

September 23, 1958

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Division of Biology and
Medicine
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission
Washington 25, D. C.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Dear Al:

Following a telephone conversation with you this morning, Dr. Donaldson has asked me to send you information concerning the diet of the Rongelapese.

Enclosed are copies of notes which have bearing on the diet of the Rongelapese. Information on the medicinal uses of some plants has also been included. It must be remembered that many factors affecting reliability are involved in obtaining such information. Therefore, it is to be expected that there will be discrepancies and even contradictions between information obtained at different times or even at the same time from different informants. You will remember that this and other problems in evaluating the diet of the Rongelapese were discussed at a meeting which you attended on 10 July at the Division of Biology and Medicine.

In an attempt to obtain some help with this matter, conversations were held with Mr. William White, Asst. DISTAD, M.I., on 5 September. He was not able to give us any specific information concerning the diet but expressed the opinion that the diet of the Rongelapese is not comparable to that of other people in the Marshalls, largely because of the imported foods, primarily rice and "C-ration", which they have been receiving.

Mr. White informed us that the Trust territory is assigning Mr. Neal Morriss as Resident Agriculturalist at Rongelap starting in October or November. Mr. Morriss will be at Rongelap during the next survey in March and his help in this and other matters should be valuable, since he will have had the time to establish the necessary rapport with the Rongelapese.

While at Rongelap further checking on the source of locally grown foods leaves no doubt that a considerable proportion of the food eaten at Rongelap Island is collected from Eniaetok Island. This is particularly true of Pandanus which is now at the peak season. Probably on the order of one-third of the Pandanus consumed at Rongelap Island has been harvested at Eniaetok.

The papaya trees are now in fruit and although none are ripe, an occasional small green fruit (2" to 3" long) is cut up and added to the rice.

The breadfruit trees are approaching the peak of their season.

The idea of collecting daily rations at Rongelap had to be approached with caution. In the first conversations with the Rongelapese concerning the obtaining of such rations it became obvious that through misunderstanding we would ultimately receive merely a collection of miscellaneous food items rather than actual daily rations of prepared food. The net result was that we obtained from each of fourteen adults, one twenty-four hour ration of food stuffs grown or caught at Rongelap. We are reasonably confident that these rations are a true representation. Parenthetically, rats chewed into the shipping containers and until the samples arrive at Seattle, we cannot be sure there will be more than nine rations available for analysis. The individual components were weighed and the total ration pooled dried in Polyethylene.

We hope that the idea of what is needed has been established with the Rongelapese and that this represents the necessary beginning to more extensive collections of this kind.

The difficulties Dr. Dunning met in finding adequate information on diets for his 1957 summary are certainly easily appreciated when one has been with the natives and has talked to people who have spent years working with the natives.

Sincerely yours,

Edward W. Held
Research Assistant Professor

WEH:mac

cc: Dr. Gordon Dunning
Dr. Robert A. Conrad

Local Medicines - Information obtained from Jabwe (local doctor) a midwife, Samson and one other man who works in the hospital but whose name was not written into notes.

Scaevola (Konnot)

Leaves and stems used.

Juice from stem squeezed into eye - sometimes stops pain in eye.

Leaves crushed in hollow stone then wrapped in cheesecloth, dipped in water and squeezed out. Mother drinks one cup 3 x daily for 2-3 weeks after delivery.

Guettarda (Wit)

For toothache, pack the cavity with the flower. Sometimes works better than APC, sometimes doesn't work.

Dodder (Kanon)

For headache. Prepared as Scaevola leaves. Small cup full 3 x a day for one week. Sometimes better than aspirin.

Triamfetta (ATAT)

For coughing and griping pains in abdomen. Prepared same as Scaevola leaves, 3 x a day for 1 - 2 weeks. Big cupful for adults, small cupful for children.

Messerschmidia (Kiron)

For diarrhea and deep wounds. For diarrhea-prepared same as Scaevola leaves. For deep wounds: 10 or 12 leaves crushed, juice squeezed out into one cup water, boiled and painted on wound while hot. Also used for stomach ache. Generally used in place of combination of aspirin and sulf a-thiazole.

Aliophylus (Kitok)

For general "body pain".

Prepared as Scaevola leaves. Same effect as Thiamin chloride.

Components of Individual Daily Rations Exclusive of Imported Foods
such as Rice and 'C-Ration'* (weights in grams)

No.	Name	Meat from mature coconut	Meat from drinking nut	Coconut milk, green nuts	Edible portion of fresh Pandanus	Bread- fruit	Dried Pandanus paste	Other	
1.		62	31	98	--	222	40	--	
2.		202	-	68 ^(ripe) _(nut)	--	--	44	--	
3.		45	--	--	127	--	--	--	
4.		95	--	--	30	--	33	--	
5.		--	--	--	--	--	84	--	
6.		38	--	--	101	395	--	--	
7.		166	117	108	79	--	50	19(1)	7(2)
8.		-	78	102	85	--	--	54(3)	103(4)
9.		68	56	158	60	--	--	--	--
10.		--	-	--	159	44	--	--	7(2)
11.		34	51	26	--	58	-	39(3)	--
12.		54	105	129	61	74	53	31(1)	22(6) 55(7)
13.		16			41	71	14	17(5)	
14.		150	28	238	43	--	-	--	--

brought in daily rations of local products from 14 people. He explained that in some cases little was given (especially Aine) because C-ration and rice were the principal foods eaten.
(1) Tacca Powder (2) Fish, Cooked (3) Sprouted Coconut (4) Rice-Pandanus paste (5) Tacca, Cooked
(6) Squash (7) Green Papaya

DOX ARCHIVES

PRIVACY ACT MATERIAL REMOVED

List of foods eaten according to :

Rice, C-ration, Fish (muscle only), Coconut, Pandanus,
Breadfruit, Arrowroot, Tridacna, Squash, Langusta, Chicken, Pig,
Birds, Fish, Crabs etc., usually boiled - boiling water discarded.

PRIVACY ACT MATERIAL REMOVED

DOE ARCHIVES 25

Information from . . . who spent an entire evening going to different families to get his information.

Coconut (Ni)

- A. We drink the juice. B. Eat the copra. C. Eat the meat inside the small plant. (this refers to the spongy material in the sprouted coconut). (1) Eat without cooking. (2) Boil it and eat it.

Breadfruit (Ma)

- (1) Cook it on the fire. (2) Take the skin off and boil it. (3) How to make cheese: Take the skin off and put in salt water for 3 days, and take it out and bury. (note: wrapped in breadfruit leaves). After one week, take it out and cook it (bake or boil) and eat, but it can stay under the soil for 2 years or more.

Pandanus (Bob or Bop)

- (A) Eat the fruit without cooking it. (B) Cook it and eat it. (1) Boil (2) Bake (3) There a kind of food we call it 'Jenkun', very much like 'catsup'. Bake the fruit and get the meat out and dry it. It can stay more than 3 years.

Arrowroot or Tacca (Makinok or Mokmok)

First we clean up the roots with salt water (sea water), and squeeze it into a bucket full of salt (sea water) and wait for about 3 hours. After 3 hours the root begins to freeze (coagulation), then pour off the water and get the meat and dry it.

How to cook: (A) Bake, (B) Boil it. Can't eat it raw.

Fish

Bake it, boil it, salt it and dry it. We cook bird, chicken, clam, pig and lobster in the same way.

Papaya (Kunipu)

For stomach ache - same effect as 'Andejohl'.

Fruit (meat only) boiled, entire concoction dried and powdered.

Dose 1-2 grams.

This by no means exhausts the list of plants and preparations used, but there was no time to obtain more of this sort of information.

and the others also insisted that when sterile water is not available the milk from drinking coconuts (green ones) can be used for I. V. infusions in cases of severe loss of blood, with excellent results. They say they learned this during Japanese times and used it on several occasions during the war.