SCHOOLING IN MICRONESIA DURING JAPANESE MANDATE RULE

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Introduction

The volcanic islands and idyllic atolls of the far western Pacific were populated as long ago as 3000 BC by peoples coming out of island Southeast Asia. Thus, when Magellan planted the Spanish flag on Guam in 1521, Micronesian cultures were rich, vibrant and thriving despite their isolation. Chamorro resistance to Spanish control in the Mariana Islands, though heroic, was fruitless for in the three decades from 1668 to 1700 war and imported diseases reduced the island population from an estimated 50,000 to a mere 4000.1 With complete pacification, school and farm activities were an integral part of Catholic mission work within two centuries of Magellan's arrival.

During their brief 15-year administrative tenure (1899-1914), German missionaries expanded formal schooling in Micronesia by supplementing religious training with the "Three Rs" and domestic science for girls. By 1913, the German schools there enrolled 321 boys and 152 girls. Palau had five schools with 213 boys and 152 girls. In the Eastern Carolines and Marshall Islands, German authorities allowed the Protestant Boston Mission and Catholics to continue their church schools.

With the beginning of the Great War in Europe, Japan seized the Micronesian islands late in 1914 without resistance from either Germany or the native inhabitants. Legal authority over the islands was conferred upon the Emperor of Japan by the Versailles Peace Conference Accords of 1920. As a Class "C" mandate,² Micronesia could be administered under Japanese law as an integral part of her territory but subject to the requirements of the League of Nations Mandate Agreement. From 1922 to the eve of the Second World War, Japan launched economic and social programs which far exceeded efforts of the earlier German and Spanish colonial administrations. The purpose of this article is to present a brief historical sketch of the

development of schooling in Micronesia during Japanese mandate rule.

Early Efforts and Policies

Soon after Japanese naval personnel displaced German officials in late 1914, a rudimentary program of secular schooling was introduced in place of the German and mission systems. This first effort to educate the young islander was carried out by the only people then available—naval officers and officials of the Nanyo Boeki Company.³ The modest curriculum consisted of Japanese language, singing and arithmetic.

In December 1915, military-commercial efforts were replaced by the work of six elementary schools, shogakko, one in each of the administrative stations—Jaluit, Ponape, Truk, Saipan, Yap and Palau. The curriculum was enlarged to include ethics and a skill or handicraft, such as weaving and carving, which would be of use to the island student in his daily life. The staff of these schools consisted of teachers who had earned official qualifications for teaching primary school in Japan.

In July 1918, the military administration was replaced by a civil administration which was, however, subject to the final authority of the resident naval commander. In a year's time, the new civil administration, more sensitive to cultural differences, drew a sharp line regarding schooling. On the one hand there was established an elementary school system for natives. On the other hand, with increasing numbers of Japanese children coming into the islands, facilities were established exclusively for them. Their program, for all intents and purposes, was identical to that defined by the Japanese Ministry of Education for homeland schools. Thus, as early as 1919, the dual policies of Japanese government finance and control of schools, and segregation of pupils had been put in place.

The Mandate Agreement between Japan and the League of Nations contained no specific statement concerning educational provision. The closest statement to that effect was contained in Article Two of the agreement.

The Mandatory shall promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being and the social progress of the inhabitants of the territory subject to the present mandate.5

In accord with this responsibility and how it related to native schooling, Japan reported to the first meeting of the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission in 1921 that school curriculum was set with two important considerations in mind: 1 - the circumstances of a particular locality; 2 - the intelligence of the native. with special emphasis being placed on practical education-agriculture, colonization and matters affecting the daily life of the native.

Organization and Re-Definition

In 1922, full civilian authority was instituted in Micronesia with the establishment of the South Seas Bureau and with this came a reorganization of the school system and new educational regulations that reaffirmed the principles of government control and pupil segregation. The elementary schools for the growing number of Japanese students consisted of a lower primary school program of six years called jinjo shogakko, and a higher primary school program of two years termed koto shogakko. Practically all Japanese children in Micronesia received eight years of primary school instruction-as they would have in the homeland. In contrast, the public schools, kogakko, for island children consisted of a basic three-year program and a supplementary two-year course which only the more able students attended. On the elementary level then, Japanese children were offered eight years of instruction, whereas island children had a total of five-three years basic for most children and two years supplementary for a small and select portion of that group.

To accompany this formal definition of existing educational principles and practices of 1922, the Japanese government in its 2nd annual report to the League of Nations clearly spelled out the objectives it had for native schooling.

The object of natives' schools is to enable the native children to enjoy the benevolence of his Majesty, the Emperor of Japan, to teach the Japanese language, to give moral training necessary to life.6

One could interpret this early statement of purpose as a policy of Japanization of the native through the school. When two cultures contact in a political arrangement where one culture is subordinate and the other is dominant, this dominance soon comes to pervade all spheres of the relationship—economic, social and psychological. Government-announced goals, such as the enjoyment of the Emperor's benevolence, Japanese language instruction and Japanese moral training imply a degree of cultural superiority which has characterized all cultures at all times.7 It seems to be a universal human tendency to project one's values on people of another culture. The goals of schools are designed to serve the interests of the culture group that establishes them. "American schools are intended to Americanize; Japanese schools must Japanize. It is clearly in the best interests of the society not to allow large pockets of its people to remain unacculturated, and the school is regarded as one of the most powerful means of effecting the socialization of 'aliens.'"8 Akin to Americanization, this is the meaning of 'Japanize" and "Japanization" used in this article.

The regulations which established pupil segregation, like the school policies which set up the English Standard school in Hawaii in the 1920s, were based on the concept of language use. As the Japanese conceived it: "The South Seas Bureau Primary Schools are institutions wherein common education is given to children habitually

using the Japanese language."9

And, for the islander: "The South Seas Bureau Primary Schools are institutions wherein education is given to children not habitually using the

Japanese language."10

Officially, the rationale for separate schools was based on language use; however, language and culture are so intimately related that one could argue that the rationale for segregation was cultural as well as linguistic. Regarding the primary school statement, this implicit additional meaning may have been the reason for the inclusion of the modifier "common"-an education common to the people of Japanese culture and tradition—that is missing in the statement defining public schools.

Moral Education and Japanization

While the above statements defined the two distinct kinds of schools, the regulations of the early 1930s were more specific than the 1922 statement concerning the aims of each. For the Japanese: "The fundamental object of the Primary School is the inculcation of moral education and

the fundamentals of national education upon children as well as the bestowal on them of the common knowledge and capabilities essential to their livelihood, attention being simultaneously paid to their physical development."¹¹

And, for the native: "The fundamental object of education in a Public School shall be the bestowal on children of moral education as well as of such knowledge and capabilities as are indispensable to the advancement and improvement of their lives, attention being simultaneously paid to their

physical development."12

The fundamental purposes agreed on the importance of moral education—as it turned out, Japanese moral education of total respect for the Emperor and total obedience to him and to all superiors. Note, however, that primary schooling for the Japanese child was to inculcate the fundamentals of national education, an objective not included for the native. National education referred to the four elements of the national curriculum for all Japanese primary schools both overseas and in the homeland—citizenship, science, physical training, and arts—which received major attention. Another striking difference in the two statements is that the primary school was to bestow on the Japanese child knowledge and skills essential for his livelihood—possibly an economic purpose consonant with the growing economic development and commercialism then taking place in the islands. On the other hand, the knowledge and capabilities the native student was to learn were to advance and improve his life. This possibly could mean economic advancement and material improvement, but in practice it tended to mean, according to David Ramarui who attended school during the Japanese administration, a definite value orientation.

The basic aim of the Japanese school system was the indoctrination of the natives with Japanese ideas and was characterized by the emphasis on Japanese language and ethics. It was designed to make Micronesians understand the Japanese and obey their orders.¹³

This corresponds with Passin's claim regarding pre-war Japanese schools that "except for the totalitarian states, no modern nation has used the schools so systematically for purposes of political indoctrination as Japan." It also corresponds to the 1922 statement of objectives and their elaboration contained in later regulations quoted above. From these official statements, it seems that the main goal of school was to acculturate the native to the general outlines of Japanese culture.

In this regard regulations for both primary and public schools required the following:

On Kigensetsu (the anniversary of the founding of Japan), on the Imperial Birthday, Emperor Meiji Day and on January 1 the staff and pupils of a school shall assemble at the school and conduct ceremonies according to the following order:

 Singing in chorus of the Japanese national anthem by the staff and pupils.

Lecture by the Principal of the school concerning that particular holiday.

 Singing in chorus by the staff and pupils of songs appropriate to the occasion.¹⁵

Thus, Japanese government schools for island children were introducing cultural changes—new behavioral regularities of obedience and respect for Japanese authority and basic fluency in oral Japanese. It was acculturation but of a conditional sort, only to the extent the islanders would not be impediments to, but useful in Japan's quest to fully exploit the mandated islands for the benefit of the immigrants and the mother country. Historically, this has been the goal of all colonial powers and Japan's colonial efforts in Micronesia were to no great extent atypical.

Growth, Curriculum and Incentives

The growth pattern of the schools followed that of the general population. In 1922 there were three primary schools for Japanese children—one each in Saipan, Palau and Truk—four teachers and 138 students. On the other hand, there were 17 public schools—two in Saipan, two in Yap, five in Palau, two in Truk, four in Ponage, two in Jaluit-for native children, 36 Japanese teachers, 18 native assistant teachers and 2,539 students, boys outnumbering girls by about 3 to 1. The percentage of school-age native children in school varied. A 1927 survey showed Palau with the highest at 86.7 percent and Truk with the lowest at 14.2 percent, with the average for the mandate being 43.6 percent.16 This variation was explained in 1928 by the Japanese representative to the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission as, "... owing to the fact that the islands were distributed over a wide area and that the degree of civilization of the inhabitants was low."17

To keep pace with the expanding immigrant population and children born to immigrants who arrived in the late 1920s, the Japanese primary school system had grown significantly by 1936 from three to 23 schools, from four to 131 teachers, and from 138 students to 8,637. The native public school system had grown also, but by

a much smaller amount—from 17 to 24 schools, from 36 to 60 teachers, from 17 to 24 native assistants, and from 2,539 to 3,079 pupils (2,448 in the regular course and 649 in the supplementary course). 18 In terms of numbers of students and fully qualified teachers, by 1936 the school system for Japanese children was more than twice the size of the system for native children.

The rapid growth rate of the Japanese system corresponded with the expanding Japanese population—more children required more schools. The native system of schooling showed a smaller growth trend which paralleled the general demographic situation. Micronesia was fast becoming a Japanese land. League of Nations' census figures for 1936 indicate a population of 50,524 islanders and 56,496 Japanese. 19 By 1940, the Japanese population numbered 77,000.20

The curriculum of the native public school, although theoretically similar to the Japanese primary school, emphasized Japanese language. In the regular three-year school course, one-half the total school hours were devoted to Japanese language learning. This heavy emphasis on language was questioned by the League of Nations' Permanent Mandates Commission members. They felt it left too little time for other subjects, and neglected the vernacular language and popular traditions.21 The defense of this curriculum decision given by the Japanese representative was that language teaching included not only grammar but reading in the various subject areas as geography, history and science. This claim appears questionable given the fact that the basic public school program was but three years in duration, that there were no textbooks except for language readers, and that students resorted to their native tongue once outside the classroom. Regarding knowledge of written Japanese, Yanaihara reports that "the large majority of the graduates have no chance for further study and soon forget what they have learned—the hira-gana characters when they return to their homes."22 After the Pacific war, Fischer reported from Truk that few native students "could be said to be literate in Japanese to the extent of being able to read a newspaper by the end of the fifth grade. Certainly none could read the regulations promulgated by the South Seas Government Office."23 To this one could reply, "Could fifth-grade Japanese students read both newspaper and regulations?" Probably yes, given language reinforcement at home, the strong tradition of learning characteristic of the lapanese, and a richer and more intense school

instructional program.

Although knowledge of written Chinese characters incorporated into the Japanese language was generally lacking, many Micronesians with three to five years of schooling knew the simpler syllabic characters and had good spoken Japanese. Kodama, in her research on Saipan in 1977, found one Chamorro woman whose spoken Japanese was so good that she was conducting Japanese tourists on trips about the island.24 Kodama also found a half dozen other informants who spoke beautiful Japanese—and this was more than 30 years after formal instruction! During the Japanese occupation of Guam, this group of Saipanese Chamorros served as the language liaison between the Guam Chamorros and the Japanese military authorities.25 In Ponape and Yap where, in 1977, Japanese tourists were rare, Kodama was sought out by older islanders who wanted to converse with the visiting "daughter of Japan."26 Similarly, the older generations of Palauans who had attended the Japanese public schools had a spoken fluency in Japanese. On isolated Kosrae—formerly Kusaie islanders were given three years of schooling and acquired a basic fluency in Japanese.27 Kiste reports that one older Bikinian (living on Kili Island) who had attended Japanese school on Ebon, remembered enough language in 1964 to be able to converse with passing Japanese fishermen.28

These examples provide overwhelming evidence of the ability and effectiveness of the Japanese public school teachers. This achievement is understandable given the essential aim of language teaching as recorded in public school regulations: "... the essential aim shall be to teach ordinary words, characters in daily use and easy written language; to make the pupils fluent in the practical application of what they have been taught; to foster in them the ability to express themselves correctly in the language, especially to enable them to acquire such degree of mastery as will enable them to experience no hindrance in using the language in daily life, special stress being laid on practice; as well as to develop their intellectual and moral capabilities."²⁹

moral capabilities."29

It is clear that these educational objectives were achieved to a surprisingly high degree in the public schools. Perhaps the predominant oral tradition of Micronesian cultures and their eagerness to learn help explain the islander's proficiency in spoken Japanese and lack of mastery of Chinese characters with their cultural nuances.

What, we may ask, were the native schools like? A student during the Japanese administration,



David Ramarui, gives us a first-hand account of the flavor and teaching methods used.

Classes were big, up to more than 80 students in one class in the fourth and fifth grade levels, with one teacher teaching all subjects: Japanese, world history, geography, science, arts, handicrafts, arithmetics, gardening or agriculture and physical education. Vernacular was completely eliminated from the curriculum. Students were punished if they spoke their native tongue. Most subjects were taught by rote-memorizing. Group reading was a common way of teaching reading. Corporal punishment was the usual way of discipline and school children were slapped or hit on the head with the fist or bamboo if they misbehaved.30

Japanese school authorities encouraged and recognized academic achievement through a system of awards. Upon the occasion of the marriage of the Emperor of Japan in 1924, a grant of 2,000 ven matched by a similar amount from the South Seas Bureau government established the Imperial Bounty Foundation for the Encouragement of Study. This foundation gave yearly awards to students with outstanding academic records from both the Japanese and native schools. Awards were also given to students who had distinguished themselves in health and sport. The foundation also made contributions to school libraries and several times a year sent a free magazine, Light of the Sun, to native school leavers. In these various ways, school achievement was encouraged and a link to graduates was maintained, slender as it was.

Limited Secondary Schooling

The Japanese school-age population was a growing one both in age and numbers. As students finished the higher primary course, those belonging to the official class and of high economic status returned

to Japan for secondary and tertiary education. Children of working-class backgrounds could enter the Saipan Business School (for girls) that was established in 1933 and offered a two-year course. or they could attend the Saipan Vocational School which offered a three-year course. The aim of these schools was to prepare successful colonists through the imparting of knowledge and skills necessary for commerce and industry.31

This hierarchical system duplicated that of the homeland. Neither of these schools, or schools in Japan, were open to the native. There were a few exceptions to this as when a student had a Japanese parent or was adopted by a Japanese family. The only schooling available to the native beyond the five-year public school course was that of the Apprentice-Woodworkers Training School in Koror, Palau. This school was a territory-wide two-year school with a highly-competitive entrance examination. Enrollment was small, only some 30 students per year. Instruction was shared between a small staff of technical experts and the academic staff of Koror Public School. All were fullyqualified teachers from Japan.

With the exception of training in woodworking and agriculture for some 50 to 60 young men per year, secondary education for the native was nonexistent in the Japanese-mandated islands. This situation stands in sharp contrast to Tonga, for example, which had a well-developed system of secondary education for native youngsters during pre-war British rule.32 Nauru, also, had secondary schools for both boys and girls in the pre-war years while a mandated territory of Australia. In comparison to the British-administered Gilbert Islands, the Japanese system of education can be seen as superior. The British left education totally to the missions and with limited financial support the schools were generally few in number and poor in quality. When measured against Australia's efforts in her New Guinea mandate, Japanese efforts at educating the Micronesian were definitely superior. With less than 5 percent of the school-age youth in school, the amount and quality of education provided to the New Guinean was the worst in any of the four Pacific mandates and possibly the worst in the world at that time.

As the apprentice-woodworker students had already completed five years of public school with excellent records, less time was needed for language instruction and more time could be spent on the theory and practice of woodworking. The curriculum consisted of 36 hours of work per week

divided accordingly:

SUBJECT	HRS/W	K FIRST-YEAR CLASS	HRS/WK	SECOND-YEAR CLASS
Ethics	1	Essential points of ethics	1	Essential points of ethics
Japanese language	5	Reading and writing of Chinese characters in daily use; reading of ordinary sentences; composition	5	Reading and writing of Chinese characters in daily use; reading of ordinary sentences; composition
Arithmetic	4	Integral numbers, decimals and equations (addition and subtraction with abacus)	4	Fractions, percent and proportions, all four operations with abacus
Drawing	2	Simple drawing and instrumental drawing	2	Instrumental drawing and cartography
Gymnastics	1	Drill, gymnastics and sports	1	Drill, gymnastics and sports
Architecture	5		5	
Materials (1) Building (2) Workmanship (2)		Building materials Outline of construction Tools and workmanship		Building materials Outline of construction Workmanship, coloring and design
Practice	18	Practical work	18	Practical work
TOTAL	36		36	

N.B. The Principal may increase the number of hours for practical lessons not exceeding an hour per day.

Source: Annual Report to the League of Nations on the Administration of the South Seas Islands under Japanese Mandate for the Year 1935, pp. 52-53.

Considering the objectives of the woodworkers school, the curriculum was well-designed and the emotional atmosphere right for producing competent and motivated carpenters—some of whom even today practice their trade.³³ Over the years, numerous Palauans were trained at the school and a fair number of them, as David Ramarui, Director of Education for the Trust Territory, and Wilhelm Rengiil, President of the Micronesian Occupational College, are now in leadership positions in education and government affairs.

Given the favorable economic conditions of the time and the growing number of Japanese immigrants pouring into Saipan and Palau in the late 1920s and 1930s, houses and buildings were in great demand. Of the 59 total graduates of the Woodworkers School by 1932, some 32 were employed as carpenters, five as assistant teachers in the public schools, three in the post office or hospital, and one as a post-graduate in the school.34 The Woodworkers School, though open to only a very small minority of islanders, assured its graduates a job and a place in the growing money economy. For those few students, this was a dramatic personal change which won them the prestige and respect of their family and peers. Kenzi Mad, a very young boy prior to the onset of the Pacific war, recalls the great pride his family took in the positions of several of its members in

the Japanese civil service. Dressing up and wearing government whites was an occasion of distinction.³⁵

In addition to training in woodworking and carpentry, graduates of the public school supplementary course could apply for agriculture training at agricultural research stations in Ponape, Saipan and Palau. In Yap and Truk were experimental farms which would train young men in agricultural skills. By 1932, some 120 students had received agricultural training. While this training was neither as long nor as prestigious as carpentry training, it provided a few more opportunities for the young native to acquire the language fluency, work-skill and social behavior needed to operate effectively in the Japanese cultural and economic world.

Conclusion

Japan ruled Micronesia as a League of Nations Mandate from 1920-1936 and after this as a territorial possession. As with the other Pacific mandates—Nauru, Western Samoa and New Guinea—each was ruled as an integral part of its respective administrating power. Japan took full advantage of this authority by implementing ambitious economic and social programs. The system of schooling established for the native offered fewer years of a less-rigorous program

than was the case for the Japanese student. Schooling was designed to socialize relatively large numbers of natives to the general outlines of Japanese language and culture and to produce an obedient citizenry. A small group of the brightest young islanders were more fully-introduced to Japanese cultural mores and patterns as well as marketable skills. It was these youth who became part of the Japanese world as carpenters, assistant teachers, assistant policemen, clerks, and agriculturists-much to the esteem of their family and peers. Also, with the exception of language readers, no special curriculum or instructional materials were developed for the island cultural setting—an indication of both the limitation and uncertainty Japanese officials may have experienced as regards native education. Finally, native youth were not provided the opportunity for higher education or teacher training. As the Japanese colonial government saw the social situation, the native had a definite place in the social hierarchy and it was the function of government schooling to affirm this position.

Footnotes

IJames G. Frazer. The Belief in Immortality, London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1924, p. 269.

²The "C" mandated territories besides Micronesia were Western Samoa, Nauru, former German New Guinea, and Southwest Africa (today known as Namibia). The "C" designation meant that these areas were geographically isolated and regarded as economically and socially undeveloped and therefore unable to "stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world.

3Tadao Yanaihara. Pacific Islands Under Japanese Mandate, Shanghai:

Kelly and Wasch, Ltd., 1939, p. 241.

David Purcell. Japanese Expansion in the South Pacific, 1890-1935, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1967, p. 230.

League of Nations. Mandate for the German Possessions in the Pacific

Lying North of the Equator, Geneva, 1920.

Japan, Second Annual Report on Japan's Mandated Territory, 1921, Appendix No. 8, "School Regulations for the South Seas

Natives," p. 35.

⁷Ethnocentrism was recognized as early as the 5th century BC by the great Greek historian Herodotus who wrote, "If one were to offer to choose out of all the customs in the world such as seemed to them the best, they would examine the whole number, and end by preferring their own; so convinced are they that their own usages surpass those of all others." The Persian Wars, Book III, Chapter 38.

Francis X. Hezel. "In Search of a Home: Colonial Education in Micronesia," in Richard W. Brislin, ed., Culture Learning, Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1977, p. 43.

Plapan, South Seas Bureau, Annual Report to the League of Nations, 1934, p. 15

10lbid., p. 16.

11/bid., p. 46.

12lbid., p. 52.

13 David Ramarui. "Education in Micronesia," Micronesian Reporter 14, No. 1 (First Quarter), p. 10. Mr. Ramarui is the only Micronesian I have found who has written about his experiences during the Japanese administration. There is a great need for oral history work on all phases of the Japanese period in Micronesia before those with memories of the past fade from the scene.

14 Herbert Passin. Society and Education in Japan, New York:

Teachers College Press, 1965, p. 149.

15 Japan, South Seas Bureau, Annual Report to the League of Nations on the Administration of the South Seas Islands under Japanese mandate for the Year 1934, pp. 48 and 59.

16 Yanaihara, op. cit., p. 243.

17 League of Nations. Permanent Mandates Commission Minutes of the Sixteenth Session, 1929, p. 54.

 Yanaihara, op. cit., p. 241.
 League of Nations. The Mandate System, Geneva, 1945, p. 106. 20 Irene Taeuber. The Population of Japan, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958, p. 61.

21 League of Nations. Permanent Mandates Commission Minutes of the Fourteenth Session, 1928, p. 203.

22 Yanaihara, op. cit., p. 246.

²³J.L. Fischer. "The Japanese Schools for the Natives of Truk, Caroline Islands," Human Organizations, 20, 1961, p. 85.

²⁴Michiko Kodama, personal communication, May 19, 1979.

26lbid.

²⁷Naime Salik (Kosraen), personal communication, March 12,

28 Robert Kiste, personal communication, May 17, 1979.

29 Japan, South Seas Bureau, Annual Report to the League of Nations on the Administration of the South Seas Islands under Japanese Mandate for the year 1934, p. 54.

30Ramarui, op. cit., p. 10.

31 Japan, South Seas Bureau. Annual Report to the League of Nations on the Administration of the South Seas Islands under Japanese Mandate for the year 1935, p. 52.

32 Naval Intelligence Division of Great Britain. Pacific Islands,

Vol. 1, p. 480.

33 Mesuban Michael, Elibosang Eungel and Antonio Marbou are three men I know who were trained at the Palau Apprentice-Woodworkers School in the early 1930s. The former two today teach carpentry and construction skills at Palau High School, while Antonio does repair and carpentry work on the school campus.

34 Yanaihara, op. cit., p. 245.

35Kenzi Mad, personal communication, May 29, 1979.

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