

Bikini Atoll Nuclear Test

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1963 Test Ban Treaty (UNESCO, n.d.)

Brief Description

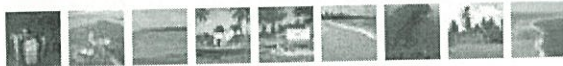
In the wake of World War II, in a move closely related to the beginnings of the Cold War, the United States of America decided to resume nuclear testing in the Pacific Ocean, on Bikini Atoll in the Marshall archipelago. After the displacement of the local inhabitants, 67 nuclear tests were carried out from 1946 to 1958, including the explosion of the first H-bomb (1952). Bikini Atoll has conserved direct tangible evidence that is highly significant in conveying the power of the nuclear tests, i.e. the sunken ships sent to the bottom of the lagoon by the tests in 1946 and the gigantic Bravo crater. Equivalent to 7,000 times the force of the Hiroshima bomb, the tests had major consequences on the geology and natural environment of Bikini Atoll and on the health of those who were exposed to radiation. Through its history, the atoll symbolises the dawn of the nuclear age, despite its paradoxical image of peace and of earthly paradise. This is the first site from the Marshall Islands to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Other Languages:

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Outstanding Universal Value

Brief synthesis

In the wake of World War II, in a move closely related to the beginnings of the Cold War, the United States of America decided to resume nuclear testing. They choose Bikini Atoll in the Marshall archipelago in the Pacific Ocean. After the displacement of the local inhabitants, 23 nuclear tests were carried out from 1946 to 1958. The cumulative force of the tests in all of the Marshall Islands was equivalent to 7,000 times that of the Hiroshima bomb. Following the use of nuclear bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Bikini tests confirmed that mankind was entering a "nuclear era". The many military remains bear witness to the beginnings of the Cold War, the race to develop weapons of mass destruction and a geopolitical balance based on terror.

The violence exerted on the natural, geophysical and living elements by nuclear weapons illustrates the relationship which can develop between man and the environment. This is reflected in the ecosystems and the terrestrial, marine and underwater landscapes of Bikini Atoll.