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Nan'yō

The Rise and Fall of
the Japanese in Micronesia,
1885–1945

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*Dedicated to
the memory of Mori Koben
(1869-1945),
pioneer and patriot*

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CHAPTER 2

*South into the Pacific*The Japanese Acquisition of Micronesia,
1914–1922

THE APPEARANCE of Japanese warships in Truk Lagoon in October 1914 was the immediate result of a sudden and dramatic shift in global events. But it was also due to the emergence, over the previous two decades, of Japan as a maritime power of the first magnitude. With skill, determination, and the friendly assistance of Britain, the world's greatest seapower, Japan had built a modern navy, trained it, and sent it into battle in two wars, thereby achieving a dominant position in East Asia. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 had demonstrated both the vigor of modern Japan and its alacrity in assimilating Western naval technologies and strategies, to the great cost of China. With the acquisition of Taiwan as part of the victor's spoils, Japan secured the cornerstone for a colonial empire and a stepping-stone to the lands and seas to the south. The victory in the Russo-Japanese War a decade later was an even more impressive accomplishment. The defeat of the world's greatest land power and the shattering of one of its fleets were due in equal measure to Japanese daring, tenacity, and luck. By 1905, Japan, which had embarked upon the oceans just two decades before, was the predominant naval power in East Asia.

The Emerging Strategic Importance of Micronesia

Just as Japanese fleets had begun to exercise a commanding role in East Asian waters, American naval power had begun to ply the western Pacific with similar energy and ambition. The Spanish-American War of 1898 not only demonstrated American military and naval prowess, but also brought the United States the territorial spoils of empire—the Philippines and Guam—to which Hawaii and Samoa were soon added. Though this fresh intrusion of American power into the Pacific came at a time when Japan's maritime and territorial horizons were similarly

expanding, it did little to alter the essentially friendly relations between the two countries. The United States had little reason to suppose that Japan possessed the means, let alone the desire, to compete for a dominant role in the Pacific or to alter the essentially unbalanced relations between a greater and a lesser power. This American complacency about Japan's naval capacity was destroyed when the Japanese Combined Fleet crushed the Russian Baltic Fleet at the Battle of Tsushima in 1905. In the ensuing clear-headed reassessment of Japanese strength, Japan's military and naval potential became as important as its intentions. To those in command of the United States Navy, Japanese energy, ambition, and valor now reinforced a potential threat to America's new Philippine territories, which lay less than a day from Taiwan by steam. Much more ominous to ordinary Americans was the challenge to white American institutions and society posed by the growing stream of Japanese "aliens" into Hawaii, the Pacific Northwest, and California. The American response—alarmist, racist, and vehement—reached a climax in the discrimination episodes of 1906–1907 in California. These profoundly shocked Japanese optimism about the relationship with America and called into question the seemingly unlimited possibilities of Japanese expansionism. For the first time, public discussion of an open and violent rupture appeared on both sides of the Pacific, though it was largely limited to the war scare literature exemplified by Homer Lea's *The Valor of Ignorance*, a scenario of a possible Japanese invasion of the Philippines and the Pacific Northwest, and Mizuno Hironori's *Tsugi no issen* (The next battle) which included a description of an annihilating battle between Japanese and American fleets in the Pacific.

For their part, the Japanese and American governments attempted to damp down the rhetorical fires, recognizing that a Pacific war was neither inevitable nor in the interests of either country. Yet, as the naval establishments in each nation brought into sharper focus their strategic priorities for the immediate future, the adversary navy clearly emerged as the salient hypothetical enemy in a naval war. Each began to ponder the strategic problems of a Japan–United States conflict. In the staff colleges on both sides of the ocean the study of a Pacific war centered on two common assumptions: that the Japanese would conduct offensive operations against the Philippines at the outset of the war, and that the United States Battle Fleet would move westward across the Pacific to come to the aid of the American garrison and naval units there. To struggle with the problem, the American Army-Navy Board, as part of its contingency "color plans" dealing with interservice cooperation in wartime, drafted Plan Orange, which provided the strategic concept and mission in the event of war against Japan.¹ Over the next thirty years Plan Orange was kept under constant review and was frequently revised in keeping with changes in the strategic situation in the Pacific.

But the central dilemma of how to bring distance and time into a closer ratio in order to effect the rescue of the vulnerable American position in the Philippines remained nearly insoluble.

For the Japanese, the problem was how to confound and defeat an American battle line superior in numbers and firepower. The first Japanese fleet maneuvers, with the United States Battle Fleet as the hypothetical enemy, were held in the waters off Kyushu in 1908, and the first concrete study of operations against the Philippines and against a westward-moving American battle fleet were begun in 1910. From these exercises Japan's naval high command concluded that Japan's best hope of victory lay in a strategy of attrition whereby the size of the American fleet would be reduced by continuing flank attacks by light Japanese forces until at some point, probably in the western Pacific, an eventually superior Japanese fleet could challenge it in a final encounter.²

Initially in the study of the strategic considerations of a Pacific war, Micronesia was not seen as an area of critical importance by either Japan or the United States, largely because in German hands the islands had posed slight threat to either side. Certainly, few strategists in either Japan or the United States had given much thought to the importance of Micronesia before 1905. America had evinced so little interest in the islands prior to that time that Germany's annexation of the Marshalls in 1886 had passed almost unnoticed in America. At the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, however, the Naval War Board had recommended that one coaling station be retained in the Marianas.³ Accordingly, Guam, already occupied by American naval forces, became the sole American possession in Micronesia. Yet when Germany purchased the remaining Marianas and the Carolines from a beleaguered and sullen Spain, the United States government raised no objection. In the fourteen years prior to World War I the German naval presence in the Pacific was symbolic rather than strategic, as the largest German naval force was based far to the north at Tsingtao on the Shantung peninsula. After the Russo-Japanese War, however, the officers in the naval staff colleges in both Japan and America gradually became aware of the potential importance of Micronesia.

To the Japanese at the end of the nineteenth century, Micronesia was viewed, along with the rest of the tropical Pacific, as an area where they could realize that vaguely formed and romantic concept, "the southward advance." Yet in the 1880s and 1890s, with the exception of a few enthusiasts in high places like Enomoto Takeaki, the South Seas and the "southward advance" were the stuff of dreamers, novelists, and isolated explorers, not the concerns of the Japanese navy. Once the "South Seas fever" among the reading public subsided, the Nan'yō no longer caught the public imagination.

Yet, even as this romantic public interest in the South Seas subsided, an increasing number of influential professionals in politics, business, and the navy began to give more sober thought to the southward expansion of Japanese influence and power. Their views, expounded in lecture platforms, in the national press, and in a steady flow of professional articles, began collectively to demarcate a gradually emerging debate as to the proper orientation for Japan's expansionist energies, a choice between an advance onto the continent in north Asia, *hokushin*, or expansion southward, *nanshin*. Influential proponents, like Navy Commander Satō Tetsutarō and the journalist and Diet member, Takekoshi Yosaburō, grounded the concept of an advance of Japanese interest and power into equatorial lands on the serious concerns of economic advantage, national security, and geopolitics. Japan's future lay not in the north, but in the south, not on the continent, but on the ocean, insisted Takekoshi. Admonishing his compatriots to realize that it was Japan's great task as a people to turn the Pacific into a Japanese lake, he urged them to support an increase in the Japanese navy, an expansion of the merchant marine, an extension of trade routes, and unfettered emigration to the tropic lands south of Japan. To Takekoshi the importance of equatorial regions to Japanese national ambitions was critical. "Whoever controls the tropics controls the world," he declared.⁴

Because the concept of a southward advance was essentially a maritime strategy, it is not surprising that in the decade that followed the Russo-Japanese War the Imperial Japanese Navy came to support these somewhat nebulous aspirations with enthusiasm. In doing so, the navy's priorities ran counter to the demands for continental expansion urged by the army. The *hokushin-nanshin* debate went on within the context of competition between the two services for funds and national attention to support their large expansion or construction programs, claims which each service made by identifying a hypothetical enemy (the United States for the navy, Russia for the army) and assigning a geographical priority. In developing the concept of a "southward advance," the Japanese navy linked it with the need to protect Japanese commerce in the western Pacific and the consequent necessity to establish naval hegemony in those waters against the advance of American naval power.

Yet by the beginning of the new century's second decade, Japan had no foothold in either the South Seas or Southeast Asia, only economic aspirations in both areas. Japanese business and commerce had begun to make important inroads into Malaya, the Philippines, and the Netherlands East Indies, but operated at the indulgence of the colonial governments in those areas. In German Micronesia a few hundred Japanese traders and fishermen in the Carolines and Marianas constituted the only Japanese presence in the South Seas. To some expansionists like the

journalist Tokutomi Sohō the idea of marking time on the continent while pursuing illusory riches in tropic lands far to the south was a very roundabout way to advance Japanese interests. "How many rubber groves, pearl fisheries, and sugar plantations can we really expect?" he asked, urging that instead Japan put its energies and resources into expanding its power near at hand, in Manchuria and north China. But in 1913, the popular monthly *Taiyō* devoted most of its November issue to an exploration of the economic, strategic, and political choices posed by the *hokushin-nanshin* controversy.⁵

Opportunity Beckons: Japan's Decision for War, August 1914

All at once, by a stroke of amazing luck, it seemed possible with but slight effort to advance both strategies simultaneously, by exploiting the suddenly vulnerable situation of Germany in East Asia and the Pacific. No other consideration seems adequate to explain the rush with which Japan chose to enter the outer edges of the maelstrom of international conflict that swept over Europe in the summer of 1914. In a sense, Japan's decision to join Britain in a war against Germany underscored the priorities of the Imperial Japanese Navy, which had been seeking to recoup prestige lost in a shabby contract scandal the previous year, as well as to drum up public support for a much larger battle fleet. Furthermore, the navy had for many years cherished its British connection. The Royal Navy had helped train the fledgling Japanese navy in the early Meiji years, infusing it with an admiration for everything British, from Players cigarettes to the British heroes of the Great Age of Sail. (As Tōgō Heihachirō, victor at Tsushima, had put it, "My god is Nelson.") The Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 was the most important tie, having aimed largely at isolating Russia, a purpose it had admirably served during the Russo-Japanese War. But the claim—or at least that of some Japanese statesmen at the time—that Japan joined in the fight against Germany because of obligations under that alliance was specious, since its terms could not be so interpreted within the conditions that prevailed in the crisis of August 1914. It is clear that Japan went to war that month because it was to its very obvious advantage to do so.⁶

Separated from Berlin by half the globe, the prize German colony and naval base at Tsingtao on the Shantung Peninsula lay just across the China Sea. Its main protection, the German East Asiatic Squadron, was out of port when the war began. The German territories in Micronesia, New Guinea, and Samoa had no permanent naval units or military garrisons whatsoever. To move swiftly against these territories and wrench them from Germany's feeble grasp would be a simple strategic effort that could be made with minimum military risk, particularly since, as

everyone in the government expected, the Allies would be victorious, or, at the very worst, stalemated. The real problem was the diplomatic and political task of maneuvering the nation into war on the Allied side and finding a suitable pretext for the dispatch of naval and military forces to occupy the German territories in China and the Pacific without antagonizing the Allied powers, particularly Britain. Undoubtedly, everyone at the top level of the government recalled the painful national humiliation of two decades before, when the intervention of Germany, France, and Russia had forced Japan to retrocede Port Arthur, wrested from China at the end of Japan's stunning victory in 1895. This time the support, or at least the acquiescence, of Britain was essential. With it, Japanese forces could move swiftly against the German colonial territories, occupy them, and be in a position to argue at the peace table for the right to retain them permanently as a reward for contributing to the Allied victory. But how to arrange it?

As it turned out, the key was provided by Germany itself. The German East Asiatic Squadron, under Admiral Maximilian von Spee, was the most powerful single group of warships of their class at the time, but was divided and far from Tsingtao when the war broke out. The squadron's two principal warships, the battle cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, had sailed south in June on a cruise to show the flag in Germany's Pacific territories. Should they choose to return to join with the other units of the squadron they could, for a time at least, ravage Allied shipping in East Asia and the western Pacific, though soon, without a home base and faced with superior numbers, von Spee's fleet would be destroyed. Unknown to Britain or Japan, von Spee, at Ponape when the war began, chose instead to rendezvous quickly with his supply vessels in the Marianas, then turn back eastward across the Pacific, around the Horn, and through the Atlantic, to try to reach Germany. In this attempt, he was fated to smash up a weak British blocking force off Chile and then, in December, to meet annihilation under the guns of a powerful British squadron off the Falklands.

All this lay ahead. In the first week of August 1914 the uncertainty as to von Spee's whereabouts and the possibility of attacks on Allied shipping by German raiders provided Japan with the pretext to exploit the international crisis. Britain, for its part, was ambivalent about having Japan as an active ally. The British government was concerned about von Spee's isolated force in the Pacific, though it was in no panic. Moreover, from the first tremors of the world crisis, Britain was suspicious of Japan's intentions and apprehensive of its appetites. Because of the proximity of Tsingtao to Japan, the British government was resigned to giving Japan a free hand on the Shantung Peninsula, but was extremely reluctant to countenance a Japanese thrust into the tropical Pacific.

In the first few days of the war, Sir Edward Grey, British foreign secretary, had fended off eager Japanese offers of assistance. Then, on 7 August, the British government, as yet possessed of no adequate naval force in the East and momentarily unnerved by reports of German raiders attacking British shipping in the East China Sea, provided Japan with the wanted pretext: a request to the Japanese government for naval assistance in seeking out and destroying these enemy vessels. Hastening to exploit the opening thus presented, the Japanese cabinet met to "consider" the request. The nation's elder statesmen were consulted the following evening, and the emperor briefed. On 9 August, the Japanese government informed Britain of Japan's intention to go to war with Germany in order to honor its commitments under the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and in order to preserve the safety of the sea-lanes in the Pacific. Japan also assured the British government that in going to war it had no thought of territorial aggrandizement.⁷

Too late, Britain sought to put the cork back in the bottle. On 9 August, Sir Edward Grey informed the Japanese ambassador in London that recent intelligence indicated the naval alarms to be unfounded and that Britain, withdrawing its request, desired Japan to postpone military and naval operations until further notice. But the Japanese government brushed past this awkward diplomatic maneuver. Foreign Minister Katō Takaaki told the British ambassador in Tokyo that the Japanese government had made its decision, that the emperor had been informed, and that preparations for war had been set in motion. To reverse these would cause the downfall of the cabinet. Reluctantly, Britain conceded the point and agreed to recognize that Japan was entering into war on the basis of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The British aim now was to persuade Japan to limit its military and naval operations to East Asia.⁸

But in Tokyo, the leadership was impatient with such efforts to narrow Japanese options or to lessen the nation's new strategic opening. Moreover, to the diplomatic offensive was brought the logic that Japan was entering the war to destroy the threat to the sea-lanes posed by German warships, as Katō pointed out. Von Spee's most powerful ships were known to have sailed into Micronesia, and the most recent intelligence was that German warships were operating near Jaluit Atoll in the Marshalls. The Japanese navy had to be able to pursue them there for the same reasons that Australian naval units had begun to move toward German territories south of the equator. The British effort to keep its unwonted ally in check now crumbled. On 12 August, in London, Grey summoned the Japanese ambassador to explain that Britain hoped Japan would not occupy any of the German island territories in the Pacific, except for direct operational necessity; but in Tokyo, the government merely repeated its denial of any territorial ambitions.⁹

Moderates versus Fire-eaters: The Japanese Navy Occupies Micronesia

On 23 August, Japan declared war on Germany and a few days later began to assemble a military expedition that would land on the Shantung Peninsula and a special naval force that would enter Micronesian waters. On 14 September, the South Seas Squadron—a battleship, two cruisers, two destroyers, and three transports—steamed out of Yokosuka under Vice Admiral Yamaya Tanin, flying his flag on the battlecruiser *Kurama*, ostensibly in pursuit of the German East Asiatic Squadron. Yet by this time von Spee had left the Marshall Islands far behind, heading for Tahiti and the chance to sideswipe the French port facilities there as he made for Cape Horn.

If there is much seeming ambiguity about the Japanese naval expeditions to the South Seas in the early autumn of 1914 it is because there apparently was vehement disagreement in Tokyo as to how rapidly and aggressively Japan should move in exploiting the opportunity the war had provided. There were some, particularly in the top echelons of the Foreign Ministry and the Navy Ministry, who urged caution and counseled against flouting Britain's opposition to the outright occupation of German territory. Foreign Minister Katō was noted within the Foreign Ministry for his keen admiration and respect for the British. So too were Navy Minister Yashiro Rokurō and Vice Minister Suzuki Kantarō (destined, as an old man, twenty-one years later, to preside over the cabinet deliberations to end the Pacific War). For these men, establishing a foothold in the South Seas, desirable as that might be, was less important than retaining the trust and support of Japan's allies, especially Great Britain. Through the first six weeks of Japan's participation in World War I, their influence seems to have kept the mission and activities of the naval expeditions to the South Seas limited to their original ostensible purpose: the location and destruction of an enemy fleet.¹⁰

Arrayed against this policy of caution and moderation were a number of groups and individuals who sought, by lobbying, by stimulation of public enthusiasm, or by powerful bureaucratic pressure, to bring about an aggressive exploitation of the new opportunity. There were various nationalist groups ready to support any effort at territorial expansion, as well as commercial firms that obviously welcomed the possibility of Japanese sovereignty in Micronesia and a friendlier environment for their enterprises. In the first few weeks of the war one such firm bombarded the press, members of the Diet, and numerous government officials with arguments concerning the economic value and strategic importance of the islands. The more nationalist newspapers saw the Japanese movement into Micronesia as breaking the stranglehold on Japan's natural expansion into the Pacific that they believed America

had attempted through its occupation of Guam, Hawaii, and the Philippines.¹¹

But the most telling pressure for a swift and permanent occupation of Micronesia came from within the navy itself, where powerful bureaucrats within the Naval General Staff and the Naval Affairs Division of the Navy Ministry saw the opportunity to acquire advance bases that would give Japan a vital strategic advantage in any future conflict with the United States. These individuals provided the impetus behind the change in the character and purpose of Japan's naval expedition into Micronesia.

Several incidents illuminate this change, though they do not explain exactly how it came about. The first of these concerns the battle group sent south under Admiral Yamaya. After touching at the Bonins, the squadron stopped at the Marianas, but, finding no sign of the enemy, pushed on as rapidly as possible toward the Marshalls, arriving at Eniwetok Atoll on 29 September. Yamaya's ultimate objective, however, was Jaluit Atoll, the German commercial headquarters in the central Pacific. He anchored off Jaluit on 30 September and, finding the vast lagoon empty, put a landing party ashore. The handful of German authorities on the island wisely made no attempt to resist or to stir up the indigenous population, who willingly accepted the atoll's new occupiers. After gaining control, Yamaya radioed his report to naval headquarters in Tokyo. Back almost immediately came instructions that he was to withdraw the landing party at once and retire to Eniwetok. Yamaya complied and steamed westward once more, only to receive further orders a few days later that he was to return to Jaluit and land a permanent occupying force. This he did, putting ashore a permanent landing party of three officers and one hundred enlisted men on 3 October.¹²

In the meantime, a second naval task force had been formed, supposedly at the request of the British government, which wished to have a battle group sent to Australia to protect troop transports carrying ANZAC contingents on the first leg of their journey to Europe. This Second South Seas Squadron (Yamaya's group being renamed the First South Seas Squadron), consisting of the battleship *Satsuma* and two light cruisers, was commanded by Rear Admiral Matsumura Tatsuo. The day after assuming his new command and before his departure from Sasebo, Matsumura called to pay his respects at the principal offices in naval headquarters in Tokyo. His first stop was the Navy Ministry to consult with Navy Minister Yashiro who cautioned him that, considering the importance of maintaining good relations with Japan's Anglo-allies, it would be most unwise to occupy any of Germany's Pacific island territories. If the military situation compelled him temporarily to do so, he was to withdraw the landing force as quickly as neces-

sity permitted, and on no account was he to raise the Japanese flag. He received similar warnings from Vice Minister Suzuki, who added that he was to be particularly circumspect in any operations near Yap and Saipan, since Britain had announced its intention to send landing parties to both these islands.¹³

After his calls on the minister and vice minister, Matsumura visited the Naval General Staff offices. When he relayed the instructions given him at the Navy Ministry he met a sulfurous response. The vice chief of staff and Admiral Inoue Yoshika stormed that these were ridiculous orders. Why on earth shouldn't enemy territory be occupied, and why withdraw a naval landing party for no operational reason? Akiyama Saneyuki at the Naval Affairs Division of the Navy Ministry was equally derisive of the ministry's policy of caution. The whole thing was rot, he insisted. Yamaya had been sent on a fool's errand, chasing von Spee around the vastness of the Pacific with only three ships. In any event, Japan ought to have something to show for its efforts and if Matsumura wanted to be of real service to his country, Akiyama argued, he ought to pick up a few of the islands in Micronesia, particularly those like Angaur, which were rich in phosphates. Matsumura himself seems to have warmed to Akiyama's arguments that the South Seas were an undeveloped, underpopulated treasure house of natural riches, waiting to be developed by Japanese enterprise and resourceful immigrants.¹⁴

These two separate developments—the altered instructions sent to Admiral Yamaya and the demonstration of an open rift at navy headquarters noted by Admiral Matsumura—form the background to the new instructions sent to these two commanders, now both at sea, by the navy minister. Both squadrons were instructed to carry out “temporary occupations” of the principal German territories in Micronesia.¹⁵ It is clear that at some point in the four days between Matsumura's conversations in Tokyo and Yamaya's occupation of Jaluit, the expansionists in the navy had triumphed. Though the cabinet still equivocated, the navy, in effect, had decided to run up the flag in the South Seas. On 5 October the First South Seas Squadron anchored off Kusaie; on the seventh it sailed past the great rock at Sokehs (Jokaj) and entered Ponape Harbor; and on the twelfth the battleship *Kurama*, followed by a cruiser escort, entered the enormous lagoon at Truk where Mori Koben saw it at anchor. To the west, Matsumura in the battleship *Satsuma*, escorted by two cruisers, sailed into the harbor at Yap (to the consternation of the Australian navy, which had been on its way north to do so); on 7 October, his squadron put a landing party ashore at Koror in the Palaus; on the ninth Angaur and its German phosphate mines were in its hands; and on the fourteenth, when the battleship *Katori* dropped anchor in the roadstead off Garapan Town on Saipan, the Japanese occupation of Micronesia (except for the American colony of Guam and

the British Gilberts) was complete.¹⁶ The effort had been swift, bloodless, and easy.

It had also been furtive. Except for the initial landings on Jaluit Atoll in the Marshalls, Japan gave little publicity to its occupation of the other island groups in Micronesia. And, after taking control of the islands, the Japanese navy made it plain that it did not welcome the entry of any other ships into Micronesian waters, even those of its allies.¹⁷ Admittedly, this was a policy little different from that pursued by the United States in the decade following its conquest of Micronesia in World War II. Yet the element of secrecy that pervaded the Japanese occupation of Micronesia from its earliest beginnings was to create unnecessary suspicion and ill will for Japan.

A Clever Hand: Japan's Secret Diplomacy, 1915-1917

In point of equity, Japan can hardly be chided for the alacrity with which it snapped up the German Pacific islands north of the equator, since Australian and New Zealand naval units had been no less tardy in occupying the German territories to the south: Kaiser Wilhelmsland in New Guinea, the Bismarcks, Nauru, and Samoa. Indeed, to prevent an accidental clash between Japanese and Australian warships, the British and Japanese governments had reached agreement in October, making the equator the operational dividing line between Japanese and British naval forces.¹⁸

Yet the outright Japanese seizure of German Micronesia provoked the sort of alarmed reaction from Britain and the dominions that moderates in the Japanese government had feared. What aroused the ire of the Anglo-Saxon nations was what they considered to be the rank opportunism and the furtive and devious manner by which Japan had acquired its spoils of war, followed by Japan's obstinate refusal to expend men, ships, or material in other theaters of war where the Allies could have used real help. Although the historical record offers extenuating circumstances to explain Japanese conduct during World War I, to their embattled Allies at the time, it was cause for suspicion.

Alarmed by the speed with which Japan had moved into the South Seas, Britain now attempted to prevent Japan from establishing a permanent claim to its Micronesian spoils. Sir Edward Grey cabled Katō Takaaki that, in Britain's view, the respective British and Japanese occupations of Germany's Pacific territories should be considered a temporary wartime measure and that the final disposition of the islands should be left to discussion between the Allies at the end of the war. Katō's rather evasive answer came back on 1 December. He agreed that the matter should be left "without prejudice to the final arrangements" at the conclusion of the war. But he pointed out that,

in view of the very extensive operations in which the Japanese Navy has been engaged and is still engaged in cooperation [with the British navy], the Japanese nation would naturally insist on the permanent retention of all German Islands north of the equator and the Imperial Government will have to rely on the support of the British government for the accomplishment of that objective when the proper moment arrives.¹⁹

This amazing bit of artifice—partly accommodating, partly insistent—must have strained the patience of Sir Edward. Noting dryly that Japanese operations since entering the war "have been greater in extent than was contemplated," he commented that Katō's statement was inconsistent, to say the least. To insist on Japan's permanent possession of the Pacific islands and to expect advance British support for Japanese claims to them at the peace table hardly squared with Katō's acceptance of the principle that all such matters should be decided at the end of the war, let alone Japan's professions in August that it harbored no territorial ambitions whatsoever. Katō was at once conciliatory and obstinate, replying that his statement had simply been an expression of friendship for Britain, but noting also that Japan had gone to a rather great effort as an allied belligerent and would find it impossible to quit the islands after the war.²⁰

There the matter rested for several years, while the Japanese navy set about establishing a firm administrative presence in Micronesia, untroubled by war's alarms or by the critical observation of other powers. Early in January 1915 the First South Seas Squadron returned to Yokosuka. Two weeks before, the Second South Seas Squadron had been transformed into the Provisional South Sea Islands Defense Force (Rinji Nan'yō Guntō Bōbitai), which, for the next eight years, was to administer the "newly occupied territories," *shinsenryōchi*, the wartime term for the ambiguous legal status of Micronesia. In this first rapid stage of the Japanization of Micronesia, Japan's naval government undertook a vigorous effort throughout the islands to place a permanent Japanese imprint on them. The administrative structures, the education and indoctrination of the indigenous population, the encouragement of Japanese enterprises, and the discouragement of involvement by other foreign powers, all reflected the official assumption that Japan was in the islands to stay.

Displaying the Japanese talent and obsession for information gathering, the government in Tokyo also sought to buttress its future claims to Micronesia by studying its new territorial acquisitions in meticulous detail. In the spring of 1915 a government-sponsored investigating team, composed largely of specialists in medicine, agriculture, and natural science from Tokyo University, arrived at Truk aboard a navy steamship to begin a two-month tour of all the island groups, investigating all manner of questions concerning them. Their massive report,

published several years later by the Ministry of Education, was obviously intended, among other things, to demonstrate to other powers that Japanese claims to Micronesia were based on a solid understanding of the territories they wished to administer.²¹

For over two years, European armies ground each other into the blood and muck of the trenches and opposing fleets collided in titanic and fruitless battle in the North Sea. Japan, with great common sense and uncommon parsimony, looked on from distant and tranquil shores, resistant to all entreaties from Europe for a commitment of lives and treasure to European battlefields, yet determined not to lift its hand from the territories it had so easily seized at the outset of the war. Occasionally, amid the world's chaos, Japanese statesmen would attempt to catch the attention of one or another of the embattled Allies regarding Japan's claims. In the summer of 1915 the ambassador to France, Viscount Ishii Kikujirō, passing through London on his way back to Japan for reassignment, revealed to Sir Edward Grey his view that, while he himself did not consider the former German islands in the Pacific as being of vital importance, "they appear to the Japanese people as the only memento of their sacrifices of the war." If they did not become a Japanese possession, public opinion in his homeland, Ishii noted pointedly, would reach fever pitch. Sir Edward replied laconically that he would keep that in mind.²²

Unable through such sly hints to obtain firm advance commitments from its allies for support for its territorial aspirations, Japan tried a different tack. In the spring of 1916, the Foreign Ministry leaked word of roundabout offers made to Tokyo by Germany for cession of the Pacific territories to Japan in return for a termination of hostilities between the two nations. Quickly, Britain squelched this initiative by reminding Japan of its pledge upon entering the war that it would not enter into a separate peace.²³

Not until January 1917 did the Japanese government see an opening by which it could make effective overtures to the Allies for the sort of commitment it sought. In that month, Britain had sent one of several appeals for help in the European theater, this time a request for Japanese naval units to assist in antisubmarine patrol work in the Mediterranean. Early in February, Motono Ichirō, the new foreign minister, let it be known that the Japanese cabinet could be moved to provide such assistance if firm British assurances regarding disposition of Shantung and the Pacific islands were forthcoming. Two weeks later Motono had his guarantees.²⁴

Several reasons, beyond the need for Japanese naval assistance, were behind this sudden change of heart by Britain. Undoubtedly, Britain recognized that Japan's retention of the islands in some form was inevitable. It was undeniable that Japanese naval garrisons were scattered

throughout Micronesia, and none of the Allied powers seemed tempted to try to dislodge them. Undeniable, too, were the ambitions of Britain's own dominions in the South Pacific, ambitions that equalled those of Japan north of the equator. Australian naval garrisons were posted in New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago, and New Zealand had occupied German Samoa. Australia was determined to retain these territories upon the conclusion of the war, if for no other reason than to prevent further Japanese southward expansion in the Pacific. As a major force within the empire, Australia was able to press its views upon Britain. Thus, the Foreign Office note of February not only conveyed Britain's guarantee of support for Japan's claims to the German islands north of the equator, but contained a demand for similar Japanese support for British claims to those to the south.

Once Japan had Britain's support, commitments from the other Allies, none of whom had competing interests in the Pacific, were easy enough to acquire. France sent in its agreement on 1 March, Russia agreed four days later, and on 28 March, Italy approved.²⁵ By the spring of 1917 Japan had quietly collected all the IOUs necessary to feel confident about the disposition of the Micronesian islands at the peace table.

The United States Navy Looks at Micronesia, 1914-1918

Of these arrangements, Japan's chief rival in the Pacific knew nothing. It is entirely understandable that during the first few years of the war Japan felt no obligation to convey to the United States any information about the secret agreements entered into with its European allies. Yet even after America's entry into the war in April 1917, Japan kept its own counsel on the matter. Viscount Ishii, now ambassador to Washington, in his call on Secretary Lansing in the summer of 1917, mentioned Micronesia, remarking that "no government in Japan could survive if it did not retain some of the South Sea islands as souvenirs of the war," and adding that Sir Edward Grey had practically assented to Japan's insistence on this point. Like Grey, Lansing let Ishii's remark pass without comment.²⁶ Perhaps he did not grasp its full meaning, or perhaps he felt that, even if true, it was of small consequence. There is some evidence that he subsequently learned of the Anglo-Japanese accords in greater detail, but if so, he failed to pass the word along, either to his president or to his subordinates at State. At war's end, therefore, the United States had no coordinated or effective policy toward Japan's Pacific advance.

Nevertheless, Japan's occupation of the German Pacific islands north of the equator in the early autumn of 1914 had been alarming to American strategists, particularly in view of the cluster of antagonisms between the two countries that had emerged over the past five years.

American phobias about Japan—the racial stereotypes, the issue of Japanese immigration, the continuing babble about the Yellow Peril—had deepened antagonisms on both sides of the Pacific. By 1913, the tide of mutual resentment had reached ominous levels and was held in check only by the common sense of both governments and the redirection of the attention of both publics to the cloudburst that had broken over Europe in the summer of 1914.

For military and naval planners in Tokyo and Washington, developments in the first years of the war hardly lessened the critical strategic problems of the Pacific. Japanese naval strategists had reason to be concerned in 1914 by the opening of the Panama Canal, which greatly enlarged the American capacity to exert a formidable naval presence in the Pacific, and in 1916 by the obvious American effort to establish naval supremacy by constructing a navy “second to none.” For American naval planners, the global crisis seemed to increase the basic strategic dilemma of protecting American territories in the western Pacific. On the eve of the war, the navy’s General Board had revised Plan Orange to take into account the possibility of a coalition between Japan and Germany. Then, in the autumn of 1914, American strategists became alarmed by the alacrity of Japan’s move into the western and central Pacific and grew disturbed about Japanese intentions, particularly in view of the veil of secrecy the Japanese navy had dropped around its new conquests. In the strategists’ view, a permanent armed Japanese occupation of Micronesia would make an already difficult American strategic mission in the Pacific almost impossible, since, in enemy hands, all the Micronesian groups bristled with potential danger: the Marianas curved menacingly down toward the lone American naval station at Guam; the Carolines and Marshalls lay strewn like caltrops across the path of any American force moving toward the Philippines.

From its unheralded beginning in the autumn of 1914 to its violent end thirty years later, the importance of the Japanese occupation of Micronesia as an international issue, and as a point of tension in Japan–United States relations, was strategic. In matters of general naval strategy these tiny, remote flecks of land assumed global significance. In that context, the problem of their disposition at the end of World War I provoked an intense diplomatic tug-of-war between the United States and Japan in the immediate postwar years, and, once settled, left a legacy of suspicion and resentment between the two great naval powers of the Pacific.

Lacking adequate information about Japan’s intentions regarding the islands and about the web of diplomatic support that Japan had stretched around them, the United States was unable during World War I to develop either a realistic policy or a unity of views concerning them.

Some American naval leaders and diplomats indulged in quite optimistic speculation about the ultimate disposition of the islands. One battleship admiral surmised that since the Japanese already held Shantung, they would see the need for equity and would willingly part with their Micronesian territories. The assistant secretary of state believed that the islands should be returned to Germany after the war and then claimed by the United States as a down payment on war reparations. The navy’s General Board wanted America to acquire the Marianas, while the Committee for Planning Operations thought the Carolines and Marshalls should be internationalized.²⁷

Gradually, by war’s end there emerged a widely held view in the top echelons of the navy that the critical point about the German Pacific islands was not who held title to them, but what their strategic value would be. As undefended territories, effectively neutralized by international agreement, they were exotic, beautiful slivers of tropical real estate and no more; fortified with dry docks, barracks, coast-defense guns, and storage facilities, they were seen to have vital strategic importance. It was insistence on the military neutralization of Micronesia, therefore, that the naval advisers to the American delegation at Paris urged upon President Wilson and his staff.²⁸

Noble Visions and Hard Realities: Micronesia and the End of World War I

Lastly, there was the outlook of the American president himself, though it cannot be said that Wilson *had* a specific viewpoint on Germany’s Pacific territories prior to December 1918. The profile of those distant tropical islands hardly appeared on the horizons of a man absorbed in a grand vision for the remaking of the world. Yet Wilson, committed to the radical reform of international affairs, was to make the most determined stand against the Japanese acquisition of Micronesia. Vexed to learn in the last months of the war of the various clandestine arrangements that the Allied powers had made between themselves for the redistribution of conquered territories, he was determined to block such claims by creating new standards of international conduct and new institutions for internationalizing the spoils of war. In place of the established, cynical, and collusive arrangements of the old imperialist diplomacy—the gentlemen’s agreements that slid around formal treaties, the spheres of interest mutually arranged behind closed doors, the territories traded and bargained for over brandy and cigars, the countless betrayals of the aspirations of subordinated peoples—Wilson proposed a new set of principles to govern the rearrangement of territories: “open covenants, openly arrived at,” “territorial integrity,” “self-determination of peoples,” and the “impartial adjustment of colonial claims.” Ter-

ritories wrenched from the hands of the defeated nations were not to be annexed by the victors, but were to be placed under some sort of international guardianship supervised by the new League of Nations.

If this program of world reconstruction could be realized at the forthcoming peace conference it would surely sweep away all claims to conquered territory based on prior agreement, Japan's included. But ranged against such an idealistic program were formidable realities, chief among them being the reluctance of imperialist powers to renounce the diplomatic practices of more than a century for the untried idealism of this schoolmasterish American president. Specifically, in the case of the Pacific islands, Britain was understandably reluctant to go back on its 1917 pledge to Japan, no matter what new moral light it might be placed in by the United States. Moreover, there was the problem of similar arrangements for the annexation of German Pacific territories south of the equator by Australia and New Zealand. As early as 1917, the British government had made it clear to the State Department that loyalty within the British Empire made it essential that those nations retain the territories captured by British imperial forces during the war. For their part, Australia and New Zealand, as deeply suspicious as the United States about the new advance of Japanese power into the Pacific, seemed determined to annex certain of those same territories on the grounds of national security. Inevitably, the logic of honoring any such claims would lead to a similar concession to Japanese demands for title to its Pacific conquests.

It was undeniable, too, that Japan was already established in the islands and that each passing year had served to consolidate its presence there. By the time the Allies gathered at Paris to discuss the postwar settlement, Micronesia had virtually been a Japanese colony for five years. If the islands were not to be returned to Germany, what nation could present a better claim to them than Japan? And what nation or group of nations would be willing to try to force Japan out of them?

Finally, although Micronesia did not burn as an issue in the Japanese public consciousness, there was a widespread assumption, across a range of interest groups and in the government, that Japan deserved the islands for its security and for its contribution to the war effort. This view was strongest in the navy, of course. Navy Minister Katō Tomosaburō and Admiral Takeshita Isamu, the senior naval adviser to the Japanese delegation at Paris, were convinced that the islands were necessary as a strategic screen that would block America's access to its Philippine bases.²⁹ But beyond questions of security there glittered new possibilities for the expansion of Japanese trade and influence south of the equator. Despite the navy's initial efforts to limit public information on the affair, the sudden thrust of Japanese power into the tropical Pacific in the autumn of 1914 had seized the imagination of the Japanese press

and had reignited public discussion of a "southward advance."³⁰ From this perspective, the newly occupied territories of Micronesia, valuable as they might be in a defensive strategy, were of greater importance as steps on the road to far richer territories further south, lands that appeared open to the play of Japanese investment and economic influence. The navy also saw Micronesia in these terms. "The newly occupied territories in the South Seas fill a most important position as a link between Japan and the East Indies, the Philippines, New Guinea, and Borneo," declared an internal navy memorandum. "Even if our occupation brings no immediate advantage the islands must be carefully kept in our possession as stepping-stones to the treasure houses of the southern regions [Southeast Asia and Melanesia]."³¹ Civilian commentators had begun to sound similar arguments in the years immediately following the naval occupation of Micronesia. Yamamoto Miono, a young professor of economics who was to go on to a distinguished career at Kyoto University as a specialist in colonial economies, had been a member of the research team dispatched to Micronesia in 1915. Obviously influenced by the briefings provided to the team by the naval garrison in Micronesia, he wrote in the popular monthly journal *Taiyō* that while the islands were but tiny specks of territory with small resources,

it is appropriate that we add them to our colonial empire. They are important to us for several reasons. First, they can serve as a stepping-stone in the event of the southward advance of the Japanese people. Second, in the event of a future crisis in the Pacific, possession of the islands, situated as they are between Hawaii and the Philippines, may be of critical importance to our nation.³²

Other voices within and without the government spoke quietly or loudly for retention of the islands. The Foreign Ministry had committed its prestige to confirmation of the 1917 agreements, and some members of the Diet urged no retreat on the issue as a matter of national honor. In the last few days of the war, a federation of various nationalist and expansionist organizations issued a manifesto that included a demand for retention of the conquered territories.³³ Statements by various prominent Japanese collected and cabled to Washington by the American naval attaché in Tokyo, overwhelmingly asserted Japan's right to the territories. Among them was a pronouncement by Prime Minister Ōkuma Shigenobu, who in the summer of 1914 had flatly asserted that Japan had no territorial ambitions, but now insisted that Japan had earned the right to possess Micronesia. Moreover, more than a few Japanese shared the suspicions of Japan's navy men about the motives behind the international moralizing of the American president as well as the navy's concern that it threatened Japan's permanent title to its wartime acquisitions.

Some in Japan believed that neither Japan nor any other nation had a moral right to annex the former German territories in the Pacific. The distinguished liberal journalist and scholar *Yoshino Sakuzō* agreed with Wilson that the islands ought to be internationalized under a League of Nations mandate. If Japan were to assume guardianship of the islands under such an arrangement it should not expect unilateral annexation. The only justification for annexation, *Yoshino* argued, would be a situation in which Japan, by the nobility of its intentions and the worth of its good works, so captured the loyalties of the island peoples that they would ask to become citizens of the empire.³⁴

To most commentators, such lofty motives were irrelevant and the Japanese claim was one of necessity. For some the need was economic and material. As the publicist K. K. Kawakami, writing in English, explained to an American readership: "The masses of Japan do not base their clamor for the South Pacific islands upon such pretentious abstract arguments. Their claim is more spontaneous, more direct, more straight from the shoulder . . . They . . . plainly assert that they want to keep those islands because they need them more badly than any other nation." For others, like old South Seas hand *Shiga Shigetaka*, the economic argument for such a tiny land mass was spurious; the matter was rather one of national destiny. *Shiga* had noted that, though they had few people and little water, the thirteen hundred islands strung across Micronesia would serve as a base for Japan's advance into the South Pacific and thus for its development as a great maritime power.³⁵

By January 1919, when the Allied representatives met at Versailles to establish the League of Nations and to settle the issues of the war, including Japan's claim to Micronesia, they were confronted with a tangle of selfish interests and noble visions, no nation having a monopoly on either. The inevitable compromises, including the settlement of the mandates question, were roundly condemned by many at the time and have been criticized by historians through the subsequent decades. But they were the product of an imperfect world and, to a degree, they represented at least an incremental step on the path toward a more equitable international order as well as toward the formal recognition by imperial powers of their responsibilities to their dependent peoples. Such was the decision made at Paris to award Japan a mandate under the League of Nations for the administration of the former German Pacific islands north of the equator.

Woodrow Wilson, the doomed star of the Paris peace conference, went to Europe in the winter of 1919 fiercely opposed to the annexation of any of Germany's former colonial territories by any nation. He conceived, instead, that the German colonies should be governed under a system of mandates from the League of Nations. In Wilson's view such a system should be bound by a number of qualifications: that the manda-

tories should be drawn from the smaller, disinterested nations of the globe; that the mandates should, in any event, refrain from fortifying the islands; that freedom of trade and commerce should be preserved in all the mandates; and that mandatory powers should protect the welfare of the inhabitants of their mandate territories.

By general principle, then, Wilson was adamantly opposed to the permanent acquisition of Micronesia by Japan and unprepared to recognize the secret treaties of 1917 by which Japan had sought to bring that about. Alerted at last to the strategic importance of Micronesia, he was not even prepared to grant Japan a mandatory role there. But from the outset of the conference Wilson was handicapped in his effort to deal with questions that affected Japan, since both *Georges Clemenceau* and *David Lloyd George*, the other two members of the inner power group at Versailles, were bound by the 1917 agreements with Japan. Undoubtedly, Japan's representatives to the conference counted on this hard reality.

Annexation versus Guardianship: The Mandate Compromise, 1919-1920

On 27 January 1919, in the enormous and drafty audience hall of the old Palais Bourbon, decorated with heavy tapestries and frescoes in the classical style, Japan's chief delegate, *Baron Makino Nobuaki*, stood up to make his country's case before the meeting of the so-called Council of Ten. After describing Japan's contribution to the elimination of Germany's "piratical activities" during the recent war, *Makino* declared that Japan should be confirmed in its possession of Micronesia because of its record of humanitarian accomplishment there:

As Japan has been endeavoring to secure a stable livelihood for the inhabitants of these islands by giving them work and providing them with schools for the education of their children, they are quite satisfied with their present arrangement . . . [Moreover, they] still remain in a primitive state and have no ability to establish political, economic, and social organizations, in a modern sense, by themselves. For Japan, which has actually occupied these islands, it is necessary, in view of her contribution in bringing about the current situation and of the agreed popular opinion in Japan, to continue to protect these islanders and to improve their living conditions by making her possession of these islands definite.³⁶

While much about this statement can be faulted, it is worth quoting at length because its chief appeal is much closer to the argument advanced by *Yoshino Sakuzō* than it is to any of the justifications of necessity or compensation hitherto advanced by Japanese spokesmen. It took into account the new tone of moral rectitude, set for the conference

by Woodrow Wilson, which all the other delegates might ridicule behind closed doors, but few dared openly challenge.

After Makino was finished, Woodrow Wilson, speaking for those who opposed all annexations of territory, proposed his alternative of mandates issued by the League of Nations. Wilson's proposal quickly opened up acrimonious debate, the most vehement criticism coming from the British dominions, particularly Australia. Prime Minister William Hughes, angry and insistent, made the case for full sovereignty over the former German colonies and argued that Australia's annexation of certain of those territories south of the equator was vital to "insure her national safety and to guarantee her industrial, social, and racial policies."³⁷ Perhaps the irony implicit in this argument is clearer today than it was to those assembled in the Palais Bourbon on that dreary afternoon in 1919. Japan was the power that Hughes undoubtedly regarded as the greatest industrial, social, and racial threat to Australia, a threat increased by its southward advance into the Pacific in 1914. Yet, by waging the battle for Australia's right to annex German territories south of the equator, Hughes unwittingly acted as a proxy for the international confirmation of a permanent Japanese presence to the north.

Recognition of that fact undoubtedly influenced the conduct of the Japanese delegation during the debate. Makino, at least, understood that Japan, distrusted and resented by the Anglo-American maritime powers, had the most to lose by leading a bruising argument on the issue. For most of the three days of protracted wrangling in that grand and musty chamber, Makino, except for some brief expressions of doubt concerning the practicality of Wilson's mandate scheme, kept his own counsel, letting the irate Australian carry the weight of Japan's contention.

It became clear over the course of the debate that neither the new idealism of Wilson, nor the spoils-of-war stance of Hughes could completely carry the day. Indeed, Hughes contributed to the search for a compromise on the mandates question, declaring that, while he was in general opposed to the mandate principle, he was prepared to accept the idea if, in the Pacific territories it now occupied, his nation could make the same laws and exercise the same powers as existed in Australia.

This concession led to a proposal being advanced by the South African delegate, General Jan Christian Smuts, and formally introduced by Lloyd George, under which the mandated territories were to be divided into three categories, ranked according to the development and autonomy of the indigenous populations and the degree of authority of the mandatory powers. The Class C mandated territories were defined as those which, "owing to the sparseness of their population, or their small size, or their remoteness from the centers of civilization . . . can best be

administered under the laws of the Mandatory as integral portions thereof"³⁸ Further, the powers that held mandate over such territories would be obliged to report to the League of Nations on the progress of their mandate administrations, to forswear the construction of any fortifications there, and to guarantee that the territories would be open to the trade and commerce of all nations—all points on which Wilson had insisted.

This formula, which applied to the former German territories in the Pacific, was, of course, a fig leaf for the annexation of the territories coveted by Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, while it preserved the fiction of guardianship by the League of Nations.

In Tokyo, the Japanese government warmed quickly to the compromise, sensing that it would be both futile and hazardous to press the case for outright annexation. Navy Minister Katō Tomosaburō reversed himself on the need to occupy the islands in full sovereignty and professed that the navy was not concerned about Wilson's principle of non-fortification in mandated territories. In the event of hostilities, Katō argued, Japan could quickly develop whatever bases it needed. Although history would prove him only partly right on that score, his support for the mandate compromise proposed by Smuts enabled Prime Minister Hara Kei, who backed the compromise, to press the rest of the government to go along and in consequence to cable Makino to accept the proposal.³⁹

A few die-hard annexationists outside the government grumbled at the idea of anything less than total integration of the new territories into the Japanese empire. Shiga Shigetaka, who had been a foremost advocate of planting the flag in the tropics thirty years before, expressed alarm that Wilsonian principles might be extended to the Marianas, the Carolines, and the Marshalls. Writing in a popular journal, he scoffed at the hypocrisy of the Anglo-American backing of the Smuts plan and urged the government to accelerate its efforts to create a permanent physical presence in Micronesia—imposing administrative buildings, docks and warehouses, schools, and such—that would stamp the islands as indelibly Japanese.⁴⁰ But advocates like Shiga were out of touch with diplomatic realities and with what the government had already accomplished to establish a Japanese presence in Micronesia.

In Paris, Wilson remained cool to any arrangement that left the islands to be administered in any capacity by Japan, whose pledges and intentions he did not trust. Now sensitive to the strategic value of Micronesia and still resentful about the secret treaties of 1917, he threw up a flurry of objections: Britain and Japan had had no right to hand round the islands in the first place; the language of the Smuts proposal was too vague in its terms and too inconsistent in its principles; and he wished, in any event, to set aside the disposition of the island of Yap,

because of its international importance as a cable station. By late April, however, resigned to the prospect of a Japanese mandate and absorbed by other, weightier issues facing the conference, Wilson reluctantly agreed, reserving (he believed) only the matter of Yap, on which he wished further consideration.

Wilson was right about the vagueness and inconsistency of the Smuts compromise. While it spoke of the territories in the "South Pacific," it made no mention of the islands north of the equator and omitted reference to the principles of nonfortification and equal opportunity of trade, which applied to Class B mandates. These problems were taken up over the next few months in a succession of meetings, deliberations, and the drafting and revising of agreements, each infused with the national ideals, prejudices, fears—both justified and groundless—of bureaucrats, diplomats, and military men. By and large, they had never seen the distant mountain ranges, the rain forests, or the lagoons over which they bargained and debated so doggedly. For the naval advisers to the American delegation the principal issue was the demilitarization of the mandates, since in their view unfortified Japanese islands in the Pacific would be vulnerable to superior American naval power. For the Japanese, it was important to guarantee in the Pacific the principle of the Open Door, which would allow Japanese trade and commerce to move southward into Melanesia. For Australia and New Zealand, and thus for Britain, it was vital to keep Japan—its ships, its goods, and its settlers—out of the South Pacific in order to preserve the racially isolated position of which William Hughes had spoken so emotionally.

Early in May, the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers agreed that the former German islands north of the equator should be awarded to Japan as a Class C mandate, pending final approval by the Council of the League of Nations. Three months later a special mandates commission meeting in London set forth the precise terms that were to govern all Class C mandates. Initially, it seemed, these terms worked to the strategic disadvantage of Japan. Wilson and his advisers obtained the proviso on which they had been so determined: the demilitarization of the mandates. While Japan was now bound to keep its new Pacific territories defenseless, the United States, whose own colonial possessions in the Pacific were not mandates and thus not under such restrictions, was free to strengthen Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines. Moreover, Japan was not free to extend its influence any further into the Pacific. Britain and the dominions rejected all Japanese entreaties that the mandated territories, specifically including those held by Australia and New Zealand, be open to the trade and immigration of all nations, including Japan. Together, these two limitations, the one military and the other economic, turned back, at least temporarily, whatever aspirations

Japan may have had for a "southward advance" across the equator. Because of the suspicions aroused by the force, speed, and secrecy with which Japan had seized Micronesia in 1914, its wartime allies were determined that it would not be allowed to use the islands as either naval or economic bases for the penetration of Melanesia or Southeast Asia.⁴¹

Yet a closer look confirmed that in significant ways America had failed to limit Japanese control over Micronesia—and that control had now been tightened. For all practical purposes, the islands were now to be administered as Japanese possessions, not as territories under quite temporary guardianship by the international community. Moreover, the failure to obtain agreement on the principle of the Open Door in the Pacific would provide Japan with a pretext to keep its Micronesian waters off limits to the ships and commerce of other nations.

The Yap Controversy, 1920–1922

It is incongruous that such a tiny scrap of land as Yap should have become over the next several years the focus of jealousies and suspicions, the subject of great stacks of cables and memoranda, and the wedge by which the United States sought to challenge the legality of Japan's advance into the Pacific. Indeed, Yap itself was not even the immediate object of this attention, which, rather, was focused on the transoceanic cables that met there, connecting such distant terminals as Shanghai, Guam, and Manado in the Netherlands East Indies. American spokesmen were to make much of the fact that the struggle over the Yap cables was in reality a question over whether transoceanic communications would be monopolized by other countries and, in the event of war, imperil America's link with its Pacific territories. But, in truth, the United States already had other cables that connected the American mainland with Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines. The Yap cables were an important supplement to those links, but only that. In wartime, moreover, the Yap cables would have been either denied to the United States or severed by its naval forces.⁴²

Indeed, the sheer volume of the diplomatic correspondence surrounding the Yap controversy induces the suspicion that it was a bogus issue and that American representatives, at least, were seeking something else. Was it prescience or petulance that caused Wilson to ask in April 1919 that Yap be set aside in considering the general award of the other Micronesian islands as a mandate? Whatever it was, Wilson's inattention let the May 1919 decision of the Supreme Council slip by without a protest that it failed to exclude Yap. Within three months, as his grand pattern of international government began to unravel in the United States Senate, Wilson had reason to rue his negligence. As Henry Cabot

Lodge and his "little group of willful men" in the Foreign Relations Committee began sifting through the negotiations that had led to the Versailles settlements, seeking reasons to deny Senate ratification of the peace treaty, certain revelations about the secret treaties of 1916-1917 and Wilson's reluctant acquiescence to them emerged—and did not help the cause of the treaty in the Senate. Then, in Wilson's testimony to the committee on the negotiations involved in the treaty, the problem of Yap bobbed to the surface. Confidently, Wilson asserted that he had reserved the question of the island from discussion at Paris. When his senatorial critics uncharitably pointed out that the Supreme Council of Allied Powers had made no explicit exception of Yap in awarding the Micronesian mandate to Japan, and that the United States had made no objection at the time, neither Wilson nor anyone else in his administration could provide contrary evidence. Wilson could only argue that he had *assumed* that Yap had been included in the mandate provisions of May 1919 to which he had given his consent. Wilson's flawed testimony on Yap made it seem that either he had been duped at Paris or he had attempted to deceive the Senate. Both appearances contributed to the gathering congressional opposition to the Paris accords and to American membership in the League of Nations. Moreover, Wilson received no help from any of the powers in his efforts to reopen the issue. In December 1920, a year and a half after the Allied powers had decided to award Micronesia to Japan, the Council of the League of Nations confirmed the Japanese mandate, again without reference to Yap.⁴³

By this time America had dropped out of the League, shattering Wilson's grand vision for humanity. Whether for the sake of his personal honor and pride or in order to salvage some tattered remnant of his Fourteen Points, Wilson continued to pursue the impossible object of an international rehearing on the disposition of Yap. From his sullen and obstinate refusal to give ground on the issue, one might suppose that this sliver of hills and jungle at the western edge of the Carolines (did he ever imagine it this way in his mind's eye?) became for Wilson a repository for his frustrations and shattered hopes. At his direction, the United States announced in November 1920 that it would not recognize the disposition of Micronesia made in May 1919. Two months after the League of Nations had confirmed the 1919 agreement, the secretary of state sent in the American protest, arguing that no such award could be made without the consent of the United States, which, as an Allied power, had an equal concern in the disposition of German territory. To this the Council of the League merely responded that, as the original agreement on the mandates was drafted by the victorious Allied powers, America's complaint should rest with those nations. Wilson himself, bitter and obstinate, refused to let go. In one of his last official acts, he denied that the United States had ever given its consent to the

disposition of Yap and thus, by extension, considered invalid the award of the Japanese mandate as a whole.⁴⁴

The succeeding Republican administration was no less determined to defend American interests in the Pacific, including the matter of Yap. But as the new administration had no ties to the League and was compelled by no ideological imperative to campaign for the internationalization of the island, something else may have impelled the continuing American concern with this dot in the Pacific. Almost certainly, the motives behind the diplomatic maneuvering by the United States in 1921 were a fear of Japanese perfidy, on the one hand, and a search to gain strategic advantage in the Pacific, on the other. The first related to American suspicions that arose from the continuing Japanese restrictions on the entry of foreign trade and vessels into Japanese waters. For the United States Navy, bedeviled by the possibility that, behind a veil of secrecy, Japan might be violating its pledge and be constructing a network of formidable naval bases, access to Micronesia by American vessels and commerce became a vital objective. For its part, the War Department saw the possibility of using the issue of the Yap cables to seek access to any and all cables in Micronesia. Both services thus pressed the Harding administration to secure a modification in the arrangements by which Japan controlled Micronesia. To bring this about Harding's secretary of state, Charles Evans Hughes, took a strikingly different approach to the problem. Instead of arguing over what had or had not been agreed upon at Paris, Hughes informed all the Allied powers, including Japan, that as the United States had not signed the Versailles treaty, it was not bound by its provisions and therefore refused to recognize the Japanese mandate over any part of Micronesia.⁴⁵

Yet there were pressures at work leading to a resolution of the issue. In 1921, Yap was but one of an array of bristling controversies that had emerged after World War I to rekindle relations between the United States and Japan: the massive Japanese intervention in Siberia, the collapse of ambassadorial talks over immigration problems, American indignation over Japan's continued occupation of Shantung, and, most ominous of all, the quickening naval arms race between the two powers. To deal with these problems in an international context, the United States issued an invitation to the maritime powers to attend a grand conference in Washington on naval arms limitation and the settlement of outstanding problems in East Asia and the Pacific.

Along with the major European powers, Japan accepted the American invitation, though it feared that such a gathering might be used by the West, particularly the United States, to force Japan to relinquish its wartime gains. But Japan's political elite, beginning with Prime Minister Hara, were sensitive to the need to lessen their nation's isolation

from the West and to adjust Japan's course to the changing currents of international cooperation set in motion by Woodrow Wilson. To minimize the chance of being isolated at the Washington conference and thus becoming the object of American antagonism, the Hara cabinet decided, in the summer of 1921, that it would be well to settle as many outstanding problems as possible on a bilateral basis with the United States before the conference began.

Only this background can explain why Japan, having occupied Micronesia for seven years and been confirmed in that occupation by the agreement of a majority of the international community on terms that were very nearly Japan's own, nevertheless agreed in the summer of 1921 to treat directly with the United States over the issue of Yap. In these negotiations, Japan gave way, by stages, to American demands. In September, the Japanese government essentially accepted American insistence on access to Yap and on use of the cables there, as well as on American rights of residence and property. In December, Tokyo agreed to the right of free entrance into Micronesian territorial waters by American commercial vessels and agreed to extend to the mandated islands the provisions of the existing Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Japan. These concessions were formalized in a convention signed in Washington on 11 February 1922, by which the United States finally recognized Japan's mandate over Micronesia and Japan reiterated the pledges it had given to the League not to fortify its mandate.⁴⁶

A Temporary Calm: The Washington Naval Treaty, 1922

In the meantime, the Washington conference on naval armament and the outstanding issues of East Asia and the Pacific had been convened. It culminated in agreements between the powers that guaranteed the territorial and administrative integrity of China, an Open Door in East Asia (though not necessarily in the Pacific) for the commerce of all nations, and limitations on the naval tonnage to be maintained by the principal naval powers. This last problem had been the subject of heated controversy. After prolonged and difficult bargaining, the Japanese delegation had agreed to accept a ratio of naval tonnage less than that of the Anglo-American naval powers. But Admiral Katō Tomosaburō and his colleagues in the Japanese delegation had extracted a high price: a freeze on all insular fortification in the Pacific west of Hawaii. Such a concession, embodied in Article 19 of the subsequent Washington Naval Limitations Treaty (the Five Power Treaty), left the Japanese navy dominant in the western Pacific and, in the event of war, made the Philippines and Guam as vulnerable and open to attack as Japanese Micronesia.

But, for the decade after 1922 at least, hostilities between the two Pacific powers seemed less likely than they had for the past fifteen years or more. After the clearing away of a number of old disputes at Washington in 1921 and 1922, the animosities of the immediate past seemed substantially ameliorated on both sides of the Pacific. In Japan, not only party politicians and professional bureaucrats, but significant elements within the military and naval leadership, accepted the fact that the imperialist policies of the past were outdated and that Japan would have to adjust to the new principles of international openness and cooperation espoused by the United States. American images of Japan also quickly changed for the better, so much so that in mid-1923, Franklin Roosevelt, who had sided with the hardliners in the Navy Department five years earlier, could write that Japan and the United States "have not a single valid reason, and won't have as far as we can look ahead, for fighting each other."⁴⁷

Perhaps this calm that settled over the Pacific goes far to explain the irony that lies at the end of the three-year American effort to challenge the advance of Japan into Micronesia. Having secured the rights and privileges, not only on Yap, but throughout Micronesia, for which it had maneuvered so intensely and argued so vehemently, the United States failed to exercise them in the years that followed. It never sought to use the communication facilities on Yap, nor to exercise treaty rights elsewhere in Micronesia. Few American ships sought entry into Micronesian waters, nor did Americans seek to settle or trade in Micronesia. Almost unnoticed, on the other hand, was a gathering thicket of bureaucratic hindrances by which Japan complicated free access to its island territories. By the 1930s, when Japanese-American relations once again worsened and Micronesia again became the subject of international dispute, this sequestering of Japan's Pacific territories would lead to reawakened American fears of Japanese perfidy and reemerging phantoms of secret Pacific bastions and "impenetrable Japans."

In the meantime, Japan, for better or for worse, had a mandate to work its will among the islands and peoples of Micronesia, subject to only the most feeble and tenuous restrictions imposed by the international community. The structure, style, and substance of Japan's mandatory rule were, inevitably, those of a colonial power.

company's benefit, it now had as its Truk agent the son-in-law of the influential chief of one of the larger islands of the group (Nakajima 1984, 64-65).

48. Nakajima Hiroshi (1984, 65) believes that Mori was exempted from the expulsion order because he was too valuable as agent for the Jaluit Gesellschaft.

49. Morizawa, 3 June 1983.

Chapter 2: South into the Pacific

1. Morton 1959.

2. Bōeichō Bōei Kenshūjō Senshishitsu (hereafter BBKS) 1975, 132-134.

3. Pomeroy 1948, 44.

4. Quoted in Yano 1979, 48.

5. Ibid., 21-22; *Taiyō* (November 1913), 43-112.

6. Foreign Minister Katō Takaaki is known to have told the Japanese cabinet on the eve of the nation's declaration of war: "Japan, at this time, is not entering the war because it is obliged to do so by the Alliance. Rather, it considers a resolute decision to embark upon war as an opportune policy for two reasons: the request from Britain, which is based upon the friendship of this Alliance, and the opportunity to sweep up bases in Eastern waters and to advance the Empire's position in the world." Quoted in Ikeda 1967, 2:28-29.

7. Gaimushō 1966, 102-114.

8. Ibid., 114-117; Purcell 1967, 88; Spinks 1936.

9. Gaimushō 1966, 126-130.

10. Ibid., 665-666.

11. Purcell 1967, 152.

12. Nihon Gyōsei Gakkai 1934 (Section 6, Nan'yō), 68. Details of the movements of Yamaya's squadron at the time of the navy's seizure of Jaluit are provided in Kaigun Gunshireibu (n.d., 625-650). This unpublished and, at the time, classified history, which is on file in the War History Office of the Japanese Defense Agency's Defense Academy, is to my knowledge the only detailed account of Japanese naval operations in Micronesia during the First World War.

13. Gō 1942, 219.

14. Ibid., 220-223.

15. Kaigun Yūshūkai 1938, 672.

16. Details of the operations involved in the seizure of these places can be found in Kaigun Gunshireibu n.d., 659-669 (Kusaie), 675-702 (Ponape), 719-729 (Truk), 757-764 (Yap), 773-776 (Palau), and 741-749 (Saipan).

17. Gaimushō 1966, 675; Pomeroy 1948, 49; Kaigunshō n.d., vol. 16, "Tokubetsu rikusentai shikikan ni ataeru kunrei" [Instructions for commanding officers of special naval landing parties], 15 October 1914. This valuable collection of Navy Ministry materials on file at the War History Office of the Japanese Defense Academy was first given scholarly attention by Gabe Masaakira in his "Nihon no Mikuronesia senryō to 'nanshin'" (1982), parts 1 and 2.

18. Jose 1943, 121-122.

19. Kajima 1980, 183-184.

20. Purcell 1967, 94.

21. See Matsumura 1918, 1-3.

22. Kajima 1980, 185.

23. Iklé 1965.

24. Nish 1972, 204-209.

25. Kajima 1980, 194-202.

26. Lansing 1935, 290-291.

27. Braisted 1971, 441-446; Levi 1948, 62.

28. Schilling 1954, 229-231.

29. Dingman 1976, 79-80.

30. An example of this *nanshin* fever was the attention given to the topic by the influential trade journal *Jitsugyō no Nihon*. In the spring of 1915, the journal devoted an entire issue to the Nan'yō, covering both Southeast Asia and Micronesia, stressing the natural riches of those regions, and providing information on travel, living conditions, and investment possibilities. Eight of the approximately thirty articles dealt specifically with Micronesia (*Jitsugyō no Nihon* 18 (3), 28 March 1915).

31. Kaigunshō n.d., vol. 16, "Nan'yō shinsenryōchi no shōrai" [Future of the newly occupied territories in the South Seas].

32. Yamamoto 1915, 115.

33. Kobayashi 1966, 785-789.

34. Yoshino 1919, 146a-147a.

35. Kawakami 1919, 63; Yano 1979, 209.

36. Kajima 1980, 388-389.

37. Whyte 1957, 382-383; *Literary Digest* 1919 (February 22), 22.

38. Kajima 1980, 389-391.

39. Dingman 1976, 81.

40. Cited in Yano 1979, 209-210.

41. Gabe 1982 (pt. 2), 70-74, 85-87.

42. Braisted 1971, 528-529.

43. Rattan 1972, 127.

44. Ibid., 127-128.

45. Ibid., 130-134.

46. United States Department of State 1938, 599-604.

47. Quoted in Freidel 1954, 135.

Chapter 3: The Iron Cherry Blossom

1. Kaigunshō n.d., vol. 16, "Tokubetsu rikusentai."

2. Hezel and Berg 1979, 442.

3. For an interesting biographic sketch of Matsuoka see Nakamura 1980-1981.

4. See Matsuoka's brief account of his experiences on Ponape at the head of the landing party in the introduction to his *Mikuronesia minzoku shi* (1943, 6-9). For a discussion of his scholarly work, see NKK 1943a.

5. Palau Community Action Agency 1976-1978, 2:304-306.

6. It is obvious that these men gave a good deal of thought to the administration and development of Japan's new tropical territories. For example, Commander Matsuoka submitted an extensive report on the prospects for the development of Ponape, undertook the translation of a German work on the cultivation of coconut palms, and drafted a long essay on the importance of Micronesia as a stepping-stone to Japanese access to the riches of Southeast Asia. Commander Kurose Seiichi on Jaluit sent in a carefully considered series of recommendations to improve Japanese administration in the Marshalls, covering, among other things, improvement of relations between the Marshallese and Japanese officialdom, ways to promote copra production and land reform, and setting a standard time zone for Micronesia. Matsuoka 1943, 7; NKK 1943a, 3-4.

7. Crampton 1921; Hobbs 1923, 23-24; McMahon 1919.

8. Blakeslee 1922, 106. Similar in tone is Wood (1922).

9. NKK 1944b, 2-6.