The Sokehs Rebellion of 1910

Ponape was in frequent contact with European and American ships since the 1820's. The island was a favorite stopping place for the whaling ships of the 19th century. Since many of the whaling ships came from American ports in New England, it was natural that the Boston Missionary Society would become interested in this still non-Christian Pacific island. Because of the efforts of the Boston Missionary Society and the frequent visits of whaling ships Ponape was already quite Westernized and Christian by the 1880's. However the island was still independent: all political power remained in the hands of the five traditional feudal kings or Nahnmwarkis.

The increasing comercial interest of the German Empire in the Caroline and Marshall islands led Spain to lay claim to Ponape in 1885 on grounds of her earlier "discovery" of the island. The dispute between Germany and Spain was settled by the Pope in an agreement granting Spain sovereignty over the Caroline Islands but allowing the Germans trading rights.

In 1886 the Spaniards began a colonization which was too fast and hardly wise in the choice of its methods. Spanish Capuchins now sought to spread Catholicism in Ponape. This led to conflicts with Protestant Ponapeans. Kolonia was given to the Spanish by the Lahp of Loht, and the town was constructed

by Ponapean workers lent for the task by the Nahnmwarkis.

Insensitivity to Ponapean customs and liberties, unfairness and corruption, and religious differences led to a series of three wars between Spain and the feudal kingdoms of Madolenihmw, Kitti, and Sokehs. Hundreds of Philippino soldiers under Spanish officers along with armored ships waged three inconclusive campaigns against the Ponapeans. The Ponapeans were by now quite expert in the use of Western firearms which they gained in trade with whaling and merchant ships. They proved themselves to be masters of stone fortifications and guerilla warfare.

Spain lost hundreds of soldiers in these wars and never gained more than a limited power over the area surrounding Kolonia.

After Spain's defeat in 1899 in the Spanish-American War, the Caroline Islands and the northern Marianas were bought by Germany. The first German administrators found the Ponapeans to be naturally suspicious of foreign colonists and jealous of their ancient liberties. Nevertheless, the efficiency, economic organization, and lack of corruption of the German colonial administration brought about a workable relationship between them and the Nahnmwarkis.

In 1910 the new district administrator of Ponape, Boeder, began a fifteen foot wide road along the shore of Sokehs Island in order to extend the power of the colonial government. A nobleman of Sokehs, Somatau, was hired as a paid supervisor,



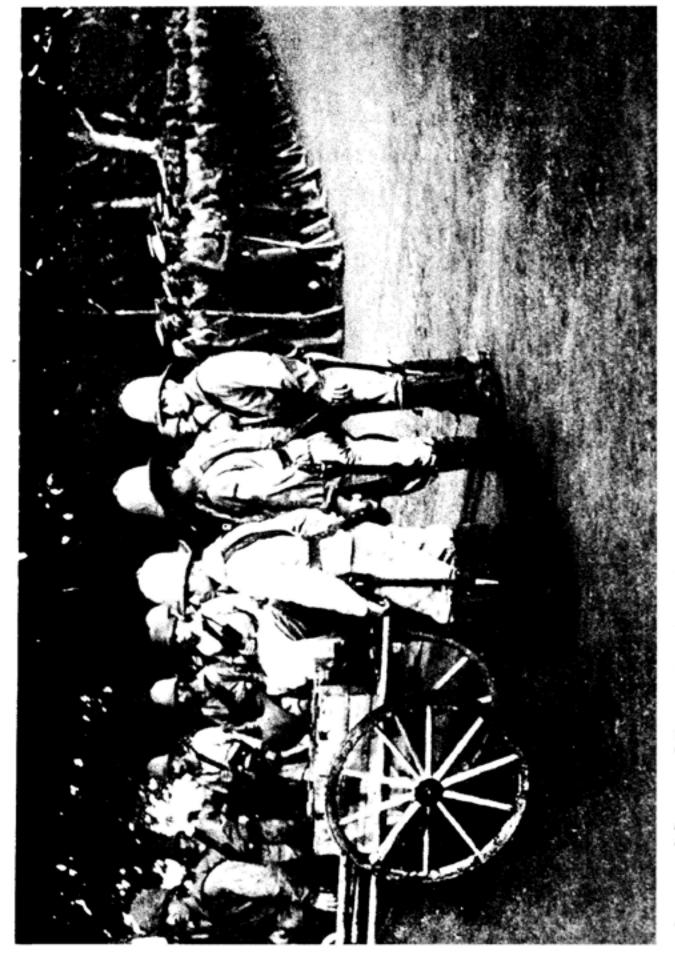
Ponapean allies of the Germans guarding the walls surrounding Kolonia during the early stages of the Sokehs War

but the work was done by Ponapeans without pay. The Germans required thirty days of free labor on public works projects as a form of tax.

On October 17, 1910, the German supervisor Hollborn severely beat up a workman who he accused of laziness. That night in the <u>mahs</u> of Sokehs, Somatau and other men of Sokehs planned to avenge their people's honor.

The next day Hollborn and another German foreman took
refuge in the Catholic Mission were they were persued by the
warriors from Sokehs. When he heard of this, District Administrator Boeder left on a boat for Sokehs accompanied by his secretary
Brauckmann and two servants. When they arrived in Sokehs, they
were killed by Somatau and other men of Sokehs. Their bodies
were multilated by machetes and left floating in the lagoon.

Government power now passed to the hands of the physician, Dr. Girschner, who organized the defense of Kolonia with 50 policemen and a volunteer force of 400 Ponapeans from Net, Uh, and Kitti. Entrenchments and barbed wire strengthened the defenses of the old Spanish fort. Yet the people of Sokehs took many guns from the armory in Kolonia during the night. The rebels now demanded that all guns and ammunition be given to them, for which they promised not to harm the people in Kolonia. Dr. Girschner replied telling them to give over all of their guns and guilty persons. The rebels replied that they

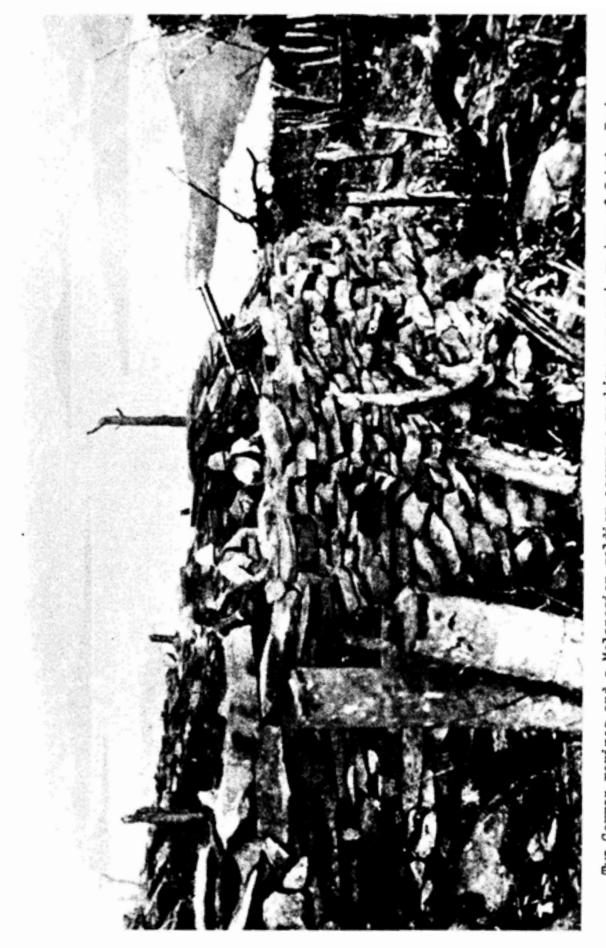


A group of German soldiers and marines with a machine gun prior to the assault on Sokehs Rock: in the backgroud are some of the Melanesian troops brought in by the Germans from Rahaul

had "already fallen too deeply into sin to give up now."

The unwillingness of the remaining Germans to negotiate with the people of Sokehs sealed the fate of Somatau and his warriors. This was for two reasons. First, it was obvious by now that the rebels could not expect much help from the other states of Ponape, for many men had already agreed to aid the Germans. Second, the German Empire possessed the most modern and best trained army and navy in the world of 1910. The forces they were to send were not to be compared to the earlier Spanish forces used in Ponape. On November 26, the motor ship Germania arrived in Ponape, and news of the rebellion spread to the Headquarters of the German South Seas Government in Rabaul, New Guinea. Soon the Germania returned with 68 men on December 5. On December 13, the steamer Siar arrived from Rabaul with 70 Melanesian soldiers. On December 19 the warship Cormoran anchored at Ponape. On December 28 the cruisers Emden and Nürnberg of the German East Asiatic Squadron left their anchorages at Hong Kong and Tsingtao, China, bound for Ponape.

In the meantime Somatau had worked on the fortification of Sokehs Island with about 250 men equipped with Remington and Winchester rifles and dynamite. Sokehs Island is ideal for defensive warfare since a high mountain of 900 feet arises sharply from the sea to form a natural basalt wall. The top of the island can only be reached by a few narrow paths. Old



Two German marines and a Melanesian soldier occupy a machine gun nest on top of Sokehs Rocks. These are part of the fortifications built by Somatau and the people of Sokehs and later captured by the German forces.

rivalries and hostilities between Sokehs and the states of Uh and Madolenihmw had only been intensified by the rebellion, and Somatau had few Ponapean allies outside of the people of Palikir who were pledged to Sokehs in the event of war.

The main body of German forces consisted of Melanesian troops under the command of Freiherr von und zu Peckelsheim and a small force of German marines. On January 13, 1911, the Nürnberg, Emden, and Cormoran bombarded the top of Sokehs ridge. Later in the day, 100 Melanesian soldiers led by Captain Taegert stormed the ridge itself gaining control of its highest point. On the 15th and 16th of January, Sokehs island was searched by the soldiers, and 125 Ponapeans and five Mortlockese were taken prisoner. Palikir was invaded and searched by soldiers from the 19th to the 21st of January. Here an additional 110 prisoners were taken most of whom were women and children.

Somatau and a hundred of his men were in a fortified trench on the mountain of Nankiop near Nanpil. On Jan. 26 this trench was attacked by two German columns. Somatau and his men successfully defended the position until ammunition became short causing their retreat. Lt. Erhard was killed leading the assault. Somatau retreated with his wounded and continued guerilla warfare against the German forces who had great difficulty traveling in the jungles. Finally on February 13, Somatau surrendered to the chief of Net with five of his men. On February 16, Chief Samuel surrendered in Kitti to the men of the Nürnberg.



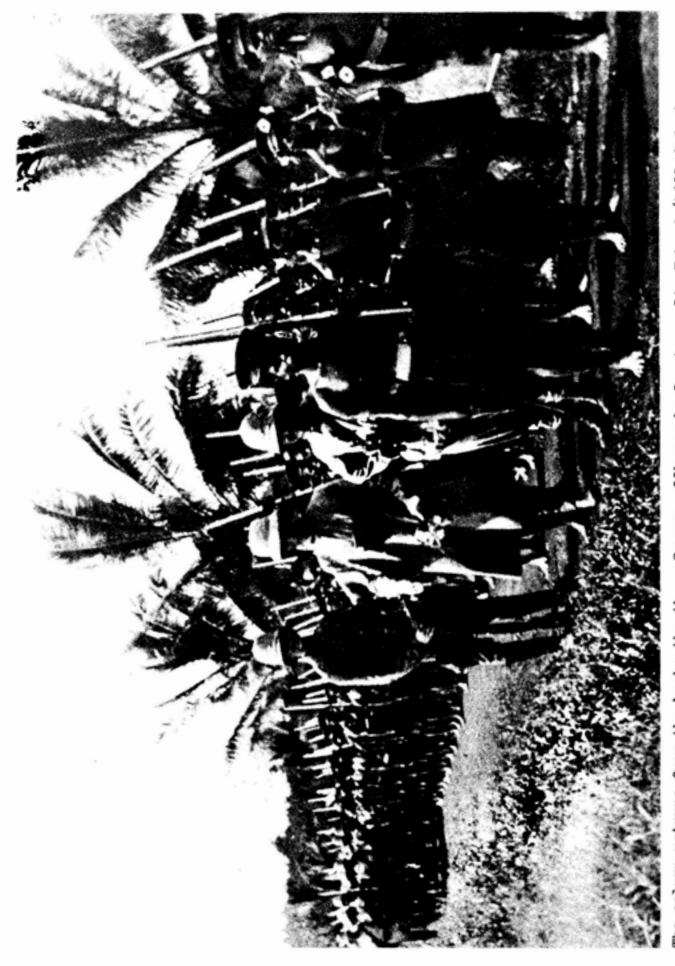
Die Kolonne des Fregattenkapitän Tägert

The caption in German translates, "The Column of Frigate-Captain Tägert." German officers and soldiers, Melanesian soldiers, and Ponapean guides in the persuit of Somatau on Nankiop.

At the time of their surrender, the people of Sokehs still had ammunition and weapons to continue the fight. This leads one to ask why the leaders surrendered in the face of a certain death sentence. There are perhaps two reasons: first, the German forces were causing severe hardships for the Ponapeans because they were destroying crops and burning down houses. The second reason is given by a German captain, Bellerthun, who commented:
"From all that I have seen and heard of these people I would say that they have a very high contempt of death."

A regular court sentenced the leaders of the rebellion to death. The other people of Sokehs were sentenced to deportation to Yap and Palau.

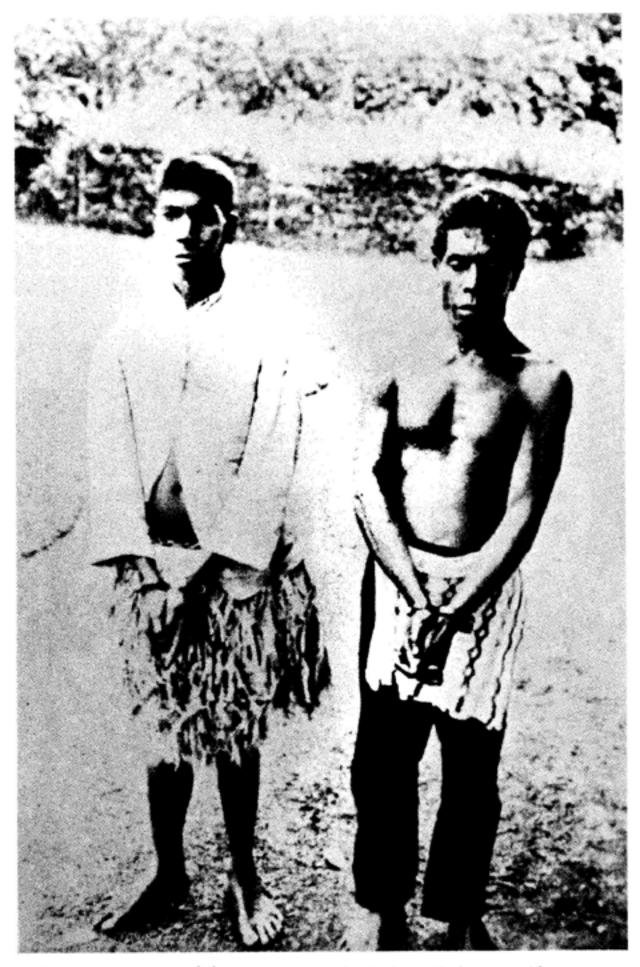
On the 24th of February, the Melanesian police troops
executed fifteen men. They walked calmly to their death in front
of the whole population. Somatau asked permission to give a speech
to the people, but he was not allowed to do so. Chief Samuel said
to the people shortly before he was shot, "Take an example and live
better than we did." One of the young men was especially remembered
because he was smiling at the time he was shot.



The column returns from the bush: the three German officers in front are Lt. Erhard (killed during the campaign, Freiherr von und zu Peckelsheim, and Captain-Lieutenant Werber on the right.



The group of Chief Samuel captured and held prisoner on board the S.M.S. Cormoran in February of 1911. Chief Samuel is seated on the right on the stairway.



(1) Lepereren and (2) Somatau shortly before their execution

Ba tang nu Kanif ni fan ko yol ni kafini sum

Gayche ngagog ned famade

Kan kore nam ney yo!

Ko gub ni du war gag

Ko gub ni du war gag

Ma nge rin' make kireb

Ma nge rin' make kireb

Kangon yu Rulo mayu Timil

Mange rin' ni kam gur god ngay.

Gaf gou gimed, yo!

Gaf gou ni kamtayed yo! Dogol

Ni ke taye re nam ney.

Mange rin' ni kam gur god ngay?

Gaf gou gimed, yo!

Faani kamu dogol gad ngaya

Kam lagined rorad.

Bay bongon u wun'um.

Bay riyu paam?

Gaf gou gimed, yo!

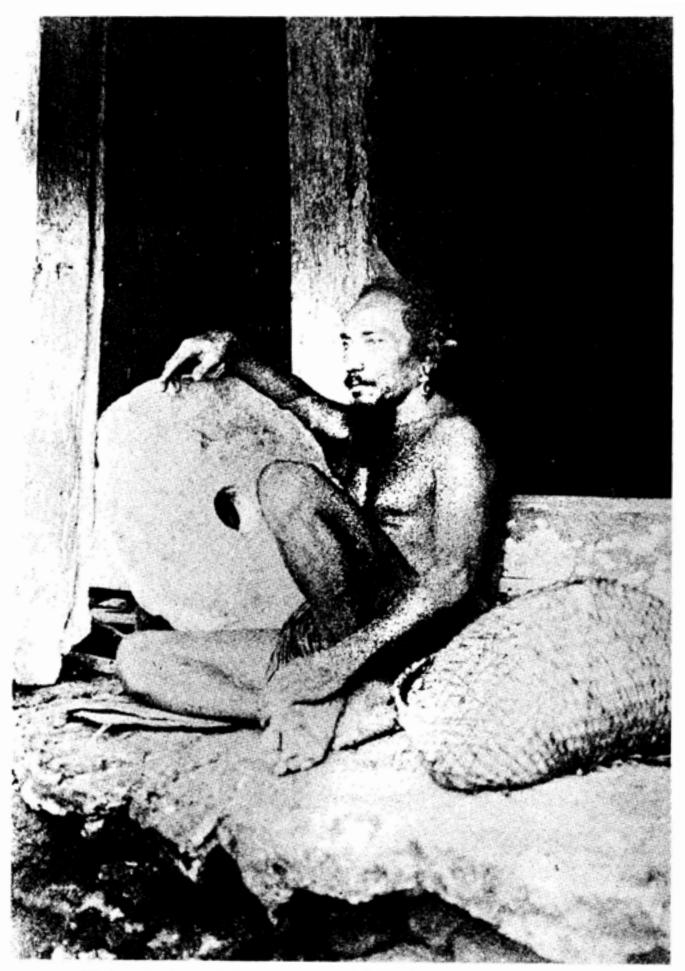
Fa'an ni ke bulla

Nikeb nga danop

Keb ku thailap

Ni be thailapu waab nay

Ni nge guy lungun riy



Rupon, High Priest of Gatspar, in a picture from German times

Meguy be'nib fel miligen

Mo matay

Meguy be' ni buch miligen

Mo man'ag

Liyor! Ko mange liyor!

Da kuni liyor ko liyos nu taliu

Nga nib nga ni manthiu

Ngan ngu lu ngorow

Ngan gubung nag dad

Gaf gou gimed ya ke pil,

Pile m'uw ngo mad

Ke thingeg e muw ngo madi

Kagu wa mus gad

Wamuse gutad

Gamad be nameg

Fanmadi nga danopu

Madab kiyeg romad

Gaf gou godad!

A Tang of Kanif Against the New Customs

Wait! We, the spirits of this land

Wish to tell our concerns, yo!

I have come to ask,

I have come to ask,



A small spirit-house in Saveth, Yap, over 60 years ago

What is the reason, how did things go bad What is the reason, how did things go bad With the tribe of Rul and Tomil? What is the reason that you progress so quickly? You are poor, yo! Greed has come into this land! You have fallen into poverty, yo! What is the reason you progress so quickly? You are poor, yo! You have stolen from Rul and Tomil: Do you have the use of your reason? Do you have the profit in your hands? You are poor, yo!

If the seeds come up 1, la,

If they come up on earth,

Then they will bring about the humiliation,

The humiliation of Yap,

Because he sees the discussions here. 2

If he sees one whose actions are good,

He will release him.

¹ If the actions of the German Administration are successful.

Previous to the German times, the Yapese discussed their affairs among themselves. Now the German District Administrator listens to them. When he saw "one whose actions were bad," he had the power to exile the man to Saipan.



Women dancing on Yap in a picture from German times

If he sees one whose actions are bad,

He will send him away.

Honor! What kind of honor is this!

No longer does one worship the gods in the holy groves.

One should come and bow before them,

And humble oneself before them.

One should raise us up again.

We are poor because our cance,

Our canoe is broken.

Ambition has overturned our canoe,

We are finished,

We have suffered the end.

We strive in vain

For our rights here.

But it is impossible for us.

We are impoverished!



Migiul, the mispil of Magachagil, Yap, in the year 1903

Johann Stanislaus Kubary (1846-1896)

Of the hundreds of anthropologists and ethnographers who have worked in Micronesia during the last two centuries, we shall only mention one. Johann Kubary was born in Warsaw, Poland, the son of a German mother and Hungarian father. In his youth, his devotion to the cause of Polish independence made him an undesireable person in the eyes of the Russian and German governments of his surpressed homeland.

His early interest in ethnography led to a job with the Godeffroy Trading Co. of Hamburg which was then engaged in copra and trepang trade with the Marshall and Caroline Islands. The owner of the company, Mr. Godeffroy, also had a museum in Hamburg for his collection of cultural objects from the South Seas. From 1870 until 1879, Kubary collected artifacts and wrote ethnographic descriptions of Micronesia. He married a Ponapean woman who bore him two children. At the end of this period, his patron, Godeffroy, went bankrupt. For the next 17 years, Kubary wandered throughout Melanesia, Europe, and Micronesia as a small trader looking for new financial support to continue his ethnographic research. He returned to Ponape in 1896 to visit his son and to see the botanical gardens that he had previously built. But the gardens had been destroyed by the bombardment of Spanish warships during the Spanish-Ponapean wars. Kubary, disheartened and hopeless, took his own life in the ruins of his Ponapean gardens.

Today there remains of his life some articles in the journals of small German museums and a brass plaque with a memorial inscription lost in the weeds of the Spanish Fort in Kolonia



Johann Stanislaus Kubary in a picture taken in the year 1882



Yelirt, Kubary's Ponapean wife in the year 1882. Their only daughter is said to have died only recently in Singapore.



Dr. Augustin Krämer, a German anthropologist and one of the foremost members of the Thilenius South Seas Expedition of 1908-1910: he is responsible for the preservation of a large body of Trukese and Marshallese folklore.



On the left, Soulik en Sokene: on the right, Nahnawa en Dolakapw: two Ponapean gentlemen of Net who were well-known tellers of legends. In German times they worked with members of the Thilenius Expedition in recording a large body of Ponapean folklore.

Japan in Micronesia: 1914 to 1945

The German Administration of Micronesia ended suddenly in August of 1914 when Japan declared war on the German Empire. Japan's sims were to take over German territories in China and the Pacific for their commercial, military, and colonial value. By October of 1914, all of the islands in Micronesia were occupied by Japanese forces. In March of 1917, England supported Japan's claim to Micronesia by the Secret Treaty of London. This was to reward Japan for her naval help in the war against Germany. From 1914 to 1922, Micronesia was ruled by the Japanese military. In 1920 the League of Nations gave Japan a mandate over the islands, but the terms of the mandate forbade the construction of military bases. From 1922 until 1935, there was a civil government concentrating on the economic exploitation of Micronesia. Koror was the headquarters of the Japanese governor. From 1935 on, Japan began to disregard the League of Nations and began militarization of the islands in preparation for the Second World War.

Japan's economic interests in Micronesia concentrated on the high islands. Most land in Saipan, Tinian, and Rota was given over to sugar cane, sweet potatoes, cotton, and coffee. Fishing was important in all districts. The South Seas Development Company (Nanyo Kohatsu Kaisha) controlled many of these agricultural enterprises. There was a pineapple cannery in Babeldoap, and rice was grown in Ponape. Mineral deposits of phosphate were developed in Rota, and the German phosphate workings were continued in Anguar. Bauxite was mined in Babeldoap.

This rapid development of agriculture and industry was mainly achieved through the importation of great numbers of Japanese and Korean managers, engineers, technicians, and workers. Micronesians were employed mostly as manual laborers. As a result of these policies, by 1940 Micronesians were a minority of the population of their own islands.

District	No. of Japanese		
year	1920	1930	1940
Saipan	1,759	15,656	45,922
Palau	592	2,078	25,768
Yap	97	241	1,933
Truk	601	749	4,128
Ponape	425	689	8,048
Marshalls	198	422	680
total	3,671	19,835	84,478

This large scale colonization by Japanese went hand in hand with attempts to turn Micronesians into Japanese nationals through education and propaganda. Three year schools were established for instruction in the Japanese language and in mathmatics and geography. Later trade



Admiral Yamamoto of the Imperial Japanese Navy: the admiral was always interested in Micronesian affairs. In the 1920's he interceded with the Emperor to allow Christian missionaries to reenter Micronesia. He directed many Pacific battles from his flagship in the Truk Lagoon.

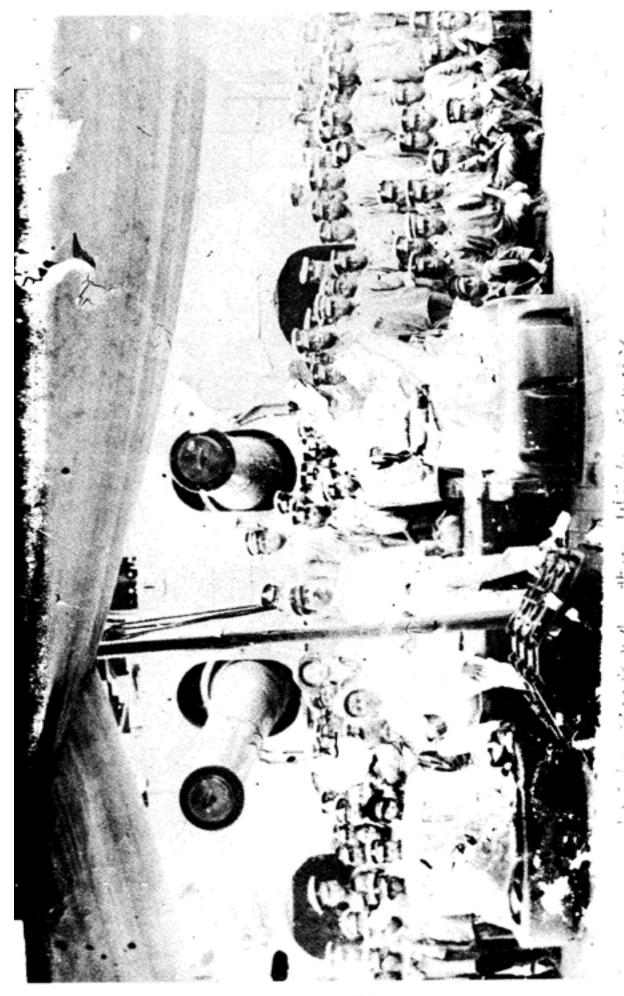
schools in carpentry, sewing, and other practical skills were available for selected Micronesian students.

Land that was previously acquired by the German Government passed into the hands of the Japanese Administration and additional lands were acquired by either payment or force.

By 1940 Micronesians were largely engaged as paid workers in these Japanese enterprises and were all well on their way to becoming acculturated as members of the Japanese Empire. Islands such as Saipan and Koror already looked like Japanese cities with restaurants, automobiles, post offices, and other urban comforts.

The attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941 by
Japan was to have great consequences for Micronesians.

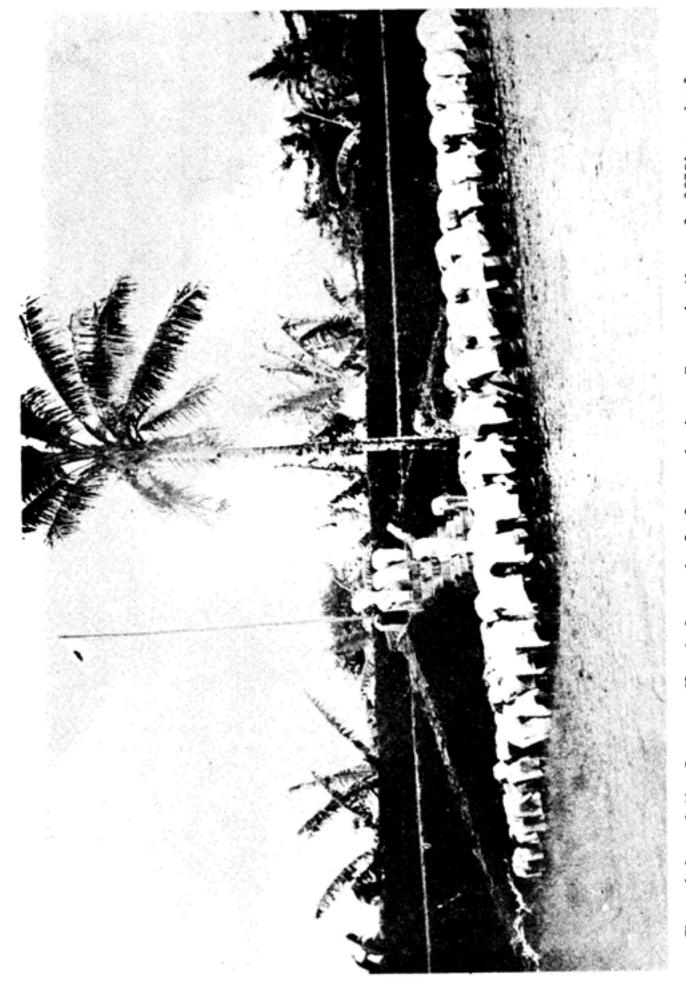
Micronesia was in fact Japan's main line of defense
against America, and the bloodiest battles of the war
were fought on Kwajalein, Peliliu, and Saipan. Truk
was the major anchorage of the Japanese Fleet in the
South Seas. Admiral Yamamoto, who planned many of
Japan's naval campaigns in the Pacific, gathered news
of battles in the Solomons on board his flagship in
the Truk Lagoon. Although Japanese surface ships were
usually victorious in surface battles with Allied ships,



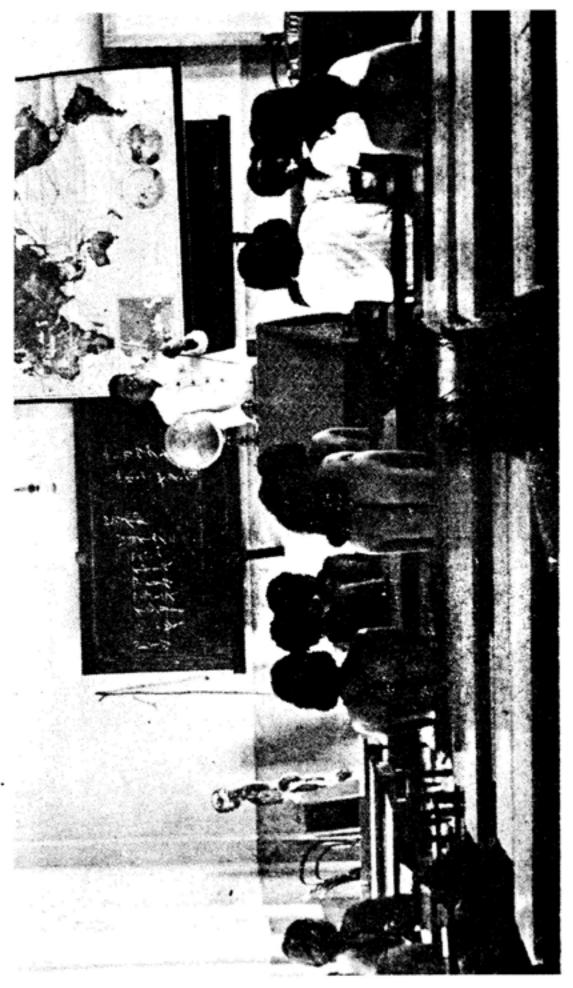
Trukese students in the uniform of a para-military student organization on board the Japanese cruiser Yodo in the 1920's. Although it went against the terms of their League of Nations mandate over Micronesia, the Japanese attempted to militarize the youth of Micronesia. During World War Two some Micronesians served as members of the Japanese Army and Navy. Japan's loss of aircraft carriers in 1942 at Midway
Island proved to be fatal for her defensive plans.

During 1943 and 1944, American forces fought their way
from the Marshalls to Tinian and Saipan. From there
bombers destroyed Japanese cities forcing a surrender
in August of 1945.

Micronesians suffered extreme hardships during
the war: often they were used as slave laborers in the
contruction of Japanese fortifications, they were denied
use of their own lands and food, and hundreds died as
the result of American land and air attacks. Almost all
of the Japanese cities and factories were destroyed
by the war. 1945 saw Micronesia administered by the
fourth foreign power within the last fifty years.

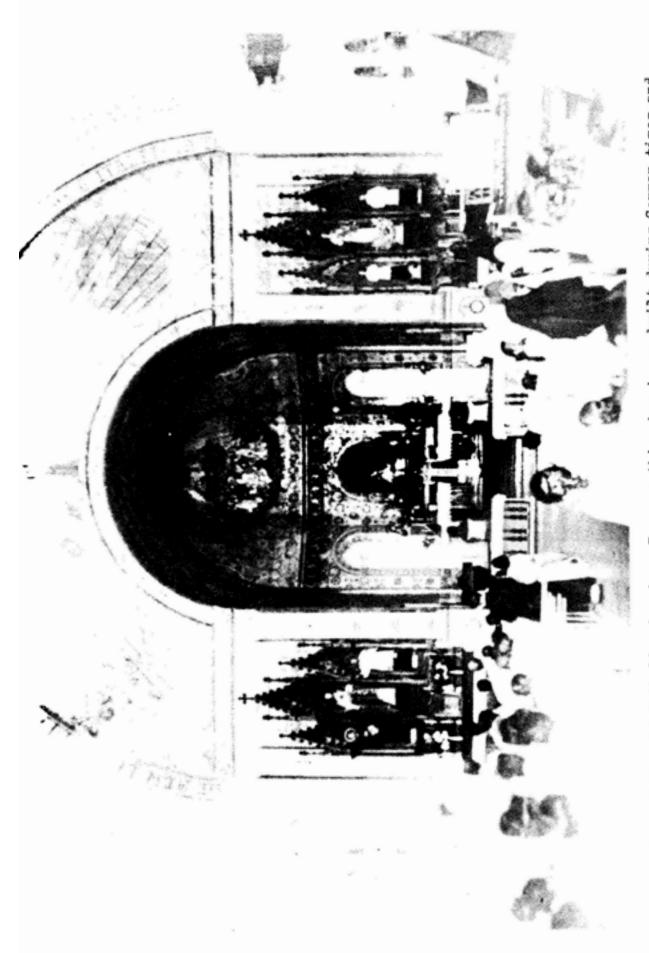


The raising of the Japanese flag before school classes begin on Ponape in the early 1930's: school discipline was very strict during the Japanese administration, and loyalty to the Emperor and the Japanese Empire were stressed.

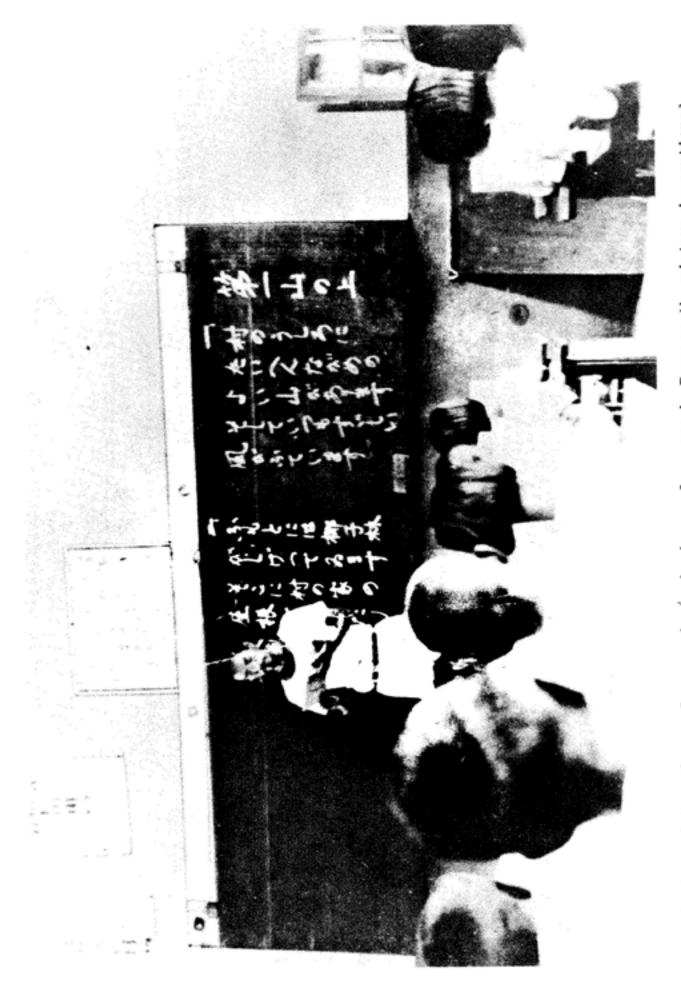


況狀の會習講善改民島プッヤ

A Japanese classroom on Yap: instruction took place in the Japanese language and little or no attention was given to the local languages or cultures which were considered to be inferior by the Japanese athorities. However the formal nature of Japanese education often fitted in well with the formal traditional cultures of Micronesia.



of Micronesia in the belief that Christianity made people more docile and easy to govern. Micronesians from the days of the Japanese administration: the Japanese generally encouraged the Christianization was destroyed except for its bell tower by American bombing raids during the war. This picture is The interior of the old Catholic church on Ponape: this church was built during German times and were not encouraged to take up Shinto, the official Japanese religion.



This is a picture from a Japanese book showing a classroom in Ponape: the picture is captioned, "After five years, the Micronesian children were able to speak, read, and write Japanese."



This photo from 1935 shows a Japanese pearl diver at rest. The Mikimo Pearl Company and the Palau Suisan Company were both engaged in pearl gulturing in Palau during the Japanese Administration.

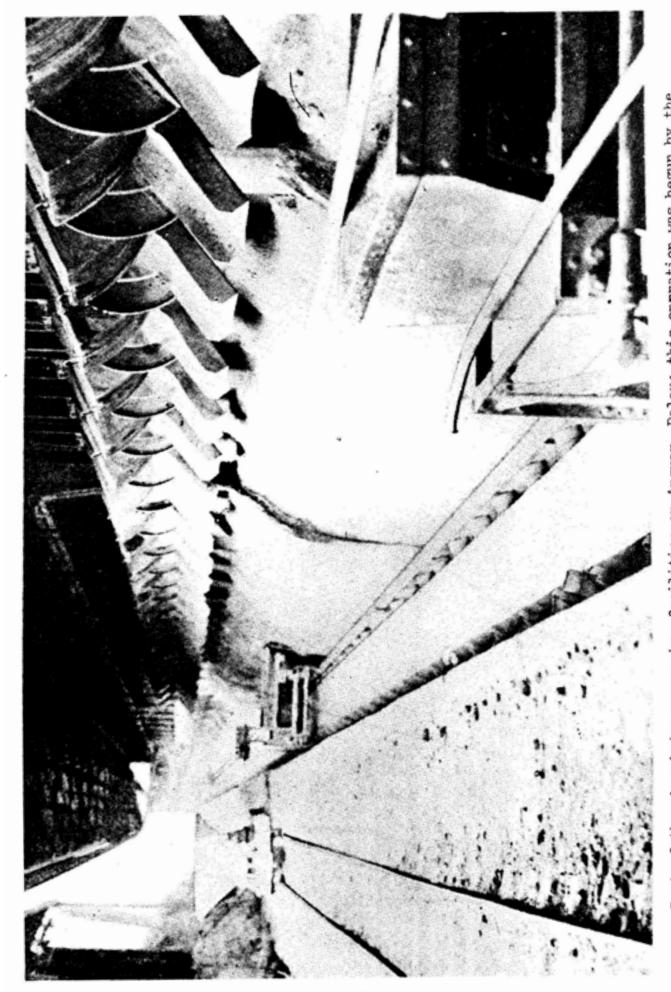


Black mother of pearl shells being raised from their beds in Palau in the 1930's

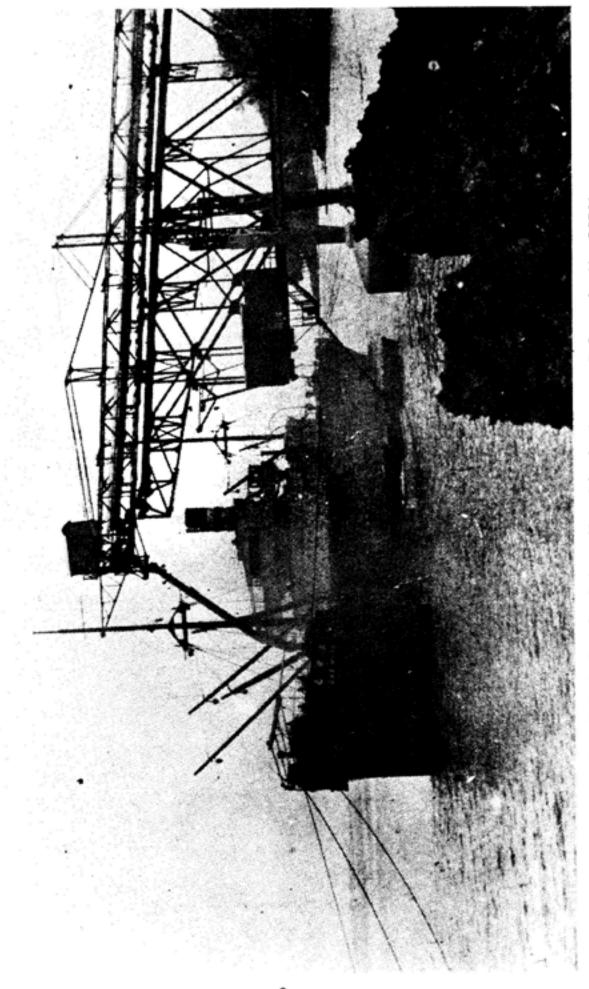
Pearls being taken out of the interior of mother of pearl shells in Palau



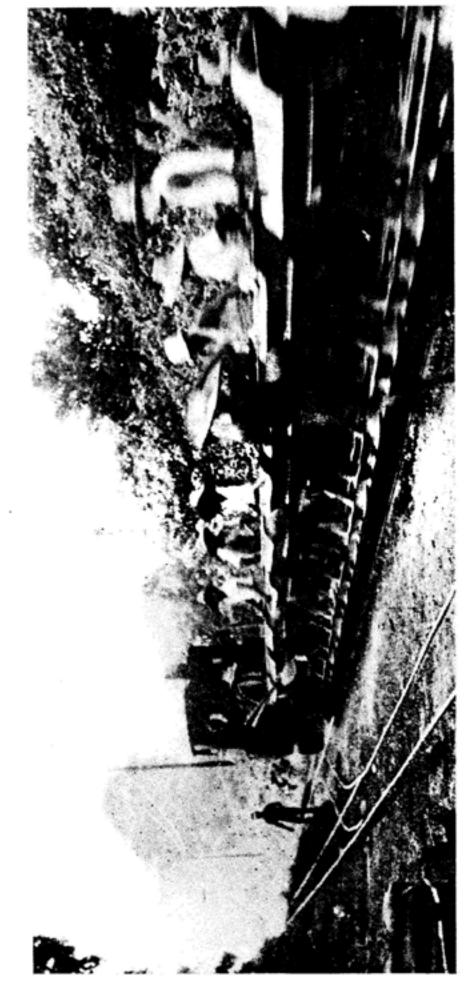
Facilities for the mining of phosphate on Peleliu: the Nanko Co. began phosphate mining in Peleliu in December of 1931.



Part of the phosphate processing facilities on Anguar, Palau: this operation was begun by the Japanese Government and then turned over at a later date to the Nanyo Kaitaku Co.



Phosphate being loaded on the ship in Anguar, Palau, in the 1930's



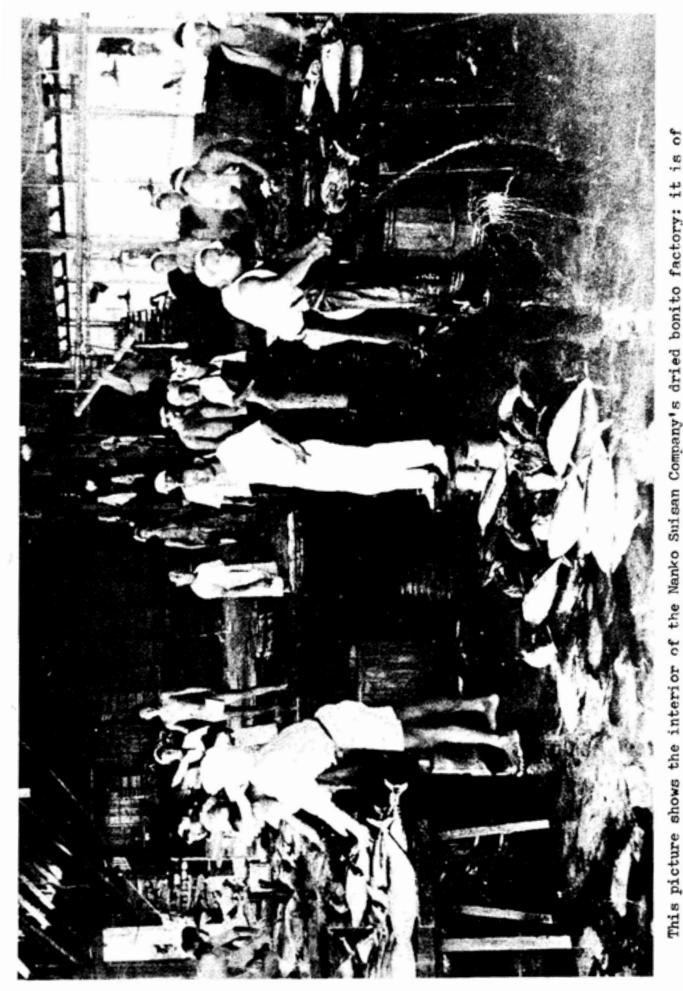
Cars for loading phosphate at the mines in Anguar: Micronesians were employed in large numbers by Japanese businesses and companies in Micronesia but usual only as manual laborers.



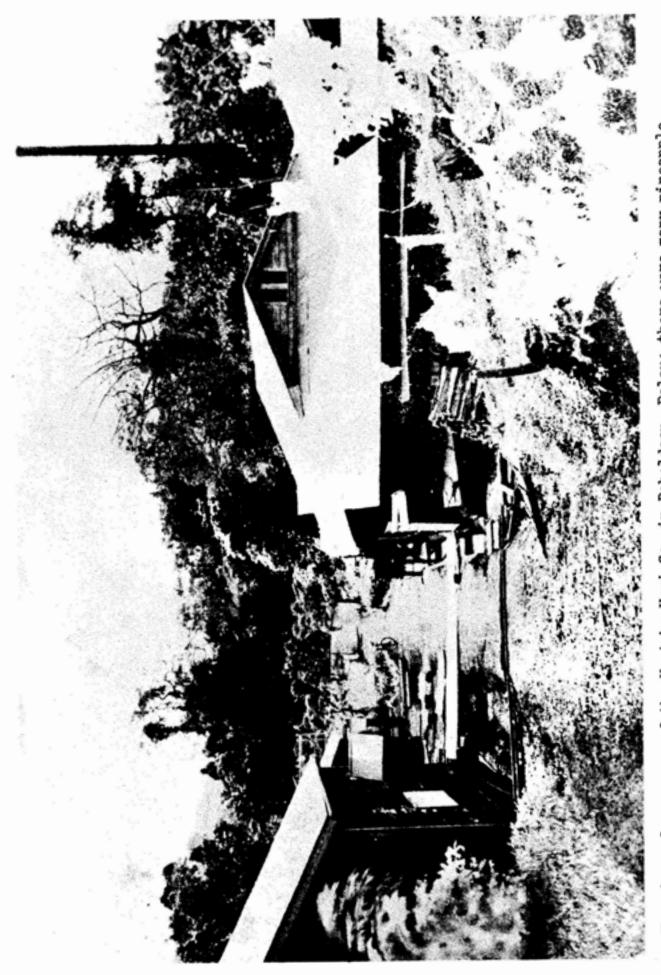
A conveyor belt for loading phosphate on to ships in Anguar



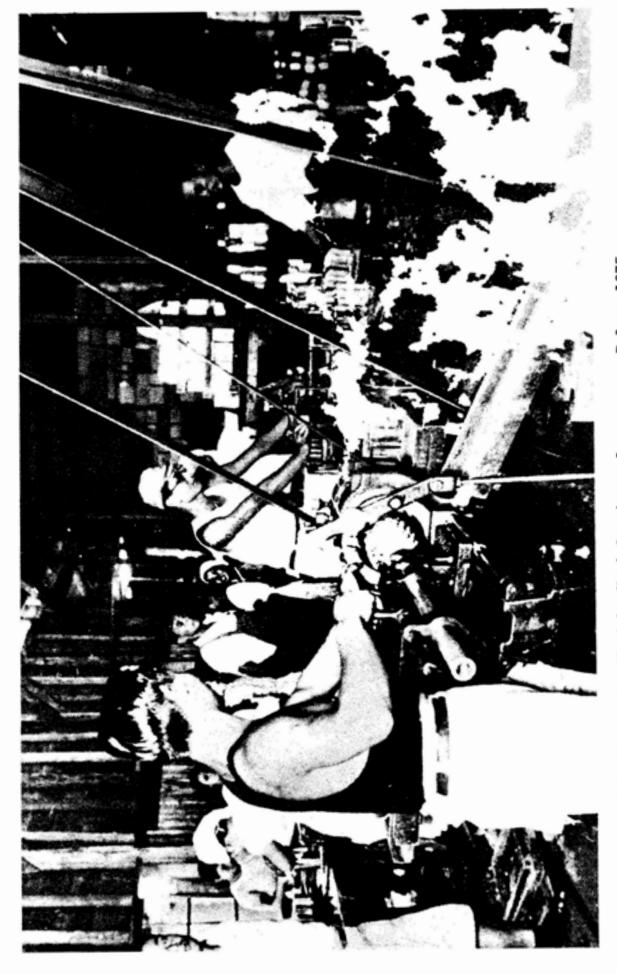
The dried bonito factory of the Nanko Suisan Co., Palau, 1935



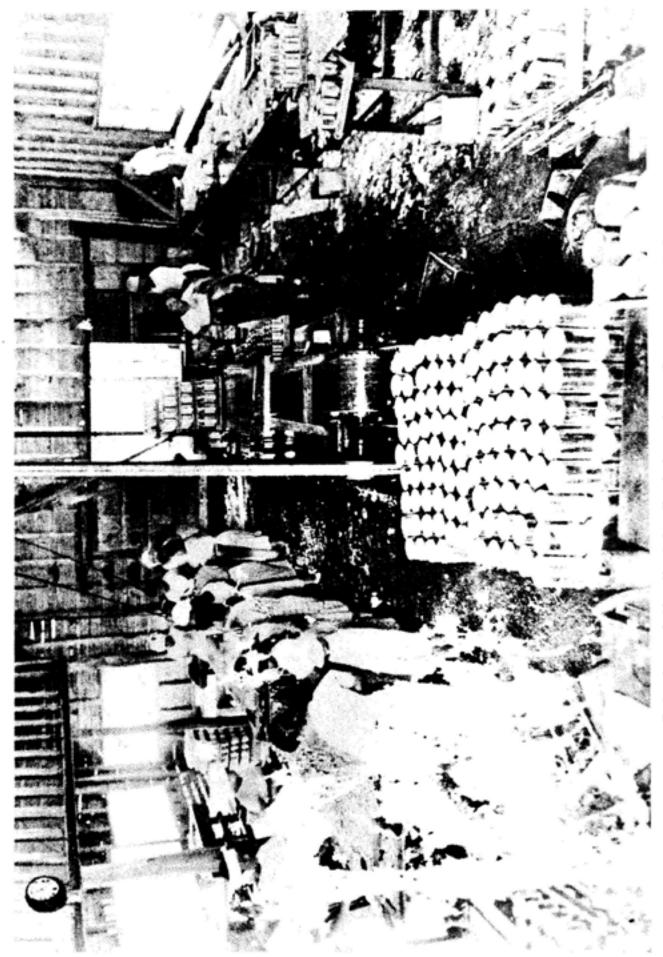
interest to note that not only was the capital and management of businesses came from Japan, but also many of the common workers were Japanese nationals. By the late 1930's, islands nuch as Saipan and Koror were entirely integrated into the Japanene economy.



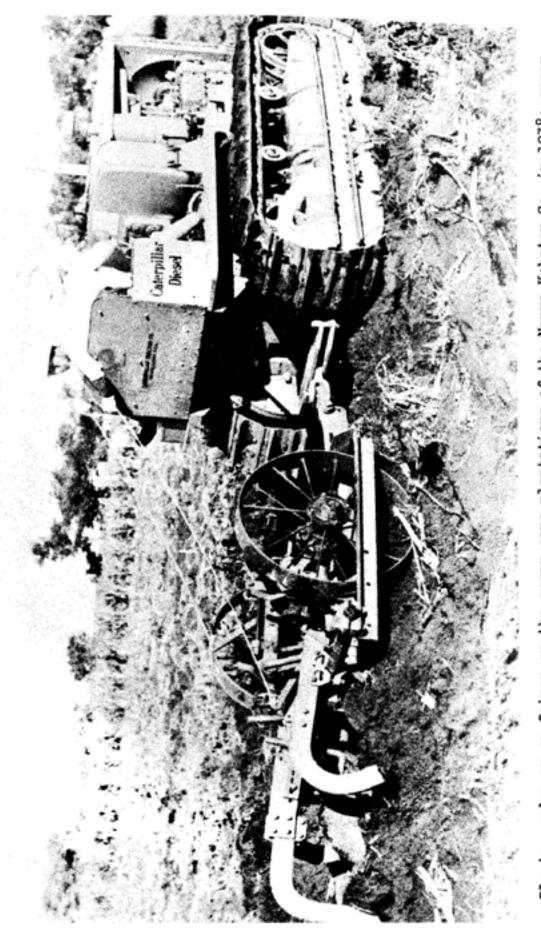
The pineapple cannery of the Nantaka Hori Co. in Babeldaop, Palau: there were many pineapple plantations in Babeldoap, and each had its own cannery. The largest plantations were in Ngermeskang and Ngerdok.



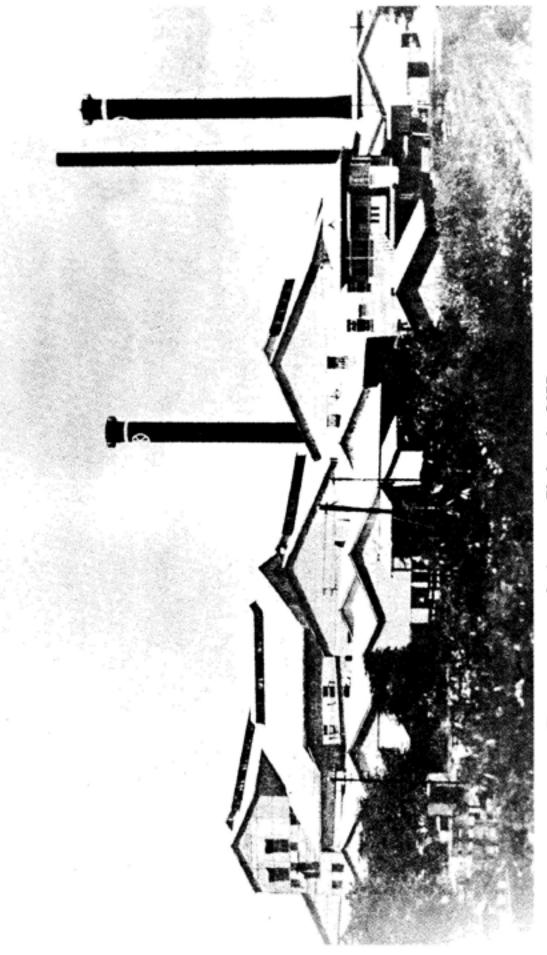
Interior of the Nantaka Hori Co pineapple cannery, Palau, 1935



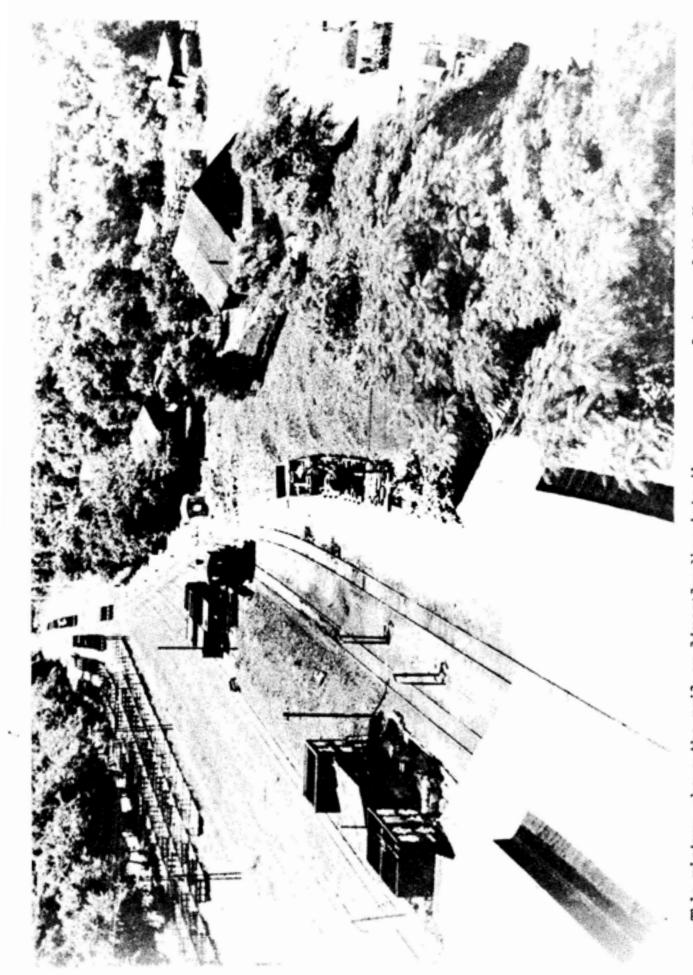
Interior of the Nantaka Hori Co. pineapple cannery, Palau



Plowing underway on Saipan on the sugar cane plantations of the Nanyo Kohatsu Co. in 1938: sugar Taiwan. Much of the sugar cane was used for industrial by-products in a Japan short of natural cane was entensively grown in the Mariana Islands and also in other Japanese colonies such as resources.



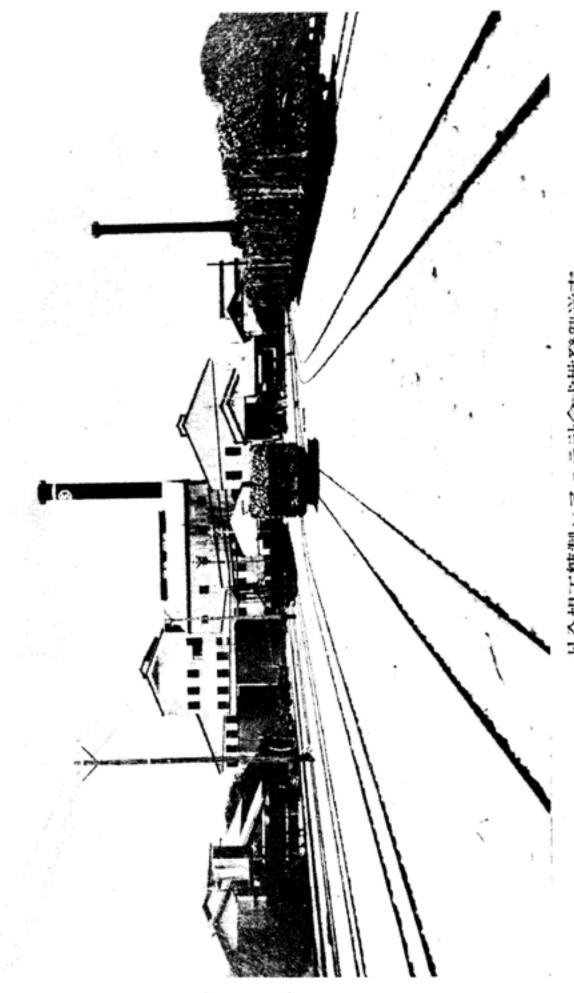
The sugar cane factory on Tinian in 1935



This picture shows the railway lines leading into the sugar cane factory of the Nanyo Kohatsu Co. on Saipan. The factory and its railway were destroyed during the battle for Saipan in 1944.

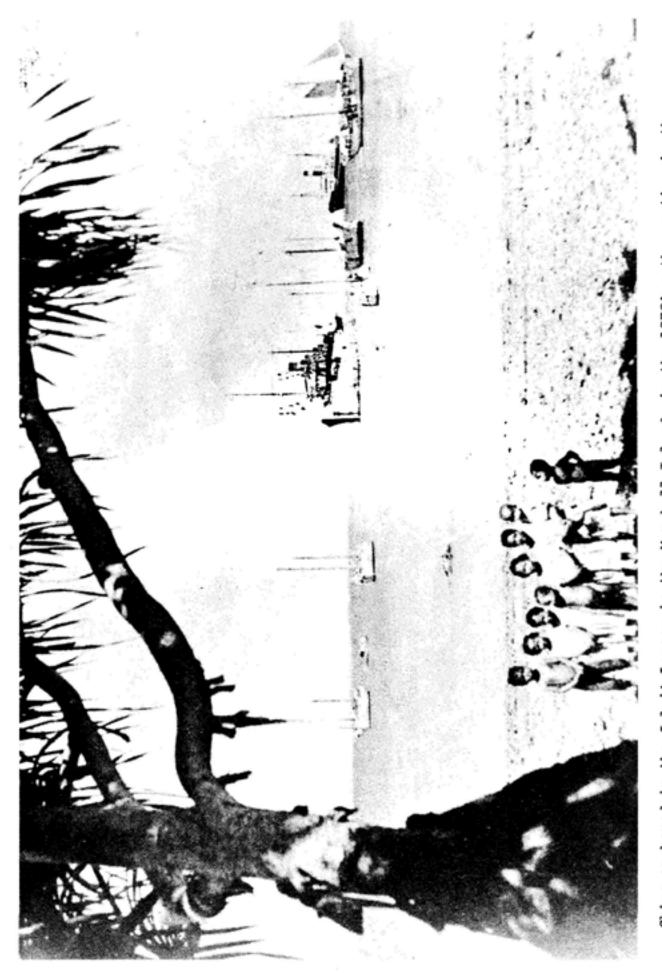
場工理修屬附所鏃採ルウガンア

A machine shop attached to the phosphate mine in Anguar, Palau

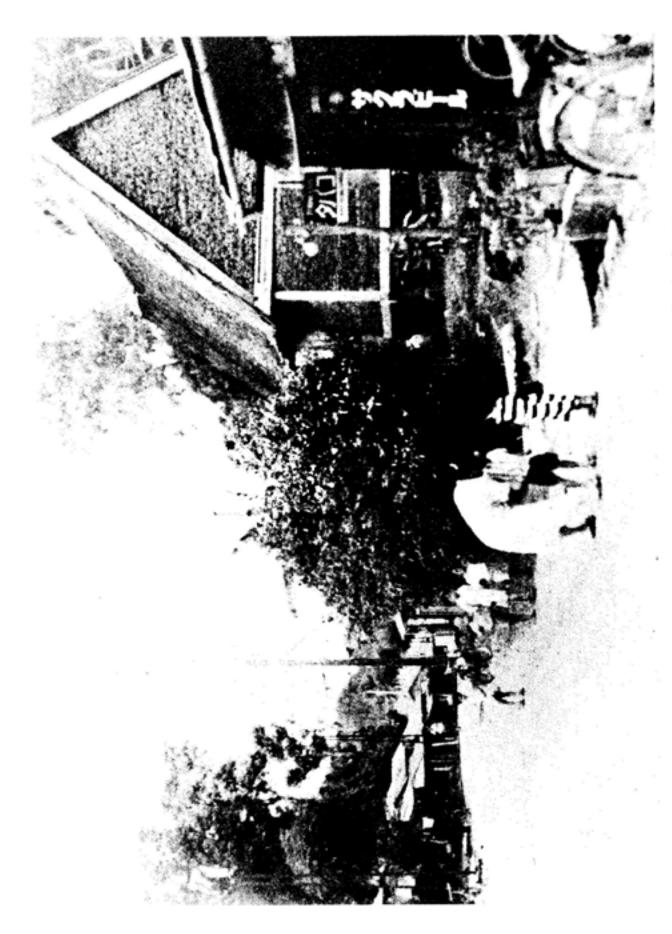


The sugar refinery of Nanyo Kohatsu Co. on Tinian

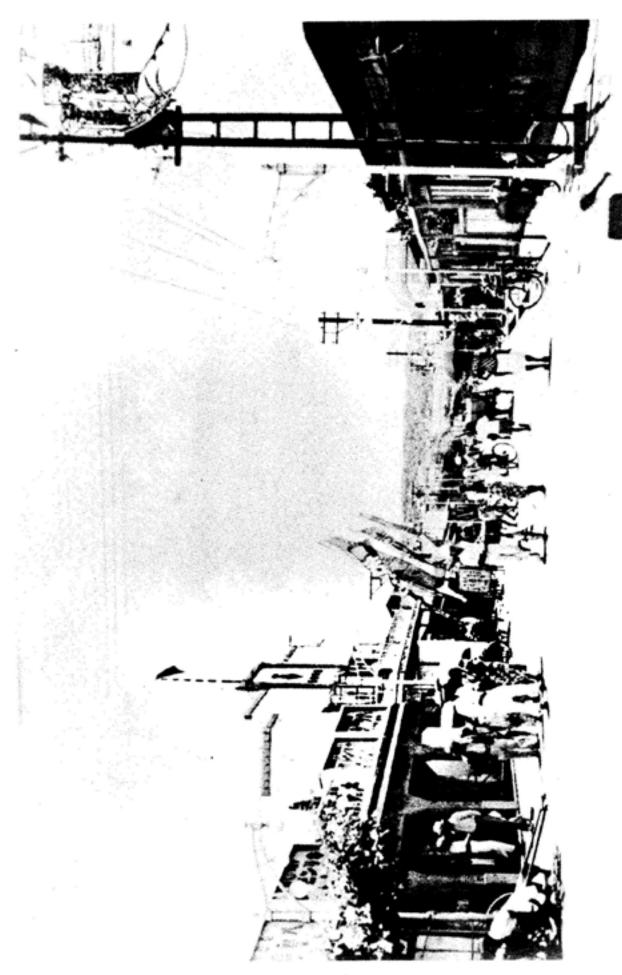
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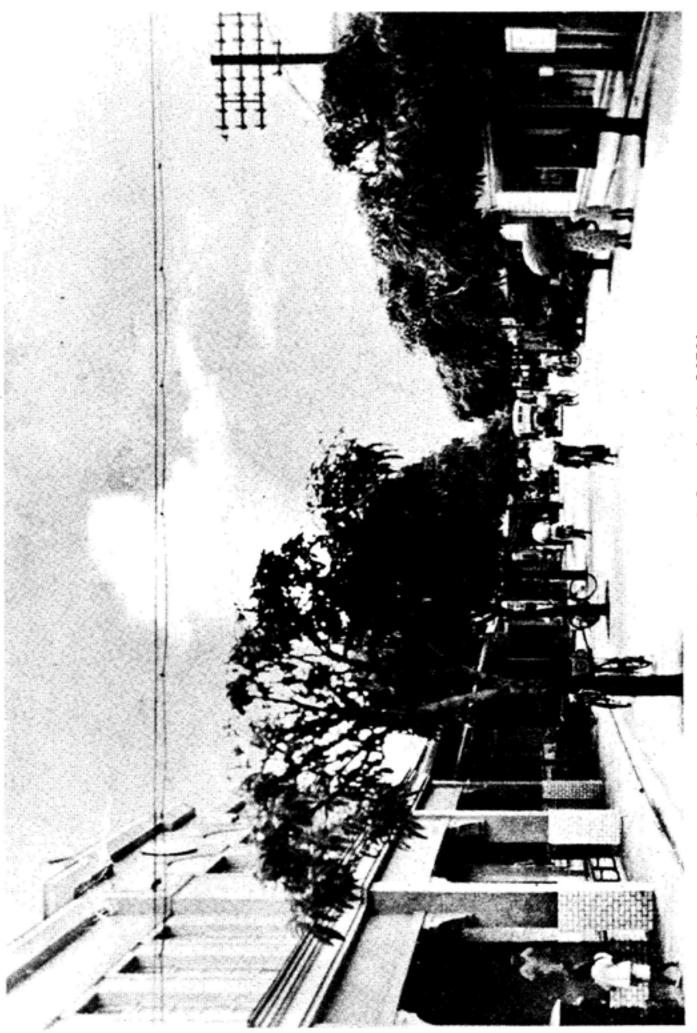
Ships anchored in the Jaluit Lagoon in the Marshall Islands in the 1930's: the caption in the Japanese book reads, "Here, the Japanese influence is still insignificant, and a ship from Japan comes only once or twice a month."



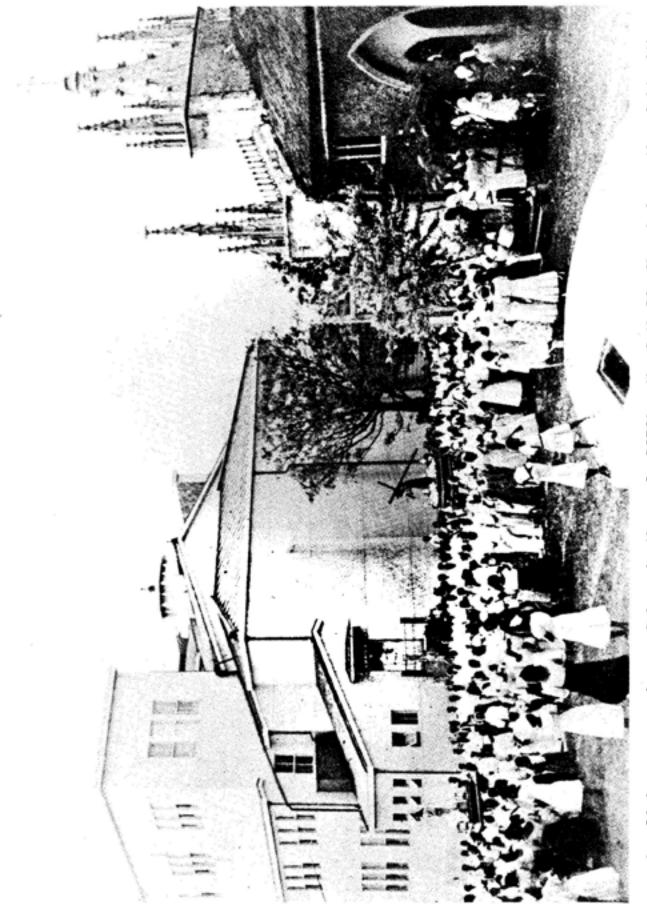
A side street of Koror, Palau in the mid 1930's: the picture is probably looking toward the area where the Factory Club and George's Theater are today. Eiclycles provided a cheap and practical means of transportation in Japanese times.



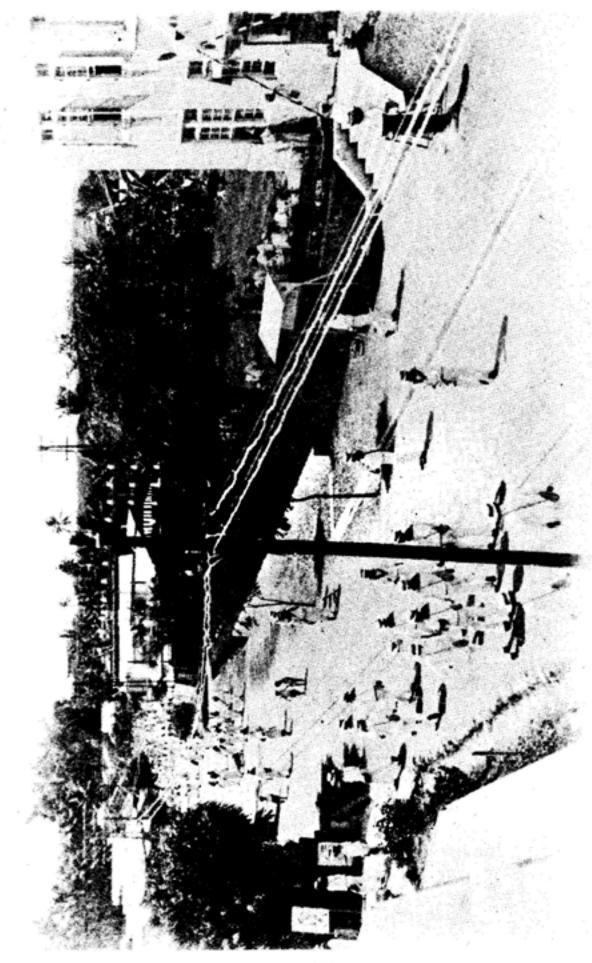
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A street scene from Koror, Palau, in the 1930's



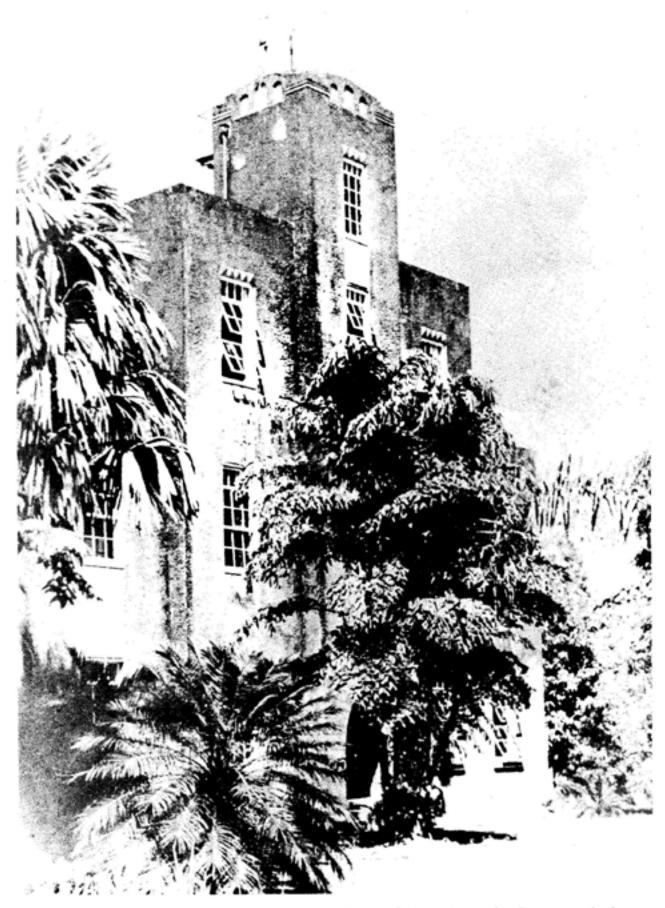
A religious procession on Saipan in the early 1930's: the Catholic Church is on the right with a Government Office Building on the left.



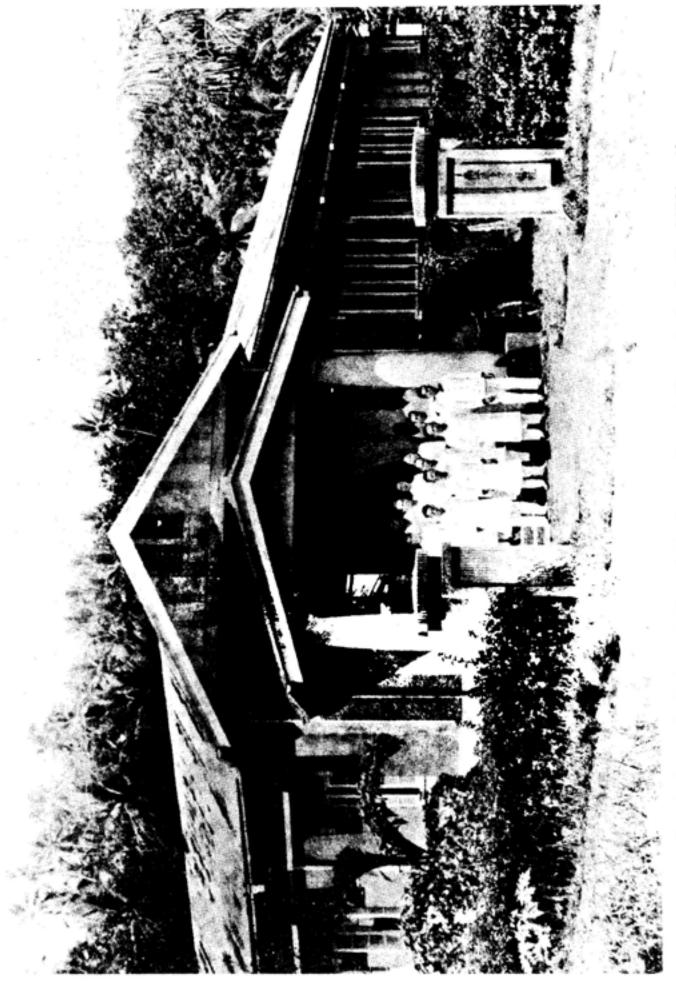
The main street of Koror about 1935: the Post Office is on the right and the street is filled with sailors of the Japanese Navy.



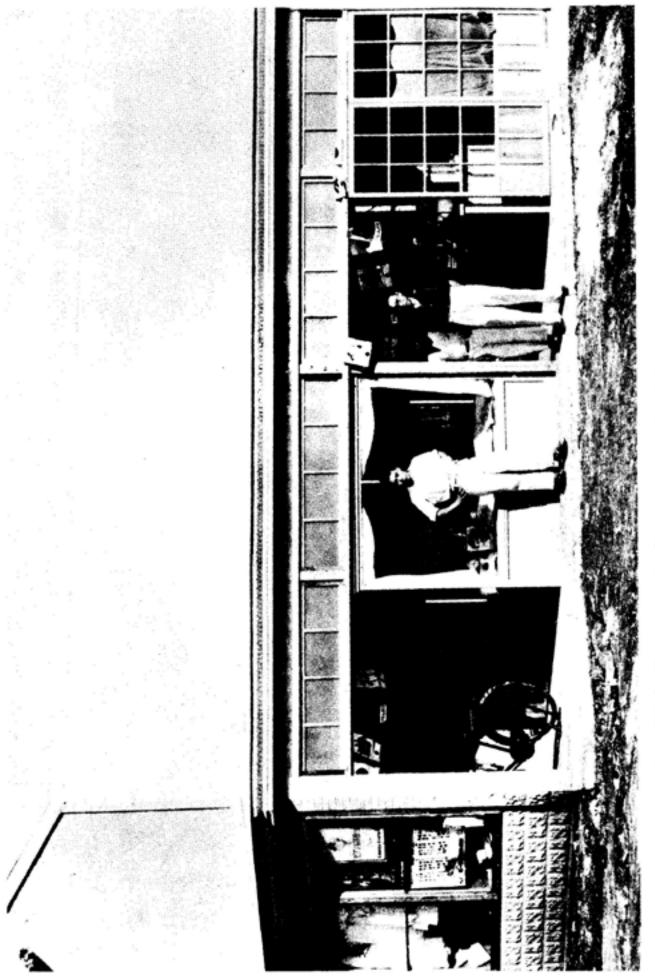
A Japanese built dam in Ponape: the dam was part of a scheme to use Ponape's rivers and waterfalls as parts of a water-powered electrical plant.



The building of the Tropical Industries Laboratory in Ponape: today this building is part of the Agricultural Station.

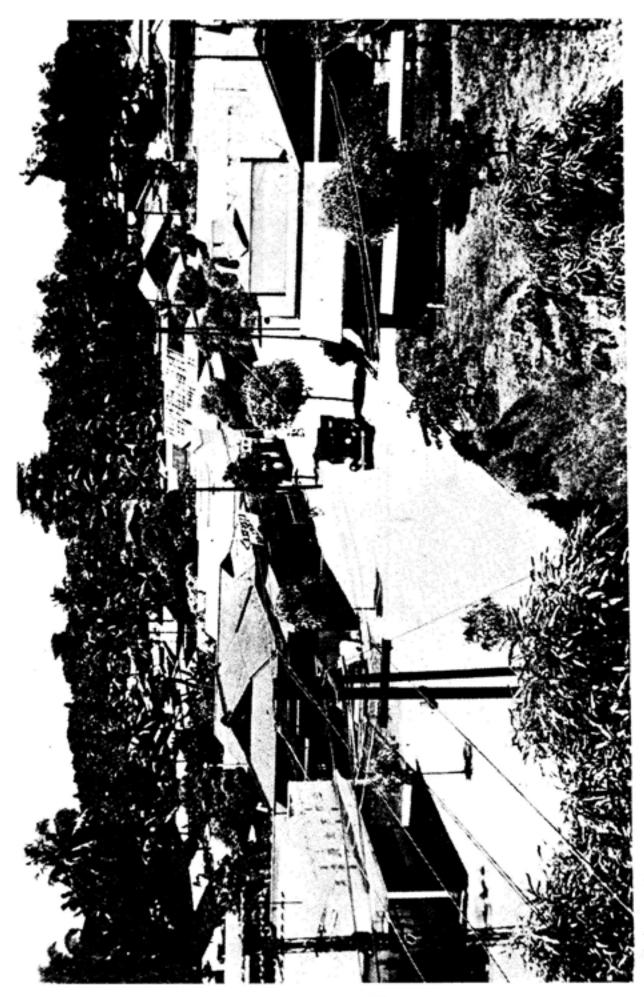


The staff and building of the public hospital on Dublon, Truk, in the 1930's: the building is still standing today, and one of its rooms is used as a dispensary.

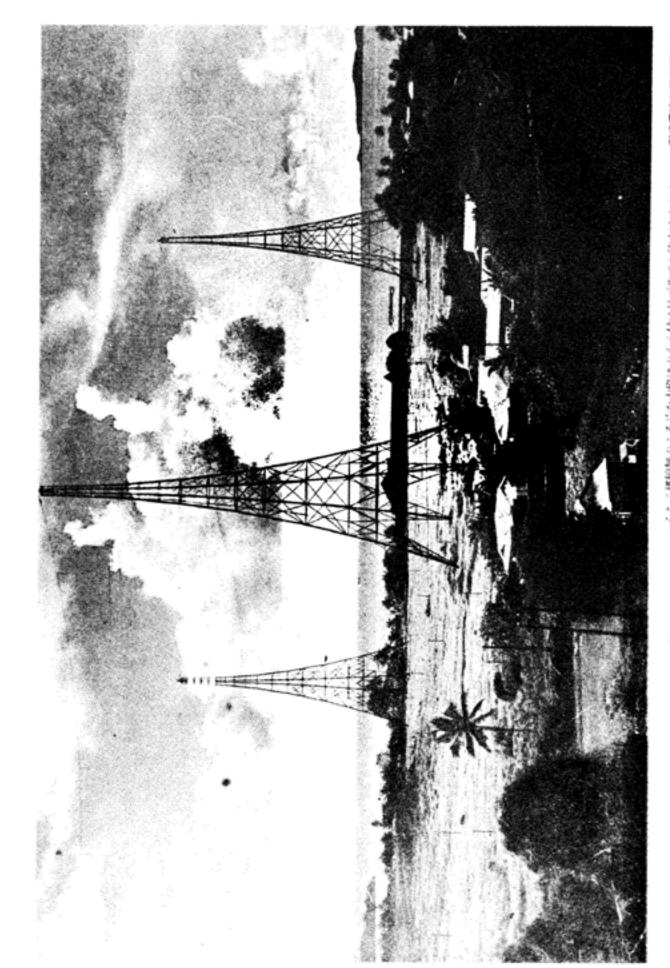


The "Makino" store on Dublon, Truk, in the 1930's

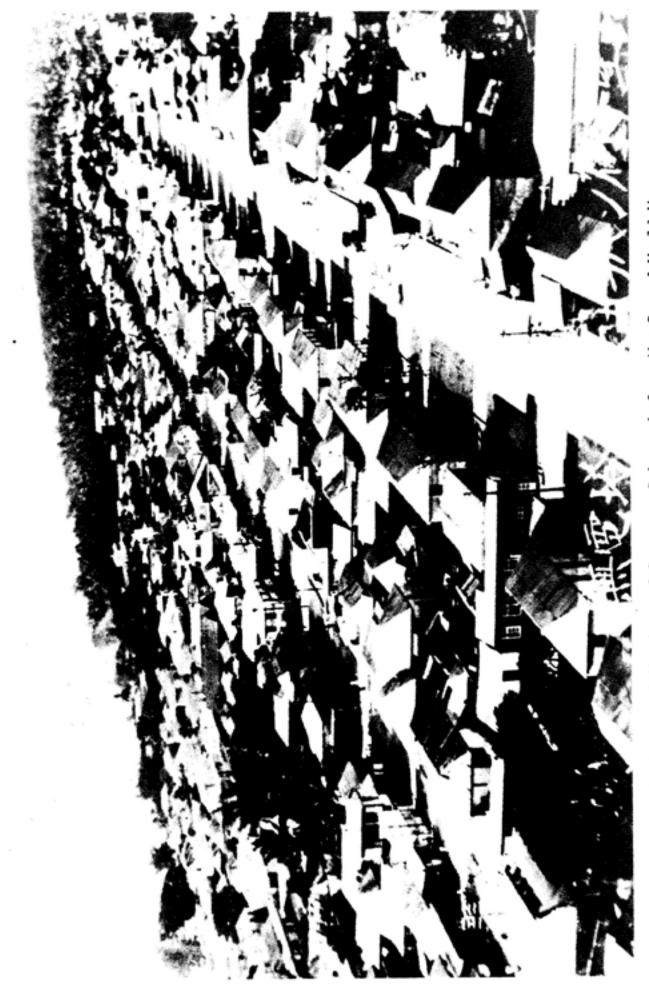
A street scene from Koror, Palau, about 1935



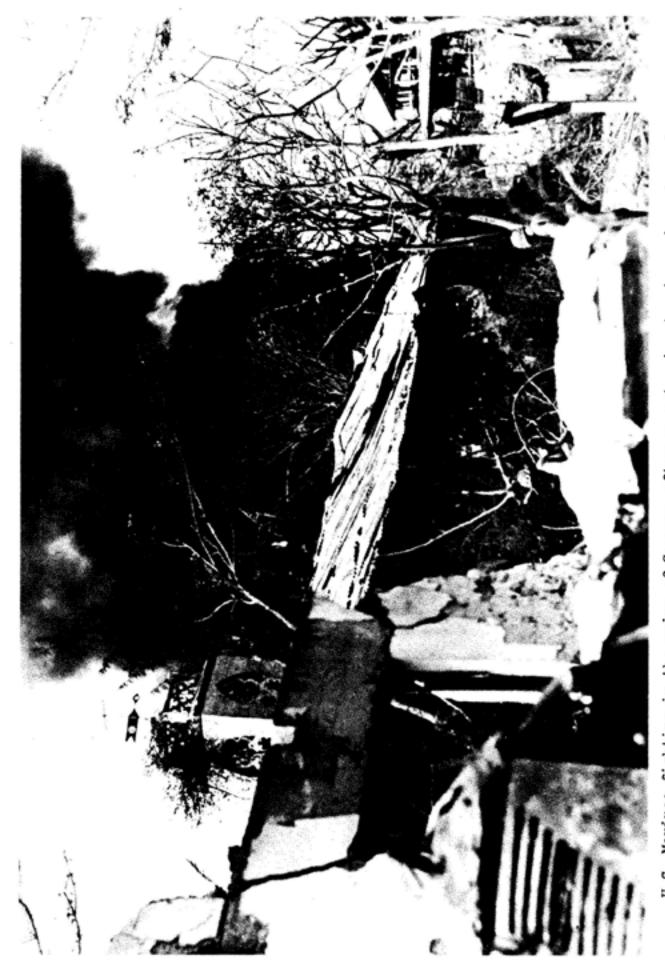
街市ルーロコ・オラパ



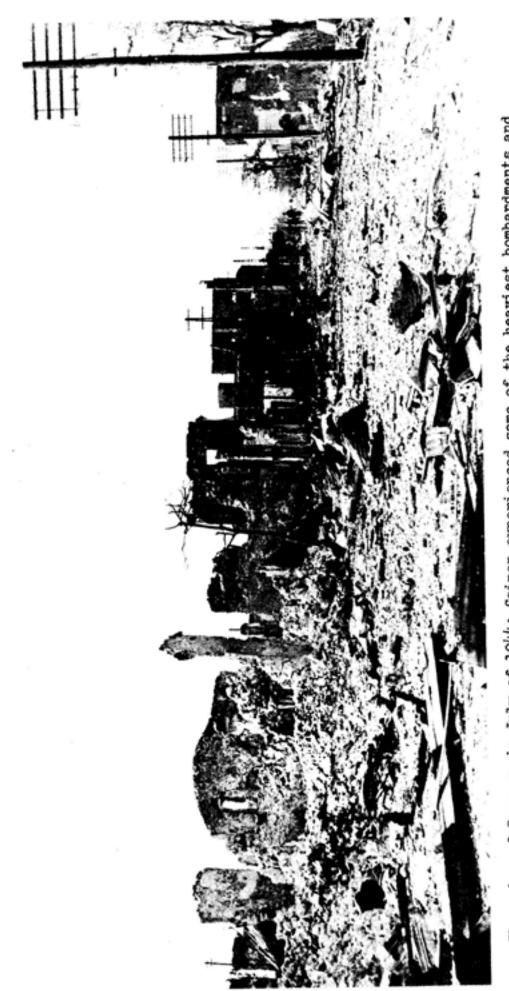
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A picture of the town of Garapan, Saipan, before the Second World War



U.S. Marines fighting in the ruins of Garapan after an extensive American air and naval bombardment in July of 1944: the belltower of the chuch is still standing today just off of Beach Road.



The ruins of Garapan in July of 1944: Saipan experienced some of the heaviest bombardments and fighting of the Pacific War. The towns of Saipan and Tinian were almost completely destroyed and the Saipanese were kept in refugee camps for months after the fighting had ended.



This U.S. Navy photo shows the bombing of the Truk Lapoon in February of 1944: Dublon Island is on the left with Moen in the background. This bombing sunk large numbers of Japanese ships within the Truk Lagoon and fatally weakened the Japanese Fleet in the Central Pacific.



These "story-boards" are from an abai or meeting house in Palau. They show some of the events in wartime Palau including forced labor under the Japanese Military Government and the bombing by American airplanes.



Chief Agifaru of Faraulap Atoll, Yap District, has just received an American flag from Rearforeign administration within 50 years. The shared experience of these four adm instrations Admiral Wright in this picture of 1.946. So Micronesians entered into their fourth period of has done much to unite Micronesians despite their linguistic and cultural differences.

A house in present day Babeldoap, Palau

Photo Credits

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MAPS

