Qaibala: Establishing ‘Aoke Station, 1909–14

Every white man on Malaita knows the risk he runs and must take his chances, if he is not prepared to do this it were better to go elsewhere for safety. It is not to be expected that because white men settle in a wild part of the group for their own ends, that the Government will be able to assist and protect them.

—Acting Resident Commissioner Frederic J. Barnett, 30 June 1915¹

PS. We have told the heathen that you are coming, but they only laugh.
—Louisa Tarasol-Eurora (Mrs Charlie), Fo’odo, 7 March 1910²

British Authority before the Protectorate

The third aspect of change that engulfed Malaita, after the labour trade and Christianity, and unified the island was the establishment of a government base. The Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC) extended its reach into the protectorate in the 1890s, but had no presence on Malaita until 1909. Once ‘Aoke was opened, British authority could slowly be extended and enforced, although until the 1920s and 1930s there remained no substantial protectorate authority on the island. Until 1909, the Queensland and Fiji labour trades and Christian missions

¹ SINA, BSIP 14/10, A/RC FJB to A/DO Ralph B. Hill, 30 June 1915.
² SINA, BSIP 14/82, Louisa Tarasol-Aurora to RM TWE-P, 7 Mar 1910.
operated around Malaita almost unencumbered. Analysis of Malaita after 1909 must expand its focus to concentrate on the slow institution government control. Whereas early chapters dealt with labour and missions as independent entities, from 1909 they were subservient to government processes emanating from ‘Aoke and Tulagi, at least in theory.

Chapter 2 outlined the beginnings of British authority in the Pacific through the Royal Navy Australia Station (RNAS) and the WPHC, with the governor of Fiji in the role of high commissioner, exercising extraterritorial authority over British subjects in the Solomon Islands. In 1884, Britain declared a protectorate over southeast New Guinea and the Germans established a Schutzgebiet (mercantile territory) over northeast New Guinea. After further negotiations, the German territory was confirmed in 1886 as extending south to include the north of the Solomon Archipelago: Buka, Bougainville, the Shortlands (except Mono or Treasury Island),3 Choiseul, Isabel and outlying Ontong Java Atoll. The southern German boundary passed between Isabel and Malaita.4 The central and southern Solomons were acknowledged to be under British influence through the WPHC and RNAS. However, Britain had only tenuous authority there until the protectorate was declared in 1893 and the first resident commissioner arrived in 1896.5 Attempts to control the labour trade were part of these territorial manipulations.

After a royal commission into New Guinea recruiting in 1885, the Queensland Government announced that the labour trade was to cease and no more recruiting licences would be issued after the end of 1890.6 This closure was revoked in February 1892 when Premier Griffith, faced with large-scale discontent in the sugar industry and wider economic downturns in the colony, reversed his 1885 decision and reintroduced recruiting licences. The only area remaining closed to Queensland recruiters was around eastern New Guinea, by then formally within British and German jurisdictions. Recruiting to Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia had continued during these years of uncertainty. The British

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3 In 1885, HMS *Lark* had left a few bags of coal at Mono while surveying Bougainville Strait. This led to its designation as a British coaling station. *BSIP Handbook* 1911, 19.
4 Lawrence 2014, 84–85; Sack 2005, 344.
5 Lawrence 2014, 84–89; Moore 2003, 133–34, 149–52. The legality was based on Western Pacific Orders-in-Council, 1877, 1879, 1880 and 1893, the British Settlements Act 1887 and the Foreign Jurisdiction Act 1890.
6 Jamison 1990.
Government realised that there had to be better supervision of the Pacific end of the labour trade. The WPHC and the Admiralty began to discuss creating a Solomon Islands protectorate with its own permanent deputy commissioner, to match the joint (but limited) French-British naval presence in the New Hebrides from 1888, and the British New Guinea and German New Guinea administrations.

The declaration of a formal British protectorate over the Solomon Archipelago south of German New Guinea and down to Makira occurred in March 1893, partly motivated by Queensland’s 1892 decision to recontinue the labour trade. The Santa Cruz Group, Rennell and Bellona, Sikaiana and Tikopia were added between 1897 and 1899. The 1893 Order-in-Council gave the high commissioner the power to control prisons, immigration, imports and exports, to fulfil the terms of treaties, and to legislate for peace, order and good government. The Colonial Office allowed the protectorate to be proclaimed on the understanding that the islands would have to ‘pay their own way’, and as a measure to control the labour trade. Malaita became part of this formal British protectorate.

Declaring the British Solomon Islands Protectorate

After Queen Victoria signed the necessary documents, establishing the legality of a protectorate under international law required a physical visit and some show of compliance by the inhabitants of any newly acquired area. In May 1893, HMS Curacao under Captain Gibson and HMS Goldfinch under Lieutenant-Commander Floyd departed from Australia

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7 QVP 1894, 2, 925–73, Pacific Order-in-Council, 1893. The Order-in-Council included several island groups: the Friendly, Navigators, Union, Phoenix, Ellice, and Gilbert islands, Solomon Islands as far north as the border with German territory, and the Santa Cruz Islands. CO 225/39, Western Pacific Queensland, no. 222 (microfilm 2316), top-numbered 5 Jan 1893, 622. Extract from minute by Lord Ripon (23853), and J.B. Thurston, WPHC, to SSC Marquis of Ripon, 21 Nov 1892; BSIP AR, 1898–99, 16.
with orders to visit the Solomon Islands and land on all of the main islands to assert British authority. An officer from HMS *Curaçoa* recorded his view of the visit to Malaita:

> The natives have a reputation of being more quarrelsome and dangerous than those of any other island. They came in large numbers to the beach, and were mostly armed with Sniders, though some carried spears, clubs, and axes. They were complete savages. We all landed with revolvers, and did not venture off the beach or out of sight of the ship. Men, women, and children were entirely unclothed, but they struck us as being larger and finer in physique than the inhabitants of most of the other islands …

Anglican missionary Rev. Richard Comins, who joined HMS *Curaçoa* at Siota in the Gela Group, also described the scene. At each stop they landed, hoisted the Union Jack, fired a *feu de joie*, read a proclamation and gave out presents. In most cases, copies of these proclamations were either handed to chiefs or buried in bottles, and small presents of hatchets, knives, cloth and tobacco were given to local leaders. The ceremony was enacted at several areas on Malaita. In most places the people would not take the flag or touch the copy of the proclamation. This was better than what happened at Roviana Lagoon, New Georgia, where the people immediately ripped up the flag for loin cloths.

The only Malaitan opposition was at Laulasi in Langalanga Lagoon, where the people seem to have feared that alignment with the British would make the inland descent groups think the lagoon people were preparing for war and cease trade. At Port Adam, a 21-gun salute was fired and the Union Jack was duly hoisted, left under the care of local leader Faka’ia and Melanesian Mission teacher Luke Masuraa. There was a similar ceremony at Sa’a, where the situation was still volatile from the mission staff having earlier aided the crew of HMS *Royalist* to punish the murderers of Uki

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8 Although the 1893 Order-in-Council included the Santa Cruz Islands, the proclamation was not formally made in these islands until 1898. In June 1897, when HMS *Wallaroo* visited Rennell and Bellona and the Stewart Group, including Sikaiana, these were proclaimed by Captain G.N. Pollard to be under British protection. During 1898, the commanding officers of HMS *Mohawk* and HMS *Goldfinch* extended British protection to the Santa Cruz Islands, the Reef Islands and Duff Islands, plus Vanikolo and Tikopia, and helped with general policing duties. The islands of the Shortland Group, Isabel, Choiseul, and Ontong Java Atoll were transferred to Great Britain by a convention with Germany dated 14 November 1899. *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Sept 1952; *BSIP News Sheet*, Oct 1961, Apr 1966.

9 Naval Officer 1893, 450.

10 WPHC 8 III 22 (1), Australian Station, Solomon Islands, 1893, H.W.S. Gibson, HMS *Curaçoa*, to CC, 13 July 1893.
Island trader Fred Howard.\textsuperscript{11} Other nearby villages expressed sorrow for the Walade, Port Adam and Sa’a people, thinking that they had been shelled by the naval vessel.\textsuperscript{12} This was typical of the experience of floating European government for all Solomon Islanders. British, French and sometimes German naval ships had patrolled around the coasts for decades, and contact most often took the form of a bombardment in retaliation for some offence. The British Navy usually only patrolled between May and October each year, a pattern that villagers would have noted, allowing them the rest of the year with no naval threat.\textsuperscript{13} The only other British presence probably escaped local notice, although labour recruits would have realised their importance on the ships: government agents. Since the early 1870s, these agents on Queensland and Fiji recruiting vessels had provided reports (some of dubious quality) on each voyage, and they had ultimate power on board each ship. They provided information to the Queensland and Fijian governments, usually in the form of diaries, or if an incident occurred then in lengthy reports.

Between 1870 and 1896, the government agents and the RNAs were the sole British representatives in the Solomons. Permanent resident authority came with Charles Morris Woodford, initially appointed as deputy commissioner from April 1896. He toured around, then travelled back to Sydney and Fiji, and then in March 1897 returned as resident commissioner and set up his headquarters on Tulagi. Woodford had visited the Solomons previously on three trips as a naturalist (1886–88). During his first visit, on the Fijian recruiting ship \textit{Christine}, he spent some time collecting specimens on Malaita.\textsuperscript{14} He had lobbied High Commissioner Thurston for the position in the Solomons and spent a short term as consul and deputy commissioner in Apia, Samoa (1894–96), as a form of apprenticeship for the Solomons position.\textsuperscript{15}

A haphazard pattern of foreign bases had emerged since whalers had arrived in the archipelago in substantial numbers in the 1820s, mainly in the New Georgia Group and at Kolombangara, Simbo, Ontong Java and Makira. These were also Christian missions, often sited on small but secure offshore islands. Woodford’s first official report listed almost 50 foreign residents, only one of whom, Rev. Walter Ivens, lived part-time

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{CominsWelchman} Comins and Welchman reports of the proclamation, \textit{OPMM}, Mar 1894, 49–50.
\bibitem{Lawrence2014} Lawrence 2014, 149–58.
\bibitem{Woodford1890} Woodford 1890; Lawrence 2014, 63–137.
\bibitem{Lawrence2014 Heath} Lawrence 2014; Heath 1974.
\end{thebibliography}
at Sa’a on Malaita. There were 21 cutters, ketches and schooners trading within the protectorate, plus the visiting labour trade and naval vessels. Although Woodford’s initial plan was to place the government base on Uki Island, he instead chose small Tulagi Island in the Gela Group and used nearby Gavutu, a trader’s station, as his headquarters until buildings were constructed on Tulagi just across the passage. He had also considered Guadalcanal, where he had spent several months in the 1880s, but decided it was unhealthy. Woodford seems not to have considered Malaita as a possible base, presumably because of the reputation of Malaitans and because the island was not geographically central to the protectorate. He visited Malaita in November 1899 when he recruited some men for his police, although he would have been in regular contact with Malaitans on recruiting vessels, which by law (after 1898) had to call first at Tulagi. Woodford was aware that weapons and ammunition were still being smuggled from Queensland and Fiji to Malaita and other islands, even though labour vessels were thoroughly searched when they left these colonies and again at Tulagi. The main weapon sellers seem to have been European and Islander crew members. Ships from New Caledonia and German Samoa were also supplying arms and ammunition to Malaitans.

Governing Malaita, 1880s–1908

No one knew the true size of the Solomons Islands population, although all estimates suggest that Malaita was the most populous island in the protectorate. Estimates of the population in the early twentieth century usually varied between 100,000 and 150,000, with 50,000 to 100,000 people on Malaita. Protectorate officials could only count Malaitans who lived around the coast and had no idea how many lived inland. In 1910, Arthur Mahaffy described most Malaitans as living ‘perched upon the sides of precipitous mountains or hidden in the recesses of the virgin forest’, impossible to count. Even 1930s and 1940s estimates were likely inaccurate.

16 CO 225/39 (1892) (microfilm 2316), ‘Solomon Islands: Resumption of Labour Traffic; Submits Observations on the Conduct of this Traffic and Recommends the Annexation of the Solomon Islands’.
17 Bennett 1987, 151.
18 CO 225/91 (1910), 286 (microfilm 2915), Arthur Mahaffy, assistant to HC Sir Everard im Thurn, report of visit to Solomon Islands, 8 Apr 1910.
As mentioned in Chapter 1, precontact numbers could have been much higher, given the degree of depopulation thought to have occurred throughout Near Oceania in recent centuries. Declaration of the protectorate in 1893 meant nothing on Malaita, though Woodford slowly began to assert his authority starting in 1896–97. His initial ‘equipment’ consisted of an 8.2-metre whaleboat, eight police and a £1,200 grant-in-aid. He used the RNAS ships to deal with any ‘incidents’, although because the fleet was based in Sydney and only sailed through the islands for half the year, and acted in consultation with the high commissioner in Fiji, response time was usually very slow. Woodford instituted a stringent three-week quarantine regulation, especially for any ship coming out of German New Guinea, where people were dying of smallpox and influenza on New Britain. He insisted that all ships entering the protectorate had to call first at Tulagi, and he began to tighten regulation of the labour trade and land purchases.19 His main tasks were regulating the external and internal labour trades and instituting colonial law and order (called ‘pacification’) to a level that would enable plantations to be established in the BSIP. Even when he was notified of incidents needing investigation, Woodford often had insufficient time or capacity to respond effectively. While Malaita was close to Tulagi, there was little he could do to govern the island. His main contacts were the mission stations’ European and local teacher staffs with whom he exchanged correspondence. He occasionally did manage to make his presence felt, such as when he ordered Rev. Hopkins to evacuate Lau Lagoon for an upcoming naval bombardment in 1902, or when he arrived at Malu’u in 1904 on the government vessel Lahloo and arrested a man for murder. Woodford’s first resident magistrate, Arthur Mahaffy, visited Malaita on HMS Sparrow in 1902 to investigate several deaths.20

As part of my research from the 1970s into the 1990s, I collected details of violent incidents between indigenous inhabitants of New Guinea and Island Melanesia and foreigners over hundreds of years. These statistics cover 584 violent incidents, accounting for more than 1,400 foreign deaths and untold numbers of indigenous deaths—the true number was probably twice that. There are two other relevant lists of incidents, one by Bennett and another in my book Kanaka: both of these sources are

included in my main list. My Island Melanesia statistics accounted for 318 incidents with in excess of 684 foreign deaths (Europeans and their crews). The numbers would be higher if Queensland and Fiji plantation incidents were included. During the second half of the nineteenth century, naval investigations and consequent retaliation often followed indigenous attacks. Investigations could take from six months to two years to complete and almost always ended in bombardment or with shore parties destroying villages, fruit trees, canoes and pigs. The research located 35 substantial attacks around Malaita before there was a government base on the island. On Malaita, the first known attack against European ships occurred in 1827, then none are recorded until 1872, followed by a spate of serious attacks in the 1880s involving attempts to take control of and loot ships and kill their crews. Damaging attacks were made on the Borealis (1880), Janet Stewart (1882), Young Dick (1886) and Minota (1907). Unsuccessful attempts were made on the Helena (1884), Savo (1888), Fearless (1890), Marie (1890), Meg Merrilies (1890) and Para (1895). The Borealis, Janet Stewart and Young Dick were all attacked along a few kilometres of the east coast between Uru Harbour and Leli Atoll. There were around 44 deaths and eight serious

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23 Forster 1975, 97; Bennett 1987, 30–31, 350; Rhodes 1937, 253 (Rhodes provides no source).
24 Scarr 1967a, 38.
26 MM, 3 May 1882; Queenslander, 25 Nov 1882; Wawn 1973, 244; Rannie 1912, 70–72; Mitchell Library, RNNS FM4/1665, 23, 'Australia Station, New Guinea, Solomons and New Hebrides, Correspondence Respecting Outrages', 20; QSA COL/A783, In-Letter 1,572 of 1892, GA Rannie to IA, 19 Dec 1892.
29 QSA COL/A411, In-Letter 169 of 1885, 'Evidence of Inquiry'.
33 Ibid., 434.
34 QSA COL/A795, In-Letter 10323 of 1895, IA to US CSD, 28 Aug 1895, Appendix B: extract from GA log; QSA GOV/A28, IA to US CSD, 18 Feb 1895.
woundings of foreign crews, a recorded 21 Malaitans killed (a number
that can probably be doubled or tripled), seven Malaitans were taken to
Australia for trials and four, including a woman and child, were taken to
Fiji, and perhaps 40 or 50 recruits from the ships were also killed. During
the 1890s and early 1900s, when Malaitan recruiting was at its peak, there
were many smaller attempts to capture labour trade ships or kill crews,
some of which involved fatalities. Recruiting boats away from the main
vessel were easy targets, particularly if they were in rivers and creeks that
could be blocked by felled trees.35

Malaita certainly had its fair share of incidents, although when
considering the statistics we need to keep in mind Malaitan centrality to
the labour trade: they made up 58 per cent of Solomon Islanders recruited
to Queensland and Fiji, 1870–1911. Consequently, one would expect
around half of all labour trade violent incidents in the Solomons to have
occurred around Malaita. Using Queensland statistics to gain a wider
perspective, in comparison with the number of recruits recorded from
the next most important islands (Epi, 5,084; Tanna, 4,241; Guadalcanal,
4,188, Ambrym, 3,464), we see that more labourers were from Malaita
(9,187 indenture contracts) than any other island.36 Analysis of my labour
trade voyage files suggests that equally serious attacks also took place on
Tanna, Epi, Aoba and Malekula; although no other island’s peoples tried
to seize as many vessels as did Malaitans, or were as successful. There
was an element of luck in the effective attacks since success would not

35 Lady Darling (1875): MM, 11 Dec 1875; Queensland, 1 Jan 1876; Ariel (1888): Wawn 1973,
415; Wawn, private log, Ariel, 22, 26 Oct 1888, 51–64, map, 64; Upolu and Fearless (1890): Wawn
1973, 269–72, 424, 434; Sybil II (1891): Mitchell Library, RNAS FM4/1665, 23, ‘Correspondence
Respecting Outrages’, 37, Case 51, Captain E.H.M. Davis, HMS Royalist to CC, 6 Oct 1891; Helena
(1893): GA S.M. Smith, private log, Helena, 3 Apr 1893; Sybil II (1893): QSA GOV/A25, Officer
in Charge, Pacific Islands Labour Bureau to US CSD, 1 June 1893; MM, 27 May 1893; Para (1894):
Wawn, private log, Para, 8 Aug 1894; QSA GOV/A26, IA to US CSD, 8 Mar 1894; Sybil II (1894):
Wawn, private log, Para, 19 July 1894; QSA GOV/A27, IA to US CSD, 1 Oct 1894; GOV/A27,
841, Appendix A, 2, IA Brennan to Permanent Under-Secretary CSD, 1 Oct 1894; WPHC 8 III, 23,
1894, ‘Australian Station, Solomon Islands, 1894’, Case 63, James Goodrich, Commander, to CC,
29 Aug 1894; Lochiel (1895): QSA GOV/A29, Chief Secretary to Governor, 20 Dec 1895; Rio Lodge
(1896): QSA GOV/A30 IA to Permanent Under-Secretary CSD, 18 Mar 1896; QVP 1897, 2, 1,086,
Station, Solomon Islands, 1896’, Case 73; QSA GOV/A30 IA to Permanent Under-Secretary, CSD,
13 Mar 1896; Sybil II (1896): Smith, private log, Sybil II, 20 Dec 1896; Rio Lodge (1897): QSA
GOV/A32, IA to Secretary to Prime Minister of Queensland, 26 Aug 1897; Fearless (1901): Annual
Report of the Department of Pacific Islanders, 1902’, 2; QSA GOV/A36, IA to UC CSD, 27 May
1901; and GA S. M. Smith to IA, 24 Apr 1901; Rio Lodge (1902): QSA GOV/A38, IA to US CSD,
9 June 1902; Roderick Dhu (1902): QSA GOV/A38 IA to US CSD, 19 Mar 1902.
have been a foregone conclusion. The list of failed attacks is also long. These attacks and the truculent behaviours of Malaitans working on overseas and local plantations were the main reasons they gained a bad reputation, which fed into the trope of Malaitan violence. It is also clear from the testimony of men such as Saelasi Lounga from east Kwaio, and the documentary evidence, that attacks on ships usually occurred within existing cultural frameworks. What emerges from the oral testimony concerning the related attacks on the *Borealis*, *Janette Stewart* and *Young Dick*, remembered through sung chants about ancestral deeds, is that in each case, and as with any planned Malaitan military attack, religious observances were involved to gain ancestral support, including sacrifices of pigs and the following of special ritual taboos. The beheading of the *Ariel*’s government agent, Thomas Seymour Armstrong, at Maana`oba Island on 6 December 1888 is part of this same sequence.

There were also many smaller incidents involving labour trade vessels at Malaita in which the recruiters managed to escape. The range of incidents outlined above, and others in the 1900s, were typical of what occurred during the late 1870s, 1880s and 1890s and what was to follow over the next few decades. The attacks were usually in retaliation for deaths away from the island, or ‘blood money’ bounties posted for various offences on Malaita. Armstrong’s death is in this latter category—dead relatives had to be avenged to placate ancestors and keep descent groups free from spiritual threat. When *ramo* accepted shell valuables as bounty payments for having taken a life, their actions were not always condoned by leaders of descent groups. However, as Shankar Aswani argues, based on Daniel de Coppet’s research in `Are`are (where there was considerably more hierarchy than elsewhere on Malaita):

> A leader extracted dual social benefit from murderous acts: on the one hand he elevated his political stature by the exploits of his warriors/assassins and on the other he emerged as a benefactor who restored peace and socio-cosmic stability via the formation of exchange relations.

37 Transcript of account by Saelasi Lounga from Uru, east Kwaio, 4 Aug 1982, courtesy David Akin; Lawrence 2014, 78–79.
38 Keesing 1986c; information from David Akin, 8 Oct 2011; Wawn 1973, 418, 423; Mitchell Library, Wawn, private log, *Helena*, 6 Dec 1888; Melvin 1977, 24; Cromar 1935, 265; MM, 22 Jan 1889, report by Captain Norman of *Fearless*, who was then at ‘Ataa; WPHC 8, 3, 18 (2), 14, evidence of Jackson Ka (Kaiviti), son of Kwaisulia, 22 Aug 1889, Case 29.
39 Moore 1985, Map 6, 62.
The arrival of thousands of guns and axes changed Malaita, as it did other areas of the Solomons. There was an escalation of the violence against outsiders, and *ramo* began to use guns in addition to indigenous weaponry.

For instance, in 1901 the father of a Malaitan who had died in Queensland offered a reward for the retaliatory death of a European. This was extracted twice: on 19 April 1901 when James Arthur, recruiter on the *Fearless*, was shot and killed at `Ataa, and through the death of George McCabe, recruiter on the *Roderick Dhu*, killed by Galla and Jacky Qui (Kwai) at Uru Harbour on 23 December 1901. In response, Mahaffy travelled to Malaita on HMS *Sparrow*, which bombarded a small island near Malu`u. In Lau Lagoon, Mahaffy dealt with another complicated but fairly typical payback killing, mentioned in earlier chapters. Amasia, a man from the Anibiongi descent group, had been kidnapped at Leli Atoll, probably by the Fiji labour trade vessel *Nukulau* in the early 1870s. He learnt about Christianity at a Wesleyan mission and spoke Pijin Fijian rather than Pijin English. Amasia returned home to Ngongosila Island in 1898 or 1899, built a Fijian-style house and was living with his Fijian wife Bauleni (Pauline) and his son Ini`a, Joseph Kwainauri and Waisaki. Against the will of local leaders, Amasia tried to start a Christian school, a task made more difficult by his dogmatic ways and his wife’s refusal to follow local customs. Pauline was killed by Avu soon after she defiled an ancestral shrine. After her death, Waisaki moved to Sinalagu, and Amasia and Ini`a left for Kwarande and Ngorefou in Lau Lagoon. Amasia was killed there in 1902 by Waita and Suemai, who were seeking revenge for Amasia’s supposed killing of their grandfather three decades earlier. The third set of 1902 deaths that Mahaffy investigated related to Kwairae from Oru opposite Malu`u Harbour, who killed a man in a canoe off `Aoke Island and killed a woman and wounded three men at Foate. Mahaffy demanded that Oru people give up Kwairae, and when they did not, HMS *Sparrow* shelled the island and a shore party burnt down the village and killed their pigs. Lau bigman Kwaisulia was nearby, held hostage on HMS *Sparrow*

41 *Fearless*: ‘Annual Report of the Department of Pacific Islanders, 1902’, 2 (original copy); QSA GOV/A36, IA to UC CSD, 27 May 1901; and S. M. Smith to IA, 24 Apr 1901; *Roderick Dhu*: QSA GOV/A38 IA to US CSD, 19 Mar 1902.

42 Ben Burt, British Museum, identifies Amasia as one of the Malaitans kidnapped by the *Nukulau*. Thirteen survived and 11 were returned to Malaita. Ivens said that Amasia was kidnapped by the *Marion Rennie*, although his description of the circumstances also fits the *Nukulau* incident. Burt’s 2002 account can be taken as definitive. Amasia remained in Fiji for the next three decades, and claimed to have been in prison for 21 years. He returned home and attempted to set up as a teacher at Ngongosila before he transferred to Lau Lagoon where he was killed. Burt 1994, 112; 2002; Moore 1985, 38–39; Fox 1958, 172; Ivens 1918, 21; Ivens, ‘Kalilana Mala (The Rounding of Mala)’, *SCL*, 15 June 1900, 9–20; *SCL*, Aug 1900; Comins, ‘First Voyage, 1902’, *SCL*, Aug 1902, 33.
while his son Jackson Kaiviti arranged the surrender of Waita and Suemai. At Kwai Island, Avu was not surrendered and the village was destroyed, as were 40 or 50 pigs. The killers of McCabe escaped retribution since they came from an inland village.\textsuperscript{43}

HMS \textit{Prometheus} bombarded Suiwa Village on the west coast in January 1907 and later that year Waita and Suemai were still being pursued when HMS \textit{Cambrian} shelled three artificial islands and two inland villages at `Ataa. The ship also bombarded Waisisi and Fiu to punish murders recently committed.\textsuperscript{44} C.C. Mackenzie, an inexperienced recruiter on Oscar Svenson's \textit{Minota}, recruiting labourers for Guadalcanal plantations, was killed at Bina in 1908, tomahawked by men from an inland descent group who came down to Alite Island in Langalanga Lagoon. The lagoon people rescued the ship and local crew, then sailed the vessel back to Tulagi and reported the incident. Woodford arrived on HMS \textit{Cambrian} and landed at Bina, then travelled inland to destroy the village implicated in the death. His shore party burnt villages, killed pigs, and a child was accidentally drowned. Just as would occur in the retaliation for the Bell killings in 1927, innocent people were punished, which in this case led to fighting between them and the actual perpetrators.\textsuperscript{45}

Europeans used indiscriminate naval bombardments or naval shore parties to punish Solomon Islanders for 80 years, up until 1927 when the crew of HMAS \textit{Adelaide} were involved in retribution against the east Kwaio people, though only a small group had killed District Officer Bell and most of his party (see Chapter 10). What changed in the twentieth century is that, whereas previously the British Navy and the Queensland and Fiji governments were only interested if the violence involved foreigners (which was the way the laws worked), once the protectorate was established, with reform to the British laws governing protectorates, and with a government base on Malaita, policing could also be applied to all local actions that transgressed protectorate laws.

The Gela Group, where Tulagi was situated, was already stable under an Anglican mission theocracy, and this allowed the government to focus initially on the northwest Solomons. This need of ‘pacification’ was ample

\textsuperscript{43} WPHC IC 7/1903, RM Arthur Mahaffy to RC CMW, 1 Oct 1902.
\textsuperscript{44} NAA CRS A1 07/9881, Report by Captain Gaunt, HMS \textit{Cambrian}, 23 July 1907; \textit{MM}, 28 Jan 1907.
\textsuperscript{45} WPHC IC 7/1903, RM Mahaffy to RC CMW, 1 Oct 1902; WPHC IC 98/1908, CMW to HC Sir Everard im Thurn, 13 Apr 1908; Bennett 1987, 109; Akin 1993, 166 n 40.
justification for the next government bases, at Gizo in 1899 and in the 
Shortland Island District in 1906.46 Apart from the mission stations, there 
had been no attempts to settle on Malaita, although the island continued 
to be the mainstay of the labour trade to Queensland until 1904 and to 
Fiji until 1914. We have seen that once the external movement of labour 
came to an end, thousands of Malaitans returned home between 1902 and 
1914. After a long battle with the WPHC, a protectorate decree was passed 
in 1910 that ended all external employment of labour.47 Woodford argued 
that the future development of the Solomons required an ample supply of 
local labourers to build up copra plantations. Malaitans were essential to 
this plan, and just as they had dominated the overseas labour trades they 
soon made up over 60 per cent of the protectorate’s labour. Malaitans still 
had few other ways to obtain European manufactured items.

Over the previous 30 years, Malaitans had become used to access to 
foreign goods. And with guns no longer readily available, tobacco was 
at the top of their list. Woodford estimated that 50 tons of tobacco was 
imported into the protectorate every year in the early 1900s. Labourers 
working overseas often brought back 20 to 30 pounds (9 to 14 kilograms) 
each, which, based on 500 of the 1,000 returning Malaitans each year, is 
5 tons. Presuming that they also obtained part of the general imports of 
tobacco, well in excess of 10 tons (9.07 metric tonnes, or 520,000 sticks 
of tobacco) reached Malaita every year in the 1900s.48 The protectorate’s 
annual report described the Malaitan predicament:

It will be interesting to view the effect upon the Island of Mala of the 
cessation of recruiting. Up to the present time, tobacco and other trade 
has been poured out upon Mala by the labour ships for the purchase of 
recruits. The Mala natives will not in future be able to do without it, 
consequently they will either have to go to work locally in the Protectorate 
or convert their rifles into agricultural implements and produce some 
saleable commodity on their own account.49

If Mahaffy was correct in claiming that 80 per cent of Malaitan males 
possessed firearms in the 1900s, we have some idea of how much Malaita 
had changed in three decades. Malaitans were no longer envious of 
their northern Solomons neighbours who had attracted earlier supplies

48 Fifty tons is 100,000 pounds or 45,359 kilograms. There were approximately 26 sticks of 
tobacco to the pound. A serious smoker can smoke a stick in a day or two.
49 BSIP AR, 1902–03, 9.
of Western goods. They had entered consumer society, and had also enhanced their reputation as dangerous with the thousands of guns they possessed and sometimes used on each other and outsiders. This was the background of the situation government officers faced after 1909. Most of the guns were confiscated in the mid-1920s, without compensation. How many were functioning weapons, and had ammunition, is difficult to say.

Establishing Malaita District, 1909–10

Establishing a government presence was for the government much overdue, given the return of thousands of Malaitans from overseas colonies during the 1900s and their effect on Malaitan communities, and of course the need to reharness the Malaitan workforce for Solomon Islands plantations. The Malaita Government station was begun in September 1909, at Rarasu on the west coast at the top of Langalanga Lagoon. Early records (even the note paper) called the station Quibala (Kwaibala) after the local river. The government station was only one of several permanent European bases on Malaita, and for some years Malaitans would have viewed it as a minor settlement, albeit with a large number of armed guards (the police). The station soon became known as ‘Aoke (Auki), the name of the island opposite in the lagoon.

Woodford first visited ‘Aoke in 1886 while on the Christine, a Fiji labour vessel:

The place where we anchored is called I think Auki (Aoke [crossed out]) and there is a good passage with five fathoms of water. When you are inside there is a good harbour. On the starboard side going in there is a small island covered with coconut trees on which is a very populous settlement. A little distance off in the same direction is another smaller one. On this there appears to be only one large house, most probably a canoe house. Further on again on the edge of the reef is a small rock with trees growing upon it. Immediately on anchoring we were surrounded by small canoes, many of them only large enough to carry one child. There were altogether about fifty and the number of people was about eighty.

50 Estimated by Arthur Mahaffy on his visit to Malaita on HMS Sparrow in 1902, BSIP AR, 1902–03, 15.
51 SINA, BSIP 14/40, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 30 Mar 1911.
52 Woodford 1886, 4 June, 134.
Map 14: Major foreign bases on Malaita, 1910.
Source: Courtesy of Vincent Verheyen.
Ten years later, he estimated the population of `Aoke Island as around 600, noted its coral rock fortifications and went on to describe the manufacture of shell wealth items in Langalanga Lagoon:

They get the materials from Gela and Savo. Their canoes go across to Gela for pigs which they buy in exchange for the money. A canoe lately brought back 40 pigs from Boli. Every few days a market is held on a beach on the mainland opposite the island and at Fiu & other places. The island people buy yams & other food & sell the bushmen pigs from Gela & the shell money.  

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Figure 7.1: The residency, the Malaita resident magistrate’s (later the district officer’s) house, and the office built for Thomas Edge-Partington in 1910.

Source: British Museum, Edge-Partington Collection, Album 5, Ca44.293.

Woodford 1896, 15 June, 8–9.
Woodford visited Malaita many times during his term as resident commissioner, using the government ketch or hitching a ride on passing naval ships. In 1908, he visited Bina Harbour in Langalanga Lagoon aboard HMS *Cambrian* to investigate the murder of C.C. Mackenzie.\(^{54}\) The Kwaibala area was central, had a good harbour and had not been selected as a Christian base. Being situated at the top of lagoon, it provided a sheltered transport route down the west coast, and was close to Aloa, the steamer port on Guadalcanal. Woodford authorised Frank Barnett, then the controller of Customs, to purchase 12.1 hectares immediately west of the Kwaibala River for £10 on 15 July 1909 from Qualagau (Kwalagau), while Woodford paid £10 to purchase an adjoining 18.2 hectares to the west of the first purchase, from Gemite and Malafou.\(^{55}\) Two months later, Woodford sent Resident Magistrate (RM) Thomas W. Edge-Partington, transferred from Gizo, to establish the ‘Aoke headquarters.

Early in 1910, Woodford and Mahaffy both visited ‘Aoke, where Edge-Partington was busy supervising construction of the new station and in the process of building his house. ‘Aoke was envisaged as the nucleus out of which law and order would emerge, although all three men were well aware of the difficulties faced in incorporating tens of thousands of Malaitans into the protectorate.\(^{56}\) The nearby Langalanga people, spread out over a series of islands in the lagoon, had an uneasy relationship with their coastal and inland neighbours. In 1896 Woodford observed that the inland people were much better armed, but the lagoon-dwellers had significant advantages in their use of canoes, their control of the production and trade in shell valuables and their control of trade in pigs from Gela to the Malaitan coast.\(^{57}\)

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\(^{54}\) No charges were laid and in 1913 Woodford asked Edge-Partington to inform the murderers’ village that no action would be taken. Bennett 1987, 109; SINA, BSIP 14/8, RC CMW to RM TWE-P, 4 Dec 1913.

\(^{55}\) SINA, BSIP 14/7, RC CMW to AEW, 11 Mar 1912. Several men were also paid for sago or coconut palms (‘more or less imaginary’) growing on the land.

\(^{56}\) CO225/91, Western Pacific no. 24619 (microfilm 2915), Arthur Mahaffy to HC Sir Everard im Thurn, 8 Apr 1910.

\(^{57}\) Woodford 1896, 16, 17 June.
The Administration of Malaita, 1909–15

While ‘Aoke was being established during the 1910s, Malaita had three Christian denominations operating and a large plantation venture underway—the Malayta Company, exemplifying industrial Christianity. This substantial Christian presence meant that large changes had already occurred on Malaita, extensions of those brought about by the external labour trade since the 1870s.

The administration of Malaita before the Second World War falls neatly into two halves, 1909 to 1927 and 1927 to 1942. David Akin’s research shows that 16 European protectorate officials worked on Malaita for some period between 1909 and 1927. These early years were dominated first by Thomas Edge-Partington, and then by William Bell.58 Edge-Partington, born in 1883 into an English gentry family, joined the colonial service after he failed his lieutenant’s examination in the Royal Navy. He served from December 1905 to May 1909 as the first resident magistrate at Gizo, then at aged 26 was transferred to Malaita in the same position between 1 September 1909 and 26 January 1915.59 These early years were spent establishing ‘Aoke and in rudimentary policing operations. Edge-Partington was joined in February 1912 by an Australian, Frederick M. Campbell, commander of the protectorate’s police until 1917, when he was transferred to Kirakira as Makira’s first district officer (DO).60 The other important early officer was another Australian, William Bell, who was protectorate inspector of labourers between 1911 and 1915, when he became the DO for Malaita.61 Before that, Bell had been a Fiji-based labour recruiter, and from 1904 or 1905 to 1911 Bell was a government agent on Fiji labour trade ships that worked mainly around Malaita. Thus when he began at ‘Aoke he already had 10 years of extensive contact with Malaitans.

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58 List of Malaita’s colonial officers compiled by David Akin, in Moore’s possession.
59 Moore 2013c entry. Except when absent on leave: Edge-Partington took an extended period of leave from February 1912 to February 1913.
60 Moore 2013c entry; Bennett 1987, 401; Boutiller 1983, 44; notes accompanying Edge-Partington’s photographic collection, British Museum, www.unithistories.com/officers/RN_officersE.html (accessed 5 Oct 2011). In 1914, the title ‘resident magistrate’ was replaced by ‘district officer’ (DO).
61 Moore 2013c entry; Keesing and Corris 1980.
Edge-Partington arrived on Malaita at a time when the Queensland labour trade had ended and thousands of ex-labourers had returned home. The smaller Fiji labour trade was also phased out during his years on Malaita, the external movement of labour replaced by indenture within the Solomons. Malaita’s plantation culture, begun in Queensland, Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia, was now developed further by new generations. The experiences of these men overseas and within the protectorate mitigated the old linguistic and political divisions. Pijin English created a *lingua franca* that had been missing from earlier interactions. Those who had absorbed Christianity no longer held their old leaders in the same awe, and their access to manufactured goods, brought with them from other colonies or earned in the protectorate, altered their status and allegiance to established bigmen. As described in earlier chapters, Christian enclaves all around the coast were beginning to polarise social and political norms. Most of those converted to Christianity overseas were living in coastal Christian villages where the authority of mission teachers had replaced that of indigenous leaders.

Policing continued in the punitive mode of the naval bombardments over the previous 50 years. Edge-Partington was equipped with a whaleboat and a small police squad he had brought with him from Gizo. In their first action, when Joe Sili, a Malaitan man, was murdered on the front
veranda of Rev. Hopkins’s house at Ngorefo on the mainland of Lau Lagoon in September 1910, they proved ineffective. Visitors from inland descent groups had been sitting on Hopkins’s front veranda. Another small group walked up, made friendly banter and then shot Sili dead.62 Hopkins had been at fault in allowing the second group of men armed with Snider rifles onto his veranda. Sili’s death was sponsored by Lainau (Laina’o), a bigman from an inland village, and Simanhu from Ferasubua Island in the lagoon. Irokwato, a famous ramo, was also involved.

The event showed just how short-staffed Edge-Partington was. He left only four police to guard ‘Aoke station and had to ask the ‘Aoke Island leaders to help protect the settlement. Then he and the remaining 21 police had rowed for three days around north Malaita to Sulufou, calling at Fiu and Maanaere on the way. The police, augmented by eight locals, attacked and burned Lainau’s and Irokwato’s villages, and also destroyed ancestral shrines, slit-drums and food trees.63 The inhabitants of Ferasubua were ordered to produce Simanhu within one month or face a large fine in shell valuables and destruction of their village. Edge-Partington was not impressed by his police whom he described as paralysed by fear; his report to Woodford must rate as one of the most honest in the protectorate’s records. He told the resident commissioner that he was ‘not a fool and to expect a man to go into the bush on this island and fight with a few boys is simply madness’.

My boys were absolutely useless and if the bushmen had made a stand as they intended to we would never have got out of the bush. This of course may have been because they are absolutely untrained and didn’t know which end of the gun goes off …

If I am to quiet Mala I must have the boys to do it. I absolutely refuse to do it with a few creatures called Police that the Mala people are laughing at. What is more I am not living on an Island but on the mainland and after attacking a place I have got to keep a good look out all the time to keep them from coming down and attacking this place for revenge.

I never saw such a hopeless lot to attack a bunch of unfrightened bushmen in my life, and if you want a second opinion about them ask Mr Sage as he was with me and was laughing at them all the time.64

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62 Fox 1958, 172.
64 SINA, BSIP 14/40, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 1 Mar, 14, 19 Sept 1910.
For his part, Hopkins began to comprehend the complexity of Malaitan society as each death brought further reprisals.

It all makes for confusion, treachery and distrust; the atmosphere is horrible. At Fiu a heathen visitor was killed with an axe by an apparently friendly caller—for a murder done some years ago. An old man was killed at Market—shot from behind a tree for an offence his brother committed long ago. A woman of the school was followed by two men and killed to avenge a quarrel in which she had no concern.65

Court proceedings were held during patrols and at `Aoke. There is a photograph from Bell’s early years, where a trial is being held on the veranda of the DO’s residence, although this may well have been staged since there was also a separate office.66 The result could be fines in shell or teeth valuables, or custodial sentences. Serious cases, including all murders, were referred to Tulagi. Fines could be collective, to be paid by the occupants of one village or one small island, such as a £50 fine visited on Maana’oba Island off north Malaita in 1912.67 Local offenders serving short sentences were held at `Aoke. Government policy was to transfer prisoners with long sentences away from their home areas; thus prisoners from the Western Solomons ended up at `Aoke or Tulagi and those from Malaita were often transferred to Gizo or the Shortlands. In 1910, `Aoke had prisoners but no prison and nowhere to detain them, except under Edge-Partington’s house during daytime, and in the labourers’ quarters at night. Whether prisoners understood the concept behind the punishment is unclear. Edge-Partington warned them that they were confined to the station for a set period of time and would be shot if they ran away; for good measure he added that if they escaped into the bush the local people would kill them.68 There is an old colonial adage that the prisoners were more interested in the rice, other foods, clothes and tobacco provided than in comprehending the process of being charged, tried, convicted and imprisoned. There was also a sense of stoicism exhibited by not being too concerned by the whiteman’s legal system.

Edge-Partington was clearly worried that `Aoke would be attacked and overrun. There were thousands of rifles on Malaita, mainly Sniders and Winchesters—owning a gun was a badge of manhood—with more still

65 Fox 1958, 172.
68 SINA, BSIP 14/40, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 2 Oct and 22 Dec 1909; BSIP 14/41 1911–13, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 19 Dec 1911.
being smuggled in or stolen from recruiting schooners. In 1914, dozens of guns were purchased from Levers Pacific Plantations Ltd’s ships at Marau Sound on Guadalcanal and sold to the bush villagers.\textsuperscript{69} Plugs of dynamite were sold at one \textit{tafuli`ae} (10 strings of shell wealth) per plug, and cartridges were also available.\textsuperscript{70} Trader and later labour recruiter Joseph Dickinson had been in the Solomons since 1908:

Apart from their own weapons the natives had rifles of old and new pattern, with an abundance of ammunition smuggled in during the Queensland labour trade, or supplied by unscrupulous recruiting ships of that day. This gun-running, like the Malaita man’s raiding, was also now [in 1927] a thing of the past. However, the gun-runners had left behind them eight to ten thousand rifles, though the greater number were more dangerous to their owners than to anyone else.\textsuperscript{71}

Spies constantly watched the government station and knew where the police rifles were stored. There were also prowlers around the station at night, presumably testing the strength of the garrison. Nearby descent groups were suspected of planning a daytime raid. ‘Aoke market days were the prime concern, when it was impossible to keep outsiders away and many of them carried guns. Woodford proposed banning guns from the market. Edge-Partington rejected this plan because it would risk the lives of friendly locals on their way to and from the market, placing them at risk from more belligerent types.\textsuperscript{72} ‘The inland and lagoon people came to ‘Aoke market and also recruited from there to the Solomons’ plantations.\textsuperscript{73} Recruiter and trader J.E. Philp described the scene at ‘Aoke in August 1912:

At 9 a.m. we went ashore (or rather to the shore) to a native market where there is always a possibility of getting recruits. It was quite a ‘Paddy’s Market’ as far as noise goes. Dozens of canoes from the islands trafficking with a crowd of bush-folk. The women do most of the business. The bushmen were all armed—most of them with Sniders. Whilst we were interviewing a likely recruit, a boat from the \textit{Sealark} [a naval ship] came close by us taking observations. The officer in charge expressed his surprise at seeing

\textsuperscript{69} SINA, BSIP 14/42, RM TWE-P to Collector of Customs and A/RC FJB, 25 Sept 1914.
\textsuperscript{70} SINA, BSIP 14/40, RM TWE-P to A/RC FJB, 12 June 1911; RM TWE-P to RC CMW 25 Sept 1911; BSIP 14/41, 1911–13, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 15 Apr 1913.
\textsuperscript{71} Dickinson 1927, 51.
\textsuperscript{72} SINA, BSIP 14/41 1911–13, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 18 Apr 1913.
\textsuperscript{73} SINA, BSIP 14/40, RM TWE-P to RC MW, 20 Jan, 8 Mar and 19 May 1910.
so many arms about ‘so close to the government station’—and wondered why it was allowed. It would be a problem to stop the natives carrying arms—for no white man has ever gone far into the interior yet.74

During 1910, an epidemic of colds and coughs hit the station and surrounding areas and caused deaths on Aoke Island and elsewhere. This was common around foreign stations when people were exposed to new diseases brought by labourers returning from Queensland and Fiji.

Edge-Partington attempted to establish his authority in and around Langalanga Lagoon and in May made an expedition into the mountains behind Bina Harbour, arresting Joe Maikali from Laulasi Island for attempting to kill a man. There was also continuing friction between the Kwara`ae and the Langalanga people and gardens and trees were destroyed. Similar to the mission stations, Aoke became a safe haven for refugees from other areas, including six men, six women and three children who lived there in 1911.75

The previous 10 years had brought great changes to Malaita. At the end of 1900, no Europeans were living permanently on the island: Charles Pillins at Malu’u had died and Walter Ivens was commuting between Ulawa and Small Malaita. By 1910, Aoke station housed Edge-Partington, 36 police constables and one Fijian police officer. Twenty-eight station labourers from the Western Solomons, Guadalcanal and the Russell Islands on one-year contracts cleared the land and planted crops. These were in addition to the refugees and six prisoners. Beyond Aoke, a small foreign population had spread around the island: the Anglican, SEM and Catholic missions were staffed by 15 European men and five women, one Fijian and several New Hebrideans and Solomon Islanders from other islands. There were also a few Indigenous Australian women who had come with returned-labourer husbands.76

74 J.E. Philip in Herr and Rood 1978, 166.
75 SINA, BSIP 14/40, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 5 May 1910, 1 Apr 1911.
76 C.C. Sage and W.H. Sage, two brothers, were based at the Melanesian Mission stations at Fiu and Sa’a. The SEM had staff at Malu’u (the Abbots and Caulfeild), Ngongosila (Catherine Deck, Miss Swain and Mr C. Crenan) and Onepusu (Misses Dring and Maclealan, Mr Jacobs, Northcote Deck and Mr Lees). Four European men were at Baunani plantation (Smithers, J. Allen, Every and Stene). The Malaya Company ship the Royal Endeavour had two European crew members, Captain W.S. Lane and Mr P. Lane. The crew of the Evangel and the Jubilee were also often on Malaita. An Australian part-Aboriginal woman named Louisa Tarasol-Aurora lived with her Pentecost husband at Fo’odo, and there may have been more mixed-race people at Onepusu. A small Catholic Marists station had opened at Tarapaina staffed by a Fijian teacher and a Marau man, and visited by priests from Guadalcanal. SINA, BSIP 14/40, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 28 Feb, 9 June, 1, 12 Nov 1910; RM TWE-P to Collector of Customs FJB, 30 Mar 1911.
The daily business of the RM included supervising movements of labour and dealing with reports of murder or smuggling of guns, dynamite or ammunition, and minor matters relating to payments of money or valuables between individuals, which sometimes involved payments to other islands. A growing part of his work was investigating land purchases made by the missions and the Malaita Company, usually without prior involvement by the government. Edge-Partington faced a difficult problem in June 1911, when on the same day a Malaitan school boy was killed at Maanaere nearby in west Kwara’ae,77 and Frederick Daniels, an SSEM missionary based on Ngongosila but visiting Uru, was shot just after delivering his Sunday sermon. The multiple reasons given for the murder of Daniels are a window into the complexity of investigations by any RM or DO. The immediate reports suggested two mission-inspired explanations, both of which involved *ramo* claiming ‘blood money’ offered for the death of a European. The first was that the murderers had wanted to kill Rev. Hopkins, but found him too well protected and chose

77 SINA, BSIP 14/40, RM TWE-P to A/RC FJB, 22 June 1911.
Daniels as an easier target. The second version was that Daniels had aided the escape to Onepusu of a couple who had breached sexual codes.  

Third and fourth explanations were provided by anthropologist Roger Keesing much later, drawing from a conversation Jonathan Fifi’i had in the 1960s with an aged ‘Alakwale’a, the man who shot Daniels.

Figure 7.4: Men from an inland village around 1910.

Note the number of men smoking pipes and the double- and single-barrel guns augmenting the traditional clubs and bows and arrows.

Source: Deck Collection, Black and White Photographs, 4; see Young 1925, 46.

‘Alakwale’a told Fifi’i that two men, Sam Farulate and Diakafu (mentioned in Chapter 4), had been wane naa ba’e (fataabu, ancestral priests), but when they returned from Queensland they had introduced Christianity and schools, which broke taboos and created grievances. Farulate had fled to Uru from Sinalagu, and Diakafu had been forced to relocate there from a Christian village he had started in the mountains. ‘Alakwale’a’s second reason related to an unfair curse that his mother had made. He and his kinsman Kwa’iga, both from Farisi on the coastal slopes of Uru Harbour, killed Daniels as a means to purify the curse.  

Edge-Partington wrongly

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78 SINA, BSIP 14/40, RM TWE-P to A/RC FJB, 10 Aug 1911.
79 Keesing 1992a, 50–52.
believed a fifth explanation, about involvement by Maesaua of Uruilangi (who had organised the 1880s attacks on the Borealis and Janet Stewart). The Uruilangi settlement was bombarded and destroyed by HMS Torch five months after Daniels’s death, but Maesaua, by then a crippled old man, had by the time of Daniels’s murder long since passed on all of his authority to his successors.80

There had also been attacks on labourers at the Malayta Company’s headquarters at Baunani, mission school boys were killed at various coastal places, and ‘Aoke itself was still under threat. The attacks were not all one way, nor were they unprovoked: Malaitans living near the Malayta Company land resented the way their land had been taken from them and the manner in which the company had attempted to block their sea access. Their shrines were desecrated and they were attacked if they ventured close to the plantations. The missions also posted guards with guns. Edge-Partington, aware of numerous incidents, requested HMS Sealark, then at Tulagi, to proceed to Malaita to help with the investigations. He was rebuffed by Acting Resident Commissioner Burnett, who advised him to formulate a proper scheme for dealing with the ‘subjugation of aggressive natives’.81 Furious and exasperated, Edge-Partington copied his letter to Woodford and Mahaffy. He was insubordinate and sarcastic to Barnett, saying that for all the notice that Tulagi took it was probably not worth reporting ‘any further slaughtering of white residents on Malaita’.

As you know nothing about this island and have hardly set foot on it I fail to see how you could devise tactical schemes for the bringing of the guilty parties to justice as you must be aware it is impossible to go to a village in the bush and arrest one guilty man.82

He was summoned to Tulagi to explain the ‘general disrespectful and defiant tenor’ of his letter, and reprimanded.83

Edge-Partington received two taunting message from the Maanaere people from near Dala: that they were looking forward to the visit of the government boat, and would kill and eat the occupants. Hyperbole aside, they were challenging what they knew was a weak government presence. The upshot was that Edge-Partington received a temporary

80 Ibid., 52–53.
81 SINA, BSIP 14/40, RM TWE-P to A/RC FJB, 25 June 1911.
82 SINA, BSIP 14/40, 25, 26 June, 15 July 1911.
83 SINA, BSIP 14/40, A/RC JFB to TWE-P, 11 Sept 1911.
assistant, cadet officer L.W. Keppel. To catch the murderers of Daniels, the government reverted to old methods when HMS Torch arrived in November 1911 with High Commissioner Sir Francis May aboard. A shore party burned Farisi Village, desecrated ancestral shrines, killed three men, a woman and a child, and badly wounded five others. The murderers escaped. The reprisal was presumably the reason for an east Kwaio threat a few days later to attack Onepusu, on the opposite side of the island.

Edge-Partington felt useless and hamstrung in his attempt to exert control over Malaita by superiors like Barnett and May. In August 1911, with the Daniels murder still not dealt with, he noted that another school boy had been murdered on the mainland opposite Ngongosila, adding to the dozen school murders in the previous fortnight. In an attempt to help them protect themselves, Edge-Partington illegally issued three guns to SSEM teachers, until Woodford found out and ordered their recall. Another European, Otto G. Keller, was murdered at Fo’odo in west To’aba’ita in 1912, and the assassins collected 100 tafuli‘ae and 10 pigs that had been posted as ‘blood money’ in retaliation for deaths of Malaitans who had departed in 1902 on the Queensland labour schooner Sybil II, which wrecked on its way to Australia. Edge-Partington was on leave and Woodford authorised Acting RM Allen W. Walsh and Police Commander Campbell to investigate.

High Commissioner May issued strict instructions on 15 December 1911 about the manner in which murder investigations were to proceed. This rule reverberated for many years and took away any power for independent action. The RM was to go to the scene of the crime with an interpreter, make enquiries and take statements and attempt to arrest the culprit ‘without resorting to an armed expedition into the interior’. If no arrest was made and the resident commissioner was satisfied that arrest was warranted, a demand could be made for the apprehension of the culprit, and if this was ignored, on the decision of the resident commissioner, an armed force of police could be sent to affect the arrest. The police were

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84 In December 1911, a man from the Western Solomons residing at ‘Aoke accused Keppel of raping him. Keppel was charged with assault and left the protectorate. SINA, BSIP 14/41, 1911–13, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 17 Dec 1911.
85 SINA, BSIP 14/416 Dec 1911; BSIP 14/4, RC CMW to RM TWE-P, 22 Jan 1912.
86 SINA, BSIP 14/40, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 10 Aug 1911; BSIP 14/7, RC CMW to RM AWW, 1 June 1912.
87 SINA, BSIP 14/40, 1911–13, RM AWW to RC, 4 Jan 1913.
to surround the house an hour before daybreak and if the culprit was not present the occupants and livestock could be seized. Force could be met with force, but no firearms were to be used unless the police were fired on. There was to be no destruction of dwellings until after six months and then only with the permission of the high commissioner. Since there was no judicial commissioner (magistrate) at Tulagi until 1913, it was difficult even to bring murderers to trial. Although Woodford disagreed with the interpretation, Acting High Commissioner Sir Charles Major ruled that under the 1893 Order-in-Council the resident commissioner did have the power to try murders, which Woodford began to do from late 1911. The high commissioner still made the final decision in all capital cases. Woodford directed that May’s instructions were to be followed, but that a ‘sentence of death must be pronounced in all cases of conviction of murder’.

There are signs that `Aoke was beginning to fit into normal social patterns. Just before his leave, Edge-Partington organised a large feast for Christmas 1911, one for 500 coastal and inland Malaitans and another for police and labourers. In doing this, he may have been following Mahaffy’s example, since he had sponsored similar displays at Gizo, or he may have been influenced by mission stations that also held Christmas feasts. In local eyes, these colonial officials and missionaries were establishing themselves as bigmen of renown. Although whaleboats were still the major form of transport, occasionally the government launch Belema was provided to transport Edge-Partington or the several other officers based temporarily on Malaita during these early years. They also used ships of the Malayta Company, the SSEM and the Melanesian Mission, and passed messages via the mission stations. The first sign of indigenous entrepreneurship emerged when Malaitans at Malu`u realised that they, too, could produce copra on their own land, and applied to begin their own coconut plantations. In early 1914, Edge-Partington also managed

88 SINA, BSIP 14/4, memorandum of ‘Instructions’ from the High Commissioner, enclosed in RC CMW to RM TWE-P, 15 Feb 1912.
89 SINA, BSIP 14/41, 1911–13, 3 Jan 1913; Boutilier 1979, 60–61.
90 SINA, BSIP 15 VIII, 136 ‘Aoke Station Diary’, 27 Dec 1911. The amount of food prepared for the feasts gives some ideas of their size: on 27 December the guests consumed 14 pigs, 100 fish, 2,640 taro, 2,000 sweet potatoes, 500 coconuts, 10 coconut puddings, 500 nut puddings, and 200 bamboos of nuts. The smaller event, on 29 December, consisted of 3 pigs and 1,000 taro.
92 SINA, BSIP 14/7, RC CMW to RM AWW, 17 July 1912.
to make his first visit to Da‘i Island between Malaita and Isabel. There were only six hamlets there, and the island had been badly denuded of people by head-hunting raids from Isabel.93

After seven years of service, Edge-Partington took leave during most of 1912, his place taken by Allen Walsh. During his absence policing improved, largely because Campbell, appointed commander of police on 23 February 1912, was based in ‘Aoke. It was difficult to recruit police and Malaita was considered an unattractive post. Woodford tried to bring in police from Fiji and Hong Kong, and also to get a force of sailors from the RNAS. When this failed, he settled for 21 men from Tanna Island in the New Hebrides, who arrived in January 1912.94 A Fijian police officer, Ratu Waisele, was brought in to train the police during 1908–09, but within a year he asked to be sent back to Fiji. Edge-Partington reported that ‘he was frightened to go out in the sun’, missed his wife (who had gone home due to illness), was afraid of getting malaria, thought that he would die and did not ‘seem to have the spunk of an ordinary white child’. Without the respect for his being a chief, which he could expect in Fiji, Waisele floundered.95 Securing adequate police was a perennial problem and some were found in unusual persons, such as former prisoners and refugees at ‘Aoke.96 For a brief period in 1912, Edge-Partington’s replacement Walsh was even sent a white prisoner named Hassall to act as his assistant, until Campbell was appointed to take charge of the native police.

Before Campbell’s appointment, police training was almost nonexistent and the RM’s job became much easier once he arrived. Rather than always being on the back foot, the RM began to be able to enforce protectorate law, at least around the coast. The situation was unusual: the RM had ultimate control over his district but could not interfere in the running of the police, and moreover the police commander was in charge of the police for the whole protectorate.97 Even then, around 30 police, most of whom were needed to guard ‘Aoke, and one whaleboat, were hardly sufficient resources to ‘pacify’ Malaita. The standards of the police were

93 SINA, BSIP 14/41, TWE-P to RS, 4 Jan 1914.
94 Boutilier 1979, 58; SINA, BSIP 14/41, 1911–13, RM to RC CMW, 1 Jan 1912.
96 SINA, BSIP 14/40, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 16 Sept 1911.
97 SINA, BSIP 14/41 1911–13, minute from HC Sir Henry May on the duties of the police officer, 4 Nov 1911, 17 July 1912.
very different from today. In 1912, Charlie Kwaivania had just completed a two-year sentence for theft, and despite his reputation as a cunning thief while a house servant, and a comment from Woodford that prison did not seem to deter this behaviour, he was so intelligent that Campbell appointed him to the police at a wage of £1 per month.98

The BSIP police headquarters was based at `Aoke from 1912 to 1915, with a detachment of 20 to 25 police on two-year terms. Recruitment was always an issue since the men did not like the mobility necessary for an effective force, and there were no particular qualifications. Most of them were 1st, 2nd or 3rd class privates who earned £12 to £18 a year. Lance-corporals (10) earned £24, corporals (3) £27 and sergeants (2) £36. Many of the men who served their two years refused to reengage, choosing instead to become labourers for much lower pay. Though Campbell found Malaitans to be the best police, few wanted to join, and as a result most came from Guadalcanal or Gela. Police were drilled in a squad using infantry training methods. They were armed with old and unreliable .303 rifles. In `Aoke they lived in sago palm thatch houses.99

Any attack on a European was pursued over the long term, as were other breaches of the peace. The 1908 murder of McKenzie in Langalanga Lagoon was still being followed up in 1913. Some cases involved European property, such as when bush people tried to loot the Doris in 1912, a ketch wrecked on Malaita, and killed two of the crew. But Walsh also investigated indigenous disputes, and officers increasingly probed attacks on Malaitans with no connection to Europeans. For instance, at `Adagege in Lau Lagoon in early February 1912, Kakwari was arrested for murdering his wife Sula, and later that month Walsh arrested Duu from Manalok, close to Fiu, for three murders over the previous three months. However, Walsh was chastised and threatened with dismissal for disobeying High Commissioner May’s strict December 1911 code after he burnt villages and destroyed property at Maana’oba. RMs and DOs had to follow cumbersome instructions from Fiji, which undermined local initiative.100

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98  SINA, BSIP 14/7, RC CMW to RM W, 19 Sept 1912.
100 SINA, BSIP 14/41 1911–13, RM AWW to RC, 5, 21 Feb, 14 June 1913; BSIP 14/7, RC CMW to RM AWW, 11 Nov 1912.
Edge-Partington returned to Malaita in March 1913 with Mary, his new wife. When based on Gizo he had a mistress from Simbo Island, for which he was forced to apologise to both the resident commissioner and the high commissioner and received an official reprimand from London.\textsuperscript{101} It is unlikely that he tried to find a Malaitan replacement. Once his British wife arrived, the couple developed a pleasant lifestyle in the residency high on the hill at `Aoke, overlooking the bay. His photographs show a comfortable tropical house with wide verandas, a drawing room complete with photographs and a silver service and a tennis court to entertain visitors. Visitors always noted the well-appointed surroundings, rare in the Solomons in the early years, and that Mary Edge-Partington was a genial host.\textsuperscript{102} However, in 1914 Edge-Partington still reported that unless more police were provided it was best to abandon `Aoke. He felt that High Commissioner May’s strict instructions for dealing with ‘outrages’ made it practically impossible to police Malaita properly, and there was still daily

\textsuperscript{101} CO 225/87 170 (microfilm 2915), TWE-P to FJB, 20 Sept 1909; HC Sir Everard im Thurn to CO, 16 Nov 1909; WPHC 4/IV 836/1908, Arthur Mahaffy to HC, 22 Dec 1908; CMW to Major, 30 Sept 1910.

\textsuperscript{102} Edge-Partington’s photographic collection is held by the British Museum. Also see Herr and Rood 1978, 186–87, 195.
fear that the inland people would attack 'Aoke.¹⁰³ Edge-Partington was frustrated that four years of work had accomplished little, although it is apparent, viewed from a distance of a century, that he had made excellent progress and was exaggerating the direness of the situation.¹⁰⁴

Figure 7.6: 'Aoke police barracks and tennis court, pre-1915.
Source: British Museum, Edge-Partington Collection, Album 5, Dscn1095.

Malaitan people had good reason for disquiet. For one thing, the missions and the Malayta Company had accumulated land without proper authorisation. The largest land purchase was 2,470 hectares by the Malayta Company, but several mission stations sat on land alienated from customary ownership.¹⁰⁵ Arthur Mahaffy, who by 1910 was assistant to the high commissioner, thought that there had been an upsurge in violent incidents in the protectorate over the previous five years because there were fewer European 'old hands' around. With their greater experience they were better able than new arrivals to understand the local people and their expectations. Just as occurred in Australian Papua, the BSIP had become a magnet for adventurous young Australian men who adopted methods that experienced traders and recruiters would never have used.

¹⁰³ SINA, BSIP 14/7, memorandum of instructions by HC Sir Francis May, modified by the SSC, 3 Apr 1912, RC CMW to TWE-P, 15 Feb 1912.
¹⁰⁴ SINA, BSIP 14/85, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 27 Mar 1911; BSIP 14/41, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 18 Apr 1913, RM AWW to RC CMW, 23 Feb 1912; BSIP 14/42, RM TWE-P to FJB, 12 Oct 1914; BSIP 14/9, FJB to RM TWE-P, 29 Oct 1914.
¹⁰⁵ SINA, BSIP 14/40, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 13 June, 12 and 19 Aug 1911.
Some itinerant labour recruiters took unnecessary risks and displayed grave ignorance of Malaitan ways.\(^{106}\) Another reason for the increase in violence was that there were now more targets: Malaita’s permanent foreign population had increased from zero in 1900 to over 20 in 1910. This rapid growth was largely due to the combined forces of the Malaita Company and the SSEM. In 1912, the former had seven foreign staff at Baunani, Manaba and Hauhui, while the SSEM had five European staff at Baunani, five at Onepusu, one at Fo`odo and two at Malu`u.\(^{107}\)

Minor incidents of violence were reported almost continuously, sometimes between Malaitans but also involving foreigners, such as the plantation manager and three labourers fired at from the beach while on their way to Baunani in June 1913.\(^ {108}\) The settler community, mainly traders, planters and missionaries, was divided over how to proceed. Missionaries usually advocated peaceful means and lamented violent official reprisals, but most of the other settlers supported the use of full force in the old naval tradition, which punished broadly and often left actual perpetrators unscathed.

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107  SINA, BSIP 14/41 1911–13, ‘List of Whites and Half-Castes Resident on Mala’, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 1 Feb 1912. Part-Australian Aboriginal Louisa Tarasol-Aurora at Fo`odo was the only mixed-race European.
108  SINA, BSIP 14/41 1911–13, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 16 June 1913.
When the police headquarters shifted back to Tulagi in 1915, a police establishment of 25 remained on Malaita under Sub-Inspector B. Kirke. He and his police were deployed mainly between `Aoke and the north of the island, and around Baunani to the south, where difficulties were ongoing. One police patrol in 1916, accompanied by Kirke and the DO, crossed the centre of the island. The Malaitans they encountered responded violently only once, when the patrol apprehended a murderer. Usually people fled before the patrol, which arrived to find only deserted villages.109

After nine years of service in the protectorate, once Edge-Partington returned from leave in 1913 he began to look for a new posting, and asked to be sent to British East Africa or Uganda. On 12 October, he wrote to Acting Resident Commissioner Barnett stating that, without even enough police to protect the station, he considered continued occupation of `Aoke untenable. He resigned two week later, took six weeks leave and left in late January 1915 to work for a plantation company in Ceylon, where he died in 1920.110

Conclusion

This chapter began with the beginnings of British naval justice, government agents on recruiting vessels and the early years before `Aoke was created. The main focus has been Edge-Partington’s years from 1909 to 1915, when formal government began on the island. Chapter 8 pursues the same years, but from a different perspective, examining the use of Malaitan labour within the BSIP, mainly in the Western Solomons and the Russell Islands, but also on the Malayta Company’s plantation at Baunani. We also encounter a new religious element: the arrival of the Catholic mission to compete with the Melanesian Mission and the SSEM. The argument pursued is that once a protectorate presence was established, labour movements and Christianity became subservient to government, although their social effects remained independent and helped to create modern Malaita.

110 SINA, BSIP 14/41, RM TWE-P to RC CMW, 3 May 1913; BSIP 14/42, TWE-P to A/RC FJB, 12, 27 Oct and 5 Dec 1914.