

**THE MAKING AND NURTURING OF RELATIONSHIPS:
AN UJELANG/ENEWETAK MODEL IN THE
CONTEXT OF CHANGE**

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Pacific adoption has long served as a prototypical contrary case that complicates the ethnocentric and simplistic kinship logics of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology—logical approaches which themselves project and perpetuate Euro-American ideas about relatedness. Yet, at the same moment the Pacific adoption literature has confronted the biases of Euro-American categories of kinship and interpersonal relatedness, it also has perpetuated certain stereotypic contours of those categories by shadowing the outlines of their very existence. Escaping those contours in an English publication is, ultimately, impossible. Nevertheless, more finely rendered accounts are attainable. In this paper, I attempt to fashion one such account, a creolized rather than pidgin anthropological representation. By closely considering the etymological contours of “adoption-like” practices on Ujelang and Enewetak Atolls, by tracking meanings as well as cultural contexts of use, I expand the horizons of what is known about Marshallese nurturance and relationship-making. *Kokajiriri*, typically translated as “adoption,” might better be understood as “relationship-making” through “caregiving”. The varied contours of both relationship-making and caregiving are explored below, along with changes that have occurred in the form and frequency of kokajiriri relationships as a result of shifting forces of globalization and concomitant alterations in the daily lives of local Marshall Islanders.

MUCH OF THE ADOPTION LITERATURE in the Pacific, while confronting the biases of European and American categories of kinship and interpersonal relatedness, perpetuates certain stereotypic contours of those categories by shadowing the outlines of their very existence. Escaping those bounds in a

publication in English is, in all likelihood, impossible. Nevertheless, it is possible to remove to more distance, a Creole rather than pidgin anthropological representation, by closely considering the generation of local practices of child-making and nurturance on Ujelang and Enewetak Atolls. In this article, I follow such a path by aligning the etymological contours of “adoption-like” practices on Ujelang Atoll and tracking their meanings and practical uses.

Kokajiriri children, typically translated as “adopted children” Marshallese-style are in fact “made” (*ka-* “to make something occur,” “to bring [it] into being”), and in this case it is *ajiri* (“children,” or perhaps “dependents”) that are continuously made through certain social practices. Continuity is marked by reduplication (*-riri*), and continuity of practice is critical to *kokajiriri* ties. But *kajiriri* also means “to feed” or “to nurture,” and it is precisely the persistent practice of such nurturance that makes *kokajiriri* relations family or kin in a number of senses.¹ The varied contours of these practices are explored in the course of this article along with changes that have occurred in the contours and frequency of *kokajiriri* relationships as a result of shifting forces of globalization and concomitant alterations in daily life.

Tracking the shifting contours of *kokajiriri* provides us with an important reminder of the way that family forms are shaped and reshaped in specific ways that demonstrate the resilience and productive potency of human agency and cultural practices. Not only do the details of *kokajiriri* positively refute the ethnocentric and overly simplistic logics of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, which themselves project and perpetuate Euro-American ideas about kinship (cf., McKinnon 2005), but the shifting contours of *kokajiriri*-style practices also force us to consider the ways that the processes of so-called modernization, westernization, or globalization actually take place, not through assimilation but through the continuous reassertion and renovation of locally negotiated cultural practice. Thus, the details of Enewetak/Ujelang social practices outlined below not only hold significance as *sui generis* (social phenomena)—another country heard from (as Geertz would say of all such “thick descriptions” [1973, 23])—but these local practices take on added significance as evidence contravening the grand theories mentioned above, theories that fly so high above the ground that they lose any sense of legitimacy since they bear no relationship to the ethnographic facts, that is, the practices of actual people who are members of real societies on the face of this earth.

In the pages that follow, I explore *kokajiriri* relationships and practices of Marshall Islanders, particularly among Enewetak/Ujelang community members with whom I have continued to live for many years since 1976.

Most of this research has come from opportunities I have experienced while living with local people in the Marshall Islands, a group of coral atolls some 2,500 miles south and west of Hawai'i in the central western Pacific. Equally, however, as Marshall Islanders have begun to establish new communities in Hawai'i and the mainland United States, I have lived and worked with people in those locales as well. My greatest exposure to the contours of diasporic Marshallese has come from my research among Marshallese (and largely Enewetak/Ujelang Marshallese) who reside along the Kona coast of Hawai'i. I first selected the Enewetak/Ujelang community as an ideal location for the study of social change at a time when U.S. nuclear testing had forced them to reside in exile from their homeland for well over three decades. However, my own long term commitments to this community have created many opportunities for return research (Carucci 2004a), and these prolonged periods of living my life in intertwined relationships with members of the same community help me to situate the shifting interpersonal histories and practices to which I refer in the pages that follow.

Etymological Explorations and Historical Practices

If the essential contours of kokajiriri are expressed through semantic channels, the practices through which it comes to be instantiated are varied both in intensity and in historical manifestation. In one sense, “children made” (or, more appropriately, “dependents made”) through kokajiriri are quintessentially Marshallese. As the ultimate prestation, the highest form of exchange out of which social relationships are woven, these shared persona represent the essence of giving/sharing that provides the constitutive mastic of Marshallese communities, be they fashioned at the extended family level, the community level, or even at the level of the emerging nation state.

In its earliest life cycle manifestation (if we accept a certain bias toward the “naturalness” of gentrix/offspring birthing ties), young women prior to marriage frequently birth offspring who are kokajiriri(ed) by others, most frequently their families of orientation.² These are just as likely to be kokajiriri families as “birth” families (*nejin*) to begin with. Kokajiriri relationships of this type are fairly seamless ones in which feeding and nurturing of newborns by their grandmothers and grandfathers and by siblings of the gentrix, as well as by the birth mother who, at this stage, remains part of that family, weaves the newborn into the family so that s/he becomes as much a younger sibling of the gentrix as an offspring to her. Indeed, terms of reference and address often position the maturing young child in the family with precision, and, not infrequently (from the biogenetic bias of a Euro-American view), a “shift of generation” indicates that the child is brought up as a younger sibling to her (biological) mother.

Two of my own older sisters by adoption both had offspring of this sort (born to their daughters), and, in one case, my sister's own biological youngest child (*lokonji*) was just slightly "younger" (in Euro-American weeks) than her kokajiriri child (the biological child of her daughter). In my lengthy experience with this family, the kokajiriri children have never been looked down upon or treated in any way inferior to the biological offspring. Indeed, in some minor ways, they may be more highly indulged. Nevertheless, these children are called *ajiri turin ial* (children beside the path) or *ajiri turerein ial* (children at the side of the path). In translation these metaphors seem to stress abandonment, and, indeed, there is some possibility that this designation may have been a mission-inspired method of marginalization. Certainly, rampant sexuality was thought to be deserving of discipline.³

For local people, however, *ial* refers not only to the village path but also to paths of relationship, the so-called kinship ties long reified by anthropologists. And for an *ajiri turin ial*, his/her paths of relationship most typically will be identical to those of the mother and will exclude those paths that lead through the various families of the father. The child is left along the side of those paths, rather than being incorporated into them. Thus, although many kokajiriri relationships broaden the optative social pathways available to a person, this form of kokajiriri repositions the child in a network of social relationships already explored by his mother and her siblings. Although a number of relationships to land are available to an *ajiri turin ial*, these relationships will also approximate those of the child's mother and will not include other potential relationships through his/her genitor. Therefore, if there is any conflict felt by kokajiriri children residing with (biological) grandparents, it does not result from abandonment but from the oddities of their structural position vis-à-vis their agemates. Perhaps it is on account of the array of structural realignments that *ajiri turin ial* are overindulged by their parent/grandparent caregivers. Often among the youngest, they receive the overindulgence that is culturally proscribed for *lokonji* ("those behind," last born). These children will be closely bound to their families of orientation because they have no other locations through which they may weave their identities into the land. Finally, as the youngest members of their generations (as younger siblings to their [biological] mothers), they will likely have a limited number of potential marriage partners, prolonging the length of time spent with their families of orientation.

In emotional terms, kokajiriri relationships of this variety are frequently said to be the closest of all kokajiriri relationships since the endearment in grandparent/grandchild relationships exceeds that embedded in parent/child relationships (and is necessarily defined in opposition to it) (Carucci 2007). At the same time that grandparental kokajiriri children are made through

practices of residence, working land, feeding, inheritance, and other daily routines, the birthing relationship of the (biological) mother is not held in secret, and the kokajiriri(ed) child certainly knows that his/her parents are, simultaneously, grandparents. Therefore, the types of ambivalent emotions, feelings of rejection, and animosities that Rauchholz (2008) attributes to adoptive relationships in Chuuk are no more frequent in Enewetak/Ujelang kokajiriri relationships than they are in birthing and nurturance relationships (so-called biological relationships). Indeed, when the parent in a kokajiriri relationship is also fashioned as a grandparent, they are blessed with tinges of the cross-generational solidarities and indulgences that so impressed Radcliffe Brown (1952, chap. I).⁴ Even when the parent/grandparent dies, disputes over land will not cause animosities to surface since, in the abstract, a grandchild has as much right to grandparental lands as does an offspring by birth.

The dynamics of the grandparental type of kokajiriri relationships, like all relationships, change their contours throughout the life cycle, with one of the most volatile periods surrounding the time when the kokajiriri(ed) offspring is nearing or has just *koba*(ed) (“combined,” entered a marriage). Inasmuch as this period of time involves substantial renegotiations of power, its marking as “a (potential) time of capsizing” is hardly surprising. Nevertheless, kokajiriri relationships of the grandparental variety do not dissolve at this juncture, in all likelihood on account of the links to land that result from having lived on and worked a certain parcel of land for an extended period of time. Of course, those ties through land are equally shared with a person’s kokajiriri family, all of whom consume foods from that land, solidifying their unity as a social unit as well as expressing their oneness with the land.

My own elder sister’s kokajiriri child, along with her near-identical agemate, born to my sister, provides a good comparison of the experiential circumstances of a young kokajiriri child. Both of these young girls, just over two years old in 1982–1983, referred to their mother as “*mama*” and were referred to as *nejō* by their mother though, obviously, one of the girls, Belita (a pseudonym), was kokajiriri while the other, Marita, was, in Euro-American terms, Belita’s aunt (her birth mother’s youngest sister). The only time that Belita was separated out from her female agemate was when her “biological” mother was present. When addressing Belita, she would vary her references to her own mother asking Belita, for example, to “take this thing to *būbū*” (grandma), and “take it to *mama*” (mother; both Belita’s mother [kokajiriri] and her own). My sister’s treatment of both younger girls was similar, although inasmuch as her own offspring was slightly more cantankerous than Belita, it often seemed as though Belita received special favors. On March 23, 1983, Belita and her sister were both playing in the yard while one of their older sisters and mother were attempting to wash clothes. Belita’s sister

Marita kept dumping powdered soap in the laundry tub as my sister yelled at her from a distance: “Marita: *nanna, jaab kokurri men ne*” (Marita, bad, do not ruin that thing [near you]). As Marita persisted, my sister continued to chastise her and tossed small paving pebbles at her to get her daughter to desist. She then shifted to a new tactic: “*Ah, le, Marita, Belita ej mona kraka. Kwokonan ke mona*” (Hey, Miss Marita, Belita is eating cookies. Do you want to eat [them])? Belita was not yet eating cookies, but she clambered over to her mother/grandmother who opened the footlocker and opened a sleeve of cookies. Marita considered this option but still was not enticed.

When I saw the two girls for a shorter period of time in 1990, both girls (at that time around ten years of age) were the closest of siblings. Belita certainly gave no evidence of having suffered through a different sort of childhood than her sister. Now, with responsibilities for childcare, minor cooking tasks, and doing the laundry, both girls seemed to appreciate their sibling/agemate because sharing these burdens made them somewhat less onerous.

Three and a half years later, in 1994, Marita, my sister’s “own” child, was again the one to be sanctioned. Bolder than Belita, she was now running off to meet with her young male cross-cousins, again incurring her mother’s wrath. On July 12, 1994, I was in the household waiting for the girls to finish cooking a meal, and, again, my sister was scolding Marita.

“Belita, *eeh! Je jəŋin mōŋā.*” (Belita, *eeh* [suffix meaning “are you there”]! We have not yet eaten.)

B: “*Iŋā. Marita ejaŋin itok.*” (Yes [I’m here]. Marita has not yet come).

“*E bed ia?*” (Where is she?)

B: “*Ear etal im boktok aiboj eo.*” (She ran to bring back water.)

“*Etke ejanin bar roltok?*” (Why has she not yet returned?)

Belita’s sister’s son: “*Immotalok ippen laddik rane.*” ([She has] gone off to the windward with the young boys of ours.)

Z: “*Iio! Immotalok? Ebon emōn ledik eo.*” (An exclamation like “Well, there you go! Off to the windward? The girl will never be OK.”)

This particular day is not atypical for this period of time in the household. Belita is the ordinary, dependable, offspring and Marita the wild and adventuresome one. Does this particular dynamic result from the close age of the two and the fact that Belita is adopted? Does it result from the constant comparison of the demeanor of the two? Perhaps it does (although this case is unique in the girls’ age positioning as virtual-twins, and also as the youngest of the sibling set/“offspring” [*lokonji*] offering no exact comparisons). But the demeanor manifest in the family certainly does not inherently place Marita at an advantage over Belita. If anything, Marita’s relative rebellious

streak may have been fashioned out of the necessity for her to have to share the indulged position of the youngest with a female “twin” who, in lieu of Belita’s adoption, would not have been a sibling “just like” her. In large part, however, various positionalities within the family emerge in relation to the interactive practices of daily life, as much the result of my sister’s mode of coping with the two girls as the cultural proscriptions that give a certain contour to childrearing and to being a child.

By 1997, Marita was part of a *koba* relationship, an (experimental) marriage, and like Belita’s (biological) mother, this one did not prove to be perduring. Belita did not marry for some years, although when I encountered her on the Big Island (Hawai‘i) in 2003, she was married to a man from another part of the Marshall Islands. She had recently been living with one of her older siblings in Honolulu and was thinking of moving to the Big Island (although in 2006, she had not yet made this move). She said “*Mama, ej emon wot an moud.*” (Mother, [her] life is still going well [she is healthy]).

I hesitated, and began to ask “Mama, who?” since there were several of her “mothers” resident in Hawai‘i. But before I could finish, she said, “*Būbū. Ej emōn wōt.*” (Grandma. S/he is still well), indulging her thinking that, given an American sensibility, I would want her to track the genealogical connection to her “grandmother” rather than the relationship-making connection that was foregrounded in her initial reference.

Caregiving of the grandparental sort, along with its nuanced flexibilities, is explored in a different setting by Dickerson-Putman (2008). It is particularly noteworthy that the Raivavae practices outlined by Dickerson-Putman are themselves historically pliable, shifting their semiotic and pragmatic contours as issues of colonialism and globalization begin to have greater importance for Raivavae residents. As I demonstrate below, analogous patterns of change are apparent among Enewetak/Ujelang people. These patterns stress the primary importance of flexible relationship-making strategies that are refashioned in innovative ways in relation to shifting social and historical conditions, yet retain critical cultural contours of precedent practices. The emergent contours of such practices along with their multifaceted forms directly contradict the simplistic claims of evolutionary psychologists who see “the expenditure of resources on those who are genetically unrelated or distantly related . . . as a ‘waste’ of both genetic and economic inheritance” (McKinnon 2005, 62). By such a logic, the wide array of relationship-making practices of Pacific peoples multiplied many times over by the continuously emergent set of new historical forms constitute a vast wasteland of intellectual energy and practical activity. This paper, and others in this volume, demonstrates multiple ways that cultural practices operate in accord with a diversity of emergent *sui generis* logics that often revel in the squander of Eurocentric figurations of genetic and economic resources.

In a second form, as a type of coparenthood, *kokajiriri* inextricably weaves a young married pair into one arm of an extant extended family of one sort or another. The fetus or infant serves as the operative gift that indexically vivifies and announces this weaving, yet the actual thread-count that marks the solidity of the bond may become greater or lesser through time depending upon subsequent exchanges and demonstrations of mutual support that overlay this highest ranked of gifts. In the most tightly woven relationships, children birthed to two or three families flow in and out of the households that seem to give them spatial and temporal distinction with such fluidity that the *nejin/kokajiriri* boundary virtually disappears.

Indeed, since *kokajiriri* is a coparenthood/cochild relationship, not giving up one set of parents, and one family, for another (Carroll 1970a, 123), the blending and merging are often only the extant inscriptions of long-standing, cross-generational unities that mark “separate” extended families as “really one” (*juon wōt*). *Kokajiriri* links of all sorts serve as a practical pneumonics of life for Marshallese. Regardless of the types of links, engendered through birthing or enacted through feeding/caring for, with the passage of time and with the constituting of new alliances and relationships, there is a sense that old established relationships have become weaker and less intense. *Kokajiriri* is a practice that contravenes such separating tendencies bringing stories of past closeness back into practiced sharing, comingling, and solidarity. Of course, like all relationships that rely on continuity of practice, *kokajiriri* is but a singular prestation, even if it engenders both promise of continued sharing and obligation (Mauss 1967). In the most threadbare cases of *kokajiriri*, those in which subsequent interweavings do not overlay the primary warp and woof threads of coparenthood/cochildhood, one is allowed to look back on the *kokajiriri* relationship as marking what was at one point in the past an obviously closer relationship. In either case, these forms of coparenthood are quintessentially Marshallese. Based on practice rather than genetic ties,⁵ they ebb and flow with the actual invested energies of those involved in the *kokajiriri*.

An unlimited number of examples express the way in which past closeness comes to be reinscribed in contemporary discourses that revivify and enliven past histories of solidarity because, indeed, this is one of the most common ways of giving manifest form to the extraordinary social advantages of *kokajiriri*.

INTERVIEWEE: Don't you see that the great grandmother of Liperia and the great grandmother of Liaanji were siblings? Just because that group [Liaanji's family] now live in Majuro, this [fact] is meaningless. They *kokajiriri*[ed] the infant because they are really close.

LM: Don't they [the local family] really miss her?

INTERVIEWEE: They would never say no [to a request to kokajiriri Liperia's daughter], because they are one only [juon wōt]. Now, this group, when they go to Majuro, they "fly" right over and reside with that group [Liaanji's household]. And on the Tenth Day,⁶ and times of that sort, the other group they can fly toward us and stay on Enewetak. They do not go to their own place on that islet [Meden]; they stay here with this group [Liperia's household]. This group [the large extended family back through the common grandmothers] they are really close.

In point of fact, although close in certain ways, this large extended family is frequently mentioned as one that was nearly split into fragments by an Enewetak land dispute that began prior to World War II. The land dispute re-erupted with the move from Ujelang back to Enewetak in 1980, and, if anything, the request to kokajiriri Liperia's soon-to-be-born child served as a way to bridge significant rifts in the larger extended family. It was the relative position of the two women (Liperia and Liaanji) as agemates and friends in school that created a sense of unity between the young women, not the fact that their families were close to one another prior to Liperia giving her child to Liaanji in kokajiriri. Therefore, the entire discourse of perpetual closeness paraphrased above is an historical artifact fashioned out of kokajiriri.⁷ It draws on the "relationship-making" potency of kokajiriri to create an imagined nearness (although certainly with practical effects) out of an alternative history of turbulence.

A second example comes from multiple Enewetak stories that reconfigure the dual Enewetak chieftainships (the Enewetak chieftainship that Tobin equates with Pita and the Enjebi chieftainship associated with Ebream [Tobin 1968]) into a single entity.⁸ Although contexts vary, it was common for community elders in the 1970s and 1980s to say that the Enjebi and Enewetak chiefs were "really one." One senior man, with ties to both chiefly "halves" of Enewetak couched his talk of unity in the following way: "Do you not see that that fellow Pita, [he] took the offspring of Ebream as [his] own, really [his] own [lukuun an], he would never throw (him) away.⁹ And that fellow Ebream, (he) also took Rinton (Pita's biological grandson) and kokajiriri[ed] [him]. And up until the current day he resides there to the windward because he is kokajiriri.¹⁰ All of his power (*maroŋ*) it comes through Ebream, not Pita. These chiefs, in reality, are just one. They are chiefs birthed from one another (*kalotak nan doon*) and nursed together (*kaninin ippen doon*)." In other words, for certain purposes, kokajiriri serves to unify chiefly regimes that have long been understood, both within the community and by others, to be historically distinct.

These medial forms of kokajiriri were taken by an earlier generation of anthropologists to be the prototypical forms, and, perhaps examples similar to the above were the common forms that they witnessed. However, it is also possible that a certain ethnocentricity convinced these researchers that kokajiriri filled a gap that most closely resembled Euro-American adoption, providing children to childless couples and supplementing the size of a sibling set of those with children. Of course, many recognized the flexibility of this practice, such as Goodenough (1955) who argued that these fluid kinship arrangements, including Pacific-style adoptions, were functionally adaptive in a situation where the distribution of land might get out of sync with internal population dynamics.¹¹ There is little doubt that some kokajiriri relationships are established with the intention of family-fashioning in mind. For example, on Ujelang and Enewetak, Takaji and Jebe were a married couple who could not produce children of their own. Nevertheless, they were parents of a family of four, each of whom was a dependent made through a kokajiriri relationship. In many other cases, however, it is not the lack of children, nor the minimal size of a family that provides motivation for establishing a coparent/cochild relationship. Rather, it is the extant attempt to revivify or project into the future the relationship between coparents and the extended families of those coparents that inspires a young couple to engage in such an exchange and comingling of clan and extended-family essence.

The third major type of kokajiriri relationship lies at a substantial distance from the medial ideal described above. These relationships are established among adults and include, but certainly are not limited to, my own adoption by Biola into the *bwij in Jalij* and several other extended families, as well as the Ujelang/Enewetak community more generally (Carucci 1997b).¹² It is these relationships that force the semantic understanding of kokajiriri to be expanded from child-making to a broader concept of “dependent-making” and, with the passage of time, to something like relationship-making. Although the details of these relationships vary, all are rooted in feeding and caring for another (Carucci 2004b). One of my own fathers, Onil, originally from Pingelap, but integrated into the community during World War II, is also part of a kokajiriri relationship but one of yet another contour than my own. That is, when my mother, Biola, adopted me, I was clearly an outsider and far younger than mama. Thus, in several respects, my own kokajiriri relationship drew on many of the same features as the child-making ideal. Even though my own ineptitude in certain Marshallese skills made me more dependent than many kokajiriri islander offspring, in other respects (wealth and “white privilege”) made me less dependent and, perhaps, more desirable. Nevertheless, kokajiriri relationships of this sort were fairly frequent. Ben (from Saipan) and Itan (from Chuuk) were notable analogues at

the time that Biola adopted me. Both were outsiders, and both were substantially younger than the person who adopted them. In contrast, Onil's kokajiriri relationship with Druie was rather different. The two were nearer in age and had more of a friendship relationship, but Onil (the outsider) fortified the kokajiriri relationship with Druie, frequently stopping by her home in the opposite half of the village, not uncommonly with a request for a small favor, but with equal frequency bringing a gift for Druie or her husband. Somewhat younger than Onil, Druie always treated him as a father and addressed him as *papa*.¹³ In spite of the fact that Druie was, in absolute years, the junior partner in this relationship, her seniority derived from her local status and from the fact that she was a chief's daughter. Therefore, she was the instigator of the relationship: she kokajiriri(ed) (*kokajiririki*) Onil, not vice versa.

At a later juncture, when my future wife, Mary, first came to Enewetak from the United States in 1982, she became part of a kokajiriri relationship with Lombwe, and his kokajiriri relationship with her was one of older sibling/younger sibling, with Lombwe "adopting" Mary as his younger sibling. At one level, this relationship may have been established in this way to align my own generation with Mary's (and place us in opposite clans), since, even though we were not married at the time, we were clearly not siblings, yet resided in the same household, thus confounding local categories. Nevertheless, Mary's adoption caused me to ask more detailed questions about kokajiriri, and I discovered that Lombwe's adoption of Mary as a younger sibling was not unique. Other kokajiriri relationships, both on Enewetak and elsewhere in the Marshalls, were engendered along older sibling/younger sibling lines. Indeed, adoptions of this sort are far more frequent among mature residents who, according to one consultant, "were nearly one in their throats" (that is, felt as though they were especially close emotionally but of similar rank). Nevertheless, not all sibling adoptions are adult affairs. During the same year Mary was adopted, one of my own offspring-through-adoption, Erta (my older brother's daughter) around age seven, kokajiriri(ed) an infant with whom she was particularly enamored as her *jatō* (younger sibling). However, Erta's mother often spoke of the infant involved in this kokajiriri relationship as *nejin* Erta ("born to Erta," or "the offspring of Erta") and, in later years, Erta referred to her as both "nejō" and "jatō." Although some subtle contextual shifts may have accompanied Erta's selection of the different referents, I could not detect any systematic reason for the alternate forms.

Overall, none of these variants of kokajiriri relationships are as frequent as the child-making forms of the first two types, but they still occur with some frequency and are certainly not just marginal practices. Rather, such

relationship-making is the broader form, one that stresses “feeding” (*enajidiki*), “watching over” (*lali*) and “taking close care of” (*kajiriri* or *kejbaroki*) rather than the “making of children.” As such, I would argue, these less-frequent forms in fact capture the essence of *kokajiriri* which always involves relationship-making and taking close care of.¹⁴ Indeed, the switching of terms of reference and address in Erta’s *kokajiriri* relationship confirm the precedence of the practices of feeding, caring for, and watching over. These aims are equally well fulfilled with *ko(kajiriri)* sibling ties as with *kok(ajiri)ri* child ties. Although anthropologists have long recognized that Pacific adoption is somewhat different than Euro-American adoption, once relationship-making in the extended sense comes to be seen as its core, Marshallese adoption is, in many ways, the antithesis of American adoption which, even in its liberal current-day variants, continues to adumbrate the relationships between the co-relatives who give and receive the child rather than use this quintessential gift to publicly mark the elaboration of those social interrelationships.

Of course, “liberal” American adoptions sometimes do allow for contact between the birth parents (usually the mother) and the adoptive parents, but these relationships are often fraught with feelings of unease. Far more telling, stories that stress the paradigmatically central “naturalness” of biogenetic relatedness are captured and widely distributed in television clips of on-camera reunions of adopted children with their long lost (“real,” biological) parents. These depictions, which elide ambivalences and gloss over feelings of unease, highlight the (cultural) irrefutability of the biological links that irrevocably unify “parent” and “child.” Rather than stressing (in Marshallese terms) the social isolation of one set of coparents, or highlighting the intricate layers of emotional work and physical labor that “made” the real life family of the child, the film clips stress the latent sources of alienation, if only in the culturally foregrounded biological trope itself, that have driven the offspring to find life’s fulfillment in the discovery of their “real” parent. These nationally televised myths about the naturalness of the biological family, of course, never stress the subsequent relationships that may (or may not) emerge between the offspring and the genitrix/genitor, nor the shifting relationships with the very real parents who raised the child, much less the relationships between these long-isolated families who seldom share any relationship other than that differentially mediated through the birthed/adopted child.

Certainly, this glimpse of American adoption is far from exhaustive. It is meant only to demonstrate the ways in which American adoption builds centrally on a single set of nuclear-family-focused relationships at the cost of strangling many of the other potential relationship-engendering possibilities that are part of Marshallese adoptions. Nevertheless, my brief analysis of

the populist depictions of American adoption on television align with other systematic research on American adoption,¹⁵ and particularly with the work of Judith Modell (1994, 2001; also see Schachter 2008).

Digging far deeper than the selective, if overdetermined, images of show-host biological family reunions, Modell notes that adoptees who seek out their “real” (biological) parents, all too often are struck by “the thinness of a purely biological relationship” (1994). Far more critical than their biological or adoptive grounding, so-called real kinship relations were those where people “worked at” the relationship (Modell 1994), an idea that resonates with Marshallese ideas that kinship has little to do with genetic endowment or other inherent qualities of persons and everything to do with relationship-making. In related work, Modell found that even though so-called open adoption throws a gauntlet at the consanguineal core of (American) kinship (2001, 247), in fact, “redrawing the lines of kinship is rarely easy” (247), and “the move toward openness . . . has been slow and cautious” (249). In a very real sense, open adoptions are focused far more on “*the transfer of information rather than the creation of kinship ties*” (254: original italics) and this exchange of information helps distance adoption from the genealogical principle that lies at “the cultural core of American kinship” (258). The radical distinctions between the operational principles of American adoption and kokajiriri are even more evident in these comparisons inasmuch as kokajiriri, in its very instantiation, stresses relationship-making without any thought given to individual autonomy, choice, or control—core components that help to situate the conditions of American open adoptions (Modell 2001, 258).

Indeed, in a very real sense, kokajiriri exists as an embedded fragment of Marshallese social practices wherein the giving of a child engenders far more obligation and entertains the possibility of so many future social ties that the increase in rank through giving this highest of gifts far outweighs the concomitant risk of not having an equivalent gift returned. Ideas of personal autonomy are not even a consideration in Marshallese society where persons exist as social beings, not as radical individuals imbued with certain inalienable rights. All of these complex interrelationships only serve to reinforce my initial point about the absolute incommensurability of cultural categories and practices that make the idea of a simple translation process between kokajiriri and adoption nearly impossible to think.

Shifting Parameters of Marshallese Kokajiriri

Not surprisingly, rapid and substantial shifts in lifestyle among the Enewetak/Ujelang community, and among Marshall Islanders more generally, have

brought about concomitant changes in the shape of kokajiriri practices in Marshallese communities. Equally, it is of little surprise that such changes are, in a very general way, related to shifts in subsistence practices (or in the so-called economic conditions) that people have been forced to face in recent years. Nevertheless, the particular shapes of the shifts in Marshallese adoption are far from predictable from those base conditions. Rather, as Sahlins contends (1994), something far more fundamental, shaped not by subsistence practices or economics but by the cultural milieu, comes to lend a particular shape to historical practices. Such is certainly true of Enewetak/Ujelang social practices in the current day. To date at least, this shape is far different than that taken by American adoption and American kin practices which, during the past 150 years, have moved toward increasingly more mobile, nuclear family and subnuclear family units that can be moved across the landscape with some frequency in accord with the demands of the (largely urban) capitalist marketplace.¹⁶ Beginning in a rather different cultural landscape, Enewetak/Ujelang people, ultimately faced with similar economic forces, have come up with quite different solutions to the issues of family and adoption.

As is generally true throughout the Marshall Islands, the frequency of adoption among members of the Enewetak/Ujelang community has dropped significantly since World War II. Although the precise frequency of adoption is not known, Marshallese adoption certainly exceeded 50 percent prior to the war. Among a group of seniors with whom I worked in 1990 and 1991 collecting their recollections of World War II, the rate of adoption was over 80 percent. Similarly, over 85 percent of the members of the Enewetak/Ujelang community who were born prior to the war were in the “junior” part of a kokajiriri relationship at some time during their lives. Of this very high number of adoptive relationships among senior members of the community, perhaps only 50 percent were critical to that person’s own self-constructions. In other words, of the 85 percent, not all were vital relationships at the time, since, in many cases, the senior member of the relationship was no longer alive. In many of these cases, terms of reference (indeed, even sometimes terms of embedded address), along with residence and land rights, still marked the relationship quite clearly and made it vital. In other cases, an earlier kokajiriri relationship had not worked out. The relationship was remembered by the most astute oral historians but was not memorialized in a way that would give it any long-term historical efficacy.

This is only to say that, like other optative kin practices that are well known throughout the Pacific, percentage assessments of kokajiriri relationships are highly variable and, therefore, of limited utility. Noting that an adoptive

relationship once existed is far different from claiming an adoptive relationship as a primary component of one's identity. And, like many relationships, kokajiriri relationships are called upon strategically to serve one's own interests. As a person becomes aged, he or she may "call in" favors from adopted offspring and play one offspring against another to obtain certain desired foods, a particular residential situation, or other goods or services. And, after a person's death, the "closeness claims" of various offspring (birth kin or adopted) are strategically deployed to attempt to secure a certain right vis-à-vis all other claimants who were related to the dead person. Indeed, one of the most hotly contested land disputes on Enewetak in the current day focuses on claims from a kokajiriri relationship in the early twentieth century (Carucci 1997c).

However variable the rate between vital, comatose, and kokajiriri relationships in repose, the current rate of adoption has dropped substantially since the World War II era. My current rough estimate places adoptions at around 30 percent or 35 percent with about 20 percent of those being operationalized in daily practice. Taken at face value, this significant shift commands attention, but I believe that closer scrutiny of day-to-day practices demonstrates that something far more complex than simple assimilation to Euro-American forms is taking place. Clarity, however, requires us to consider the historical conditions under which these different approaches to adoption came into being.

Although the contours of Enewetak social organization in the pre-World War II era are far from transparent, it is clear that this community of about 165 people was not only small but relatively isolated, with intra-atoll migration tightly controlled by the Japanese government that administered the area. Skilled students were allowed to travel to Pohnpei to pursue schooling beyond the third grade, and a very small number of men were employed as laborers. In large part, however, the rest of the community remained on Enewetak, fishing, weaving, and making copra, with long-term face-to-face relationships guaranteed. The population had dropped substantially since the turn of the century, and people alive in the 1970s clearly remember being worried about the Enewetak community simply dying out or, during the war, facing eradication. Fears about the community dying out rested, in part at least, on the recognition that one of the four matri-clans on the atoll had recently "died" and a second would die in the near future. It was unclear to residents whether it was possible for two clans alone to successfully intermarry in perpetuity. On the other hand, community solidarity was such that one potential source of new clans, brought by women who were in-married into the community, was not welcomed. Instead, all in-married women were dealt with as though they were clan-less. Their offspring were marriageable

as if they all constituted one large amorphous clan with no manifest links to local lands or local extended families. These conditions clearly led to rampant relationship-making. Childless families, including the two women who were the final substance-transmitting persona in their respective clans, Mede (for diPako) and Bolina (for Jiduul), both had adopted offspring. But equally, adoptions linked numerous other extended families, both large and small. As noted earlier, Rinton, the oldest offspring of Ioanej (chief of the Enewetak half of Enewetak) was adopted by Ebream (chief of the Enjebi half of Enewetak) and, in a similar vein, Hertej, oldest male in the large *bwij* (extended family) of Jalej, was adopted by Pita, Ioanej's father. Therefore, kokajiriri helped to interweave powerful families at least as much as it filled the ranks of those without children. In this time period, relationship-making was an all-important aim in a community that saw its entire future as being dependent on banding together to survive the significant threats to its very existence by varied impacts of colonialism.

After World War II, when Enewetak people were placed in exile on Ujelang to allow the United States to conduct nuclear tests on their home atoll, the conditions of relative isolation they had faced on Enewetak were largely perpetuated, although there was no overt ban on inter-atoll migration. Indeed, the traditionalist policies of the United States toward Micronesia were quite effective for a time on Ujelang because the long-term isolation of the community, the independent chieftainships on Enewetak (without links of subservience or domination in relation to Marshall Islands chiefs), and the Japanese administration of Ujelang and Enewetak from Pohnpei, meant that Enewetak people had few links to other communities in the Marshall Islands. A few outside adoptions were constituted, including one between the Marshallese high chief, Kabua Kabua and Pita, one of the Enewetak high chiefs. But even this kokajiriri relationship remained in abeyance for years without nurturance, until it was resurrected as a political tool in recent years (see Carucci 1997c). Rather, the conditions for internal adoption continued on Ujelang until the time that the community was preparing to be repatriated on Enewetak.¹⁷ With the beginning of Tempedede (temporary resettlement), however, in 1977, new conditions of mobility began to significantly alter the contours of kokajiriri.

In an important way, the precedence for changes that have occurred since 1977 were already established in the 1960s and early 1970s when a few Ujelang families moved to Majuro to set up an urban enclave of Ujelang residents. It was at this time that Kabua gave the Ujelang people a tiny parcel of land on the small islands between Uliga and Delap that soon became known as "Ujelang Town." Early residents in Majuro included Alek, Ijmael, Balik,

Yojitaro, and Majao, to be followed eventually by the family of Jitiam and Erine and others. These family dwellings became residential headquarters for all sorts of urban migrants from Ujelang and, somewhat later, Enewetak. In particular, they took in the children of their relatives, who, in a very real sense, were their children as well, thus blurring the lines between ordinary Ujelang parentage, kokajiriri, and something that Americans might label “fosterage” (although no comparable category exists in Marshallese, except for a term to describe the caretakers of chiefly offspring). In ordinary parentage, a whole upper generation of persons are either mothers and fathers, or older or younger mother’s brothers to the generation of offspring who will succeed them, and in a very real sense, they take on the varied responsibilities for all of the younger generation offspring of the community (although what constitutes a “generation” has some considerable flexibility depending upon the extended family of reference and circumstances of the moment) (Carucci 1989). As we have seen, kokajiriri further marks certain of these social relationships and overly elaborates them as channels of caretaking and reciprocal giving. Fosterage, I suppose, lies somewhere in between, without a public announcement and the promise of continuity of kokajiriri but with relationship-making commitments that far surpass those expected of a communal parent in the community at large. This intermediate and more flexible form of “caring for,” which upon occasion becomes formally marked by a proclaimed kokajiriri relationship, is what has come to fill the percentage gap in kokajiriri in the era that has followed the community’s return to Enewetak.

With the return to Enewetak, formally completed in 1980, scheduled weekly flights connected the atoll with Majuro, 540 miles away. Although the flights occurred irregularly, they certainly led to a massive increase in mobility. Even in the late 1970s, Ujelang residents had become quite mobile, with summer trips, mainly to Majuro for church events, visitation, and resupply, taking as much as 40 percent of the population from Ujelang. Air transport on Enewetak provided an additional avenue for mobility that has continued to the current day. Financial setbacks that accompanied the end of the first Compact of Free Association, and that have been exacerbated under the Bush regime, have caused a significant slow down in travel. Nevertheless, community mobility continues at an unprecedented rate when compared to the first twenty years on Ujelang, an era when government supply vessels anchored in the lagoon only two or three times per year.¹⁸ Mobility placed an incessant stress on the residents of Ujelang Town, eventually causing some community members to seek housing in other sections of Majuro. In the 1980s, with partial compensation for nuclear damages in the form of monetary payments, the rate of visitations to Majuro increased,

the dispersal process intensified, and these movements by members of the community were accompanied by a rapidly increasing rate of intermarriage with people from the Marshall Islands and, particularly, from Majuro. Many of these intermarriages gave Enewetak people links to families with land rights in the government center.

One outcome of the stress on residence in Ujelang Town was a shift to more flexible forms of caregiving by full-time residents of this small enclave. Shorter-term agreements to “watch over” a relative’s offspring moved caregiving from the long-term coparentage commitments of *kokajiriri* to a form that resembles fosterage. A formal term has not yet arisen to classify these relationships, but usually, in discriminating them from *kokajiriri*, they are described as *lali wōt* (solely watching over) or *kejbaroki wōt* (just taking care of).

Beginning in the early to mid-1990s, the pattern of “taking care of” expanded in quantum proportion as people began to move to the Big Island of Hawai‘i in considerable numbers. If living in Majuro was a short-term affair for most Enewetak visitors who tended to stay until their supply of money (and often much of their welcome) ran out, those who lived full-time in Ujelang Town had to have two or three extended family members who were employed. On the Big Island, visitors typically stay for much longer periods of time; therefore, several workers are required for each large household. Some are engaged in full-time labor, whereas others harvest macadamia nuts, coffee, or perform other tasks that allow for flexible schedules. Nevertheless, even though the Ujelang/Enewetak residents on the Big Island must adapt to the same conditions of a capitalist marketplace as long-term U.S. residents, their specific modes of dealing with these conditions is quite different. Household size, already robust on Ujelang and larger in Ujelang Town, has further increased on the Big Island ranging from a small domicile with thirteen to the large household where I frequently ate in 2002–2003 with as many as thirty-two residents.¹⁹

These households, some with multiple sleeping quarters, all of which share a common cookhouse, include people related through a number of different paths, including *kokajiriri*. Lacking the standard senior household head that was common on Ujelang, each is headed by a young or middle-aged couple, with younger and older relatives attached to that founding couple. A small group of such couples founded this Big Island community and continue to be the leaders in the group. Several of these households also include more distant kin that are being “watched over” as they attend school or seek to get established on their own somewhere on the Big Island. The duration of their stay varies. Some of the school children have been in residence for several years and many of them are not likely to leave until they

graduate or find a marriage mate and begin a splinter household of their own. Others find jobs and soon move to other residences. If the job does not work out, however, they often return to this household of migration orientation until another work opportunity presents itself. In a few instances, Enewetak/Ujelang families on the Big Island include Marshall Islanders from Bikini, Jaluij, Majuro, and elsewhere. Caring-for relations of this sort are probably not unique, since Marshall notes that Namoluk residents in the United States often build increasingly generic notions of shared identity with Chuukese and others from Micronesia (Marshall 2004, 140).

Nevertheless, tracking the histories of contemporary kokajiriri relationships in Majuro and on the Big Island demonstrates that some of these caring-for relations will become formal kokajiriri relationships.

Although some of those in residence in these large Big Island families are related as kokajiriri, many are in a caring-for relationship reminiscent of fosterage. This more transitional link of interpersonal relationship offers far more flexibility than kokajiriri. Nevertheless, kokajiriri relationships may grow out of such links. Indeed, four of the frequent residents of the household with which I affiliated were linked through kokajiriri relationships that had begun as reciprocation for a watching-over relationship in Majuro. In a neighboring household, one young girl, a daughter (or in anthropological jargon: a brother's daughter) of the man who coheaded this household had adopted one of the young children in the household. Although she helped with most household tasks, she also dedicated extra time to her young kokajiriri offspring. Other such caring-for relationships will fall into disuse. These pathways of relationship may become overgrown with brush and simply abandoned. On the other hand, they may be resurrected, cleared of brush, and revitalized several years in the future.

In the diasporic conditions that Enewetak/Ujelang people now face, the formerly multifaceted tentacles of kokajiriri have further differentiated themselves, forming a new set of affiliate practices that draw on the same symbolic toolkit as kokajiriri but with new arms that allow for greater temporal and spatial flexibility. These flexibilities now perhaps better translate as fosterage rather than adoption, yet neither term captures the sensibilities of Marshallese practice that align *kejbarok* (watching over) and kokajiriri. Even though the look of these Marshallese practices is quite different from American social adaptations to increased urbanization and capitalist production, the two forms share in common their stress on flexibility. However, these flexibilities have their unique cultural and historical contours, and in the Enewetak/Ujelang case, the newly arisen social practices incorporate a long-standing cultural focus on relationship-making while shifting to new globalized senses of spatiality and temporality in which social connections

may shift their focal contours several times over during a person's lifetime as increased mobility demands. Such flexibilities have always been an integral part of Pacific relationship-making; it is their relative pacing that has, in recent years, contributed to the emergence of innovative social forms.

Meaning-Making and the Histories of the Disempowered

In their moves from Ujelang and Enewetak to Majuro and the Big Island, a substantial shift in the locus of power has occurred. Communal self-sufficiencies on the outer islands were substantial. In Majuro, new chiefs and newly emergent governmental authorities had to be reckoned with, and on the Big Island, Enewetak/Ujelang Marshall Islanders are made marginal, not only through the discourses and exclusionary practices of other residents of Hawai'i, their new associates at a certain level, but equally through their participation in a capitalist economy that reiterates and creates many of the conditions of their marginality. At the same time that evidences of these marginalizing forces are heard and felt routinely, however, Enewetak/Ujelang people live their lives with other concerns and motivations occupying the core of their lives.

There are certainly those who then say, "so why do these newfounded strategies that maximize flexibilities of relationship-making matter? Are they not just a minor detour along a trail that ultimately leads to assimilation and submission to the inexorable forces of capitalism?" I believe that the answer is "no," that the detours are, in fact, the real, meaning-making histories of lived experiences of actual people who, through their daily encounters, their struggles, and resistances, inscribe the uncharted counter-hegemonic pathways that represent the practice of cultural reason in the making. And ultimately, assimilation does not occur. Indeed, the discourses of modernization, westernization, and assimilation are little more than the rationalizations of members of a hegemonic regime that serve to reinforce the beliefs of those in positions of power about the extent and irresistibility of their own unstable base of power. Therefore, as much as the strategic circumstances of Enewetak/Ujelang Marshallese have come to be affected by capitalist forces in 2006 on the Big Island to a far greater extent than they were in 1906 on Enewetak, as much as current-day Marshallese lives may necessarily be inscribed in opposition to their assessments of others in more empowered positions around them, the actual practices of relationship-making and the discourses that surround these increasingly flexible family forms are unique and powerful cultural forms, innovative in their contour, yet inscribed with cultural specificities that represent long-standing and socially productive sets of Marshallese lived practices. As they come to be lived through on the Big Island, these practices are radically different from

the increasingly restrictive scope and atomized contour of American family forms that have emerged in response to other local variants of capitalism. And, of course, the same practices, by extending social relationships rather than promoting “individual self-maximization,” utterly contradict the underlying logic that, according to evolutionary psychologists, should cause all cultural personae to act in accord with the mandates of “genetic individualism and self-interest” (McKinnon 2005, 58).

If anthropologists began their disciplinary quest, somewhat misguidedly, in trying to track the trails of marginal societies that were supposed either to die out, or become us, in this era of capitalist expansionism and globalization, we should have learned that subject-making (Ong 1996) is less about becoming us than it is about the definition of selves in relation to meaningful pasts and in opposition to us/U.S. (Sahlins 1994, 379). It remains the task of anthropologists, who have long cast their lot with the marginalized, to represent the vitality and distinctive character of those who speak with disempowered voices, yet those who also continuously and collectively create and perpetuate distinction in direct proportion to any attempts to eradicate difference and enforce unitary hegemonic contours to human discourses and social practices.

NOTES

1. A number of authors have noted the salience of shared food in relationship-making. Although in far less consubstantial terms, M. Marshall notes, for example, that “Shared food on Namoluk symbolizes kinship and friendship” (1976, 39), concluding that “Children of close relatives on Namoluk are shared via adoption and fosterage in the same way that land, food, residence, labor, physical possessions, political support, and money are shared [These practices] . . . flow logically from the system of kinship and represent . . . ways for demonstrating what it means to be ‘close kin’” (1976, 47). In some senses, Rynkiewicz makes an analogous point for Marshall Islanders in noting that “Adoption is clearly one part of a cultural domain that might be called kinship sharing or reciprocity” (1976, 95), pointing readers to Carroll and Marshall. Nevertheless, he leads his readers in far different directions than those I regard as salient when he states that “the most common and effective form of adoption [among Arno Marshallese] is *kokajriri*, the adoption of children. The etymology of this word shows that the process is patterned after consanguinity” (Rynkiewicz 1976, 99). I am suggesting the etymology, in fact, establishes the primacy of feeding and of establishing relations of (inter)dependence, in a very different sense that has nothing to do with consanguinity but everything to do with feeding and relationship-making. My own earlier writings on feeding and relationship-making, although not solely in regard to adoption, include Carucci 1980, 1997a, 2004a, 2004c, 2007.

2. Caregiving of the grandparental sort, along with its nuanced flexibilities, is explored more thoroughly by Dickerson-Putman (2008). It is particularly noteworthy that the Raivavae practices outlined by Dickerson-Putman are themselves historically pliable, shifting their semiotic and pragmatic contours as issues of colonialism and globalization come to have greater importance for Raivavae residents. As I demonstrate below, analogous

patterns of change are apparent among Enewetak/Ujelang people. These patterns stress the primary importance of flexible relationship-making strategies that are refashioned in innovative ways in relation to shifting social and historical conditions yet retain critical cultural contours of precedent practices. The emergent contours of such practices, along with their multifaceted forms, directly contradict the simplistic claims of evolutionary psychologists who see “the expenditure of resources on those who are genetically unrelated or distantly related . . . as a ‘waste’ of both genetic and economic inheritance” (McKinnon 2005, 62). By such a logic, the wide array of relationship-making practices of Pacific peoples, multiplied many times over by the continuously emergent set of new historical forms, constitute a tidal wave of wastefully expended intellectual energy and practical activity all oriented toward making close relationships with persons (initially and “biologically”) more-or-less distant.

3. *Ajeri iturin ial* are mentioned by Erdland (1914, 124), but he does not track the source of the term. By the time of Erdland’s work in the Marshall Islands, the mission had been around for several decades.

4. Of course, like Rauchholz, Radcliffe-Brown grounded his argument in ideas about the primacy of biological kinship. While noting the same types of cross-generational familiarities that struck Radcliffe-Brown, I suggest that these structural oppositions arise out of the socially constructed discontinuities between parents and grandparents that derive from and are fashioned out of linguistic referents and daily demeanors not out of any type of cross-culturally shared understandings of genealogical kinship or biological relatedness.

5. I am comparing Marshallese family forms to American kinship ideas that go back to Schneider (1968) not in any sense suggesting that there is another type of Marshallese family that is based on genetic ties. Marshallese families may be based on the “actual invested energies” of birthing, which link a woman and her child by shared clan essence, and they may rely on ties of blood, which, as a symbol, links offspring to their fathers (but not their mothers). Of course, this means that neither birthing nor blood mean sharing genetic material, though, being more dynamic than signifiers themselves, the meanings are constantly shifting and, at some future point in time, may come to include ideas about shared genetic material.

6. The Tenth Day or “Coming Out of the Holes Day” commemorates the end of the suffering during World War II. This “liberation day” celebration is now held on March 10 on Enewetak (for further detail, see Carucci 2001).

7. Single quotation marks indicate that this conversation is an approximate transcription. The interactions at my older sister’s home, quoted earlier with double quotation marks, are from more exact notes taken as the interactions were in process. Some side conversations, backchannels and, of course, a lot of nonverbal communicative materials are still elided in the double quotation-marked interactions, but the spoken words are represented with relative precision.

8. As I have discussed elsewhere (Carucci 1997c), life in a single village on Ujelang served as a major force that realigned chiefly arrangements that had existed previously on Enewetak.

9. This stands in sharp contrast with Rauchholz’s (2008) contention about Yap. For Enewetak/Ujelang Marshallese, the same root, an “his/her real (inalienable) soul material”

moves, without qualification, among all “made children” whether they are made along pathways of birthing, nurturance and feeding, residential sharing/land working, kokajiriri, or along male-linked pathways of blood.

10. Renton’s “official” house was placed by the Americans in Kabinene, the leeward most land parcel, next to the house of his sibling by birth, Nebtali. Nevertheless, he chose to live far to the windward on a land parcel through which his rights were established through Ebrean. When I asked Renton why he did not reside in his Kabinene house, he replied that “I am comfortable [*menene*] in this spot. From the time I was tiny and growing older, I liked to reside here and play, and gather sprouted coconuts and throw drinking coconuts, and many other things.” In other words, through living on his kokajiriri land, Renton had woven his identity into the land in a way that made him feel that he belonged to a greater degree than he felt he belonged on the land parcel to which he had rights by birth. The fact that he chose to have the Americans build his house in Kabinene simply served as a reminder to people that he also had rights in that spot, rights that, in lieu of the house, might be questioned.

11. Thorgeir Kolshus (2008) explores adoption-like practices on Mota (Vanuatu) to show how the flexibilities and fluidities of interpersonal relations are greatly expanded because local people use adoption to build a wide variety of “individualized” social relationships. These individualized strategies are related to land distribution, but frequently extend far beyond land as well.

12. This form of Pacific adoption is hardly unique to Ujelang and Enewetak. Carroll (1970b, 10) outlines these forms in some detail.

13. There are alternative, although not entirely contradictory, accounts of how Druie’s and Onil’s kokajiriri relationship came into being. In the 1970s, Onil told me that he had asked Druie if she would adopt him because they were close, but in 2006, Druie’s son told another relative that there had been a Father’s Day celebration on Ujelang, many years ago, and that Druie had selected Onil’s name to honor for this event (undoubtedly preparing him food as part of the honor). This, he indicated, was the inception of the kokajiriri relationship.

14. The multifaceted nature of relationship-making in the Pacific, although widespread among Austronesian speaking people is not restricted to them. For example, Butt (2008) argues that among Dani (Highland Papua residents), persons are not born as complete beings. Rather, “persons are multiauthored, built through contributions of others.” Indeed, although Marshall Islanders place the stress on relationship-making rather than person construction, if one focuses on the person, the objective product that exists as a residue of relationship-making, multiauthorship is precisely what occurs in the Marshall Islands by feeding and watching over.

15. Some of the tropes of natural connection, as well as feelings of unease, that are manifest in American adoptions are captured at an earlier moment by Charis Thompson (2001) in her analysis of relationships in an infertility clinic, and Signe Howell (2001) explores some differently inflected “oscillation(s) between biology and culture” in her work on Norwegian transnational adoptions.

16. This, of course, is a grossly simplified picture that captures only the most generic outlines of change in American families.

17. Since adoption is closely linked with residence and land holding, it would be inaccurate to think that adoption remained unchanged during the times that preceded World War II on Enewetak, or during the time that people lived in exile on Ujelang. Clearly, land on Enewetak was frequently transmitted to kokajiriri offspring prior to the war, as long as they actively invested labor in that land. On Ujelang, land was initially divided on a head-by-head basis, and adopted children at the moment of the division (circa 1948) typically received land parcels contiguous with their adoptive parents. All newborns after the land division, whether adopted or not, received no land. They became part of a family with a pre-established amount of land. Once the contradictions of this principle of land division became evident, it may have constrained family size to a certain degree, but nuclear claims compensations (which came largely in the form of U.S. dollars beginning in the late 1960s and increasing in the 1980s) absolutely reversed this dynamic since the dollars were divided each quarter depending upon atoll population, rapidly increasing the reproductive rate, and giving a new contour to kokajiriri relationships as well.

18. Many residents recall waiting as long as eight months between field trip ships.

19. The shifting dynamics of these extended households are worthy of further exploration, but the thirty-two member household in 2002–2003 was not unique. In 2006, I frequently visited another household that varied between thirty-four and forty-one members. Not surprisingly, at this scale, discourses of empowerment that talk about (properly) watching over and caring for household members by the heads of those households are balanced with stories of disgruntlement at some fragment or another of the huge household. As these stories of disgruntlement are more publicly voiced, they promote processes of fission that reduce overall household size. Indeed, the thirty-two-member household of 2003 had been reduced to 10–16 members by 2006, and the tenor of discourse aligned with these shifts.

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