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DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
2550 CAMPUS ROAD

February 24, 1967

R

Mr. William Bonnet
Manager
Atomic Energy Commission
531 Ohohia
P. O. Box 580
Honolulu, Hawaii

Att: Mr. Neil Rasmussen

Dear Mr. Bonnet:

Enclosed are some articles and a bibliography of things written about the Bikini Marshallese as I have studied their adjustment to other environments since resettlement from Bikini in 1946. I have spoken to Mr. Rasmussen recently on the phone in regard to the proposed resurvey of Bikini by the University of Washington group headed by Mr. Held, and promised to send along what I have on hand relative to this group.

I am engaged this spring in final revision of a 525-page manuscript on the Resettlement of the Bikini Marshallese, which covers their history from pre-evacuation days in 1946 through their residences on Rongerik and Kwajalein to their present location on Kili. This first study goes only to 1950, which is approximately the time the Navy Department gave over administration of the Trust Territory (and the Bikini Marshallese) to the Department of the Interior. It is based on brief visits with the group at Rongerik in early 1948 when I made a survey of their situation at the request of the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory; at Kwajalein a few months before they departed for Kili, in 1948; and in late 1949 after they had made a brief adjustment to the new island. This study contains as complete a review of their pre-evacuation status on Bikini as is possible to reconstruct, since very few records were kept by the Navy of the situation then.

I spent the entire summer of 1957 and again 1963 with the group on Kili, and a graduate student from University of Oregon (Robert Kiste, now at University of Minnesota) stayed on after I left in 1963 for four more months. This material which includes the administration's attempt at a Kili Development program in 1953-55, will be the subject of a second book, to be started next fall.

During a recent visit to Majuro (February 6-17, 1967) I discussed the possibility of a return to Bikini for the community with District Administrator Dwight Heine, since I had heard that a resurvey had been requested by the High Commissioner. Mr. Heine indicated that some plans were being laid in that direction, and that he hoped I might be of use to the administration at such time as a decision was pending.

REPOSITORY DOE/PASO
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BOX No. 1229; "ERDA #4"
FOLDER BIKINI - A STUDY OF THE BIKINI PEOPLE

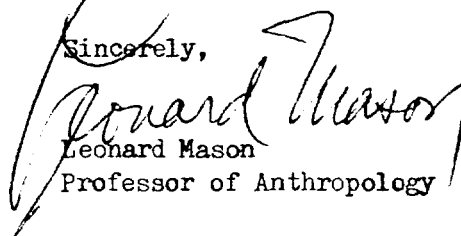
Mr. Rasmussen informs me that, on my recommendation, Mr. Jack Tobin has been persuaded to join the proposed resurvey next month with Dr. Held. I think the study group is extremely fortunate in securing his services since he worked closely with these people during his service in the Marshalls as District Anthropologist in the 1950's, and made a special study during this time of the group at Kili when resettlement was for a time being considered then. The decision then was that no other islands were available or suitable for resettlement, and the community has remained on Kili. The essential problem with Kili is that it has no lagoon, and during the winter months is usually impossible to service from the sea; otherwise it has many advantages in agriculture and copra production which Bikini does not or never did enjoy.

As you will see from reading some of the enclosed articles, a ticklish problem in the past has been the relation of the ex-Bikini people to the paramount chief Lejolang Kabua. At present this relation has dwindled to zero. A return to Bikini, however, will renew this problem since Lejolang has never relinquished his rights in that atoll. I mention this only to point out that a resurvey of Bikini itself, in terms of its potential occupancy again by man, is but part of the whole problem of resettlement. Fortunately, Mr. Tobin is very well informed on this situation, and for this reason also I am happy to see his inclusion on the University of Washington team.

At such time as Dr. Held and his party come through Honolulu I would be available at any time to discuss the matter with them. I will be working this semester mainly at home, on my research, and can be reached more easily at 34-178 (if no one answers that number, try 944-8415, my office number and the secretary will take a message).

It has occurred to me that Dr. Held and his group might find my manuscript very useful, and although still not published it should be obtainable in photocopy from University Microfilms at Ann Arbor, or directly from Yale University, where I submitted the manuscript in its original form as my Ph. D. dissertation in 1955. I have given permission for it to be copied before, and I assume that permission is still valid in those places. The changes I am making are relatively slight and result from new and more information received from the people in my 1957 and 1963 field trips concerning their pre-1950 experience. Their memories by now have dimmed and become distorted, and I fear that on some topics the only information available at all will be from my investigation of the 1946-50 period during those years in the field.

Sincerely,


Leonard Mason
Professor of Anthropology