Sikaiana Photo Archive

- These slides are a general overview of 3 ½ years of ethnographic research conducted among the Sikaiana people of the Solomon Islands from 1980-1993. Viewers are cautioned that there may be many changes over the past 25 years and this does not claim to represent current Sikaiana life.
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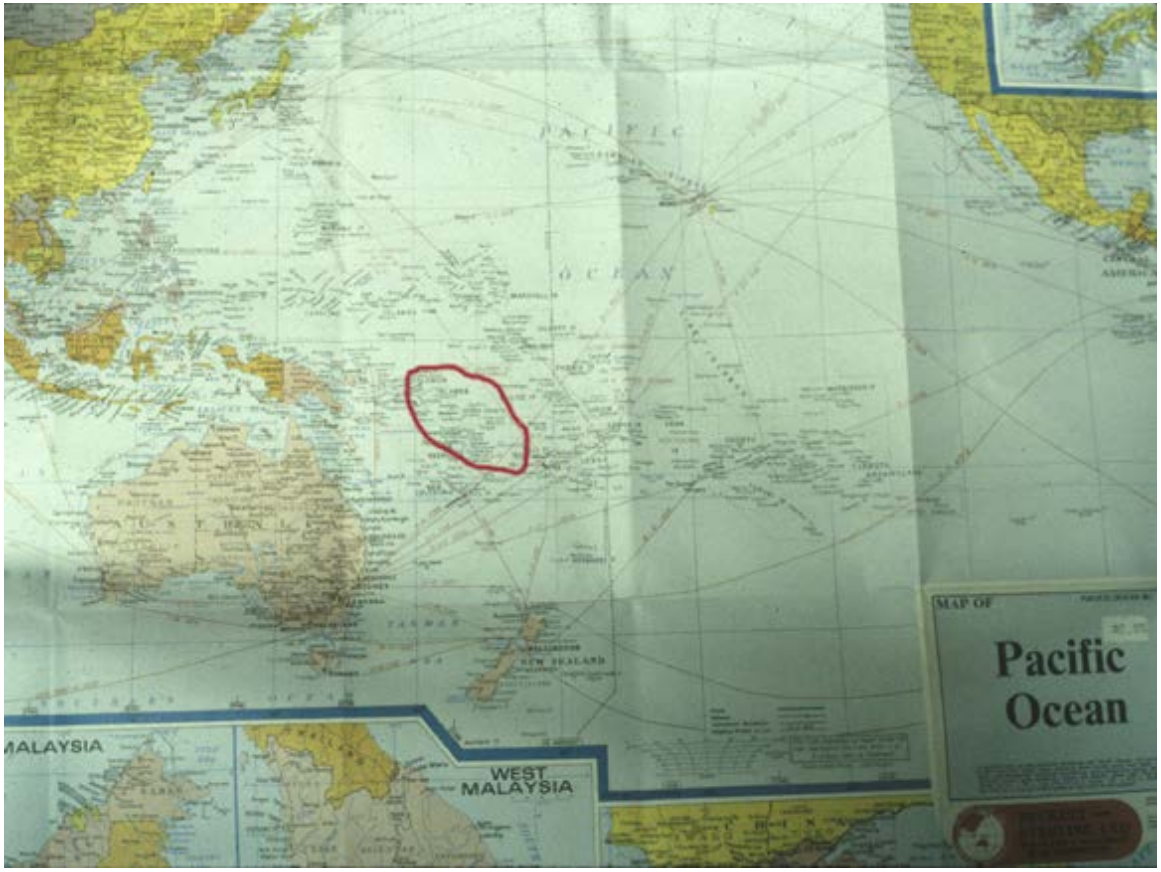
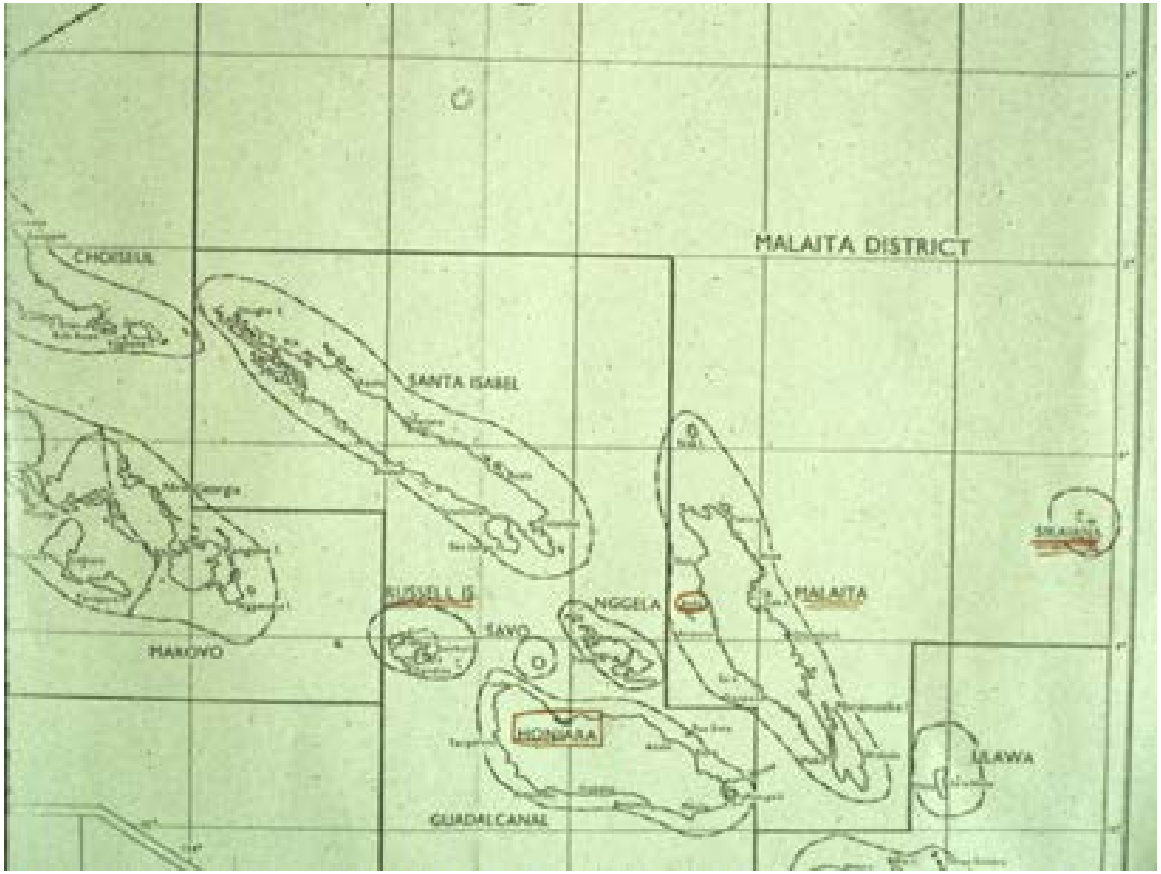


Map of the Pacific. Sikaiana is in the Solomon Islands northeast of Australia. From the United States , I fly to Hawaii and then to Honiara, the capital of the Solomon islands. In the 1980s, there was usually one boat a month to Sikaiana.

The Solomon Islands is located about the center of this map. Note Hawai'i in the Northeast corner.



This is a map of the Solomon Islands. Honiara is the capital of the Solomon Islands located in the south central area of the map and marked by a red box. Sikaiana is underlined on the right. It takes a boat about 36 hours to travel from Honiara to Sikaiana; during my stays there was a boat about once a month. In the 1980s, about 60% of the total Sikaiana population lived away from Sikaiana, the largest number of these immigrants lived in Honiara and the nearby settlement at Tenaru. There were also concentrations of Sikaiana on Isabel Island and at the Lever Brothers Plantation at Yandina. There was constant movement of people between Sikaiana, Honiara and other parts of the Solomon Islands.

The Solomon Islands

- The Solomon Islands was a British Protectorate established in the late 19th century. It includes about 60 different language groups. It became an independent nation in 1978, two years before my arrival. The Solomon Islands is probably best known to Americans as the location of the Battle of Guadalcanal. The film, *The Thin Red Line* recounts the battles there, and the first parts of HBO series, *The Pacific,* describe the battle there.

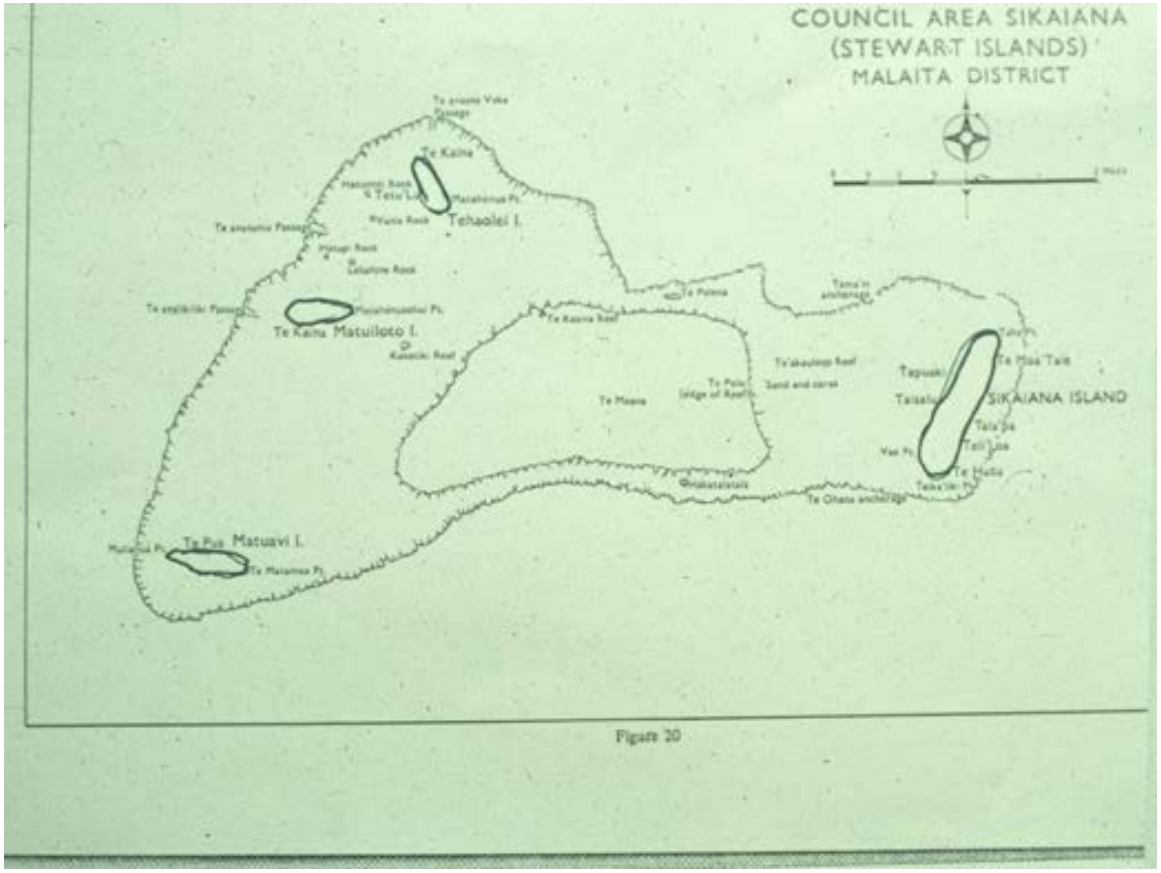


Figure 20

This is an older map of Sikaiana. You can find the island on Google maps. There are four islets which are in bold. The reef extends around the island. At low tide it is possible to walk from islet to islet. The lagoon, Te Moana, is too deep to wade. Most people live on the largest islet at the eastern end of the atoll. There is church, school, clinic, coop on this islet, which the Sikaiana people call Hale.

This is a group of Sikaiana people. They are mostly Polynesian with some Gilbertese, Melanesian, and a little European admixture.

- Many Sikaiana people have migrated to other parts of the Solomon Islands. During my stays in the 1980s, there were about as many Sikaiana people living in and around Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands, as lived on Sikaiana. Whereas the population of Sikaiana was stable at about 200-250 people, the Sikaiana population in Honiara was increasing, as was the general population. The following slides look at life on Sikaiana, then Honiara and Tenaru, a settlement of Sikaiana people about 15 miles outside of Honiara.

There is a boat that goes from Honiara to Sikaiana about once a month. During my stays in the *Belama.* In this picture, it is pulling away from the dock in Honiara. A lot of Sikaiana people living in Honiara see the boat off and meet its return about 3 days later.

The north coast of Guadalcanal from a distance. Most of the fighting during world War II took place a few miles to the left (east) of this picture.

A Sikaiana family on the boat. They are lying on the *Belama*'s hold.

Sikaiana from a distance. It is possible to make out the outlines of the four islets at the horizon. Two islets, Te Haole and Matuiloto, can be seen on the left. On the right is Matuavi and then behind it is the main islet, Hale.

Canoes come out to meet the ship. There is no passage way large enough to let the ship inside the lagoon. Note the group of people waiting to help canoes through the narrow passage at the reef. The Belama circles around for about 6 or 7 hours, unloading and loading passengers and supplies. In the afternoon, it turns around to return to Honiara.

This the view from the shore. On the right it is possible to see the people waiting at the passage.

Three islets across lagoon, collectively known as Muli Akau, as seen from main islet, Hale. Sunset.

Looking across the lagoon from Hale (the largest islet at the East side) to Muli Akau (the three small islets at the Western end of the lagoon).

A view of the shore line and mangroves in 1981.

From the front of my house, the main path which follows the lagoon side of Hale. Most people have houses along this path. During 1980-1983, the school, church, courthouse and cooperative store were located along this path.

The main path along the lagoon side (*alohi*) of the main islet (*Hale*). Cooperative store is on left.

Two men bringing rafters for a house. Note young coconut trees in background.

Toddy bottles for collecting coconut sap.

Taro (haahaa) gardens in the interior.

Women in front of taro garden. Everyone carries a bush knife to work.

Taro gardens. Note that they are in a swamp with trenches on both sides.

Taro Gardens

Banana plants.

I ask students to look for signs of modernization in this picture. The children are sitting on a concrete base for a concrete house. Everyone is wearing manufactured cloth. There are manufactured cooking materials on the platform next to the woman in blue. Sharp eyes will see corrugated metal used for roofing material at the right of the picture. Traditional materials include the coconut basket and husking stick in foreground and leaf house.

In the 1980s, most extended families had a radio and/or tape player. There was a national radio station, the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, that broadcast from 6 AM to 10 PM. The radio played western rock, popular and country music. The main language of the radio was English. Sikaiana people enjoyed western rock music. Younger people composed songs to western guitar music, older people still sand traditional songs.

A group of children outside my house and turn to watch me. In 1980 I had a Nikkormat camera with a zoom lens that was much larger than present-day cameras. Note outline of the islet under the coconut palm to upper right. It is Matuiloto, about 4 miles away on the opposite end of the lagoon.

This is a surface collection of shell tools, which I left at the National Museum. This shell technology was replaced in the late 19th century by steel. One elderly women described Sikaiana's ancestors as *toa*, 'very strong men'. How else could those tools be useful, she asked.

Young man starting a canoe, *manaui.* Traditionally, Sikaiana people used outrigger canoes, *vaka hai ama*. But during the 1980s, there were only single hull dugout canoes .

Same person, same canoe. After it is partly shaped, a canoe is dragged closer to the shore. This young man was supervised by an older person in work on the canoe. Canoes must be symmetrical and straight. Usually, men will be in their 30s before they are experienced enough to make a canoe.

A woman works in the gardens. She is wrapping leaves around each stalk of taro to provide a mulch. The process is called *hakataaute* (literally ‘decorate’).

These men are collecting leaves for the mulching described in the previous picture. The man in the foreground is the brother of the woman in the garden. This is an example of the division of labor: men climb trees, women work in gardens, both are complementary activities that are needed to complete a task.

Generally, men fish. Women clean and cook the fish. A canoe comes ashore after fishing with a net. Islet at other end of reef in background.

Fish nets tear and need repair. In former times, Sikaiana made nets out of local materials. In 1980-1983, all the nets were bought in stores, and made from manufactured materials.

IN 1980-83, copra (dried coconuts) was the most common source of cash on Sikaiana. Here an extended family is cleaning the copra. A family that worked hard could earn up to the equivalent of US $50 a month. But most families made less. Copra yielded about US $20-30 per person per year. The money was used to buy clothing, steel tools, kerosene for hurricane lanterns, batteries for radios and flashlights, flour, sugar, tea, coffee, fish hooks and lines.

Weighing copra.

Pigs have to be fed every day. Usually, they are fed coconuts. The pen is in the background. Unfenced pigs eat garden crops.

Bringing in a pig. Most families keep pigs that need to be fenced. Pigs are usually served on special occasions. The fat is used for frying foods that has become very popular among Sikaiana.

Inside the fence is a nursery (*hakatupulana*) for storing sprouted coconuts . The inside of these coconuts has turned from liquid into a soft fruit and is eaten (*k*anauto*)*.

Bird net. Men climb a high tree and catch birds in the net. In one technique a captured bird is held in the had and squeezed so that its calls will attract other birds. A man can catch about 100 birds on a good outing.

A woman weaves a coconut leaf basket. This picture was taken in Honiara.

Making a pandanus sleeping mat. Start by collecting leaves from pandanus tree.

Strip the spine off the back.

Pound the pandanus flat and into rolls.

The rolls are cut into strips.

Plait the long strips into the sleeping mat. This mat is being started. Many people sleep on these mats, although manufactured foam mattresses were also used.

In former times, cloth was made on a loom. The backstrap loom is rare in Polynesia, where cloth is usually made of tapa bark. The loom is women's work, although I heard legends that was once done by men. In 1980-1983, the loom was only used as part of a special heritage event, once when I asked to see how it was done, and once as the result of a special grant from the National Museum. Sometimes loom-made belts (*taakai*) are still worn as part of pregnancy: to hold the belly before delivery and to keep the belly tighter after delivery.

Bark is taken and placed in water. After a few days, the material is pulled into long strips that are used for the loom.

A typical kitchen. The stove is made from an empty 44 gallon gas drum. Most food is now fried, following practices learned from Europeans.

Baking bread. Flour is imported.

Traditionally food was baked in an underground oven (*umu*), which are rarely used at present. In Honiara, I saw a modified form of the underground oven. Here, a cooks used wheel drums, possibly from World War II vehicles, in a similar manner to an *umu*.

On Sikaiana hand pumps are used to get water for bathing and washing. Rain water, captured in cisterns, is used for drinking.

Outside the Sikaiana church. Church of Melanesia (Anglican) missionaries arrived on Sikaiana in 1929, and a rapid conversion followed. There are church services twice a day with Communion on Wednesday and Sunday. Many people attend both daily services, almost everyone is present at Sunday Communion. After church on Sunday is a good time for community meetings because almost everyone is present.

St Andrew’s Church. Note that women enter on right side and men on the left. At meetings after service, men stand to the right side and women on the left. The church is decorated for a holiday.

The church and the main path along the shore line (*alohi*), after a cyclone.

Church fundraising event. People buy food and the proceeds are given to the church. The event is held on the base for a concrete house that has not been built.

In former times, people were buried at sea. Following Christian practice, people are now buried in a cemetery (Te Kava).

Sikaiana court: 3 justices and clerk.. The local court hears a variety of cases: not working on the community work day; public fighting; owning a pig that strays too close to an inhabited area; and land disputes. Serious cases are referred to a higher court that is off the island. Occasionally a judge from this higher court visits Sikaiana.

Marriage Exchange (*penupenu*)

There are two sets of presentations between the families of the fathers of the bride and groom and the families of the mothers of the bride and groom. Generally, the valuables going from the fathers' families are considered more valuable than the return from the mothers' families.

- **GROOM'S SIDES** **BRIDE'S SIDES**
- **Cloth and Money ---------->**
- Father of Groom <----------> Father of Bride
- Mother of Groom <----------> Mother of Bride
- **<---------- Food**

Bringing the goods for a marriage exchange (*penupenu*).

A woman with bride wealth payment from her daughter.

Men cut steps into a coconut tree to make it easy to tap its sap. They climb the tree twice a day to cut the sprout and replace bottles. The toddy can be cooked into a molasses or taffy. But most is fermented. Techniques for collecting and fermenting sap were learned from Gilbertese immigrants brought to Sikaiana in the 19th century. The Gilbertese learned fermentation from European beachcombers.

Toddy bottle and kettle. The big bottles are buoys used in commercial fishing that drift to Sikaiana. They are used to ferment toddy.

Toddy drinking group at Tenaru. Drinks are passed out in a circle. The man with the pitcher (*taki) i*s pouring a drink.

Drinking group at Tenaru.

1981 Puina. Women paddle ashore as they sing songs that are critical of the men.

1981 Puina. Women sing songs.

Haiumu. The game is somewhat like kick the can. There are two teams which try to hold onto one another to prevent them from reaching a goal. The game is usually played between sides of boys and girls and because of the holding onto opponents, is seen as a mild form of sexual play.

A girl has fallen out of a tree and lost her *manu* (inner essence). Her family went to the area where she fell and gather her *manu* into the cloth and then place it on her.

John Kilatu dressed as a traditional chief (*aliki*) and Fane Telena as his female assistant (*sapai ulu*)., Solomon Mamaloni, Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands is in the background. Mr. Mamaloni made the visit to Sikaiana to show his support for rural areas. The Sikaiana people performed re-enactments of traditional rituals to greet him. This is a common way to greet a visitor.

A wedding on Sikaiana.

New Year’s Day. People rub dirt into one another's’ faces as a form of play.

- Many Sikaiana people have moved to Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands. There were about 15-20,000 people there in the 1980s, coming from all ethnic groups. These pictures show some of the scenes.

Aerial view of north coast of Guadalcanal.

Honiara from the World War II Memorial that is a little to the west of the city.

Main Road, 1993.

Main intersection, Mendana Avenue, Honiara.

Mendana Avenue, Honiara.

Four-Story government building, Honiara.

Mendana Avenue, Honiara.

China Town, a popular shopping area..

Inside a successful person’s house, Honiara, 1987. Note the video on right.

Watching videos, Honiara 1987.

Billboard in Pijin encouraging breast feeding.

Guadalcanal form airplane, 1993.

Honiara Market

There is a settlement of Sikaiana people about 15 miles outside of Honiara at Tenaru. Tenaru is near the site where the 1st Marine Division landed to take the Japanese airbase at Guadalcanal. There are still concrete platforms that were built by Americans.

Sikaiana people arranged with local landowners to have an extended lease on the land. They are close to the ocean, although there is no reef. They have more open land and often hold community events. They also have gardens. Moreover, they are also able to commute to jobs in Honiara.

They built a church there and hold services.

Tenaru.

Sunday School youth group at Tenaru Settlement, 1993.

Tenaru.

Tenaru.

Tenaru. 1993.

SOME PEOPLE

Fane Telena was the oldest surviving person during my stay in 1980-1983. Both her children were born before the arrival of Christian missionaries in 1929.

John Kilatu was born about 1920. He attended mission schools and eventually became a doctor in the Solomon Islands.

Brown Saua was a government administrator and then businessman.

Paul Knight was a tail gunner on a plane flying from the carrier, *Enterprise*, who was shot down on Sikaiana in August 1942 during battle of Eastern Solomons. He was wounded and cared for by the Sikaiana people before being rescued.

Me, Honiara, 1993.