

HISTORY of the SOLOMON ISLANDS - TIMELINE

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c. 40,000 BC: The Solomon Islands are first **settled by Papuan peoples from New Guinea** as part of the Melanesian Migration. These early inhabitants represent the furthest expansion of humans into the Pacific at the time.

c 2500 BC: Waves of Austronesian migrants arrive, introducing new agricultural and maritime technologies. Their pottery and artifacts are found in places like Poha Cave and Vatulumá Posovi Cave on Guadalcanal.

c.1500BC: The Lapita culture evolves in Melanesia, a syncretic Melanesian-Austronesian mix which will become the proto-Polynesian culture that spreads east to Fiji --> Samoa & Tonga --> remote Oceania as far as Hawaii, Easter Island, and New Zealand.

1568: The Spanish explorer Álvaro de Mendaña de Neira becomes the first European to reach the islands. He names them "Islas de Solomón" after hearing rumors of gold, associating them with the biblical King Solomon's wealth.

1595-1606: Later Spanish expeditions fail to confirm Mendaña's claims. Spain abandons its colonial aims in the Solomons amidst relentless violence, ravaging tropical disease, mutinies, mayhem, and much better prospects elsewhere (the Americas, the Philippines). Little European contact was made for the next 2 centuries due to known native hostility and endemic tropical diseases.

1768: On his worldwide circumnavigation journey of exploration and scientific investigation, Louis Antoine de Bougainville visits the island that he humbly names after himself. Bougainville Island is geographically part of the Solomon archipelago its largest island,

1800s: British and German traders began to visit the islands, primarily for its copra. Some of the more fearless settled in the islands and ran plantations. The 'blackbirding' trade emerged wherein native Solomon Islanders were kidnapped or coerced and sold into indentured servitude on plantations in Fiji and Australia.

1886: Germany and Britain agree to divide the Solomon Islands, with Britain declaring a protectorate over the southern islands in 1893. Blackbirding continues to be prevalent. Tensions abound between colonialists and natives, as well as between 'bushmen' (interior-dwelling natives) and 'saltwater men' (coastal natives) who have contact with European settlers.

1899: Germany cedes the northern Solomon Islands (Bougainvillea and Buka) to Britain in exchange for British recognition of German claims to western Samoa. At the same time, both parties agree to American hegemony over eastern Samoa (which remains to this day).

1900: While the Solomons remain a formal Protectorate rather than a Crown Colony, the administration underwent a shift to more direct *de facto* colonial control in the early 1900s.

1919: Japan establishes a major presence in the Pacific with the (mis-named) 'South Seas Mandate' after WWII. The League of Nations grants Japan control over former German possessions in the North Pacific including the Marshall Islands, the Caroline Islands (today's Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of Palau) and the northern Marianas. Japan is NOT given control of the Solomons. The southern Solomons remain British while Bougainvillea and Buka are mandated to Australian control along with the Bismarcks and northeastern New Guinea ('Kaiser Wilhelm land').

1927: The Kwaio ethnic group of central Malaita initiate the armed Kwaio Rebellion as a revolt against colonialism and European values. Several rebels are hanged in Tulagi, the then-capital of the Solomons.

1942 - 1945: The Japanese forcefully occupy the Solomons until they are forced out by Allied forces. The Solomon Islands become a major theater of World War II, with significant battles as part of the massive Guadalcanal Campaign, including: Battle of Savo Island, Battle of Guadalcanal, Battle of the Eastern Solomons, Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands, and the Battle of Bougainville.. Years of horrific grueling war

in extraordinarily difficult conditions result in massive Japanese casualties (over 30,000 killed) as well as over 7,000 Allied deaths. Guadalcanal was liberated after a 7-month war of attrition (the Japanese called it 'Starvation Island' in February of 1945. The war on Bougainville Island continued until Japanese surrender and the end of the War in August 1945.

1946: An independence movement known as "Marching Rule" emerges.

1975: The official name changes from "British Solomon Islands Protectorate" to "The Solomon Islands."

1976: The Solomon Islands achieve self-government.

1978: The Solomon Islands gain full independence from British colonial rule. They join the Commonwealth of Nations with Queen Elizabeth II as head of state.

1998 - 2003: The country experiences severe internal ethnic tensions, particularly between Guadalcanal natives (Guales) and Malaitan settlers. This period, known as "The Tensions," includes conflict, violence, and the near-collapse of the government.

2003: Prime Minister Sir Allen Kemakeza requests international assistance. An Australian-led peacekeeping force under the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) deploys to restore order, disarm militias, and stabilize the country.

2006: Following allegations of corruption, Prime Minister Snyder Rini resigns after only eight days in office, leading to riots in Honiara. Manasseh Sogavare is elected as his successor.

2007: A tsunami caused by an 8.1 earthquake results in massive destruction of property and 52 deaths.

2014: Heavy flooding due to Tropical Cyclone Ita causes one of the worst natural disasters in the country's history, killing at least 22 people and destroying homes and infra-structure. General elections in the same year see significant political changes, with long-time politico Manasseh Sogavare regaining the Prime Minister position.

2021: Ethnic tensions between Guales and Malaitans again boil over. with riots and looting in Honiara. A root cause of the riot was the central government's recognition of China rather than Taiwan which had been its long-standing choice. Malaitans strongly favored the Taiwanese who have traditionally been major benefactors of Malaita in particular. Again Australian-led peacekeeping forces are brought in to quell the riots.

2024: PM Sogavare fails to gain support for another term as PM due to concerns about increasing autocracy as well as allegations of corruption related to real estate transactions. He is succeeded by (China-friendly) Jeremiah Manele.

The largest single coral colony in the world is found in the Solomon Islands by a National Geographic team. The coral is 3X larger than the previous record-holder ('Big Momma' in Samoa), and is believed to be about 300 years old.

2025: As Beijing increases its economic and political influence in the Solomon Islands, Australia proposes counterbalancing initiatives including a \$118M program to train and support Solomon Islands police officers.