

Name:	Arthur Solomon
Date of interview:	1 April 2017
Location of interview:	Rabe, Milne Bay Province
Interviewer/s:	Elizabeth Taulehebo, Anne Dickson-Waiko and Keimelo Gima
Duration of interview:	37:26 & 05:14
Main language of interview:	Tawala and English
Image:	

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

00:00	<p>[Interviewer]</p> <p>This is an interview with Arthur Solomon at Rabe village taped on 1st of April 2017 and interviewed mainly by Elizabeth Taulehebo because it is going to be in Tawala language, with Anne Dickson-Waiko and Keimelo Gima and also Muyawa Basinauro who is also our guide and interpreter.</p>
	<p>In 1942, I was five years old. I was five years old when the war came. I was at Giligili. At that time, Giligili plantation was owned by the Lever Brothers. Okay my father was working there. I was born at Giligili. Peter Solomon is my father's name. My family was living at Giligili Plantation. I was born there. In 1942 when the war came, I was there.</p> <p>We accommodate all the captains in our house. We had a very big house. My father was the caretaker of the [desiccated coconut] factory there. Desiccated [coconut] factory, where coconuts are processed. Yeah, this fine coconut that we buy in the shops. We were living there when the war came. The big bosses for the Army were living in our house and were taken very good care by my mother like doing their laundry. Okay, and as the war was</p>

	<p>becoming stronger, so they sent us up to live where the big machine guns were installed.</p>
02:32	<p>At Giligili and on the mountain, there they put these Ack-ack guns. Cannon gun, those very big ones. They were put there to protect the passage of the Bay. And also against planes that come flying about. That's how we were secure from that guns. While we were living, no planes or bombs would harm us. We were living there. We lived there for several days. We were living there and the war was growing worse.</p> <p>Okay at Giligili and that boundary road, there is a place called Diloga, yes. That's where the machine guns were put up. I think after the war and the Army were departing so they had to remove the guns. Because they were not something small. They were large things.</p> <p>So we were living there. We were living with all the other labourers for Giligili. They were staying with us.</p>
03:30	<p>We were living there and the war was growing worse so the government [ANGAU] came and sorted us to send us back to our villages. And they were sent home. For me, my father was supposed to be sent to Solomon Islands with his family but my mother refused. She was afraid that something might happen to us while travelling on the sea. She said, 'we will go to my village instead.' But my father said, 'it's good we'll go but what guarantee do I have whether you will stay put or not?' Anyway, we went over.</p>
04:05	<p>From there, the Army had to guide us through. Yeah we went by foot, below this mountain range [Stirling Range]. There were telephone lines connected below the mountains and every, how many metres away or yards away were stationed with some people, this was the Army people. They were waiting for us. So they pass us through those groups. There were different groups in each post. Before we reached each group, they were already informed that, there are some people coming, a father with his children, his helpers and wife. So they are aware before we reached them. At Giligili all the way up to gravel pitch, Hauma, where they used to remove graves. It's up there. Where Driftwood is and the creek, that's Hauma. Yeah, from there and we were to make our last stop then we'll go over to my mother's village, so we slept there.</p>
05:12	<p>And that night, we were sleeping there and the Japanese landed at Wahuhuba. It was very bad. There was rain, thunder. It was not a good time when they landed in the night. We were spending the night there when they landed. The Army were also there. There was very heavy rain and thunder. And gunshots were heard. I was already a big boy [in terms of understanding good and bad], but when the Army said, 'your child will have to this cork, if you hear air raids you have to give him to bite it.' You know, in case of shock, I bit my tongue. So I did that. [They were given cork to put between their teeth so when there's gunshots, they get shock and they cannot bite their tongue].</p>

	<p>We stayed there whole through the night. The night was very bad. It was really bad. It was a very bad night for us. Heavy rain, thunder and big storm. Bad weather. We slept with some of the soldiers there. Some of them were sent down to where the enemy were. War had already started then.</p>
06:56	<p>The next morning, we prepared to continue our journey over to the other side. Okay we climbed the mountains and went over to the other side. Same thing the Army were guiding us through. We walked till we arrived at Taupota and lived there. [That's quite far]. Because we want to go down to Solomon Islands, my mother does not want, she refused. We might have what ... but we ... [They were going to go to Solomon Islands because his father was working for the factory here, they wanted to take them over there. Desiccated coconut factory]. The Lever Brothers. [They were running their business]. It was run by this Solomon, Honiara ... [people]. Because like the Kitchen_Brothers they got biscuits business ... Solomon Islands, here.</p>
08:16	<p>My father got some men to be our carriers, my father's boys. So on the way if I get tired then they used to carry me. They used to carry me and continue walking. We'll be walking and walking and if I get tired of being carried then I used to say, 'let me down to walk also.' From here and going, we were going through the camps and sleeping for the nights. The soldiers used to ask us to rest and sleep over when it's late. And next day, we used to continue walking. I think we travelled for four days from here and we arrived at Hauma. [They were not like for the whole day walking, they were guided by the soldiers because probably they scared of them being shot]. From there and we climbed over the mountain and walked down to Taupota.</p>
09:18	<p>So we lived at Taupota. The war was still very bad. At Taupota, we lived with my mother's family. I have two siblings because there are three of us in the family. We have only one sister and the other one is a male. We went with my sister. Her name is Mary. And my brother, he was already big boy and the elder one then me. He was a big boy and there was a boat used for the Giligili factory in which he usually sneaked out without our knowledge. He used to travel to and fro [when transporting coconuts]. This continued and at that time the Ahioma Plantation, it was run by Giligili. So from there some coconut supplies were coming down [Giligili]. That plantation at Ahioma is a very old plantation.</p> <p>[It's close to the river, Ahioma river]. Gopaia and down this way [to the west]. It is usually referred to as Ahioma Pouna, the Point down at the beach. Ahioma Plantation.</p> <p>My elder brother was enjoying his time in the boat travelling around when the news of the war reached them so they sailed up to Watunou. The captain of the boat and him walked over to the other side. They were scared so they ran away too.</p>
11:09	<p>My father returned here [Giligili] and we stayed there. When he came, he used to accompany the Army and travel around here. He was like leading the Army around but he was not formally recruited by writing his name. He was</p>

	<p>like a scout. He was assisting the soldiers from traveling here to the other side because there were some soldiers over the other side and they used to walk over and come here, the Australian soldiers. They used to walk over and from here he used to guide the others to walk over. So that's like my father's job.</p> <p>Like the Australian soldiers were only using them. It was not like they cared for them much or were concerned like that.</p> <p>[My father], he was using English but ... because he was working in the factory. Lever Brothers [were white people]. They have those, what we call uh Bosses at Giligili. They have managers, overseers, cowboys; they were down there because they were looking after cows, horses. They were supplying Samarai with beef. [It was a cattle ranch too].</p>
14:00	<p>In the past, they call this place Giligili not Milne Bay. Only Giligili. Later they got the name [Milne] and yeah, the pioneer man [Mr Milne]. Milne came and they [change the name to Milne Bay]. They renamed this place but the name was not popular at that time. It was because of that name, the pioneer's name, an explorer. But it wasn't used yet. Mostly they were using Giligili. So it was Giligili, Samarai and Moresby. It was with the Solomon Island, Giligili. [So Giligili's name was brought in to Giligili]. Yeah, yeah. I don't know what that name [Giligili] means. I don't know [where the name came from]. No, no [that's not the native name for this place]. That Laviam, yeah that's Laviam and it has you know small names too. Little blocks [hamlets] there, got names too. You see in that plantation, there's Boda, Litalewa, Laviam, Waema, Gabugabuna; they are all in that Giligili area. [So now it's known as Giligili and the Australians call it Giligili]. But mostly the little bit where the plantation is, it's Giligili. Like three of them Giligili, Waigani and Hagita. Those three places there were plantations there. [Coconut plantations plus cattle ranch]. They are all [run by] Lever Brothers. Their plantations. [Ahioma Plantation], I don't know but it was ... the coconuts from there were brought here. It was very big plantation.</p>
16:56	<p>We stayed at Taupota and my father was traveling backwards [to] and forward [fro], coming across, going back because we have some things here. But while he was going and coming, all our things were stolen. After the war everything was gone. [At Taupota] Army coming used to bring food supplies for us like biscuits and all those, sugar. And all the tinned foods, you know ANGAU rations. Any Army or like troops coming [to Taupota way], they [bring the rations]. Yes, we have plenty to eat. We were the only ones to go and live at Taupota with the people. No other people from Rabe.</p> <p>This Cardigans, because we and the Cardigans were in that company [Giligili] so Cardigans they went down to Australia. Because their father was a half-caste, European so they went down to Australia. While we went across to [Taupota]. We supposed to go to Solomon Islands because my father's Boss is from Solomon Island. We stayed for a very long time there [Taupota] 1942, 1943 and 1944, we returned back here. We came back here after the war.</p>

19:25	<p>No, [my father was not hurt during the war]. He wasn't. When we returned, our house and all our belongings were already destroyed. We didn't recover anything. Factory it was broken down but it was still in use. [Machines were functioning]. There was a fellow who came after that, he wanted to start that desiccated factory again. Okay, at Sineyada, there's a fellow who started it, Mr Jerome, came back again and employed my father to guide him in restarting everything. It was running well. I thinking they did one export. And the second one they did it and they found out about Blackwater fever down in Australia. So they investigated about it and they traced it back and found the cause here in Milne Bay. They came and arrested the white man but as for my father, he said to him, 'what did I tell you at the first place? Because they were using water from a pond. They were trying to drain the pond out because there were tadpoles inside and they wanted to remove them but the white man said. 'No, don't worry. It's alright, we got a strainer there.' It doesn't matter we get [use] strainer but the water was already infected. They exported only once and they found that disease, from that pool there.</p>
21:53	<p>Uh, about to lead them where the enemy is, uh no. he was leading them [Australian soldiers] to a safer place. But the Japanese used to come and he found them, they were asking about Giligili, "where's Giligili?" So he told them, "go across, this is not Giligili. Go around, it's across here." [So he was just tricking them], yeah, yeah. You know, they use hands and names, "Giligili, where, where, where?" yeah, those Japanese used to ask. [They just point], "over, over, over" [imitates the action]. Because you know they couldn't speak, those Japanese too. They use their hands and ...</p> <p>[The Japanese], they were alright. Very good people but in another way, you know cruel yeah. There are a lot of them, they torture ladies.</p>
23:32	<p>[The Japanese], they were uh I heard stories of one of them. Tied up their hands and cutting the breasts [of the ladies], yeah. From outside but news was everywhere. Also there's another thing, they came ... At that time they came round to Taupota, they went into the Church, they tear all the bibles, spread them out and they slept [on top of it, the papers], yes the papers. They did the same up at KB. That's the one. The lady that they cut up, a lady from that side, Taupota. They just cut it [breasts] and left it. You know those Japanese when they come, they do that. They don't care what they do. No reasons and they do it. That's why ... that's how some of the men, they used to kill them, kill those Japanese. I mean our local people. Many of them, they kill Japanese not with guns, they use bush knives. But many of them, they felt sorry for them uh. But they came in with bad you know intentions. The village people felt sorry for the Japanese, some of them. Because you know like they felt sorry for them because they are human beings.</p>
26:10	<p>My father, he did come across some black American soldiers. Because all those Americans and Australians, they were together, mixing up together. Uh Americans, they are like Australians. They are alright. They treated the locals well, yeah. The Americans and the Australians were not in good terms</p>

	<p>because those Australians, they are the ones who are in the war. Those Americans, they just wait around. That's what you know they did here in Milne Bay. There were a lot of Americans but they are not real fighters. They were I think like standbys uh. But Australians yes. And also they are good workers. These American negroes and Americans [white Americans]. They are workers. [They were the ones making dams, water ...], yes, that it was made by Americans. He felt alright because those two countries, they were together. The blacks [Americans], they were alright. They stayed together.</p>
28:20	<p>[At the time his father was working in the plantation and the treatment of the blacks by the white overseers ...], they were treated alright. They were alright. Those workers working for the company, they were given accommodations. Everything set. They paid. Paid well but you know those old times, in pounds. My father was paid about ten pounds for a month and with the rations. But those ten pounds in those days, uh you can fill your house up and build another house for ... food store. And even half-penny.</p>
29:34	<p>My mother was around during the war as well. She was a village lady. And those times, that side there no school. Only Churches went but no schools. Schools later to come but my father yeah, he went to a Mission school. He understands a bit. Anglican school down at Dogura.</p>
30:31	<p>Our home at Giligili was already destroyed. So we came back to Waema.</p>
30:50	<p>After the war, you know he was a bit uh thinking about our things but otherwise he was bit alright because the government came and we got our war claim so we got our house and our things. [We were] compensated, yes. He said eh we are lucky to survive. If not we could be dead because it was very bad. Me, the Armies told my mother to plug cotton wool into my ears and hold that cork there to bite it if any bomb blasting ... it was scary to us, children. We couldn't sleep properly, stay properly.</p>
32:33	<p>But my father you know we went through in prayer, we stayed in the war time. Praying to God for his safety ... because my mother and father they don't believe in those too [use of customs, black power, magic]. My mother was but my father doesn't believe in those sorts of things.</p> <p>[Like ours, they had little food but they said that God really bless them]. Yeah, he made friends with the soldiers. After the war, some of them gave their address to him, but you know old man, he doesn't know to write. We lost them [addresses] already. No photos of them. No. we had some souvenirs but we lost them. My father was given a [medal] but it's not with me. You know we've been shifting from place to place so that's when we lost everything. But also if we know that things will happen in the future like this, we could be more careful.</p>
34:38	<p>That's my father's brother, eldest one. He was in the PIB. And coming back from Rabaul ... His name is Frank Solomon. I think he was really a young guy when he joined the PIB, maybe I think he was about twenty [years old]. [He was with Yahuna], yes, that's right. My father was the younger one. That's</p>

	<p>from Rabaul coming across to Buna and he fell off the boat [barge]. They were going around trying to look for him but they didn't find him. He was lost [drowned]. I think he just fell off the boat. It was a rough weather when they were coming. They went and search for him but nothing, so they came to Buna. They reported that [Frank Solomon was missing]. No, they received only his medal. His medal was in his pack clothes. So the other guys got that medal, he came and because they know me so later then they brought it to me. So it's here with me.</p> <p>We sent down to Moresby to try and fix those ribbons or what, you know they ribbons but they said nothing.</p>
PART 2	<p>I think they came on one of those wartime boats [barge]. He fell off between Rabaul and Buna and just in the middle of the ocean. They were coming to Buna.</p>
01:50	<p>During ANZAC Day/Remembrance Day, I used to just go and march with them because I used to think of him ... It's a painful experience to lose a love one, a family member.</p>
02:34	<p>After the war, we returned and settled at Waema. My father, he went in there, the revived desiccated factory I was talking about earlier on and he finished and was in the village. Then there were some tradesmen that came and he joined them, white men like Mr Hill and later on he returned to work at Giligili. The Australian soldiers were not at Waema, they only stayed at the beach area. There was also another Base at where now uncle Tuwehu and the family are residing, down at the beach. That's where their war kitchen was.</p>