



Pastor Hivana Tasa (on the right) with his son Pastor Piuki Tasa, 1986.

Photo courtesy of Piuki Tasa.

Tasa, Hivana (c. 1911–1995)

PIUKI TASA

Piuki Tasa, B.A. in theology (Pacific Adventist College, Papua New Guinea), is a Solomon Islander by birth. Pastor Tasa has served the Adventist Church in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea as a pastor, evangelist, teacher, departmental director, manager, and administrator. In retirement he has served as the area manager of literature evangelists for Western Solomon Islands region. He was married to Davinia until her death and they had 3 daughters and 1 son with 8 grandchildren. He is now married to Judy Meoki from Efogi in Papua New Guinea. They live in retirement in the Viru area of the Solomon Islands.

Born in the bush of South New Georgia, Solomon Islands to animist parents, Pastor Tasa Hivana became a teacher and pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church. He worked in both the Solomon Islands and Bougainville and was one of a small group responsible for the translation of the Bible into the language of the

people of the Marovo Lagoon.¹

Animism in New Georgia and the Arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Tasa Hivana was born around 1911 at Tehanae, in the bush of Libo, a village some fifty kilometers inland from the south coast of the island of New Georgia, Western Solomon Islands.² The people of Libo were practicing animists who worshipped the carved god "Kibo," found in the wood and stones around them. They were cannibals and head-hunters who traveled from island to island to collect heads, women, and children. They communicated with a spirit they called "Ponda."

When Tasa was born, his father Timi and mother Nami planned to kill the child because he was born out of wedlock. However, their plan was not widely known and when Timi and Nami later married, another couple, Kulu and Pendi, adopted the child and became his parents.

Libo was the original village of the people of Viru Harbor. Sometime around 1933, well after Tasa's birth, the people left Libo village and settled at the present locations of Tetemara, Tombe, and Bareho at Viru Harbor. At Tetemara, a large coconut plantation was owned by Norman Wheatly, an Australian. It was Wheatly who had first invited Captain Griffiths F. Jones, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor to Viru Harbor in 1914. Viru was the first established mission station of the SDA Church in the Solomon Islands.

The Conversion of Tasa

When Tasa was still living at Libo village, boys and girls from the SDA school at Viru would visit Libo. Tasa was amazed to see the changes that had taken place in the lives of the young students. The girls were beautiful and the boys looked very handsome. Their clothing was clean, their teeth were white, and they sang beautifully the Christian songs they learned in school. Their hairstyle was well groomed and neat. Soon he began to copy their hairstyle. He took the husk of the beetle-nut and began to brush his teeth. He took the broom of the Endeve (sago) palm for a comb and used coconut oil for his skin.

Sometime around 1927, Pastor J. D. Anderson came to Libo, and among other things, told people that the Seventh-day Sabbath was God's day for rest. Timi, Tasa's father, was not at all convinced. Soon afterward he took Tasa and his sister Maegula to look for coconuts. Finding some coconut trees, Tasa climbed a tree and used a stick to dislodge the coconuts so they would fall to the ground. Afterward, he let the stick fall to the ground but it struck Maegula on the thigh and she was badly hurt. He challenged God that if Maegula got well he would become a Seventh-day Adventist. Maegula got well and Tasa became a Seventh-day Adventist. On December 30, 1928 Tasa was baptized by Pastor Anderson at Viru Harbor with his father Timi, sister Maegula, and a friend by the name of Peo.

Education and Early Service

A small village school had been established at Libo in 1924. Tasa attended the school from 1924 until 1930. His teachers were Pujaka from Viru, Kilivisi from Viru, Kuka from Duke, and Sukiveke from Lauru. Then in 1930 he left Libo to attend Batuna Training School where he became both a student and a teacher. He would attend classes as a student in the morning and as the teacher in the afternoon. His students were from the islands of Rennell, Bellona, and Bughotu. One of his teachers was Miss Totenhofer from Australia.

From Batuna he went as a teacher to Jella, then to Hovoro, then to Bareho, all in the western Solomons. On October 24, 1945 he married Eliamu Gnatulu.³ They were to have two sons and one daughter. After his marriage, he returned to Batuna where he assisted Pastor Lyn Thrift who asked him to translate Pastor A. W. Martin's doctrine notes, a 300-page document, into Ulusaghe, the local Marovo language.⁴

Tasa was credited with being fluent in English.⁵ In 1949 he was asked to travel to Australia to be a member of a team tasked with completing the translation of the Bible into the Marovo language. The other members of the translation team were Pana Kapo, Pastor Rini, and Pastor Robert Barrett,⁶ who worked together for some months.⁷ Tasa was the typist, even though he had no formal training as such.⁸ Tasa returned to Australia a second time to help finish the work with Pastor Kata Ragaso.⁹ The complete Bible was published in 1952 by the British and Foreign Bible Society. Sometime later in 1958-1960, while at Kukudu and Rumba, he translated Ellen G. White's book, *Steps to Christ*, known in Marovo as "*Tohaini la Pate Kraist*

Arriving home, he returned as a teacher to Jella. Then in 1955 he was invited to accept pastoral responsibilities as the district director of the Ugehele district. In 1959 he was ordained to the gospel ministry at Kukudu by Pastors E.E. White, Itulu, and Wallace Ferguson. Following his ordination, he transferred to Bougainville where he and Eliamu spent three years at Buka (Inus), three years at Irunioku (Buin), and three years at Kiet (Rumba) as the district director of each district. He was then transferred back to the Solomon Islands to Tau on the island of Guadalcanal. In 1970, he was transferred to Buinitusu as district director at the beginning of 1970.

Retirement Years and Death

On July 16, 1970, Pastor Tasa Hivana retired and returned home to Tombe village near Viru after completing forty years and nine months of service. In 1984, Eliamu died. Tasa was able to visit his sons and grandchildren in Honiara and Pacific Adventist College. He died on July 13, 1995.¹⁰

SOURCES

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"Our readers will be pleased to know . . ." *Australasian Record*, July 17, 1950.

"Pastor A. R. Barrett and Solomon Islands assistants . . ." *Australasian Record*, January 2, 1950.

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"Translator Dies." *Australasian Record*, September 23, 1995.

NOTES

1. This article is written by Pastor Piuki Tasa, the son of Tasa Hirvana and Eliamu Tasa. It is based on the personal knowledge of the author and the oral history that has been preserved by the family given the scarcity of written records.
2. Tasa Hivana Sustentation Records; South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives; Folder: 'Tasa Hivana;' Document: 'Sustentation Fund Application, Tasa Hivana.'
3. Ibid.
4. Lyndon Thrift, "Busy days at Batuna, Solomon Islands," *Australasian Record*, July 29, 1946, 4.
5. "Interesting visitors to Warburton . . .," *Australasian Record*, June 11, 1951, 8.
6. "The *Muliama*, which berthed in Sydney . . .," *Australasian Record*, November 7, 1949, 8.
7. "Our readers will be pleased to know . . .," *Australasian Record*, July 17, 1950, 8.
8. "Pastor A. R. Barrett and Solomon Islands assistants . . .," *Australasian Record*, January 2, 1950, 3.
9. A. R. Barrett, "The Task Is Finished," *Australasian Record*, September 24, 1951, 6.
10. "Translator Dies," *Australasian Record*, September 23, 1995, 3.

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