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Impacts of the War

The Solomon Islands Campaign was more than a significant milestone in the history of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate and its people. Rapid change affected islanders' outlook and their surrounding environment during and after the war. These changes set the stage for the struggle towards Solomon Islands independence from Britain in 1978. Today, many of these changes are still visible in the physical and human landscapes of the country. This chapter will explore the impacts and effects of the Pacific War on Solomon Islands and its people. The first section will deal with the immediate impacts of war, while the second section discusses political change, social change and economic development in the postwar period.

Immediate effects of the war

The arrival of the Pacific War in Solomon Islands had a dramatic impact on all aspects of indigenous social life. Islanders' world view and understanding of racial relationships developed considerably, through encounters with military troops of both the Allied and Japanese sides. Perceptions and attitudes towards the British administration took a new turn during the war as islanders interacted with members of the United States military forces. For the first time since Britain established a protectorate over Solomon Islands, individual islanders were able to interact on a new level with white men: sharing cigarettes, eating together and performing the same tasks as the white soldiers. This set new standards for islanders, and at the same time provided both reason and opportunity

for expressing resentment towards their white colonial masters and the British administration. An example of such feelings can be found in the words of scout John Kari of Western District:

it seemed before the war that the Europeans who were around don't really like black people around them. They could never sit down and just story, or eat. They only talked to their own kind. But when the Americans came, they really went inside the local people; it was the first time for us to see this. Also, the British wouldn't come ashore through the water. A man would carry them. I remember an American saw one of the Solomon Islanders carrying Mr Horton. He said, 'what, is he sick or lame? Is he taking him to the hospital?' and they didn't like to see the Americans give us smokes. We would always hide from the government men to get smokes, and the Americans would ask what the problem was. Was it wrong for us to smoke? The government would say we had to work, but the Americans would turn around and say, 'the machines do the work, not the hands' (Gasa and Kumana 1988: 98–9).

Two significant issues are expressed by Kari. First, there was only limited social interaction between indigenous people and whites prior to the war. The relationship that islanders had with the prewar white community of the British protectorate was a 'master–boy' relationship. Islanders always regarded white government officials, traders and missionaries as 'masters' and powerful agents in their societies. Meanwhile, many whites considered the 'native' a primitive savage. Islanders were not seen as racially equal to 'white men', and day-to-day social interaction between the parties was discouraged. The extremes of this racial imbalance can be seen in a 1922 complaint to the High Commissioner for the South West Pacific by the chairman of Levers Pacific Plantations Ltd, on the alleged mistreatment of islanders by three Australian overseers who were transported to Fiji to face trial for the murder of a Malaitan labourer. Joseph Meek, the chairman for Levers, wrote to the high commissioner in defence of the overseers, stating:

We submit for the consideration of the government that when a white man is arrested in the Solomon Islands, and when he has to be conveyed from the Solomon Islands to Fiji that there should be white quarters with the white man's accommodation, and that the white race should not have their dignity lowered by being put into a hold with the ordinary 'Boys'. In fact, only by doing this can one preserve the dignity, not merely of the white man, but of the white Government. It does not seem to have been practised in this case, and these men seem to have just reason for complaint (Meek to High Commissioner, 22 June 1922, WPHC 4, 1862/22, Western Pacific Archives).

Such feelings as expressed by Meek depict the racism in the British protectorate before the war, and its connections to colonial rule. These white racial sentiments were not ignored by islanders. Jonathan Fifi'i, a houseboy for Sister Cleaver, an Australian nurse in Tulagi before the war, described his experience of racial segregation in the colonial headquarters: 'Tulagi was a strange place then ... the white people all segregated up on the hill, with their hotel and their club; and the Chinese down in Chinatown ... we Solomon Islanders were at the very bottom of the heap' (Fifi'i 1989: 34). Fifi'i also recalled his encounter with S.G. Masterman, the inspector of 'Native Labour' for the protectorate, to exemplify the extent of racism at Tulagi. Fifi'i, on his way to buy bread, rode past Masterman on his bicycle. Masterman yelled out to Fifi'i to stop and get off his bicycle. In doing so, Masterman lectured Fifi'i that 'when you see a white man, you can't go past him on your bicycle. You get off and stand at attention until he goes past ... because white people are the rulers here. You natives are nothing. If you see a white man, you have to give him proper respect' (ibid.: 35). The treatment of islanders as an inferior group did not go unrecognised by the celebrated Anglican missionary, Charles Fox, who stated that the islanders felt:

very much being treated as inferiors. The colour feeling is real. The test of colour feelings is whether a man will eat with another or not. That is the Melanesia test. No Government official or trader will allow Melanesians to eat with him or even drink a cup of tea with him, for the sake of British prestige. But that is the Melanesian test (Hilliard 1978: 272).

There were exceptions in the case of some missionaries whose intentions were to spread Christianity to islanders. For this purpose, missionaries had a daily social interface with indigenous peoples and their affairs. However, missionaries' collaboration with islanders did not erase racial demarcations. Fifi'i deduced that 'the Christianity we were given taught us to be peaceful and obedient, like well-behaved children — not equal to white people' (Fifi'i 1989: 41). Any Europeans who ventured over the racial line were accused of 'going native'. Such was the case of the Methodist missionary Reverend J.F. Goldie, who was among the first team of missionaries of the Methodist Mission Society of Australia who went to Solomon Islands in 1902. Their pioneering effort to Christianise Solomon Islands was highly successful and islanders thought so highly of Goldie that he became their voice in liaising with government administrators, planters and traders, who demanded land at low cost or sought to alienate it for plantation purposes. Goldie's position as

a missionary ensured that islanders' welfare was prioritised. However, he was often accused of 'interfering' with matters and even of 'going native' by having a personal interest in islanders' affairs (Luxton 1955: 117–18). Because of the missionaries' collaborative efforts with indigenous peoples, it is important to note that when islanders mentioned 'Europeans' they were mainly referring to white planters, traders and some of the British administrative officers. Solomon Islander academic Tarcisius Kabutaulaka wrote, 'although the District Officer was frequently friendly towards Solomon Islanders, he treated them as inferior because he did not want to identify himself with them' (Kabutaulaka 1990: 43). Hence, it is evident that the social environment in the protectorate during the prewar period was divided by a racial line of 'white' superiority over the inferior 'black race' of which the islanders were a part.

The second point expressed by Kari was that the war provided an avenue for interracial interaction in marked contrast to indigenous experiences before 1942. Islanders were able to mingle with people of 'white' origin for the first time and became able to differentiate white people according to their nationalities. This ability saw a marked bias develop in favour of American troops over British colonial administrators. The statement by John Kari that Americans 'really went inside the local people' is an expression of the extent to which indigenous perceptions of interracial relationships with American troops were shaped by the war. Scout Andrew Langabaea made a statement similar to Kari's, recalling 'the Americans would say the skin was different, but the life and blood was one kind ... before you always had to say, "yes, sir" and "no, sir" but not with the Americans. Any man was just "Joe"' (Gasa and Kumana 1988: 103). George Maelalo, who had frontline experience with the fighting forces, had an even more specific outlook on Allied soldiers according to their nationalities:

The Joes were a different kind of people when they were in the bush. They did not care about anything. If they wanted to do something, they went ahead and did it. There was one thing that I noticed about the American soldiers. They did not have much respect for their officers. Rarely had I seen a soldier respond promptly to an officer by saying 'here, sir'. After the officer had left, the soldier would say, 'one of these days I will put a bullet in your head'. They were not like Australian soldiers. Australian soldiers thought very highly of their officers. The soldiers obeyed their officers very much (Maelalo 1988: 185).

These expressions indicate the superiority of the colonial administration over islanders before 1942, and islanders' realisation of opportunities for new cross-cultural relations emerging from the war. This development can be seen from the vocabulary of formal addresses to British officers as compared to American soldiers. The words 'Sir' and 'Master' were the only terms used to address men of European heritage before the war. When the Americans entered the war, 'Joe' became the common address for white American soldiers. As Maelalo observes, the word 'Sir' was not accustomed usage for American soldiers. Like other islanders, Maelalo began to question the genuineness of the prestige claimed by colonial officers.

Not only did the war reshape islanders' world views, it also laid a foundation for political education. The opportunity to interact with white American soldiers set an educational milestone for indigenous peoples, who began to challenge colonial dominance over them. This does not suggest that islanders were unaware of issues of racism in the protectorate prior to the Solomon Islands Campaign. In fact, expressions of dissatisfaction had occurred before the war and, as Hugh Laracy has argued, many islanders' dislike of the colonial regime was evident well before the war. Resentment had been demonstrated through conflicts with planters and district officers. An example was the killing of district officer William Bell on east Malaita in 1927. His murder occurred as a result of his attempt to collect head tax and confiscate rifles from islanders (Laracy 1983: 12). These rifles were either obtained from traders or purchased by those who had been to Queensland as labourers. Although confiscating rifles from islanders could be seen as an appropriate measure by the administration to put an end to tribal conflict throughout the protectorate, it did not seem right to the islanders who owned the rifles. The possession of a rifle was a source of power among tribal groups, and confiscating one would put the tribe at risk of attacks from its enemies. After the murder of Bell, massive retaliation was carried out by the government, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of civilian islanders and the destruction of houses, gardens and villages. In late June 1928, those who were convicted of Bell's murder were hanged (*ibid.*: 8).

This massive reprisal demonstrated the administration's ability to control the population, but islander discontent with the British administration continued to grow. As Laracy argued:

there is no reason to suppose that Solomon Islanders have ever been less conscious of their worth than have any other people ... the historical record clearly attests to their abundant readiness to defend both themselves and that which they considered to be theirs (ibid.: 7; see also Akin 2013).

A sense of admiration became evident among islanders as they saw black American soldiers enjoying equal opportunities in the battlefield with white GIs. The observation that black GIs wore the same clothes, slept under the same tents and had the same rations as white soldiers sparked inquisitiveness and captivated the imagination of islanders. Jonathan Fifi'i, a sergeant of the Solomon Islands Labour Corps and district head chief of the Maasina Rule, a nationalist sociopolitical movement that emerged after the war, recalled:

We did the same kind of work as the Americans and the British, but we weren't allowed to wear the same kinds of uniforms. We wore lavalavas, yardage. It was forbidden for us to wear trousers or shirts. We sergeants were given a piece of khaki that had three stripes painted on it. They tied strings onto the cloth, and each of us were to tie the cloth onto our arms. The white officers all wore their stripes sewn onto their shirts, but all we got were those pieces of khaki. I was ashamed to wear it like that, so I would just carry it around in my hand (Fifi'i 1991: 41).

Fifi'i's statement demonstrates that Solomon Islanders were not unaware of the racial allusions of colonial officers. When questioned about whether Americans gave uniforms to islanders, Gafu, a member of the labour corps replied, 'No, we only wore *lavalavas* [sarongs] because we were just labourers. The black Americans, however, wore uniforms. It was our ordinary clothing that made it easy for the Americans to identify us' (Ngwadili and Gafu 1988: 209). It might be that islanders perceived themselves as equals to black GIs but perceived white soldiers as superior. If so, this observation will have contributed to islanders' quest to improve their status relative to their white colonial 'masters'.

Indigenous people enjoyed the food and friendship shared with generous American soldiers. David Gegeo stated this gave rise to a 'mythic schema' of the abundant wealth and racial equality of Americans (Gegeo 1991: 30). Islander impressions of United States society, of course, did not correspond with the racial situation that actually existed in America. Whether islanders were aware of racial discrimination that existed among American soldiers was not evident in their oral recollections. What is evident was the equal treatment they experienced at the hands of both black and white American

soldiers. Gafu recalled 'they [Americans] outnumbered us but there was not a feeling of white versus black among us. We all stay together as if we were of one race' (Ngwadili and Gafu 1988: 209–10). However, Arnon Ngwadili, the caretaker of Resident Commissioner William Marchant, described how the 'Black Joes' would often come to the residence to inquire about who owned the house or who lived in the house. Ngwadili stated 'the white Americans are alright'. He recalled that sometimes he was afraid of the coloured Americans because of their physical build. But realising his responsibility as caretaker, he often refused their attempt to enter the commissioner's house (ibid.: 205). To islanders, close association with white soldiers changed their understandings of the racial relationships to which they were accustomed under the British administration. Scout Essau Hiele commented that war left a positive imprint because 'people's minds are open, eyes were open, [and] brains were open, to outside things. People no longer find it difficult to understand new things' (WPA 1988: 21).

This transformation of views was not unique to Solomon Islands. In neighbouring Papua New Guinea, similar perceptions of prewar interracial relationships prevailed among indigenous people. Like the experiences of Solomon Islanders, the war also brought experiences in contrast to the prewar white master/black servant relationship for indigenous people in Papua New Guinea. John Waiko, a Papua New Guinean and historian, stated the wholesale desertion of the white community in many areas during the early days of the war permanently damaged white prestige and reputations among indigenous Papua New Guineans (Waiko 1991: 6). A new perspective emerged among Papua New Guineans of the Australian soldiers they encountered, a relationship that again contradicted prewar white master/black servant relationships. As Peter Ryan, an Australian intelligence officer in Papua New Guinea during the war, explained:

a different sort of white man was seen for the first time in Australian soldiers whose humanity, informality, and willingness to labour in the sun and in the mud were in contrast to the rigid allowances of many of the pre-war residents (Ryan 1969: 534).

This new attitude towards white men that emerged under war conditions has had a lasting impact on indigenous outlooks and experiences in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

Impacts of war on village life

The Pacific War resulted in a state of confusion, dislocation of people and disruption of society throughout Solomon Islands. The arrival of the war was swift and unexpected by islanders, who lacked any knowledge of the scale of modern warfare. Many people who lived in coastal areas immediately relocated further inland when Japan invaded. Although this evacuation was ordered prior to the landing of Japanese troops on Tulagi in 1942, not all people evacuated their villages or properties and camped in the mountains. Hence, when Japanese troops advanced into Solomon Islands, panic ensued and islanders witnessed massive violence and destruction on some of their islands. Scout Abel Reka of Western Province described the impact:

It wasn't peace. The country of Solomon Islands felt no good. It was as if we were standing in the fire. We didn't know what would happen tomorrow. We didn't know where was mother, where were the children. Running around like chickens, looking for a rock to shelter us (WPA 1988: 31).

Reka's description clearly shows the state of confusion and dislocation among indigenous people when the war reached their shores. David Gegeo of Malaita, who has done extensive research on indigenous wartime experiences, discusses the extent of social dislocation in his own Kwara'ae region of Malaita. Unlike Guadalcanal and islands of Western District, Malaita was not a centre of fighting during the campaign. A small unit of Japanese soldiers had camped at the northern end of the island but was immediately eliminated (with some taken prisoner) by the Malaitan scouts of Resident Commissioner Marchant, who had relocated the British headquarters to Auki shortly before Japanese troops invaded Tulagi. Even though Malaita did not experience a direct impact, the trauma of war still echoes among older people of Kwara'ae. Gegeo stated:

people still talk about how women pulled their sleeping children from bed and fled into the forest with them, and how the men spent the rest of the night labouring to erect shelters in mosquito-infested swampy areas, using the dim light from burning dried bamboo and coconut leaves (Gegeo 1991: 30).

Gegeo's description of local recollections reveals how, for most islanders, the war was a challenging period. People lived in constant fear and harsh conditions. The hardship endured was physically and psychologically more far-reaching than most could ever express.

Along with dislocation, shortages of food became a struggle for local inhabitants. Food shortages were experienced mainly during Japanese invasion and occupation. Islanders were ordered beforehand by district officers to evacuate and plant new gardens further inland. Those who ignored the order were subsequently faced with food shortages. When the American troops landed on Guadalcanal, the British administration distributed rations to those villages in the greatest need as a result of the war's impact. Islanders, however, had to prove that they had planted new gardens before food could be distributed to them. This was to encourage people to remake their gardens and to ensure that military rations went only to islanders directly affected by the war as a temporary relief program.

There was also an initial loss of cash income due to the collapse of trading activity throughout the protectorate. But in contrast to these early difficulties, islanders experienced an economic rebound when the United States entered the war. This boom was due to the economic opportunities this stage of the war provided for local people and included the facilitation of small-scale economic activities such as selling of crafts, artefacts and food to the American soldiers, and a resumption (with a corresponding increase) of wages gained from labour. Although locals complained about the low wages paid to them compared to Allied troops, their monthly wages had increased at least threefold for the average labourer and over eight times for those with the rank of sergeant (Fifi'i 1991: 41). Apart from normal wages, islanders were able to sell handcrafted walking sticks, grass skirts and other crafts and food to Allied troops. Sir Frederick Osifelo, chairman of the Post-war Constitutional Committee (responsible for drafting the constitution of Solomon Islands) wrote in his autobiography of his experiences as a teenager on Malaita during the war. Osifelo recalled:

The demand by American Marine and Army personnel for such things as sea-shell, carvings, walking-sticks, grass skirts, combs and so on, resulted in even people of my age focussing on making or finding something to sell. I was fourteen years old in 1942/1943 and actively involved in making walking-sticks, combs and grass skirts. At night we went out to the reef with torches or lit coconut leaf in search of sea-shells. Sometimes we sent our stuff to Lunga with relatives working in the Labour Corps so that they could sell them for us, at other times we sold them ourselves when the warships visited Auki (Osifelo 1985: 23).



Figure 16: Nggela people go out to trade with sailors on board the USS *Nicholas* anchored in Purvis Bay, 22 August 1943

Source: United States Navy, United States National Archives.

The war facilitated a commercial environment from which even teenagers like Osifelo benefited. Similar sentiments were expressed by Roy Kimisi, who estimated he was about 12 years old when the Americans landed on Choiseul Island. Kimisi recalled: 'I'm not sure some of those Americans cared very much about their dollars. Sometimes they'd just buy a grass skirt and throw it away' (WPA 1988: 77). Local oral recollections of the

war indicate that those who engaged in selling such things to soldiers were mostly juveniles (see Figures 16 and 17). This is perhaps because most able-bodied men were engaged in the scouting network or the labour corps. Since men were absent from their villages, women stepped up to do male chores in their families, while their children found rich rewards selling crafts to soldiers. These small-scale initiatives enhanced village-level knowledge of trade practices. They also marked the beginnings of a quest by islanders for better socioeconomic relations under the British administration. Shortly after the war ended, the Maasina Rule movement emerged with the aim of pushing for the recognition of the social welfare agenda of islanders, increased wages and the revitalisation of local cultural heritage and autonomy. Although it enjoyed limited success in achieving its objectives, it marked a significant point in the history of Solomon Islands by speeding up the decolonisation process, as discussed in the next section (Akin 2013; see also Keesing 1978).



Figure 17: Lieutenant George Rollinsk, supply officer of 193 Infantry dickers, with three natives selling canes and grass skirts, New Georgia, 2 December 1943

Source: United States Navy (photo 80-G-56673), United States National Archives.

Postwar political and economic impacts

World War II in Solomon Islands not only modified the outlooks and lifestyles of islanders, it also fuelled mounting grievances of islanders towards the colonial administration. The postwar period saw sociopolitical initiatives such as the Maasina Rule movement emerging among the local population. Maasina Rule quickly became an influential sociopolitical movement that exemplified the impact of the war on political innovation among indigenous peoples.

As discussed in the previous section, the war shone a spotlight on the racial disparities of white cultural imperialism over indigenous Solomon Islanders. Hence, shortly after hostilities subsided, the notion of Maasina Rule began to take shape. Jonathan Fifi'i, a founding member of Maasina Rule, explained in his recollection of the war that the movement developed from encounters with American troops who listened to islanders' complaints of the injustice experienced under the colonial regime, and gave advice on what indigenous people should do to express their frustrations to the British administration (Fifi'i 1988). Frederick Osifelo wrote in his biography: 'I am convinced that the war brought about the formation of Maasina Ruru [Rule]' (Osifelo 1985: 23). But Hugh Laracy argues that the roots of Maasina Rule can be dated to earlier in the history of the protectorate. The war only intensified what had been already mounting indigenous frustrations (Laracy 1983: 7). Beginning on Malaita, Maasina Rule became the first postwar sociopolitical organisation and expanded geographically to other islands. Although it was not successful in driving out the colonial regime, it made the administration painfully aware of the concerns and ambitions of its subjects, and forced these to be taken into consideration (*ibid.*: 6).

Maasina Rule, initially known as the 'Native Council Movement', was started in Are'are district of Malaita as early as September 1943 by the notable big man of the district, Aliko Nono'ohimae, in his village of Arairau. Nono'ohimae's vision was to set up a council to work towards the betterment of indigenous people. His early attempts had little impact due to his leaving to serve in the labour corps on Guadalcanal in 1944. Later that year, district headman Hoasihau revived the movement. Enthusiastic in his leadership, Hoasihau held meetings in Are'are with the aim of raising money to aid a chief whose responsibility would be to liaise with Europeans on matters of concern to islanders. By late 1944, Nono'ohimae

returned to Malaita in time to team up with Hoasihau to promote the Native Council Movement. His encounter with American troops during his time at the labour corps camp on Guadalcanal bolstered his belief in local governance by islanders.

By mid-1945, the Native Council Movement, which now bore the name 'Maasina Rule' or 'the rule of brotherhood', gained momentum throughout Malaita, following a 'patrol' led by Nori, another Are'are man and returned member of the labour corps who shared the movement's leadership. The movement continued to gain popularity and, by December 1945, the first order was issued on Malaita forbidding Malaitans to accept labour recruitment for Europeans. Early the following year, the making of communal farms and construction of new coastal villages began. On 26 December 1945, Maasina Rule was formally established with 5,000 members and nine council members. In 1947, a large number of people were relocated to the newly built communally owned coastal villages. By then, the movement had spread to the islands of Ulawa, San Cristobal (Makira) and Guadalcanal. In late June 1947, Maasina Rule leaders and 7,000 supporters met at Auki on Malaita with the district commissioner. One of the explicit demands expressed during the meeting was for an increase in islanders' wages to 12 pounds per annum: a demand originally made in the prewar period and that lingered during the war. On 31 August 1947, threatened by its popularity among islanders, the British regime executed 'Operation De-Louse' in an effort to put a stop to the movement. By early 1948, all accused members of Maasina Rule were tried and imprisoned (Laracy 1983: 17–20). The designated name for the operation is itself an indication of the colonial mentality and the administration's contempt for islanders who had contributed so much to the Allied victory, and their efforts to voice their concerns and grievances.

The origins of Maasina Rule on Malaita are significant for understanding the geographical area it covered and its legitimacy among its followers. Both founders of the movement, Nono'ohimae and Hoasihau, were from the Are'are district of Malaita and had been members of the Fallows movement. This movement was one of a series of attempts to call upon the British administration to address, or at least listen to, the grievances of islanders in the 1930s. The Fallows movement was organised by an Anglican missionary, Richard Fallows, from the mid to late 1930s, and gained momentum particularly on the islands of Isabel and Nggela. Fallows observed that the government failed to take heed of the interests of those it governed, concerning itself only with the interests of the few

European settlers in the protectorate. His aim was to form a parliament that would represent islanders in discussing matters of interest to the government — a concept resembling the Native Council Movement initiated by Nono'ohimae and Hoasihau (Laracy 1983: 13–14). Fallowes was later deported, but his legacy left an imprint among many islanders.

Although Nono'ohimae was pagan, five of the nine council members were teachers of the South Seas Evangelical Mission (now known as the South Seas Evangelical Church, or SSEC). The SSEC had its first contact with indigenous labourers in Queensland in 1886 (it was then known as the Queensland Kanaka Mission). In 1904, the SSEC established its mission headquarters on Malaita, spreading throughout Malaita and Makira where Maasina Rule was also widely accepted. The remaining four members of the council were either pagan or from other Christian denominations (Laracy 1983: 20). In the western Solomons, where the people were evangelised by the Methodist Mission Society, Maasina Rule was only a distant echo and had no influence. On Guadalcanal, the ideology of Maasina Rule was introduced by the local war hero Sergeant Major Jacob Vouza, but was short-lived after he was arrested in 1947 alongside other members of the movement (*ibid.*: 23). Yet again, the scale of the Maasina Rule movement indicated the widespread demand by islanders for representation and improvement in their welfare under the British administration, which might not have been felt, or at least not have been felt so strongly, without encountering and being encouraged by Allied troops during the war.

Commercial centralisation

The war also opened new avenues for economic development. The protectorate benefited immensely from the relocation of its administrative headquarters from Tulagi to Honiara after 1953. Infrastructure such as roads, bridges, Quonset huts, the military hospital and airfields became the foundation for postwar economic reconstruction in the protectorate.

One major infrastructural product of the war was the Solomon Islands international airport. Henderson Field, as it was originally called, was initially built by Japanese troops on Guadalcanal shortly after their invasion of Tulagi (the British protectorate headquarters until February 1942). On 7 August 1942, threatened by the construction of the airfield, the United States First Marine Division made its historic landing on Guadalcanal. The airfield was captured on 8 August and was named

Henderson Field after Major Crofton Henderson, a marine aviator who was killed at the Battle of Midway (Jersey 2008: xiv). The airfield was reopened in 1969 as the Solomon Islands international airport, retaining the name Henderson Airport.¹

Besides the historic Henderson Field, roads built by the Allied forces are still used today, and Quonset huts built for military purposes have long been used by various government authorities who now own the properties on which the huts are located. The Public Works Department used to house a few offices in these historic huts, but in 2014 all the huts were demolished to make way for new developments. This military infrastructure, now decaying, formed the basis for economic development and reconstruction of economic activities in the former protectorate.

Honiara became the centre of all major economic activities in the postwar period. The British administration did not anticipate the long-term consequences of centralising development on Guadalcanal. Since the war had already laid an infrastructural foundation to rebuild the protectorate, it was considered logical to use what was already in place. However, the centralisation of economic activities on Guadalcanal began to pose another difficulty: a surge of rural–urban migration and the appearance of related social problems. The British administration at the time could not foresee the impact these would have on islanders over 50 years, blinkered perhaps by the convenience of infrastructure established during the war. Consequently, in 1998, 20 years after Solomon Islands gained independence from Britain, the country experienced an ethnic confrontation between people of Malaita and Guadalcanal. Among other causes of the conflict was the frustration of Guadalcanal people over the growing numbers of Malaitans migrating to their island as

1 In 2000, the Japanese Government funded the renovation of Henderson Airport, and Japanese consultants suggested a change to the historic Allied name of the airport. Perhaps in an attempt to show appreciation for the continual support of the Japanese Government in maintaining the airport, the Solomon Islands Government made a public announcement that it would rename Henderson Airport to 'Honiara International Airport'. The announcement resulted in an online petition opposing the change with over 8,000 signatures, as well as official exchanges between the Solomon Islands Government and United States diplomats. In 2003, when the terminal renovations were completed, Prime Minister Allan Kemakeza announced that the airport will be officially known as 'Honiara International Airport — Henderson Field' (ABC Radio Australia 2012; see also usmarineraiders.org/about-the-raiders/history/combat-operations/guadalcanal/thank-you-note-from-solomon-island-prime-minister/).

a result of the 'pull' factors of economic development and urbanisation. John Naitoro (2000: 7) argued that the historical cause of the unrest is rooted in development centralisation on Guadalcanal.

The legacy of the war not only posed long-term hurdles to the political and economic development of Solomon Islands, it also provided an avenue for long-term economic benefits from remnants of military artillery and other wreckage, at both the national and local levels. The islands of Guadalcanal, Nggela and Western Province, where large-scale military confrontations took place, have become giant museums for international visitors. Left in situ in the landscape rather than gathered into a modern museum collection, the physical fragments of war have become a source of income to customary landowners, who charge small fees to visitors of battle sites within their jurisdiction. Battlefield tours to historical sites such as Bloody Ridge, Henderson Field and Beach Red are conducted for international visitors and descendants of Allied soldiers who participated in the war.² On 7 August of each year, United States Marines and other veterans of the war and their descendants return to Solomon Islands to celebrate the initial landing of the First Marine Division on Guadalcanal and conduct commemoration ceremonies for fallen comrades. Although international visitors to Solomon Islands are few compared to sites such as the Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea, the economic platform the war has established is still considerable.

Conclusion

The war had immediate and long-lasting influences on indigenous islanders' social world views and on economic and political events at both local and national levels. Islanders began to perceive their social environment differently and glimpsed the world beyond their borders. As Allied troops entered the war, the 'master-boy' relationship was shaken and the opportunity to interact with white men (American GIs) emerged. This provided a lesson enabling islanders to become more critically aware of and contest their supposed racial inferiority so entrenched

2 John Innes, a historian of the Guadalcanal Battlefield, conducts battlefield tours annually on Guadalcanal and Tulagi. In 2011, in collaboration with the Solomon Scouts and Coastwatchers Trust, his field tour on Guadalcanal was documented by the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (Audio) and Trad Records (a local company in Honiara), who produced a DVD of the tour (Innes 2013). All the recordings are in the author's possession but can also be purchased from the Solomon Scouts and Coastwatchers Trust.

by white ‘masters’ in the prewar protectorate. Although islanders had expressed their grievances prior to the war, their consciousness of the injustice of subjection to authority was heightened when a sudden shift of interracial interaction occurred. Having become convinced and more confident of their rights to better conditions, islanders openly criticised the British regime in the postwar period. One method of protesting their dissatisfaction with the colonial administration was through the formation of the Maasina Rule movement, which was eventually broken up by the British colonial authorities in 1947. However, its formation ensured that islanders’ grievances were outlined and their voices heard. Beyond these social and political impacts, the war also provided economic opportunities from which Solomon Islands still benefits. Despite creating unforeseen social tension from rural–urban migration, the country benefited from wartime military infrastructure, and the physical remnants of the war have provided long-term economic gains to local peoples as well as contributing to the national economy of the country. They have also contributed costs, and it is to these I turn in the chapter that follows.

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