

in German style. Genial Governor Fushida shows us about the humming offices where heavy-spectacled, eager young Japanese brush columns of ideographs into ledgers and chatter in high-keyed self-importance; then walks with us down a street of bustling stores a mile long ("There was nothing but jungle here a year ago," he says) to our home-to-be.

It is a two-room German house with a verandah commanding an astounding view of the island-studded harbour, towering Chokach and the gleaming white reef. Fruits of every description droop from the trees around the cottage. Rain is still coming down relentlessly. A man is slashing out some jungle undergrowth that is encroaching upon the garden. "It comes in at the rate of a foot or two a day," says Governor Fushida. "And perhaps you haven't believed the stories you've heard about Ponape telephone poles sprouting branches. Well, look at that one." Sure enough, the pole before our house was rapidly reverting to type.

"But I'll tell you something stranger than that," he went on. "The director of our experimental farm stuck his walking stick into the ground. It was made of green wood. That was two years ago. Now it's a tree."

An early visitor described the island as "of a prodigious and inexhaustible fertility. Sago-palms, bananas, mangoes, orange and lime trees grow in greatest magnificence. Great beds of wild ginger carpet the ground, sending up a pungent aromatic reek from their trodden leaves. . . . There is no lack of food in the land, for yams and taro are zealously cultivated."

That was in Spanish times before the Germans and Japanese began the agricultural development of the island. Now extensive plantations of tapioca and rice, as well as scientifically cultivated coconut groves and oil-palms, have been added to the natural products of Ponape. A remarkably efficient government experimental farm has brought in two hundred and thirty-six fruits and vegetables from all over the world and acclimatized them for use on the island. Ponape is a treasure chest.

But its chief significance at the moment is strategic.

Like a castle surrounded by a moat, Ponape is circled by a lagoon walled by a coral reef. The lagoon is from one to four miles wide. Much of it is a shallow and almost impassable mangrove swamp. The mangrove has a peculiar habit of sprouting what look like branches, but turn out to be roots, descending through the air until they reach the mud. These interlacing stilt-roots are hard to climb over or through. A mangrove swamp is not adapted to animals that walk on their hind feet; one must return to primordial serpentine habits to squirm through this muddy, slippery lattice as difficult as a barbed-wire entanglement.

Where the shallow lagoon is not choked with mangroves it is studded with reefs of live coral growing so rapidly in some places that charts, even if available, would be useless if not new. Violent cross-currents caused by the tides add to the difficulties of navigation.

Not all of Ponape's moat is shallow. In six places harbours pierce the reef and swamp and provide access to the shore or shelter for defending ships. These harbours are Ponape, Chokach (or Jokaj), Ronkiti, Mutok, Lot, and Metalanim.

The first two of these harbours are in effect one harbour, since they join to form a magnificent fleet basin fully ten miles long and from one to two miles wide. In the heart of this stands Chokach Island with its 900 ft. cliff-faced rock. Also the harbour is commanded from heights on the main island. Ranged like carefully-placed sentry-boxes along the shore of the fleet basin are four summits, the lowest at the western end, 800 ft. high, the highest a mountain of 2,000 ft. overlooking the best part of the fleet basin on the east.

Moreover, all harbours around the island and the seas beyond them are commanded by the central peak of Ponape, Totolom, with an elevation of 2,579 ft. From this peak the distance to all parts of the reef averages less than eight miles, well within the range of big guns.

The several dozen rocky islands in the lagoon afford good protection for ships from sea attack. Ships of the greatest