

# **SCHOOLS IN MICRONESIA PRIOR TO AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION**

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## **Introduction**

If there is any ubiquitous Western cultural legacy to be found in colonial countries around the world, it is the school. Micronesia is no exception: schools were introduced into its islands over three centuries ago with the advent of the first Europeans. The earliest of these schools were mission-run, both Catholic and Protestant, although this fact is sometimes overlooked by historians of education. Not until the present century, in actuality only in the past sixty years, did public education develop to any appreciable degree. Whether private or public, the education systems established in island Micronesia served the purposes of their foreign founders and taught alien ways and beliefs. Just as the missionaries used education to impart a new religious code, the colonial governments used it to institute political control by transmitting their language and values to Micronesians.

Yet, for all the colonial stigma that the school bears, it has become a permanent and indispensable part of the island cultures today. The institution has taken as deep root in Micronesian soil as the churches that first carried it there and the Western legal system that sustained it in later years. To be sure, it has been transformed in recent years as Micronesians have assumed virtual self-government and increasing authority over their own policies, but it remains a recognizable legacy of colonial days.

This article is an attempt to chronicle the various shapes and forms that schools in Micronesia took, the purposes that they served, and the transformations they underwent from the earliest years of Spanish colonization through Japanese rule to the eve of the American administration in the Trust Territory. Finally, it will highlight a few common themes related to the curriculum and mechanics of the school, its rationale at different periods in history, and its impact upon students and society.

### **Early Spanish schools in the Marianas**

The first school in Micronesia--for that matter, in all of Oceania--was founded less than a year after the arrival of the first Jesuit missionaries in

with a gift of ten thousand pesos and supported by a yearly subsidy of three thousand pesos from the Spanish crown, opened its doors to Chamorro children. The school, which the Jesuits saw as the “wellspring of their mission,” had humble origins: the missionaries enticed small boys to school with candy and holy cards and taught them little more than simple prayers.<sup>1</sup> The original school building was destroyed in a typhoon two years later, but it was rebuilt in 1674 within the fortified walls of the presidio in Agana and another school, Escuela de la Niñas, was added for girls.<sup>2</sup>

Although small schools for the very young soon sprang up near the Jesuit residence in every major town on Guam, the backbone of the educational system remained the colegio and, to a lesser degree, the girls school in Agana. In the 1720s the colegio had fifty boarding students and an equal number of day students, most of them full-blooded Chamorros rather than Mestizos. The students, who were mostly between seven and ten years old, wore uniforms of white linen pants and blue vests with a sash around the waist, attended mass and rosary each day, and played a conspicuous part in religious ceremonies in the community. The boys spent two hours a day studying liturgical responses and chants, religious doctrine, and penmanship--much of this in Spanish. For the rest of the day they took care of the farm animals and the gardens and learned a variety of skills such as bookbinding, tailoring, and embroidery. But the heart of the curriculum, at least for those who had the requisite talent, was music; a select choral group spent a good part of the day practising the masses sung on Sundays and holydays, while others played the violin, flute, or harp in accompaniment.<sup>3</sup>

The Jesuit educational efforts in the Marianas incorporated three different approaches. The Colegio de San Juan de letrán and the Escuela de las Niñas were first-rank institutions that offered boys and girls the opportunity to learn the essentials of their faith and its liturgical celebration in music, while acquiring some useful trade skills. There were also the village parish schools in which young boys and girls were taught a little religion and some Spanish, but with none of the frills that the two schools in Agana offered. Finally, for the instruction of adults there were the large ranches that the Jesuits ran, not only to furnish their own food but to offer villagers the opportunity to learn blacksmithing, agricultural methods, animal husbandry, and other things that might improve their standard of living.<sup>4</sup>

After the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Marianas in 1769, the Augustinian Recoletos who assumed pastoral responsibility for the mission did not show the same interest in the schools that their predecessors had.

The colegio was moved to a new site near the main rectory in Agana where it became yet another administrative chore for a priest who was already the pastor of Agana and the vicar of the Marianas mission. The colegio then began a slow demise through the early nineteenth century as the enrollment dropped to thirty students and the subsidy was cut to one thousand pesos a year.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the government established its first two free schools to boost the sagging educational program in the colony. The curriculum of these schools was reading, writing, and arithmetic, together with some music instruction.<sup>6</sup> More free schools were opened as time went on, and by 1833 Governor Villalobos tried to close down the colegio altogether on the grounds that its subsidy could be put to better use as salaries for teachers in the village free schools. Furthermore, the governor argued, students were being spoiled by spending five or six years at a school where they were eating better than they would at home. The students' learning was breeding arrogance, he maintained, for many of its alumni had to be punished for causing trouble in the community. In brief, the governor was in favor of government-financed local schools, the forerunners of our public schools, that could offer education to greater numbers of young people, particularly in outlying areas.<sup>7</sup>

These village free schools were generally ramshackle, one-room buildings constructed of bamboo and roofed with thatch, a great contrast with the spacious stone and masonry halls of the colegio and the girls school. Teachers were usually Spanish-speaking locals recruited wherever they could be found and paid from the special government fund for lepers (evidently the only fund available). A Filipino prisoner who had been convicted of murder and exiled to the Marianas taught Carolinian children for thirteen years in one such school on Saipan.<sup>8</sup> When Governor Pablo Perez toured these schools on a visit to the northern islands, he found the students attentive and eager to learn, but "like parrots that talk without understanding what they say."<sup>9</sup> The governor judged that the school, for all its limitations, was truly helping the Carolinians to become civilized—"which means," one commentator wryly noted, "that they were willing to work for Spaniards."<sup>10</sup> By 1886 there were seventeen such schools in the islands.

Meanwhile, from mid-century on, the Colegio de San Juan and its sister school entered upon a period of resurgence. The colegio's original subsidy of three thousand pesos was restored and its enrollment soared to nearly 500, while the Escuela de las Niñas educated about 150 girls. The curricula in both schools had taken a strong academic turn since the previous century: students were still learning sung masses and forming ensembles

of violin and flute, but they were devoting most of their time to the four R's (reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion) and taking such additional courses as Spanish grammar, geography, and "rudiments of good manners."<sup>11</sup> The schools survived as the Marianas' most prestigious institutions of learning until the American takeover of Guam at the end of the century. With a lifespan of more than two centuries, the colegio became the longest-lived educational institution ever founded in Micronesia.

### **Protestant Mission Schools in the Carolines and Marshalls**

The Protestant missionaries introduced the first schools into the Caroline and Marshall Islands, just as the Catholic missionaries had in the Marianas. Within a few months of the founding of the American Board missions on Ponape and Kosrae in late 1852, the American pastors opened their first day schools. These schools were in fact informal sessions conducted on the veranda of the missionary's home or in a nearby meeting house whenever a group of islanders could be gathered, and they served as a point of contact between the missionaries and the local people. The students were largely adults, often chiefs and other influential persons in the community, and they were instructed in basic English, geography, singing, or whatever else was thought to hold any interest for them.<sup>12</sup>

After a while, groups of more or less constant pupils were formed, and class was held on a regular and more formal basis. Albert Sturges, one of the missionaries on Ponape, offered daily classes that were attended by two dozen people, including the Nahnken of Kiti. His colleague on Ponape, Luther Gulick, staged a year-end exhibition at which the eleven pupils of his own school, all dressed in clothes that they themselves had made, displayed their skills in reading, writing, spelling, and speaking English as well as in singing English songs.<sup>13</sup> On Kosrae, Benjamin Snow conducted a school for forty-five pupils, most of them young boys and girls, with four hours of instruction daily on reading and writing English. At first the students showed enormous enthusiasm for their studies, and Snow reported that they would leave the class to practise tracing their letters with sticks on the beach.<sup>14</sup> As time went on, however, their enthusiasm waned and the students turned to other pursuits--often enough for the more mature girls this meant visiting the whalers that were lying at anchor. Much the same was true of all the early mission schools; and when the "ardor for learning subsided," as a pastor on Ebon put it, there was nothing to do but close the school for a while.<sup>15</sup> Hence the typical early mission school was alternately opened and closed several times in the course of its first two or three years. The results of these early schools

were far from encouraging: Gulick judged that none of his students was very successful in learning English, and he soon resorted to giving them "some oral knowledge on religious and other topics."<sup>16</sup> In time, the American missionaries learned what Snow was forced to conclude after shutting down his school yet again for five months in 1855: "We shall never do much in English, I fear."<sup>17</sup>

Invariably the mission school changed its form after the first two or three years when the missionary had become conversant in the local language. At this point the school ceased to be merely a vehicle for gaining access to the people and winning some influence over them; it became a tool for helping the islanders to acquire literacy in their own language. Singing, needlework, and other things were taught at times, but the central concern was teaching students how to read and write the vernacular. After all, the Bible, which the missionaries were already beginning to translate into the local languages, could only be read by someone who was literate. Thus the second stage of the Protestant mission school was an attempt to provide the necessary skills so the people could become dedicated readers of the Word of God.<sup>18</sup>

At the mission school in Madolenihmw, Mrs. Gulick ran classes in Pohnapean for her nine or ten students for two hours a day, while her husband translated scripture, wrote primers for the use of the pupils, and attended to his other church duties. In the evenings, Gulick turned out copies of his instructional and devotional materials on a small, ancient handpress that had been donated to the mission.<sup>19</sup> On Ebon, the mission headquarters in the Marshalls, the switchover to instructions in the vernacular resulted in the rapid publication of a mound of materials that included a forty-four page primer. By 1861 ten thousand pages had been printed on the mission press, a handful of people could already read, and one of the missionaries admitted to finding "an aptitude for learning which we little thought existed beneath those dark skins, and in those still darker minds."<sup>20</sup> When a Hawaiian missionary helper, himself a licensed teacher, took over the running of the school on Ebon in 1861, its enrollment doubled and two more schools were opened on other islands within a year. Pupils at the Ebon school thronged around the mission quarters busily writing on their slates long after formal classes were over, and burst into the print shop at the sign of a pressrun to grab the new broadsheets and read them before the ink was dry on the paper.<sup>21</sup>

Nowhere were these schools more successful than in the Marshalls. The Hawaiian and native Marshallese preachers who soon replaced the American missionaries founded schools on each island to which they carried the gospel--seven in all by 1875. Each of these schools had as its prin-

cial object the development of Marshallese literate in their own language, and the number of readers at each location was counted as carefully as church members. By 1866 there were over three hundred students in four separate classes on Ebon alone, some of whom were able to recite the entire gospel of Mark by memory.<sup>22</sup> Within a few years Marshallese themselves were serving as pastors and teachers in most of the islands of the archipelago.

The mission school also became a regular fixture in the Mortlocks and Truk, as Ponapean teachers carried Christianity to these hitherto unevangelized island groups during the 1870s and 1880s. By 1886, when most of the major islands in the Mortlocks and Truk had a pastor in residence, there were thirteen schools and 979 students in the area.<sup>23</sup> With the entire eastern half of Micronesia then introduced to Christianity, the American Board could boast of a network of thirty-seven mission day schools serving 2,500 pupils altogether.<sup>24</sup>

As the need for native teachers and pastors became more evident, the mission education system entered its third and final stage. Emphasis shifted in this stage from the moral and intellectual enlightenment of the congregation at large to "fitting young men for teaching and preaching the Gospel"--that is, training those few who would exercise leadership in the church.<sup>25</sup> The largest of the mission schools, that on Ebon, gradually took on this function in the late 1860s as the need increased for educated Marshallese to serve as missionaries to their own people. The Marshall Islands Training School, as it came to be called, was moved to Kosrae in 1879 because of the greater abundance of land and other resources. The twenty or thirty young men attending the school went through a four-year program very much resembling that of an American high school. The teachers were all American mission personnel, and instruction, at least in these earlier training schools, was largely in English. A similar school was begun on Ponape for promising young men from the eastern Carolines, and another was founded on Truk in 1886 for the central Carolines. Soon the need for similar schools for girls was recognized so that pastors and teachers would have good, educated wives to assist them. Accordingly, girls schools were established on Ponape in 1882, on Kosrae in 1886, and on Truk in 1889. Enrollments averaged about twenty to twenty-five at the girls school and possibly forty to seventy at the training schools.<sup>26</sup> The young adults attending the schools, almost all of whom were boarders, dressed in Western clothes and ate with knives and forks, for they were to set the high standards of personal behavior that their compatriots would seek to emulate. They were to be the exemplars of the new religious and secular ideals for the next generation.

### Schools during Spanish and German Rule

The Catholic Church finally entered the educational scene in the Carolines when Spanish colonial rule was inaugurated there, in 1886 on Yap and a year later on Ponape. Indeed, the new government left all educational work to the Capuchin missionaries who accompanied the first Spanish civil authorities. As the Catholic priests founded their new mission stations, they also opened schools that provided young people with instruction in the Spanish language and religion, and sometimes also with a smattering of agriculture or carpentry as well.<sup>27</sup> Work proceeded slowly due to resistance to the new religious beliefs on Yap and open insurrection on Ponape: in 1890 there were only two Catholic schools with a total of ten students in the Carolines.<sup>28</sup> The following year the Capuchins extended their missionary work to Palau where they were encouraged at finding the children very eager to learn and surprisingly faithful in their attendance. In Yap, however, school enrollment remained poor until the Spanish governor compelled parents to send their children to the mission schools under pain of penal labor for any who failed to comply with this ordinance. At once the priests began a boarding school at one of their mission stations for more talented pupils. By 1898, the year before Spanish rule in the islands ended, there were six day schools and one boarding school, with some 540 students in Yap alone. With the establishment of German rule the following year, however, compulsory education ended and enrollment in Yap dropped to a mere nine students.<sup>29</sup>

Even during the first few years of German administration in the Carolines, it was evident that Spanish missionaries would be severely limited in their effectiveness, particularly as the German government initiated its attempts to maximize German influence on the islanders. Between 1903 and 1907 German Capuchins replaced their Spanish co-religious throughout the mission field and altered their schools in accordance with the government's Germanization policy. In the mission boarding schools German language instruction was especially intensive, and all teaching was done in that language.<sup>30</sup> The Catholic schools generally offered a three-year program to boys and girls, with especially talented students being sent to the government school on Saipan to continue their education. Schools were quite evidently coming into their own during this time, for the *ibedul* in Palau built a school at his own expense for his village's high-ranking children.<sup>31</sup> Even in Yap, the island group least receptive to education, school enrollment by the end of German rule was back up to 473--almost what it had reached in 1899--without government-enforced, compulsory attendance.<sup>32</sup> German Capuchins introduced Franciscan nuns from Ger-

many in 1907 to teach in their girls schools while the priests and brothers held classes for boys. At the heart of the curriculum was the study of the German language, a project that was subsidized by the German government to the amount of four thousand marks a year.<sup>33</sup> The hope of the German authorities, it seems, was to rid the islands of the pidgin English that was threatening to become the universal means of communication between those who spoke different local languages. In 1914 the mission was operating twenty schools, including one in the Mortlock Islands, an area that had only recently been reached by the Catholic priests. Over twelve hundred pupils were enrolled in these schools.<sup>34</sup>

Since the German government preferred to subsidize German language instruction rather than develop its own school system, direct government involvement in education was virtually nil. Only in Palau and the Marianas was any formal education provided by the government. In Palau the government initiated a program to instruct local policemen in the German language and arithmetic. This program, begun in 1902, offered two hours of class a day to twenty or thirty men and could be called the first government-run school in the Carolines.<sup>35</sup>

In the Marianas, on the other hand, the government assumed almost total responsibility for the education of the young. The educational heritage of Spain in the northern Marianas furnished little to build upon ("dirty school buildings and native teachers incapable of teaching anything," according to one German<sup>36</sup>) and the Spanish missionaries would not accede to the government's request to stay and open Catholic schools. As a result, the government was compelled to open two schools of its own on Saipan and another on Rota, with a total enrollment of over three hundred pupils, and education was made compulsory for all between the ages of six and thirteen. In the early years, classes were taught in Chamorro by local, government-paid teachers, although the German language was increasingly emphasized and courses in this study were taught by the district officer himself.<sup>37</sup>

In time, the German administration made an attempt to upgrade the schools on Saipan, consolidate them into a single system, and utilize them for the higher education of Micronesians in other parts of the territory. In the government-run educational complex on Saipan there was an elementary school with six grades (and separate sections for Chamorro and Carolinian students because of the difference in ability) and an intermediate school with two additional grades. The elementary school curriculum, which was varied and broadly humanistic, reminiscent of the Colegio de San Juan in the mid-nineteenth century, included singing and violin playing, natural history and geography, drawing, physical training, and handi-



craft making, in addition to the inevitable German. There were two master teachers, both of whom were Germans, assisted by several Chamorros and Carolinians. The elementary school offered a far richer program than the mission schools in the Carolines could, much as the colegio had in comparison with the old parish schools. The intermediate school furnished training in vocational areas such as farming, boatbuilding, and native crafts. Exceptional students who completed both elementary and intermediate schooling were sent off to the German naval base at Tsingtao in preparation for teaching, keeping financial records, or training in carpentry, blacksmithing, or other trades.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, shortly before the turn of the century, Catholic missionaries made their first incursion into the Marshall Islands, a group that had for decades been strongly Protestant. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, who had earlier established a base in the Gilberts and surveyed prospects in the Marshalls throughout the 1890s, finally opened a mission on Jaluit in 1899. The boarding school that was founded there soon afterward had a small and exclusive clientele: half-castes, some of the high chiefs, and the children of Europeans. The curriculum was no less unabashedly elitist, for it offered intensive education in German and the usual other subjects, all given in the German language.<sup>39</sup> The twenty or so young children who greeted a visiting ecclesiastical dignitary in 1902 surprised him by welcoming him in his own language and carrying on a lengthy conversation with him in German. Later in the day the school children sang the high mass for the feast of the Assumption while young outsiders watched the spectacle with their noses pressed against the chapel windows.<sup>40</sup>

The kind of education that the Sacred Heart missionaries offered in their school on Jaluit became all the more popular when the government implemented its Germanization policy after 1906. Pupils came from distant islands--as far away as the Gilberts and the eastern Carolines--to attend the school, and it was not long before new schools were opened on other atolls in the Marshalls. A school on Likiep, principally for half-caste children, was founded in 1902, and another was begun on Arno in 1910 in addition to the schools that had existed on Nauru for some years. The Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart were summoned into the Marshalls in 1902 to help staff the expanding school system, which by 1914 included eleven schools on five different islands serving some two hundred children. The schools remained very small, a necessity if they were to achieve the ambitious goals they had set for themselves. They were full eight-grade elementary schools, with class for five hours a day, teaching oral and written German along with Bible history, mathematics, and sing-

ing. In addition, older boys learned navigation and business math, while girls took courses in home economics and fine handwork.<sup>41</sup>

When the German administration was dismissed after the Japanese takeover of the islands in late 1914, the German-bred school system was disbanded with it. Japanese authorities allowed the Catholic religious to keep their schools open for a year or so, but as of December 1915 all German missionaries were forbidden to teach school, and the courses permitted were limited to religion, singing, and needlework. Finally, in 1919 the last of the German Catholic missionaries were expelled from the Marshalls and the Carolines, and their whole school system came to an abrupt halt. The German Liebenzell missionaries, who had arrived in 1906 at the request of the American Board to replace its personnel in the Carolines, were also sent home.

With the departure of the missionaries, of course, the extensive school systems ceased to function everywhere except in the Marshalls where the Protestant mission schools had been in the hands of local teachers for years. By 1914 the Protestant schools served about 2,100 children (1,500 in the Marshalls and over 600 in the eastern Carolines), and the Catholic schools in the Carolines and Marshalls educated another 1,500.<sup>42</sup> If we add to the number of children in mission schools another 300 attending the government schools in Saipan, it appears that about 4,000, from a total population of approximately 40,000, were in school during the later years of German rule. Most of these young Micronesians were attending village schools with only three grades, but a small percentage had the opportunity for up to eight years of study and a chance to acquire a fair mastery of German as well as learn a trade. This was a considerable achievement for an administration that was staffed by only two dozen officials and that itself played such a small role in education.

### **Education under the Japanese Mandate**

Barely a year after the Japanese government expelled the last German missionaries, it initiated negotiations with Protestant and Catholic groups for the assignment of new missionaries from a neutral nation to its mandated islands. The Japanese valued Christian missions for the civilizing influence they had on the islanders and wanted them to continue. Nevertheless, the Japanese government had no intention of relinquishing its educational responsibilities to the missions as the German government had done. From the day the Japanese assumed control of the islands they set up their own schools, for Japanese authorities saw in education an unparalleled means of fostering the development of the islanders. For a time

the schools were makeshift operations in which naval officers and officials from Nanyo Boeki Kaisha, one of the major businesses in the islands, taught a potpourri of Japanese language, math, and singing with whatever materials they could gather. In December 1915, however, the government established a public education system, the first ever to be founded in Micronesia, with a school in each of the six administrative divisions. Over the next few years, certain changes were made in the school system for Micronesians, and as the number of immigrants in the islands rapidly increased, a parallel system was established for Japanese children.<sup>43</sup>

The Japanese-run public schools, called *kogakko*, offered three years of elementary education for Micronesians, with a supplementary program of two additional years for more advanced students. Islanders between the ages of eight and thirteen were encouraged to enroll in the elementary schools. Japanese teachers, assisted by local instructors, taught a uniform curriculum that was determined by the Bureau of Education. Half of the instructional time in the elementary schools--twelve out of twenty-four hours a week--was spent on the Japanese language, with additional courses in arithmetic, singing, and drawing.<sup>44</sup> Some vocational training was called for in the curriculum, but this amounted to little more than manual labor in the vegetable garden and around the school grounds.<sup>45</sup> Clearly the educational program put great stress on the language of the colonial power (as had the school program under the Germans), since language was thought to have moral value as well as practical usefulness for Micronesians. The supplementary two years, which were offered to some students on more populated islands, had a more varied curriculum. Japanese language, both spoken and written, continued to dominate the curriculum, consuming eleven of thirty hours of instruction, but more class time was devoted to vocational education: agriculture, housekeeping, and handicraft-making.<sup>46</sup>

The purpose of the educational system, as stated in an official Japanese ordinance, was "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."<sup>47</sup> The vehicle of Micronesian students' "moral education" was to be not a course in ethics but a knowledge of the Japanese language, for besides being a means of communication, Japanese was understood to be an expression of a wholly different value system. As students learned the Japanese language, they could be expected to rapidly become more "civilized" and increasingly concerned with making use of opportunities to elevate their standard of living. In the long run, the enlightenment of Micronesians through education could not help but make them more loyal to the Japanese emperor and more eco-

nomically productive members of the empire. These educational goals were similar to those endorsed by Germany during its short rule in the islands and little different from those of any colonial government elsewhere in the world.

Lofty educational goals were one thing, but the operation of the schools on a day-to-day basis was quite another. In the first place, there were no texts designed for Micronesians, and the textbooks used were ill suited to the level of the Micronesian student. Classes were large, often with eighty or more students in a single class. As for teaching methods and discipline, a high-placed Palauan who attended one of these schools has this to say:

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.<sup>48</sup>

Yet Micronesian students attended these schools in ever greater numbers as years went on. A great part of the explanation for this rests, then as now, with the obvious fact that a knowledge of the language of the ruling power was a very important asset, especially if one wanted to advance socially and economically. The typical Micronesian graduate of the public school may not, after five years of education, have been able to read a Japanese newspaper as one author asserts, but he could understand directions in Japanese, hold an ordinary conversation, and possibly qualify for one of the many salaried positions that were opening up for Micronesians with the economic boom of the late 1920s and 1930s.<sup>49</sup>

Opportunities for education beyond the five grades of public school were extremely limited for Micronesians. The most attractive of those existing was the carpentry school--or "Woodworkers Apprentice Training School," as it was formally called--which was founded in Palau in 1926. This select school admitted only ten or fifteen pupils a year from throughout Micronesia and offered a two-year program, sometimes extended to three years, in woodworking and related skills. Each year it graduated about ten young men, more than half of whom eventually obtained jobs with the Japanese administration in the islands. In addition to the carpentry school, there were other post-elementary training programs available for Micronesians after 1926, most of them in-service programs lasting six months to a year. One of the most notable was the agriculture training

program conducted at the agriculture stations on Ponape, Saipan, and Palau; by 1932 about 120 Micronesians had gone through the year-long training. In addition, there were programs in sanitation and hygiene, post office work, handicraft training, and blacksmithing.<sup>50</sup>

The public school system grew from the original six schools opened in 1915 to seventeen schools with a total of 2,500 pupils by 1922.<sup>51</sup> Thereafter its growth was much more moderate: by 1937 there were twenty-four schools with over 3,000 students. It is estimated that over 50 percent of the school-age population actually attended school in the middle 1930s. In all, there were nearly 9,000 Micronesians who had finished the first three years of schooling, with about 3,500 of them also completing the additional two years.<sup>52</sup> By the outbreak of World War II, roughly 20 percent of the population had received some formal education under the Japanese administration.

Mission schools, which fared less well under the Japanese than under the Germans, began a long process of rebuilding during the 1920s. The Catholic schools had vanished even before the last of the German priests was exiled, and the Protestant training schools that were once the backbone of their educational structure had also been closed. With the resumption of missionary activity in the early 1920s, Micronesia was apportioned to Liebenzell--which had been invited to take up its former work in Palau and part of Truk--and the Japanese Protestant missionary organization known as Dendo Dan. A training school was reestablished in Truk, this time on Tol, while a girls school was founded on Udot.<sup>53</sup> Two additional schools were eventually opened in Truk, two on Ponape and another on Jaluit. Catholic schools were set up in Truk, Palau, and Saipan, but the ones on Saipan were the most significant and accounted for about 85 percent of all Catholic students. In 1922 there were 400 students in all mission schools; ten years later there were 1,180; and by 1937 the total was 1,535.<sup>54</sup>

The figures alone, however, can be misleading. Some of the mission schools, especially the Catholic ones on Palau and Saipan, functioned not more than a few hours a week, and then only to give religious instruction after the public school was finished for the day. While the rest of the mission schools were full time, their program was heavily slanted toward bible study and religion--much more so than in previous decades. Most of their pupils had already attended the government public schools and had enrolled in the mission schools to gain the religious instruction that public schools would not provide.<sup>55</sup> In short, the mission schools during this era served mainly as a supplement to the education given by the public system. This was a radical departure from the former pattern of education in

Micronesia, one that prevailed from Sanvitores' time through German rule, in which the mission schools bore nearly the entire burden of education. This development heralded the ascendancy of the public school, which would reach its height under the American administration following World War II.

### **Conclusion**

As diverse as the forms of education have been throughout Micronesia's colonial past, the story of schooling in the islands yields at least a few generalizations. The first and most obvious of these is the key role of the missions, Catholic and Protestant alike, in the development and maintenance of early school systems in Micronesia. With very few exceptions (notably the early free schools in the Marianas and the German public school in Saipan) all schools were mission-run until 1915, the year in which the Japanese administration established the first public school system. The early mission schools were clearly established as the means of propagating a religious message, although the curriculum always included other subjects besides religious doctrine and Bible study. Educational strategies of those who ran mission schools reflected the usual dilemma of whether to concentrate limited resources to educate a small elite, or to utilize the resources so as to attempt to offer a little education for everyone. The response of the missions to this dilemma varied with the historical circumstances and the missions' own stage of maturity.

The last century has seen much discontinuity in educational policy in Micronesia and a large turnover of personnel, both administrative and missionary, due to the frequent changes in foreign control of the islands. Nonetheless, a surprisingly high percentage of Micronesians were offered an education, generally for three or four years, throughout these politically turbulent times. From the educational boom in the Marshalls initiated by Protestant missionaries in the 1870s through the final years of the Japanese mandate in the 1940s, roughly half of the school-age population was actually in school. This percentage compares favorably with other colonial areas during the same period.

Finally, a few observations can be made on the content of the curricula in Micronesian schools. Of central importance to the curriculum was almost always the language of the colonial power, and there were usually more than sufficient inducements for local people to wish to learn this language. The major exception to this was the nineteenth-century Protestant schools in their second phase, when they stressed literacy in the vernacular in order to make it possible for their students to read the Bible.

The rest of the curriculum was typically a melange of courses that included basic skills like arithmetic along with all manner of other subjects. Two items of special interest that recur constantly on these curricula are singing and vocational arts. Music, although also taught in European and American schools of an earlier day, was recognized as a subject that would evoke interest among Micronesians and be put to use by them. Much the same could be said for the vocational arts--especially agriculture and carpentry--that so often appeared prominently on the instructional program.

Perhaps most important of all is the fact that schools became an indispensable part of Micronesian life throughout these years, and school began to be recognized by Micronesians as an invaluable means of achieving status and other more tangible rewards. After three centuries of exposure to colonial education of various forms, Micronesia adopted the school as its own.

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#### NOTES

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