

REVIEW OF BALDACCHINO'S "A WORLD OF ISLANDS"

Godfrey Baldacchino, Ed. *A World of Islands: An Island Studies Reader*. Charlottetown: University of Prince Edward Island. 2007. 640 pp.

Baldacchino's *A World of Islands* (2007) represents a valuable instrument for all scholars interested in islands across disciplines, from biology to anthropology. Within the newly-born sub-discipline of Nissology (after νησί – [*nisi*] the Greek word for island), the aim of which is to study islands on their own terms, leading scholars introduce the audience to a wide range of debates related to "islandness," such as environmental issues and political governance.

In this work, islands are approached as particular and essential physical and cultural loci within a global context. One quarter of the world's states are islands or archipelagos, and 10% of the world's population live on islands. Islands are thus "hotspots" for biological and cultural diversity, as well as for international politics. Through their physical, cultural, economic, and political particularities, islands are propelled into a relational discourse in which the physically bounded spaces that constitute them are overcome. Thus, islands are presented as complex physical and cultural spaces that interact locally and globally.

The book is divided into four sections. In the first, *Identities, Locations & Landscapes*, Stephen Royle,

reader in geography at Queen's University Belfast, explores island typologies, including their possible benefit as laboratories for many disciplines. Christian Depraetere and Arthur Dahl, who work for the United Nations Environment Programme, classify in intricate details the uneven distribution and characteristics of islands around the world. The numerous maps, diagrams, and illustrations provided are very illuminating particularly for non-cartographers. Furthermore, Patrick Nunn, a geography professor at the University of the South Pacific, gives a clear explanation of the diverse models of island formation and the effects of tectonic climatic change on the evolution of their environments.

Section two, *Island Life*, comprises contributions on particular aspects of life on islands. Andrew Berry, a researcher at Harvard University's Museum of Comparative Zoology, presents some of the unique biological and evolutionary features of islands, such as genetics, hybridization, and extinction patterns, using the Hawaiian Islands as an illustrative case. Andrew Cliff explores islands' epidemiology, while islands' particular flora and fauna are illustrated by Sam Berry, a specialist in genetics. Finally, the archaeological record is dis-

cussed by Athol Anderson to highlight the often-dramatic impact of human activity on islands' fragile ecosystems.

The third section, *Island Development*, includes chapters ranging from governance to tourism. In the chapter entitled *Island migration*, John Connell, a geographer based at the University of Sydney, asks how migration can impact small and remote islands such as the Cook Islands. Of particular interest is the approach taken by Eric Clark, of Lund University in Sweden in his article *Gentrification and Space Wars* where he highlights how the often-limited space on islands becomes central in claims made on land and customary rights by both islanders and outsiders.

The final section, composed by Graeme Robertson, is an annotated list of institutions and resources for islands studies: a tool that can become an extremely useful guide for scholars around the world.

A World of Islands is multipurpose. For established experts in island studies, the book represents a comprehensive work that delineates the different aspects (physical, economic, political, and cultural) that constitute islands and their interactions within local, national, and global scales. In fact, as Baldacchino claims in the introduction, "island peoples continue to make significant contributions towards global cultural diversity." For future islands scholars like myself, *A World of Islands* is an important and exhaustive compendium on the ma-

ny, and often contradictory, elements that constitute islandness. Its kaleidoscopic and interdisciplinary overview can thus be of great help to young researchers in orientating and building their future research, and to all those interested in island studies on a general scale. In pointing out how the different parts that constitute islandness influence and are influenced by each other, this work shows a wide breadth of interpretations and visions that can be used to support one's particular argument or study. From an anthropological perspective, however, the book is missing a broader cultural and ethnographic approach. Issues of self-representation, tourism, community development, heritage, cultural landscapes, and cultural, economic, and environmental sustainability are not approached in depth, nor are they developed following anthropological theoretical and methodological approaches. Rather than seeing this as merely a fault, I consider it an invitation for their audience to expand and differentiate the discipline of nissology. Having read *A World of Islands*, I now feel that it is my task to contribute to the study of islands from an anthropological point of view and to develop an interdisciplinary dialogue that both expands and moves beyond my own discipline.