

Editor's Note

TODAY AND AFTER more than four decades of American rule, four new political entities are emerging from the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (USTTPI). The Northern Marianas will become a Commonwealth of the United States. The Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia (composed of the former USTTPI districts of Pohnpei, Kosrae, Truk, and Yap) will enjoy a measure of self-government as states freely associated with the United States, a status first suggested by the Cook Islands' arrangement with New Zealand in 1965. Although there are some unresolved problems, Belau may follow suit.

Japan was ejected from these portions of Micronesia at the end of World War II, yet a strong Japanese presence has continued. Older Islanders have memories of the Japanese period, and some still speak textbook Japanese. Many Micronesians are of part-Japanese descent, including two of the first presidents of the newly emerging states. Today, Japan is exhibiting a renewed influence in the area through commercial activities and tourism.

Professor Peattie's monograph explains much of this history, and it is an atypical volume in this series. As Peattie makes clear in his preface, his concern is not with the Islanders but with the Japanese in the islands. To the surprise of some old Pacific hands, Japanese activities in Micronesia began long before Japan acquired the area with the onset of World War I in 1914. Representatives of Japan had penetrated Micronesia three decades earlier; they helped lay the foundation for Japan's eventual rule of the islands as a mandated territory under the auspices of the League of Nations.

Japan's influence was pervasive and well orchestrated; the Japanese had clear objectives in mind. Micronesians were to be absorbed into the Japanese empire, and eventually Japanese and other Asians would come to outnumber Islanders in their own homeland by a ratio of two to one.

While his focus is upon the Japanese, Peattie helps us to understand much of Micronesia's history and why things are the way they are today.

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