



Ghusa Peo and Guini with bridal party

Photo courtesy of Milton Hook. From the collection of Harold B. P. Wicks held by Jennifer (Wicks) Steley, Sydney, NSW.

Peo, Ghusa (c. 1896–1926)

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Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist* the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

Ghusa Peo, a mission leader from the Solomon Islands, was the eldest son born to Chief Tetagu and his wife, Sambenaru, of the Marovo Lagoon region in the Solomon Islands. Jimiru, Rini, Kata Rangaso, and Liligetto were

Ghusa Peo's younger brothers.¹ It is estimated Peo was born about 1896.²

When Griffiths Jones pioneered the Solomon Islands for the Seventh-day Adventist Mission, he found ready acceptance by Tetagu. On January 1, 1918, Jones baptized ten young men at Sasaghana. Peo was among those first baptisms.³ Later that year, Jones chose Peo to accompany him to the Australasian Union Conference Session at Cooranbong, New South Wales. Peo addressed the delegates on one occasion, speaking in his native language while Jones interpreted.⁴

Initially, Peo served as one of the first Solomon Islanders to establish an outstation on Ramata Island⁵ but when a major church was later established at Telina on Vangunu Island, he found himself increasingly indispensable to mission operations at that center. The Telina Church was organized on July 2, 1921, and Peo was elected as its deacon.⁶ He was already filling a leading role in the translation work, taking English hymns and Sabbath School lessons and providing these to his people in their own language.⁷ He quickly learned to use the typewriter and would cut stencils and duplicate pages on the mimeograph machine. He was one of the first three Solomon Islanders to be granted a missionary license.⁸

When Peo pioneered the Ramata outstation, he met a young woman named Guini. They were married at Telina on February 14, 1924, in a Christian ceremony fit for a chief. Over four hundred from his clan gathered from all around the Marovo Lagoon to celebrate in a manner distinctly different from their traditional culture. A feast followed the Christian church service, but no pigs were slaughtered, and a bride price did not exchange hands. Instead, everyone showered the bride and groom with gifts.⁹ A daughter, Amelia, was later born into their family.

Peo was chosen to be the Marovo district leader with Telina as the headquarters for 19 outlying stations under his supervision.¹⁰ In this capacity, he demonstrated quality leadership skills, but ominous signs of ill health appeared in late 1925.¹¹ He was suffering from tuberculosis. The tragedy was compounded when little Amelia died with pneumonia in January 1926. Two months later, on March 9, 1926, Peo died and was buried at Telina.¹² Guini returned to her own people at Ramata.

During his eight years of mission service, Peo contributed a significant level of intelligent leadership and translation skills. Church officials had identified him as a potential chief among national leaders. He was a role model to his constituency, especially his younger brothers, who also grew to be mission leaders, the most notable being Kata Rangaso.

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NOTES

1. "The Tetagu Family," Harold Bulmer Priestley Wicks photo album, 5–8, personal collection of Jenny Steley.
2. Harold Bulmer Priestly Wicks, "Death of Peo," *Australasian Record*, May 24, 1926, 8.
3. "Arrivals from the Solomons," *Australasian Record*, September 9, 1918, 8.
4. "Sabbath Schools," Special No. 2, *Australasian Record*, November 11, 1918, 21.
5. Madeline Wicks, "Marriage of Peo," *Australasian Record*, June 2, 1924, 3.
6. "Writing from Telina, Solomon Islands . . .," *Australasian Record*, August 8, 1921, 8.
7. "Peo, our Solomon Island brother . . .," *Australasian Record*, August 8, 1921, 8.
8. "Solomon Island Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1923), 170.
9. Madeline Wicks, "Marriage of Peo."

10. Harold Bulmer Priestly Wicks, "Death of Peo."

11. "We regret to hear of the illness . . .," *Australasian Record*, March 1, 1926, 8.

12. Harold Bulmer Priestly Wicks, "Death of Peo."

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