

October 25, 1954

Memorandum

To: Staff Anthropologist
 From: District Anthropologist
 Subject: The Ujela# situation

1. In compliance with your request for information concerning the status of the displaced Enewetak inhabitants, presently living on Ujela# Atoll, the following information and recommendations are herein submitted.
2. This information is based upon personal observations and research which have been conducted over the past four or more years. It is particularly based upon a three week period (10 October to 2 November 1952) spent with the Ujela# people in conjunction with the hydrogen bomb tests conducted during the latter part of that period.
3. The writer has kept in touch with the situation through the media of those Ujela# people who have come to the District Center for educational, medical and other reasons and also through the field trip personnel who have visited the atoll. He plans to spend at least one month on Ujela# in the near future in order to follow up the earlier research and to analyze the current situation especially in relation to the proposed community development program. The proposed two week period would not allow sufficient time to do a thorough job of research.
4. The writer has discussed the Ujela# situation and recommendations for improving said situation, with Mr. Frank Midkiff upon the occasion of the latter's recent trip through the Trust Territory with Mr. Arnold.
5. The situation on Ujela# differs from that of Kili, the location of another displaced group, in that the salient problems are economic; not socio-political as well as economic. The psychological blocks against acceptance of relocation and adjustment to the new location which have been observed on Kili, are practically non-existent on Ujela#, as will be delineated later.
6. Communal Organization:

The Ujela# community although it actually consists of two socio-political groups with two hereditary leaders ("Iroj lablab") and with elected officials duplicated on down the line, is well integrated and is outstanding among the other Marshallese communities in regard organization, cooperation and team work. Ujela#, for example, is one of the few municipalities which paid its school teachers regularly.

These people are very hard-working and have been making a reasonably satisfactory adjustment to their new home despite the fact that their former home, Enewetak Atoll, was much larger both in land and lagoon area and provided more natural resources for them.

The contrast of attitudes between the Ujelaf people and the Kili people has been striking.

The Ujelaf people have worked hard to try to make a satisfactory home of their new location. They have planted food trees; breadfruit, banana, pandanus and papaya as well as squash and arrow root. These plantings were mostly brought in by the U.S. Navy Civil Administration and the Department of Interior Administration field trips.

They have raised pigs, chickens and ducks and have cleared away large areas of copra land formerly covered with brush. They have built stone walls to protect the food plants from livestock and made other improvements. No one can validly report that these people have not tried to help themselves. In fact the help received from the government has been of a rather sporadic nature. Government support, particularly logistic, has not been adequate.

7. Recommendations:

Given the proper support, both logistic and agricultural, the Ujelaf people can carry on the program of adjusting to their new home. Outside leadership and inspiration is not the crucial need here that it is on Kili. Technical advice and material support to improve the agricultural yield, to increase the food supply and copra crop is plainly indicated for Ujelaf.

These people are at home in this environment and know how to utilize its resources because of the fact that Ujelaf is like Enewetak climatically and some of them lived and worked on Ujelaf when the atoll was operated as a copra plantation by the Jaluit Gesellschaft and later by the Nanyo Boeki Kaisha. In fact a few of the present inhabitants of Ujelaf belong to the group which originally owned the atoll before it was "purchased" from their "iroij" in a "Manhattan transfer" type of transaction by German traders.

These factors undoubtedly aided in the psychological adjustment of the displaced Enewetak people to their new location. Analogous factors were entirely lacking in the case of the displaced Bikinians.

(a) Agricultural recommendations:

It is recommended that seedlings of food plants which have proven to be successful on Ujelaf be supplied in large quantities. Special stress should be laid on pandanus and breadfruit varieties. The superior Kusaie breadfruit should be tried out on Ujelaf and imported in large quantities if successful. The proximity of Ujelaf to Kusaie would make the latter an ideal source of supply.

Competent advice should be obtained as to the possibility of creating taro pits on Ujelaf, as has been done successfully in the dry Gilbert Islands and on other Pacific Islands.

This would provide additional vegetable food, especially needed during the period between the breadfruit and pandanus seasons to augment the monotonous and inadequate diet of arrowroot and coconuts.

The present supply of livestock (pigs, chickens and ducks) should be increased and upgraded. Turkeys will do well on Ujelaa and should be imported, if possible. Axes, shovels, machetes and other implements will also be needed to carry on a program of agricultural aid.

(b) Recommendations for improved logistic support:

The geographical location of Ujelaa in relation to the sources of supply and markets is extremely unfavorable. Ujelaa is 410 miles from Kwajalein and 640 miles from Majuro, the district center. Ujae Atoll, the nearest inhabited Marshallese Atoll, is 290 miles east of Ujelaa. These vast distances prevent Marshallese craft from sailing to Ujelaa to left copra and to supply needed trade goods. The government field trip support has been unreliable and unsatisfactory. Six months went by recently without a field trip to Ujelaa. (See Mr. George Ramos' field trip report, Western Circuit, for details). Said trip was made over three months ago.

This lack of even minimal support has created genuine hardship conditions and has prevented maximal exploitation of the copra potential. Marshallese will not produce copra if they cannot market it. A perfectly logical reaction. Conversely, it has been proven that increased availability of the market stimulates increased copra production.

The Ujelaa people are used to and require clothing, soap, kerosene, sugar, rice, flour, matches, fish hooks and line and other necessities and are naturally frustrated and dissatisfied when they cannot obtain them. They cannot understand why these necessities have not been made available to them regularly. As the leaders and others of this group have told the writer: "We do not ask the American Government to give us anything, we just want to have the opportunity to purchase the things we need in order to live." (Certainly not an unreasonable request and attitude.)

It is strongly recommended that careful planning be made to insure at least one field trip every three months to Ujelaa to provide the needed logistic support. If the AKL should be absent from the Marshalls District, the Ponape station ship could be utilized to insure a regular and dependable schedule. Ponape Island is closer to Ujelaa than Majuro, and both Ujelaa and Enewetak were in the Ponape District during German and Japanese Administrations.

The feasibility of placing Ujelaa under the jurisdiction of Ponape to be supported logistically from Ponape Island should not be overlooked. If this would mean more frequent field trips on a regular and dependable basis, the writer believes that the best interests of the Ujelaa people would be served by so transferring jurisdiction and responsibility. On the basis of past discussions with the Ujelaa leaders and others, the investigation into current attitudes should be conducted, however, before any decision is made.

The problems of lack of sufficient food and lack of sufficient logistic support are "felt needs" and have been discussed by the leaders of the

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ex-Enewetak people with the writer and other Americans within the Administration. In fact, Lombwe, the Ujelaa Health Aid who was in Majuro for further training this year, recently stood up at an open meeting and told the High Commissioner that "The people on Ujelaa are very hungry and have not been getting enough to eat and ask the American government for help."

(c) Compensation for the loss of Enewetak Atoll:

Monetary compensation to the displaced Enewetak people for the loss of their ancestral homeland is long overdue them, just as it is to the other Marshallese who possessed land rights in Bikini, Kwajalein and Majuro Atolls and which were alienated from them by the United States Government. Such compensation would be rendering long delayed equity and would alleviate the "plight of the Ujelaa people" about which "Headquarters is highly concerned."

The ex-Enewetak people have been very cooperative with the American Administration in the past. As many of them have told the writer: "We did not give the Navy any trouble when they told us to leave Enewetak. We hated to go but we obeyed. We want to cooperate with the Americans all of the time." How long this attitude of cooperation will continue under the present conditions is a moot question. The confidence and faith which these victims of the Atomic Age have had in the Administering Authority cannot be sustained without more concrete evidence of interest and tangible aid by this Administration.

It is hoped that this brief summary will aid in the formulation of a program to aid the Ujelaa people to rehabilitate themselves in their new location. A more detailed and current report will be submitted following the return from the field study on Ujelaa in the near future.

Jack Tobin
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