

REVIEW

KEYSTONE NATIONS: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND SALMON ACROSS THE NORTH PACIFIC

Edited by Benedict J. Colombi and James F. Brooks, 2012. School for Advanced Research, Santa Fe, NM. Paper, 305 pages, photos, line drawings, maps, tables, index. ISBN 978-1-934691-90-8; \$34.95.

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Colombi and Brooks' edited volume, *Keystone Nations: Indigenous Peoples and Salmon across the North Pacific*, is an impressive and thoughtful collection of case studies drawn from a seminar at the School for Advanced Research (SAR). This diverse group of ethnographers came together to explore the relationships between indigenous people and salmon along the North Pacific coastline from the Russian Far East to the Columbia River basin. The authors represent an array of geographic and theoretical perspectives, which the editors assemble in this 2012 publication to illustrate the variability and complexity of human-salmon relationships.

To frame the case studies, which derive from the Russian Far East, coastal Alaska, and the North American Northwest, introductory and concluding chapters reflect on the individual contributions and the volume's overarching themes. In the introductory chapter, Courtland L. Smith presents agricultural metaphors—such as harvesting, culturing, and farming—as a way to understand both how capture fisheries in this region have changed historically and the complex relationships among indigenous people, commercial industry, market economies, and common resources. In her complementary concluding essay, Marianne Elisabeth Lien does not simply summarize or generalize about the work, but asks how the ethnographies presented in this volume “may challenge our assumptions about both salmon and indigeneity, and [guide us to] look for differences rather than for generalizing traits” (p. 239). She emphasizes the blurred line between “culture” and “nature” in these communities and argues that the diver-

sity in human-salmon relationships presented in this volume should be a caution against generalizing approaches to salmon management across this region.

The essays themselves draw on a broad range of case studies to address a few central themes, which are laid out by the editors in the preface: (a) indigenous histories and knowledge systems; (b) the global economy; (c) policy, sovereignty, and co-management; and (d) emerging contemporary issues. From these themes, the authors are able to use ethnographic and historic data to deduce threats to both indigenous cultures and salmon, which are intermeshed in biological and political spheres. By examining the role that salmon play as a keystone species in a variety of North Pacific ecosystems and communities, including the Nivkhi, Itelmen, Koryak, Aleut (Unangax), Sugpiat, Gitxaala, and Nimiipuu, and the position of these communities in larger political, social, and economic contexts, this collection offers a fresh and innovative perspective of North Pacific fisheries.

All of the authors in this volume place contemporary indigenous people in a historical context in an effort to understand how social, political, and economic changes have influenced traditional fishing activities and the symbolic importance of the salmon. In Kamchatka, according to Koester (Chapter 3), there has been a resurgence of the deep connection between Itelmen identity and salmon, though both Kasten (Chapter 4) and Sharakhmatova (Chapter 5) find that many of Kamchatka's communities are limited by poor economic and political conditions that make inserting traditional lifeways and identities

into the Russian market economy extremely difficult. As several of the papers illustrate, indigenous communities grapple with balancing traditional lifeways, community sustainability, and the global economy. Wilson (Chapter 2) addresses the tension between protecting the Nivkhi salmon fishery and Sakhalin's offshore oil and gas development, while Reedy-Maschner (Chapter 6) and Carothers (Chapter 7) both emphasize the "entangled" and changing nature of Alaska's Aleut (Unangax) and Sugpiaq relationships with salmon, salmon fishing, and the global economy. Like the Nimiipuu described by Colombi (Chapter 9), as these groups change economically, socially, and politically to adapt to global influences, their identities remain firmly rooted in salmon fishing. Several essays emphasize that indigenous people are not passive players but rather active participants in the discussions about and changes made to the salmon fishery (Carothers, Chapter 7; Reedy-Maschner, Chapter 6; Wilson, Chapter 2). Menzies (Chapter 8) takes an ecological perspective and acknowledges that the environment in British Columbia's Gitxaala territory reflects deliberate, long-term human influence.

While analyzing the role of Nimiipuu and Columbia River tribes in a global, capitalist context, both Colombi (Chapter 9) and Diver (Chapter 10) address the power of fisheries co-management in these communities. These chapters give us a glimpse of the "alternative future" that is possible in this region if indigenous groups draw on their sovereignty, experience, and values and if potential partners are willing to engage in open dialogue that acknowledges tensions and makes room for indigenous voices.

The broad geographic scope of *Keystone Nations* will appeal to scholars working in anthropological or resource management contexts across this region, and its themes

are applicable in a global context. One of the strengths of this volume is that it offers a view across the North Pacific, an area that is bound by the salmon resource. It is valuable to see the commonalities in these chapters, the strength of indigenous identities, and the fundamental challenges to the salmon fishery across this region. However, the authors of these case studies make it clear that each indigenous community has a unique historical trajectory and has adapted to political and economic pressures in its own way, which suggests that the future of salmon management will vary across the region. The second great strength of this volume is that it takes a historical perspective, driven by theory and supported by ethnographic data, to consider the significance of emerging contemporary concerns. This perspective is increasingly important in discussions of North Pacific resource management (e.g., Braje and Rick 2011; Moss and Cannon 2011) and, as Lien argues in the concluding chapter, we must understand the history of the salmon's cultural context to understand why this fish is relevant and how it must be regulated. To expand on this valuable contribution, the editors promise a second volume that addresses the complexities of management practices and policies and imagines "alternative futures" (Colombi and Brooks, preface).

REFERENCES

- Braje, Todd J., and Torben C. Rick, eds.
2011 *Human Impacts on Seals, Sea Lions, and Sea Otters*. University of California Press, Berkeley.
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