

Roger Gale. *The Americanization of Micronesia: A Study of The Consolidation of United States Rule in the Pacific.* Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1979. Pp. 334. \$13.00.

“To the victor belong the spoils,” so goes the old adage. When Japan took all German lands above the equator in World War I, she regarded Micronesia her own in spite of the Class C Mandate which was established by the League of Nations and which was the basis for US recognition of her claim. When the United States took the same islands from Japan thirty years later, she followed policies of benign neglect of the people and secrecy, the fact of the United Nations Trusteeship notwithstanding. There

is a remarkable similarity here. The Japanese rapidly began “Nipponizing” the islands, treating them simply as an extension of the homelands. By the time World War II broke out, there were more Japanese, Koreans, and Okinawans in the islands than Micronesians themselves. While the United States has not followed similar population and immigration policies in Micronesia, it has nonetheless regarded the islands as an “American place.” For years travel was restricted, CIA secret training activities were carried out at Saipan, and most-favored-nation clauses were invoked for trade purposes.

Author Gale outlines the series of events and their post-war sequence which led to the establishment of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. These events are often forgotten these days in the flurry of activity and political realignment talks which today dominate the stage for Micronesia-watchers. Gale says in this book that US strategic interests in the area have always held sway in American policy considerations towards island development, and in fact he suggests that deliberate designs for dependency have been implemented. In his own words:

It is the main theme of this book that the systematic transformation of global political power, and in terminology in the post colonial era, combined with a continued bureaucratic inarticulateness with the United States, has led to a situation in which it is presently impossible, using the traditional tools of political science, to categorize Micronesia simply as either an integral part of the United States, or as an entity with a defined international personality.

“We have,” as University of Guam political scientist Robert Rogers points out, “a federation within a federation. This is a new political animal for which there is no precedent.” (Referring to the newly-created Federated States of Micronesia.)

Gale traces for us the story of the US involvement in the Trust Territory as far back as the special wartime training programs for postwar island administrators at the Stanford School of Naval Administration. He follows through with the US Commercial Company which, in effect, ran the island economy immediately after the war, to the comprehensive investigation of Micronesian anthropology (CIMA), the largest and most comprehensive social examination of people ever made up until that time.

He also critically analyzes the now-infamous “Solomon Report” on Micronesia which was commissioned in the mid-1960s to examine political alternatives and futures for the islands; the Peace Corps presence; and the entire US strategic significance of the area.

This is the best and most comprehensive serious work to appear on American Micronesia since Norman Meller’s *The Congress of Micronesia*.

Together with David Nevin's *The American Touch in Micronesia*, it will provide the reader with a wide background knowledge and analysis of American performance in the islands and its effects since the war.

I appreciate it also--and especially--because it implies the reasons for the Micronesians' current problems with their own identity: their islands are a political misfit without precedent. Since no one is sure what they are politically, it follows as no surprise that the Micronesians might not be sure of themselves. And the implications of all this will stretch far, far into the future.

Dirk Anthony Ballendorf
Director, Micronesian Area Research Center
University of Guam