

R

THE ENEWETAK ATOLL PEOPLE

A SPECIAL REPORT FOR THE RADIOLOGICAL SURVEY OF 1972-73

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Jack A. Tobin  
Community Development Advisor

Majuro, Marshall Islands  
April 20, 1973

DOE ARCHIVES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Maps

- Figure 1            Micronesia  
Figure 2            The Marshall Islands  
Figure 3            Enewetak Atoll  
Figure 4            Ujilang Atoll

Part I

Historical Background

Attitudes of the Enewetak People

Part II

Probable Pattern of Living Of Returnees  
to Enewetak

The Population

The Gene Pool

Settlement Pattern

The Diet

Agricultural Rehabilitation

Possible Proscription of Use  
of Islands

DOE ARCHIVES

0 Daio Shima

- Kita Iwo Shima
- Iwo Shima
- Minami Iwo Shima

### MARIANA ISLANDS

- Ulithi
- Fais
- Gafenu
- Yap
- Feroulep
- Ngulu
- Sorol
- West Fay
- Olimarou
- Woleai
- Ifalik
- Eauripik

- Kayangle
- Babelthuap
- Palau
- Angaur
- Sonsorol
- Pulo Anna
- Merir
- Tobi
- Helen Reef

### MELANESIA

- Mapia
- NEW GUINEA
- Hollandia

200 1000000

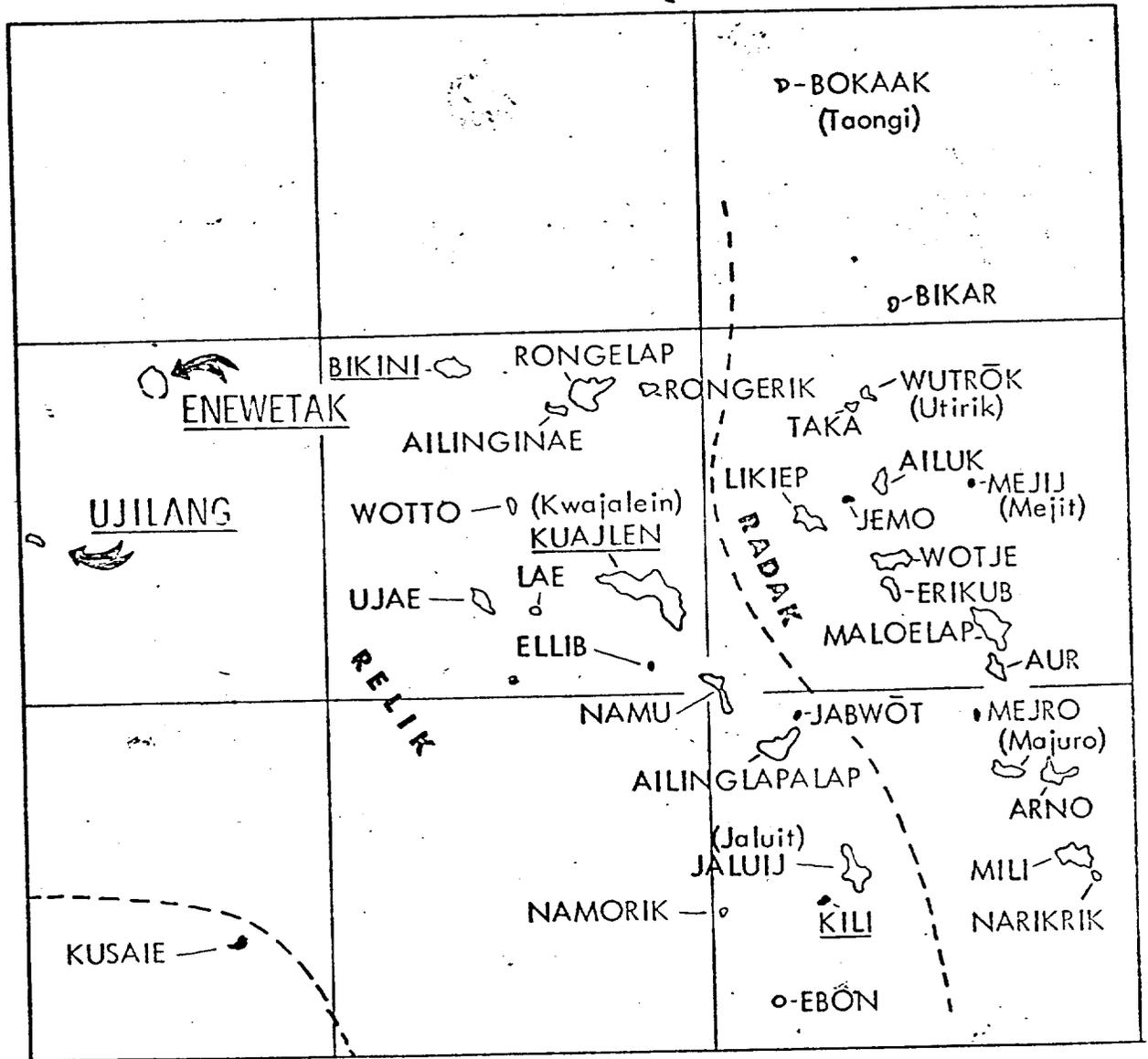


Figure 2. The MARSHALL ISLANDS

Adapted from Street  
(1960: 3)

By Tobin (1967)

CONFIDENTIAL

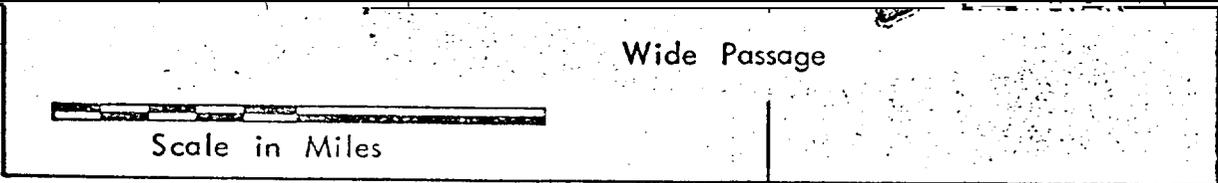


Figure 3. ENEWETAK ATOLL

Adapted from Street  
(1960: 5)

Total dry land area: 2.67 sq.mi.  
Lagoon area: 387.99 " "

By Tobin 1967

X DESTROYED

**DOE ARCHIVES**

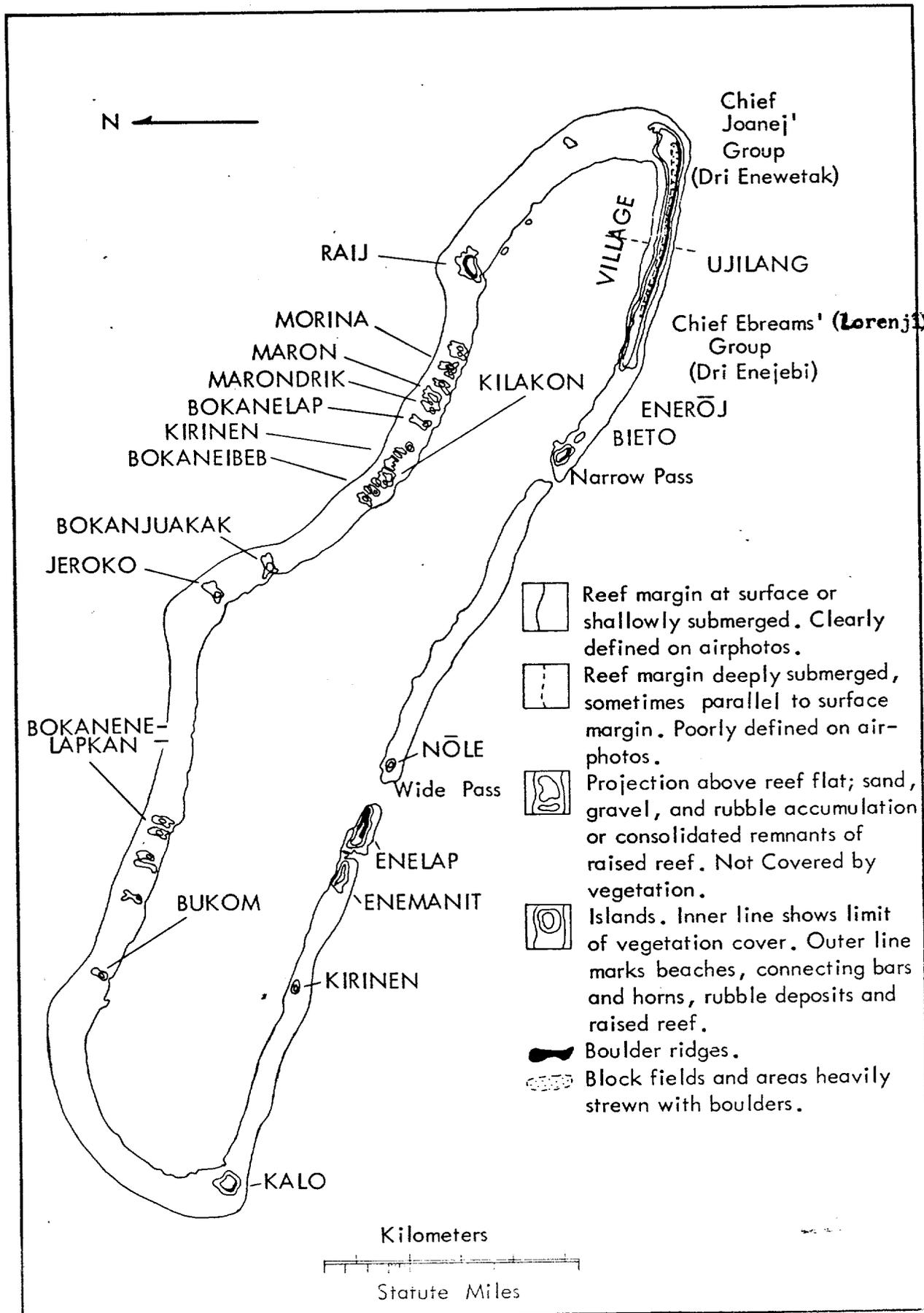


Figure 4. UJILANG ATOLL

Total dry land area: 0.67 sq.mi.  
 Lagoon area: 25 " "

**DOE ARCHIVES**

Adapted from Military Geography of the Northern Marshalls, (1956: 48)

United States. In order to understand the present situation, we must examine the history of this group, and how they arrived at their present location. A summary of pertinent events is herewith presented.

The Enewetak People say that they have always lived on Enewetak Atoll as far as they know, and that "there have always been two chiefs (iroij) and two groups, because there are two big islands: Enjebi and Enewetak."

(At one time in the distant past there was a third socio-political unit on the southeastern part of the atoll, called Wurrin. This was absorbed by the Enewetak group). The people state that they are the people of Enjebi Island and the people of Enewetak Island who lived on the atoll of Enewetak. They claim that the two groups have never warred against each other but have always cooperated very closely.

(For all practical purposes the Enewetak People are one group today. This is due to intermarriage over the years and the intense in-group feeling the people have).

According to those who know the history of their people; the chiefs, the wise old men and women, and those few of the younger people who have learned the ancient lore from their elders, four separate groups of Marshallese arrived on Enewetak Atoll before the coming of the Europeans. These came from the atolls of Bikini, Ujae, Wotto, and other atolls many miles to the east of Enewetak. These invaders, apparently castaways, either fought the Enewetak People, or merely remained a while before returning to their home atolls. Apparently none of them remained on Enewetak.

DOE ARCHIVES

German traders followed, brought in coconut seedlings and asked the chiefs to tend them and sell the copra which would be made, to the Germans. Trade goods were advanced the chiefs against the equivalent in future copra production

FOE ARCHIVES

The Japanese seized Enewetak, along with the rest of the German possessions in Micronesia, in the fall of 1914. A few Japanese naval officials arrived at Enewetak in 1920 and 1923 according to informants. They brought some Japanese traders, and then departed for Japan. Japanese warships arrived later from time to time for short visits, but no resident administrators were appointed.

Enewetak (and Ujilang) unlike the rest of the Marshalls, were administered from the Branch Bureau of the South Seas Administration (Nanyo Cho), on Ponape Island in the Eastern Carolines. Infrequent trips were made to Enewetak for administrative and commercial purposes. The contact with the Japanese was very slight as had been the contact with German officials. There were no Japanese officials of any kind stationed on Enewetak. There were however a Japanese trader and two Japanese assistants.

The Japanese established no schools on the atoll but several of the

young people were sent to Ponape to attend government and Protestant mission schools.

A weather station was established on Enewetak in the late 1930s and seven observers were stationed there.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

In the late 1930s the Imperial Japanese High Command decided to make Enewetak an important link in their strategy for the conquest of the Pacific area. During the years 1939-1941 thousands of army, navy, marine, and engineer corps personnel, and Korean and Okinawan laborers poured into Enewetak. Elaborate fortifications were installed, and a large airfield was constructed on Enjebi Island. Marshallese youths from all over the Marshalls were later pressed into service as laborers on the fortifications on Enewetak. The local people were also conscripted.

These fortifications were assaulted and overcome when United States forces invaded Enewetak in February of 1944.

The Japanese had refused to allow the remaining Marshallese and Enewetak People to leave the two main islands of the atoll. It is presumed that they feared the islanders would contact the enemy forces and furnish them with information of military value. Some of the islanders had already fled to the smaller islands and others were able to flee when the bombardment started. It is said that they did provide information of military value to the invading forces.

A number of Marshallese laborers, and natives of Enewetak Atoll were killed or wounded during the bombardment that preceded the actual invasion of the atoll, and during the subsequent fighting. The traumatic experience is recalled with sadness, and memories of great fear.

After the Americans had secured Enewetak the Marshallese laborers who so desired, were sent home as soon as possible. The local people were fed and housed by the Navy. They look back on this period of free and lavish supplies of food and clothing, such as they had never seen before, as the Golden Era.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

Ujilang Atoll, which was uninhabited at the time, had previously been selected as the relocation site for the displaced Bikini People, whose own home atoll had been appropriated earlier for atomic experiments.

Their leaders had been taken to inspect Ujilang, and plans had been made for the removal of the Bikini People to the atoll after the brush had been cleared and a village constructed. The Bikinians were now told that they would not be resettled on Ujilang but would have to go elsewhere.

The Navy continued the work of clearing brush and constructing a village of wooden, sheet-metal roofed structures.

The Enewetak People were told to prepare to leave their atoll and relocate on Ujilang. Many of them have told me "We did not give the Navy any trouble when they told us to leave Enewetak. We hated to go, but we obeyed." One must know the deep emotional attachment which all Marshallese feel toward their ancestral homes to appreciate the difficulty the Enewetak People experienced in planning to leave their homeland for perhaps forever.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

On December 21, 1947, 142 Enewetak People came ashore to take up permanent residence on Ujilang. The main island, the village site was not yet completely cleared of brush but was completed later.

The coconut trees planted by the Germans and Japanese were still standing and bearing. Seedlings of breadfruit and pandanus were brought ashore and planted. Thus a new life began for the uprooted Enewetak People. No American official remained on Ujilang, nor was there radio communication with the outside world. There were to ensue long periods of complete isolation, and privation.

The former Enewetak inhabitants attempted to adjust to their new location. They had, and still have, several formidable problems with which to cope. The most obvious problem, and one which they have uppermost in their minds, is the great disparity in the size of Ujilang and that of Enewetak. The total dry land area of Ujilang Atoll is only 0.67 square miles and much of this is rocky and poor. The area of the lagoon is only 25.47 square miles. On the other hand, the total dry land area of Enewetak Atoll is 2.26 square miles, much of which was well suited for agricultural use.<sup>1</sup> The total lagoon area is 387.99 square miles. (Bryan 1946:2). Both figures are obviously considerably larger than those for Ujilang. These figures are reflected of course in the much less abundant production of food, and the food potential, especially from the reefs, lagoon, and surrounding sea on Ujilang.

Logistics is another major problem. The geographical location of Ujilang in relation to the sources of needed imported foodstuffs and other commodities is unfavorable.

The trend toward increase in population size and the consequent pressure upon the natural resources has been a matter of concern.

1

Less of course the islands that have been destroyed by nuclear weapons testing or damaged in the course of the testing.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

community assumed the responsibility for doing the actual labor involved.

These efforts to ameliorate the situation, while welcome, did not lessen the desire of the people to return to their ancestral homeland. They continued to press for this goal. Discussions and meetings were held with government officials. The long awaited answer reached Majuro on April 19th 1972 when the High Commissioner informed the District Administrator that Enewetak Atoll would be returned to its former inhabitants in 1973.

This marked the beginning of a new and better life for these displaced people, and an end to their long years of exile.

**DOE ARCHIVES**



Total Inowetok People 421

People Who Have Married Inowetok People and Who Live on Ujilnag; 21  
(They are an integral part of the community).

Grand Total: 432

**DOE ARCHIVES**

and number of males..... 220  
" " " females..... 204  
Sex Not Reported..... 2

Grand total:..... 432

Ujilang permanently with Ujilang spouses.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

especially during the Japanese period. Several males from the Ponape District took up residence on Enewetak and remained there with their spouses and children.

Improvement of transportation facilitated travel. A number of Enewetak Atoll children went to school on Ponape. There was an increase in visitors to the atoll from the Marshalls and from the Ponape District. These factors contributed to outmarriage and change in the gene pool, as they do today. It is highly probable that this trend will continue. (The census data included in this paper reflect this trend). Non-Micronesian Mongoloid and Caucasoid components which are not tabulated in the census data have also been added to the Enewetak gene pool.

There has been a marked increase in movement outside of the atoll of Ujilang with residence elsewhere within the past decade or so. A small group of Enewetak People live on Majuro, and a number of children attend schools on that atoll. Outmarriages have resulted from this change in residence. This trend will also probably continue. However the majority of the people live permanently on Ujilang Atoll today. It is highly probable that they will follow the pattern of remaining together after return to Enewetak.

Those who do not have permanent jobs on Majuro will probably return with their non-Enewetak spouses and their children which will bring about additional change to the Enewetak gene pool in the years to come.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

Settlement Pattern

Land use rights are possessed by people in more than one piece of land and on different islands throughout the atoll. These rights are owned and held by kin groups. The land parcels are worked by the members of the lineage which holds these rights which are inherited at birth primarily. The traditional pattern of habitation is for households (family groups) to live on their land, not in a village cluster. That is, to live in a scattered pattern. The community buildings, church, school, dispensary, warehouse, and the like are however normally centralized for convenience and access to all.

This pattern is obviously desirable from the point of view of environmental sanitation and public health. It is the pattern followed on Ujilang today and will probably be perpetuated on Enewetak.

The typical Marshallese land holding, or wāto, consists of a strip of land stretching across the island from lagoon to ocean, and varying in size from about one to five or more acres in extent. The resources of all of the ecological zones of the island are thus available to each corporate land holding group, the lineage, as well as ready access to both lagoon and ocean beach. This method of equitable distribution of natural resources is analogous to that involved in strip farming in medieval Europe.

A similar allocation of resources prevailed in aboriginal Hawaii, and exists on other Micronesian atolls today.

Infrequently, the land parcel is divided into two or more portions with transverse boundary lines. This usually occurs when the island is a very wide one. The wāto boundaries are marked by lily plants (Crinum asiaticum), red leafed shrubs (Scaevola taccada), or frequently by slashes on the trunks of coconut trees. Large coconuts on the ocean side are also used to fix

the village sites would be as indicated, all of the islands (and reefs) of the atoll would be used and exploited after the people have returned to Enewetak.

They emphasized the fact that the decision of settlement pattern had been reached by the community on Ujilang following a series of lengthy meetings.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

pleasant island with good facilities, will become a permanent settlement.

If the amount of radioactivity on Enjebi should prevent habitation at this time, and for a significant period of time in the future, the establishment of a settlement there of course will not be possible. The Enjebi People may decide to live on Enewetak Island, this is most probable, because of the excellent facilities there, or on another island in the northern sector of the atoll within their traditional sphere. It should be noted that this sector has suffered the most damage from the nuclear weapons testing program.

It should be noted that the Enewetak Atoll People have lived together in one settlement on one island on Ujilang Atoll as a matter of expediency. for over a quarter of a century. A boundary was set through the middle of the main island with half of the island and half of the satellite islands allocated to each group. (See Map Number 4). The community buildings: church, school, dispensary, meeting (council) house, and warehouses are located on the common area near the dividing line. This arrangement has apparently worked out very well.

The definitive answer to the question of settlement pattern upon return to Enewetak, if any obstacles to the present planning occur, must of course come from the people themselves.

#### Pattern of Exploitation of the Natural Resources Economic Potential

The coconut trees and other food bearing trees and plants have been almost completely destroyed on Enewetak Atoll. Most of the islands have become overgrown with vegetation, and are littered with debris which must be removed before replanting can begin. This will be a formidable task which will extend over a long period of time. The Enewetak leaders have expressed their desire to be involved in this work, and indeed they should be. This will provide a cash

DOE ARCHIVES

trained for agricultural purposes as a result of the use of  
weapons.

The smaller islands and islets of the atoll which were not used for agricultural purposes to any significant extent will continue to provide seabirds and turtles and their eggs. These are important in the diet.

The surrounding reefs of the lagoon teem with fish and other marine fauna as well. This is an extremely important factor in the local economy and the well being of the Enewetak People. It will be crucial in the successful relocation of the former inhabitants of the atoll. The abundance and variety of the marine fauna on Enewetak is invariably central to any discussion of that atoll by its former inhabitants. The rich natural resources of Enewetak are always compared with the unfavorable situation on Ujijang.

#### Pattern of Exploitation

The traditional pattern of habitation and exploitation of the natural resources is to live on a main (large) island in the atoll, or as in the case of the main islands in the case, or on small islands. The people

**DOE ARCHIVES**

main settlement is sometimes unfeasible due to unfavorable weather.

are most Marshallese. There will be a great deal of travel between all of the islands of Enewetak Atoll throughout the year and every year.

The Enewetak People are highly oriented toward the sea and lagoon and like to travel. This orientation and pattern will undoubtedly continue after the return to Enewetak. I believe that curiosity stimulated by a more than quarter of a century absence on the part of the older generation and of complete ignorance of the atoll, except through hearsay, on the part of those who remained on the islands of the atoll, and children at birth, will result in a great deal of travel in the initial period of resettlement.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

Rice, flour, sugar, coffee, tea, canned meats, canned milk and other items are staples in the diet of the Enewetak People and have been for many years. They cannot be considered to be luxuries. Rice is eaten in large quantities often three times a day.

It is likely that the abundance of fish and shellfish on Enewetak will

mean a reduction in the purchase of canned meats, and the availability of pork and domestic fowl locally would also probably affect canned meat purchases.

The use of wildfowl and turtles will also probably mean a decrease in canned meat purchases. It should be noted that canned meats and fish are quite expensive in the Marshalls. These, and other consumer goods must be imported over vast distances. This is reflected in the cost to the consumer on the atolls, especially the outer atolls.

There will probably be a marked increase in the amount of marine products eaten because more will be available. This is of course because of the much larger size of the lagoon and greater amount of produce imported as compared to Ujilang. The produce from the land should also be increased eventually, commensurate with the much large land area of Enewetak Atoll.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

Various kinds of plants are used in the preparation of medicines. These are used both internally and externally. The Marshallese pharmacopoeia includes the ubiquitous Tournefortia, Messerschmidia, argentina, Scaevola frutescens, the leaves and shoots of coconuts, pandanus, bamboo, and many other plants.

Plant materials of all kinds are used for handicrafts, construction of boats, shelters, implements, and the like. They are obviously important in the economy and the culture.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

~~Mica and Islands on the eastern (windward) side of the atoll.~~  
the leeward side, toward the south and west of the atoll was relatively free of fish poisoning. Poisonous fish (Iik karek) are said to live in both the

(Identification (English names) are from Report of a Survey of the Fish Poisoning Problem in the Marshall Islands, US DPHEW PHS, Jan. 1959, Mimeo.)

The heads of fish are considered to be delicacies and the internal organs (heart, liver, and brain) are eaten. The intestines of fish are not eaten but the intestines of turtles are consumed, after cleaning and washing and either boiling or baking.

All kinds of shellfish are eaten and everything but the "black part" of clams is consumed. The best area for clams and other shellfish is said to have been in the area destroyed by the nuclear tests, in the northwestern sector of Eniwetok Atoll where the islands of Eluklab and Dreldrelbwij formerly existed. Informants say "It is gone now, it is destroyed and one half of our food supply is gone."

**DOE ARCHIVES**

The monitor lizards (Varanus indicus) which were imported by the Japanese to curb rodents were never eaten by the local people or by other Marshallese.

Some of these reptiles have been reported on Japtan Island within recent years. The people dislike them and are arraid of them.

The Enewetak People eat the coconut crab (Birgus latro) which is considered a delicacy. Other species of crabs are used for fish bait only.

All species of birds are eaten by the people. <sup>BRANDS, H. G. AND 1900 14</sup> Some species of birds are not eaten however.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

Some of the Enewetak People eat dogs. They also learned this from Trukese and Ponapeans while at school on Ponape. The younger people mostly eat dogs. Other Marshallese do not eat these animals.

The intestines of pigs are eaten by the Enewetak People. They are cleaned and washed and either boiled or baked. This was learned from people from Truk and Ponape who had learned to eat pig intestines from Filipinos living on their islands. The Enewetak People also learned to eat the heads of pigs. Previously they had discarded the heads with the intestines. This is true for other Marshallese as well. <sup>The</sup> internal organs: brain, liver, <sup>kidneys</sup> and heart are eaten by the Enewetak People and the rest of the Marshallese.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

done on Bikini. This is the most important and arduous part of the agricultural rehabilitation.

All of the food plants mentioned previously will be desired by the people, and others, such as lime trees may be introduced to supplement the diet.

The Enewetak leaders have stated that the Enewetak People wish to become directly involved in the work of Agricultural rehabilitation of their atoll, as of course they must be. It will be to the obvious advantage of the Administration to have these well organized and enthusiastic people do the work rather than to bring in outsiders.

It will be of mutual advantage to have the Enewetak People help to rehabilitate their atoll.

The project can also afford continuing training in improved agricultural methods.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

~~tion, the people would comply with the restrictions which would be necessary~~  
for their safety. This would be a matter of local policing by the community  
itself. A thorough explanation should be made to the entire community in  
language that they can understand so that the reasons for imposing such re-  
strictions would be clearly understood and appreciated by everyone. This  
same procedure should apply to any restrictions against eating certain foods  
produced on Enewetak.

Mr. Tommy McCraw did an excellent job in explaining the radiological  
hazards and prohibitions on Bikini to the Bikini exiles on Killi Island  
in 1968. His advice should be solicited if the situation on Enewetak should  
warrant it.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

LITERATURE CITED

BRYAN, EDWIN, H., Jr.  
1946

Maps of Micronesia. Honolulu, U.S. Commercial  
Company.

FINSCH, O.  
1893

Ethnologische Erfahrungen und Belegstücke aus  
der Südsee. Wien, annalen des K.K. naturhistorischer  
hofmuseums, ed. III, heft. 2,4.

KRAMER, A.F. and HANS NEVERMANN  
1938

Ralik-Ratak (Ergebnisse der Südsee Expedition  
1908-1910, II B, (Band II). Hamburg, Friedrichsen,  
De Gruyter Co.

TOBIN, JACK A.  
1967

The Resettlement of the Enewetak People: A Study  
of a Displaced Community in the Marshall Islands.  
Doctoral Dissertation, University of California,  
Berkeley, unpublished,  
Ann Arbor (University Microfilms Incorp. 1967).

**DOE ARCHIVES**