FRIENDS IN THE MAKING: THE CONTEXTUAL FRAMING OF *JERĀ*-RELATIONSHIPS AMONG MARSHALL ISLANDERS

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Friendship is an odd kind of relationship among Enewetak/Ujelang people in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. It sits juxtaposed between kinship and otherness, categories that are themselves continuously generated and regenerated through ongoing practice. The diversified universe of everyday life is constituted by a wide array of kin relationships, and those relations with both living and noncorporeal significant persona are engendered and rendered viable in the discourses, exchanges, and face-to-face manner in which people—both living and "dead"—treat one another in day-to-day life. It would be misguided to think of them as labels for statuses that people move through during their lives, as the wide variety of kin relations depend on practical realization to bring them into being and maintain them as viable ways of discussing those interpersonal relationships. Beyond the edge of these everyday face-to-face relationships lies an undifferentiated group of people known as *ruwamāejet*, outsiders or others, and this group is marked by their lack of interrelational qualities other than, perhaps, basic shared humanness. In the earliest contacts with these others, in 1529 and a few times subsequently on Enewetak, during times that preceded the era of substantive colonial interaction (Hezel 1983), local people say they were not even certain about the shared humanness of those odd European explorers. Friendship occupies the liminal space between ruwamāejet and face-to-face relationships labeled by the substantial variety of kin terms. It moves an ambivalent relationship into the kinship domain, relying on the same referential devices used with kin terms yet maintaining a sense of

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potentiality and deniability that does not hold for other kin term–designated relationships. Kinship always specifies and elaborates on "within" relations, particularly on Ujelang and Enewetak, the two atolls discussed in greatest depth in this article. By contrast, *jerā-* relationships always begin as between relationships but deploy the discursive potencies of kin-designated categories in the hope that friends will act and become like kin. The contours of this ambivalent relationship form the core of this article.

It is quite clear that for Marshall Islanders, jerā- relationships, that is, "friend of-" relations, have no meaning except as a part of the universe of kinship relationships even if their position has an ambiguity that does not typify most other close interpersonal relationships. Jackobson notes that kinship and friendship are similarly interrelated in Mbale, Uganda (1986).[1] Indeed, while Ferdinand Tönnies (1955) is best known for the contrast between the ideal types, *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, classically "community based" and "society based" social forms, he fully understood that, in practice, the two were interrelated yet were at least theoretically differentiable. For Tönnies, historical changes in the types of sentimental attachments among consociates—in essence, the nature of friendships—formed one key distinction between the way people acted in community-based societies and in urban, capitalist types of societies. The shift from sentimentally saturated kinship and friendship relations to emotionally hollow, formal relationships in capitalist societies was a central concern of Töinnes, however much his dualistic schema overdetermined the contrast in order to construct distinct types. Indeed, an entire session at the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania attempted to provide a far more nuanced account of the way that such sentiments, embedded in relations frequently translated as "friendship," have been refashioned in colonial and postcolonial contexts within Pacific societies.[2]

Historians have looked extensively at the relationship between friendship and empire, and those working in Pacific history have noted the way that the discourse of civic friendship comes to be an integral part of the colonizing mission. In *Intimate Strangers*, for example, Vanessa Smith argues that friendship relations like *taio* (the category presumed to mean "friendship" by the earliest visitors to Tahiti) become a "complex compound of economics and affect" (Smith 2010, 20), categories that, for Europeans, were part of the "centuries-old collision between material self-interest and intimate recognition" (Simoonds [encapsulating Smith] 2013, 370). At times, this contradiction operated dialectically, whereas, in other cases, it reflected the shifting stances of the European interlocutors who were lending significance to local interactions. The latter circumstance, argues Smith, typified the varied interpretations of friendship placed on the interactions between the Marquesans and Crook, a missionary, and Robarts, a deserter from the *New Euphrates*, a whaler who passed through

the southern Marquesas in 1798. While both men become adequately embedded in relationships with local Marquesans to experience taio-like relationships, each, for quite distinct reasons, ultimately retreats from the entailments of Marquesan "friendships" to the comfort of European ones because of the acategorical characteristics of the Marquesan relationships (Smith 2010: 263–81). Mixing exchange and sentimentality, Smith argues, forced these men to bridge categorizations between the savage and the civilized in ways that caused them discomfort (264), ultimately leading them to retreat to the comforts of the familiar.

American cultural studies theorist Ivy Schweitzer (2006) argues that Aristotle's distinctions, in which "natural slavery" was viewed as the inverse of perfect friendship, formed the underlying rationale for imperialist endeavors as many "medieval and early modern apologists for colonialism applied Aristotle's theory to . . . indigenous peoples . . . to justify social hierarchy, wars of conquest, and religious conversion by force" (16). While she analyzes these processes through perspectives presented in various Europeans' inscribed texts about indigenous peoples of the Americas, analogous rationalizations were used in the Pacific. Nevertheless, as Alecia Simoonds (2013) demonstrates using sequential editions of Turnbull's *Voyages* (1805 and 1813), the European gaze is far from monolithic. In Turnbull's case, he first presents friendship as "an impossible model of exchange thwarted by native incorrigibility" (370), a view in which Tahitian's "performance of hospitality exposed [the] epistemological collision between the supposed altruism of friendship and the self-interest of commerce" (377). When the first edition of *Voyages* proved to be a market disaster in the metropole, a mere trader's account in which, as the *Critical Review* claimed, the "voyage's 'commercial objective' gave Turnbull all the 'incitements of individual avarice'" (380), Turnbull reinvented his view of friendship with the Tahitians, and in the 1813 edition he replaced the Adam Smith–grounded view with a "natural law conception of friendship as commercial imperialism in its ideal, morally-virtuous form" (370). The 1813 edition of *Voyages* reimagines "imperial commerce . . . as a form of [cross-cultural] friendship" (381) and, Simoonds argues, the fact that the 1813 edition "won instant applause demonstrates the necessity of sentimental culture to British expansion in the Pacific. . . . Friendship [was critical] in securing the virtue of an imperial project in a region where traders were charged with corruption" (385).

Terrell (2015) deals with Pacific friendship from one anthropological perspective, though his is a largely archaeological project and has, as its target, a critique of the evolutionary biological or sociobiological views of theorists like E. O. Wilson and Steven Pinker. Terrell contends that there is good evidence that, as inherently social beings, humans are not at their core violent but rather have, throughout long evolutionary history, developed a "talent" for friendship.

While he grounds a substantial part of his argument in research that he and Rob Welsch conducted in the Pacific, more specifically, around Aitape, New Guinea, Terrell never really defines for us the specific *cultural* contours of friendship, that is, what is unique about friendship on Tumleo or other areas where he has worked. Indeed, Terrell provides some evidence that these friendships were multigenerational, inherited relationships (39–40), reminiscent of Kula exchanging partners. The exchange of clay, pots, and other valuables was part of these friendships. While the exchange dimension of these relationships is certainly widespread in the Pacific, as has already been seen, it lends a contour to the relationships that makes them very different from the "self-in-other" type of friendship idealized by Aristotle. For Terrell, these regional or cultural parameters are largely irrelevant, much less what might distinguish Tumleo friendship from friendship among other groups along the northern coast of Papua New Guinea. The coevolved ability to read friendly intention among dogs and humans, for Terrell, points to this generically evolved social talent (105), a phenomenon of interest in thinking about the shared propensities of all humans. At the same time, if even these generic friend-like qualities are extremely hard to read out of the physical and material records of our ancient pasts, they reveal nothing substantial about the nuanced cultural shapes, much less the performative contours, of the many practices that are considered to be friendship-like by specific groups of Pacific Islanders. As Beer (2001, 5806) notes (also in Beer and Gardner 2015), these practices are highly variable from society to society, and these are the practices deserving of further in-depth inquiry. Of equal interest may be societies of ample complexity to harbor multiple, contested views of personhood and friendship, social settings that only complicate the idea that friendship is immediately recognizable, always grounded in sentiment, or always manifest in egalitarian relationships (Desai and Killick 2010: 9–13).

Certainly, cultural anthropologists have worked toward digging deeper into the way that friendship-like relationships operate among local people. One of the most thought-provoking analyses, by James Carrier (in Bell and Coleman 1999), posits that friendship, in the Euro-American mode, brings with it an analytic perspective that requires autonomous individuals. Recognizing that Marshallese persona (and likely the persona taken to be the norm in many other Pacific persons) are highly interrelational (Carucci 2004, 2008; Graeber and Sahlins 2017), it is hardly surprising that the imagination of the self, projected onto/into an other in the idealized friendship of Aristotle, would seem like nonsense to Marshallese. What person would be so selfish and insensitive as to think that they could exist other than as a contiguous piece of those around them? Marshallese act and reflect on those actions as dyads, triads, and larger groups. To claim an action or thing simply as one's own is offensive.[3] Jerā- relationships, so-called friendships in this scenario, are reserved for those

who have crossed into being out of the realm of nonrelationship, not for those who might epitomize an ideal friend. Hence, a dilemma still exists for Terrell, for whom friendship is everywhere fashioned of the same type of thread, if not a piece of comparable fabric.

Like Bell and Coleman (1999), Amit Desai and Evan Killick (2010) have also provided an overview of friendship-like engagements among eight very different societies and among groups from rural to urban. While none of the chapters deal with Pacific friendships, certain lessons, nevertheless, may be learned from the Desai and Killick collection. Michelle Obeid (2010), for example, dealing with relationships in the Lebanese town of Arsal, notes the way in which local residents think of friendship and kinship as a "single form of social relationship" (93). Indeed, such is the case for Marshall Islanders even though jerā- relationships form one edge of the set of kinship, alliance, adoption-like relationships that exist in that locale. A much broader point is made by Coleman in the epilogue to *The Ways of Friendship*, a warning *not* to relegate friendship as "the informal negative to kinship's formal positive" (Coleman 2010, 199). This tendency only perpetuates British functionalist biases regarding the primacy of kinship in so-called primitive societies. David Schneider encouraged his students to place all sorts of interpersonal relationships on the same plane and not to privilege kinship—particularly the biogenetically grounded assumptions of Euro-American kinship—over a broad array of conceptually compatible human relationships. Once biogenetic bias has been winnowed out of the anthropological record of Marshallese kinship, the compatibilities between kinship and friendship are apparent. In Janet Carsten's (2000) terms, relatedness, always given a specifically local articulation, can allow us to escape the constraints of the contrast between culture and biology. Returning to Obeid, she, too, notes that the elaboration of friendship-like ties among her Lebanese consultants emerged under a regimen of shifting population characteristics in Arsal, with the community moving from a herding lifestyle to a much more diverse set of "occupations and livelihoods" as the population increased. In other words, as is true for Enewetak/Ujelang people, cosmopolitan and globalizing forces have caused the community to "change their attitude toward the nature of social life" (Obeid 2010, 96), and friendship-like relations have flourished under these altered social conditions. As Gillian Evans notes in her study of boys in the working-class neighborhoods of Bermondsey (southeast London), friendships are as much about exploring the potentialities of a relationship as they are about defining the identity characteristics of boys themselves (Evans, in Desai and Killick 2010, chap. 8). Certainly, such is the case for members of the Enewetak/Ujelang community in the contemporary era. In exploring the territory opened up by a plethora of new acquaintances, the risks involved in establishing jerā- relationships represent an investment in potentialities, in uncertain futures, and

in expanding the universe of relationships that were far less available during more than a century of colonial control.

As Vanessa Smith (2010) notes after surveying the historical landscape of friendships in the Pacific, "affective engagement is crucial to observation from within." At the same time, she notes that a "friendly methodology," such as that deployed by Malinowski, was part of a "new science trying to authorize itself . . . through a mixture of friendship and its disavowal." Far more in a Pacific mode than the inscriptions of Crook or Turnbull, Smith premises her book on the assumption that "professions of friendship disguise their opposite, that friendship is always calculating on other goals" (293). Certainly, jerā- relationships among Marshall Islanders are of this order, finding no contradiction between calculation and friendship in its perfect form.[4] For Marshallese, "if the friend is 'another self'" (Schweitzer 2006, 14), that other is loved not out of self-love but rather out of relational differences that position one's alter-self in a set of social circumstances different from those occupied by the person. Extensions of person and of the full array of available social interrelationships lie at the core of jerā- relationships. How better to make the transnational local?

The Inscribed Landscape of Jerā- Relationships among Marshall Islanders

A review of the literature on the Marshall Islands reveals little about relationships translated as "friendship." Certainly, the term appears in dictionaries that attempt to provide reasoned translations of terms used in everyday life in spoken Marshallese. Mentions of friendship also appear occasionally in the anthropological literature, though in-depth accounts of jerā- relationships, roughly "friend of-" pathways, do not exist. Importantly, Abo et al. (1976), in the *Marshallese-English Dictionary*, list "befriend" as the primary definition of jerā, followed by "friend," thus stressing some of the relational component of jerā- pathways (100). Equally, the ongoing interactive component of such relationships is suggested when the authors note that *jemjerā* might be roughly translated as "be friends; friendship; (or) friendly relationship" (97). One active example they provide is "He/(She) befriended the family," a translation of *Ear jemjerāik baamle eo*. This more nuanced interpretation of jerā- relationships represents a greater understanding than Bender's earlier suggestion that jerā- (which, at that time, he phonetically represented as *jeray*) meant "befriend, friend" (Bender 1969). At that point in time, Bender (1969, 227) adhered closely to Spoehr's biases about what Marshallese kinship was all about (Spoehr 1949, chaps. 7 and 8). While Spoehr was wise enough to recognize that Majuro residents were far more bilateral in their kinship practices than one might expect if they adhered to the African lineage model, kinship, nevertheless, was a domain he supposed was based on blood ties. Spoehr's biological bias is reflected in

Bender's separation of friendship from the dedicated chapters on kinship (Bender 1969, chaps. 17 and 22). As a linguist, however, following the common discourses of Marshallese speakers, Bender did include jerā- relationships as a logical part of a set of common phrases that includes everything from *ruwamāe-jet* "strangers/foreigners" to the closest of relatives (153–54). I further clarify the complexities of translation, meaning, and use of jerā- and other relationship terms below.

Like Bender, Tobin also adheres to Spoehr's model in his discussion of kin relations on Ujelang, with no mention of friendship. Therefore, kinship on Ujelang is presented as an isolated domain with kinspersons discussed as part of a steady-state lineage-style pattern that remains in alignment with ecological resources and economic conditions (Tobin 1967). Even though several Ujelang marriages at the time of Tobin's visit had begun as jerā- relationships, jerā- remained unexplored in Tobin's writings about Ujelang people. However, Tobin briefly does mention friendship in his work on Marshallese land tenure. Even though Tobin (1958) says nothing about gift land (*imōn aje*) being part of relationships with those termed jerā, something that certainly occurs in the Marshall Islands, he does note that *bwōl*, taro swamps, were given to persons related by friendship and marriage (65). While Tobin discusses lands transmitted through "adoption" (*kokajiriri*) and through pathways of marriage (21), his work reinforces the idea that kinship, which he judged to be a biologically grounded domain, stood in opposition to friendship, grounded in active social practices. This limited his understanding of kinning practices among Marshall Islanders. As much as Tobin's exploration of the various types of land tenure and use in the Marshall Islands are incredibly valuable, those local categories and practices do not align smoothly with his biologically grounded interpretations of kinship.

Neither the earliest of investigators of Marshall Islanders nor most of the recent Marshall Islands' researchers deal with friendship relationships in any depth. The mid-twentieth-century researchers, with their focus on relationships among kin, perhaps come closest to describing friendship-like relationships. For nineteenth- and early twentieth-century investigators, the idea that friendship might be contiguous with kinship was far beyond their limited, broad-brush, interpretive interests and understandings of the Marshall Islands.[5] Decades later, Mason and Kiste, like Spoehr and Tobin, mentioned above, were critical mid-twentieth-century Marshall Islands researchers who perpetuated the discussion of kinship as a biological domain. At times, they discuss kinship as an arena analogized and extended by adoption practices but without any consideration of friendship relationships.[6] This began to change, if slowly, following Carroll's publication of *Adoption in Eastern Oceania* (1970). Rynkiewich, Pollock, and Alexander, for example, explore and incorporate some

of the insights detailed in the Carroll volume.[7] By contrast, recent researchers have chosen to focus on specific domains of inquiry that have largely skirted friendship relations. Guided by the necessity to pursue far more in-depth and nuanced understandings of culture-specific topics in their inquiries, researchers in recent decades have elaborated on critical issues other than the shifting and emergent contours of friendship. An overview of these important research endeavors is provided in note 8.[8]

Of greater relevance to the analytic framing of jerā- relationships is McArthur's (1995, 2004) work, which draws attention to the critical way in which narrative and cultural performances operate at the contested interface between local and emerging national-level discourses and the negotiation of power in the Marshall Islands. Even though jerā- relationships do not form the core of his inquiry, McArthur's concentration on intertextual production and power as a critical leading edge of Marshallese cultural fashioning certainly informs the way I discuss the dynamic contours of jerā- relationships as they are reimagined and deployed through time. His brief discussion of jerā- relationships and Etao are addressed near the end of this article.

Another helpful contribution is Berman's (2019) work, which provides a series of explicit interactional sequences detailing the discursive practices of Marshallese children, particularly as they interface with adults. Nevertheless, her focus on the ways in which giving can be avoided leads her down a path contrary to the way in which jerā- relationships are generated, maintained, and altered through time. Similarly, Berman's (2014) research on kokajiriri "adoption," a practice that I have argued is a core part of Marshall Islanders' "kinning" practices (Carucci 2008, 2017), offers a very different view of the meanings and intents of this frequent, if waning, Marshall Islands relationship-generating activity.

Finally, Dvorak's (2018) book *Coral and Concrete* delves deeply into the ethnohistory of Kwajalein. He explores the complex interpersonal/international encounters that have taken place on the atoll and among its many transnational community members as well as with those with whom they have interacted. While jerā- relationships are important dimension of the interactions that took place among Kwajalein people and Japanese, Koreans, and Americans who have occupied the atoll over the past century, Dvorak's focus on the "structural violence and systematized racism" that were pervasive in these interactions leads him in other highly productive directions. Therefore, like the works on World War II by Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci (2001) and Falgout, Poyer, and Carucci (2008), Dvorak's work, while mentioning friendships, does not focus on jerā-relationships and the way in which the everyday practices among the partners to those relationships have altered their contours through time. This article attempts to fill that void.

Exploring Jerā- Relationships

For Marshall Islanders, establishing and maintaining jerā- “friend of” pathways and the whole process of befriending (*jerāiki*) transforms nonrelationships and uncertain relationships into kin-type categories when definite, perduring alignments do not yet allow those relationships to be considered a specific type of kin relationship. Jerā- relationships exist in a purgatory-like state, awaiting further classification once active relationships are perpetuated long enough to grant them specific kinship formulations. They are exploratory first moves that offer those from outside an as yet unproscribed position within the community. While that position is marginal and exists for a time in a sort of suspended animation, it may bring the privileges of the guest, placing one front and center, with special access to goods and no (overt) expectation of return. At the same time, like all those positioned in the center, a jerā- will always receive overelaborated attentions that allow others within the local community to assess just how those prestations are received and reciprocated. Jerā- relationships initially require some risk, dangling a sacrificial gift in the lap of the recipient to see what type of reciprocation it evokes, to establish what type of added kinning practices may lie in waiting if the relationship is maintained and, it is hoped, nurtured and enhanced. On the other hand, frequently jerā- relationships fizzle, moving back toward oblivion as someone departs from an island or otherwise leaves a social scene, never to return. Nevertheless, the discursive labels for those one-time relationships of the past allow the relational characteristics that linked people together to be discussed retrospectively, sustaining a liminality that states to others that this was not just an interaction with a stranger, but neither was it a relationship among us.

The expansionist aim of jerā- relationships makes them well aligned with the era of globalization, for under such conditions, new relationships are constantly available to be tested and assessed in terms of their short-term lives or perduring character.[9] The World War II era presented prime opportunities to explore the expansive depth of jerā- relationships for Marshall Islanders, with friendships established with ordinary Japanese soldiers and with pseudo-jerā- relationships explored with American servicemen as well. The early years of the American administration of the Marshall Islands placed Enewetak and Ujelang people back in an isolated position in the world, but in the years leading up to and following Marshallese independence, mobility increased, and the opportunity to deploy strategies of jerāiki “friend making” moved onto center stage. In many instances, those friend-making strategies eventually proved vacuous, but in some cases, they have led to long-term friendship or kinship/marriage relationships, and in that sense, they have borne some interrelational fruit. In the course of this article, I provide some examples of the way that jerā- relationships

operate and equally concentrate on the way the contours of the relationship category have shifted through time as expanded ideas about community have accompanied the movement of Enewetak/Ujelang people from their outer island locale to Majuro (government center of the Marshall Islands) to Hawaiʻi and to additional settings in the mainland United States. One hears jerā- spoken of with increasing frequency during this period of time inasmuch as it has been an era of communal exploration and dispersion, undoubtedly not the first in the long history of Enewetak and Ujelang atolls but certainly the first within colonial times, an era when people were largely restricted to a single atoll or nearby atolls where one might still assert shared pathways of clan identity. By contrast, within the past forty years, members of the community have moved to foreign locales where they encounter few, if any, kinspersons, and at the same time, others have come to the various locales where Enewetak and Ujelang people now live, establishing ties of greater density than those that typify outsiders.

To provide a bit of context, I have worked extensively with members of the Enewetak/Ujelang community over the past forty-four years, living for more than seven years of that time in the Marshall Islands, in Hawaiʻi, or in one of the other locales that Marshall Islanders now call home. The self-assigned designation of Enewetak/Ujelang derives from the thirty-three years that members of the community lived in exile on Ujelang during the period following World War II when the United States appropriated Enewetak Atoll for use as a nuclear test site. The community returned to Enewetak in 1980 after a partial cleanup of the atoll, but the failure of the United States to fully rehabilitate the majority of the atoll and the impossibility of living in the Marshallese manner on an atoll so thoroughly altered by nuclear testing led many members of the community to move elsewhere, including Majuro (the government center of the Marshall Islands) and the Big Island of Hawaiʻi. During this period of massive social and cultural change, the relationship term jerā- changed in its frequency of use as well as in the array of relationships that might be considered rough equivalents to the American idea of friendship.

During my first field research stay with the Enewetak/Ujelang people, then living on Ujelang, I read about the term jerā- in Byron Bender's *Marshallese-English Dictionary*, but it was many months before I encountered any Ujelang people who used the term. When I asked about the term, some of my close consultants simply said "oh, friend"—that was its meaning in their view, but its lack of use seemed to indicate that Ujelang people simply did not make or have friends. In essence, this was true since all day-to-day relationships were among kinspersons, and it was that array of kin terms that were utilized, along with personal names, and a whole battery of pronouns that people deployed to describe the relationships and interactions that took place every day. Two Peace Corps members lived on the atoll, but one of them had established a marriage

relationship on the island, and the other resided with a local family and was referred to as "the male living with Jemej and wife" or "the white guy[10] living in Yakjo." Less than two months after my own arrival, I was adopted by one of the elder women in the community (Carucci 1997), and therefore none of the outsiders who lived within the community remained outsiders. We were incorporated into the web of kinship relationships in our various different ways and then referred to or discussed using kin terms and residential location terms, not by the term jerā-.

In 1977, as the Ujelang people began planning to their return to Enewetak Atoll, things began to change. A middle-aged respected elder, Benjamin, who had a long-established relationship with one of the regional leaders from the Department of Energy, began to communicate with that man, and with that contextual shift, people referred to the man as *jerān* Benjamin. While the regional leader was also, on occasion, called by his personal name, it was common to refer to him in the abstract as *leo jerān* Benjamin—"that man, Benjamin's friend." Once the program known as *Tempedede* "Temporary" was established that allowed Ujelang elders to return to Jeptan islet on Enewetak Atoll in advance of their planned repatriation, the conditions were set to have the term jerā- used frequently. With those residential shifts and with a plethora of opportunities to interact with others who were not locals but with whom people interacted on an extended basis, people deployed the term to cover opportunistic relationships that, they hoped, would be perpetuated and would result in new resources and gifts being bestowed on members of the community.[11] At the same time, since the future duration of these relationships could not be predicted and since those jerā- were not embedded in the wider web of kinship relationships, they were termed jerān so-and so "the friend of so-and-so." The links were typically through a specific individual or perhaps a small group of local men who had established this seemingly close relationship with a worker on Enewetak. Ironically, with these expanding relational possibilities that brought the jerān so-and-so era into frequent use, the discourses even shifted to some degree back on Ujelang. Once Tempedede had been in operation for a few months and some of the community members who had been on Enewetak returned to Ujelang, I was addressed as jerā for the first time. On that day, a young returnee just back from Enewetak shouted out to me, *Jerā; ewor ke kijem jikka*? "Friend, do you have any food-class cigarettes?" While I was not a smoker, most of those who were, including this young man, knew that I often had cigarettes available for those who came to my house to consult with me on various research topics. But if this young man remembered the cigarettes, it was as if he forgot that, prior to his departure, he had always used a kin term, *rūkora* "my mother's younger brother," to address me. Jerā- had a very impersonal ring in comparison. One of my close research consultants surmised that the young man had on

Enewetak grown accustomed to addressing men he was hoping to *kantāk* "contact" for cigarettes with the English term "friend." Now back on Ujelang, he had forgotten to shift back to a kinship register, instead using the same routine form of address he had deployed with American employees on Enewetak, where the term jerā- had been appropriate. If my close consultant was correct, the young man was just translating back into Marshallese without much forethought, but his use of "friend" on Enewetak was entirely strategic. That is, he used "friend" *not* to identify an extant friend but rather as a strategy to "contact" men he did not really know at all in order to convince them to give him a cigarette. The "friend of-" only referred to a relationship he hoped would further develop, at least in relation to the sharing of cigarettes. Little wonder that as the young man addressed me as jerā-, his tonality and use of the Marshallese gloss for "friend" sounded quite impersonal to me.

Jerā- on Enewetak came to have a meaning that covered other types of "fishing expeditions" as well. As soon as young women began to join the elders and crew of male workers who first traveled to Enewetak under the Tempedede Program, word returned to Ujelang that a few of them had established jerān relationships with workmen on Enewetak. These men were then referred to as "jerān Medietta, jerān Moej," or whatever other young woman at that time had begun to pursue a jerā- relationship with an outsider working on Enewetak. In the case of both Moej and Medietta, the relationships led to marriage, though only that of Moej lasted for the long term. Nevertheless, until the time when each couple was considered married, community members used the term jerān "friend of" plus the name of the future spouse to refer to this newcomer. And gender was not the determining factor in such relationships. A few months later, Hezra began an interpersonal relationship with a *di pālle* "American" woman on Majuro, a woman who was already known by name to Ujelang people. For that reason, she was either referred to by her personal name or called jerān Hezra.

Most critically, these exploratory cross-sex relationship terms are far different than trial marriages within the community. Such trial marriages between cross cousins occurred consistently during the years of research I have spent with Enewetak/Ujelang people, but until quite recently, none of them were categorized as jerān so-and-so. Cross-gender sexual relationships or trial marriages deploy the jerān so-and-so formula only when the person identified via another person's first name is not him- or herself a member of the community. In this sense, jerā- relationships remain exploratory, whereas everything is known about both parties to a trial marriage in a cross-cousin relationship. As cross-cousin pairings become publicly known, other Ujelang/Enewetak people inevitably begin joking with one member of the pair as if they were already married. Once a publicly visible sign demonstrates that a couple is actually *koba* "combined" or "married," the categorization of the relationship simply moves from

a joking register to a reality register by deleting the smiles and other clues that mark that a comment is in jest. Most commonly with cross cousins, the visible sign of this change comes when the man remains until sunup with his partner and consumes morning food with her family. In any case, terms of reference and address are the same for cross-sex partners, modified only by intonation, smiling, and so on. If inquiring about a partner's whereabouts, the statement is simply, *Ewi lio (leo) ippõm* "where is that female (male) who is with you" (understood to mean "your spouse"). As a form of reference, the most frequent statement is, *Ewi lio/leo ippen XX* "where is that male/female with XX" (the name of the "spouse"). Once a couple is truly living together, the smiles and marked intonation are simply deleted. With more established couples, *ippen* comes to alternate with *Ewi XX emen*—harder to translate but something like "where is XX (personal name of one of the spousal pair) and that person who is part of XX." The "friend of XX" formula employs the same grammatical arrangement as "with" and "part of" relational referents, but XX always designates the known community member. If jerā- has, in recent years, come to alternate with the ippen form of address and reference for cross-cousin, not-yet-married pairs, I believe it is because the number of cross-cousin marriages within the Enewetak/Ujelang community has decreased radically. Therefore, the jerān XX relationships are the new reference norm, and cross-cousin relationships now borrow from the relational terms most commonly encountered. Nevertheless, in spite of these shifts in marriage, jerā- remain liminal, another type of linkage that, it is hoped, will transition into a marriage. On this account, they have a different history of use when compared with the taken-for-granted relationships that derived from cross-cousin pairs. An intermediate transitional referent is needed to cover the stage of hope since the relationship between a community member and an outsider is far more tenuous and exploratory than trial marriages between those cross cousins who have been in face-to-face relationships with one another throughout their lives.

For many years, Ujelang people were considered marginal "backwoods" sorts of Marshallese by those in the Marshall Islands, and only a handful of marriages were contracted between Ujelang people and Marshall Islanders during the years that Enewetak people lived in exile on Ujelang. With the money from a trust fund to begin to compensate Enewetak/Ujelang people for the suffering they had endured during the nuclear testing era, the conditions governing such marriages changed. Almost overnight in the mid-1980s, Enewetak/Ujelang people were reclassified as desirable spouses by Marshall Islanders, and many marriages began to integrate Enewetak/Ujelang into the Marshall Islands. This entailed a significant reformulation of identities since at the time people lived on Ujelang, they spoke of Marshallese (*di Majel*) as outsiders in exactly the same way they spoke of Pohnpeians or other groups around the Pacific. Enewetak/

Ujelang people did not consider themselves a subtype of Marshallese. As people intermarried with Marshallese, a move that coincided with the (semi-) independence of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Ujelang/Enewetak people came to speak of themselves as Marshall Islanders. Many of their new spouses had ties to Majuro inasmuch as that was the location where Marshall Islanders were most likely to be encountered. Some of these marriages, as well, deployed the jerān XX formula that had been used to discuss protomarriage relationships with workers on Enewetak. The situation was complicated, however, by linkages of clanship, which, in some cases, supersede atoll boundaries.

Indeed, overtly, people from Enewetak appeared to deploy the term jerā- in exactly the same way for Marshallese cross-gender "friends" as they did for those relationships with Hawaiian and American workers during the Tempedede era. For some people, however, there was a difference, and that distinction focused on clan ties. Di pālle and Hawaiians were considered clanless, though at one point on Ujelang, someone claimed that my clan must be the eagle clan since a representation of an eagle appeared on the presidential insignia of the United States and was also found on quarter-dollar coins. Some Marshallese, at least, were different. Frequently, adult Enewetak/Ujelang community members in the 1970s and 1980s talked about interpersonal relationships among Marshall Islanders that they encountered in Majuro as a way to specify who someone was and what the proper demeanors should be when in that person's presence. Often, younger Marshallese were linked with mature Marshallese men or women who were known to Enewetak/Ujelang people: "Oh, that young unmarried woman is born to that woman who is the younger sister of XX," and, as needed, the social relationship between XX and some other even more widely known person would be specified. These existing links of interpersonal relationship were used, at least on some occasions, to decertify the generic, exploratory nature of a jerā- relationship with a Marshall Islander. On one occasion, for example, Medi ("Mary"), the wife of the Ujelang mayor, interrupted as someone identified the relationship a young Enewetak man had with a young woman from Majuro: "Those two are not just friends for a while (inconsequential friends). She is not solely his friend, because she is the offspring of that female person XX, and XX is an Ejoa." A younger woman interrupts Mary to say that the woman was still a friend of the young Enewetak man, but Mary cut her off, saying "No, can't you see that . . . can't you see they are cross cousins to one another because he is an Ijjidik." This was surprising to me since several very knowledgeable Ujelang people had indicated that the Ijjidik and Ejoa clans in the Marshall Islands were not necessarily the same as those clans on Enewetak, though a few Ijjidik and Ejoa derived from failed early attempts of Marshallese warriors to conquer and settle Enewetak Atoll. Even though the conquests had failed, one or two families were separated from the invaders and were assimilated into Enewetak. With those

families came fragments of Marshallese clans. But those clans were not the same as the original Enewetak Ejoa clan, for example, which was a founding clan of a now long-absent subdivision of Enewetak known as Wurrin (running north and south from Runit islet, the "capital" of Wurrin). In any case, Medi's contention conflated these complications, but it presumed that because the young man and woman were distant cross cousins, inasmuch as Enewetak Ijjidik and Ejoa intermarriages were of the bilateral cross-cousin variety, these two were not jerā-, or, if they were jerā-, they were not solely jerā-, because an already existing cross-cousin relationship predefined the relationship. The preexistence of that pathway contravened the exploratory nature of any jerā- relationship. Hertej, the mayor, and some other male respected elders jumped in to try to clarify exactly how the young woman fit within the array of Marshallese Ejoa clan members, but no one contradicted Medi's contention. There was something in preexisting clan relations that brought the use of the term jerā- into question and that precertification of other relationships outweighed and perhaps even disallowed the use of jerā- to describe this "friendship-like" bond. If jerā- were like relatives-in-waiting, relatives were not intensified friends. Relatives emerged from another source that included already determinant parts of a person's personality and demeanor along with a clanship marking that specified a whole set of prohibitions and allowable types of activities. Jerā-, oozing out of the fringes of otherness (ruwamāejet), did not share these characteristics of precertification.

On the Big Island, as might be expected given the trajectory outlined above, one hears about jerān all of the time. But the term of address jerā is heard only rarely. This is because virtually all situations where one might say, "Oh, my friend" as a form of address uses precisely those terms since English speakers are the people being addressed. However, among Marshallese, there is frequent talk of jerān so-and-so, "the friend of so-and-so," and typically the "so-and-so" is a Marshallese person who is an integral part of the community while that person's jerān is not. Equally, one hears *lio jerām* or *leo jerām* frequently "that female person, your friend" or "that male person, your friend" speaking to a member of the Marshallese community but referring to someone who is not part of that same community. These referential devices, therefore, are precisely the same as those already discussed, but because Hawai'i is a place where Enewetak/Ujelang people are frequently intermarried with Marshall Islanders and where Marshallese are surrounded by outsiders, utterances of this sort are heard far more frequently than in the Marshall Islands.

In terms of the relationships themselves, for Enewetak/Ujelang people in Hawai'i, jerā- varies from relationships where a community member has many interactions with other Marshall Islanders to others who, at best, seem to be marginal friends. While Americans are renowned among Western Apache for calling

people they barely know "friends" (Basso 1979), Enewetak/Ujelang folks have a polyphonic response to such performative friends. Like Western Apache, some may simply respond to such faux friends with silence, later laughing about the shallow understanding of Americans once they have departed. But others participate in the public deceit, reciprocating by publicly responding with the English word "friend" even if, once the "friend" has departed, a more critical assessment of that person's relationship may be voiced. I have heard Bilimon, a fairly gregarious long-term resident of the Big Island, use the English term "friend" in both ways as well as others. He calls one di pālle "white person" with whom he has long-standing, mutually beneficial exchange relationships "friend" when speaking with him and later, when discussing the same man among fellow Marshall Islanders, refers to him as *leo jerā* "that fellow, my friend." In another case, however (a white man who brings fish to sell by Bilimon's and Neiwan's house on occasion), I have heard other members of Bilimon's household call the man leo jerān Bilimon "that guy, a friend of Bilimon's." Nevertheless, Bilimon himself expresses more ambivalent attitudes about the fish guy. At times, he calls him "friend" (in English) when speaking with him directly but then critiques him among family members once the man has departed. The distinction may be slight, but Bilimon himself never calls the fish-delivery person jerā among Marshallese family and friends. I take this to mean that jerā, for him, requires more sustained interactions, a more developed relationship, and a relationship that performatively moves toward a kinship relationship. In other words, Bilimon reserves jerā- as a category that means "friend with the potential to become a relative." Indeed, when Bilimon critiques the fish "friend," it is most frequently because the price he demands for his fish is too high. That very act negates the generosity that should typify relationships among relatives and jerā- "potential relatives/friends." When others refer to the same man as jerān Bilimon, their intent is different. In essence, those others are saying, "Well, we do not really know this guy, but he is (kind of) a friend of Bilimon's." The referential range of the term, then, varies depending on context, but jerā- still occupies the liminal space between outsiders with whom one has no regular relationship and those to whom one refers (and addresses) as kinspersons. For someone to claim another as jerā- (other than when requesting cigarettes or another small favor) requires a more established relationship than to refer to someone else as jerān so-and-so. For Bilimon, the use of jerā- as opposed to "friend" is more than code switching. It differentiates *leo*/*lio jerā* (that male/female person with whom I have a sustained set of exchanges, more investment of love and caring, and view as a potential relative) from "friend," an English label to publicly encourage someone to respond in a generous, desirable way but with no indication that they are on the way to accomplishing that aim. By contrast, either jerā- or "friend" may be used to refer to someone else's friend when one does not know the relationship thoroughly. On the Big Island, the terms often provide a

strategic shortcut to explain why some person who is not a community member may be interacting with a person who is part of the community.

In addition to all of these friendship relationships there is another use of the term that has become increasingly common among kinspersons. In these instances, one addresses a kinsperson using *Oo, jerā* . . . in situations where a speaker seriously doubts the veracity of the statement that has just been uttered by the person one is calling "friend." This allows a speaker to set aside the specific relational ties of kinship that link the speaker to the person being spoken to and, instead, question them as if they should not be constrained by all of the proprieties that accompany the more complex relationship. Thus, one is able to say, "You are kidding, right" or "I doubt that is true" to kinspersons whose word should never be questioned. Among in-married and recently married young men and women, this usage of jerā occurs all of the time, as if everything that another age-mate says is doubtful. Fully mature adults use the form with greater discrimination, and it is heard only rarely among the most highly respected of aging *alab* "respected elders." Those elders typically speak with great consideration. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that they seldom deploy this "I doubt what you are saying" form. Even if they do doubt that something is true, that perspective will not be publicly revealed to anyone in the conversation. At best, it will be discussed when the respected elder is speaking with a different group at a later point in time.

Jepta Relationships in Hawai'i

In addition to jerā-based utterances that mark the relationships that link people together, on the Big Island, in particular, jerā- has come to be deployed to discuss relationships among groups. The first of these I witnessed was during *Kūrijmōj* in 2002, the three- or four-month-long celebration engaged in by Enewetak/Ujelang people and other Marshall Islanders that has totally reformulated Christmas into a Marshallese festive event. As I have discussed at length elsewhere (Carucci 1997), local communities divide themselves into competing *jepta* "song fest groups" for the celebration, and these groups travel back and forth on visits where the groups share food and challenge one another to singing and dance competitions. These visits are termed *kamolu*, literally "to make song." On Ujelang, there were only two jepta, Jitōken and Jitoen, the "windward and leeward" halves, and they competed as metaphoric warfaring groups, doing battle with their songs, dances, speeches, and foods and as metaphoric marriage partners. As the population expanded and spread out onto multiple islet residence locales after the community's repatriation onto Enewetak, the number of competing jepta also increased from two to three and then, ultimately, to four groups. Equally, on the Big Island in the 2002–2003 Kūrijmōj season, there were four jepta, though one was in Hilo and participated only for major events. During the

season of back-and-forth kamolu on the Big Island, sometime after the Ocean View jepta had held three or four major kamolu encounters with the Captain Cook jepta, Bilimon and his older brother, Tobin—one from Ocean View and one from Captain Cook—told me at a first birthday's party during November, "Ocean View and Captain Cook have become friends with one another (*emoj aer jerāiki doon*)." Since that time, I have heard a number of other group relationships, including the "political" alliances described in the next section, described as jerā- relationships. This usage had never occurred on Ujelang, but, again, the context did not require it. Jepta in that location were already described as opposed partners who engaged in mock battles and a marriage-like alliance. With only two jepta, they were the only "cross-cousins" who could engage in such an alliance.

While the groups on the Big Island had proliferated, the same basic principle of alliance unifying opposed groups held in that setting as well. An analogous logic extended also to the political contexts described in the following section. If jerā- relationships exist in the conceptual space between ruwamāejet and kinspersons, jerā- were like cross-cousin alliances of marriage. These relationships brought members of different clans together, unifying opposites, and if on Ujelang those cross cousins were frequently members of the same extended families, since the population was small, nevertheless, they were members of opposite clans. The marriage alliance re-cemented those who were being made into the first logical types of others, cross cousins, by bringing access to their different lands back together and by birthing offspring that themselves stood, generation after generation, as the visible proof that two clans were ongoing partners allied with one another. As with the jepta in Captain Cook and Ocean View, jerā- described that marriage-like alliance. The relationship held risk since it involved a group of others, even if, in the case of Ujelang marriages, those others were very well known. It did not share features with those linked as siblings, as mother/child, or as grandmother/grandchild. Those relationships also required constant time, nurturance, and investments of labor, but they were among clan mates. Jerā- were alliance-like relations among others, potential partners to a (future) marriage. Since one's internal visceral substance differed from those others, even spouses, one needed to be very diligent in order to nurture and polish those relationships though exchange, but caution was always required since difference represented the potential of alternate agendas that one might not fully understand.

Governmental Friendships

Once Enewetak people came to recognize that they had been constructed as international political animals, as representations of a cause that was continuously and, all too frequently, solely associated with being nuclear survivors, the idea also emerged that they were either supported by others or castigated by them.

Thus, in 2014, Boas said, "It is as if those human entities in Congress now (U.S. Congressmen) are not now friends (*kio rejjab jerān*) of the people of Enewetak," noting the change in tenor since times during the Clinton era or earlier, when Congress was more supportive of the plight of the Enewetak community and other Northern Marshall Islands groups that suffered as a result of U.S. nuclear testing. Equally, seeking to better understand the odd machinations of politics in the United States, Joniten asked (in 2015), "Why is it that the Republicans (*Republican rane*) are not friends with Marshall Islanders?" This was difficult for him to comprehend since, in earlier, more cordial political times, U.S. senators and congressional representatives from both sides of the isle were relatively supportive of issues concerning Marshallese who had made sacrifices to help the United States during World War II and the Cold War era. The friend/not friend distinction deployed by both of these Enewetak/Ujelang elders is a simplifying device that, in these instances, is aimed at understanding support or nonsupport for causes that might benefit their community. In no way do these uses of jerān attempt to capture specific friendships, for indeed, with the dozens of encounters between Enewetak leaders and senators or congressional representatives in Washington, D.C., highly cordial friendship-like relations did exist between those lawmakers and Enewetak elders who frequented their offices on Capitol Hill. The same type of friend/not friend categorization of political relationships was used a few years earlier as Enewetak community members tried to understand the shifting politics between the United States and Russia. In 2002, Jimako asked me quizzically, "Why is it I do not understand? Before, there were years and years when Russia and America hated each other, as if it was prohibited to talk together, and now, it is as if they are friends with one another (*jerān doon*)." In all of these instances, friend/nonfriend condenses complex political relationships into a yes/no formula. Like the use of jerā- to describe jepta relationships at Kūrijmōj, these relations are alliances rather than relations among those who are bilateral extended family or clan relatives. However, nearly the opposite of its uses in interpersonal relationships, no liminal or exploratory components accompany these ideas about jerān. Perhaps jerān of this sort should be translated as "ally," but given the complex array of strategies of alliance among local Marshall Islanders, it seems surprising that they would expect alliances among Americans and other foreigners to be less nuanced and strategic.

In many ways, the relatively recent political use of jerā- relationships reappropriates the friendship discourse that was used by European and American powers during the colonial era as if jerā- were a simple translation of American, German, or Japanese ideas about friendship. Taipei, for example, has adopted Majuro as a "sister city," and above the Republic of the Marshall Islands International Conference Center, a sign that displays the flags of both nations alongside one another states (English first, then Marshallese), "Gift from the

people of Taiwan Token of friendship and cooperation between Taiwan and the Marshall Islands October 12th, 2007," and then, in Marshallese, "Menin letok jen armij in Taiwan Kakōllan bujen jimjerā im ibben doon ikotan Taiwan im Marshall Islands October 12th, 2007." *Jimjerā im ippen doon ikotan* is here translated as "friendship and cooperation between," though a more literal translation might be "friends with/of one another and remaining together in between." Of course, inasmuch as the money for the conference center came from Taiwan as a gift, it marks a ranked relationship in which Marshallese friendship/alliance is presumed to extend into the future in exchange for an unreciprocated gift. Each of these recent uses of jerā- incorporates the residues of colonialism even as they extend, without much questioning, into the postcolonial era. Herein, the reification of relationships among imagined entities, "states," are given qualities analogous to actively engendered interpersonal relationships among humans, thereby presupposing that many characteristics about the dynamic qualities of rank and friendship are also applicable to entities like the United States, Taiwan, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Toward a Dynamic Theory of Jerā- Relationships

Returning to the theoretical survey of Pacific friendship with which I began this article, it is my hope that the culturally specific and contextually variable contours of jerā- relationships among Marshall Islanders, a point that aligns with the works of Bettina Beer and of Desai and Killick, has been made evident. Equally, jerā- relationships reinforce the messages Carrier's work, pointing to the way in which the contraindividual Marshallese approach to personhood interfaces with culturally contoured notions of "friendship," a point that aligns with the interrelational stress on interpersonal relationships stressed by Graeber and Sahlins. Furthermore, I hope that the way in which historical forces reveal points of friction (Smith) and lead to changes in local conceptualizations and uses of "friendship" (Obeid) or, more accurately, of jerā- relationships in the Marshall Islands is quite obvious. Finally, I have highlighted the way in which Marshall Islander's ideas of "kinship"-like relations and "friendship"-like relations are contiguous in character, not, as Coleman cautions, a logical formulation in which friendship stands as the logical negative to kinship's positive. With these features in mind, I hope to point readers toward a more dynamic and nuanced understanding of jerā- relationships and practices among Marshall Islanders.

Alterations of Cultural Logic: Reinscribing the Ancient Past

The stories of Etao have long held special interest and humor for Marshall Islanders, and if one hears these stories recited with less frequency than in the

pretelevision era, they are still considered intriguing by youth and adults today. In this article, I have tried to show how jerā-, roughly equivalent to "friend/friendship," has moved from marginal use during an era when nearly all relations were among kin and political interests were largely local to a vastly expanded domain as Marshall Islanders have entered the global era and explored many new settings where repeated and ongoing relations with others are common. But, as Truillot (1995) reminds us, interpretations of the past always incorporate elements of the moments of their construction in the here-and-now and such is the case with the genre of Etao tales exchanged among Marshallese.

Etao, the trickster figure in Marshall Islands belief, offspring of Lijebake, and primordial fashioner of Marshall Islands landmarks, travels a route from Kapiloñ (the islands to the southwest, such as Pohnpei) to Ujelang and Enewetak, then on to Bikini and the Rālik Chain of the Marshall Islands before heading to Ratak (the "sunrise" chain of atolls and coral pinnacles forming the eastern range of seamounts in the Marshall Islands). His final two escapades in the Marshall Islands take place on Majuro and Mili atolls before Etao heads to Kiribati and then, according to some renditions from the 1970s and 1980s, on to the United States, where he revealed to the Americans the secret of the nuclear bomb (see Carucci 1989). As is often the case, in his final Marshall Islands encounter on Mili, his aim is to steal away with local women, and on Mili, the chief's daughters are his cherished prize. In the 1970s and 1980s versions of this story, several different storytellers indicated that Etao's aim was to *koba ippen*, that is, to "combine with" or "marry" the daughters, or to babu ippen "lie down with" or "sleep with" the daughters. When I heard a version of this story more recently, in 2006, among Big Island Marshallese, Etao's aim was now to jerāiki "befriend" the daughters, though, certainly, some intentions of "sleeping with" were discussed later in the story.[12] In many ways, the telling of the story had not shifted much in the decades that separated these versions. Nevertheless, in the 2006 version, befriending had become inscribed as an ancient aim of Etao even though that jerā- tie emerged as a way of discussing cross-gender relationships quite recently among Enewetak/Ujelang people. In this manner, traditional lore is constantly reimagined, with ancients acting in ways enabled by the possibilities of the current day. Etao, always enigmatic, acts in ways that complicate the designs and desires of Marshallese chiefs and ordinary people. But in certain ways, he acts in a fashion complicit with their desires and their abilities. Such is the case when Etao begins befriending chiefly daughters, an act, much like his excursion to America, that brings Etao to life for contemporary Marshallese audiences. Jerā- relationships become highly elaborated as a correlate of the potentialities inherent in new relationships, for if Marshall Islanders are not themselves highly empowered in relation to the large nations of the earth, their expertise in generating power out of interpersonal relationships is, if not unmatched, virtually unlimited.

NOTES

1. Bettina Beer (2001, 5806) also notes the common overlap of friendship and kinship in her overview of friendship.

2. This article began as part of that ASAO session, Friendship and Peer Relationships, held in San Diego, California, 2016. My thanks to session convener Mary K. Good and to my coparticipants for insightful comments and inspiration to continue working on this important topic.

3. Marilyn Strathern (1988) has noted that relational selves are also typical of Melanesians, destabilizing any simplistic equation that would allow for the comparison with the stable, autonomous selves taken for granted by many residents of Europe or the United States.

4. Equally, without bringing any mark of distain on anthropological friendships, this same "reflexive assumption" undoubtedly characterizes all friendships in the field (Flinn et al. 1997), for no matter how "native" an anthropologist may "go," a multiply layered set of contexts always frame his or her motivations for interaction.

5. For example, folks like Kotzebue (1821, 1830), Erdland (1914), and Kramer (1906; see also Kramer and Nevermann n.d.) make little mention of friendship relations. This is not surprising inasmuch as, far in advance of the scholars mentioned in the above paragraph, they had already presupposed that the Marshall Islands was a kinship-based society and that kinship must be biological. The exception in Kramer and Nevermann is a short story recorded under "Oracle, *bubu*," a way of foretelling the future using different arrangements of knots on a string of sennit: "When A. Capelle . . . came in 1859, Chief Djimata on Ebon consulted the oracle. When it turned out favorable three times, he said, 'You are my friend'" (Kramer and Nevermann n.d., 32). In line with the thesis of this paper, it is not surprising that this interaction occurred in the muddled spaces between us and them, insiders and outside foreigners. Equally, Capelle offspring today mark the success of the Marshall Islands' strategy to use a jerā- relationship as a pathway toward becoming an insider, *nūkū-* (roughly "relative").

6. American researchers following World War II helped extend the idea of biological kinship as they attempted to interpret Marshallese kin practices with modified versions of Radcliffe-Brown's African systems of kinship and marriage. Adhering to this model, investigations such as those of Mason (1947, 1954) and Spoehr (1949) inadvertently reinforced the separation between friendship and kinship. Len Mason (1947), for example, clearly attempts to impose Euro-American ideas of "blood" onto Marshallese categories even though they do not fit. He says "*nugin* is the term applied to all relatives by blood" but then notes that some consultants have a special term for people "related to the *alap* (family/land head) through the male line and not the female" (16). Clearly, then, so-called blood ties (biogenetic relationship) have nothing to do with the way Marshallese define relatives since they place relatives with identical amounts of shared blood quanta in opposite categories. In the same way, Mason attempts to remove kajiriri (literally "cared for" relatives and spouses from membership in the *bwij* since they have no blood ties to other members of the group, but then he, necessarily, says they are "generally excluded" [for spouses] or "on the death of the foster parent, [they] generally return to . . . their real mother's *bwij* (15–16)." Entailed in "generally" is the fact that, frequently, these exclusions and dismissals are *not* true. Completing Mason's biological imposition on Marshall Islanders' reckoning of kin is the way in which he defines Marshallese kin terms using a genealogical grid (18–21): therefore, the meaning of *jiman*, for Mason, is

“his mother’s father, his father’s father, his male relative of the preceding generation [his great uncle], his ancestor” (19). These anthropological conveniences cannot possibly capture what the Marshall Islanders who worked with Mason told him. Rather, they represent Mason’s isolating and biologizing of Marshall Islander’s ideas about relatedness. Following the precedent set by Spoehr, Mason, and Tobin, Kiste (1974) dedicates a chapter to social organization in *The Bikinians* (1974). He does mention adoption, a popular “alternative kinship” topic of that era (Carroll 1970), but friendship relationships are not discussed.

7. Rynkiewich (1972, 1976) begins to break down the idea of kinship in the biological mode when describing adoption as “part of a cultural domain that might be called kinship sharing or reciprocity” (Rynkiewich 1976, 95), wherein Marshall Islanders stress “the kind of relationship that would be established” (93) with “an emphasis on sharing food, housing, and labor” (95). While friendship was left out of his discussion, it need not have been inasmuch as a similar set of emphases hold in the case of jerā- relationships. In spite of Rynkiewich’s attempt to move the discussion of kinship beyond a biological model, he continues to be constrained by earlier anthropological models. In a classic case of ethnocentric double-speak, on subsequent pages (95–98) Rynkiewich returns to privileging classificatory kinship in the biological mode with the contradictory statement that “[t]he Arno . . . reckoning [of] kinsmen includes the possibility of manipulating through *extension* and *denial* both the substantive and behavioral attributes of ‘kinship.’ Actual genealogical connection is not a necessary condition for classifying and treating another person as a kinsman” (98, emphasis added). Placing kinship in quotation marks may indicate some hesitation on Rynkiewich’s part. Nevertheless, kinship is here reestablished as the privileged domain with exceptions (like kokajiriri or jerā- relationships, roughly “adoption” or “friendship”) relegated to kinship-by-extension status. Fortunately, Pollock (1970) provides a reasonably detailed example of emergent family relations in her work on Namu. She discusses the case history of Netub and Weni, a story that she elicited in 1968. This case history describes the relationship between an in-marrying affine (Netub) from another Namu islet and his in-laws. While Pollock does not mention jerā- relationships per se, the story of what life was like for an in-marrying affine is highly informative. Even though Netub and Weni did not necessarily begin their premarital relationship as “friends,” the “outsider” components of Netub’s relationship to Weni’s father and other relatives (101–6) parallels the sorts of attractions, obligations, and performance-based privileges and opportunities that may be seen in marriages that transition from jerā- relationships to affinal relationships. William Alexander (1978), another representative of this generation of Marshall Islands researchers, also adds value to the understanding of interactions within Marshallese households and communities, even though he does not directly address jerā- relationships. Rather, he compares the economic grounding of household membership on Lae and Ebeye (Kwajelein). He does not speak of friendship per se. Nevertheless, some of his examples outline the shifting interpersonal relationships encountered on Ebeye and Majuro as opposed to “rural” Lae. In the urban situations, economic providers, as opposed to the most mature household heads, elevate their rank and maintain positions of substantial power within smaller households that include both kin and nonkin. The latter household arrangements, at times, undoubtedly included jerā- relationships (91).

8. The topical specificity of recent research reports, while providing more realistically grounded accounts of everyday practices than earlier accounts, lead their authors down pathways that do not further the understanding of jerā- relationships. Walsh’s (2003) important work on chiefs, for example, pays scant attention to friendship relations. Her work (1999) on American adoption of Marshall Islands-born children, while exploring the highly contested domain in which local ideas of relatedness were challenged by powerful capitalist-infused

constructions of adoption, led in directions antithetical to the overlap between kokajiriri "Marshall Islands adoption" and jerā- relationships. Allen (1997), looking at members of the Enid, Oklahoma, Marshallese community, describes Enid *haole* youth who consider their Marshall Islands' classmates "friends" (132) and makes brief mention of "created kinship ties" (179) but, otherwise, does not consider the way in which members of the Enid Marshallese community fashion jerā- relationships. Barker (2004), Johnston and Barker (2008), and Alcalay (1998) focus on the Marshall Islands' nuclear testing and the unsettled and abusive aftermath of those tests. With their concentration on the visible effects of American power as it came to be forced on local islanders, the friendship relationships that, not infrequently, mediated across the inequalities are not discussed by these authors. Rudiak-Gould (2013) provides a sophisticated analysis of Marshall Islanders' feelings about and reactions to climate change and global warming, while Ahlgren's works deal with cholera on Ebeye (2007) and with *The Meaning of Mo* "tabu" (2016), particularly in relation to sacred ecologies and principles of conservation. None of these works delve into jerā- relationships. Similarly, Genz's (2018) research on Marshallese navigation does not explore the ways in which jerā- relationships become kinship relationships in the fashioning of *wa* "coteries of proa sailors."

9. Equally, having no reliable written information on the shape of precolonial jerā- relationships, it is possible that the transcultural interpersonal contours of jerā- relationships are a direct product of colonial/local encounters, still contoured to align with kin relationships but expanding beyond them. However, local ethnohistorians contend that the term jerā- is of ancient derivation, even though uses of the term were, initially, regional.

10. *Di pālle*, literally "person of cloth" perhaps, at one time, meaning "clothed person" or "person of the cloth" (i.e., missionary: among the first clothed persons to reside locally) but now equated with white people or Americans (its unmarked sense being those with light skin tone).

11. The overt discussion of opportunism in these relationships should not lead outsiders to think of them as radically distinct from kinship relations or as a new and unique form of friendship. Advantageous social positioning is frequently discussed when referring to other people's kinship and marriage relationships, so it is hardly surprising that the advantages of friendship relations would be evaluated through similar types of talk. Summarizing Aristotle (1976), Doyle and Smith (2002) review Aristotle's three types of friendship: friendship based on utility, friendship based on pleasure, and friendship based on mutual goodness. For Aristotle (1976), the last form was the perfect form "in which people each alike, wishes good for the other *qua* good" (1156a16–b23). These distinctions seem quite foreign to Marshallese sensibilities, as if utility stood in opposition to goodness. Taking the transactional and exchange characteristics of all social relationships as given, Enewetak/Ujelang people certainly do not see assessments of value as standing apart from goodness. Indeed, as I have noted elsewhere (Carucci 2017), stinging may be negatively judged, and giving generously is certainly positively valued, but a person who might elect to pursue some social relationship based on the relatively advantageous circumstance offered by access to land or resources is considered ordinary, perhaps even wise, not avaricious. In brief, Aristotle's distinctions embed a number of cultural biases and presuppositions pointing to the necessity of looking closely at friendship practices cross-culturally. As Beer (2001, 5806) notes, such practices are highly variable from society to society.

12. McArthur (2000), in his analysis of a version of this same tale, notes the way in which Etao, the classical trickster, is discursively aligned with the ambivalent characteristics of jerā-, a relationship that, for his Marshallese consultant, is surrounded with ambivalence: "it [the friendship

relationship] can be true, it can be false” (92). The same, McArthur notes, holds for the relationship woven into this story between the Marshall Islands and the United States, a highly ambivalent relationship simultaneously beneficial and conflictural for Marshall Islands residents.

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