A BRITISH SIX-INCH GUN AT BARCINAS BAY, TINIAN, CNMI

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Japan seized the German Micronesian Islands in early October 1914. Following the capitulation of Imperial Germany in 1918 and the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, the subsequent negotiations in the Washington Naval Treaty in 1922 brought about agreement that Japan be given the former German colonies in Micronesia north of the Equator as a “class C” mandate by the League of Nations. In the 1930s the world watched with ever increasing unease the real and perceived developments in the Mandated Territory of the Pacific Islands (Micronesia), especially following Japan’s refusal to sign the continuation of the treaty on the limitation of naval tonnage in 1935 and their departure from the League of Nations a year later. Japan was feared to be developing strategic strongholds and military infrastructure on some—if not most—of the Micronesian islands, a fear fueled by the secrecy with which she shrouded the mandated territory.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan used bases in the islands for a swift and wide-ranging attack on Allied shipping and insular possessions such as Guam, Wake, Nauru, and Kiribati (then the Gilbert Islands). Substantial military development occurred in Palau, the Marianas, Chuuk, and a host of other locations. The eastern perimeter of Micronesia was also heavily fortified with naval and air bases centered on Kwajalein, Maloelap, and Wotje Atolls. Mile Atoll, Jaluit Atoll, and Eneen-kio (Wake) also had bases and heavy coastal defense installations (Denfeld 1979a-b; 1981, Spennemann 1992a).

This paper describes a British-made costal defense gun emplaced at Barcinas Bay, Tinian, Northern Marianas Islands. Similar guns have been previously described for the Marshall Islands. (Spennemann 1992b, 1995a-b; 1999a; 2006)

TINIAN

After World War I the Mariana Islands became a Japanese mandate, with the exception of the island of Guam, which had become American territory in 1898. While Tinian was very underdeveloped and underpopulated during the German colonial period, the Japanese civilian administration developed substantial infrastructure on the island to service the sugar cane industry the Japanese had introduced (Spennemann 1999b; Peattie 1988). Along with other islands on Japanese Micronesia, Tinian was provided with defense installations prior to and during the Pacific War. The Japanese bases in the Mariana Islands were defended by an assortment of coastal defense guns, ranging from
6-inch naval guns, to the short barreled 8-inch anti-submarine guns normally used on merchant shipping (Spennemann 1994).

The Japanese deployed 6-inch guns as the standard armament on most pre-World War I and World War I period warships, and an additional number of such guns were manufactured as coastal defense guns for the Japanese homeland. The Japanese distinguished two main gun types, both of their own production, but of British design: 150 mm type 33 (1900) and 150 mm type 41 (1905) guns (Spennemann 1992b). In addition, the Japanese used a number of pieces of foreign manufacture, especially of British origin. The 6-inch coastal defense guns were former naval guns set in land emplacements. On board ship they had been either fitted singly in turrets or barbettes (1895-1905) or in double or triple turrets (1906-1930s). In their land emplacements, some barrels were fitted with a shield, while many lacked it.

On Tinian and neighbouring Saipan, as well as on Rota and Guam a number of 6-inch guns had been emplaced in formal batteries of three, as well as single guns. In the remainder of Micronesia six-inch coastal defence guns have been recorded from Pohnpei (Sokeh’s Rock and Madolenimwh Harbour, Denfeld 1979a), Chuuk (Sapuk and Nefu Cave, both Moen-Denfeld 1979b), Palau (Babeldoab, Spennemann 2006) and the Marshall Islands (Spennemann 1992b). During World War II such guns were also emplaced on Kiska (Verbeck 1943), Tarawa (Kiribati) and Nauru.

The advance of the US air attacks on Kiribati in late 1943 and the Marshall Islands in late 1943/early 1944, and the eventual capture of these island groups, made future US landings in the Marianas a possibility. As a result, Saipan and Tinian were provided with Japanese forces. To fend off US landings, the landing beaches were protected with an array of defense installations ranging from underwater obstacles to coastal defense guns emplaced at vantage points. Between 24 July and 1 August 1944 Tinian was captured by US forces launching a massive attack from neighbouring Saipan (Crowl 1960; Russell 1995).

A post-war analysis of the Japanese defense and the US attacks (Crowl 1960) maps the Japanese defense installations (see Russell 1995, p. 5). That map does not include the gun described here, suggesting that the gun played no role in the actual fighting. Indeed, the Barcinas Bay gun was not required in the island’s defense as the US forces landed elsewhere.

Figure 1. Map of Tinian showing the location of the gun.¹

The majority of the guns emplaced on Sapian and Tinian were removed in various scrap metal drives which occurred from the 1950s to the early 1970s.² Unlike the scrap metal drives in the Marshall Islands, the drives in the Marianas used heavy equipment and were able to move large items. It appears that the gun described below was too inaccessible to warrant removal by crane.
THE GUN AT BARCINAS BEACH

A single six-inch gun is located in a natural cave in Peipeingul Cliff, Barcinas Bay, Tinian. The gun has already been mentioned in a guidebook (Lotz 1998, 64-65; see Figure 3), and the focus of a postcard (Figure 4), but not yet described. The cave position, facing generally south, overlooks Subharon Bay. The gun with a range of about 15,000 yards (Spennemann 1992b) would have been instrumental in protecting a possible landing beach near San Jose by covering from the Sunharon Bay from the north. The bay was also covered by a three-gun 150mm battery located near south base (see Figure 2).

The gun is clearly one of Vickers-Armstrong pattern design. Fortunately, the breechblock, which allows for identification, has not been removed. It bears the following inscription:

EOC
6 IN. B. L.
N° 15012
1904

ORIGIN OF THE GUN

Following 1895 Sino-Japanese War the Japanese navy decided to step up ordering ships from the United Kingdom. The ship building program had already begun a couple of years earlier, but was substantially intensified follow-
ing the conflict. Between 1895 and 1906 several battleships (Fuji; Yashima; Shikishima; Hatsuse; Asahi; Mikasa; Kashima; Katori) and cruisers (Asama; Tokiwa; Izumo; Iwate) were built in British dockyards on Japanese orders, all equipped with Armstrong-Whitworth armament (Jane 1904; 1906, 1990, Jentschura et al. 1977).

Following the end of World War I and the scrapping of the German Fleet, a series of bilateral and trilateral talks, a conference on arms limitation in Washington in 1922 led to an agreement to fix the ratios of the naval powers of Japan, France, Great Britain, the United States and Italy.

The Treaty entailed the reduction of overall naval tonnage, resulting in several vessels being disarmed and/or scrapped. Of the vessels not sunk or broken up, “all guns and essential parts of guns, fire control tops and revolving parts of all barbettes and turrets” had to be removed and landed.4 The gun barrels and mounts of Japanese ships were stored and eventually emplaced in defensive positions in Micronesia and elsewhere.

Six-inch guns of identical manufacture have been noted on the Japanese bases in the Marshall Islands (Taroa, Maloelap Atoll; Wotje, Wotje Atoll; Mile, Mile Atoll). Likewise, 8-inch guns taken off decommissioned, British- and Italian-built Japanese cruisers were found on Betio (Kiribati) and Chuuk (Federated States of Micronesia) (Spennemann 1994; 2001), and
emplacements had been built for such guns on Jaluit Atoll (Christiansen 1994).

Based on the dates of the ships’ launching and completion, as well as the gun numbers and dates punched into the breech block, some conjectures can be made. The dated Micronesian guns fall into four age groups: 1898 (Taroa), 1901 (Wotje), 1904 (Tinian) and 1905 (Mile). The following is based on the assumption that the gun barrels would be manufactured after the ship was laid down, but before or around the time it was launched, as the guns needed had to be completed and test fired. Based on these assumptions, then, the 1904 gun barrel on Tinian would have been made for the Elswick Battleship Kashima. No other ship would fit that bill.

The Kashima was a 16,400 ton battleship, laid down on 1 January 1904, launched on 22 March 1905 and completed on 25 May 1906. Built at Vicker's Barrow shipyard, it was the last Japanese battleship to be launched at a foreign shipyard and also the last Japanese battleship built with a ram bow. The Kashima, as well as her sister ship the Katori were two vessels of Elswick design (Jane 1906, Spenemann 2006). The vessel was equipped with four 12-inch 40 caliber main guns, four 10-inch and twelve 50 cal. 6-inch guns (Jane 1990, Jentschura et al. 1977).

The vessel was stricken in 1922 and broken up in November 1924. While the smaller guns were placed in storage, the larger guns were immediately reused as coastal dense guns protecting Tokyo Bay. The gun emplaced at Barcinas come from the guns placed in storage.

The base developments in the Marshalls and the Marianas occurred just prior to the beginning of World War II in the Pacific. Some bases, such as Mile and Guam, were built after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Likewise, the Aleutian bases of Kiska and Attu were built after the outbreak of the war. Common to the late bases is the use of British-built six-inch guns, as well as the deployment of short-barrelled eight-inch guns originally developed for merchant marine shipping.

It would appear that the Japanese Navy utilised the available Japanese built 6-inch guns in prime defense positions. Only when the stock of these had run low or had been depleted, British-built World War I vintage six-inch guns were used. Based on this it would appear that the gun at Barcinas Bay has been a late emplacement.

Figure 9. The Japanese battleship IJNS Kashima or IJNS Katori (sister ship to the Kashima)
Table 1. Known breechblock numbers and dates of British six-inch guns emplaced in Japanese Pacific bases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nº</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Maker</th>
<th>Island</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Probable origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1168 A</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Mile, Marshalls</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Katori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1236</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mile, Marshalls</td>
<td>SW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11377</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Taroa, Marshalls</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Asama, Tokiwa, or Shikishima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11378</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Taroa, Marshalls</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Asama, Tokiwa, or Shikishima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12699</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Kiska, Aleutians</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Izumo or Iwate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12857</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Wotje, Marshalls</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Mikasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13828</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Wotje, Marshalls</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Mikasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15012</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Tinian, Marianas</td>
<td>Bracinias</td>
<td>Kashima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15658</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Mile, Marshalls</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>Katori</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Mile, Marshalls</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>Katori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15859 (?)</td>
<td>1905 (?)</td>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Mile, Marshalls</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>Katori</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

ENDNOTES
1. Base map: section Island of Tinian (Topographic) 1:25,000 U.S. Geological Survey, 1999
2. pers.comm. Carmen Sanchez (Historic Preservation Office, Tinian).
5. Image via Wikipedia.


Verbeck, W.J. (1943) The enemy on Kiska. US Naval Intelligence, Section G-2, 1943.

**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY AND CONTACT**

Dirk HR Spennemann is Associate Professor in Cultural Heritage Management at Charles Sturt University, Albury, Australia. His main research interests are German colonial heritage in Oceania, in particular Micronesia, and historic preservation issues in Micronesia in general. His second focus are issues of heritage futures, including the threats to heritage posed by natural and human hazards and threats posed by managers in their efforts to counter these hazards. Ethical Heritage Planning and Policy are the cornerstones that need to be understood and addressed if our past is to have a meaningful future.

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