

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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