

A Note on Language

Throughout this book I have used the language prominently appearing in primary and secondary sources aimed at English-language readers to trace this history. For example, rather than use “Majel,” the Marshallese word for Marshall Islands, or “Ri-Kuwajleen,” the Marshallese word for the original Marshallese inhabitants, or the “Kwajalein people” I have used the “Marshall Islands,” “Marshallese,” and/or “Kwajalein landowners” to reflect the language that most commonly appeared in primary and secondary source documents by US and Marshallese voices as well as in oral history interviews with both populations. As a book that resides at the intersection between US and Marshallese histories, written by an English-language speaker for an English-language readership, I have deferred to this language used by both US and Marshallese historic subjects, while aware of the many deficiencies that accompany those linguistic limitations. In cases where I do incorporate Marshallese translations, I have deferred to the cultural expertise and linguistic skills of Marshallese sources, as well as anthropologists, historians, and cultural studies scholars of the Pacific, as cited in those sections.¹

There are also a few instances throughout the book in which my referencing of individuals shifts between “Micronesians” and “Marshallese.”

These shifts are not intended to suggest a conflation of the two descriptive categories. While Marshallese have been historically categorized as belonging to the regional identification as Micronesians, not all who identify as Micronesians are Marshallese. Nor should either of these two categories be presumed to address the variety of ways that individuals self-identify in this region of the Pacific. Specific island and atoll identifications have also come into play, as have historic rejections of the category “Micronesian” (likewise for “Polynesian” and “Melanesian”) as an artificial colonial imposition upon vast geographic, and historically and culturally diverse, regions. The sections in my book that shift in that categorical language reflect how Trust Territory government and military documents described these populations at different times (also indicated in endnotes). When referencing these documents I have kept my language mirroring these shifts as they appeared in the historic evidence. While this may cause some ambiguity, that ambiguity reflects that which is found in the archives and potentially suggests how various US civilian and military colonial administrators may have perceived this category of “Micronesians” as a seemingly homogenous population. My inclusion of this language is not intended to reify that colonial categorization but rather to write in a way that reflects, while analyzing, those historic primary sources.

In analysis where I refer to the population living on Ebeye and working on Kwajalein during the army missile-installation era, I primarily use “Marshallese,” or “Ebeye residents.” This is because the majority of the population on Ebeye and working on Kwajalein during this period comprised Marshallese individuals. However, it should be noted that Ebeye has historically housed a smaller but growing population of individuals from other parts of Micronesia as well as the Philippines. In addition, many of these individuals have also worked on Kwajalein.

In reference to the missile installation at Kwajalein Atoll, I have tended to use interchangeably broad terms like “missile base” or “missile installation” to avoid confusion, as the installation has birthed various official titles over time. These have included the Kwajalein Missile Range, USAKA (United States Army at Kwajalein Atoll), and most recently the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site (also called the Reagan Test Site or the Reagan Test Site and Space Range). These official titles are

only interspersed throughout the book when they reflect primary source language; otherwise they are largely absent.

Finally, I have tried to minimize, as much as possible, the uses of “American” or “Americans” to describe citizens from the United States who have resided on and/or worked at Kwajalein. This is intended to avoid perpetuating a US-centric vision of population identification that obscures the broader region of the Americas.² That said, I *do* use “American” throughout the book when referring to cultural patterns, norms, and tropes (including “the American dream” and “American exceptionalism,” among others). I also use “American” when this term reflects the language used in primary sources or in oral history interviews as articulated in quotes and/or paraphrases.

