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Editors

Ethnobiology of Corals and Coral Reefs

 Springer

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Preface

Our story of how this book came into being starts, as any story should, on the Mediterranean coast of the Languedoc-Roussillon region of France. As every two years a group of friends, excited to see each other and chat science all night, met for the International Congress on Ethnobiology (ICE). That year the people of the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), led by our Edmond Dounias, managed to put together one of the most wonderful ICEs of all times. It was delightful... perhaps it was such a success due to Edmond's drive, enthusiasm, and vision. It is this vision that gave our book the halite of life.

During the organizational period, Nemer wrote to Edmond pronouncing his interest in creating a session on marine ethnobiology. The Mediterranean coast of France was the perfect setting to celebrate such a session. Similar interests started to appear; Rutger de Wit and Samuel Cornier pronounced themselves with similar ideas regarding marine ethnobiology. On May 22, 2014, Rutger, Samuel, and Nemer were leading a session on marine ethnobiology under the title "Ethnothalassic interactions: A special session devoted to ethnobiological issues in coastal and marine environments."

At the end of the congress, Samuel and Nemer decided to celebrate by going to the beach and joined with friends Gisella Cruz-García and Lisa L. Price who had given their presentation at the conference. We were further joined by Paul J. Peters; it seems that Paul is always there when it comes to ICE. After 40 min of driving we reached the turquoise waters of Palavas-les-Flots and walked for a while before enjoying an exquisite seafood meal in this charming location. It was during dessert that Lisa pronounced those words: "Wouldn't it be lovely to do something together regarding marine ethnobiology? I have been thinking for quite a while that I love coral and [ethnobiologically speaking] I don't think there has been much written on the topic." We were on our way...

Months after that meeting surrounded by breezes, seafood, and that inland sea, Lisa received an email from Nemer: "Let's do this."

It was also during the conference that we learned from Rick Stepp about an attractive Ethnobiology Series endorsed by Springer. We rushed to draft a primal

idea of this book and contacted collaborators. After having a list of potential contributions, we contacted Rick, who channeled them towards Eric Stannard, Editor for Springer Science and Business Media.

Eric's response was great, enthusiastic, encouraging, and very clear. This gave the book editors more reasons to construct something. This is how this volume started!

In the making, we realized that ethnobiological research on corals and coral reefs, while sound, is also scarce. The process of putting this book together has shown us that we should not conform to presenting empirical research that would only be attractive to specialized audiences. There is a huge need for young scholars and professionals in the social and earth sciences to conduct research on corals, coral reefs, and the people that interact and live in/with coralline environments on a daily basis. We also believe there is a need for a larger audience to realize that these organisms and the ecosystems they form are fragile yet vital to the people of the world. Most of all, corals and their reefs are remarkably complex and beautiful and interface with humanity in many ways and over great depths of time and space.

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Nemer E. Narchi wishes to thank Yolanda Massieu at Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana and Benjamin Wilder and Carolyn O'Meara at N-Gen for giving him a chance to subtract hours from their commitments in order to pour them into this enterprise. He is also thankful for the economic support of CONACYT and El Colegio de Michoacán, and obviously to the life lessons and all around support provided by Alicia Narchi. There is much inspiration that Nemer drew when little from Jacques Yves Cousteau and Sylvia Earle.

In closing, we wish to acknowledge the International Society for Ethnobiology and thank them for the wonderful ICE Congress held in Montpellier in 2012 that brought us together and helped inspire this book.

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Thomas Malm is a biologist, social anthropologist, and Professor of Human Ecology at Lund University, Sweden. He has traveled extensively in Oceania and was in 1983–1984 Curator at the Rarotonga Marine Zoo, Cook Islands. In 2000, he received the Dahlgren Award from the New Society of Letters, Lund, for his doctoral thesis, “Shell Age Economics: Marine Gathering in the Kingdom of Tonga, Polynesia.” As a cross-disciplinary researcher with many interests, in addition to works on ethnobiology and Pacific Islands, he has for example also written about herpetology, “the great chain of being,” botanical gardens, and cryptozoology. Dividing his time between Lund and his second home in Honolulu, Hawaii, he is currently working on a photographic study of sea shells and is editing a book about dragons in Swedish folklore.

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