and access to store-bought foods run out. Fresh foods that are available are not sufficient in quantity to benefit more than a small (and more local) portion of the population. And as we will see, the obstacles to importing such foods for sale in stores have never been overcome. Efforts by TT administrators to grow “green” food crops to improve the nutrition of Ebeye residents never materialized (TTPI Archives 1966c).

#### The food situation on Ebeye in recent years

On my first visit to Ebeye in 1999, both Americans and Marshallese told me that I should be sure to visit other locations in the Marshall Islands as well, preferably one of the outer islands, or at least Majuro. The reason given was that is Ebeye is anything but “normal” in Marshallese or Pacific terms. When I did finally go to Majuro, it was quite surprising in comparison. The first things that hit me were space, green things, and fruit on trees. I was also struck by the ability to move more freely around the lagoon and atoll compared to Kwajalein. On my first visit to Ebeye, and as other newcomers noted, the extremes of the food situation quickly become apparent.

While I had been warned about food availability, I assumed there would still be at least *some* traditional foods available, in stores and in households, including at least such basics as coconuts and fresh fish. Upon my first visit to an Ebeye grocery store, I was struck by the large sections devoted to cookies, sugared cereals, candy, sodas, snack foods, and canned and frozen meat. My diet on that first trip consisted largely of things such as Spam, corned beef, chicken and turkey tails, and white rice, washed down with soda.

Early in this first visit, I was pleased to stumble upon a lonely box of some kind of bran cereal amid the Frosted Flakes and Fruit Loops at one grocery store. It was more expensive, but seemed like it might be worth it. Upon buying it and tasting it, however, I discovered that it was several years old. The moral of the story: the Fruit Loops are always fresh. That summer I consumed more sugar than I had in years, largely because drinking water was scarce, and soda was often safer to drink. It was also what I was usually offered as a guest. While I did get the chance to eat a few more traditional foods on my next visit, they usually only appeared as one traditional food among the more modern fare at community events and special occasions. As can already be imagined, Ebeye's import dependence is high: the only other case like it in the Pacific may be Nauru, where dependency on store-bought foods is near total due to the environmental devastation of phosphate mining in the colonial period, and the relative wealth of Nauruans.

During my fieldwork, Ebeye had several larger grocery stores and a few of medium size, which I was told was a significant improvement over the past, when "mom and pop" stores were the rule and canned foods predominated. Of course, "mom and pops" were still tucked everywhere: some specialized in particular items and particular clienteles, such as the sale of tobacco or the sale of ice cream near schools. There were also a few restaurants on the islet, some of good enough quality to attract Americans out of "the bubble" on the base. Most of these

larger stores were non-Marshallese owned and managed, which was a source of tension, particularly in regard to the issue of “outsiders” taking jobs from local Marshallese, and the touchy issue of possible price gouging. However despite these tensions, the lower prices and better selection of those stores made them well-trafficked.

One of the major factors that kept the food selection in the past canned and limited was the lack of regular electrical power on Ebeye. Because power was irregular and stores did not usually have back-up generators, businesses on Ebeye used refrigeration and freezer storage on the base until forced by the Command to develop independent infrastructure as a result of the 1982 demonstrations. Power failures can still be disastrous for store owners, especially longer outages. Also, for many years Ebeye did not have adequate docking capabilities to receive direct shipments of containers to Ebeye: goods were off-loaded on Kwaj, and then arrangements were made to transport them to Ebeye. This was another situation that changed significantly as a result of post-demonstration efforts to increase the self-sufficiency of Ebeye.

In other topics related to dependency issues, I was interested to discover from discussions with local Marshallese and from TT documents that USDA foods were provided at various times to various populations on Ebeye, including people from the nuclear atolls, MAC Islanders, and other qualifying populations. An American long-timer on Kwaj recalled seeing an episode of *60 Minutes* from decades ago in which Ebeye children were shown feeding government cheese to the pigs. Marshallese told me that while they did use the rice and flour, the canned meat was used for fishing bait. One American recalled that while other islands in the TT also qualified for and received USDA food, they didn’t really need it like the Marshallese did. In other discussions with Americans, the idea seemed to emerge that it was necessary for many Marshallese

populations, but debilitating at the same time. One American noted that “It really screwed them up...”

As noted previously, this kind of support for MAC Islanders has been a contentious one in the gap between what Islanders say they were promised, and what American representatives over the years have said was promised, and for how long. While USDA food support might seem like a given, according to one American long-timer, other kinds of support in addition to USDA food were provided at various times for various populations:

There is something about these people that have been misplaced from the outer islands, somewhere along the way the U.S. government promised that they would take care of them, as far as food goes. For example, Third Island [Ennubirr, Roi Namur’s version of Ebeye], same deal, for years they could actually come down to the mess hall and take out chickens, rice, flour, you know, staples. And all that good stuff. Somehow it slipped through? They’re not doing it anymore.

Such practices may also have changed under different commanders. They may also have been victims of the general lack of institutional memory on Kwajalein.

Food prices on Ebeye are another topic guaranteed to get a strong response on Ebeye. There are good reasons why some Marshallese refer to the “Triple J” food store as “Triple Price.” The consensus among shoppers was that they were being gouged because they are a captive audience, and that the stores collude to keep prices high. Prices are indeed higher than on Majuro, but they seem especially high compared to Kwajalein, the usual local standard of measurement. This is not a politically-unimportant detail, as lower prices on Kwaj are one of the major reasons Marshallese want access to base stores. It is also important because access

restrictions preventing Marshallese from being able to enjoy such prices on Kwaj are often cited as example of U.S. discrimination. As Giff Johnson noted in the 1980s, as a result of denial of access to Kwaj, Marshallese “must buy food on Ebeye at prices 100% more than Kwaj stores and 20% higher than other islands in Micronesia” (1984:22). It must be remembered, however, that foods available on the base are subsidized by U.S. taxpayers to keep prices low, as a benefit to American servicemembers and others working at U.S. military facilities overseas. (This is even the case in the U.S., leading servicepeople to shop primarily at base exchanges for price breaks, although selection may not be quite the same as in off-base grocery stores.) Dever noted in 1978 that food prices were 20% higher due to additional handling fees caused by inadequate docking facilities on Ebeye (1978:9). Beyond that comparison, a 20% difference between prices on Ebeye and other parts of Micronesia is substantial, but understandable in reference to the infrastructure of Ebeye at the time.

In discussing the issue of high prices with store managers, one noted particularly that the taxes the RMI charges on food imports are higher on Kwajalein than on Majuro. However, even when RMI import duties came down in 1999, Ebeye businesses asserted that the continuing problem was a result of a 10% tax being charged on all merchandise by the Ebeye government (*Marshall Islands Journal* 1999b). Another manager noted that there is a conflict of sorts on Ebeye, as many Ebeye residents, because of their proximity to Kwaj, expect American-quality foods, which are more expensive than other options, particularly once transportation costs have been added. This manager also noted that because of malnutrition issues on Ebeye, he has made a point of only stocking enriched white rice, because for some segments of the population, this is the bulk of their diet. However, this enriched rice is more expensive, and residents seem to focus only on that detail.

Again, the issue is not just prices, it is also the near-total dependency on store-bought goods and a lack of a local resource “safety net.” And these things have real impacts: some of the poorest families on Ebeye may only eat rice and ramen noodles. I was told that in very crowded and poorer households, any meat that might be available would usually be eaten by older males (especially those working), with kids largely subsisting on rice. In addition to the safety net of local resources being absent for many Ebeye residents, there has also been a decline in food sharing on Ebeye. Alexander also noted this development in the mid-1970s (1978). While food sharing still does take place, I was told that on Ebeye, families cannot always afford to share food with more distant family members as they would have traditionally, because of the high price of food. As already noted, food sharing is important in creating and maintaining social bonds in the Pacific, and such a decline on Ebeye is another indicator of why Ebeye is not “normal” in a Marshallese or a Pacific sense. Other Pacific Islanders often noted this difference.

The lack of availability of fresh foods on Ebeye, including traditional foods, is another important issue on the islet. As noted, the lack of fresh local foods is due to the lack of space on Ebeye in which to grow them. However, some Marshallese stressed to me that even if there was space to grow certain tree crops, those resources could not be accessed without permission from local landowners, as many residents live on land to which they have no traditional rights.

Other Pacific Islanders reported that the lack of local fresh foods, and the price of buying those that were available, was a shock to them on arrival, especially those accustomed to fresh food markets. Traditional foods were only occasionally available at Ebeye grocery stores, and when they were they were usually quite expensive, even by American standards. As noted in a 1994 text on Marshallese plants and animals, a large pandanus fruit in an Ebeye store had recently cost \$12 (Merlin et al 1994:35), a huge sum on Ebeye. Those Ebeye residents with



access to such foods usually reported that they got them through family connections on other islets on the atoll, or from relatives on outer islands. Residents without such ties have little or no access to these kinds of resources.

Fish seemed to be a bit more available in stores and in the fish market on Ebeye (that was open sporadically), but they were also likely to be priced out of range for many Ebeye residents. Another source of fish, of course, is to know a fisherman, but that again does not apply to the majority of the population of Ebeye. While I frequently saw men fishing on the reef on the causeway between Ebeye and Gugeegue, the need for functioning boats and fuel can be prohibitive in doing other kinds of fishing. There are also issues of water quality, particularly contamination by fecal coliform, a concern always in my mind when I saw men and children fishing at the dock. Some Marshallese workers regularly fish on the base, which has different kinds of water quality issues, as noted in Chapter 4.

In addition to the lack of space on Ebeye to grow fresh and traditional foods, several Marshallese men noted that because they have jobs, they have no time to fish. Women with jobs noted that they also have little time to spend making traditional foods, which require much more labor to prepare than store-bought foods. Convenience was noted as being a major reason for diet choices. Changes in tastes are also a major factor. This change is especially apparent in younger generations, especially those raised in urban areas, who have grown up eating a low-quality, store-bought diet. Several residents noted to me that there are many children on Ebeye who have no taste for traditional Marshallese foods, or even fresh foods of any kind, as they are not accustomed to eating them. In an example of extreme sugar consumption, a long-time American resident of Kwaj recalled watching a Marshallese woman add sugar to an already sweetened Pepsi at the base Snack Bar. But this change in tastes is population-wide: one Ebeye resident told

me that his relatives on various outer islands are always clamoring for him to send them candy and other junk food, as frequently as possible and in the largest quantities possible. He observed that his relatives ate as much of these foods as they could.

However, local Marshallese are becoming more aware of the health impacts of this diet – most women I talked to about their families’ diets were well aware of what “junk food” was, and that it was associated with diabetes, “high blood” (pressure), and other health problems. Of course, one good question is - Why not have fresh foods shipped from nearby atolls? There was some traffic in these foods between Ebeye and closer atolls such as Namu, but a lot of this traffic seemed to move through family links, which could include commercial ones, but in many cases was distributed through family networks or “mom and pop” stores. The ultimate result, however, was only a few fresh traditional foods at high prices in larger stores frequented by the majority of Ebeye residents, including those without significant local family ties.

In her analysis of links between Namu and Kwajalein, Pollock noted that there had been attempts in the past to encourage Namu residents to become more commercial and produce fish, bananas and papayas for the urban market on Ebeye or Majuro (1970:41). However, there was little response at the time, due to the unreliability of shipping links between the atolls (Pollock 1970:41). In 1996, she reported Namu residents sending loaves baked from breadfruit paste to relatives on Kwajalein (Pollock 1996:4). There were also projects in the works to catch fish and sell them to Ebeye (Pollock 1996:7). Passengers and freight travel regularly between the two locations, both by boat and airplane. Pollock reported that air transport was being used to ship produce to Ebeye, including boxes of roasted breadfruit, whole pandanus fruits, boxes of fermented breadfruit paste and fish if available. These things were sent either to relatives or to be

sold (1996:9). In general, Pollock described a trend whereby Namu residents did not sell their excess food in 1968, but did so in 1996, with Ebeye being their primary buyer.

While it then might seem obvious that the answer to Ebeye's fresh food problem is to simply import more produce from local atolls, store managers indicated to me that there were significant obstacles to this kind of plan, most notably the cost of air freight, even from closer atolls. This accentuates the fact that the fresh produce flown in from distant locations for American residents of Kwaj is a *hugely* expensive enterprise, but is not reflected in base prices due to subsidies. Even then, as Americans noted above, this produce was highly perishable. This then highlights the situation on Ebeye, where economic issues mean that the main transport method for produce is by container ship. Only the hardiest produce can survive such a trip, including such things as carrots, cabbages, potatoes, apples, and onions that do commonly appear in Ebeye stores.

The question that might then be posed is - Why not grow them commercially on local islets? While growing tree crops in the MAC might seem more feasible, it must be remembered that the MAC is also a missile testing hazard area. While MAC Islanders can now visit their home islets for many more days out of the year than used to be the case and can harvest tree crops there more frequently, movement in the area is restricted when the range is in use, and no permanent structures can be built on these islets. In addition, some of those islets are leased by the U.S. government for missile testing and other infrastructure and aren't accessible at all. As far as other islets outside the hazard area, local Marshallese on Ebeye reported receiving produce from islets across the lagoon, but these seemed again to be largely sent by relatives and sold only on a small scale. Intra-atoll transportation was clearly in issue in some cases, again requiring boats and gasoline.

On one of the islets on the causeway between Ebeye and Gugeegue there were the remains of a defunct greenhouse, but I was told that the business had failed. In general, however, one must also keep in mind that atoll islets tend to be very small and narrow, with poor soils and limited freshwater, in general, seasonally, and during droughts. Salt spray is another major limiting factor, and few plants can tolerate it. Also, Americans live on the most productive islet on the atoll. Even with “Kwaj as garden,” there are over 10,000 people on Ebeye. Another significant obstacle is that there is very little public land in the Marshalls, meaning that landowner approval must be gained before land can be used for any purpose. I was told that the difficulty of obtaining any kind of long-term lease from landowners is an obstacle to many kinds of business enterprises that might be feasible in the area. While this lack of land alienation is a positive thing in many ways, it has also been a major obstacle to business development both on Kwajalein and throughout the Marshall Islands.

Another factor affecting health in urban contexts such as Ebeye is changes in activity patterns. In the move from the outer islands, Marshallese and others have often traded active lives of resource extraction for largely sedentary lives based on store-bought foods. Even if Marshallese had a comparative cultural concept of “exercising for fitness” (a foreign concept in many cultures), the crowded conditions on Ebeye make it difficult for adults to exercise. Work schedules also make it difficult to do so. However, during my fieldwork there was a small contingent of Marshallese who were regularly walking on the causeway for health purposes, despite heat, rain or potholes.

I was told by administrators at the Ebeye hospital that over 30% of Marshallese adults on Ebeye are diabetic. While efforts to screen and treat larger portions of the population are underway at the hospital, the lack of health care resources is an obstacle to many residents

getting treatment. However, even for those who have been diagnosed and attempt to follow doctors' orders, life on Ebeye presents particular challenges. The predominant diet on Ebeye is a diabetic's nightmare, and finding appropriate foods to eat can be very difficult. A "healthy shopping list" of foods for diabetics available in the hospital while I was there included quite a few foods that are rarely available on Ebeye. These foods, if available, would also be very expensive. I talked to some Marshallese who felt that greater access to Kwaj food outlets would be a great help to diabetics, but these ideas are not without complications, as will be seen.

In 2002, a working group on Ebeye was organized as part of Pacific Diabetes Today Training. The group discussed aspects of life on Kwajalein contributing to problems of diabetes, prepared the "healthy shopping list" for diabetics noted above, and wrote letters to government officials to encourage price controls on healthier foods (RMI 2002). Local volunteers had also been going into people's homes to show them healthier ways to prepare existing foods, and they did a demonstration at the meeting. However, one of the volunteers had to bring the low-fat cooking spray from Majuro to do the demonstration, because there was none available at the time on Ebeye!

While price controls may be the hardest nut to crack here, store managers I talked to seemed supportive of stocking healthier foods. However, one manager noted that although Ebeye residents say they want healthier foods in the stores, when he had made efforts in the past to stock these foods, "nobody bought them." Whether this was because of high prices or because of other food preferences, he wasn't sure. He then noted that he stocked primarily junk food because that was what people primarily bought.

One major advance Ebeye had made in regard to food and health was the addition of a dietary department to the new hospital: in the past relatives brought food into the hospital for

patients. During my time in the field, the dietary department was doing an exemplary job of trying to prepare appropriate meals for patients, considering the products they had to work with. Other programs on Ebeye have had more difficulty meeting that challenge: while I was there, Head Start instructors (from outside Ebeye) were concerned about some of the foods being served to children in the Ebeye program, including too many sugared cereals.

### Issues of food & Kwaj access

As I began exploring food issues on the atoll, particularly those regarding local produce, I was curious as to what happened to coconuts harvested on Kwajalein, cut regularly by Marshallese workers for safety purposes, as these coconuts could be a potential (though small) source of food and drinking fluids. I was told by Americans and Marshallese that they were often just taken to the dump, although Marshallese could request access to the coconuts and fronds for various purposes. Marshallese told me that they were “not very good” coconuts due to the fact that they were not very old and did not have proper soil: the islet had to be replanted after the total destruction that took place during the battle for Kwaj in World War II. On occasion in the past, however, these coconuts were supplied to the Ebeye hospital. Fish and other natural products of the islet can be transported through the DSC to Ebeye, and this appears to have been the case in recent decades.

As noted, food issues on Ebeye are often linked to Kwaj access issues. This has particularly been the case in regard to fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables. There have been efforts by the Command and Contractors over the years, despite significant obstacles, to provide fresh foods through base channels for the population of Ebeye, due to the significant nutrition problems on the islet. By the late 1960s, the Command had instituted a program in coordination

with the TT to make fresh foods not available on Ebeye available through a few TT-approved businesses on Ebeye. The approved merchant on Ebeye, the Kwajalein Islands Trading Company (KITCO), was allowed to buy “scarce food and other unavailable items” from the base every week, as well as staples when there were shortages on Ebeye (Host Nation Archives 1968a:33). The approved merchant was selected based on such factors as the auditability of their accounts (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 61). However, this plan was not without its complications.

The Command has often asserted when placing restrictions on certain resources that they are responding to legitimate complaints from Ebeye businesspeople who are losing business because they cannot compete with the base. Critics have sometimes charged that this is a thinly-veiled excuse for not wanting to help Ebeye. However, as noted in Chapter 7, there is a significant amount of documentary evidence of Ebeye businesses protesting unfair competition and pressuring the Command to limit access (TTPI Archives 1980c). In reference to sales of produce to KITCO, I found a particularly interesting letter from the 1970s from a grocery store owner from a high-ranking family (Host Nation Archives 1968a:Tab 60). He was protesting the Command policy of providing scarce produce to KITCO, as the lower prices there meant his higher-priced and less attractive produce was rotting on the shelves. Such a complaint, coming from someone of his rank, surely got some kind of response. The buying of food from Kwaj by Ebeye merchants appears to have ended in early 1984, when container ships began direct shipments to Ebeye (CRC Minutes, Jan. 16, 1984).

In more recent years, the Command and Contractor have tried other strategies for providing fresh foods to Ebeye. One such plan was the provision of a wide range of produce at the DSC Snack Bar on Kwaj one day a week, intended for purchase by individual Marshallese either returning home after work or coming over on the ferry to purchase it. However, while I

was in the field this produce was scaled back abruptly to only apples, bananas, and sometimes oranges. In asking around about the change, I was told by both Americans and Marshallese that it had to be stopped because businesses on Ebeye were coming over and buying up large quantities of this produce for use in restaurants and stores, which was not the intent of the program. In just this brief example, one can see some of the complexities that arise in trying to provide “fair” access.

As noted, there have been requests in recent years to open certain kinds of access to Kwaj because of the number of diabetics on Ebeye. One continuous refrain has been requests for access to Kwaj bakery products because bread on Ebeye is “too sweet” for diabetics (CRC Minutes, Jul. 30, 1992). The response of the Command was that they did not see why, with so many diabetics on Ebeye and functioning bakeries, someone on Ebeye couldn’t bake bread that was not as sweet for this segment of the population, as it seemed to be a ready market. Marshallese representatives countered that Ebeye establishments have found that healthier products don’t sell and so even if they start making or stocking these items, they soon have to discontinue them because no one buys them (CRC Minutes, Oct. 22, 1992). The Command also noted that white bread from the Kwaj bakery is usually available at the DSC Snack Bar for anyone on Ebeye to access. Other requests have also included requests to purchase whole wheat bread from Kwaj: Ebeye bakeries do not make whole wheat products. Some requests over the years also focused on giving such access only to diabetics (CRC Minutes, Sep. 28, 1992): however, as noted, this may include up to 50% of the adult population of Ebeye, and attempting to determine who is and isn’t a diabetic would be an administrative nightmare. This is one of those “gray area” issues. In the area of more “black and white” scarcities, the Commands has responded over the years to shortages of critical food supplies (such as rice) on Ebeye, usually in



short supply due to shipping problems (CRC Minutes, Agenda Sep. 25, 1989; CRC Minutes, Oct. 26, 1989).

The bakery has been the focal point of other kinds of battles, although those battles rarely have to do with health. Alexander reported in the mid-1970s that Marshallese were forbidden to take decorated cakes to Ebeye, noting the particularly ironic situation of the Marshallese cake decorator on Kwaj not being able to take a cake home for his son's birthday (*cite*). Marshallese told me that there used to be a time when they could buy Kwaj cakes for any event, including graduations, *kemems*, and official events. In addition, they were permitted to buy cakes and take them to Majuro. However, by 2001 this was no longer the case, and requests for access to this resource was a continuous refrain. In a discussion with a bakery owner on Ebeye as to why they don't bake and decorate cakes, she cited lack of trained people as a major reason. As noted, there was a woman making decorated cakes on Ebeye which Marshallese told me were nice: she baked them with charcoal because of unreliable power supplies. However, people noted that these cakes were expensive relative to Kwaj because the cost of the ingredients was so high on Ebeye. It also seemed that especially for official events, Marshallese wanted the kind of cakes Kwaj produces.

Some issues related to food and access have been more focused on Marshallese workers on Kwajalein. One recurring issue over the years has been the lack of affordable places on Kwaj where Marshallese workers can get meals while they work (Host Nation Archives 1972), especially non-grandfathered workers whose hourly wages may be very low. As a result, many workers end up eating just bread for meals, or things like ramen out of vending machines, or not eating at all. Several American base residents strongly felt that to remedy this situation, all Marshallese workers should be allowed to eat one hot meal a day during their shift free of

charge, as a benefit of working there. Others reported that some Americans, including supervisors, regularly purchased meals for Marshallese co-workers out of their own pockets, but were given citations by base security for doing so.

One positive recent development in this regard, noted by both Americans and Marshallese, was that in 2001, Marshallese workers were allowed to spend up to \$10 in the Ten-Ten store, which includes a decent selection of groceries and produce, as well as convenience store items. Hours in which they could buy were originally limited, but then became full-time. Workers could then buy fruit and vegetables and other healthier foods for meals, although these items were meant to be eaten on base and not taken back to Ebeye. While some Marshallese workers noted that some of their co-workers still bought junk food, there were also those who took advantage of this access to eat something healthier. I do not know whether this policy survived the most recent “tightening” cycle. Another food access issue during my fieldwork was the decision in 2001 to close the DSC Snack Bar for cost reasons. This created hardships for Marshallese workers, and months later it was reopened by the Command, although with a reduced menu (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Mar. 22, 2002:1,5).

Food issues also became political in the 1982 demonstrations, as access to most base food sources by workers was cut off, for fear that food would be provided to demonstrators. However, after protests to the Command for punishing Marshallese workers who did not participate in the demonstrations, access for workers was reinstated. American base residents were also threatened if they provided any food or other support to demonstrators. However, the most contentious issues in regard to food and the 1982 demonstrations were related to the dependence of Ebeye on Kwaj for storage of frozen and refrigerated items, as well as other food shipments. The exchange began with the Command issuing ultimatums for Ebeye to develop its own food warehousing

and storage facilities. The RMI government responded with requests for more time to make the transition. The RMI President then released a statement to the press saying that the Command was cutting off food supplies to Ebeye. The Secretary of Defense replied with a strongly-worded letter noting that most food shipments being affected were only frozen and chilled items, and as such the press release was a misrepresentation of the situation. He went on to comment that he found it “extraordinary” that the RMI government had received millions of dollars and bought such things as “modern aircraft,” yet had neglected basic infrastructure on Ebeye (TTPI Archives 1982e).

Marshallese *did* report some food shortages on Ebeye, especially in the later months of the demonstration, due largely to access restrictions related to the demonstrations, including the fact that Marshallese were forbidden access to the bank on Kwaj for a period of time, which was needed to pay for food shipments. Access to the bank was resumed in a limited fashion after protests were made in this regard. In addition to food storage facilities, the Command also required that Ebeye develop its own banking facilities in the wake of the 1982 demonstrations.

#### An alcohol postscript

Some coverage of alcohol use, however brief, is important here, as it has had a huge impact on Marshallese life and health on the atoll. It is a major access issue, and also has significant health and social effects. This is a critical issue that needs to be studied on Ebeye, although because it is mostly men that drink, the researcher would likely have to be male. Of course, as noted, drinking by Americans, including teenagers, is also a problem on the atoll: this is not just a Marshallese issue. CRC minutes from 1988 note that public intoxication was a problem on base regarding both Americans and Marshallese (CRC Minutes, Jul. 22, 1988).

As noted, immediately after World War II, drinking alcohol was one of the things American soldiers shared with the Marshallese on Kwajalein, and it facilitated sociability. However, from the very start it resulted in problems and social disruptions (Poyer, Falgout and Carucci 2001:281). This pattern of alcohol use has continued over the years, resulting in problems on both Kwaj and Ebeye. A letter from the “women of Ebeye” to the TT HiComm in 1966 shows that there were already significant problems on Ebeye related to drinking, largely by young men (TTPI Archives 1966d).

Problems with Marshallese workers and other Ebeye residents on Kwaj associated with alcohol have included public drunkenness and absenteeism from work. Problems on Ebeye in this regard have included alcoholism, domestic abuse, and income lost that is badly needed by families on Ebeye. As noted, drunken behavior on the ferries has also been a problem, especially after payday and on late ferries. While alcohol is a serious problem with larger consequences, concerns by Marshallese representatives to the CRC have largely focused on preventing younger Marshallese from gaining access to alcohol through the base. Access to alcohol by Marshallese workers (largely male) is more complicated because it has been seen as one of the benefits of working on the base, and as a way to relax with friends after a day’s work, much as it is for Americans. The Oceanview Club on base (also known as the “Snake Pit”) has always been the most popular place for Marshallese workers to drink, often with American friends.

Alcohol, whether in the form of beer or liquor, has always been one of *the* most desired goods on Kwaj, largely because of its low cost and variety compared to Ebeye. During my fieldwork, only beer and occasionally vodka were usually available on Ebeye. Young people were also known to brew and drink what was called “yeast.” While I was surprised by requests made in 2001 for workers to be allowed to take beer home with them to Ebeye, I was told that

this had been allowed at times in the past. Requests to transport alcohol from Roi to Ennuirr have also been common (CRC Minutes, Sep. 30, 1993). One American long-timer noted that at one point there was a vending machine dispensing beer at the DSC, and beer was served with dinner on the *Tarlang* ferry service between Kwaj and Ebeye. Alexander noted in the mid-1970s that “Anyone who can take a boat to Kwajalein can obtain beer from vending machines in places such as the bowling alley” (1978:163). Maids could also easily bring alcohol back to Ebeye because DSC guards were forbidden to check “personal packages” (Alexander 1978:163). Other than tightening access restrictions, efforts on Kwaj to deal with these alcohol issues in the past have usually included citations and substantial fines. Workers who were repeatedly cited or let alcohol affect their work performance could be fired. During my fieldwork, counseling services were available at both the base hospital and Ebeye hospital to aid those with chronic alcohol problems, particularly those in danger of losing their jobs for this reason.

As a sign of its high desirability, a Command representative told me in 2002 that alcohol was the number one item smuggled through the DSC. In spite of the fact that a Marshallese worker can lose his/her job if caught trying to take alcohol through, workers and others continue to do so. These episodes also increase when alcohol is scarce on Ebeye: Demand was particularly high during a visit I made to Kwajalein during the 2003-2004 holiday season, as there was a “beer shortage” on Ebeye, a crisis rivaling the occasional rice shortage. (The Command will respond to a rice shortage, but not to a beer shortage.)

There have been previous crackdowns, including those by a commander who tried to ban alcohol and tobacco completely for both Marshallese and Americans (Americans said they strongly protested this). However, the restrictions in the most recent tightening cycle seem to have been the most severe. Under these restrictions, only Kwaj residents can purchase packaged

alcohol, and a Kwaj resident must accompany Marshallese workers in drinking establishments. In addition, the former expansion of access hours for workers has been contracted: they can still come on base three hours early, but must leave one hour after their shift is over (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Sep. 24, 2004:6). Extended after-work access hours have been connected to increases in drinking in the past (CRC Minutes, Apr. 30, 1992). The Command has emphasized that this is not just about reducing access, but reducing the base's role in enabling the drinking problems of Marshallese men. Justifications published in the *Hourglass* included that the Command is “trying to enable responsible social drinking” and prevent some of the destructive effects alcohol has had on employment and on Ebeye families (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Sep. 24, 2004:6). Despite the severity of the crackdown and Command justifications, based on Kwaj's larger access history, this policy is likely to be modified in the next loosening phase.

## CHAPTER 9

### MOBILIZATIONS: MEDIA, RESISTANCE & U.S.-MARSHALLESE RELATIONS

#### Introduction

Over the years, there has been a considerable amount of resistance of various kinds to the military presence on Kwajalein from a number of different sources. National media examinations of events on Kwaj have been particularly important in shaping outsiders' views of what happens on the atoll, and have often been critical. Local Marshallese have staged a number of sail-ins and demonstrations since the 1960s. Americans of various kinds, including some in the TT administration, have emerged as vocal critics of U.S.-Marshallese relationships on the atoll. Greenpeace has been a very visible opponent of U.S. missile testing on Kwajalein and has staged protests there in recent years (Johnson 2001; *Marshall Islands Journal* 2001b, 2001c).

This chapter focuses on these forms of resistance, and the kinds of prominent narratives that have come to dominate the literature on Kwajalein over the years. These narrative lines of dominance and resistance often obscure as much as they reveal, and the story is often far more complex (seen here from an American viewpoint). The chapter will conclude with discussion of some of the forums that have emerged over the years to attempt to resolve contentious issues on the atoll, part of the "space" created by Marshallese resistance.

## Debates over resistance

As noted in Chapter 2, borderlands work has been criticized over the years for “romanticizing” resistance, particularly in its almost exclusive focus on resistance by the less powerful, and the tendency to see resistance as *the* final outcome of border struggles. Other concerns with the concept of resistance include its overuse and lack of definition, as, “Few concepts in the recent past have proved to be as popular – and as elusive – as has ‘resistance’” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b:18). Some authors have also noted that the trend toward identifying resistance in everyday situations (modeled on James Scott’s *Weapons of the Weak*) has gone too far, resulting in authors finding it where it doesn’t exist and giving it far greater power than it has in actuality (Dirks 1992:17). Ortner has criticized many resistance studies for their lack of ethnographic perspective, including a tendency to deemphasize the internal politics of the “colonized,” a lack of attention to culture, and a tendency to dissolve subjects (1995).

Despite these weaknesses, there have been some critical developments in resistance studies that are important here. Scott’s work opened up resistance studies to the idea of more subtle forms of resistance, outside of open rebellion in peasant societies (1985). Foucault has also been an extremely important influence in resistance studies in bringing to the fore the “less institutionalized, more pervasive, and everyday forms of power” (Ortner 1995). Christine Pelzer White has asserted that the study of everyday forms of resistance should also include “everyday forms of peasant collaboration” (in Ortner 1995). Michael Adas has noted that avoidance may also serve as a form of resistance (1992). Ambivalence on the part of both the colonized and the colonizer has also been raised by several authors as an important topic to be addressed in resistance studies.



While resistance to U.S. policy and the U.S. presence on Kwajalein Atoll has taken more overt forms in the “sail-in” demonstrations that have occurred over the years, “everyday” forms of resistance occur here as well. However, how to distinguish resistance from other kinds of behavior (that may be more self-serving) is an important methodological question debated in the literature (Ortner 1995:175). It is often a question of motivations: when someone tries to take something through the DSC that is prohibited, is it resistance, or is it because they need or want that item? Is it resistance that some Marshallese speak little English after working on Kwajalein for years, or is it because they don’t need to, because of fears of embarrassment, or because of the state of education on Ebeye? Are tensions between Marshallese and ferry crews a reflection of relations on the atoll, or are they a result of drinking on payday? I join Gupta and Ferguson in the use of a more complex view of resistance here, emphasizing that “One cannot decide whether something is or is not resistance in absolute terms; resistance can exist only in relation to a ‘strategy of power,’ and such strategies are shifting, mobile, and multiple” (1997b:18).

### American Resistance

As noted, the character of a particular colonial system is often “shaped as much by political, social and ideological contests among the colonizers as by the encounter with the colonized” (Comaroff 1997:192), and I believe that is indeed the case on Kwajalein Atoll. While for the colonized and their suffering

the niceties of competing colonialisms are beside the point...At another level, however, the struggles among fractions of a ruling class can make a difference. They certainly did in South Africa. Not only did those struggles create spaces and places in which some

blacks were to discover new, if limited, modes of empowerment; others, of course, were to find novel sources of enrichment at an almost Faustian cost (Comaroff 1997:192).

The spaces created by resistance of various kinds on the atoll *have* made a difference, particularly in creating spaces in which Marshallese have some power, although the relationship always remains asymmetrical, and those gains may not benefit Marshallese uniformly.

As already seen, during the TT period there was considerable friction between TT administrators and the Command, but other Americans have also been outspoken critics of Kwajalein as well. In her discussion of the role of anthropologists in early postwar Micronesia, Falgout notes that “American expatriates were lumped into two categories; those who minded their own business, and those who stirred up trouble” (1995:106). Here I look at some of these “troublesome Americans” who have emerged at various times to challenge the Command and the U.S. presence on Kwajalein. I will also briefly discuss the actions of Greenpeace, which has been a major “thorn in the side” of the Command in recent years.

In talking to American residents of Kwaj, the biggest surprise for me was the discovery that not all Americans on the base necessarily agree with decisions made or events that have occurred there over the years, and that they have been vocal to the Command on a number of issues. One of the important functions of “studying up” or studying the “colonizer” is to see beyond common stereotypes, and common assumptions about American residents were definitely put to the test here.

Several of the long-timers I interviewed could also easily have been classified as skeptics, both of Command policies and the overall “mission” of missile testing. In this sense, they may be the sort of “fringe elites” that Marcus recommends as a route to accessing “direct views of elite praxis and culture” (1983b:20). I was most surprised to learn, however, that some *missile testing*

*engineers* are not necessarily supporters of missile testing and the military order on Kwajalein. They emerged as even more complex characters in events described below regarding the 1982 demonstrations. Some other American residents would come to surprise me as well for their critiques of Command actions and policies. At times these individuals have been viewed as “Marshallese sympathizers” and subsequently viewed with suspicion or ambivalence by the Command. However, while they had definite Marshallese sympathies, they also did not hesitate to “set the record straight” regarding what they saw as misrepresentations of Command actions and events on the atoll over the years. As already seen, these individuals seemed to be very conscious as well of the contradictions surrounding their own roles in the system, as critic on one level and supporter on another, and they were also very good at spotting those same ambivalences in broader discussions of the U.S.-Marshallese relationship. American base residents in general also had complex roles in the demonstrations, to be discussed below.

TT representatives and Peace Corps volunteers were two groups of Americans who created particular problems for the Command. While TT personnel were sometimes viewed negatively by Marshallese, some spent a significant amount of time protesting access restrictions on the atoll, as noted in the chapter on Ebeye. As one example, in the late 1960s TT representatives reported Command “strong-arming” of the Marshallese, some of whom had recently written a protest letter regarding access changes on Kwaj (TTPI Archives N.d.). TT documents on these back-and-forth debates on atoll issues are an important record of the U.S. colonial project on Kwajalein. William Vitarelli’s two-year stint on Ebeye is a case in point. Records show his constant efforts to get materials from Kwajalein for a variety of Ebeye development programs, including preschool and kindergarden programs, a youth corps and a community garden (Host Nation Archives 1966e). Vitarelli also angered members of the

Command by talking to reporters from *Life Magazine* who were forbidden by the Command to go to Ebeye (Host Nation Archives 1966g). In a larger sense, he was also important in serving as a witness to the real-life effects of some base access policies, as previously discussed (Dever 1978:v). (However, he also participated in Operation Exodus, which, as noted, has been criticized as being one of the most imperial of TT policies in the 1960s.) In general, TT critiques of the Command and its policies, and signs of friction, are not hard to find.

Peace Corps volunteers were also vocal critics of the Command and of the TT administration. While they were sent out initially to improve the image of the U.S., some did that almost too well: “Relations between volunteers and expatriate government workers became strained in the first years because of the often critical posture of volunteers toward the Trust Territory government and their expressed sympathy for Micronesians” (Hanlon 1998:109). Mason notes that volunteers often became “spokesmen and champions” for Micronesians (1989:9). As Hanlon notes, in some cases they were blamed for “instilling the troublesome concept of independence in the minds of Micronesians” (1998:109). Many brought the fundamental “tension of empire” between military activities and democracy to the fore. In addition, Peace Corps lawyers created the Micronesian Legal Services Program, which “proved particularly nettlesome to Trust Territory officials in its advocacy of the legal rights of Micronesians” (Hanlon 1998:109-110). An undated document from an unknown source in the Host Nation Archives (from the later 1960s, and possibly from the *Ebeye Voice* publication) notes that the TT HiComm had recently released a statement describing the problem of Peace Corps volunteers in Micronesia ““who deliberately, openly and callously attempt to disassociate themselves from the Trust Territory administration, its programs and goals”” (Host Nation Archives, n.d.). The article goes on to defend the actions of volunteers refusing to support such

TT actions as the confiscation of land for military purposes and “the tacit approval of segregated military facilities,” and notes that volunteers on Kili Island (home to a population of dislocated Bikinians) had submitted a petition to the UN “urging the return of Bikini” (Host Nation Archives, n.d.).

In addition to becoming expatriates devoted to such things as education in the Marshalls, as many have, some Peace Corps volunteers went on to become activists for Marshallese interests. The author of the important report *Ebeye, Marshall Islands: A Public Health Hazard*, Greg Dever, was a former Peace Corps volunteer in Micronesia (1978). Anthropologist Holly Barker began her current work on nuclear compensation issues in the Marshalls with her stint as a Peace Corps worker: her criticism of the U.S. nuclear testing program during that time resulted in threats of termination of her Peace Corps work (2004:3). Mason also notes that some volunteers went on to serve as TTPI staffers (1989:10).

As can be imagined, there was even more friction between Peace Corps volunteers and Kwajalein itself. A 1968 article in the *Ebeye Voice* describes the arrest of a Peace Corps volunteer who refused to obey base security officers. In response, the volunteer noted that the incident was ““not an individual case of harassment, but a negative attitude by a few toward all people from Ebeye; Marshallese, Peace Corps and even Coast Guard... Marshallese receive this kind of treatment everyday but don’t protest” (*Ebeye Voice* 1968:6). In another example, there is a 1972 letter to the Commander in the Host Nation Archives written by a Peace Corps volunteer, protesting the way in which he and his wife had recently been treated by base security personnel (Host Nation Archives 1972a). He pointedly notes that “If KMR security guards are harassing U.S. citizens, can you imagine how they treat the Marshallese?” (Host Nation Archives 1972a:2).

The letter goes on to protest recent access restrictions, as well as the overall relationship between the base and local Marshallese, and concludes by noting:

The conditions on Ebeye were of course created by the presence of Kwajalein Missile Range. To deny that, to say that the Trust Territory is to blame, is preposterous...I dislike penny-ante thinking in high-stakes games which involve the future of my country. We have paid dearly for short-sighted policies in the past and we shall soon be paying for them here (Host Nation Archives 1972a:2).

On a larger scale, Greenpeace has also emerged as a major critic of missile testing and the U.S. military presence on Kwajalein over the years. Of course, as noted in Chapter 4, Greenpeace relocated the population of Rongelap to Mejjatto on Kwajalein Atoll in the mid-1980s, after the U.S. government refused to respond to their requests to leave their nuclear-contaminated atoll. While Greenpeace has been active on Kwajalein in the past (CRC Minutes, Jun. 21, 1990), a major campaign against Kwajalein took place starting in 2000 ([www.stopstarwars.org](http://www.stopstarwars.org)). This protest included a brief occupation of one of the missile launch sites, which almost aborted a mission (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Mar. 30, 2001:2). This was followed by the jailing of some demonstrators, although they were then tried and released without having to serve jail time (*Marshall Islands Journal* 2001c:4).

Around this time, a contingent of Greenpeace representatives was given permission by some Kwajalein landowners to set up a camp on Ebwaj Islet, one of the causeway islets between Ebeye and Gugeegue. Marshallese on Gugeegue recalled taking boats out to their ship to see a presentation on U.S. activities in the area. The fact that landowners had welcomed Greenpeace to islets on the atoll was a major “thumbing of the nose” to the Command, which responded by

pressuring the RMI to make good on its legal obligations to guarantee unrestricted use of the atoll. In talking to American long-timers about the issue, most were not sure if U.S. representatives used more of the “carrot” in dealing with this, or the “stick,” but whatever they did was fairly effective at reducing Greenpeace’s presence after this episode, although during my fieldwork, threat conditions on base were occasionally raised when there were possibilities of Greenpeace coming back (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Feb. 21, 2001:8). Steps taken to reduce future Greenpeace activity included an agreement reached between the RMI and U.S. government to enforce a 12-mile “exclusion zone” around Kwajalein during and 24 hours before a missile test (*Marshall Islands Journal* 2001c:4), as well as pressure on the RMI to deport the single Greenpeace activist living on Ebwaj (Johnson 2001, *Marshall Islands Journal* 2001b).

Long-timers on Kwaj felt that landowners had encouraged Greenpeace’s actions, knowing they would anger the Command, “because they could,” and to get

...a sense of satisfaction, just showing that they can be independent. We can do this. I think there’s also a sense of amusement, just seeing, okay, yeah, what are they going to do about that? Knowing that they are going to do something, I can just see them, USAKA people posture and speech, you know, they [the Marshallese] know how it’s going to turn out in the end, but in the meantime, they tweaked it a little bit.

One of the Greenpeace members involved, Alice Leney, went on to achieve notoriety among the Marshallese as “Alice in Wonderland”: his continuing exploits in irritating the Command (which included living on Majuro to work on environmental projects) were a common topic in the *Marshall Islands Journal* in 2001 and beyond. This made for interesting article titles, including

“U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll ‘terrorized’ by Alice in Wonderland” (*Marshall Islands Journal* 2001c:1).

### Local Media

One of the “tensions of empire” for Americans on Kwaj can be vividly seen in issues related to “free speech,” where military control clashes with American ideals regarding the rights of individuals. A member of the Command noted in the *Hourglass* that “We do have the right to free speech and to express our opinions with surveys, town hall meetings, letters to the editor of the *Hourglass* and the commander’s hotline” (*Kwajalein Hourglass* Apr. 30, 2002:3). However, as many base residents told me, free speech is not really “free” because it is often subject to Command review: for example, everything published in the *Hourglass* must be approved by the local Command, as well as the Huntsville administration. One long-timer noted that she had had letters to the editor rejected because her letter did not meet certain requirements of content. Another long-timer noted that while residents and workers *can* express their views in these various forums, that does not mean these comments will be incorporated into base decision-making processes or influence outcomes: the Command and the Contractor have the final say.

There is also a certain amount of self-policing on Kwaj, as residents noted that there are many things in the realm of “free speech,” such as staging demonstrations and making particular kinds of comments (such as public criticism directed at the Commander and other base administrators) that while they may not be explicitly forbidden, “everybody knows you don’t do those kinds of things,” or that if you do, you are likely to get some kind of negative response from the Command and/or the Contractor. In terms of responses to Americans who don’t



conform, residents noted that the Command and the Contractor could make their displeasure known through various subtle and not-so-subtle ways. One might fail to advance in the system, or the Contractor might fail to renew one's contract when it expired. Changes in contractors were also seen as potential opportunities to eliminate troublemakers: several residents I talked to believed that some long-timers had not been retained in the recent contract changeover because of their outspokenness. As in military systems, the actions of family members can negatively affect the employability and career trajectory of the person working for a contractor.

This is where the tension lies: the military as an institution is not known for encouraging free speech. However, they can't necessarily kick Americans off the base for speaking freely, as the military system here has to accommodate a largely civilian population. So compromises are often required. This is why Kwaj from a military perspective is seen as a difficult assignment, because servicemembers have to deal with lots of civilians who may not conform to military standards and tend to be much more vocal than soldiers. As a base resident noted in Chapter 5, military training does not usually prepare soldiers for this kind of situation.

As noted, it is only in relatively recent years that there has been some measure of openness in terms of what can be printed and discussed in the *Hourglass*. For example, before the mid-1990s, problems concerning Marshallese workers and U.S.-Marshallese relations were usually not discussed in the newspaper. Before this time, "...you would not have letters to the editor. That just started recently in the last few years, two or three years. So that kind of open venue, and town hall meetings, where the colonel came, that's also been recent." Residents had a variety of views regarding how and why this change in policy came about. Some felt that recent colonels had come to Kwaj with particular mandates to have more public discussion, while others felt that it had to do with the personalities of particular commanders. Others also noted

that *Hourglass* editors in recent years had pushed for more openness. Still other residents felt that it was a complex mixture of these factors. Despite these changes, several residents still felt the nature of the Hourglass was still “very military” and quite restrictive, with one noting that “I read that paper, and believe me, there is nothing in that paper. You know, every issue of that paper is looked at by somebody at USAKA, and there is nothing in that paper that is not approved, believe me. And depending on who the commander is...” it *could* be more or less restrictive, but never “open” or “free.”

### National & International Media

The relationship of Kwajalein to outside media has been much more complicated. Looking at outside media depictions, the most commonly repeated narrative lines are the “slum versus country club” analogy and accusations of “apartheid.” Residents and expatriates also felt that this narrative line could also be read as “big bad American racists” versus “poor pitiful Marshallese.” Terms used in a 2001 *New York Times* article about Ebeye and the U.S.-Marshallese relationship on the atoll included the terms “squalor,” “segregated,” and “ghetto” (*New York Times*, Jun. 11, 2001). Long-timers noted that media coverage has generally been driven by Marshallese protests, with very little balancing or rebuttal from the Command and other Americans. In general, a monolithic view of relationships on the atoll dominates.

As noted in Chapter 4, the base was essentially closed to outside media for many years, following DoD policy, although some residents noted that some Huntsville-approved media were allowed from time to time (TTPI Archives 1975b). Journalists today must still get permission to visit the base. I was told by both Americans and Marshallese that these kinds of restrictions had

also been used by the Command to keep reporters off of Ebeye over the years, although some reporters were allowed to transit the base to Ebeye even during the demonstrations. One long-timer felt that restrictions on media access were a deliberate attempt by the Command to keep reporters from going to Ebeye, going to Kwaj, and making comparisons. Over time, however, this policy has resulted in suspicion on the part of the media regarding events on the atoll, and has contributed to the mystification of Kwaj. But again, the military and affiliated industries have never been known for their openness to the public and the media, policies that are often in conflict with larger U.S. ideals of free speech and openness of information.

As American residents noted, many media reports over the years have presented an incomplete view of what happens on the atoll, or very politicized versions of events from Marshallese sources. In the *New York Times* article noted above, the statement is made that “[Marshallese] would gladly shop on the American-controlled islands, too, where the prices are far lower and the selection is wide, except that Marshallese are not allowed to” (*New York Times*, Jun. 11, 2001). The impression here is one of complete denial of access, which does not match the actual relationship on the ground at that time. The implication is that this is a clear-cut injustice on the part of Americans toward Marshallese, as well as a general disregard of their needs, lending credibility to accusations of “apartheid.” However, as noted in Chapter 7, access issues are considerably more complex than this. This is not to say that Americans on Kwaj are blameless, and long-timers were quick to assert this. However, this coverage, and the narrative line it follows, often simplifies what are much more convoluted and contradictory issues on the atoll.

As one sign of more recent media openness on Kwaj, a journalist from *Harper’s Magazine* was given access to the base for an article published in 2001 (*Kwajalein Hourglass*,

Dec. 15, 2000:12; Wypijewski 2001). According to one long-timer, “she went through Huntsville and got permission to come out here. And like I said, they used to *never* let people come out here.” Residents felt it was a good, detailed and largely fair article critiquing missile defense and the U.S. role on Kwaj. One resident noted that

I thought it was more on the mark than most other things I’ve read. And most of the stuff you’ll read ends up being the ‘we have nuked them, we have moved them over and forced them to live in conditions of impoverishment, country club setting, slums,’ and it ends up being far too simplistic...and I think she caught some of the complexities there.

However, several noted that there was no discussion of issues related to Marshallese corruption or the complex politics of Ebeye and access to the base. One noted that the author displayed an understandable first response to the contrast between Ebeye and Kwaj: “I think she did pretty well, considering, you know, she was only here for a short time, and it’s very hard for anybody who comes here, and you go from there [Ebeye] and you come back [to Kwaj], and that’s the way you feel, [that] it isn’t fair.” At that time, residents were also talking about derogatory comments about the Marshallese made in this article by a long-time Host Nation employee; her comments included that Marshallese were “the laziest, most wasteful people” (Wypijewski 2001:48). Long-timers noted that the American community on Kwaj was split into those who condemned the comments as racist and those that felt that this person had been misquoted. However, all sides agreed that this individual had “battle fatigue” after being on Kwaj for decades, and needed to go home.

There is another tension concerning media coverage here, one that the Command and the various Contractors have created and propagated themselves. When the Command utilizes the

media, it has often been in the form of cut-and-dried news reports regarding base events, such as successful missile tests and reports on equipment upgrades, which often appear in media targeted at military markets, such as the *Stars and Stripes* military newspaper and *Soldiers* magazine. However, long-time residents noted that the Command and Contractor have also used media reports as a way to create favorable views of the base in order to recruit American workers. This has included the propagation of images discussed in Chapter 5 of “Kwaj as 1950s Smalltown USA” and ideas of “Kwaj as Pacific Paradise.” Long-timers noted that this has created problems for Kwaj in the media because the better Kwaj looks, the worse Ebeye looks in comparison. The golf course helps attract American workers to Kwaj, but also makes the base an easy target for “country club” or “apartheid” allegations when that golf course is compared to conditions on Ebeye. In other words, the Command and Contractor have often “set the stage” for media and other critiques of Kwaj.

This dynamic can be seen in discussions I had with long-timers regarding an article on Kwajalein Atoll in the October 1986 edition of *National Geographic* (Patterson 1986). That article, part of a larger feature on the U.S. impact on Micronesia, included a photograph of American base residents shopping for fresh produce at Surfway. One long-timer recalled that the Command and the Contractor had brought in produce especially for the photo shoot: “...we’ve done our own nonsense...*National Geographic* came out here in ‘85 to do a story. They [the Command and Contractor] brought in food and made Surfway look beautiful. We hadn’t seen produce like that forever.” This photograph then makes a marked contrast to descriptions and photographs in the article of Ebeye and the lack of fresh foods there. As noted in Chapters 5 and 8, produce like this was not always available on the base in the mid-1980s, in contrast to the impression given in the article of continuous low-priced abundance. Incidentally, this article is

also known for popularizing the phrase “slum of the Pacific” to describe Ebeye: the phrase is used by the base commander (1986).

In this and other media depictions over the years, photographs or descriptions of living quarters and conditions on Kwaj and Ebeye have often been compared, feeding into the “slum versus country club” narrative. As long-timers noted, in these comparisons nicer “hard housing” on Kwaj is often compared with particularly decrepit-looking shacks on Ebeye. Again, the Command and Contractors have at times been their own worst enemy in propagating idealized views of base housing. One resident observed that when representatives of the media are brought out to the base,

...they typically show them the best [living quarters], they will even take, if they know some guy's rooms are really immaculate, so they say, ‘oh, can we show this person your room,’ so they take them into the BQs and this guy's got chandeliers and all that stuff, and probably a hot tub in the corner...And they say, this is the way the guys live here. They didn't show the way people live on this island.

That the majority of base residents live in trailers or in BQs (where they often have roommates) is not often noted, as well as the fact that there are a range of types of housing on Ebeye.

But there is another underlying issue here that residents pointed to – the complexities these simplistic images hide, and the political purposes to which these simplifications are often put by Marshallese elites. As noted, some residents felt that Marshallese leaders point to shacks on Ebeye as an indictment of U.S. administration, obscuring the role of Marshallese elites have also played in this system. The role of elites is rarely mentioned in media reports: as one long-timer noted, “No, they don't see that. They don't see that, they only see this.” Residents

suggested that in this light, it might be more appropriate to compare the worst housing on Kwaj to the nicest Marshallese house or condo in Honolulu, some of which they believed were paid for in part by funds intended for Ebeye. According to one long-timer, “*That’s* what you should compare – *that* house compared to an Ebeye house – now there’s the relevance. I mean, I don’t see the relevance of comparing my house to something on Ebeye.”

Some thought a more relevant comparison would be between Ebeye and other Pacific communities. Another resident suggested it might also be informative to compare how Americans live on Kwaj with how they live in other locations overseas, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey. However, residents also recognized that the unique geography and history of Kwajalein makes comparison here particularly easy. There is also the question of who should pay for what: “Just because the military pays for Americans to have decent houses here, should the military pay for the Marshallese houses on Ebeye?” Clearly “Kwaj versus Ebeye” images and narrative lines are connected to much more complex issues.

### *Melal*

Another media event residents were talking about while I was there was the publication of the novel *Melal*, written by an American, Robert Barclay, who spent some of his formative years as a “Kwaj kid.” The novel is an apocalyptic combination of Marshallese myth and historical events on the atoll, including a heavy dose of the reality of life on Ebeye, and conditions for Marshallese workers on Kwaj (2002). While the work is fiction, it draws heavily on conditions on Ebeye in the mid-1980s, and from the author’s experiences on both Ebeye and Kwaj. He noted to me that “Ebeye in *Melal* is a composite of memories I have, many of them coming from around 1985” (2002, personal communication). Long-time residents told me the

author's recall was quite accurate, in terms of details about the base and the general spirit of the times, and so for them it was only half-fiction. One long-timer emphasized that the author as a child was well positioned to see and experience these details as a "kid on the fringes" of Kwaj, passing back and forth from Kwaj to Ebeye. He was also able to see things adults might not have seen. In this sense, Barclay was adept at "border crossing" between Kwaj and Ebeye, between cultures, and into places adults might not be allowed, as discussed below.

In terms of the development of the novel, Barclay noted that it was written based largely on his experience on Kwajalein as a child, but then put into historical context as he began to study the literature on Kwajalein as an adult in the mid-1990s (2002, personal communication). When I read in a newspaper article that Barclay "doesn't consider his novel a political one" (Adams 2002), I responded in my head "but everything about Kwajalein is political!" In this light, it is also interesting to note that some in the publishing industry (including Barnes and Noble advertisers) made the assumption based on the content that it was written by a Pacific Islander, and included that assumption in publicity materials (Adams 2002).

However, some Americans I spoke to about the book were concerned about the way it freeze-frames 1980s Ebeye in the minds of readers, and images of racist Americans (although Barclay does do some balancing of characters on both the American and Marshallese side). Most Kwaj residents I spoke to thought the book was excellent, as part novel and part history, but also noted that things on Ebeye have improved in some respects since the 1980s, as have conditions for Marshallese workers on the base.



### Home on the Range

Another important work affecting outsiders' views of Kwajalein has been the documentary video *Home on the Range*, by Adam Horowitz (1990), filmed around the time of the 1986 demonstrations, and including demonstration footage. It provides some very good glimpses into Marshallese life on Ebeye at the time, including the ever-present children playing creatively with whatever they can find, and young men drinking beer. It also shows a few of the infrastructural issues of the time, including flooded streets, and the deficiencies in the Americanized diet.

In the context of the demonstrations, it also provides excellent views of a few other islets in the MAC, including demonstrators occupying and building a house on Meck Islet, the site of missile launching facilities. Elsewhere, a missile is shown embedded in the ground, on what is likely to be Illegini Islet, which has been the site of some land impact missile tests. One of the most memorable scenes is that of a local landowner during the demonstrations, showing the sign outside a base establishment explicitly forbidding the entrance of Marshallese. Another is a segment showing security personnel dragging Marshallese onto the ferries to end the demonstrations. (American long-timers noted that these security forces were largely non-local forces hired from the U.S. to assist with security on the base during the demonstrations.)

Interestingly, the Command banned the film on Kwaj, although they did not prevent it from being shown on Ebeye, and Kwaj residents who wished to see it there could do so (*Marshall Islands Journal*, Jun. 8, 1990:1,26). The Alele Museum television station on Majuro also decided not to show the film again after its first airing, noting that "showing the film more than once was making a political statement in favor of the film" (*Marshall Islands Journal*, Jun. 8, 1990:1,26). Interestingly, there is a letter in the Host Nation Archives from the chairman of the

Subcommittee on Insular and International Affairs to the Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities stating his concern that the film was being banned on Kwajalein. His view on the matter was that

Seeing the film would enable Americans on Kwajalein to better understand the landowners' position and, hopefully, lead to an improvement in communication between KMR and the community in which it is located. The commander of KMR from 1986 to 1988 made enormous progress in improving community relations. It is a shame that his...work could be affected by the refusal to allow a film to be shown because it reflects a point of view not shared by the Army (Host Nation Archives 1990a:1).

While it is a powerful video in many ways, it is also a continuation of the basic “good versus evil” narrative line. Americans on Kwaj are portrayed as one-dimensional characters or talking heads for U.S. military interests, and only the Marshallese are humanized. In addition, much like *Melal*, it is a picture of a time on the atoll, which then becomes frozen and unchangeable in people's minds.

### Marshallese Demonstrations

Resistance to the U.S. administration and the base by Marshallese has taken a variety of forms, from lower-level everyday forms of resistance (including resistance to base regulations) to higher-level actions. Regarding some of these lower-level actions, there is ample documentary evidence of Marshallese protests to the Command regarding base policies. One such example is a 1968 letter written by a group of Marshallese maids protesting recent access changes (TTPI

Archives 1968c). Another less-well-known episode is the strike by Marshallese workers in the mid-1970s, noted in Chapter 7. Protests in various forums beyond the atoll have included statements in various media outlets and testimony in the Congress of Micronesia and the UN.

Better known generally are the major sail-ins or demonstrations that have taken place on the atoll over the years, described in Chapter 4. The history and politics of these events could easily be the subject of multiple dissertations, but only brief outlines can be supplied here. Root issues behind these demonstrations have included the conditions and terms by which various U.S. agencies and the military gained control of various pieces of land on the atoll (including the MAC, Kwaj Islet and land on Ebeye), as well as amounts of compensation for that land. Conditions on Ebeye and the forced dependency of the MAC Islanders on Ebeye have also been significant issues, as well as insufficient compensation for having to live there.

MAC Islanders and other Kwajalein Marshallese have also protested agreements made between the RMI government and the U.S. government regarding Kwajalein Atoll, particularly the Compact and the associated Military Use and Operating Rights Agreement (MOURA) for the use of Kwajalein. Specific aspects of these agreements being protested here include the amount of land lease money agreed to, and the fact that local landowners and leaders have usually been excluded from direct negotiations. Amazingly, at one point a few Kwajalein leaders met with DoD representatives without the approval of the RMI (CRC Minutes, Jan. 19, 1983). As noted, in the case of U.S. military use of resources overseas, the U.S. government normally only negotiates with national governments in order to avoid entanglement in regional or local disputes.

In regard to initial land acquisitions, one American long-timer noted that U.S. negotiators clearly manipulated the MAC Islanders in early negotiations by putting stacks of bills on a table

in front of the Marshallese: “I seen pictures of that, when the Navy they got the lease out of them, they had stacks of bills, it’s a Navy archive picture in a book, they had stacks of bills this high...in \$10 and \$20 bills, ‘here’s for you, here’s for you.’” Marshallese I talked to about these negotiations laughed as they talked about how naïve they had been at the time about money. Some lands were leased in 1964 for ridiculously low amounts of money (\$10 per acre per year), and leases often extended for 99 years (Johnson 1984:27). If agreement couldn’t be reached quickly due to the complications of the Marshallese land tenure system, land was often acquired by eminent domain. In a summary of land acquisition issues on the atoll, a 1968 document states that when the Army needs a piece of land,

Trust Territory officials must take the property by Eminent Domain with a promise that compensation will be negotiated at a later date. Nevertheless, this is the only practical way to do business in Marshallese land matters. There are so many Marshallese people to be consulted and agree to land lease understandings that it usually takes years to work out an agreement. It took twenty years to get a land lease agreement for the island of Kwajalein (Host Nation Archives 1968a:6).

In this light, a Command statement in 1968 regarding Marshallese-American relations on the atoll seems highly questionable: “Evacuation of islands could not be accomplished without the cooperation of the Marshallese people who volunteer to move from their homes...” (Host Nation Archives 1968a:28). Clearly, military objectives were prioritized over the needs of the Marshallese: the military wanted easy solutions to these matters, like a single “King” or “landowner” with which to negotiate.

While the 1979 demonstrations are the first ones usually remembered, there were smaller sail-ins in the late 1960s, when a landowner and his extended family reoccupied their home islets in the MAC. I will provide a brief history here of the major sail-ins, and then focus particularly on events associated with the 1982 demonstrations, called Operation Homecoming. All of these demonstrations severely curtailed the ability of the U.S. to use the lagoon and associated islets for missile testing, and other related activities (such as the firing of meteorological rockets). Interestingly, during some demonstrations, base authorities asked Marshallese leaders to ask demonstrators to take cover for certain activities that might present a hazard to them, and some leaders and demonstrators did comply with these requests. Several Marshallese noted that some missile tests were conducted while demonstrators were still in the MAC hazard area, with no requests by the Command to take cover (or Marshallese refusal to do so).

In the 1979 demonstration, Marshallese occupied parts of Roi-Namur, which was originally confiscated by the Japanese. Prior to this, negotiations between the DoD and Roi-Namur had failed to reach agreement on compensation for U.S. use of the islet. The U.S. military clearly hoped that having the TT grant it “the exclusive right to use and occupy Roi-Namur Island for an indefinite period of time” in 1960 would mean negotiations with landowners wouldn’t be necessary (KMR Annual Historic Review 1973-74). However, landowners were not as cooperative as the U.S. military had hoped, and negotiations, lawsuits and condemnation proceedings then took place. In 1978 the first occupation of the island took place: this was ended by promises of continuing USDA subsistence allowances. In 1979, Roi and other islets were occupied again, on the basis that the Marshallese landowners had not been compensated for past and current use of the islet. This demonstration included as many as 200 demonstrators during some periods. American long-timers had fewer memories of this event because several of those

interviewed arrived in the early 1980s. Others were already living on Kwaj, but noted that they had less knowledge of and contact with this event because it was focused more on Roi and the MAC, and did not include a major occupation on Kwaj Islet.

However, “Kwaj kid” Robert Barclay recalls significant encampments on Kwaj during these demonstrations on Emon Beach and Coral Sands. He particularly recalled “people giving them food and supplies,” and recalled he and his friends being chased away from these areas by security. He also recalled that there were rumors that demonstrators were going to form “a human chain” across the runway (2002, personal communication). Another famous incident from this series of demonstrations was the clubbing of a Marshallese leader on Roi by a security officer.

The largest sail-in and occupation, called Operation Homecoming, took place in 1982. The demonstration lasted for 4 months and included approximately 1,000 Marshallese at its peak (Johnson 1984:32). The demonstrators occupied parts of Roi, the MAC and Kwaj, invading the American “bubble.” This demonstration ended with the informal incorporation of some Kwajalein landowners into negotiations over compensation for U.S. use of Kwajalein. The agreement reached included: the RMI providing the U.S. with “free and unrestricted use” of leased lands; increased compensation to landowners; and \$1.9 million a year for KADA, separate from payments to landowners (RMI Revised Compact Proposal, Attachment F, May 3, 2002).

The 1986 demonstrations, depicted in the video *Home on the Range*, also involved Marshallese occupying portions of the base, as well as MAC islets, but was somewhat smaller than Operation Homecoming. This demonstration was a protest against the signing of the Compact, the expiration of land leases, and worsening living conditions on Ebeye, which is at its nadir at this time.

Here I will focus on some events occurring around the 1982 occupation, drawing both on mostly American recollections, but also on Marshallese viewpoints and documentary sources. My aim here is to add further complexity to what has often been depicted as a black and white situation, Americans against Marshallese, as well as bringing to the fore some less-well-known aspects of these demonstrations. One can see in the demonstrations that the Marshallese crossed physical borders, and then the Command responded by reinforcing not only physical borders, but regulatory ones as well.

What is most interesting to me in the context of this research is the role some American residents played in this power struggle, particularly in challenging some of those reinforced borders, and crossing them themselves. As noted above, there was significant sympathy on the part of some base residents for what the Marshallese were fighting for in the demonstrations, namely, more compensation for the use of their land, and for the improvement of living conditions on Ebeye. Several American long-timers noted that they felt that the original demonstrations were completely just.

The Command marked the borders of the demonstration sites with barriers and security personnel, and warned Americans against interacting with the demonstrators. As an indication of their sympathy, some residents reported providing food and other supplies for demonstrators, despite threats from the Command to bar anyone caught doing so from the island. One long-timer noted that “you weren’t supposed to go near them.” Another recalled “sneaking around” and bringing food to the demonstrators: “If you were caught, you might have gotten fired, but...” Another noted that even after stern warnings were issued, residents sent their kids with food and supplies for the demonstrators, as they figured that security wouldn’t dare punish a child: “...you

could be barred if you fed them, so we sent all the children down with food. Who's going to bar a 5-year-old?"

In terms of official information about the demonstrations, base residents reported that there was very little available to them, whether through the *Hourglass* or other channels, especially in the early parts of the 1982 demonstration. As a result, rumor was one of the main sources of information on the base. According to one resident:

we weren't supposed to know anything, so it was all hush-hush. We didn't know what was going on, all we knew was that, 'keep out of here.' We used to go to Camp Hamilton all the time to go windsurfing, and all the sudden, you can't go anymore. You can't even ride by there. And there was nothing in the papers...

Another noted

I think it was just formally hush-hush. There was nothing in the *Hourglass* about the sit-in, until I think the day they were removed. But for months and months and months, you had people who were like at the Pacific Club, you'd see their laundry waving in the wind.

Long-timers also noted that most Americans on the base could go about their daily business without being affected too much by the demonstrators: no matter that parts of Kwaj had been occupied, Americans could still stay somewhat in their own "bubble." One reported that "Well, the demonstrations really didn't impact our daily lives. You know, we knew what was going on, but those kinds of things were not reported in the paper, either. Nothing was. Nothing was said, so it was word of mouth to everybody..."



In addition to controlling the borders of the demonstration sites and information, the Command also reinscribed other borders on the base. It severely restricted access to the base and its resources, so that only workers and a few government officials were allowed on base. Barriers at the DSC were hardened. Workers at first were not allowed to bring lunches with them or take water home, until protests from various Marshallese leaders convinced the Command to allow workers to transport certain things back and forth. As previously noted, the Command also cut off the water supplies to the demonstration sites on Kwaj, in the hope that this would curtail their occupation. Long-timers recalled that they knew this would not be ineffective, as Marshallese have seen worse and persevered. Residents also saw this as a short-sighted failure to understand the connectivity of Kwaj and Ebeye, as “disease could spread to the American population, because we had a symbiant relationship. Anything that happened on Ebeye, even though we had few workers here, happened here too.”

But the Command went further in hardening the borders of Kwaj. In response to the demonstrations and a rumor that Marshallese were going to invade Kwaj over the reef, the Command created a “security barrier” across the reef on the northern end of the islet. Initially, the barrier consisted of rolls of concertina wire and some barricades (Figure 4), as well as larger klieg lights. Another base resident recalled that a large metal door was installed by the radio station, “...because they were afraid they were going to take over the radio station...[the door] probably cost thousands of dollars and was probably never even shut, you know, because no one ever thought about [invading].” In terms of how the Marshallese responded to the concertina wire, one told me that “They really think that, they think we are animal, because you only make cage for animals.”

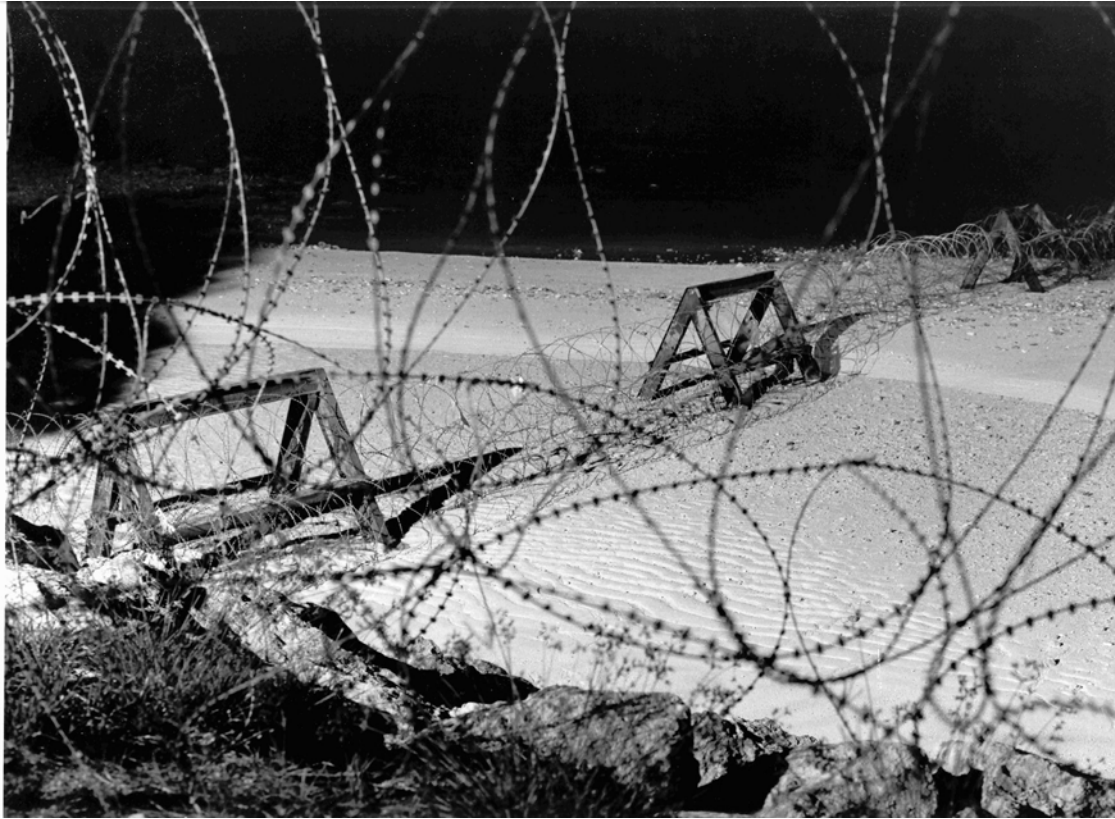


Figure 4. Concertina wire at north end of Kwaj, 1982.

The response of many American residents to the concertina wire was disgust. One recalled that

...the residents on this island were like ‘is the Army crazy? What are they doing going to war against women and children?’ Because that was for the most part who the demonstrators were. They would sail into Emon Beach and it would be nothing but little kids.

In regard to my question about whether residents felt threatened at all by the Marshallese, one resident responded “What were they going to do? Throw diapers at us?” Another noted that “I

think those of us who were tuned into it, saw it as *really* an inappropriate overreaction. The Marshallese were offended, we were bewildered and embarrassed by it.” Another recalled more emphatically: “...the god-damned concertina wire! That was gross. Why would you do that? ...concertina wire is ugly...[Actually,] barbed wire is ugly, but concertina wire is *brutal* *ugly*...concertina wire is not meant to keep people out, it’s meant to hurt.”

Residents with children were also concerned for their safety:

[the barrier] went out to the reef, to the drop off where they anchored it at first, and then, because there were tons of [American] children out here, tons and tons, and they *were* playing in that stuff. And it looked very pretty for the first week, and then it started to rust.

Others reported that it then began to fall apart, leaving jagged, rusty metal pieces in the water and all over the reef.

As one measure of resident disgust, many long-timers recalled with great amusement that in response to the concertina wire, an engineer on Kwaj designed a protest t-shirt, meant to parody Kwaj’s slogan “Kwajalein, Almost Paradise.” As one long-timer recalled,

...one of the guys that I worked with designed a t-shirt, which said ‘Kwajalein, Almost Poland’... it was a picture of the atoll and a target, and concertina wire around it, I think, and underneath it said ‘Kwajalein, Almost Poland’...No, everybody thought [the concertina wire] was ludicrous.

This engineer had quite a few of these t-shirts printed up, as well as stickers. (Unfortunately, I was unable to locate a remaining copy of either, or a photograph.) That the Command was not pleased with this event was an understatement: according to one long-timer, “Well, needless to say, [this engineer] wasn’t very popular with the commander at the time.”

However, while a portion of residents felt no significant threat from Marshallese, the Command took potential threats very seriously. While some of this must be considered in the context of Cold War paranoia (and what was described as the “gung ho” personality of one of the commanders in question), not all of these fears were completely unfounded. During the 1982 and 1986 demonstrations, groups of Marshallese demonstrators refused to stay in the demonstration areas, and frequently moved to other areas of the base, such as the airport or Snack Bar. Earlier events associated with the 1986 demonstrations included a brief occupation of the Snack Bar (*Marshall Islands Journal*, Nov. 29:1985). The Command was especially concerned because even with assistance in some demonstrations from RMI and TT security forces, base security was stretched to its limits. Residents noted that this required the hiring of “rent-a-cops” from the U.S., who had no experience on the atoll, and in some cases, no law enforcement experience. At some point, the Command was pondering the importation of U.S. National Park police to assist overworked security personnel (TTPI Archives 1982f).

In addition, the use by Marshallese leaders and demonstrators of such political rhetoric as “Give me liberty or give me death,” as seen on signs in the MAC during Operation Homecoming, in addition to other Marshallese statements regarding the possibility of dying for their lands, would also have raised red flags for the Command. And finally, Marshallese demonstrators showed themselves throughout the demonstrations to be very knowledgeable in protest tactics. In the march on the Kwajalein Police Station to demand the release of arrested

leaders during Operation Homecoming, photographs show many Marshallese demonstrators holding young children, a tactic not lost on security officials. So it would seem that while some base residents did not perceive or believe in any imminent physical threat, Command concerns about such a threat were not *totally* unfounded.

Another interesting aspect of the 1982 demonstrations that emerged from interviews was that some base residents felt that the concertina wire was erected not just to prevent a Marshallese invasion, it was also erected to keep some Americans in. And the group of Americans whose movement the Command most wanted to control was American men with Marshallese wives or families on Ebeye, a group that has often had an ambivalent relationship with the Command. Because access to resources on Kwaj was largely cut off during the demonstrations, these men could no longer transport goods from Kwaj to Ebeye. As a result, they began transporting goods to Ebeye across the reef, at night and during low tide. After the Command found out about this, these treks became more covert. As one resident recalled:

when it got to be low tide, they would bring the big keg lights out, and set them up on North Point, and turn them on so no one could walk the reef. So what happened was, the guys who had families over on Ebeye would wait until the darkest nights, when the reef was just walkable, and slip through with diapers, and baby formula, and bags of rice. ...They couldn't get, and it was, the people who lived here knew what was happening, and we just turned a blind eye to it, because we were in sympathy, because that was their families.

In this research, this group of men as a whole emerged, both in the case of the demonstrations and in a larger sense in terms of access issues, as a surprising example of literal

and figurative “border crossers” on Ebeye. Children also emerged as border crossers of a kind. They did so above in the case of the 1982 demonstrations, where they served as conduits between sympathetic residents and Marshallese demonstrators. Other “Kwaj kids” moved in and out of demonstration sites, playing with Marshallese children. Some of these “Kwaj kids” have gone on to study Kwaj in their adults lives, such Barclay and Dvorak. Both moved easily between Kwaj and Ebeye as children, with an ease not likely to be experienced by adults, which significantly broadened their horizons.

I was especially interested in what one long-timer told me about Barclay: she described him as a bit of a wild kid, who seemed to pop up everywhere. She felt that this movement, what he experienced and saw as a result, and his incredibly accurate recall of details only long-time Kwajers would know were true, were manifested in *Melal*. This comment led me to ask Barclay if he remembered any events associated with the various demonstrations on Kwaj. He then recalled that he had seen the beating of a Marshallese protestor in front of the Kwaj police station, as the Commander stood by and watched, wearing a pith helmet (2002, personal communication). I later found a 1982 account of this event in the TT Archives, written by a TT security officer: the documentation closely fits Barclay’s description (TTPI Archives 1982c).

After the demonstrations, residents reported that access was cut off for many categories of people. Some of this seems to have been opportunistic, as the 1982 demonstrations made the Command realize the amount of goods that were leaving the base for Ebeye: it then used the opportunity presented by the demonstration to tighten access restrictions. Those American men noted above who previously were allowed to transport goods to Ebeye were not allowed to do so after the 1982 demonstration. A few long-timers felt that these restrictions were retribution toward these American men for their perceived role and sympathies in the demonstrations. Other

Americans on Ebeye were also punished by losing access, and reported experiencing some backlash, assumedly for being “Marshallese sympathizers,” even years after the fact. As an article from the Marshall Islands Journal notes, “some of the Americans who reside [on Ebeye] feel they are treated like poor cousins of the Americans who live and work on KMR, and in a special way still victims of the hard feelings generated by ‘Operation Homecoming’” (*Marshall Islands Journal* 1984b:5).

In addition to various access restrictions, the Command did not allow Marshallese maids/nannies to be employed on base for at least two years after Operation Homecoming. While this was also a punishment directed at the Marshallese, all long-timers were united in strongly feeling that it was also retribution toward those base residents who had sympathized with and aided the demonstrators. This prohibition hit female base residents with families particularly hard: as one noted, “a number of [American] women had to stop work on this island, because the maids were their babysitters...It was punishment. It solved nothing and made lots of hard feelings.”

Some long-timers noted that they felt criticism from various sources (including Marshallese) for not having done more to aid Marshallese demonstrators, such as pressuring the Command and Contractor to address Marshallese concerns, or even joining them in the demonstrations. However, they also noted that Command prohibitions against contact with the demonstrators were severe, threatening residents with being barred from the base. As one long-timer noted:

There was a change in attitude from the Marshallese to the Americans who lived here, like we were all the baddies. But that wasn’t true, because we were powerless also, there was nothing we could do. Because we worked in separate companies – who did we go to?

The Army certainly wouldn't listen to us, they were in their own bubble... we were powerless, there was nothing we could do. When they sat in our yards... I just gave them food and water all day long, and [her son] played with all the little kids.

Some of these kinds of explanations seemed to emerge spontaneously from interviews, I think reflecting the fundamental tension some base residents felt between military control versus American civilian ideals, which would include rights to peaceful protest and fair consideration of Marshallese concerns. Sympathetic residents could not do more and expect to stay on Kwaj, as their families would have had to leave the base, and they may have lost employment and risked being black-listed for defense-related work. However, internal conflicts were generated as this inability to act conflicted with their sympathies, and their discomfort with Command actions and treatment of the Marshallese at this time, such as the installment of the concertina wire.

No matter how strong sympathies were at the time on the part of some base residents, there has been a general shift over time in these sympathies, particularly after the 1986 demonstrations. In looking at the demonstrations as a whole, long-timers felt that these efforts were generally fairly successful in addressing compensation issues on the atoll, in terms of increasing the overall amount of compensation. The demonstrations also drew outside attention to conditions on Ebeye, and this outside pressure ultimately resulted in responses by the U.S. government. Residents noted that it was no accident that funding for improvements on Ebeye magically appeared after various demonstrations. One resident believed that the demonstrations really had worked for the Marshallese: "they actually won their case, I think, in the long run, because they [the U.S. government and military] weren't paying enough for these islands. They had a 99-year lease." It seems that because these efforts had "worked" to some extent, some sympathy dissolved. Another noted, "you know, I kind of have to agree with the Army. We rent



this place, I'm sorry. I agree with the demonstrators as far as the amount of money they were getting for it, but we have certain rights [because we lease the land].”

As previously noted, some of this sympathy also seems to have dissolved as problems with the distribution of lease payments became apparent, and as money and other resources intended for the improvement of Ebeye did not reach their intended targets. While both Americans and Marshallese stressed that there have been some landowners and leaders fighting more equitably for all Kwajalein Marshallese and residents of Ebeye, there have been some, including some who were vocal critics of the U.S. and had pressed for more monetary compensation for the use of Kwaj lands, who then used those gains for their own personal enrichment. Americans also echoed these criticisms, but often noted that the U.S. had to respect Marshallese sovereignty to some extent and could not interfere in these kinds of complex internal matters, no matter how much they might clash with American democratic ideals. As one resident noted regarding land lease payments, “I believe they should get it. Of course, I don't agree with the way the money is split up, but that's immaterial,” implying that distribution issues were and are an internal matter. However, other long-timers felt that because these distribution problems were a critical part of the Ebeye problem, they have ultimately become a U.S. problem.

One question that remains is why there haven't been more demonstrations on the atoll, as land compensation issues, distribution and other “internal” issues, access issues, and rifts between “Kwajalein Marshallese” and the RMI government still fester. Occasionally over the years, individual Marshallese have tried to move back into the MAC, but there have been no major sail-ins since 1986. There have been more recent protests by Marshallese from Kwajalein, but these have taken place on Majuro and have been focused on actions taken by the RMI government. There is also the interesting question of what steps the Command/U.S. government

has taken to make sure these demonstrations don't happen again, and whether those measures include more of the "carrot" or more of the "stick." Regardless, it appears that the possibility of a sail-in is still a threat: In May 2004, Kwaj police completed "non-lethal civil-unrest training," complete with plastic shields, batons and shotguns with rubber bullets (*Kwajalein Hourglass*, Jan. 5, 2005:6). That these efforts are intended to be used against rebellious Americans is not completely unreasonable, but unlikely.

### Spaces Created by Marshallese Resistance

Because of the unique geographic situation of Kwajalein, enabling a large enough group of Marshallese protestors to bring missile testing to a halt, and the fact that they have been willing to do this on more than one occasion in the past, Marshallese have been able to forge a unique relationship with the base. This relationship involves the ability of local Marshallese leaders and landowners to engage directly with the Command and Contractor in negotiation of issues on the atoll. While some issues, such as those regarding land compensation issues, are usually "bumped up" by the Command to higher-level discussions (including those between the RMI and the State Department and other relevant agencies), that Marshallese at the local level are in dialogue with the base *at all* is itself quite unique in the context of other U.S. military bases overseas. While this dialogue, as noted in Chapter 7, has been at times unproductive, highly ambivalent, and filled with apparent cultural "disconnections," it is dialogue nonetheless.

As noted previously, this dialogue includes the Community Relations Council (CRC), started in 1982 as a requirement under the Compact. (Issues not resolved at the level of the CRC are discussed at higher-level, semi-annual Joint Committee Meetings between the RMI and U.S., also required by the Compact.) However, I was surprised to learn in looking through documents

pertaining to the base, that even before they were formally-instituted as part of the Compact, there were meetings of the “Inter-Island Community Relations Committee” long before this, open to anyone on Ebeye who wanted to discuss Kwaj-Ebeye issues. Topics discussed at those early meetings included: issues concerning Marshallese workers on the base; Marshallese student summer hires on the base; MAC visitation; issues related to searches at the DSC; protests by Ebeye businessmen that goods from Kwaj damaged their businesses; the lack of a bank on Ebeye; and the number of access passes to Kwaj, among other topics (TTPI Archives 1980c). In sum, the same kinds of issues discussed in recent years in CRC meetings. However, I was unable to determine exactly how and when those early meetings began, and who made them a semi-formal institution.

Clearly, the establishment of these committees was an attempt by U.S. representatives to resolve local issues before they could reach the level of demonstrations. In terms of this relationship, all former and current military personnel stressed that they had never heard of anything like it on a military base or GOCO, as the U.S. government and military make a point of negotiating only on a national-government-to-national-government basis, in order to avoid getting caught up in local, regional and national politics. However, due to the atoll’s unique history and geography, the U.S. has clearly been drawn into these politics on Kwajalein, politics it helped create, with outcomes that remain to be seen.

## CHAPTER 10

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Main Findings

In this conclusion, there are numerous threads to be rewoven. I will begin by summarizing some of the main findings of this research, particularly in regard to themes that have emerged throughout these chapters. The contributions of this research to border studies, the anthropology of colonialism, and the anthropology of militarism will then be discussed.

From this research, borders of various kinds emerge as excellent sites for the examination of colonial dynamics, and for analysis of the daily life of the state (Wilson and Donnan 1998a:4), in addition to the analysis of “the agents of empire” more broadly conceived. In focusing here on the experiences of long-time American residents, we get a view of both a particular set of borders and a particular colonial system from the side of greater power, perspectives not often seen. Due to their “fringe” status, we also benefit from these residents’ unique perspectives on the system, and their relative outspokenness. Indeed, they might be considered as a sort of elite border population.

But what do we learn about the colonial relationship on Kwajalein through this examination of “the agents of empire”? In the examination of American experiences of life on the base, we see most Americans “in the bubble” of the base and its associated power structure, physically and discursively separated from Ebeye and the Marshallese. The consensus among base residents seemed to be that while some Americans do reach out beyond the bubble, many don’t. Most illustrative here are resident reports that some Americans have lived on Kwaj for 20 years and never once visited Ebeye. We also see how turnover in Commanders and other

Americans mean that few of those present on the base have any deep knowledge of the atoll's history, or Marshallese culture. However, despite the ability of Americans to separate themselves, this research makes apparent that the two islets and peoples are inextricably linked, by such things as history, labor and resource flows, and disease.

It is here that we begin to see how the “tension of empire” between military order and democratic ideals emerges in everyday life. We see particularly how physical and regulatory borders on the base constrain the lives of Americans as well as Marshallese. Particularly interesting here are the regulation of what most Americans see as basic freedoms and rights, including the right to say what you think publicly, snorkel without flotation devices, and let the grass on your lawn grow above a certain length. Particularly illustrative here is the way that this regulation of life extends into the control of families. Elements of surveillance are also part of Kwaj life, as is the stated ultimatum that if you can't live with the restrictions, you can leave. We also see the emergence of other “culture clashes” on the base: between American and Marshallese workers, and between Americans and Marshallese elites. Discussions with base residents also revealed how small-island living changes the dynamics of American racism and discrimination, with the focus of both shifting to local Marshallese.

We also see how Marshallese challenge the physical and regulatory borders that structure their daily lives, particularly in regard to access restrictions. However, it is not just *one* set of regulations that Marshallese must adhere to, but continually changing ones, as Commands change, or for reasons that are not always apparent. American residents and administrators describe a system in which Marshallese push, and then the Command pushes back, continually reinforcing and reinscribing these borders. Over time, we can see these as cycles of loosening and tightening of access restrictions – loosening because of basic needs on Ebeye and

Marshallese pressure, and tightening to prevent abuse of the system and to keep things from getting “out of control.” While I do not doubt, based on this research, that some access policies and practices are based on racial discrimination alone, these loosening and tightening cycles contribute to continuously-renewed perceptions of discrimination with each tightening cycle, as the interests of a military bureaucracy clash with the interests of local Marshallese.

In providing case studies on food and water issues, as well as those surrounding health care, we see that access to Kwaj by Ebeye residents cannot be completely closed because of the basic human needs on Ebeye that demand an American response. But then “where to draw the line” becomes a difficult issue, resulting in a difficult balance between the ideal of self-sufficiency for Ebeye, concern for other human beings, and prevention of access abuses.

One of the most interesting facets of access policies and practices not previously noted on Kwajalein are those issues associated with American men married to Marshallese women, or those with Marshallese families or girlfriends. It is here that racial and cultural borders are in many ways conflated with regulatory ones, in debates over base housing, access to base resources, the transportation of goods to Ebeye, and “the relative problem.” Competing notions of “family” are also clearly at play here.

This research also points to the “competing colonialisms” evident on Kwajalein, seen primarily in disagreements regarding colonial practices and policies between the Command and American base residents, as well as other American actors. It does indeed seem that especially during the Trust Territory days, Americans on Kwajalein Atoll spent as much time arguing among themselves as they did arguing with local Marshallese. These competing colonialisms definitely come to the fore in debates over who is responsible for conditions on Ebeye and who will provide the resources to “fix” it. Some Americans conclude that the fault is ultimately the

failure of the U.S. government to have any kind of unified policy, or any policy at all, in regard to Kwajalein and the Marshall Islands. There has also been refusal to deal with “culture” and complex local political issues, which have created their own complications.

But there is another important factor to consider in debates over Ebeye, one often obscured by constructions of “the slum” versus “the country club” and other discourses pitting evil U.S. imperialists against helpless Marshallese. And that is the issue of where exactly significant amounts of money intended for Ebeye infrastructure have gone. There is also the critical issue of the inequitable distribution of land lease payments. Here we see another “tension of empire” emerge – that between American ideas of democracy and fairness and the Marshallese social hierarchy on the atoll. While American resident sympathies used to lie with all local Marshallese, including landowners and leaders, this sympathy has shifted in recent decades to the Marshallese underclasses on Ebeye, seen as being caught in a system of double domination, between both “the boot” (the American military) and “the flipflop” (Marshallese elites).

“Competing colonialisms” emerge again in the discussion of resistance to the base by various American groups, including Peace Corps volunteers and TT representatives. Most surprising, however, are those “competing colonialisms” expressed by base residents, including missile testing engineers, toward the Command, particularly those associated with the 1982 demonstrations. That some American residents felt at the time that the concertina wire was erected by the Command as much to keep Americans in as it was to keep Marshallese “invaders” out is particularly revealing. In the context of these demonstrations, American children and American men married to Marshallese women also emerged as literal and figurative “border crossers.”

In examining the Marshallese sail-ins of the 1960s to 1980s, we see one of the reasons why the Command and U.S. government has not been able to completely dominate relationships with local Marshallese: landowners can shut down the missile testing range. As such, these actions have forced the Command into a unique conversation with Marshallese regarding access and other issues. While this conversation is often an ambivalent and conflicted one, as a military bureaucracy and Marshallese hierarchy try to understand one another, it is a conversation nonetheless. And it is in this conversation that we see the cycles of access repeating themselves over and over again: as Spener and Staudt note “borders are never finished” (1998a:236).

As seen throughout this research, “studying up” in a context such as this, and in anthropology in general, can be a very contentious exercise. However, as Heyman notes, just because this work presents difficulties, and challenges us professionally and personally, does not mean that it should be avoided; in fact, it should be seen as a welcome stimulant to debate and creativity (2004). Research on the powerful usually consists of external critiques, or examinations of the impacts of elite activities on less powerful populations. While this work is of critical importance, it is limited. Some of what it lacks is the depth provided by ethnography: we would not study traditional cultures from a distance, but that is often what we do with the powerful. To fully understand power, we must engage ethnographically with those along the full range of the continuum, from traditional and less powerful communities to complex state organizations and actors. I would argue that without some deeper understanding of the “agents of empire,” our ability to understand the workings and essence of any colonial system and its true impacts is limited.



### Contributions to the Study of Borders, Colonialism & Militarism

This research is particularly intended to contribute to border scholarship that focuses on the side of greater power, an area in which only a limited amount of work has been done (Donnan and Wilson 1999:25). It is also intended to contribute a comparative case of U.S. borders to a literature dominated by analyses of the U.S.-Mexico border. While the U.S.-Mexico border is the birthplace of border and borderlands studies and is a critical breeding ground of theory, it is now important to direct some of our attention to other international borders and other *kinds* of borders. This is important not only to test theories developed at the U.S.-Mexico border, but also to extend our understanding of U.S. relationships with the “Other” in the context of U.S. colonialism and imperialism.

In regard to the contributions of this research to the anthropology of colonialism, one of the strengths of this research is that it contributes a contemporary case to the anthropology of colonialism, which has largely been historically-oriented and focused on the “old colonial” powers. The strength here is the ability to observe interactions and tensions in the present, providing additional material to documentary sources. In addition, it extends colonial processes into what is usually considered the realm of the “neocolonial” or “postcolonial.” Similar to the way we often assume we know what “colonialism” means, we also assume we know what comes after. As Stoler and Cooper observe, “The very ease with which we often use the term ‘colonial legacy’ carries the suggestion that we already know very well what the oppressive coordinates of that legacy are...” (1997:33). Exactly what those systems entail is an important question. Here we see the larger historical continuity of the system, from early U.S. involvements in the Pacific, to the TTPI period, to the present situation on Kwajalein. We also see how our reasons for being there have and haven’t changed.

I would like to conclude with some discussion of how this work contributes to the anthropology of militarism. Here I draw particularly on Lutz's examination of ethnographic engagements with militarism (1999). She observes that

Throughout the twentieth century, anthropologists have often chosen a field site by its distance from contemporary battlefields. While this may be an eminently sensible strategy, it has eliminated not a few places from an ethnographic gaze, especially during the second half of the century when war's presence in civilian spaces radically increased (Lutz 1999:610).

When anthropologists have looked at conflict, it has been in regard to "primitive" warfare: "civilized war...was not an ethnographic topic" (Lutz 1999:612). Classic views of what warfare is also mask important developments, including how the nature of conflict has changed, as well as the larger repercussions of "the state of permanent war readiness" (Lutz 1999:615). This is not just an issue affecting the U.S.: "Most of the world's people are living with a military, and in preparation for future wars" (Lutz 1999:618). It is here that explorations not just of impacts, but also of the "agents of empire," whether civilian defense contract employees or members of the military, become important. As I ask in the introduction, what do we really know about the "agents of empire," or powerful institutions and elites in our own society? What do we know about what these "agents of empire" do outside the U.S., and what they think about what they do? Ultimately, I hope this research will contribute to these larger debates about the nature of U.S. colonialism and imperialism, and how our "agents of empire" relate to local populations, both at home and abroad.

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