

Intimacy and Community in a Changing World: Sikaiana Life 1980-1993

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New Introduction 2020

This ethnography is based upon living as an anthropologist among the Sikaiana people of the Solomon Islands. I lived there for a total of about 3 ½ years between 1980 and 1993. Most of the material in this ethnography was written between 1988 and 1994 and was intended to be published.

Readers should be aware that life is very different for the Sikaiana people today in 2020 in some significant ways. There have been many changes in Sikaiana life over the past 30 years. Readers should also be aware that this book is not typical of contemporary ethnographic writing and anthropology.

This book is about my understanding of the Sikaiana people from 1980-1993, not about their lives today. I have left most of the book in the “ethnographic present,” that is I use the present tense to describe general cultural patterns that took place in the 1980s. An earlier generation of anthropologists developed this technique in writing ethnographies. The work of anthropologists is to document human diversity. The experiences of a group of people at any point in time reflect some of the diversity of human experience and should be recognized for having its own significance. The past, as some say, is a foreign country. This technique is justly criticized for masking the temporality and dynamics of human life. My use of the present tense is even more problematic because these chapters are really grounded in the past: it is not fully accurate in depicting present-day Sikaiana life in 2020. I wrote most of this about 5-10 years after living on Sikaiana, when their life was very much in **my** present. I find that in all my writing, including in ethnographic writing about regional cultures in Pennsylvania, it is challenging to decide what tense to use. In the case of this book, I simply do not want to try to develop the words to describe something in a more remote past in the 1980s when I was living among the Sikaiana, from the perspective of a slightly more recent past in the early 1990s when I was writing this book. Beware of my ethnographic present. One of the biggest changes is the loss of the Sikaiana language as the main medium for everyday speech. I am told it simply is not used very much at all. This is probably the most dramatic change, but there are other changes as well. Occasionally, I add brief comments in red-type to bring readers up to date and historically contextualize the contents of these chapters. Most of these comments about the present are based upon conversations with Robert Sisilo and Priscilla Taulupo who lived in New York from 2017-19, while Robert was posted as the Solomon Islands ambassador to the United Nations.

Although I write about Sikaiana life in the ethnographic present, I write about my own experiences among the Sikaiana people using the past tense. Partly this is an artefact of the way this book was written. I was writing shortly after I left Sikaiana, looking back on myself and trying to explain specific events that shaped my understandings of them. This is somewhat misleading, but does reflect the fact that as I got to know them, I was changing much faster than they were, both in my understandings of them also in terms of the person who I am today. Their culture was something relatively stable that I was trying to understand.

Readers should also be aware that although most of this material has been published in various scholarly journals, it was never published as a book because no one wanted to publish it. To be a little fairer to the monograph and myself, no publisher that I considered worthy of publishing it, wanted it. I tried about 7 or 8 publishers, including a couple trade publishers and some of the better-known academic publishers. Three times it got beyond the series editors, who are rarely professional anthropologists, and sent to an outside reviewer, who were professional anthropologists. The reviewers were somewhat positive, but were not certain that the book would sell well or fit into the publishers' series. I wrote the book for a general audience including intelligent, interested lay people, college students and some professional colleagues. It was meant also to be something of a discourse on the nature of fieldwork. At the time I was writing, there was a strong post-modern movement that emphasized the subjectivity and contexts of ethnographic descriptions, calling into question any understanding of another culture. I wanted to describe my subjectivity as a vehicle to understandings that I believed had some empirical validity: my understandings were somehow intersubjective enough so that there was a common ground between me and the Sikaiana people that could also be shared with the readers of this book. I tried to explain how I came to these understandings and also show how they increased over time. The idea was that the movement of increased understanding in the book reflected my own increased understanding of the Sikaiana life. Alas, publishers and the reviewers did not seem very impressed. In 1995, I was tired of trying to find a worthy publisher and I was reluctant to lose the copyright to a second/third-tier publisher, my first child was born, and my research interests were shifting to regional ethnography in the United States. I stopped working on the book and it sat on my computer. Even by 1995, I saw some possibilities on the digital world and I wanted to keep the copyright to develop the book as I saw fit. In 2012, I took a sabbatical to resurrect this material as part of a website about Sikaiana.

If I can briefly digress, a website with pictures, songs, and other media is much closer to the actual experience of living with another culture than a book which is really one dimensional in its linear organization. Nevertheless, anthropologists still seem to be mainly interested in published written accounts, although media now offer an incredible range of expressive opportunities. Partly this is a result of the expectations of academic life. Back to this book.

The theoretical and comparative references in this book are also dated. Indeed, my approach to examine Sikaiana life in terms of some classical theories of modernization and differentiation was considered passé even in 1995. Nonetheless, I still think it is a useful perspective. Readers should know that there are many professional anthropologists who, if they ever took the time to read the book, would be unimpressed. They would find the theoretical sections dated, and they would not be interested in the descriptive sections. In short, readers should not take this as an exemplar of contemporary anthropology, although in my view that is not necessarily a bad thing. I am not impressed by many of the contemporary trends in anthropology.

I have done very little editing of the early 1990s version in presenting this version. I have updated a few of the literary or theoretical references. Like the Sikaiana

people, the rest of the world has changed in the last 40 years and so has the academic discipline of anthropology. Anthropologists are much less likely to find an isolated community (although Sikaiana was far from isolated in 1980) and if they did are likely to have different interests. Much of contemporary anthropology is focused on issues of power and the various expressions of power in affecting marginal groups including those shaped by gender, social class, race, neo-colonialism, and race. These are important concerns, but generally they were not mine when I was living on Sikaiana and a little later when I wrote this book.

Readers should be aware that recent fashion in anthropology has also criticized this kind of ethnography for being implicitly racist, patriarchal, heteronormative, and embedded in an exploitative neo-liberal tradition. Perhaps this is all true. I am a white, heterosexual, male with a middle class, professional background, pushing 70 years old. Perhaps this has completely compromised all my thinking and writing. Readers can decide.

Despite all these shortcomings, when I re-read the book in 2012, I still liked it, and I admit that I still like it in 2020. I think this book and the accompanying material in the website offers an example of the expression of human diversity. Perhaps someone else will find something useful in it. Perhaps some Sikaiana people will appreciate it as a source for understanding their cultural heritage. I think it worthwhile to learn about other cultures, I think I have something worthwhile to write, and I think that knowledge should be shared. I certainly learned a lot from the Sikaiana people and I want to share that with other people.

In 2012, I changed the title. The original title was *Polynesian Voyagers in the 20th Century* and was meant to be vaguely reminiscent of Bronislaw Malinowski's famous book, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. I saw Sikaiana's ancestors as voyagers across large expanses of ocean, and saw the present-day people as voyaging into a contemporary, complex, global culture. The new title reflects my continuing experience that as they voyaged through many changes there was a deep intimacy and closeness in Sikaiana life. That is still my main conclusion about my experiences with them in 2020. It was reinforced when I met Robert and Priscilla in New York in 2017 and we started talking about the Sikaiana individuals who we knew while I lived there (and their children and grandchildren).

I have changed some names and deleted a couple sections to preserve confidentiality. I did not include extended sections of the Sikaiana vernacular; instead I mostly include the English translations.

Robert Sisilo and Priscilla Taulupo read an earlier version in about 1991. I am grateful for their comments; they are not responsible for any inaccuracies or deficiencies. As stated above, I also had the fortune to meet with them in 2017-19, while Robert was posted as the Solomon Islands representative to the United Nations in New York. My comments about changes in Sikaiana life since 1980-93 are largely based on discussions with them.

Again, the occasional comments about changes in Sikaiana life since the 1980s are marked in red.

CHAPTER I

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

For 33 months, from October 1980 until July 1983, and again for seven months from March 1987 until September 1987, and for several weeks in 1993, I lived among the Sikaiana, a Polynesian people in the Solomon Islands. Part of the time, I lived with them on their coral atoll; the rest of the time was spent living with Sikaiana emigrants, mostly in and around Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands. In 1980, I went to the Solomon Islands to do research on Sikaiana culture, society, and language for my doctoral thesis in anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. I returned in 1987 to do more research on social change. I want to be very clear that this book is about Sikaiana life during the period from 1980 to 1993. There have been many changes since then. I write in the "ethnographic present" to relate my experiences at that time, not to claim that nothing has changed.

This book describes some of the results of this research. Sikaiana was settled by Polynesian argonauts who journeyed across hundreds of miles of open ocean to settle a small, isolated atoll. But for many years before my arrival in 1980, the Sikaiana had not gone on any long-distance sailing voyages. They no longer construct the seaworthy outrigger canoes necessary for such trips. Since the 1920's, they have travelled away from the atoll only on the steamships sent by traders, government administrators, and religious organizations. The Sikaiana, like so many other people in the world, participated in intensive culture change in the 20th century. Christianity, salaried labor, formal education, government bureaucracies, and the international media are part of their daily lives. In this book, I will describe how the Sikaiana, during my stays, participate in these institutions, while they also continue some of their distinctive cultural traditions and maintain themselves as a separate community within a larger social system.

For me, the most striking feature of Sikaiana life is what I call, for lack of a better term, its "intimacy." Life on the atoll is public and enveloping. One wakes to the calls of people going about their chores. A foolish act provides material for the next day's banter and gossip. Individuals are known for their delights, dislikes, individualities, peculiarities and these provide a source for a continuous commentary in daily life. People encounter one another at the morning and afternoon church services, walking along the paths to the gardens, at public meetings, community work projects, and the frequent drinking bouts. There is an on-going discussion about individuals and involvement in their daily lives. Intimacy in my own society is structured around a few private relationships of extreme intensity and isolation, most apparent in marriage and nuclear families. In sociology textbooks, the term intimacy almost invariably refers to sexual intimacy. I am not referring to sexual intimacy rather what to me was a general interpersonal closeness. Compared to the close relations I experienced in my own society, Sikaiana intimacy is less focused on a few very close relatives, and less isolated between different groups. It is more public, more generalized and in that sense more communal and enveloping. In this book I will try to explain the organization of this intimacy in everyday relations, as I also explain how I came to participate in the

intimacy of these relations.

As a study of intimacy in a small community and culture change, this book addresses one of the important issues in social theory and modern life: the organization of social relations in small, personal communities and how these relations change as the result of the introduction of complex technology and the incorporation of these small communities into larger, complex social systems. These changes are sometimes labelled as "modernization," and its accompanying ideology sometimes is called "modernity," and often described as a related series of processes: the breakdown of communal relations, values and interests; an increased emphasis, described as both liberating and isolating, on privacy and individuality; the rise of specialized occupations, bureaucracies and expertise; an industrialized economy and some form of large scale production usually associated with capital investments; and a compulsion for knowledge and self-reflection. These changes have been taking place in Western societies for the last few centuries and were central issues for the 19th century founders of social theory, a diverse group which included Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Tonnies, Simmel, Cooley, and Park, among others. As the result of the development of a global economic and social system, similar changes have been taking place more recently in smaller non-Western communities, such as Sikaiana. Even in the present period of post-industrialization, globalization, and neocolonialism, scholars continue to debate what is happening to small communities and personal relations, and there is considerable disagreement concerning both the overall trends in these processes and what has been lost and what has been gained.

Sikaiana offers an opportunity to examine these processes. Its very small population was enclosed by hundreds of miles of ocean and until recently isolated and self-sufficient. But over the past 150 years, the Sikaiana people have greatly intensified their contacts with the outside world and as a result participated in the processes associated with Westernization and modernization including the introduction of a market economy, labor-for-wages, and highly specialized occupations and institutions. I will discuss these changes in terms of how they affect the organization of interpersonal relations on Sikaiana: how people establish relations with one another; how these relations coalesce in various groups and activities; and how these groups and activities are integrated into larger social systems in the region and world. Although constantly affected by world-wide forces which act to incorporate or integrate them into larger regional social systems and at the same time distance or differentiate them from one another, the Sikaiana have maintained a communal sphere of personal relations. These issues concerning the integration and differentiation of social relationships are relevant not only for understanding the residents of a remote atoll, but also for providing a perspective for understanding social relations elsewhere.

The Sikaiana Community

In writing about the "Sikaiana people" or their "community" some readers may legitimately want to know about whom I am writing. Who exactly are the Sikaiana and in what sense are they a "community"? My definition of the word "community" is taken

from *The Oxford Dictionary of The English Language* which emphasizes two sources for the meaning of the word: a concrete sense referring to a group of individuals or "a body of fellows"; and a more abstract meaning which is a quality of "fellowship, community of relations." I will describe a group of people and the locality they inhabit. But I will also focus upon the institutions, events and practices which determine a special "fellowship" or "community of relations."

As a group, the Sikaiana people includes most, but not all, of the present descendants of the atoll's 19th century inhabitants, whose cultural traditions these descendants have both perpetuated and revised. Roughly it corresponds with an abstraction some Sikaiana use when referring to themselves, "*taatou i te henua*," "we, from the island." There are some people with Sikaiana ancestors who are minimally or not at all involved with the people I am describing. They have migrated away from Sikaiana and inter-married with other ethnic groups in the Solomon Islands. On the other hand, there are also a few people without Sikaiana ancestry who are involved in Sikaiana activities: for example, a Kiribati woman married to a Sikaiana man, now fluent in the language, and fully involved in Sikaiana events.

In the 1990s, there are about 500-600 Sikaiana people who, although somewhat diverse in personality and life experiences, generally subscribe to similar values, expectations and understandings about life and their behavior. Most of these people can speak the Sikaiana vernacular, although many, especially younger men, may feel more comfortable in Pijin, the English-derived *lingua franca* of the Solomon Islands. They possess rights to use resources on the atoll. They maintain an interest in the affairs of one another and express that interest through participation in shared activities. These are the people who form the community.

Sources

In writing about Sikaiana life, I build upon several sources in social theory. The first source concerns the integration of small communities into a world social system and the accompanying changes in those small communities. The second concerns the ceremonial and symbolic behavior which organizes face-to-face relations. Thirdly, I examine humans as active, not passive, participants in their culture and its changes.

A central issue in social theory since its founding in the 19th century concerns processes associated with industrialization, urbanization and the leveling of villages and small towns as they became integrated into larger social systems. Writing about these issues from the perspective of industrialized nations, social scientists often make a general dichotomy between "traditional" and "modern" societies in an attempt to systematically describe these changes. Generally, such dichotomies depict low-population, self-sufficient, personal, communal, ritualistic and conservative "traditional" communities and contrast them with high-population, interdependent, technologically specialized, impersonal, bureaucratic, and cosmopolitan "modern" societies. Much of this writing about social change builds upon themes established by social theorists in the late 19th and early 20th century: Durkheim's discussion of increasing specialization in occupations; Weber's work on the development of expertise

and decision-making administrative institutions; and Tonnie's notions about the shift from personal relations in small communities to impersonal ones in industrialized, urban societies.

This dichotomy between "traditional" and "modern" is a simplification of an inter-related series of processes. With the development or introduction of complex technology, occupational roles become specialized and career-oriented. Self-sufficient generalists are contrasted with specialists who are interdependent for survival on others who have mastered complementary skills. In technologically complex societies, for example, carpenters, plumbers, cardiologists, and engineers each possess a professional expertise, which is consciously scrutinized, systematized and updated, and which is so complex that individuals must devote long periods of time to mastering it and must continue to update their knowledge as technology changes. Occupations, moreover, are interdependent. Large populations are necessary to support such specialization in labor, social relationships are often described as becoming more impersonal and include interactions with strangers. Personal relationships are no longer formed primarily through kinship and communally determined expectations, and new kinds of private relations develop which emphasize individual interests and preferences. In Western societies, the result is often described as a separation between impersonal, anonymous public realms and isolated personal ones. There is a breakdown of shared communal values and constraints, including ritual and religious ones. As specialized expertise associated with occupational roles becomes predominant in one's life, there is also more self-consciousness and self-reflection. People rationalize and think about their own behavior, even to the point where some professions, such as the social sciences, specialize and institutionalize the study of society and human behavior (Berreman 1978, Berger, Berger and Kellner 1973, Bellah et al 1985, Eisinstadt 1987, Giddens 1990).

Many anthropologists criticize these views of social change as too simplistic, and even somewhat Eurocentric in delineating a sharp break between traditional and modern, and associating the modern with Euro-American cultures. These processes outline general tendencies, not inevitable outcomes, and they over-emphasize Western experience with industrialization. The Sikaiana are quite different from the Sioux; industrialized Japan from industrialized Sweden. In all societies, there are relations which are more and less personal, more and less specialized, more and less based upon expertise. Before European contact, Sikaiana had ritual experts and specialists, some settings were more private and others more public, some relations were more personal and a few were highly restricted and formal, and there was some self-reflection especially concerning human social relations and motivations. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that every society follows the same course of change as the result of contact with technologically complex ones (see Miner 1952, Geertz 1963, Bender 1978, Berreman 1978).

But I think that classic social theory offers a useful approach to understanding global processes, especially the tension between global and local. Recently anthropologists have recognized the tension between global processes and local identities and the manner in which cultures are blending into a global soup or ecumene. Local lives must be analyzed in terms of their reflection of global processes (see White

1991, Sahlins 1985, Kirch and Sahlins 1992). There are no longer--if there ever were--concrete boundaries as cultures blend and combine in what Appadurai (1990) has termed *ethnoscapes*. A world system of economics, politics, and media has blended cultural boundaries and recombined cultural elements (see Featherstone 1990, 1991, Appadurai 1990, Foster 1991, Hannerz 1992, Robertson 1992). Culturally, the modern world is melting down. This meltdown includes many of the processes outlined in classic social theory.

Changes in Sikaiana social relations include many of the processes predicted by classic social theory: adoption of specialized occupations; new commitments to careers based upon an expertise which is derived from sources far beyond the atoll; beliefs in some universal religious beliefs; incorporation of western legal procedures; development of specialized bureaucratic administrative institutions; breakdown of some traditional kinship restrictions; increased self-consciousness about their own distinct practices that is a result of rapid change within their own lifetimes and their awareness of the different cultural practices of other people. But these changes have not resulted in the fragmentation of the community as a locus for personal relations. In confronting modernization, the Sikaiana have maintained a sphere of personal and private relations. This personal community is partly the result of Sikaiana's small size and relative isolation, but it is also the result of the manner in which the Sikaiana have maintained and developed communal practices and institutions, including many new ones which are derived from Western contact. Theories of modernization help provide a comparative framework for examining how Sikaiana is both similar to and different from other societies with similar institutions. They define some important changes in Sikaiana social life; but they also recognize some significant ways in which Sikaiana remains a uniquely personal community and has not been assimilated into a standardized global system. Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and Simmel lived in times that were closer to the transformation and breakdown of village life in Europe, and therefore offer a perspective, too often overlooked, for understanding similar processes which are occurring elsewhere in the world more recently.

In describing the intimacy and familiarity of Sikaiana life, I build upon approaches which examine human interaction as symbolic communication. Some philosophers claim that the essence of human experience is derived from intellect: "I think therefore I am" as Descartes put it. I have never been impressed by this proposition. As a student of social and cultural behavior, I have a different existential conceit: "I interact therefore I am." This approach is especially relevant for examining changing social relations in a society where everyone knows one another and is often in one another's presence. Writing in the late 19th century, Georg Simmel (1950a) was one of the first sociologists to be concerned with the details of social interaction, topics he labelled "sociation" and "sociability." He wrote about many issues in personal relations: adornment, secrecy, conflict, confidence, and the social role expected of a stranger. Although many sociologists and anthropologists consider such studies to be trivial when compared to the "macro" or "structural" factors shaping entire social systems, I believe that these are at the heart of social life as experienced by individuals. Romance, song composition, secrecy, joking, drinking, and sharing, as I shall explain, are essential elements in present-day Sikaiana life. In a related vein, Schutz (1962-66) argued that

there are many taken-for-granted assumptions in any social interaction or relationship. Social situations are defined or as Goffman (1974) puts it "framed" by cultural expectations and understandings about appropriate behavior and meaning. The locker-room and dining-room require two different sets of expectations for interpersonal behavior and conventions for interpreting that behavior which, although taken-for-granted by the average American, may be quite mysterious to a foreigner. My task as an anthropologist is to learn what the Sikaiana assume would or should happen in a particular situation, interaction or relationship between in-laws, at dances, when drinking toddy, in the courthouse, while composing songs, arranging romantic meetings and so on. In defining Sikaiana expectations and understandings of their relationships, I also build upon anthropological writings which examine how culture determines different concepts about the individual, personality, emotions and relations (Mauss 1938, Hallowell 1955, Levy 1973, Rosaldo 1980, White and Kirkpatrick 1985, Lutz 1988).

Finally, the Sikaiana community is not simply the residue of their past, but something that they construct in their daily interaction, festive occasions, song composition, and toddy drinking. The redefinition of cultural practices becomes apparent when examining the manner in which the Sikaiana have transformed traditional practices and redefined foreign practices to express their present, local interests. Sikaiana relations and activities are not only maintained from their traditional past, they are also constantly reinterpreted and redefined in the present (Hobsbawm and Tanger 1983, Dalby 1983, Handler and Linnekin 1984, Borofsky 1987, Keesing 1989, White 1991, Jolly and Thomas 1992, Lindstrom and White 1993). The Sikaiana people are affected by global processes but maintain and develop activities which are both personal and communal. Whereas they have relatively little direct control over global social, political and economic forces, they do exercise some control over how these forces are manifested in their institutions and daily lives.

Describing the Sikaiana

Sikaiana life, very unlike this book, does not come organized in sentences, paragraphs, subsections and chapters. There is complexity, subtlety, and fullness in Sikaiana life which is impossible to describe with mere words. This book is not the same thing as living among the Sikaiana; it is simply a written description of some selected aspects of their lives.

In writing this book, decisions had to be made about what to put in and what to leave out, what terms and examples to use, and how best to express my understanding of Sikaiana social life. In this endeavor, I am reminded of the advice of a noted Sikaiana song composer. During a composition session, several Sikaiana people had an idea for a song and were searching for the best wording to express that idea. After several lines were proposed and rejected for being inadequate, this composer admonished the others to be patient and keep searching for the best wording. He said, "*ssee hakalaoi, te talatala taulekaleka e moe*," roughly translated, "search carefully for the best wording, it is there, but we have to find it." In writing and rewriting this book, I have struggled to search for the best wording to explain my understandings of Sikaiana life.

This book is primarily about the Sikaiana, but there are several reasons why I will also talk about myself. My primary research method on Sikaiana was quite literally "participant observation." For over three years, I lived among the Sikaiana and participated in their daily lives. Like all other research methodologies, participant observation has advantages and disadvantages. Very unlike the standardized instruments used in most scientific research, this method is affected by the personal and cultural background of the researcher and the various specific contexts under which it is possible to conduct research. Understanding many human activities requires knowing about many assumptions made by the participants in those activities which are often implicit and not evident in the behavior itself. To take some examples readers might be familiar with, Holy Communion is not simply eating a little bread and wine; football games are not simply head and body bashing events; at least not for those who participate in these activities. I know of no other way to study the meaningful contexts for human activities except by living with people and trying to understand the implicit understandings which they attach to their behavior. Moreover, I know as an empirical matter that subjectively felt experiences, such as feelings and symbolic meanings, are quite important in behavior.

Traditional ethnography--and I consider this book to be in that genre--has come under attack from a group of writers who are referred to as "post-modern" (for example, Clifford 1988, Clifford and Marcus 1986). The post-modern critique argues that coherence in anthropological descriptions is something that anthropologists squeeze out of change, conflict and ambiguity. These critics also charge that in seeking this coherence in abstractions and generalizations, anthropologists simplify and then present distorted descriptions which reflect and serve the needs and interests of their own personal and cultural background. Anthropology becomes a new form of oppression, serving the needs of Western culture to analyze, explain and contain humanity's diversity. I agree with some of these criticisms. But I object when some ethnographers try to resolve these problems in description by writing ethnographies which are simply records of specific and discrete personal experiences. A radical empiricism becomes welded to self-indulgent confessionalism. Abstractions and generalizations, moreover, are unavoidable. The Sikaiana use them in describing and explaining their own behavior and I shall rely upon many of these Sikaiana abstractions in describing their behavior.

I do not write about myself to bare my soul or limit my responsibility for any errors about Sikaiana social life. I write about myself to remind the reader of the circumstances in which data is collected and to give a few examples of how I develop abstractions from specific events. The flat relations and interactions of my first encounters with the Sikaiana should be contrasted with my later knowledge of individual personalities. I describe my confusion during my first months on Sikaiana to explain Sikaiana's combination of Western and indigenous practices. I write about what a lousy fisherman I am to describe Sikaiana fishing techniques. When I talk about myself, it is not to be confessional. It is because I think it is the best way to explain both something about the Sikaiana and how I came to know them.

Anthropologists often begin their ethnographies with a description of their arrival

at a remote village and sense of total loss. Such descriptions have been criticized as worn cliches. But the cliché reflects experience and perhaps tells us something important. I will describe that sense of loss, not on my arrival on Sikaiana, but earlier, at my first arrival at the airport in the Solomon Islands. The airport was familiar but different. I was stranger in an environment which reflected Westernization but still wasn't quite familiar. Far from home, alone in a building which represents the expansions of a powerful global economic and political system, I was about to enter a remote society which, although influenced by the global system, also maintains a high degree of familiarity.

Ethnography, like other kinds of understanding, is a product of the time and culture of its producers. Copernicus, Newton, Darwin and Einstein, as much as Malinowski, were shaped by the historical period in which they lived. Each of them got some things wrong, but they were also profoundly insightful in ways that their contemporaries were not. It seems silly to criticize Copernicus, who in realizing that the earth was not the center of the universe, mistakenly replaced it with the sun. His insights represent a decentering of humanity which was both engendered and limited by his time. Malinowski, by practicing long term fieldwork and taking seriously the statements of his informants, also contributed to an important decentering, in this case an understanding that humanity is expressed in many different forms. Whatever Malinowski got wrong, it is not something that the ordinary scholar of the 1920s would have made right. Annette Weiner, who focused her fieldwork on areas of Trobriand social life which Malinowski overlooked, generally supports his findings (Weiner 1988:5).

The cultural context of the time period when I did research shaped my approach to describing the Sikaiana people, as much as Malinowski's time did his. But this is not necessarily a disadvantage. I cannot describe Sikaiana as some unchanging social system because I lived in a time when there are Sikaiana people who know more than I do about computer programming, United Nations diplomacy, electrical wiring, capital investment, human administration, gasoline engines, and Sylvester Stallone's movies. The most basic circumstances of our research were different. Malinowski's presence in the Trobriands was supported by a colonial government. In my case, the Solomon Islands government, being sovereign and independent, set the official conditions for my research and they consulted with the Sikaiana local council in that process. In this respect and many others, I am accountable to the Sikaiana people in ways that Malinowski was never held accountable to the Trobrianders. Malinowski probably never realized that Trobrianders would someday read his works. I write this book knowing for certain that some Sikaiana will.

Unlike other research methods which use instruments that are standardized across all settings, the methods of participant observation are shaped by the setting under study. Again, this is not necessarily a disadvantage for the method. The very conditions under which it is possible to collect data often reveal much about a social system. I have done field work in a variety of settings in American society including in schools and small towns. Life in these American settings is segmented and it is hard, if not impossible, for a fieldworker to be with people in the variety of different settings

where they live their lives. In American society, homes are usually very private places from which people emerge to participate in different work places, different recreational activities, and different places of worship. In contrast with fieldwork in American institutions and towns, Sikaiana offers the fieldworker a very visible and immediate public life. On the atoll, people see one another every day. They go to church together in the morning and afternoons, and pass one another doing their chores. Almost everyone on the atoll periodically congregates to prepare copra, to work on the church or school, to hold marriage exchanges, and to celebrate the major holidays. Daily, they exchange information and opinions about these events. Although Sikaiana migrants living in Honiara do not have this kind of daily contact, nevertheless, they do maintain contacts with one another in visiting, celebrating wedding exchanges, holding Sikaiana fundraising events, and in other shared activities. Compared with life in American towns and neighborhoods, Sikaiana activities are visible and relatively accessible for participation. This aspect of the conditions of research goes to the core of what I found to be most interesting about Sikaiana social life.

To some degree my focus on intimacy in Sikaiana is a reflection of my own familiarity with the Sikaiana people and I think it is important to explain how I became familiar with Sikaiana individuals and their social life. Moreover, I admit that my fascination with the intimacy of their life is a result of the contrast with my experience of social life in Western societies. Other people describing Sikaiana life would write different books with different emphases. It is very unlikely, for example, that a Sikaiana author would write a book like this. Instead the focus would probably be on specific details, accounts of genealogies, traditional practices and historical events; much less on the present and on processes of change. A Sikaiana author would probably not find the intimacy of Sikaiana social life so outstanding. But most Sikaiana clearly miss this intimacy when they are separated from it. Moreover, although they would not describe their own culture in the same manner, I think they will agree that the book describes important features of their social life (in fact several Sikaiana have read sections of this book). I don't pretend to be able to transcend my own culture or personality in order to attain some standard of detached objectivity. I do claim, however, that with all its shortcomings, participant observation can be a very effective research method for learning about another culture and the basis for communicating useful knowledge about that culture.

This brings me to one very important piece of information which undeniably affected the writing of this book: I liked the Sikaiana people and I enjoyed living with them. I once heard a colleague describe the activities of the village where he did fieldwork as "boring." This colleague was bored by the desires, frustrations, and petty disputes of a few people with simple technology in a remote part of the world. He had to conduct fieldwork to complete his academic requirements for a doctorate and he found intellectual problems in that endeavor to be interesting. But, to him, life in a small village had little to recommend it. Unlike this colleague, I found the daily life of Sikaiana to be exciting. People talked about the latest news on the atoll: who had gotten in a drunken quarrel, who were disagreeing about land rights, who were having romantic affairs and likely to get married. As I came to understand enough of their language and culture, I enjoyed the intimacy and drama of their daily life.

I have written this book from a holistic perspective which examines the various contexts and activities of the Sikaiana people and also how I came to know something about them. The book is partly chronological in describing the conditions under which I came to know Sikaiana people. But, where appropriate, it also generalizes across all three and a half years I lived on Sikaiana and their life in the 1980s. I move from a description of concrete, visible activities in the early chapters to discussions of abstract, social relations in later ones. A series of discrete and awkward interactions in my first encounters develop into a stream of participation in the routines of daily life, which in turn develop into more abstract analyses of Sikaiana meanings and understandings about daily life. Earlier chapters focus more on me, later chapters focus more on the Sikaiana. Chapter II, which follows this one, portrays my arrival on the Solomon Islands, and my initial isolation and bewilderment. Chapter III describes the daily life of Sikaiana. No longer a popular topic in most ethnographies, I feel that it is important to ground the life of the Sikaiana in how they go about making a living. Chapter IV describes my involvement with that daily life, including how the circumstances of my field research taught me about Sikaiana life. Chapter V traces Sikaiana's history, describing the changes which have taken place in this century. At the end of that chapter, I once again raise the issues about social change which were raised earlier in this chapter. Chapter VI is concerned with land tenure, descent, kinship, fosterage: topics no longer fashionable in most current anthropological writing, but I cannot imagine how to describe social relationships on Sikaiana without describing their kinship relationships. Sikaiana intimacy is partly grounded in their cultural meanings associated with kinship. Chapter VII discusses how social relations are channeled through expectations and understandings associated with gender. In Chapter VIII, the lives of five different Sikaiana people are recounted to show both their diversity and uniformity in life experiences. In Chapter IX, I discuss the cultural understandings about personality, interaction, motivation and intention which underpin daily interaction and social relations. These understandings provide the meaningful underpinnings for the intimacy of Sikaiana social life. In Chapter X, I examine the life of Sikaiana migrants in Honiara and their communal ceremonies. In Chapters XI and XII, I describe song performances and festive drinking, showing how these ceremonies maintain a sense of community identity in the changing world.

Another Perspective

There is a proverb, attributed to various sources, that goes something like this, "learn a new language and get another soul." This proverb describes my feelings about learning, not only the Sikaiana language, but also, the social and cultural life described by that language. People who speak more than one language know that experiences are expressed in slightly varying ways in different languages. Learning a new language provides a different way to view the world. Often, what is learned is not entirely new; rather, it is a new perspective on something already experienced. In a similar manner, ethnographic descriptions of other cultures make unfamiliar beliefs, practices and events become understandable by explaining their contexts, purposes and meanings. This anthropological sleight of hand is based on the assumption, not always stated, that

somewhere, somehow, at some level, and despite the uniqueness of every culture's system of meanings, humans are able to understand and communicate about events and experiences across different languages and cultures.

As a result of living with the Sikaiana for over three years, I have a second perspective on human activities and responses to world-wide processes. This perspective not only includes knowledge of another culture, but also a re-evaluation of the nature of social relationships in my own. I have a different view on economic relationships in American society because I have lived in a society where most relationships are organized around reciprocity and economic relations are embedded in social relations. I have a new view on occupational specialization because I lived in a society where most people were not specialized in their daily food gathering and consumption; moreover, all relations are permeated by kinship. I have a new view of the commercialism in American popular culture because I lived in a small society in which people created their own songs and dances. Finally, I have a new view of Western institutions and the general tone of modernity because I lived in a society which had many Western institutions and faced many of the dilemmas associated with modernity, but did so in a manner that preserved intimate social relations. In this book, I hope to communicate these views. Learn about another culture and get, not another soul, but another way of looking at things.

II: GETTING THERE

It was late in the morning when I first arrived in the Solomon Islands. Henderson Airport is located on a narrow coastal plain, a few miles outside of Honiara, the capital and main town of the nation.

It was hot.

Only one story tall, the airport terminal building is much smaller than the ones I had travelled through on my trip from Philadelphia. Henderson Airport doesn't have any enclosed walkways, ramps or spokes. A staircase is wheeled to the airplane and passengers disembark directly into the tropical heat and glare.

The airport, when one gets to know it, is open, airy and informal. Since terrorism is not a problem in this part of the world, there are none of the guards, metal detectors, and walls of security which are ever-present in American airports. But I was used to airports that are enclosed, temperature controlled, and full of mechanized barricades. I also was tired and disoriented from my flight. That first morning, rather than friendliness and informality, I felt uncertainty and vulnerability.

The other passengers rushed into the terminal. Not sure what I was supposed to do, or even where I was going, I simply followed everyone else. There was a line and I got at the end of it. Ahead I could see that it was for Immigration. When my turn came, a smiling man in a neat khaki uniform asked for my passport, visa and an airline ticket to a forward destination. I only had a passport. I planned to buy my return ticket when I knew when and how I would be leaving. The immigration officer hesitated and seemed puzzled for a moment. I wondered if I was going to be thrown out of the Solomon Islands within ten minutes of arriving. Then the officer smiled, banged down a couple times on my passport and told me in clear English to come to the Immigration Office later in the week.

I followed another line of people to pick up my baggage. Then there were several lines for Customs. When my turn finally came, my camera and tape-recording equipment were closely examined. Aware that I could be slapped with an import tax (a major source of revenue for the Solomon Islands government), I mumbled that it was part of a research project. I don't know whether or not the customs agent understood what I had said. But after a close perusal, giving me another easy smile, she waved me by.



By this time the flight's passengers had disappeared and I was the last person in the small lobby and waiting area of the airport. After the rush and tension of going through Immigration and Customs, I suddenly was aware that I was completely alone. Everyone seemed to have somewhere to go and to know how to get there. I had no idea of what I was doing, where I was going, or how I was supposed to get there.

I knew that Honiara was somewhere near the airport but I had no idea how far away it was or even where I was going to spend the night once I got there. Already, the airport seemed deserted. The passengers had rushed to taxis and vans and sped off to wherever they were going. There are very few international flights to the Solomon Islands, and in between their arrivals, except for a few local flights, the airport is deserted. I got to the airport's entrance but there were no taxis or vans in sight.

I had come to the Solomon Islands to do ethnographic research for my PhD thesis among the people of Sikaiana, a small atoll about 100 miles into the Pacific Ocean away from airport. I had spent the last few years of my life studying, reading and writing grant proposals. But, for me, Sikaiana was nothing much more than a name, a tiny dot on a few maps of the Pacific Ocean (most world maps don't include it). Alone in the airport lobby, I was sure of only one thing: if I was going to start my research project, somehow I had to get out of the airport.

Bill Davenport, my dissertation advisor, had spent several years doing fieldwork in the Solomon Islands. He had given me the names of some people to look up in Honiara, along with others to try to avoid. But no one was preparing for my arrival. He told me that the cheapest hotel in Honiara was an establishment named the "Hibiscus," and being on a tight budget, I thought I'd try to get a room there. If I could find transportation, I figured that I would tell the driver, "take me to the Hibiscus," and see where that got me. Like everything else about the Solomon Islands to me at that time, "Hibiscus" was just a word, in fact a word for a flower not a hotel. The driver might not speak English; the Hibiscus might be out of business; it might have a new name; I might pronounce it wrong. I knew a name but I wasn't sure about the meaning that would be attached to it.

A van with the words "Sol-Air" (the name of the national airline of the Solomon Islands) pulled up in front of the airport entrance. There were no passengers in the van and the driver hastily got out and went about some business inside the terminal. Because there was no one around, I suspected it was on some official business and not for passengers. But desperate to get away from the airport, I began moving my luggage toward it. Loading my luggage into the back of the van, I kept waiting for someone in a uniform to stop me and advise me that the van was on official business and not for passengers.

Several other people appeared. I had no idea from where because the airport had seemed deserted. They began loading their luggage. The driver reappeared and got back into the van. The driver looked preoccupied, but then so did everyone in the van. He and the rest of the passengers had the quiet determination of people who know what they are doing. I envied them for it. No one noticed me and yet I felt horribly

conspicuous. The driver turned and looked at each passenger. In totally self-assured, calm and certain tones, each one said some unfamiliar words to which I could not attach any specific meaning but assumed were destinations. I wasn't even sure whether or not they were speaking English. The driver turned to me. I said the word "Hibiscus" in the hope that the driver understood English and that he would know what I was talking about, even if I didn't. He did not ask me anything more but simply moved his eyes to take a destination from the passenger sitting next to me. I must have said something meaningful. I was on my way.

The airport is several miles outside of Honiara. We travelled at about 40 miles an hour along a dusty two-lane road. This was my first look at the Solomon Islands and it wasn't reassuring. The scattered houses along the way seemed rundown. Some were of leaf; others had flat board walls with rusting corrugated iron roofs. Most houses looked as if they were in some degree of disrepair. This wasn't the exotic foreign culture I had read about in anthropology books. Nor were there the majestic settings I had seen in the pages of *National Geographic* or on television. In preparing me for fieldwork, Bill Davenport warned me against over-emphasizing the exotic and primitive and ignoring the many changes taking place in the Solomon Islands. I had left the United States prepared for a Solomon Islands influenced by Westernization. But I wasn't prepared for what I saw on that first ride into Honiara. It looked like rusty, dusty, sun-bleached modernization.

I was nauseous from dust, heat, jetlag, and uncertainty.

The van followed the coast. After about fifteen minutes, we arrived at an area where there were some one- and two-story buildings which looked comparatively well kept. They had large front windows and painted signs. Something familiar-- they were stores. Although I didn't know it until later, we were driving through Honiara's commercial district. It is not very developed, even by small country standards. Small towns in Fiji, where I had spent the previous few days, are larger, with taller buildings, and stores there possess bigger display windows.

The van was now stopping occasionally and letting off passengers. Soon there was only me and one other man left. I began to wonder if I had missed my stop. Maybe I said the wrong words. Maybe the driver had already stopped at the Hibiscus and I didn't know it. The van turned several corners into what I took to be a back street, although I really wasn't sure about what was central or peripheral. Then it pulled into a shady alley. The one other passenger didn't make a motion to get out. The stop, I deduced, had to be mine. There was no sign that I could see and I wasn't sure this was the right place. I could see a restaurant and so assumed there might be a hotel.

I now know exactly how to get from the airport to the Hibiscus. I can visualize the streets, the bridges, the shops, and landmarks along the way. I can match most of these places with specific people whom I came to know and events that took place over the course of several years. The trip no longer brings forth an image of either modernization or dilapidation. It is familiar; simply the way things are. I have happily bought cigarettes, soap, and dried milk in the stores which looked so formidable in their

simplicity. I know that inside those modest houses with rusting roofs and masonite walls, people live lives which are full of happiness and sorrow, satisfaction and frustration. But on that first trip everything was a disconcerting blur.

I chose Sikaiana as a research project because I was interested in studying a society among the small and comparatively isolated islands of Oceania (Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia). After talking over my interests to Bill Davenport, he suggested that I look into doing research on Sikaiana or Stewart Island, a small atoll located about 100 miles east of Malaita in the Solomon Islands. Bill had done years of field research in the Solomon Islands. He knew that Sikaiana men had worked on government and trade boats in the Solomon Islands. It was one of the very few Polynesian cultures which had not been described by anthropologists.

The Solomon Islands is a former British Protectorate which became independent in 1978. On my first arrival in 1980, The Solomon Islands had a population of about 200,000 people. There are over 60 different languages spoken by the different ethnic groups in the Solomon Islands. Sikaiana is one of the smallest of these groups with a population in 1980 of about 600 people. Sikaiana is inhabited by people whose language, culture and heritage are Polynesian.

The Polynesian culture area is often referred to as a triangle: starting at Hawaii on the north, one leg travels southwest to encompass Tonga, Samoa and New Zealand; then the triangle's base travels east across most of the Pacific Ocean, past Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands to Easter Island; then the last leg runs back to Hawaii. Sikaiana is located outside of this triangle's western leg, much closer to Melanesia, the diverse culture area which includes the peoples of coastal New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji. Sikaiana along with some other islands and atolls on the margins of Melanesia and Micronesia were settled by Polynesians who migrated west out of the Polynesian triangle, mostly from Samoa and Tuvalu (Ellice Islands). Collectively these islands inhabited by Polynesians along the fringes of Melanesia and Micronesia are called "Polynesian outliers." These outliers are comparatively isolated, and in some cases preserved their traditional Polynesian ritual practices into the early 20th century.ⁱ The larger Polynesian islands such as Hawaii, Tahiti, Samoa and Tonga, which are better known to tourists and high school geography teachers, began having extensive contacts with Europeans in the late 18th century.

Meeting the Sikaiana

The years I had spent reading and writing as a graduate student did not mean anything on that first afternoon in the Solomon Islands. I had to meet and get to know some Sikaiana and try to learn something about them. Other disciplines in science and social science must provide specific methods of preparation for research: chemists in labs, historians in archives, most social scientists with questionnaires. In cultural anthropology, at least in 1980, the main method was to somehow get to know a very different group of people. There is little way to prepare for this, except to trust one's instincts. These initial encounters involved uncertainty for me.

I walked across the street in front of the Hibiscus, across the small shaded field, and into the door of the offices of the National Museum. I did not know where to start my research project, but perhaps someone there knew something. I had sent a research proposal a year earlier and had heard nothing. At Bill Davenport's suggestion, I made an international call to the Ministry of Youth and Education. The officer in charge of research at that time in what must have been early 1980 was one of the few remaining ex-patriates from the British Protectorate. He told me that they had forwarded my application from the Sikaiana Area Council but had not heard a reply. The officer told me that since they did not say no, I could assume that the research had been approved. This would never pass today (2020), but I was anxious to go, I had some form of approval, and so I had left.

Inside I met Henry Isa, the Director of the Museum, who seemed bewildered by my presence. He vaguely remembered my research application which had been sent to the Solomon Islands over a year earlier. But he wasn't sure whether or not it had been approved. Although no one at the National Museum was quite sure what I was doing there, they did know a Sikaiana man, Jacob Tavao, who worked in another department of the same government ministry. They decided to take me to him, perhaps he would know about the project.

Jacob is a tall, slender man who at that time was in his thirties. Jacob remembered that several other applications to do research on Sikaiana had been turned down by the atoll's local governing council. Although he did not know anything about mine, this news was not reassuring. Before I left his office, Jacob told me that he would try to contact Sikaiana by shortwave radio and find out about my application. He also suggested several other Sikaiana people living in Honiara whom I should contact.

My first encounters with the Sikaiana were awkward. I was insecure. The Sikaiana looked strange to me, as if made from wood. I had no idea of how I was supposed to interact with them. My career depended upon getting to know them. But even more important, learning about another culture, doing ethnographic field research was my deepest hope and dream. I felt that my life dream depended upon whether or not they liked me. Years of reading thick tomes with complex and sometimes subtle theories of social behavior seemed irrelevant. I was faced with the very different issue of trying to get along with unfamiliar people. There was a schism inside of me. I was excited and at the same time bewildered. One part of me doggedly insisted on meeting the Sikaiana. Another part of me went along and watched, as if from over my shoulder, in a daze of disbelief, with the constant thought, so often a part of culture shock, "what on earth am I doing here?"

When I reflect back on these initial meetings, I am certain that the Sikaiana people had a better sense of what it was that I wanted to do than I did. They knew other Westerners: administrators, missionaries, and American soldiers in World War II. Some Sikaiana women had married European men. Some had studied abroad. Moreover, several people doing ethnographic research had visited with them before. There was one anthropologist who lived on Sikaiana for several months in 1966, although he never published the results of his research. A Maaori linguist, Peter

Sharples, had studied their language. An ethnomusicologist, Hugo Zemp, had collected songs from them. Several of the Protectorate's administrators had collected information about aspects of their traditional culture. They knew much more about what to expect from me, both as a researcher and a foreigner, than I did about them.

The Sikaiana have mixed feelings about foreigners. They are wary of being harmed. Their legends record several occasions when outsiders, after initially pretending friendship, have killed or threatened them. At the same time, there are very strong norms for hospitality and courtesy towards strangers. The ancestors of the Sikaiana were themselves immigrants and foreigners to the atoll. Newcomers are also an important source of innovation and excitement. They often bring new technology and provide new styles in fashion, recreation and leisure. I soon learned that Americans had visited Sikaiana during World War II, were well remembered, and were liked for their generosity and the relative equality of their relations as opposed to the more formal British Protectorate officials. The Sikaiana were interested in the United States and world politics. Even if I had nothing new to offer in the way of fishing techniques or fashions, I was something of a celebrity. A stranger is a threat, but also an opportunity and a source for excitement.

On my second day in the Solomon Islands, I met Jacob at the Hibiscus. He had made a call on the shortwave radio to Sikaiana in order to ask whether they knew anything about my plans for research there. Sikaiana maintains almost daily contact with Honiara via a short-wave radio operator in Honiara to exchange information about weather conditions, shipping schedules, and medical emergencies. Jacob told me that no one had answered his call on the shortwave. He added with a giggle, which would become familiar, that the radio operator, who was another relative of his, may have had too much fermented toddy to drink the night before.

Jacob then took me to meet Brown Saua, a young Sikaiana man who was a rising administrator in the Solomon Island's government. At that time, Brown's office was in a trailer parked outside of a government building on Mendana Avenue, the main street in Honiara. Brown was in his thirties, slender, with dark curly hair, deep brown eyes, and a wispy beard. He was fluent in English. More than other Sikaiana, he was used to interactions with Europeans, first as a student in high school and college, and now as a government official. He seemed at ease with me, much more at ease with me than I felt with him.

Brown was interested in having an anthropologist work on Sikaiana, especially in recording their traditions, which he felt were being lost and replaced by Western ones. He had made some tape recordings himself of older people talking about life during their youth and singing traditional songs. He told me not to take pictures and make recordings of songs too hastily, however. The Sikaiana, he explained, needed to practice before they would be able to properly perform their traditional ceremonies. Brown, as many Sikaiana would do in those first few weeks, warned me not to become too involved with any one particular group on Sikaiana. There were many different factions, especially those developed from court battles over land use. If I became associated with any one faction, Brown warned, it could adversely affect my research.

Later in my second day in the Solomon Islands, a young Sikaiana man, Robert Elito who had heard about my interest in Sikaiana, came looking for me at the Hibiscus. Robert was the son of Jacob's sister and at that time was preparing as a novitiate in the Melanesian Brotherhood, a Christian religious order which had been founded in the 1920's in the Solomon Islands. Robert was interested in my project and that evening he guided me around Honiara and introduced me to some of the Sikaiana families who lived there. Later, I would visit those households by myself and I lived in several of them. But at the time, Honiara was a confusing labyrinth of dusty roads and small houses. Robert acted as an interpreter, translating my halting Pijin and English into the vernacular. Later, I found out that some of the people for whom he was acting as translator could speak English.

Within the next few days, I learned that my research had been approved by the Sikaiana Area Committee. A short time later, I was issued a two year research visa by the government. After a few visits, I straightened out my visa with the Immigration Department. Jacob's wife, Harriet, worked in the Immigration Office and helped me get everything in order. As it turned out, I had remarkably good fortune. In the following year the government prohibited all new research in the Solomon Islands. They, however, allowed me to continue on my visa. The new law stated that a person must receive the research permit while residing outside of the Solomon Islands. I would not have been admitted into the country if I had waited another year. Finally, I learned that the Sikaiana Area Committee had turned down other applications before they received mine. I am not really sure why their local council approved my application and turned down the others. But, over the next two years, I would learn that compassion is very important in Sikaiana relationships. A person who makes a sincere request for help will be treated with sympathy. When I asked to do research, I was also asking to eat and live with them, and unbeknownst to me at the time, making a request which is hard for them to refuse. The fact that I was there made my request more effective. There was also the fact that since World War II, most Sikaiana people liked Americans. Finally, John Kilatu, a Sikaiana doctor and influential member of the community, told me that he had approved my proposal because he had heard that the American government had a "freedom of formation act." He took this to mean that my research would be accessible to the public. He said the Area Council had turned down a Canadian's request the previous year.

There is a boat, the *Belama*, that travels once a month from Honiara to Sikaiana. The *Belama* takes food, supplies, and other material to Sikaiana. It brings back copra, dried coconut meat which is processed into cosmetics. Copra is the atoll's main source of cash. The boat also takes Sikaiana people to and from the atoll. Usually, there are between ten to thirty passengers aboard. I wanted to get on the *Belama* on its next trip.ⁱⁱ

While I waited for the next boat, I lived with a Sikaiana family at Tenaru Beach about 15 miles outside of Honiara. Tenaru is something like a suburb. In 1980, there were about six or seven extended Sikaiana families who had purchased land and lived there (in 1987 about ten more Sikaiana families purchased land there; and the area was more developed in 1993).ⁱⁱⁱ

The houses are located close to the ocean, never more than a 100 yards away. The beach faces a body of water which during World War II came to be known as "Iron Bottom Sound" because of all the ships that were sunk there during the war. Tenaru is also called "Red Beach", the name given to it by the First Division of the American Marines Corps who landed there to fight the Japanese on August 7, 1942.

Some of the men living at Tenaru commute to jobs in Honiara. Others fish and grow crops in small gardens near their houses. One ambitious man planted coconut trees in order to produce copra, dried coconuts which are used in making cosmetics. Most people plant sweet potato, cassava, pineapple, and keep chickens. The houses are made from lumber and masonite with iron roofs. Every few hundred yards, there are concrete floors left in World War II by the American military, presumably the bases for storehouses, or perhaps docking areas for supplies. The Sikaiana now use the concrete floors for dancing at their parties.

Jacob stayed at Tenaru on weekends at the house of his brother, and Robert frequently visited his relatives there. The Sikaiana people living in Honiara often gather in Tenaru's open spaces and comparative isolation for community celebrations such as wedding exchanges.

A friend of mine once remarked that new lovers tell each other about their entire lives on their first few days together. The rest of their relationship involves getting to know the subtleties of what was discussed in the first few days. Whether or not true about lovers, I found that ethnographic research has a somewhat similar quality of being exposed to important values and behaviors in initial meetings, and then spending long periods of time to understand the subtleties of these values and behaviors in their social context and daily routine. Rereading my notes, I find that my record of these first weeks and months contains much information which is important in my present understanding of the Sikaiana, although I didn't understand what was going on at the time.

These experiences of the first weeks in 1980 are quite different from the time that I returned to Sikaiana in 1987. I had lived there for almost three years during my first stay, and for the following four years I had spent much of my time writing about Sikaiana culture. When I returned to the Solomon Islands in 1987, I underwent an initial sense of novelty, but it was the novelty of returning home after a long absence. Things looked a little strange but I knew personalities, histories and the contexts of behavior. At the airport in March 1987, I joined the legion of determined passengers who know where they are going. I knew people in town who would be happy to see me and I was excited to be able to see them.

I know it must seem implausible, but in 1987 after about 2 days of living with a Sikaiana family, I had the feeling I had never left. Like those rare friends who immediately restart conversations after a long absence, I took up my life where I left it four years earlier. My second trip was like swimming underwater with a diving mask. I had been away long enough so that the ordinary aspects of Sikaiana life stood in sharp,

colorful contrast. Behavior was in slow motion, magnified and vivid. Some people call the method of participant observation, "immersion studies," and so it seemed aptly named on my second trip. Because I had been away from the Sikaiana people for almost four years, everything seemed to be new. But because I could speak their language and had lived with them before, I also recognized the contexts of behavior and understood not only words and actions but many of the intentions which motivate them.

Staying at Tenaru in October 1980, however, I had no such sense of context. I was like a person trying to watch fish from above the water surface. I only saw grey distorted reflections and shadows.

My memories of those initial encounters in 1980 recall specific events in detail but they are disembodied and without context. In contrast, my memories of my later times on Sikaiana are less sharp in terms of specific events, but clearer in terms of repeated activities and routines. I can't always remember the chronological sequence of specific activities but there is a clearer perception of what things mean in their social and cultural contexts.

In those first weeks in October 1980, I encountered many of the main features of Sikaiana social life, but without understanding their implications. I was introduced to a young Sikaiana man and tried to explain to him that I wanted to learn the Sikaiana language. Calling me "mate," the young man replied in English that he wished me luck but he couldn't help me much with the language because he had been away from Sikaiana so long that he no longer spoke it well. Again and again, when I talked about learning the language, I was told by the younger people that they didn't really speak it very well themselves, and preferred to speak in Pijin English. Many people told me that not only their language, but also their traditional culture and practices were being forgotten and replaced by Western ones. Overhearing me talking with her husband, a young wife mocked her young husband's explanation of Sikaiana traditions, calling out in Pijin with a convulsive laugh, "*em no savi*"-- "he doesn't know".^{iv}

Christianity was an important aspect of Sikaiana life. At Tenaru, every evening before meals, there were prayer sessions which included reading some of the liturgy. People often spoke with deep respect about the priest on Sikaiana. They recounted the activities of various people who had joined religious orders, especially the Melanesian Brotherhood, which originally converted the Sikaiana people to Christianity 50 years earlier. Sometimes, they recounted miracles performed by these people. Everyone talked about the Sikaiana interest in drinking alcoholic beverages, especially *kaleve*, which is made of fermented coconut toddy. I was constantly warned about land tenure disputes. There were rumors that an anthropologist who had been on Sikaiana earlier had been unable to complete his research because his field notes had been destroyed by a Sikaiana person who thought they would be used in court against his land interests. I also was warned about the devious character of certain Sikaiana people, although different people warned me about different individuals.

There were also stories about previous interactions with Americans, especially during World War II. A special party was held for me one evening at Tenaru at which

the women performed a dance and song which recounted the time during World War II when three American fliers were shot down and stayed on Sikaiana. There was plenty of beer.

The Belama

After I had been in the Solomon Islands for about three weeks, I heard that the *Belama* was preparing to make its monthly voyage to Sikaiana. The boat is mostly institutional yellow and green, painted in a manner that shows no special care, except to make the paint thick enough to prevent the corrosive effects of saltwater (even so, there are spots of rust.) Its shape and movement are like a tub. It rolls and chugs, never fast, but secure. It won't be smashed by waves, and as much as it rolls, it won't roll over: Nothing special, only reliable serviceability.

The *Belama* has a large hold underneath for carrying supplies. The hold is about 20 feet deep and there is an aluminum ladder leading down. (By 1987 several of the rungs had broken.) People load their suitcases and sacks of sweet potato, sugar, rice into the hold. Sometimes, people load lumber and roofing iron for a new house. Usually, several people work on the deck and wharf, passing these supplies over the edge of the boat and then into the hold. Someone is usually positioned halfway down the ladder to pass the supplies further down. Other supplies are placed in a compartment under the ship's bow, where a wooden bench follows the curve of the bow from starboard to port.

The *Belama* docks at Honiara's main harbor. There is one long wharf for the large container ships bringing imported goods to the Solomon Islands. There are about four or five shorter concrete wharfs for the smaller boats servicing various villages and localities within the Solomon Islands. Sometimes, there is no room along these docks and boats are anchored side by side.

Throughout the day of its departure, Sikaiana people arrive at the wharf to load supplies onto the boat. By evening, a large number of Sikaiana residing in Honiara come down to the wharf to see off relatives and friends. Many people send food and supplies to relatives on Sikaiana, especially 20 kilogram bags of rice, flour, sugar and 20 liter cans of kerosene. Since sweet potato is difficult to grow on Sikaiana, bags of it are sent to relatives there. People gather in groups along the wharf, talking and joking. If another boat is loading or unloading on the wharf, there will be people from other ethnic groups also preparing to depart. Most Sikaiana prefer to keep to themselves in a separate group.

The boat usually departs at about 10:00 or 11:00 PM. As the boat prepares to depart, people at the wharf shake hands with those on the boat. Some of the young men will continue running along the dock until the ship is pulling away, clasping hands across the slowly widening gap between the boat and dock.

The ship heads for Auki, the administrative center of Malaita Province. The trip

takes about 7 hours. Auki is a simple and small administrative center, with about 2000 residents. It has several single story government buildings with corrugated roofs, a bank office, post office, police station, library, prison, and several churches. Nearby is a hospital. There is a single concrete wharf where the *Belama* docks. Just off the wharf is the Auki market. The market is quite small but offers the last chance to purchase goods that are not grown on Sikaiana including betel nut (which a few Sikaiana people like to chew), pineapple, yams, sweet potato, and sugar cane. The few one room stores in Auki are stocked like those in Honiara but the prices are a little higher. While the *Belama* is docked there, Sikaiana passengers wander about town and purchase a last few items for their trip.

The *Belama* only stays for a few hours in Auki and then at about ten in the morning departs for Sikaiana. It circumvents Malaita Island, sometimes stopping at small villages along the coast. By dusk it passes the protection from the wind and tide offered by Malaita's land-mass and heads into the rougher weather of the open Pacific. Sikaiana is located about 100 miles east of Malaita. Occasionally, ships miss Sikaiana and must turn back. Several hundred miles beyond Sikaiana are the scattered atolls of Tuvalu (Ellice) and Kiribati (Gilberts). Beyond them, the Pacific Ocean extends virtually unbroken for 9000 miles until it reaches the American continent. In 1980 the *Belama* was equipped with radar and did not miss Sikaiana. But Brown Saua can recall his school holiday when the boat did miss Sikaiana and had to turn back to Malaita.

The *Belama* chugs throughout the night. Women and children sleep on a tarp above the hold, men sleep along wooden benches or wherever they can find a flat dry surface. At dawn, a small dark spot is visible on the horizon.

Sikaiana is sighted.

i. For a comparative review of the settlement and relationships between the Polynesian outliers see Bayard (1976); for an examination of their languages, see Pawley (1966), (1967), Howard (1981). Tikopia is the best known of the Polynesian outliers due to the extensive ethnographic research of Raymond Firth (1936/57), (1959), (1967), (1970); see also Kirch and Yen (1982) for a detailed archeological description of Tikopia. Other research on other outliers includes: Nukuoro (Carroll 1966, Davidson 1971), Kapingamarangi (Te Rangi Hiroa 1950, Emory 1965, Lieber 1968); Nukumanu (Sarfert and Damm 1929-31, Feinberg 1986); Ontong Java (Sarfert and Damm 1929-31, Hogbin 1931, 1934/61), Rennell and Bellona (Christiansen 1975, Kuschel 1989); Anuta (Feinberg 1981). There are a few some scattered descriptions of Sikaiana social life (see for example, Thilenius 1902, Sarfert and Damm 1929-31, Krauss 1971, Woodford 1906, 1916, MacGregor 1933, and MacQuarrie 1952). Some linguistic work has been done there (Capell 1935-37, Sharples n.d., 1968).

ii As of 2020 the boat service is far more sporadic, every few months.

iii Tenaru is still a center for Sikaiana settlement. The location is the site of cultural

village established for tourists and the location for annual games, Tuata, that bring together Sikaiana people from throughout the Solomon Islands. Several families moved away after some ethnic fighting in the early 2000s.

^{iv} I learned from Robert and Priscilla that for the most part the Sikaiana language has almost entirely been dropped from use among the Sikaiana people. Even people I knew in the 1980s as fluent speakers do not speak it any longer. There are active users of Facebook who mostly post in English, sometimes with Pijin mixed in, a few occasional Sikaiana phrases.

Map of Sikaiana

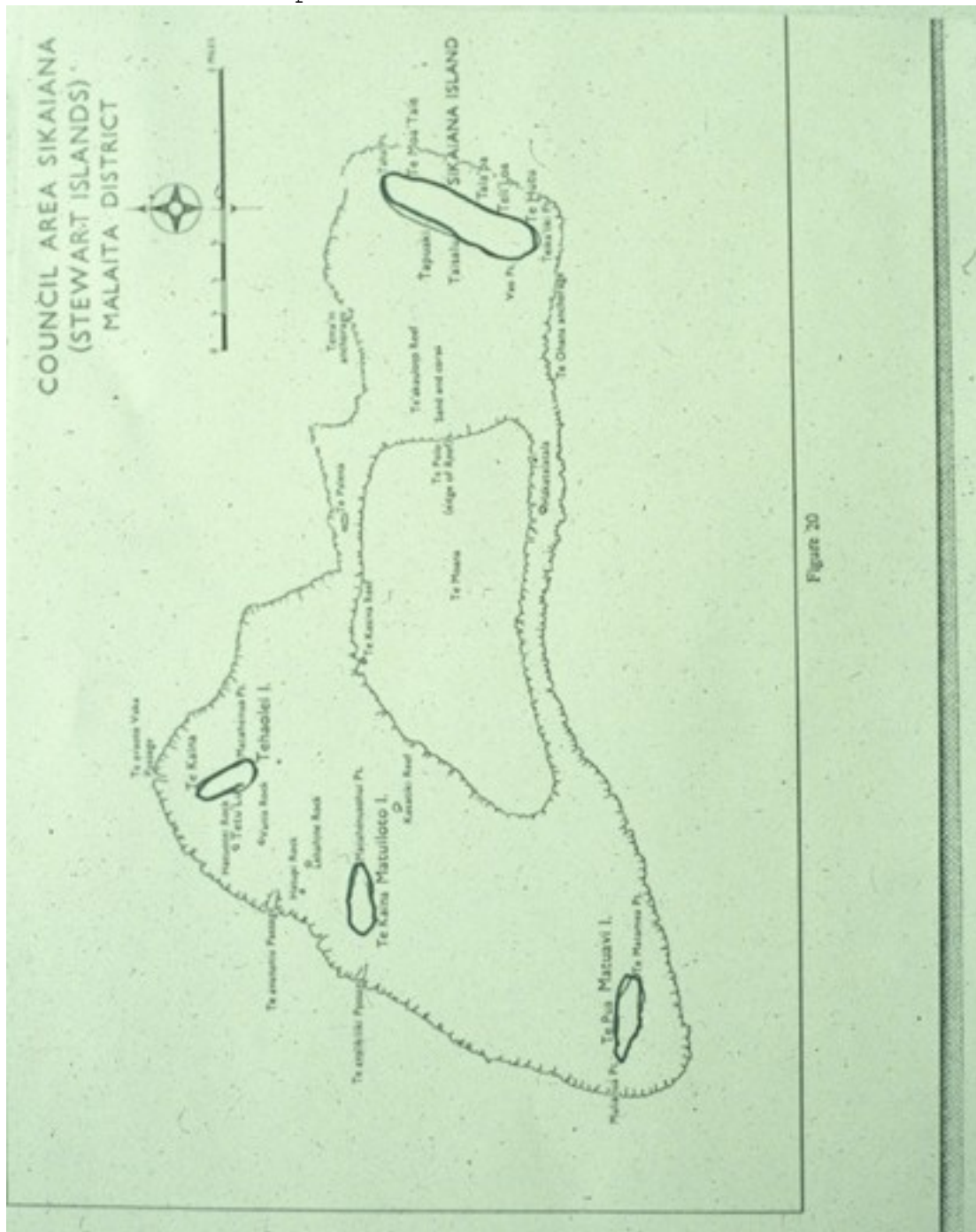


Figure 20

III

LAND AND SEA: DAILY LIFE ON SIKAIANA

The *Belama* approaches Sikaiana from the southwest, arriving first at Matuavi, the islet located on the southwest corner of the atoll. The boat proceeds around the west side of the reef passing two more islets, Matuiloto and Tehaolei, and then turns east traveling along the north side of the reef on its way to the largest islet, Hale, which is located on the other side of the lagoon.

Sikaiana, although often called an island, is really an atoll. Atolls are mostly seawater and reef. Within a giant circle of reef, there are a few thin little strips dry land which are best described as "islets", rather than islands. If seen from above, Sikaiana looks like a giant oval, broad at one end and narrowed at the other, shaped something like a giant boot or light bulb. The reef is a giant circular strip of rock which forms the circumference of this boot. It is a raised platform barrier of rock which separates the surrounding sea on the outside from the islets and lagoon within. Within the reef's circumference, there are concentric rings of shallower and deeper water and then in the center, there is a large deep-blue lagoon. Along the shallow fringes near to the reef's platform on the atoll's eastern and western ends, there are the four small islets. Hale, the largest, is located in the east at the narrow base of the bulb; Matuavi, Matuiloto, and Tehaolei are located on the western side of the lagoon at the foot of the boot.

That first time I arrived at Sikaiana, and every time since, I have always been overwhelmed by the site of the reef, as the *Belama* pulls alongside it. After travelling across unbroken blues and greens in sea and sky, there is the sudden stretch of solid, brown rock. The atoll is like an oasis of dry land in a desert of ocean. I feel strange and out of place, an insignificant intruder. It is the same feeling that I have when getting out of a disabled car and walking through the underpass of a freeway. For some reason, the atoll, a monument of nature, seems unnatural. Inside the reef's rocky barrier are the four little isolated islets covered with coconut trees, clumps of raised, defiant green life. The world of the reef, so small and fragile in terms of the enormity of the ocean, seems massive, sturdy and protective when close.

Weather permitting, the boat will unload at a small passage called Ohana on the northern side of the reef near Hale, the main islet. There is no passage large enough for the ship to enter inside the lagoon. At low tide even the smallest dugout canoes have to be portaged through the shallow passage between lagoon and ocean. Because the ocean floor falls very sharply from the edge of the reef, ships cannot drop anchor. The *Belama* circles as close to the reef as its captain dares for fear of running ashore. Near the passage, washed up on rocks about 30 yards into the reef are the remains of a yacht whose skipper foolishly anchored for a night alongside the reef. His yacht was carried by the tides onto the top of the reef and he could never free it. The yacht is now a marooned carcass, lying on its side, its paint bleached and peeling, a constant reminder to ships' pilots of the dangers of coming too close to the reef.

As the *Belama* approaches, a line of canoes departs from the shore of Hale,

paddling towards the passage. The water between the passage and the islet is shallow and the canoes follow a meandering channel of slightly deeper water where they will not scrape coral or run aground. At the passage to the ocean, the canoes' passengers disembark. Some people guide their canoes across the shallow passage and head into the waves of the ocean to paddle out to the *Belama*. Others tie their canoes on coral rocks within the reef and wait. A group of people stands at the passage to help the canoes cross the reef into the ocean. The canoes paddle out to the ship and begin unloading supplies and passengers from over the ship's side.

The canoes returning from the *Belama* have to be unloaded at the edge of the passage, guided across its narrow and shallow entrance and then reloaded a little distance into the lagoon before being paddled back to the islet. The work at the passage is frantic. Going out to sea, a canoe must wait for a calm period that follows a series of waves, and then paddlers try to get far enough out not to be swamped by the breaking waves. If a canoe crosses into the ocean out of time with the waves, it might be swamped by the incoming crests of waves. Worst case, it could be thrown back onto the reef, its hull smashed and perhaps its passengers injured. The waves are not high, at most five or six feet, but they dominate Sikaiana's small dugout canoes. Approaching the passage from the ocean, people must steer their canoes to catch a wave into the area of the passage. People standing in the shallow water on either side of the passage, grab hold of the canoe and pull it toward the passage as passengers try to clamber out before another wave breaks from behind and swamps the canoe. The canoe is guided through the passage to the calmness inside the passage where the ocean's waves will not swamp it. The *Belama* has a small fiberglass dinghy which is also used for transport. Shortly after my arrival, its pilot, a crewman of the *Belama* who was not from Sikaiana, misjudged the entrance into the passage. A wave broke on the dinghy's stern, it swamped and then flipped in the whirling wave. Luckily no one was hurt, although a load of supplies were drenched.

The day of the ship's arrival is a busy one. Passengers and their supplies must be taken ashore. Copra must be taken from the shore out to the reef and then loaded onto the ship. Mail is brought to the atoll, some of which must be answered immediately before the *Belama* departs in the evening (there won't be another chance to answer mail for at least another month). Often there is someone who receives a letter with a request from a relative to go to Honiara on the boat's return in the afternoon. He or she must then pack and prepare to go. Visiting government officials hold public meetings during the day. They sometimes summon the Area Committee members, school teachers, medical personnel, or other workers on the atoll.

The Courthouse

The Sikaiana Area Committee is a body of elected people who administer the atoll's local needs and by-laws, much like the council of a small town or borough. They were the body who had rejected earlier proposals for research and had recently approved mine. They had been informed by shortwave radio that I would be arriving on November's boat. They decided I would reside in Sikaiana's courthouse, a building

with a wooden plank floor and a sago thatch roof. Sago palm is very rare on Sikaiana. Most roofs are made from either coconut leaf or imported corrugated iron. This sago leaf and lumber had been sent by Malaita Province to build the court. Unlike most Sikaiana houses which are built on the ground, the courthouse was raised about two feet off the ground and constructed on four firm tree-trunk posts. The walling of the house consisted of wood slats cut from a soft tree which grows on Sikaiana.

Inside was one long room about 30 feet long by 20 feet wide. The wooden planks made a nice, smooth floor. There was a long wooden table which I used as a desk. When the court was in session, the justices sit behind this table. There was a wooden cabinet at one end of the room with one warped door which didn't close tightly. Edwin Huilani, the radio operator whom Jacob could not reach several weeks earlier, brought me a small wooden ladder he had taken from the wrecked yacht and placed it at the entrance. I put a foam mattress and mosquito net in one corner.

The British Protectorate officials started holding court cases on Sikaiana about 60 years earlier. The Protectorate's records of the 1930's and 1940's indicate that administrators heard court cases, often land disputes, as often as they visited, usually once a year. More recently, local justices have been selected from the Sikaiana. They hear minor criminal cases and preliminary hearings on land disputes. The court, however, only held session as often as there were complaints, at most a couple days every few months.

The courthouse is located in a neighborhood or territory named Loto, meaning 'center', appropriately named, for it is the center of the Sikaiana's social life. The church, clinic, cooperative store, and other community buildings are located nearby. Loto is immediately in front of the main ritual sites where, in former times, traditional ceremonies were performed.

The courthouse faces the main village path that follows the shore along the lagoon. Almost every resident of Sikaiana lives in a house along this path which provides convenient access to both the atoll's main institutions and the lagoon. The path extends for about 3/4 of a mile and there are about 50 or 60 houses, some in various stages of development and disrepair spread along it. In most places the path is wide and well swept. I could walk along it in barefoot without trouble; away from its smoothness, I had to barefoot gingerly to avoid pebbles, shell fragments and other debris. Sikaiana people have such deep callouses on their feet that most can walk pretty much everywhere without problem.

Hale, although the largest of the four islets, is small. It is possible to walk the main path past all of Sikaiana's houses in about 10 minutes. I could walk from any one place in the atoll to any other in less than 45 minutes.

Daily and Weekly Life

On the atoll, the daily, weekly and yearly calendars are marked by church

events. The Sikaiana church is the single most influential and pervasive institution in the lives of the people and permeates their daily activities and schedules. There are two church services each day, after sunrise and before sunset. Services are announced by a bell which can be heard from almost anywhere on Hale. (When I talked with Paul Knight, an American Navy flier shot down on Sikaiana in August 1942, one of his most vivid memories was of watching people pass his house as they walked to and from the church service.) Some people, mostly women, go to almost every service, both in the mornings and evenings. Almost the entire population attends Saturday evening service and Sunday communion.

Work is forbidden by the church on Sundays and other Christian holidays. After morning service on Sunday, men sometimes go to the field outside of the school and play soccer. There are also games of volleyball, netball, cricket and dodgeball. Some people play cards, others chat. Because people are prohibited from fishing on Sundays, most men go fishing on Saturdays in order to catch enough fish to last until Monday.

Church holidays are the major festive occasions. These include Christmas, New Years, Easter and the day of St. Andrew, the patron Saint of the Sikaiana church. During these holidays, people are prohibited from performing their normal chores for the week. They are expected to celebrate by singing, dancing, and feasting. People may feed their pigs, harvest crops for daily nourishment, fish, and catch birds. But they may not work on mats, canoes, houses, copra, or gardens. Church holidays are also occasions for drinking fermented coconut toddy.

The church building is the largest and best kept structure on Sikaiana. It is about 100 feet long and 30 feet wide. Its walls are about four feet high and made of piled flat stone. Steel poles support the iron roof which arches about 30 feet above ground. The inside is breezy, but rain can't come in. Two aisles separate rows of short wood benches into three sections. Facing the altar, men sit on the left, children in the center, and women on the right.

Most mornings after church service, the medical clinic is open, and people go there to have minor injuries treated or to receive medicine. The biggest medical problem on Sikaiana is malaria (during one epidemic in 1982 about half the population tested positive by a visiting medical team for the parasite). I was always getting cuts on the rough coral, and the dresser treated those that swelled.

Until it was destroyed by a cyclone in 1986, there was a cooperative store which opened for about an hour after the morning and afternoon church services. The store was the main broker for copra on Sikaiana. Members paid a nominal fee to join and were entitled to a share of the store's profits, should there be any. Members sold their copra to the store, which sold it to purchasers in Honiara. (Copra is dried coconut meat which is used in cosmetics. Lever Brothers was a major purchaser of Solomon Islands copra). The money which the store received from these sales was used to purchase goods in Honiara which were then transported to Sikaiana on the *Belama*. Stock varied depending both upon the cooperative store's solvency and the time when the last boat had arrived (there were times when the boat could be several weeks or even months

late). Normally there was twist tobacco, rice, sugar, tea, salt, matches, kerosene (for hurricane lanterns), fishhooks, flour, and tinned meat. Other items that were stocked less frequently include coffee, milo (a chocolate drink), dry milk, cloth, and batteries.

In the morning, women cook a light meal. Sometimes there is fish left over from the day before. Other times bananas are fried. Children like to eat boiled rice mixed with molasses made from coconut sap. Most people drink tea with sugar. Some drop large dry crackers, called navy biscuits, into their tea or coffee-- a soggy breakfast treat which I acquired a taste for. After the children eat, they go off to the local school, which is named Tapuaki, after a spirit formerly believed to have inhabited the area where the school is located.

The men climb trees to collect coconut sap twice each day, once in the morning and once in the evening. Most families keep pigs which must be fed daily. Men and women go to the islet's interior to collect fallen coconuts for feeding the pigs which are penned in areas away from the inhabited part of the atoll. Other ripe coconuts which have fallen to the ground are used to make copra. The green coconuts still hanging on trees are good for drinking, but their flesh has not matured enough to be used for making copra or feeding to pigs.

Women tend their taro gardens. If they have any free time, they plait the coconut leaf mats used in house construction and the finer pandanus mats used for bedding. Men work on construction projects such as housing, canoes, fencing for pigs, or clearing gardens. They also go fishing using a variety of different techniques depending upon the season, tides and each fisherman's preference. Some Sikaiana men are notorious for their enthusiasm for fishing at the expense of projects on land; others are considered to be poor fishermen but more adept at work along shore and in the interior.

People try to complete all their activities by the afternoon church service at about 4:00.

The main diet of the Sikaiana consists of fish, taro, rice and coconuts. A Sikaiana person considers a good meal to include both some kind of meat, usually fish, and another dish, usually taro, rice, or if nothing else is available, coconuts. Taro pudding is sometimes made in underground ovens, although more often the taro is boiled in steel pots. Chicken, pig, birds, occasional flying fox, shellfish, various seasonal fruits and nuts are also eaten. Rice is brought to the atoll, either sent by relatives or purchased in the cooperative store. Tea, sugar, and to a lesser extent flour, are regular staples, again either sent from Honiara or purchased in the cooperative store. Sometimes dry crackers, tinned beef, and even tinned fish are purchased. The fat drippings from pigs are saved in empty kerosene drums and used for frying. Most cooking is done over an open fire, either boiling in pots or frying in pans. The underground ovens, which were the traditional method for cooking and still in use during World War II, were used infrequently during my stay. The Sikaiana people have come to prefer food fried in pig fat.

Imported goods manufactured outside of the Solomon Islands are an important part of the local economy. Every adult has a bush knife. Steel adzes, axes and hammers are used in canoe making, house construction, and garden clearing. Several men own nylon fishing nets. All fishing line is made of manufactured nylon; all fishhooks are manufactured steel. All clothing is made from manufactured materials purchased in stores. Most people wear a simple piece of cloth about six feet long and two feet wide which is wrapped around the body like a sarong. Some men wear pants and short shirts. Some women wear skirts or dresses, especially for the Sunday church service. A few people wear plastic sandals but most walk on heavily calloused bare feet.

Sikaiana has no electricity, although there was a small kerosene generator in the medical clinic to refrigerate medicine. In the evening, light is provided by flashlights, lanterns, and pressure lamps. Many people own portable cassette-radios, and in the evenings, when reception is better, people listen to the national radio station of the Solomon Islands.

Most men own or have access to a canoe. Most of these canoes are made on Sikaiana, carved-out from the trunk of the *pinipini* (most likely *Calophyllum*) tree, the only tree species on Sikaiana that is large enough for a canoe. A few larger canoes are purchased from elsewhere in the Solomon Islands and brought to Sikaiana on the *Belama*. There was one fiberglass boat in 1980. Several more were brought to Sikaiana in 1986 following a cyclone.ⁱ

Water is provided by several manual pumps connected to underground wells. Most people find this water too brackish to drink and use it mainly to wash clothes and bathe. Rainwater is collected from the run-off of corrugated iron roofs and stored in large containers under these roofs. People drink this water. Occasionally, when the atoll has been without rain for a week or longer, the water drums are empty. At such times, people drink coconut milk. But the tanks were rarely out of water and usually only for a short time.

People bathe, defecate and urinate in the ocean. They strongly disapprove of anyone who defecates on dry land because before too long someone is bound to come across it while searching for fallen coconuts or working.

In 1980-1983, about one half of the houses on Sikaiana were made of manufactured materials concrete, walling and roofing iron. The rest were made from local materials, wood and coconut leaf. Most leaf houses are rectangular, about 30 feet long and 15 feet wide. Usually, there is a door on the shore side and another facing the inland side. Formerly, doors were to one side of the front wall with a center post supporting the roof. But following the European fashion learned during the Protectorate period, doors are now in the center of the wall. The front and back walling is usually coconut mats. The side walling is about four feet high, made of slats from a tree whose soft wood is cut into thin slices (*Hibiscus*?). The slats are shaped and fit tightly. Some leaf houses use lumber or occasionally a piece of iron roofing to reinforce their walling. Roofs are made of overlapping coconut leaf mats packed tightly on top of each other. Along the front and back of the houses, coconut leaf mats, more closely woven than the

roof mats, are used for walling. Floors are usually coral gravel, often covered by coconut leaf mats.

Other houses have cement foundations, masonite or board walling, and corrugated steel roofs. They are usually about the same size as the leaf houses. Sometimes, their interiors are partitioned into separate rooms. Some floors are completely covered with concrete. Most of these houses have a few holes in their walling which were punched through by some angry drunkard. Some houses with iron roofs have drains which collect the run-off of rain into large metal containers, which store water for drinking.

Inside most Sikaiana houses, people sleep under mosquito nets which are spread out at night and neatly folded into a corner during the day. Some people sleep on plaited pandanus mats, but these are being replaced by the foam mattresses sold in Honiara's stores (less craftsmanship but, to be honest, more comfortable, at least to me). Supplies are stored inside the houses. Some families store food in a screened cabinet where bugs and rats can't get to it. Most people have a few suitcases, wooden and cardboard boxes for storing clothes and other valuables. On wooden shelves and wedged into crevices of walls, there are tools and utensils, and a few articles of clothing. Other items, too good to discard but not of much use, are saved: rusted kerosene lanterns, a sandal, a rubber boot, a broken umbrella, paint brushes, empty rice sacks (used for sending taro or other foods to Honiara), empty kerosene drums. Lines of rope cross the ceiling with things hanging down from them including lamps and clothing. Tucked away somewhere there is always a Bible and prayer book. Some people have pictures on their walls, usually of friends or relatives, scenes from the Bible, or sometimes the British Royal Family.

Kitchens are detached from the houses. Smaller than houses, most are enclosed, often constructed from a patchwork of both bush materials and spare pieces of roofing iron. Inside there is a raised iron grate for holding pots and pans over the cooking hearth. The hearth is set against one wall. An open space between walling and roof provides a little ventilation. There may be a platform or cabinet for storing tea, sugar, and other supplies. Floors are often sand or coral gravel with a few worn mats scattered around. There is usually a low stool for sitting while tending the fire. This stool has other uses. It is oblong with a little nose at one end to which a grater can be attached. Women straddle the chair and use the grater to scrape the flesh of coconuts. Fuel for the fire includes coconut shells, coconut husks, and chopped wood.

LAND and SEA

There are two locations for life on the atoll: the sea and the land. The distinction between these areas are marked by two of the most frequently heard words in the Sikaiana language: *uta*, 'landward' and *tai*, 'seaward'. These are relative terms. The Sikaiana have cardinal terms for directions: "East," "West," "North," "South." But these terms are used very rarely in ordinary speech. Like the sailor who constantly refers to locations in terms of "port," "starboard," "bow" and "stern," the Sikaiana constantly

locate themselves and others in terms of their relative position towards the sea or land.

The Sikaiana person standing at the shore will motion towards the interior of an islet and describe it as "landward," and refer to something toward the ocean by describing it as "seaward." The reef itself is a giant oval between two large bodies of water: the lagoon and the open ocean. The reef is always "landward" from both the lagoon and ocean side. "Seaward" can be opposite directions depending upon where one is standing. Outside the reef, "seaward" is always away from the atoll towards the open ocean; inside the reef, it is always in the opposite direction towards the center of the lagoon. One travels "seaward" towards the center of the lagoon and, when there then all directions are "landward."

The Sikaiana living in Honiara have adapted these terms to their lives there. The business district of Honiara with its stores and market are "seaward," while the suburbs and residential areas away from the business district are "landward." Thus, a Sikaiana person from the suburbs of Honiara will describe going to town as travelling "seaward," and returning home as going "landward," even though the entire trip in both directions is along the north coastal shore of Guadalcanal with the ocean on the right or left depending upon the direction of the traveler.

The Sea

The atoll is beautiful place, but Sikaiana would not do for a Hollywood movie set. There is a harsh difference between the reality of this atoll and Hollywood's image of an island paradise. Sikaiana has the beauty of a lovely location but it is a place where people struggle for their livelihood. The seashore is not a giant couch for lounging and sunbathing, but a workshop for scaling fish, washing cookware, and beaching canoes. The idea of a tourist lying along the seashore makes about as much sense as sunbathing along the concrete ramps of a super-highway.

The atoll gave me a feeling of fragile safety within an enveloping expanse of sea and sky. The sun is warm, breezes are refreshing, the water along the shore of the islets is often calm, and the far horizon is unobstructed. It is an immense world of sand, sea and sky in shades of yellow, green, and blue. There is not so much a sense of exotic charm and calm, as one sees in advertisements and films, but a feeling that nature's forces are immense in both threatening and protecting life. It is a kind of beauty which is breathtaking, but I would not describe it as relaxing.

The lagoon is a blend of blues and green. The water changes shades of these colors from almost clear to almost black as its depth changes. In places where the bottom can be seen from the surface, the water is a very light green. The deeper the water gets, the darker are its blues and greens. The deep areas of the lagoon, like the ocean outside the reef, is a very dark blue, almost black. Facing across the lagoon, one sees concentric layers of colors: first the narrow brown line of reef which encloses the lagoon; then, a sliver of white foam from waves breaking along the reef's edge; next, the blue ocean; then, another thin, sharp line at the horizon; and finally the pale sky and

clouds.

As the tide changes, so does the appearance of the lagoon. At times when the tide is high, almost all the coral rock along the inside of the reef is covered by water, as is the entire platform of the reef. At such times, the lagoon and reef seem to be clean and none of the rough edges of coral showing above the water. At low tide, by contrast, the inside fringe of the reef is cluttered with brown, yellow and gray rocks that are much too disorderly for Hollywood or travel agents. At low tide, it is possible to walk along the entire circumference of the reef's platform from islet to islet and eventually to circumvent the entire atoll, although it would probably take the entire day to make the round trip.

Close to the shore of the islets, the water's bottom is sandy and shallow. Further towards the lagoon and reef there is the meandering trail of light blue water which canoes follow to weave their way out to the main passage, about 1/2 mile away. On the ocean side, waves break directly onto the reef; there are no coral outcroppings. On the lagoon side of the reef's platform, there is a border of shallow water several hundred yards wide. It is difficult to paddle a canoe through this inside fringe because coral rock grows everywhere. Moving further from the reef and closer to the lagoon, the water gets deeper and coral grows less frequently near the surface. The center of the lagoon is deep and its surface is choppy. The depth of the lagoon is marked by a change of water from a calm light blue to a dark choppy blue. It is sometimes hard to steer a canoe in this deeper water, especially when there is a wind. If the canoe travels into the lagoon's waves, water will splash over the sides, and it may swamp. But along the borders between the edge of the deep lagoon and where the water gets shallower as it approaches the reef, there is an avenue of chartreuse water which is deep enough so that the canoe won't run aground, but calm enough to make steering it manageable.

I always felt small when I was fishing in the lagoon or along the reef. There are expanses of green and blue encircled by the brown reef. The atoll is several miles across and the islets become small as one moves further into the lagoon. But the sky and ocean beyond remain immense and enveloping. Above, a lower softer level of clouds travels slowly across the sky. They move below a higher level of immobile clouds. Everything seems to be circles of change and permanence, fragility and stability.

Inside the reef, the bottom varies. In some places it is fields of smooth, comfortable sand. In other places it is a mush of grayish matter, smashed coral, sand, and rocks, reminding me of the brackish barnacled feeling of looking at the bottom of a boat. The fish are much more colorful than the coral. Their English names describe their variegated forms: clown fish, parrot fish, angel fish, zebra fish, and scorpion fish.

A person is exposed while out on the reef. There is no shade from the sun, nor, once a little distance from the islets, protection from the wind. It can get very hot or very cold, and sometimes the changes are fast. I always got sunburned on the first day I went out to the reef after an absence from Sikaiana. Once after returning from a two month stay in Honiara, I foolishly thought the faded tan on my arms would protect me from the sun and did not wear a long sleeved shirt. Several days later my biceps were

peeling and oozing puss. That one day's exposure to the sun had burnt more than hot metal. Even the Sikaiana get sunburned when they go out on the reef after a time away from it.

It also can get very cold on the reef. Some of the most uncomfortable times of my life, much more uncomfortable than any snowstorm, were spent shivering on Sikaiana's reef. If cloudy, the water is chilly and, without the sun's warmth, a person's body starts to shake with chills. In the evenings, it gets cold as the sun sets or a cloud near the horizon blocks what little warmth it could provide at this time of day. If it rains, the rain water feels colder than the ocean water and it is possible to warm up by diving under water. But this solution is only temporary. Soon the chills start, and so long as a person stays in the rain and water, they don't stop. Worse, there are several months in the year when there are strong winds. If the wind is from the east, it is blocked by the island when one is in the water close to Hale. But a little way out into the lagoon, the wind can be felt. When there is both wind and rain, it gets very uncomfortable, not only for me but also for the Sikaiana. Many Sikaiana are reluctant to go to the sea when it is rainy, cloudy, or in the evening when the sun is setting.

Although it gets chilly, even cold, the late afternoon was my favorite time of day to go fishing. Out in the lagoon at that time of day, there is a soft beauty. In one direction the sun is lowering behind Muli Akau, the islets at the Western end of the lagoon. In the other direction, Hale looks beautiful in the low, gentle light. At midday, the sun gives off a sharp kind of light that is both hazy and harsh. But in the evening it comes across the lagoon from an angle, reflecting under the coconut palms. The greens of the trees are deeper and softer, almost silver, and the land's browns and yellows glow.

The Bush

Hale, by far the largest of the four islets, has about 562 acres of land; of this about 124 is swamp. The ocean is never forgotten. The surf is heard almost everywhere. Along the shore of the lagoon, the sounds of breaking waves come from the opposite direction than the ocean. This is because the reef is closer to the ocean on the other, eastern, side of the islet than on the lagoon side.

There is a wide path that went from the houses directly behind mine, past the former sites of Sikaiana's main ritual house and ceremonial ground and into the interior. The interior is thickly covered with trees and vegetation. In Pijin, the Sikaiana refer to the interior as the "bush." The path is well-marked with a well-worn center of smooth dirt and a border of grass along its sides. Coconut trees are everywhere. Some tall ones slant across the path (in 1987 some had fallen from the recent cyclone). Near the path are newly planted trees which are shorter and straighter, but without any nuts.

After following the path for about a minute or two, there is an incline to a raised area, and the path looks down on taro swamps. The path is still wide and clearly marked, with coconut trees along both sides. Below the path on both sides, there are taro gardens which run in long rectangular lines away from the path. Taro stalks are

planted in neat rows following the sometimes bending sweep of the gardens. In different gardens, the taro can be at different stages of growth. Some are fully grown plants, with long, green, lush, triangular leaves several feet in length. In other gardens, little green sprouts of recently planted taro stand naked above the mud and the dried leaves used for mulch. There are muddy ditches along each side of these gardens where women stand as they tend the taro.

Looking beyond the gardens, cleared orderliness gives way to the forest. There are more coconut trees and other, larger, fuller trees. Large trees include the *ihi*, which bears a nut like a chestnut, and the *natu*, which bears a soft fruit something like a cross between a pear and a mango. Tall pandanus trees have long sharp leaves.

Continuing towards the eastern shore of Hale, which I always thought of the “back” because it is the opposite side from the inhabited main path of houses, the path drops down again to level off with the surrounding land. The Sikaiana also refer to this side of the island as Tua, or “back”. After passing a few more taro plots, the path reaches a neatly planted grove with straight lines of coconut trees. This grove was planted about 20 years ago by an ambitious man hoping to earn money from copra. As the path approaches the shore on the east side of Hale, it becomes cluttered with chunks of coral and large ferns. The open expanse of the taro gardens is replaced by the cloister of high trees and coconut groves. There are several fences with pigs inside. Giant clam shells are used as water troughs for pigs.

The path intersects with another that follows the back eastern shore of the islet. Occasionally, there are breaks in the brush along this path, providing glimpses of the reef. These breaks in the bushes are littered with large mounds of coconut husks, left by people making copra or feeding their pigs. On the back shore, there are about 200 yards of rocky shallow water to the fringe of the reef, and then, quite abruptly, the Pacific Ocean.

On the lagoon side, I felt that I was facing an expanse of sea and sky. But the back shore gives a different impression, one of confinement in which the universe seems to be pressing down. As much as I found the lagoon side to have a comforting beauty, I never much cared for the view from the back. The feeling of confinement comes from being so close to the reef with its breaking waves and then, suddenly, the open ocean. On the back, the horizon seems very low, the sky bearing down on the strips of ocean and rocky reef. On the lagoon side, the horizon is very high up in the sky because the expanses of the lagoon, reef and three islets separate the earth from the sky. There is a sense of isolation but without fear or loneliness. Indeed, the lagoon side gave me the impression of a large, protected bubble of life. In contrast, my feeling about the back shore was confinement and limitation.

I was often startled if I encountered someone walking along the paths in the bush. The primal vegetation was broken by the appearance of a human being who would usually stop, giggle, and ask me where I was going. The Sikaiana probably had a very different feeling about the interior of the islet. Although they seemed to find something frightening in deserted areas, especially at night when some people still fear

encountering spirits, they knew the interior much better than I. They knew where the paths led, the names of various territories and locations along the way, and who had the land rights to use them. To me the interior never became familiar. Their feelings about the lagoon side and the back side of the atoll were probably similar to mine, although for different reasons. The lagoon side is where everyone lives and where there is easy access to the rest of the atoll through the lagoon. The other side is simply a place to temporarily perform chores, feed pigs, and look for coconuts.

Places and History

Along the entire reef, different areas are named, often after spirits, *tupua*, who were believed to have inhabited that location. On shore, all land is divided into territories or estates with boundaries and names. Some locations ashore are also associated with *tupua*. During my stays a few people seemed to believe that there were *tupua* in certain locations, most seemed more indifferent, perhaps they once existed but were no longer there, or never had been.

Along the reef, all I ever saw was a jumble of coral and rocks. I was only vaguely aware of my relative location in terms of Hale and Muli Akau. But the Sikaiana can name each place along the reef and they remember the location of specific coral formations within these areas. Once I returned ashore without a knife I had dropped along the reef. A man, who had seen where I had been fishing, told my location to a boy. The boy went back to area and recovered the knife within a couple minutes. I knew my general location, but I never would have found where I was standing or the knife within the acres of jumbled coral formations. Another time, when I set up a fishing net alone, I swam a little distance away from it. When I swam back to where I thought I had set the net, I could not find it. It took me about 20 minutes of rambling around to find it again. All the time I hoped no one would happen to come by in a canoe and learn of my embarrassing predicament.

The Sikaiana recognize locations along the reef in the same way we know street corners and signposts in a neighborhood where we have lived all our lives. Some of these locations also mark legendary events in Sikaiana's history.

The Hetuna

Along the reef just south of TeHaolei, there are a group of large stones that are scattered about in different directions. These stones are larger than a man, and blockish in shape. According to the Sikaiana, these stones are the remains of the Hetuna, former inhabitants of the atoll who were conquered and vanquished by the ancestors of the present-day inhabitants. The blockish shape of these coral rocks, and the random direction in which they are scattered, did remind me of wooden block men who have fallen over.

By legend, the founder hero of Sikaiana is Tehui Atahu, who left his homeland,

Luahatu, in search of new lands. He was accompanied by his brother and, in some versions of the legend, his son(s). As he traveled, he picked up different crew members from other islands, including Santa Cruz, Takuu and Luaniua. Upon his first arrival at Sikaiana, the land was still submerged, although visible below the water. After sending one of his crew members to make a claim by marking the land with a long pole or spear, Tehui Atahu traveled about 400 kilometers to the northwest, to Luaniua, the largest village on Ontong Java. There he befriended a Luaniua leader, Tehui Luaniua. Together, they returned to Sikaiana and found that the land had emerged above sea level and was occupied by another race, the Hetuna.

Tehui Atahu set about to deceive the Hetuna and acquire Sikaiana. He convinced the Hetuna of his prior claim to the land by secretly building a wall across the interior and then placing moss along the wall to make it look old (the remains of a ruined wall are still visible). Secretly plotting to kill them, he convinced the Hetuna to help him build a house to be used in ritual ceremonies. While the Hetuna were all on top of the house tying down its roofing, Tehui Atahu ordered his followers to kill them. Some Hetuna managed to escape the initial slaughter and ran along the reef. The coral blocks lying along the shore near TeHaolei are the remains of these few Hetuna who were slain as they were trying to flee.

Tehui Atahu promised that he would reward the crew member who slew the most Hetuna with the chieftomship. When his brother won the contest, Tehui Atahu killed him and established himself as chief of Sikaiana. After a falling out with Tehui Luaniua (in some versions of the legend, after the latter's adultery with the wife of Tehui Atahu), the former friends had a tug of war contest to determine who should rule Sikaiana. In most versions of the legend, the contest resulted in a draw, and it was decided to divide the main islet, Hale, between the two men. Tehui Atahu took control over about 2/3 of Hale and Tehui Luaniua took the rest. The chieftomship alternated between the patrilineal descendants of these two men.

Some of the people who joined Tehui Atahu during his travels established ritual houses and became the original founders of different "tribes" or clans. After dying, Tehui Atahu, Tehui Luaniua and other founders became some of the gods whose names were invoked in the ceremonies in Hale Aitu, the central ritual house, where wooden statues of them were placed.

Some Sikaiana people claim that Tehui Atahu came from Atafu Island in the Tokelau Islands. Other Sikaiana claim that he came from an island with that same name in the Tongan group. Either origin is a possibility; neither is certain. Most elder people consistently claim that his origin is unknown, and my hunch is that an uncertain origin is part of the legend. The title Tehui is used to refer to several of Sikaiana's founder heroes, including Tehui Atahu, Tehui Luaniua, and Tehui Takuu. In the Sikaiana language, *hui* is the word for a 'cluster of coconuts' (*te* is the definite article, 'the'). I was told that the title Tehui refers to the fact that these founder heroes represented a leader and his followers, which is metaphorically similar to a cluster of coconuts. It is not possible to determine how long ago Tehui Atahu lived. In the speculative genealogies offered by some people, Tehui Atahu lived between 17 to 23 generations ago.

Most people agree that genealogies are unreliable before the "Tona" invasion and slaughter which occurred about 12 generations ago.

TePalena

About a mile away from Hale on the north side of the reef is a very shallow area of water named TePalena. At low tide, a long low coral platform stands above the water. The Sikaiana like to go fishing with a net in this area. There are long stretches of shallow water with a sandy bottom which makes it easier to encircle fish and chase them into a net. According to Sikaiana legend, TePalena is the remains of an islet where about 12 generations ago a band of marauders from "Tona" stayed. The word Tona is cognate with the name, Tonga, and the Sikaiana associate these invaders with that island. But *tona* is a common Polynesian word for a direction, often "south" or "leeward" and may refer to peoples from lands in that direction that are closer to Sikaiana than Tonga.

Exhausted from their long overseas voyages, these men from Tona prevailed upon Sikaiana hospitality and resided on TePalena until they recovered their strength. Their leader, a man named Vaeoma, feigned friendship with the Sikaiana, but was merely waiting until his men had recovered their strength from their long voyage. He planned to kill Sikaiana's inhabitants. Leitaka, a Sikaiana leader who had an affair with Vaeoma's wife, learned about this plot and every night secretly swam to TePalena, where the marauders were sleeping, and slew a few of them. After a while, Vaeoma noticed that his forces were being depleted and decided to attack. In the ensuing struggle he was matched against Leitaka and eventually killed him. Afterwards Vaeoma and his men proceeded to slay almost all of Sikaiana's men. Most Sikaiana agree that genealogies before this time are imprecise because all the mature men who knew them were slain by Vaeoma and his followers.

Vaeoma and his men voyaged on to Taumako, another Polynesian speaking island about 400 kilometers to the southeast. There, the men of Tona were all slain after a Sikaiana hostage warned the Taumakans of Vaeoma's treachery on Sikaiana.

Traditions associated with the Tona invasion suggest that Sikaiana had contacts across long distances of ocean with other Polynesian peoples. The travels of two men of this period, Semalu and Kaetekita, are recounted in a traditional song genre, *tuuhoe*. The Resident Commissioner of the Solomon Islands at the turn of the century, Charles Woodford (1906:167) collected a story that Kaetekita had journeyed to Malaita, Isabel, Taumako, Tikopia, and various other islands in the area. Even by the time that Woodford collected the legend, at the beginning of this century, some Sikaiana people had traveled widely with European traders, and these place names may have been incorporated into this legend as a result of their travels.

Muli Akau

The three islets at the western end of the atoll are known collectively as Muli Akau. The Sikaiana are reluctant to discuss the continued existence of pre-Christian spirits, but some of them still refer to a spirit named Kaealiki who is reported to have inhabited an area near the middle islet, Matuiloto. The Sikaiana also say that the Sakamani, a small people, something like leprechauns, inhabit the islets of Muli Akau. Although these little people are never seen, the Sikaiana claim that on some mornings the Sakamani leave their small footprints in the sand. In former times, these islets also seem to have had a special ceremonial connotation. When men and women divided into separate groups to compose songs, one sex would go to Muli Akau to compose their songs in secret away from the opposite sex. By secretly composed their songs, critical of the opposite sex, they could return to Hale and surprise the opposite sex with their songs.

The Sikaiana like to go to these islets for fishing because the areas closer to Hale have been over-fished. A Sikaiana man once told me he liked going to these islets because they are "clean and fresh." The beaches are clear and free of the rubbish found on the beaches of Hale, where daily use shows. During the vacations of Sikaiana's primary school, parents like to go there with their families and stay for a few days so they can get away from the hustle and bustle of the main islet. Even on an isolated atoll, people need to get away from it all.

Vaka Vusu, a descent line claiming Tehui Atahu as its ancestor, used to bury their dead in the ocean beyond Matuiloto. Today, there is a well-kept cemetery on Hale where everyone is buried in the Christian fashion. But in the past, the Sikaiana had several ways of disposing of their dead. A few people were buried on land. Others were set adrift in canoes. And others were buried in the deep waters beyond the reef. One woman of the Vaka Vusu clan, Peia, was still alive when she was sent to the bottom of the sea just beyond Matuiloto.

I heard the story of Peia from Fane, a woman in her eighties, who knew Peia. Peia lived in the early 1900s before the arrival of the Christian mission, while Fane was a young woman. Fane had matured before the arrival of missionaries. Although a Christian at the time I knew her, Fane also held that many traditional beliefs were true.

Fane says that the trouble started when Peia's husband reported that one of Peia's relatives, Tomaniva, was having affairs with the wives of certain men. The cuckolded husbands began keeping a sharper eye on their wives and Tomaniva could no longer arrange his secret trysts. Tomaniva eventually died, but his anger at Peia's husband remained with him after death. The Sikaiana used to believe that after dying some men lived on as spirits. Tomaniva became a spirit or *aitu mate*. To avenge himself on Peia's husband, Tomaniva's spirit made Peia sick.

One night Peia lay near death. Indeed, everyone thought she had died. But on the following morning, Peia recovered and recounted the following experience which she had that night with the spirit of Tomaniva.

Peia told people that as she lay near death the night before, the spirit of

Tomaniva took her inner spirit from out of her body. He led her spirit away from the house where her body continued to lie near death. They followed the main path into the bush, past the ritual houses and taro gardens to the back of the islet, and then to the beach there. At the shore, Tomaniva used his spiritual powers to turn a coconut husk into a boat and they drifted out to the reef. At the reef they waded into the water to the point where the waves break and then Tomaniva told Peia to grab hold of his belt. He dove down with Peia holding on behind. He dove deep beneath the surface, and eventually they reached the Hitiana, a place inhabited by spirits. There Tomaniva told Peia to sit by an old woman whom Peia recognized, although this woman had died many years before. After waiting for a while, Tomaniva returned, led Peia back ashore, and left her.

Although ashore on the far side of Hale, Peia felt lost. Unsure of where to go, she saw an old man who also, like the woman in the Hitiana, had died many years before. Peia asked him where to find the path to the main part of the village. The old man lifted his hand and pointed. A path suddenly opened out and became clear through the brush. Peia followed the path back to the lagoon side of the islet where her spirit re-entered her body.

The next morning, Peia awoke and recounted her experiences of the previous night to those present. Eventually, Peia recovered her physical health. But she began to go insane. Tomaniva had driven her crazy when he took her on the trip to the Hitiana.

Peia started taking on lovers. Before the conversion to Christianity, many people had secret love affairs. But Peia flaunted Sikaiana custom by being completely indiscriminate and public, taking lovers at any time of day and night. Fane said that Sikaiana's men found Peia to be very attractive; she had a light complexion which the Sikaiana admire.

Eventually her husband left her. She began to steal things. She even stole the burial shrouds from a deceased person. She got into fights. Once, she lit a stalk of coconut leaf and began burning a crippled woman who could not walk. Peia also behaved in a peculiar fashion, sometimes walking along banging her fist against her elbow, making strange sounds. Unlike, the Sikaiana who paddle in canoes or walk along the reef's platform at low tide, she waded in the water from islet to islet. Some say she had acquired magical powers that allowed her to travel very fast between the islets.

A bachelor foolishly decided that he wanted to live with her. He was discouraged by both Peia's and his own relatives. After all, who would ever want to marry anyone so crazy? But the man was determined.

One night Fane was sitting with some relatives near the house where Peia and her husband were staying. They noticed that Peia was cooking and assumed that it was something she had stolen. One of the men went to peek into Peia's house to see what it was, and as he approached he saw blood oozing out of the house's entrance. Inside, Peia, completely crazy, was cutting up her husband and preparing to cook him.

Peia's brother, TePeau, decided that she had finally gone too far: she would have to share the fate of her dead husband. The husband's relatives objected, telling Tepeau that the husband knew she was crazy and never should have married her in the first place. But TePeau, although grieving, was insistent. Peia had to die. Peia was taken across the lagoon to Matuiloto where she was wrapped in cloth. Fane said that the cloth was wrapped so tightly that Peia's face flushed. Peia said nothing to those wrapping her except, "it is very tight."

Peia was then taken by canoe to the place in the ocean that her descent line used for burying people. On her way she spoke her last words, asking for her only child, a daughter. But upset by the gruesome turn of events, the daughter and many other family members had stayed away. Peia was lowered into the surface of the ocean so that the cloth would become heavy as it absorbed the water. When the cloth was heavy with water, those holding on to her told her to hold her breath and then released her to drown in the ocean's depths.

TAHA

Taha is the roughest part of the Sikaiana reef. Everywhere else, the reef is always some distance from the islets, providing protection from the ocean. But here the reef turns at a very sharp angle and actually meets with the northeast corner of Hale. In one direction, there is the sandy stretch of beach following the back of the islet. In the other direction one can see the reef separating away from the islet as the shore leads to the front where the village is located. In the distance, beyond the stretch of the reef's northern side, the hazy islets of TeHaolei and Matuiloto can be seen.

The waves are higher at Taha than anywhere else; they break only a short distance from the islet's shore. At the sharp corner made from the meeting of both islet and reef, the waves come from two sides. There is a mound of rock, coral gravel and drift wood that has been built up by the pounding of the seas. There is a strong wind which, like so many other aspects of the atoll's beauty, makes me feel vulnerable. A short distance in either direction, the wind dies down. In 1986, this area of the atoll was hit hardest by the cyclone. Even after a year, the shore was cluttered with shattered coconut trees.

Taha is the place where in late August 1942, three American navy pilots, shot down during combat with the Japanese, came ashore in their lifeboat.

When I first met the Sikaiana, they often referred to other Americans whom they had met previously. Older people remembered Americans who were stationed in the Solomon Islands during World War II. Some had met Americans on Guadalcanal at the main base during the Battle of Guadalcanal, Henderson airbase (which is still the nation's main airport). Americans also visited the atoll during the war. The Sikaiana remember several ships which spent a day there. American fliers in seaplanes landed in the lagoon during patrols.

One incident is commemorated in a series of songs still performed by older

women who learned the songs in their youth. The Sikaiana told me that one night three Navy fighters had to ditch their plane. In the early morning, they drifted ashore in their life boat. One of the fliers had broken his leg and was left at the seashore with the lifeboat. The other two went ahead to find help. Some Sikaiana young men who had attended missionary schools spoke enough English to be able to communicate with the fliers and went to retrieve their injured comrade.

These fliers stayed on Sikaiana for a few days until, after shooting a flare, they were spotted by a seaplane and taken from Sikaiana. The Sikaiana remember these fliers vividly: "Bini," the captain, "Polo" and "Kalati" were the crew. Polo couldn't walk because of his broken leg. According to the songs, the young women were greatly enamored with the beauty of the fliers and felt sorrow at their departure. As I shall explain in a later chapter, these songs were composed by the young women, not to praise the Americans, but to tease the Sikaiana young men.

During my stay in 1980-1983, the Sikaiana often speculated about the fate of these three fliers, assuming that perhaps they had all died in the war. I was somewhat doubtful about many of the details of the Sikaiana story, and although I thought I would try to find these fliers when I returned to the United States, I was skeptical about whether it would be possible.

In 1985, I wrote the U.S. Navy Department to find out if they had any records of this event. With the help of the Navy's extensive archive service, and the records that were kept during the war, I found that three fliers, Paul Knight (Polo), Harold Bingaman (Bini) and Calvin Crouch (Kalati) from the aircraft carrier *Enterprise* were downed near Sikaiana and picked up from there several days later. About six months later, again with the help of the Navy Department, I was talking with Paul Knight in his house just outside of Bethesda, Maryland, listening to his very vivid memories of those three days.

And as a postscript, I should add that in the early 1990s, I was teaching at Millersville University and showed a slide of Paul Knight. A woman in the back announced in amazement that it was her grandfather. Unbeknown to me, I had Paul Knight's granddaughter in my class.

ⁱ Robert and Priscilla told me that by 2018, all canoes were manufactured from fiberglass and brought to Sikaiana. The *manau* was no longer made on Sikaiana.

IV

PARTICIPANT AND OBSERVER: My Life with the Sikaiana

A fieldworker is not only a researcher, but also a person, and it is in a matrix of relationships, both professional and personal, that I learned about the Sikaiana. I came to Sikaiana to do research, and my methods included both learning about and participating in the daily life of the Sikaiana. Sometimes I was working on specific projects almost every hour of the day, collecting, recording or analyzing information. Other days, I spent most of my time fishing, sitting around talking, or helping neighbors with their chores. Participating in these daily activities was an important source for my understanding of Sikaiana life.

Interviewing takes an informant's time, and the Sikaiana had to work in order to survive. Most were supportive of my research, but not everyone was anxious to stop the day's activities for several hours to answer a lot of questions. Moreover, many Sikaiana, like many Americans, did not enjoy having their lives scrutinized. On the other hand, many enjoyed talking about themselves and explaining their view of events. They also felt that their society was changing rapidly and they wanted me to record their traditions before they were lost.

In writing that I participated in the daily life of the Sikaiana, I don't want to leave any illusions about my ability to survive as a native of the atoll. I could provide labor when there was someone else to oversee my work. There are many skills that I never mastered. But in participating in these activities, however unsuccessfully, I learned about the skills necessary for survival on Sikaiana.

I wasn't a good fisherman, something absolutely essential for livelihood there. The Sikaiana distinguish between two general types of fishing: (1) with a line and hook and (2) with a net. I never liked fishing with a line. My lines always got tangled, caught in rocks, and everyone else always came back with a bigger catch.

I especially disliked fishing with a line outside of the reef. The currents make the canoe harder to manage and the line must be dropped deeper. Even for the Sikaiana, fishing with a line can be frustrating when they are outside the reef. It always seemed that just as a catch was being pulled in, a shark would get the fish before the fish could be brought into the canoe. The sharks rarely attacked people, but they often ate fish caught on a fishing line as they were being pulled in to a boat. When hooked, a fish is slowed down and it is easier for sharks to catch them. One Sikaiana man told me that the sharks simply wait at the passage from the lagoon into the ocean and follow the glimmering canoe bottoms.

The first time I went fishing outside of the reef, it resulted in a total disaster. I went with my neighbor, Uriel, a mature man who is very kind, but also quite taciturn, and not that comfortable with me as a stranger. Indeed, it would take about a year before I began to feel comfortable with him, although he lived next door to me, and the

courthouse, where I resided, stood on land controlled by his lineage. Brown Saua, the young administrator whom I had met in Honiara, was spending his vacation on Sikaiana and suggested to Uriel that he take me along fishing. Uriel was probably less than thrilled by my presence in his canoe.

I had been on Sikaiana for only about two or three weeks. On that day, most of the atoll's men went to catch fish for a special feast as part of the celebrations in honor of Sikaiana's patron saint, St. Andrew. At that time, everyone wanted to try a newly introduced technique called *kura*. A heavy fishing line, 60 to 100 pounds test line, is dropped to the ocean's bottom. A stone is tied to the line with a coconut leaf which is attached to the hook. Once it hits bottom, the line is jerked and the stone comes undone. The line is pulled to the surface with the coconut leaf attached to the hook as a lure. Supposedly, fish at all depths will be attracted by the rising coconut leaf lure, and bite. I write "supposedly," because I never knew any Sikaiana man to have much success with this method. Most of Sikaiana's able-bodied men fished using this technique for most of that day. Very few fish were caught.

On that day, my fishing line kept becoming tangled, eventually hopelessly so, and I was told we'd have to get ashore before it could be untangled. Meanwhile, I just sat in the canoe while Uriel kept dropping his line without catching anything. At one point, Uriel ran out of stone weights. After paddling the canoe a little ways towards the shallower water near the reef, he went diving for a few more. I was tired, my line useless, and I felt cramped from spending the entire day with my knees bent and my buttocks squeezed into the narrow bottom of the dugout canoe. While Uriel was diving to find more stone weights, I raised myself to stretch my legs and sat on a little board placed across the width of the canoe as a seat.

The Sikaiana do not fish with reels and poles. The line is wrapped around a short stick or piece of wood and both let out and pulled in by hand. The line is not rolled around the stick until the end of the day or the fisherman decides to change his location. Excess line lies in front of the fisherman. Usually, providing of course no one is so foolish as to touch it, the pile of fishing line doesn't get tangled. Without thinking at the time, although it seems so obviously stupid now, I seated myself on Uriel's uncoiled fishing line. As a result, when Uriel returned with more stone weights, his line, like mine, was hopelessly tangled. We had to paddle ashore with only one fish. Uriel was mumbling something. At that time, I didn't understand any of the language. But, it was clear that he was very unhappy.

Another time, much later in my stay when I knew Uriel much better, I went out with him and another man, John Tesinu. We went to a place outside of the reef, but in shallow water. Using lighter lines than in *kura*, we dropped them to the ocean's bottom. It was Saturday and we planned on a big catch to hold us through Sunday (the church forbids fishing on Sunday). We started fishing in the morning at about 10:00 AM. By about 4:00 PM we had not caught anything, and I assumed that we would go ashore for the afternoon church service. But Uriel and John were determined for a better catch. Fishing is not sport for them, it is a livelihood. In the evening, at dusk, the fish began to bite. The men kept fishing until after midnight. I, however, was exhausted from sitting

in a cramped canoe and from not catching any fish. After dusk, I simply lay back in the canoe, and to the amusement of Uriel and John, tried to doze. That day I had spent about fourteen hours sitting in a cramped canoe without catching a single fish. At least, I didn't tangle any of their lines.

I was a complete failure at one of the most popular fishing methods on Sikaiana. Men like to dive into coral beds at night to spear fish. Gripping a waterproof flashlight with their teeth, they dive into shallow water a few feet deep and direct the light toward fish resting in the coral. At night, the fish are sluggish and the divers shoot the dazed fish with sharpened steel spears launched from rubber slings. This is probably the easiest technique for catching fish on Sikaiana, and I was no good at it. I could never sink down to the bottom of the coral beds, although they were only about four feet deep. I always floated to the surface before I could take aim with my spear. Once, an accommodating Sikaiana man stood on my back to hold me down under water. I shot the spear at a lethargic fish. And missed. The fish, after its close call with a klutzy foreigner, recovered its senses and darted away.

In certain seasons, the Sikaiana fish for small coral trout with long bamboo poles. A person walks along the shallow areas of the reef and slowly trolls a short piece of fishing line across places where the water is only a few inches above the reef. When a coral trout bites, there is a slight tug on the line. The line is jerked, and then whirled in a giant circle around the fisherman's head. The line and fish are brought back to the fisherman's hand. The fish's head is bitten to kill him, and then it is placed in a leaf basket that is carried on the fisherman's back. Usually, the bait is completely intact on the hook and the fisherman begins trolling again. With moderate luck, a fisherman can catch 50 to 100 fish between evening dusk and darkness. Early in my stay, I went out with Joshua Suasua, the chairman of the Sikaiana Area Committee, to try this technique. I kept snagging my hook in the craggy coral. I'd have to put down my pole and spend several clumsy minutes undoing the hook from the coral. Meanwhile, my pole was being carried off by the currents. Eventually, I got the hook free and retrieved the pole. But then, I had to place a new piece of bait on my hook. After about an hour of this, Joshua, distracted by helping me, told me to stop fishing and just carry his leaf basket. "We just want to catch enough fish so that women don't laugh at us," he explained. And so, I followed behind holding his basket. After a while on Sikaiana, I learned to be better at this technique. But I was lucky to bring in 20 fish while others around me were getting three or four times as many.

I did enjoy fishing with a net inside the reef. In the second year of my stay, I bought a nylon net and, on most afternoons, went with a Sikaiana neighbor to place it along the inside fringes of the reef. In the early evening, as the tide changes, the fish move through underwater channels to different locations along the reef where the water is deeper. By laying the net along these channels between the coral, it is possible to make a good catch in a fairly short time. A net is set up across the small channel used by fish and the fisherman positions himself to the side of it. Every few minutes a few fish appear. Throwing stones a little behind them, the fisherman chases them towards the net. While waiting for some fish to appear, I snorkeled around the coral. As the sun sets, it is chilly, but beautiful. I don't want to leave any illusions about my ability in this

fishing method. I never learned to recognize the locations of these channels or to understand the effects of seasons and tides. I had to go with someone else who knew about tides, locations, and fish passages in order to ensure a reasonably good catch.

There were a couple of other things that I never could do at all. All Sikaiana men are expected to climb trees and I never could. I would get about ten or fifteen feet off the ground and start to shake, much to the hysterical amusement of watching women. In fact, climbing coconut trees is such a basic activity for men that the phrase, *kake te niu*, "climb coconut trees" is an idiom referring to a man's erection. When a Sikaiana woman talks of a man's inability to climb coconut trees, she usually is describing his impotency.

I never mastered the use of a machete. A Sikaiana person can hold a coconut in one hand, and then slice it open with one chop from a machete in the other. I had to put the coconut on the ground and hack away. More often than not, after several glancing blows, I was stopped by a nearby person, who picked up the coconut, held it in his left hand, and then opened it with one or two whacks. People feed pigs with coconut meat by taking their machete and using it to adroitly separate meat from the shell. This is another skill that I never mastered. My left hand which held the coconut, never trusted my right hand which was trying to cut the coconut with a machete from an arm's length away.

I was not much good at making copra. Copra is cooked coconut meat which is sold to cosmetics manufacturers, such as Lever Brothers, who use it in making soap and other cosmetics. Only mature fallen nuts are suitable for making copra. Green nuts still on the tree are good for drinking and some Sikaiana like to eat the soft thin flesh. As the coconut matures, its husk becomes darker and the flesh inside thickens. Eventually, the nut becomes heavy and falls from the tree. These mature coconuts have a thick inner flesh. (These are like the nuts sold in stores in the U.S.) The flesh of these mature coconuts has several uses. They can be eaten, used in cooking, squeezed to make coconut oil, or heated into copra. Sometimes, the Sikaiana keep the mature coconuts and allow them to grow further. The juice inside solidifies into a kind of soft apple which is very sweet. At this point, the coconut has a sprout: it is a baby tree.

Every morning, except Sundays, Sikaiana people go to their coconut groves to look for fallen nuts. Coconuts are not easy to recognize in the undergrowth and it takes eyes that are sharper than mine to see them. I would walk right by ones that another Sikaiana person would pick up. Then, I would bend over to pick up what seemed to be a good nut only to find that it had rotted out from its underside and no longer had any meat.

Once the coconuts are collected, they have to be husked. Usually this is done with a special stick, *koo*, which is sharpened on one end. The blunt end of the husking stick is placed securely in the ground so that the sharp end is about waist high. The idea is to use the husking stick to pierce between the coconut's shell and husk and then pry away the husk. The Sikaiana effortlessly pry off the entire husk with a few rhythmical jerks. I had to spend much longer just lining up the stick between the husk and shell. I also had trouble getting the husking stick to where it could give me the best leverage

between the husk and nut. I often left large stringy pieces of husk on the shell, successful mostly at separating outer layers of the husk from inner ones. In the time that it took me to husk one shell, the average person, male or female, husked three.

Next, the shell of the nut is cracked in half by slamming the blunt side of a machete against it (I mastered this stage of the process). The coconut milk is emptied into buckets and later fed to pigs. The half-shells still holding the coconut meat are then placed on a copra drier. A copra drier consists of a wire platform built over a large steel drum. Usually, these drums are made from 44 gallon gasoline containers which have been brought from Honiara. A fire is made inside the drum to heat the copra on the platform. The coconut shells are cooked in the copra drier for a few hours until the coconut meat shrinks a little bit and separates from its shell. Using an oblong rubber or steel scoop, it is possible to pry the meat out of the shell. At last, something I could do: I was OK at scooping the meat out of the shell. Often, the coconut flesh has to be baked several more hours before it is ready to be bagged and sent to Honiara.

I helped several men make canoes. A Sikaiana canoe starts as a tree and eventually, after work with an axe and adze, it is shaped. Canoe makers let me cut the inside with an adze until the canoe sides began to get thin, and then they took over. A misplaced cut while the log is still thick won't do any harm. But when the canoe starts to take shape and its sides are thin, a misplaced hack could go through the wall of the hull and ruin the entire project, rendering worthless several months of labor.

A person had to have a sense of proportion and shape in order to make a good canoe. One man explained to me that after making several canoes under the supervision of an older man, he had learned to have an image in his mind of what the final canoe would look like. I never had this mental image in my mind. I was capable of doing the slow, painstaking, muscle work of hollowing out the inside of the log. I never worked at shaping the outer edges. In fairness to myself, however, most young Sikaiana men of my age could not make a canoe either.

I provided some labor for house construction. There are basically two types of houses on Sikaiana: concrete and leaf. The concrete ones are set on cement foundations. Only a few men who are skilled as carpenters have the ability to set these foundations. I could provide labor by mixing the cement base with sand and then shoveling the concrete into the planks which marked the foundation. But I never worked on the wooden frames which support walls and corrugated iron roofs.

Leaf houses are made of logs and materials grown on the atoll. I could help move the heavy coconut trees used for the base of the houses' walls. I could help collect some of the logs and thinner trees used for rafters. Sometimes, I hammered down the small roof rafters because I was afraid that the house would collapse as a result of one of my mis-hammered nails.

I did some work normally done by women. I practiced some weaving and plaiting, although I never kept at it long enough to become any good. The Sikaiana women weave floor, wall and roof mats out of coconut palm leaves. They weave fine

sleeping mats from pandanus. Pandanus is a tree with a long leaf which, when properly dried, makes a strong durable material for weaving. I watched Sikaiana women work with pandanus. But I never had the time or patience it takes to be accomplished at weaving the fine strands, less than 1/4 inch across, into mats which are as large as 6 feet across by 6 feet wide.

I helped some women mulch their taro gardens. Sikaiana has two varieties of taro, *kapulaka* and *haahaa*. (A tour report (BSIP 11/1/3, October 8 1963) identifies *kapulaka* as *Cyrtosperma chamissonis* and *haahaa* as *Colocasia antiquorum*). The *kapulaka* simply grows unattended in swamps. I never liked to eat *kapulaka*, but I did develop a taste for *haahaa*. *Haahaa* must be planted, mulched, and harvested. Rows of *haahaa* are planted on top of long rectangular mounds of earth. Women tend these gardens by standing in ditches along the sides of the mounds. The muddy water in these ditches is knee to waist deep. Several times during the growth of the taro, tree leaves are collected for mulch and placed around each stalk in a process that is called *hakataaute*, literally 'to decorate.' The work in the swamps is dirty and muddy. Many Sikaiana found it hysterical that a man, an American no less from whom they expected more manly and decorous behavior, was engaging in this filthy work.

There were some areas of Sikaiana life which I had considerably more success in mastering. Eventually, as I became more fluent, people were impressed with my ability in the language. Some Sikaiana had suspected that something must be wrong with their language because several Europeans had tried to learn it without success. I developed a reputation for being able to compose songs, although I could not play the guitar. Since I was often talking with older Sikaiana people, I knew more about many aspects of traditional Sikaiana social life than some Sikaiana, especially younger Sikaiana or those who had lived away from the atoll. I learned genealogies and could recite the relationships between any two people. Only a few Sikaiana were better. Of course, I had an advantage because I had access to genealogical data from many different families and a fair amount of my time was spent in trying to master the intricacies of how kinship affects Sikaiana social life.

Some anthropologists have stories about a specific incident that marked their acceptance by the people with whom they lived. I never experienced one specific event which marked my acceptance. My adjustment to Sikaiana life took time. It was about six to nine months before I began to feel comfortable. For the first few months, I wondered how I would ever learn anything about the Sikaiana and how I could ever manage to stay there for two years. By the end of my first year, I felt that I was understanding things and I started feeling sorry that already half my time with the Sikaiana was past.

After about nine months among the Sikaiana, I was beginning to feel adjusted. I was learning the language and something about the meanings that could be attached to their interactions. At this time, I composed my first song in the Sikaiana language. In the long run, this song did not dramatically change my relationships with the Sikaiana. If I had never composed it, my fieldwork would almost certainly have continued on the same course. But the composition of this song represented an important sign of my progress. I was learning the language, and learning to participate, however awkwardly,

as a knowledgeable and creative member of their society.

The composition of this song was met with excitement by the Sikaiana. There was now "Bili's" song and some interest in trying to determine its metaphors and meanings. A young man gave it a tune which the Sikaiana found pleasing. In retrospect, I later came to see that by Sikaiana standards my song suffered from several faults. It was too long, and the metaphors were a bit too abstract, although these dense metaphors added a certain intrigue to the song because the Sikaiana enjoy hidden or figurative meanings. Despite its flaws, the song served as a public representation of my increasing ability in the language and my participation in Sikaiana life. It was played at dances and parties. It was played for the Prime Minister when he visited Sikaiana in 1981, and when I returned in 1987, it was still known and occasionally played.

Learning a Language

I never was much good in languages when I took them in school. In high school, I studied Latin, French and a little Greek. In college, I took three years of Russian. One summer in college, I tried to teach myself some Spanish and then I went to Mexico, but I could never hold much of a conversation. At various points in my life I could struggle along with varying degrees of proficiency in all of these languages, but I never really considered myself to be a competent speaker in any of them. Before the end of my stay in 1983, I was competent in the two languages used by the Sikaiana: the Sikaiana vernacular, a Polynesian language cognate with other Polynesian languages including Samoan and Hawaiian; and Pijin English, which is the *lingua franca* of the Solomon Islands. Pijin combines English vocabulary with some grammatical features of the indigenous languages in the Solomon Islands. Initially, Pijin is unintelligible to English speakers, but it is comparatively easy for them to learn. Most Sikaiana are fluent in Pijin. Some people who have lived away from the island for much of their lives, especially the young men, prefer to speak it in their informal conversations. Not infrequently, a young man who has recently returned to Sikaiana will reply in Pijin to the Sikaiana vernacular of his elders. Entire conversations are held in this manner. English is the third important language on Sikaiana. All written documents are in English. Most of the church service is in English. People speak English with varying degrees of facility. Some are fluent; most people know at least a little bit.ⁱ

There is a fourth language sometimes used on Sikaiana. Many older people learned Mota, a Melanesian language used in the 1930's by Anglican missionaries as a *lingua franca* in the mission schools which were attended by many older Sikaiana people. A few older people still use it to write a letter and to pray (the missionaries taught them to do both in Mota.) Mostly, however, older people use Mota when they want to converse and not have younger people understand what is being said. I never learned Mota.ⁱⁱ

I was speaking Pijin from the time I arrived in the Solomon Islands. Within three months, I was passable in it. By the end of six months I was comfortable speaking it and using idioms, if not speaking idiomatically. But my ability in Pijin hampered my

opportunities to learn Sikaiana. People preferred to speak to me in Pijin rather than in Sikaiana because, at first, it was so much easier to communicate in that way. It took me about a year to be able to string Sikaiana words together into sentences and beyond. By the end of 1981, I could understand the Sikaiana spoken in formal settings such as meetings. Many people, including most of the women, became more comfortable speaking to me in the Sikaiana vernacular rather than Pijin. Throughout the rest of my time among the Sikaiana (including my return in 1987), I was always learning new vocabulary and idioms, and my ability with the grammar was always improving and expanding into more subtle areas. During my second year on Sikaiana, I could use Sikaiana comfortably in informal settings. Because I was collecting terminology as part of my research, I developed a larger vocabulary pertaining to ritual and specialized matters than many Sikaiana people. Almost every adult Sikaiana, even those who had spent long periods of time away from the atoll, could speak the language more idiomatically. They knew how to bend the language without breaking it. I was a slower, more tedious speaker who sometimes fractured rules. I was told that my biggest problem is my accent. Sometimes, when I met a Sikaiana person for the first time, they seemed to need a few moments to adjust to it and to the unusual experience, quite startling to them, of hearing a Caucasian speak their language.

Learning the Sikaiana language is one of the most wonderful events in my life. Languages do indeed give one another soul by offering another perspective. In many cases, this other perspective reflects the attention to interpersonal detail which is part of Sikaiana's intimate social life. When people are romantically interested in others, sometimes they look at that person from the corner of their eyes. In Sikaiana, there is a specific phrase, *ppula ona kalemata*, which describes this covert but often all too obvious behavior. When someone accidentally-on-purpose brushes against the shoulder of a person of the opposite sex to show their interest, it is called *hakavvisi*. Young people are known to seek out confining situations where they might be forced to brush against one another; or at dances a person may steer the body close enough to brush without bumping another. Sometimes, when I get a restless feeling, when I want to simply go for a drive or walk around without any purpose, I think of the Sikaiana word *lulusa* which describes the activities of some pigs as they move back and forth in their pens, or metaphorically, the sometimes restless young men who walk back and forth along path near the shore with no relief from whatever it is that is on their mind.

There are other words which pertain specifically to life on Sikaiana. The night of a full moon the entire atoll is lit up in a beautiful silver shine: perhaps that is why the word for moon, *malama* is similar to the word 'lit up' *maalama*. It is easy to see people and walk the paths on such nights. The night of the new moon, when there is no moon in the sky, is absolutely pitch black. Whereas during the full moon, you don't need a flashlight or lantern to walk around, on the night of a new moon, it is impossible to see a foot in front of you. This darkness is called *poulitau*, more than ordinary darkness, which is *pouli*. The pitch dark night of the new moon has its own special name, *tuumaitu*. The early morning and late evening when it is light enough to see the outlines of people but not actually recognize them as individuals is called *sseni*.

The Sikaiana are sensitive to smell and distinguish many different kinds: *manu*

paipu 'to smell of a pipe or tobacco'; *manu peka*, 'to smell like a flying fox, or to have pungent body odor'; *manu kava*, 'to have a urinary smell'; *manu kulii*, 'to smell like a dog'; and one of my favorites, from their fairy tales, *manumanu tama*, 'to smell of a human' as would be noticed by a man-eating beast. The Sikaiana also like fresh smelling herbs, flowers and perfume. I never paid much attention to a woman's perfume until I lived on Sikaiana. They have a word, *sahio*, which describes the fragrance of perfume left in the air from a woman who has just passed by. It doesn't come from the woman, rather from the area she has just passed through. Today, back in the United States, I find that I now smell perfume left in the air from a woman who has just passed by, and I think of the Sikaiana word, *sahio*.

Field Methods

There was one thing that I was totally unprepared for in doing fieldwork, although it is the most obvious outcome of a methodology based upon participant observation. Before leaving the United States, while I was revising my proposal in increasingly elaborate ways, I had an image of my future self conducting fieldwork as a "researcher," dutifully recording notes, conducting interviews, and extrapolating conclusions. This image of myself as researcher assumed both easy rapport with, and a rigorous distance from the Sikaiana. No one ever told me, or if someone did, I merely ignored them, and foolishly it never occurred to me, that I would also be a human being who had daily needs ranging from getting food and water to having the understanding and companionship of other humans. I brought myself, with all my needs and foibles, along when I went to Sikaiana. I was there as a person, in addition to being a researcher.

I became involved in relationships involving respect, reciprocity, sharing, trust and companionship. I had to make assessments about when people might be trying to manipulate or take advantage of me. I received innumerable kindnesses and much forbearance and felt the obligations these engender. I got angry and felt happy. I enjoyed some events and was frustrated at other times. I had to measure the consequences of my actions in terms of what I was learning about the social values and expectations of the Sikaiana. I shared food with them and ate with them. I made assessments and decisions that affected both my personal life and my research. All the personal and emotional experiences I had in Philadelphia, I also had on Sikaiana.

Much of what I know about the Sikaiana was learned through developing these personal relationships and simply trying to live among the Sikaiana. The non-researcher in me who faced the ordinary problems of human interaction and relationships ended up making as large a contribution to my understanding as that aspiring professional with notebook in hand and theories in head. Participating in their daily lives, I attained an understanding that other instruments of research cannot possibly reach, however replicable, rigorous and "objective" they may be.

ⁱ As stated earlier, the Sikaiana language is rarely used as of 2020.

ⁱⁱ It seems very unlikely that any Mota speakers are still alive in 2020.

V

TAUPULE'S WARNING: The Historical Context of Sikaiana

For an update about life on Sikaiana as of 2019, see note 18 at the end of this chapter.

My first few months on Sikaiana were chaotic.

I arrived on the atoll just before several major holiday celebrations. The Sikaiana have a week-long holiday at the end of November in honor of their Patron Saint, St. Andrew. Then there are week-long celebrations at Christmas and New Year. Many Sikaiana emigrants who are working in other parts of the Solomon Islands return to the atoll at these times for their yearly holidays or work leaves. There is a long school break during this time and students also return. During each of these festive weeks, most work is forbidden by the church regulations. People fish and harvest for their daily needs but they are forbidden from working on long-term projects such as making gardens, building houses or canoes. These week-long celebrations are devoted to worshipping, feasting, dancing, and singing. The Sikaiana also celebrate by drinking fermented coconut toddy.

From my first arrival, there was heavy drinking which became more vigorous during the holiday celebrations. There seemed to be times when I couldn't find anyone sober to talk with. To the extent that I was able, I participated in the drinking. But at first, I didn't like the sour taste of the toddy, and I could not drink as much as the Sikaiana. By Sikaiana standards, my drinking habits are unusually restrained. The Sikaiana normally drink either until the beverage is finished or they pass out. At times, they become quite drunk.

The Sikaiana shyness towards outsiders is abated by drink, and I often found drunken people coming to the courthouse to engage me in conversations. These conversations could be stressful. Their heads bobbing and eyes bloodshot, people asked about my motivations for coming to Sikaiana or warned me about being manipulated by other Sikaiana.

With all the stress of adjusting to a different way of life and of developing relationships in a different culture, I also had the problem of trying to begin my research project. My initial exhilaration at finally doing fieldwork and actually meeting the Sikaiana passed as I began to think about researching their social life: what questions to ask; what to observe; what to record.

I had read a lot of academic publications about other cultures as a graduate student. Unfortunately, such publications leave exactly the wrong impression for beginning fieldworkers. A book or journal article is the end result of fieldwork and presumably the author has come to some conclusions. After reading books and articles, the naive student, such as myself, is left with the impression that human behavior is

coherent and organized. So it was a shock to find incoherence and chaos. The Sikaiana people went about living their daily lives with clear determination, but I had no idea about the shared principles, expectations and values shaping that determination.

I had received a grant from the National Science Foundation to study Sikaiana social organization. But nothing about their institutions, groups, roles or relations seemed organized. After another year I would know that their interactions are patterned and, if not predictable, at least in retrospect they usually can be understood in terms of Sikaiana cultural and social expectations. But during those first few months and for quite a while afterwards, everybody seemed to simply do whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted. I had expected from my readings on other Polynesian societies that land tenure would be important in social organization (as it would prove to be). But all I heard about land tenure from the Sikaiana was that there were serious disputes and court cases concerning land use, and considerable suspicion about how my research would affect these cases. In regard to land use, the Sikaiana agreed on only two things: one, that there were major disagreements about principles and rights of use; and second, that people would try to manipulate me into writing papers to support their claims to land. Most anthropology books described land tenure as a major factor in shaping the organization of groups. Land tenure seemed to be more social disorganization than organization.

But this problem of ascertaining any organization in their social relations was part of an even greater problem. Sikaiana life seemed a hopeless hodgepodge. There were Western institutions clearly similar to ones that I had known in the U.S. but they operated in unfamiliar ways. It wasn't different and it wasn't the same. The church, school, court, and government council were clearly important institutions in Sikaiana life. Most men and many women had left the atoll to attend mission schools and work for wages. Some had attended high school and college. Younger men told me they would rather speak in Pijin than in the Sikaiana vernacular. Most people had emigrated from the atoll for some period of time. There were cassette recorders that played rock and pop music. On Sundays people played volleyball, soccer, and cricket.

These were all practices and institutions that I considered part of my own Western cultural heritage. But there was something different, too. Although manufactured tools and products were essential in their economy, Sikaiana did not have a manufacturing economy. Life on the atoll was based upon fishing, garden horticulture and copra production. They were Christian but the church had a degree of influence over the people's schedules and activities that was much more extensive than anything I had ever seen in my own society. At the same time, many Sikaiana talked about their beliefs in spirits. The volleyball game was played by the same rules as in the U.S., and Sikaiana young men took the same aggressive pleasure in spiking as competitive Americans. But the teams were made up of men on one side against women on the other, contradicting my notions of what was competitive. Although young people played the guitar with Western tunes, the words were all in the vernacular. There was plenty of talking and joking about sex, but single young men and women were never seen together

in public and if found together in private suffered from public disapproval and criticism.

It was as if everything was just a little bit out of focus. I was bewildered. What was traditional? What was Western? And what was all mixed in? It didn't make any sense.

I had only been on Sikaiana for about 2 months when a scandal developed which the Sikaiana considered to be an example of the breakdown of their traditional culture as the result of outside influences. Representatives of the priest and church committee found that many young men and women were having secret sexual affairs. The missionaries had instilled a moral code that disapproved of premarital affairs. The punishment for a premarital affair, if it becomes public knowledge or comes to the attention of the priest, is temporary suspension from taking Holy Communion. The couple must make a public confession to the congregation before reinstatement. Sikaiana parents strongly disapprove of premarital affairs, although with an unapologetic double standard: they are most upset when their daughters, not their sons, are involved. Many adults took a moralistic stance and claimed that the scandal represented a disintegration of their traditional culture as a result of outside influences.

I would eventually learn that there was a complication in all this. Much of the morality concerning pre-marital sex came from the teachings of missionaries. Traditionally, there were secret love affairs that were widespread, almost universal, but were considered to be wrong and, as in the story of Peia from the chapter 3, could lead to hostility.

For several weeks this scandal was a major topic of conversation. Sometimes it was the topic of humor. One young Sikaiana man living in Honiara requested that the National radio station play the popular song, "It Hurts To Be In Love," and dedicated it to the young women of Sikaiana. Many people, especially adults, claimed that they were outraged. One day not long after the expulsions from church had been announced, I was sitting along the beach facing the lagoon and talking about the news to a man who was about 40 years old. He had been born and had matured in a social system with many Western institutions such as the church, schools, and labor for wages. This man had worked for a while in a workshop in Honiara but an injury had forced him to retire. He was married and disapproved of the premarital romantic affairs of younger people. Like so many Sikaiana, he blamed the present-day lack of morality on contact with other cultures and traditions. Then he told me about his great-grandmother, Taupule, who had warned the Sikaiana people about the destructive consequences of contacts with Europeans and their cultural traditions.

Taupule

Taupule's story is frequently recounted by various Sikaiana people in different versions. But everyone agrees about the basic details. Taupule was a woman from Nui

in present-day Tuvalu (the Ellice Islands). She was born in the mid-19th century. Somehow, either through love, seduction or stealth, a European trader made off with her. Some Sikaiana name the trader as "*Plea*," perhaps "Blair." Blair died and Taupule was inherited by his assistant, a man named Alan Piva. Taupule travelled with Piva on his trade ship and eventually became pregnant (or some say she was already pregnant by Blair). Piva decided that it would be best to leave her on land to have her baby and return later to pick her up. He decided to leave her on Sikaiana. Maybe he chose Sikaiana because it was near his boat's course. I also suspect that, like many other visitors and traders, he found the people to be friendly, reliable and trustworthy. Moreover, he realized that the Sikaiana language was similar to that spoken by Taupule and she would feel comfortable there. Piva left Taupule and continued his travels. On Sikaiana, Taupule bore a daughter, named Sisilia. Some claim that Piva wanted this child to be named "Million" after one of his schemes to get rich mining phosphate. But the heyday of phosphate mining was after the time of her birth and this might simply be a more recent elaboration to the story.

Eventually, one of the Sikaiana men entrusted by Piva to look after Taupule set up house with her, and she had some children by him.

A few years later, a boat arrived at Sikaiana's reef with Piva on board. Taupule's Sikaiana husband and his close relatives feared that Piva would be angry with him for taking her as his wife. I was told this man called together his mother's kin, who in Sikaiana thinking are in a special relationship of support when emergencies arise, and together they plotted Piva's death. Piva was drowned as he was making his way ashore. Some people claim that Piva at first thought that the Sikaiana were simply trying to have fun by dunking him, a common kind of playfulness I experienced about a century later. Some claim that Taupule pleaded that Piva be spared, telling the Sikaiana plotters that Piva would not object to her marriage to a Sikaiana man. Some say that Piva saw Taupule and the young child walking along the shore just before he was pulled under water. Everyone agrees that Piva and most members of his crew were killed.¹

Because she had lived on Tuvalu, Taupule had much more experience with European culture than the Sikaiana. Missionaries had already arrived at Tuvalu, and Taupule was, at least nominally, a Christian. She had a Bible or prayer-book, almost certainly the first on Sikaiana. People say that she even held some Christian religious services in her house.

Taupule is also remembered for warning that contact with Europeans would have destructive consequences for the Sikaiana. Some people claim that she worried that contact with Europeans would result in diseases and deaths. Others, like her great-grandson who first recounted her life to me, say that she was warning about the destruction of Sikaiana cultural traditions.

Taupule had a total of four children with her Sikaiana husband. During my stay three of Sisilia's four children were alive, all grandparents. A grandson of Taupule by

her Sikaiana husband had the name of the ill-fated trader, Alan Piva; he was Sikaiana's priest. Another granddaughter, a mature woman with grown children, bore the name, Taupule. One of Taupule's great-grandsons lived in New York for several years where he was posted as the Solomon Island's representative to the United Nations.

In part, Taupule's warning about culture change was prophetic.

Sikaiana History

Even by Taupule's time in the latter part of the 19th century, Sikaiana life had undergone important changes as the result of contacts with traders and whalers. By then, the Sikaiana had were using manufactured trade goods and there must have been increased pressure on the production of local resources to trade for them.

Early in my stay, it became apparent to me that any adequate study of present-day Sikaiana social life has to take into account the historical factors that shape it. There are a variety of resources for researching Sikaiana history. I interviewed old people to record their account of the events during their lives. (At the time of my stay there in 1980-1983, there were three elderly women who had matured before the arrival of Christian missionaries in 1929; all had died by my return in 1987). In addition to life experiences, the Sikaiana recount their history in oral traditions, and in some cases, these can be confirmed by independent sources and historical documents. Traders and travelers visited Sikaiana in the 19th century and wrote down their impressions. In the later part of the 19th century, the British extended their sovereignty over Sikaiana as part of the Solomon Islands Protectorate, and records were kept by visiting government officials. These government records, many found in the files of the National Archives in Honiara, are a source of information about Sikaiana throughout the 20th century.

The first recorded account of Sikaiana was made by one of the earliest Europeans to arrive in the Solomon Islands. In 1606, the Spanish explorer de Quiros met a man named Luka on Taumako who was not a native of Taumako, rather he came from an island about four days journey away. De Quiros refers to this island as "Chikayana," and most scholars identify it as Sikaiana (Jack-Hinton 1969:149; Woodford 1916:39). Luka's knowledge of the region indicates that Sikaiana had contacts with other neighboring islands. He claimed that a double canoe with about 110 people came from "Guaytopo" to Sikaiana. Jack-Hinton (1969:149-150) infers that Guaytopo is Vaitupu in the Ellice Islands (Tuvalu), although he does not rule out other possibilities. Luka also described the island of Tikopia, where he took de Quiros, and then beyond Tikopia, an island called "Manicolo" which Jack-Hinton suggests could refer to Fiji and Tonga (although other scholars suggest Vanikoro). Luka set what at that time must have been the Sikaiana record for distance in voyaging when he accompanied de Quiros to Peru (see Jack-Hinton 1969:148-53).²

The island of Sikaiana itself was first sighted by Europeans in 1791 and named

Stewart's Island. Nothing specific is recounted about visits by Europeans in the early 19th century. There is a Sikaiana legend that the first steel axe was brought to Sikaiana about five to six generations before the birth of middle-aged men in the 1980s. This corresponds with the era of trade contacts that are documented in the records of whaling and trading ships. By the mid-19th century, Sikaiana had become a popular stop for traders and travelers due to both its convenient location along important trade routes and the friendly and hospitable reputation of its inhabitants (Bayliss-Smith 1975:298-299, see also Woodford 1906:165). A writer in the Nautical Magazine of 1848 wrote:

I would advise all ships bound to China and Manila from South Wales to sight this group [Sikaiana] for the purpose of their chronometers. No danger need be apprehended from the hostility of its inhabitants, as they are very hospitable, and few in number, there being only 38 able bodied men on the group....I have had much intercourse with these natives and can recommend them as being trustworthy. (Anonymous 1848:575)

The writer was probably Andrew Cheyne who spent about nine months on Sikaiana collecting beche de mer or sea slugs (a delicacy for some people) in 1847. Another mid-19th century visitor, who circumvented the world, wrote:

If the inhabitants of the Solomon group were the most savage race of men we encountered throughout our cruise, these amiable Sikayanese left on us the impression of being the most moral and peacefully disposed race of aborigines that we became acquainted with, and even to this day the few fleeting but highly suggestive hours we spent with these primitive people are among the most singular, yet delightful, on which memory rests, when recalling the incidents of our circumnavigation. (Schertzer 1861:622-623)

In a paper read to the Royal Geographical Society in 1916, Charles Woodford, the Resident Commissioner of the Solomon Islands, described the inhabitants of Sikaiana by citing the favorable impression of Cheyne and adding his own agreement:

He [Cheyne] describes the natives as "without exception the best disposed he has met with among the islands". This character I have great pleasure in being able to confirm. (1916:41)

This favorable impression continued into the 20th century and certainly enhanced Sikaiana interactions with Europeans (see Lambert 1941:109-110; WPHC 1925:938; LSC 1/1/35:9; Time 1943 (41):38, 40). Two navy fliers, Paul Knight and Calvin Crouch, shot down over Sikaiana in late August 1942, remember the Sikaiana as a happy and helpful people.

By the middle of the 19th century, the Sikaiana had adopted new activities as a result of this contact. An Austrian visitor reported that the inhabitants could play draughts and a card game called "odd fourth" (Schertzer 1861:602). At this time, some Europeans were residing on the atoll (Shineberg 1967, Schertzer 1861:612-613). Moreover, some Sikaiana men left their home to work on boats. One visitor reported that there were 11 bachelors on the atoll, three of whom left on his ship, the *Wanderer*, adding, "all [were] young men, who seemed glad to join us" (Webster 1863:60). Europeans who visited Sikaiana during this time report that the people could speak "broken" English (Schertzer 1861:602, Webster 1863:51-52, Anonymous 1848:575). Although it seems unlikely to me that there was great facility in English, some Sikaiana probably learned enough to communicate with visitors as a result of their contacts with whalers and other visitors.

After about 1870, the great period of whaling had ended and there were fewer boats visiting Sikaiana. Traders, like the unlucky Piva, visited the atoll, but it is difficult to determine how much this contact influenced the life of the atoll. Sikaiana legends recount that a group of refugees from internal wars in Kiribati (the Gilbert Islands) were found adrift in the ocean and taken to Sikaiana by a trader. This part of the story can be confirmed by historical accounts (see Maude 1970:210, 1968, Woodford 1906:168). The Sikaiana claim that these Gilbertese refugees were killed after plotting to take over the atoll, but this cannot be confirmed (one informant told me that the men died during an epidemic). Many Sikaiana genealogies have a Gilbertese woman in their ancestry from this period. According to the Sikaiana, these Gilbertese women were spared and taken as wives.

In the late part of the 19th century, there was widespread recruitment of Solomon Islanders to work as indentured laborers on sugar plantations in Queensland, Australia. Recruitment was very heavy on Malaita, the island nearest to Sikaiana. But Sikaiana seems to have been passed over as a source of labor. In 1893, in order to regulate this unscrupulous labor recruitment, also known as "blackbirding," and to further its own

colonial interests against Germany, Great Britain established a Protectorate over most of what is now the Solomon Islands.³

In 1897 the Protectorate was extended to include Sikaiana, Rennell, and Bellona Islands. Because of some errors in procedure, this annexation was officially reaffirmed in 1899 (WPHC 1899:233). Although it had nominal sovereignty over Sikaiana, the Protectorate government of this period seems to have had little direct influence upon Sikaiana life. There was the visit in 1897 by a government vessel to declare the annexation of Sikaiana. Charles Woodford, the Resident Commissioner, visited the atoll in 1906 with the trader Oscar Svensen, who operated a trade store on Hale, the main islet. (Svensen was probably not a permanent resident, rather he periodically visited the island and had a local person act as his agent.) The next recorded visit by a government representative took place in 1924, although there may have been some in the years between (WPHC 1924:2802). After about 1930, Sikaiana was visited about once a year by an officer of the Protectorate government.

Records concerning the Protectorate's administration of Sikaiana before 1930 are sporadic, but it is evident that the government took a protective attitude toward the atoll. In 1909 there was an application to mine phosphate on Sikaiana (see WPHC 1909:176), but the undertaking was never carried out. In response to the application, Resident Commissioner Woodford wrote:

I believe that the introduction of foreign laborers to the islands inhabited by a purely Polynesian population, perhaps the most uncontaminated by external influences of any at present existing in the Pacific would not benefit the natives. (Letter dated January 24, 1910, in WPHC 1909:176)

In 1922, probably as a result of the same protective attitude, Sikaiana along with the Shortlands, Ontong Java, and Tikopia, were all declared closed areas for any labor recruitment in order to protect their inhabitants from infectious diseases (WPHC 1923:2165). Because many Sikaiana were anxious to earn money, the government agreed to recruit them for work on the vessels which served the Solomon Islands, a policy which continued until the 1950s. As a result, many Sikaiana men of this period were well-travelled in the southwest Pacific.

Traditional Sikaiana Society: 1900-1929

Sikaiana from 1900 to 1929 is a kind of baseline for this book. When I refer to "traditional" Sikaiana social life, I am referring to the practices of this time. All social systems are always changing. Sikaiana legends indicate that there were migrations, conflicts and other changes long before European contacts. Certainly, interactions and exchange with traders and travelers in the 19th century changed their life: the steel tool technology of the atoll in 1900 was very different from the shell and wood technology of

1800. In a sense there is no one period of "traditional" Sikaiana life because it was constantly changing.

But I use 1900-1929 as a baseline for two main reasons. First, non-Christian ritual and ceremonies were still being practiced. The conversion of the atoll to Christianity in the 1930s had a pervasive effect on all areas of Sikaiana life. Second, the very oldest people on Sikaiana in 1980-1983 had witnessed this period in Sikaiana's history in their youths and I was able to interview them about their lives during this period.

From 1900 to 1929, the material culture of Sikaiana was heavily dependent upon trade goods, most of which were obtained through trading copra. The oldest living Sikaiana people do not remember shell tools ever having been used for any heavy construction work in their lifetimes, although they saw discarded shell tools lying around and knew that their ancestors used them. One older person examined my surface collection of these tools and insisted that her ancestors must have been much stronger than the present-day population in order to be able to clear bush, build houses and construct canoes with such ineffective tools.

By 1900 trade cloth was used for everyday clothing and in ceremonial exchanges. Steel tools were used for construction. People had a taste for tobacco. There were several trade stores stocked by Europeans and operated by Sikaiana agents. Occasionally, there were resident European traders. Woodford's description of trade items found in trade stores in the Solomon Islands at the turn of the century corresponds to the situation on Sikaiana as remembered by older people:

... brier root pipes, clay pipes, ... wooden safety matches, American axes, ...plantation and butcher knives, pocket knives, plane irons for making adzes, files, large oval boilers, frying pans, cast iron cooking pots, lamps and lanterns for mineral oil, calico grey, white, ...blue dungaree, flannel shirts, cotton towels, dungaree trowsers, arm rings of white earthenware (in imitation of native shell rings), white and red Venetian beads, glass bead necklaces, rice, sugar, ship biscuits, tinned beef, tea, kerosene... (WPHC 1896:477)

In 1924, a visiting Protectorate official, Hector MacQuarrie, described the trade items on Sikaiana as being of a higher quality than elsewhere in the Solomon Islands:

Cheap tobacco and trade goods which might attract natives of the Solomons proper have no sale on Sikaiana. The better brands of tobacco are bought; no one will look at cheap perfume and therefore only the better perfumes are sold; cloth is bought in fifteen and twenty fathom lots and must be strong and serviceable....only the best brands of safety razors find a sale. (WPHC 1924:2802)

During this period some Sikaiana people left Sikaiana to work for Europeans or as crew members on the Protectorate government's ships. European visitors to the atoll during the early 20th century had no problem finding native translators who had traveled away from Sikaiana and were familiar with Europeans (Nerdum 1902; Woodford 1906; Lambert 1941:109).

Before 1930, the Sikaiana still practiced traditional rituals. Traditional ritual can be seen as divided into two spheres which were somewhat distinct. One sphere encompassed the atoll-wide ritual ceremonies conducted by the chief (*aliki*) and his ritual officers, *sapai ulu*, *takala*, *tautuku*, and *pule*. Usually, each officer was associated with a specific *descent* line, called *hale akina*, and ritual house, called *hale henua*. The ritual performed by each officer was secret and had to be performed correctly in order to be effective. The authority of these men was limited to ritual matters; they are not remembered to have had special power or authority in political affairs or disputes. The atoll-wide ceremonies involved most, if not all, of Sikaiana's population as participants. These ceremonies invoked Sikaiana's founder heroes and benefited the community as a whole. The ceremonies included the *Huata*, a harvest ceremony; the *Manea*, a ceremony performed to repair Hale Aitu, the central ritual house; and the *Teika Llee*, a ceremony performed when a large fish washed ashore on the reef.

In contrast to these community-wide ceremonies, there was a different arena of supernatural ritual that centered around spirit mediums and the spirits of dead ancestors who possessed the mediums. As already discussed in the story of Peia, the Sikaiana once believed that the spirits of some people, apparently always men, lived on after death. These spirits could return to possess a medium, most often a direct male descendant. Many extended families had at least one such ancestor whose spirit returned to possess a descendant. Older Sikaiana people described the rituals performed for the spirits of the founder heroes, such as Tehui Atahu, as concerned with the general welfare of the atoll as a whole. In contrast, they described the spirits of deceased ancestors as concerned with the affairs of individuals, in many cases causing them harm. Ancestor spirits could predict future events or inform their mediums about current events. Some Sikaiana people told me that in the times of infrequent communications, the ancestral spirits could provide information about a Sikaiana

person living abroad. More often, these spirits were described as having a darker side. An ancestor spirit attacked people who had offended either him or his medium and protected supplicants (usually from his own extended family) from the malevolence of other ancestral spirits. The Sikaiana claim that entire descent lines were annihilated by angry spirits. In some cases, for example in the story of Peia, a spirit attacked members of his own lineage. In harming and protecting people, there was competition among different ancestral spirits to demonstrate their superior power. Some are remembered to have been powerful and effective, others less so. Many Sikaiana people believe that the population increase that has occurred since the introduction of Christianity is due to the protection that Christianity offered from the malevolence of these spirits. Both spirits and mediums were usually men; although sometimes the wives of mediums helped translate the spirit's messages which were spoken by the medium during a trance in a strange language.

Sometime in the late 1920s, the community-wide ritual life received a blow from which it would not recover. A European trader living on Sikaiana convinced some Sikaiana men that the *kammanu*, "government," wanted them to burn down and destroy the atoll's ritual houses. Although there was no such policy on the part of the Protectorate's government, the Sikaiana describe themselves as gullible and afraid of the government's power. Some people proceeded to burn all the ritual houses. These houses were the centers for ritual ceremonies that ensured the health and welfare of the people of the atoll as a whole. Their destruction was considered to mark the end of the effectiveness of these rituals.

Conversion to Christianity: 1929-1941

In the late 1920s, some Sikaiana people who worked on government ships went to the Bishop of the Melanesian Mission and asked him to send Christian missionaries to Sikaiana. In November 1929 the Melanesian Mission's ship, the *Southern Cross*, arrived and left a group of missionaries to conduct the conversion. These missionaries were not Europeans; rather, they were Melanesian converts who were members of the Melanesian Brotherhood, under the leadership of its founder, Ini Kopuria. This brotherhood is better known in the Solomon Islands by the name "Tasiu," which means 'brother' in Mota, the language used by the Anglicans as a lingua franca in their early missionary activities. The Melanesian Brotherhood recruited Solomon Islanders, often themselves recent converts to Christianity, to take religious vows to convert other people in Melanesia.⁴

The conversion on Sikaiana was rapid, dramatic, and within in ten years almost complete. In 1934, The Bishop of Melanesia could write with justification:

Sikaiana has been entirely evangelized by the Brothers [Melanesian Brotherhood]. The church is now well established there and the population, which in six years has increased from 235 to 300 is now Christian (LSC 7/2/34: 24-

25).

In explaining to me why they asked for missionaries to come, older men (who were young men at the time) claimed that their elders wanted them to have the opportunity to go to school to learn how to read and write. As early as 1902, one visitor wrote about the Sikaiana people:

They wanted to learn reading and writing. My friend was asked if he would stop on the island as a teacher. They offered him a house and a certain number of coconut palms. (Nerdum 1902:24)

This interest in education seems to have been partly a result of a desire for access to Western material goods. It was also partly the result of a desire to know more about the outside world. In 1936, the Bishop of Melanesia described:

A growing restlessness on the part of the [Sikaiana] people who want more and more to be in touch with the wider life of the group. (BSIP 1 III F 49/6, letter from Walter Baddley dated 8/31/36)

In 1937, the Resident Commissioner of the Solomon Islands made a similar assessment of the desire on Sikaiana to see the outside world when he wrote:

The people of these islands [Rennell, Bellona, Sikaiana, Ontong Java and Tikopia], the young men in particular, are keen to visit other parts of the Protectorate and work as crews of vessels or house servants. They have, however, no wish to permanently leave their home. (BSIP 1 III F 49/6, letter dated 5/3/37)

The rapid conversion to Christianity can also be explained in the context of the recent destruction of the traditional ritual houses. Without these centers, the ritual for ensuring the community's welfare was no longer considered to be effective. On the other hand, the personal ritual involving contact with ancestral spirits remained intact. This latter system, however, centered around hostility, disease, and death. Moreover, not everyone had access to a powerful ancestral spirit, and some families felt threatened by the spirits of other families. For many people, Christianity provided access to supernatural help in maintaining their welfare and protection from the ancestral spirits.

Christian practices came to be viewed as more efficacious than traditional ritual. There are two commonly repeated stories, known by many Sikaiana people of all ages, that describe confrontations between the traditional religious leaders and the

missionary leader, Ini Kopuria. According to legend, Ini announced a Christmas dinner for those Sikaiana who joined the church. The traditionalists decided that they would ask their ancestral spirits to make it rain in order to spoil the Christmas dinner. Ini accepted this as a challenge to prove that his Christian religion was more powerful. According to the Sikaiana, at the time of the feast the sky was overcast as a result of the supplications of the traditionalists to their ancestral spirits. But the sun broke through and there was clear weather as a result of Ini's prayers. This proved to many that Christianity was a more powerful devotional system.

In the other story, one medium asked his ancestral spirit to search for the Christian Deity in order to learn about him. Upon returning, the spirit said that he had approached the Christian Deity but was unable to get close to it. Displaying the pragmatic attitude typical of many Sikaiana, the ancestral spirit advised his medium that the Christian Deity must be very powerful and that the medium and his followers would be best advised to stop communicating with the ancestral spirit and to worship Christianity.

The traditional ritual and supernatural system were not viewed as inherently false; rather the Christian devotional system came to be viewed as more powerful and, in many ways, preferable. By World War II, virtually the entire population of the atoll had converted to Christianity. The last remaining pagan died in the 1950s, although he is remembered as supporting church activities. It is said that he refused to join out of fear that his ancestral spirit would kill him. On the last day of his life, he was baptized as a Christian.

The Mission's Conversion Strategy

The conversion of Sikaiana by Solomon Islanders who themselves had recently converted to Christianity was part of the Melanesian Mission's strategy for converting the Solomon Islands. One missionary described the conversion strategy as "'white corks' upholding a 'black net'". The white corks were the European missionaries. The black net were indigenous converts who not only managed the local churches but also converted other Solomon Islanders. The Melanesian Mission's conversion policies were reflected in the educational system which they established. As described in the magazine that reported the Melanesian Mission's activities, the "Log of the Southern Cross" (LSC), the Mission had a hierarchical system of education in which the graduates of the highest level were sent back to educate lower levels. From bottom to top, there were village, district, preliminary, junior, senior and theological schools. Solomon Islanders were responsible for management of the lower three levels. At junior schools, such as Maravovo on Guadalcanal, and senior schools such as Pawa on Ugi (or Uki Island) near present-day Makira, teaching was done by Europeans. A graduate from Pawa could then return to teach at the lower levels. The *Log of the Southern Cross* explained:

It is from this school [Pawa] that increasingly a good supply of well taught lads should be going out to be teachers in the villages or in some preliminary or junior schools. (LSC 1/1/37:15, see also LSC 7/1/41:8-12)

On Sikaiana, the Melanesian Brotherhood, and later Sikaiana catechists, opened a small school and managed the local church. They discouraged traditional ritual and many other practices that became considered immoral, including arranged marriages, abortion, tattooing, drinking fermented toddy, burial at sea, adultery, the more restrictive kinship prohibitions, and festivals considered too lascivious. The local church sponsored special feasts and meetings between people who had been enemies in order to resolve their differences. The local church also encouraged everyone to maintain permanent residence on the main islet, Hale, in order to be near the church building and attend services. The major Christian holidays became Sikaiana's festive occasions and were conducted under the auspices of the church.

The missionaries also took young Sikaiana children away from the atoll to be educated in mission schools. These schools were roughly modelled on British boarding schools. One report commissioned by the government in 1940 described the junior school, Maravovo, in the following terms:

In general, the organization with school captains, prefects, scales of rewards and punishments, sports cups and trophies and monitorial and discipline arrangements follows the pattern of the modern boarding school. (Groves Report: p.4-5; in BSIP 1 III F 24/9/1)

From 1930 until the mid-1960s, the Melanesian Mission functioned as the main source of education for the people of Sikaiana. In 1930, four boys were taken to the junior school at Maravovo and six boys to the senior school at Pawa. In 1931, four more boys went to Pawa. In 1934, the Mission began taking young women from Sikaiana to mission schools (LSC 7/2/34:34). In 1936, the District Officer in charge of Sikaiana reported that the *Southern Cross* had taken 30 Sikaiana boys from the ages of seven to 14 to mission schools (BSIP 1 III F 49/6). Moreover, other Sikaiana men worked as servants for the missionaries and joined the Melanesian Brotherhood. By 1940, 58 people had emigrated from Sikaiana, as compared with 272 people who were living on the atoll. Of these 58 emigrants, 46 were involved in mission related activities (BSIP 1 III F 49/6).

The Melanesian Mission was a potent agent for change on Sikaiana by providing formal education and new religious beliefs. It also prohibited many traditional practices and guided the careers of the graduates from its schools. Moreover, Christianity provided people from the diverse ethnic groups of Solomon Islands with shared

experiences. Sikaiana people now shared religious beliefs with other Solomon Islanders and as a result had a basis for interacting with them (see Whiteman 1983).

World War II and After

Following the outbreak of war in 1942, both the Melanesian Mission and the Protectorate government suspended their administrative activities. Most Sikaiana were returned by boat to their home in preparation for the Japanese invasion.

During the War, the Sikaiana people, like other Solomon Islanders, received a memorable lesson in global politics. The British administrators had seemed invincible in their power. The Japanese invaded and easily defeated the British. In the following year, large numbers of Americans arrived in the Solomon Islands, and after vicious fighting, drove away the Japanese. When the British returned to administrate the Solomon Islands after the War, they had lost their aura of invincibility and Solomon Islanders had new frames of reference.

The American military men made a deep and lasting impression on the Sikaiana. They were powerful, wealthy and friendly. Airplanes and warships visited Sikaiana. A major naval air battle was fought almost directly over the atoll. Other air skirmishes were seen. Cases full of food sometimes washed ashore. Sikaiana young men took up smoking manufactured cigarettes during the war, instead of sticks of twist tobacco, because American cigarettes were so plentiful. The Sikaiana also had close personal contacts with the Americans which were very unlike their contacts with Protectorate or mission officials. Patrols slept on Sikaiana, prayed in the local church, drank the fermented toddy, and played cards. The Americans, for example the downed fliers described earlier, were among the first white people who were dependent upon Sikaiana for their survival, a very new and important experience for a people who value reciprocity and interdependence.

The Americans were viewed as a fearless and warlike people who, nevertheless, when not fighting the Japanese, were unusually friendly for white people. Unlike the British administrators, missionaries and traders, Americans joined in Sikaiana activities without repulsion towards their simple lifestyle. Forty years later my willingness to live like the Sikaiana, considered very unusual for white people, made people recall similar behavior by American servicemen.

The Second World War taught the Solomon Islanders that the British were not invincible. It also taught them about global political rivalries and advanced technology. Solomon Islanders, including the Sikaiana, began developing confidence in their ability to manage their own affairs without the British and other industrial nations.⁵

Following the War, the emigration of Sikaiana from the atoll continued, and more Western institutions and practices were established on the atoll. Increasingly, the Protectorate's government replaced the Melanesian Mission as the dominant source of

change in Sikaiana life and contact with the world beyond the atoll.

In 1948, the Melanesian Mission established a new school on Sikaiana assigning as teachers three Sikaiana men who had been trained at the mission's advanced school, Pawa. The school on Sikaiana prepared its students for mission schools elsewhere in the Solomon Islands, especially Maravovo and Pawa.

Sikaiana men began leaving the Solomon Islands for advanced training in other countries. During the War, one young man, Alan Piva, was sent to Australia to receive training as a priest. In the late 1940s, another Sikaiana man, John Kilatu, went to the medical school in Fiji to train as an Assistant Medical Officer (A.M.O.). In the early 1950s, two Sikaiana men were sent to England as part of their training for the police force.

After the 1960s, foreign training projects became a regular part of advanced education for all Solomon Islanders, including people from Sikaiana. By the late 1960s, Sikaiana pupils were attending the national public secondary schools and Sikaiana graduates left for university education. At this time, the Melanesian Mission maintained responsibility for primary education on Sikaiana, but many advanced students attended government secondary schools. In the early 1970s, the national government took over responsibility for the school on Sikaiana. The Church of Melanesia (formerly, the Melanesian Mission) continues to maintain schools for religious training and an academic secondary school, Selwyn Academy.

The government developed local political and administrative institutions on the atoll. In about 1960, the District Officer appointed a group of justices who formed a local court. The local government council or "Area Committee" was elected by Sikaiana voters, replacing a council that had been appointed by Protectorate officials. The government also helped establish the cooperative store which bought copra and sold manufactured goods, and a health clinic staffed by a trained nurse or medical assistant. A shortwave radio station was placed on Sikaiana in the 1950s. After 1946, there were yearly visits by a boat carrying officials of the Protectorate government. These visits also provided transportation to and from the atoll for the Sikaiana people who were working or attending school. The government increased its transportation services by sending a ship about four times a year in the late 1960s. By the time of my arrival in 1980, there was a boat once every month.

In 1978, the Solomon Islands became an independent nation with a Westminster form of government. Sikaiana was established as a separate political unit within Malaita Province. Sikaiana and Ontong Java together elected one representative to the national parliament, although because of its larger population that representative has always been from Ontong Java.

New Institutions and Roles

Sikaiana is governed by a locally elected council or Area Committee of elected representatives from each of seven "wards" which roughly correspond with traditional social groupings. These representatives, in turn, elect a council president and vice president. The members are usually mature males who are familiar with Western institutions. Young unmarried men rarely take an interest in the activities of the council. At the times of my stays, no woman had been elected to it, although some women have advanced education.

This government council meets periodically to discuss community matters as they arise. It supervises the bi-weekly day for public work, the collection of a local per capita tax, interaction with officials from Malaita Province, control of pigs, and the selection of the Area Constable. My research project was approved by it.

The power of the council is limited and superseded by provincial and national laws. For example, in 1981, in an effort to control pigs, the council announced that any pig seen outside of its pen could be speared and then eaten by the person who speared it. This by-law had been enacted previously when wandering pigs had damaged food crops. This proclamation, however, ran counter to by-laws adopted by Malaita Province. The people who speared pigs, even though they did so at the behest of the council, were found to be liable to pay compensation to the owners of the pig.

This council is sometimes factionalized, reflecting divisions among various Sikaiana factions, many of which derive from disputes about land use. In 1981 some people jokingly referred to themselves as the "opposition party" on Sikaiana, using a term used to describe the opposition party in the Solomon Island's Westminster type of national government.⁶ In early 1982, local elections for a new council were held. In several wards there were accusations of cheating and three separate ballots were held. The council has some discretion in appointing an Area Constable who administers the law on the atoll and, by local standards, receives a good salary. Twice, the Area Constable was dismissed following elections when a new council took office. Replacements, however, have to be approved by provincial administrators.

There is a nominal head-tax of a few dollars which every year is collected by the Area Constable. Most residents have little or no income, and therefore pay no income tax. The government requires that they do work service amounting to one day every other week. Usually, people work around their own houses and along the main path. They weed, clean up leaves, keep the paths smooth and swept, and clear away any rubbish. Occasionally on these days, people go work on the school grounds or other public areas. People who miss work on these occasions are taken to court and, if found guilty by the local justices, charges a small fine.

Sikaiana has a local court that meets to hear local cases. The justices in the local court are Sikaiana men who receive some training after their selection. All cases tried by the local court may be appealed to a magistrate from the province's administrative

center in Auki. Cases involving large amounts of money or serious physical injury must be referred directly to the magistrate. Cases brought before the local court in 1980-1983 included improper fencing of pigs, trespassing, failure to work on the community work days, minor assault, threatening behavior, public fighting (while drunk), one case of public slander, and five land disputes. There is a part-time salaried court clerk who schedules cases, records testimony, and reports decisions to the magistrate in Auki. Justices are paid a fee for the time that they are hearing cases.

Most cases handled by the court are minor and the fines are comparatively small. The local court, however, hears all land cases. In these cases, there is considerable animosity and, in Sikaiana thinking, the stakes are high. Because of the small size of the population, no matter which side wins a land case, there are inevitable claims that the justices' decision was the result of favoritism towards allies or relatives.

From 1980-1983, there was an informally constituted Custom Committee, made up of representatives from each of the land-holding lineages and elders. This committee advised the local court on traditional culture which is called *kastam* or *kastom* (the term is derived from the English word, "custom"). In 1980-1983, it only met once, at the request of the local court, to examine some issues in a land dispute. By the time of my return in 1987, the National Parliament of the Solomon Islands had passed a law requiring that all land cases be litigated according to customary law or tradition before being heard in the local court. During my stay in 1987, the Custom Committee was convened several times, although its decisions could always be appealed to the local court. The local court, moreover, was not bound by its decisions and often overturned them.

Sikaiana has a local primary school, which is administered by the province. After graduating from this school, those students who pass a standardized national test are sent to secondary schools elsewhere in the Solomon Islands. At the Sikaiana school, there are usually two or three teachers who divide the students into two or three different grades or sections. The school covers the curriculum for six "standards" (the British equivalent of grade levels). These teachers are appointed by Malaita Province, which also pays their salary. Usually, the province appoints Sikaiana people to teach there, although in the past there have been occasional non-Sikaiana teachers.⁷

Most Sikaiana people, both residing on the atoll and away from it, are members of the Church of Melanesia. On the atoll, there is an ordained priest and several catechists (all are Sikaiana men), who are paid small salaries. Occasionally in the past, a non-Sikaiana priest has been posted to Sikaiana.

There are several committees and clubs associated with church activities. Most men living on Sikaiana are members of a religious society, the Companions, which supports the activities of the Melanesian Brotherhood (the missionary group which originally evangelized Sikaiana and is still active in missionary activities). Most women belong to the Mother's Union, another religious organization. Both groups sent

representatives to training courses in other areas of the Solomon Islands. The Mother's Union sponsored the religious training of some of the atoll's young women at Buanana, a religious school. These young women returned and started a Sunday School for the atoll's children.

Until the cyclone of 1986 there was a cooperative store that opened most days in the morning and evening after church services. As mentioned earlier, for a fee, anyone could join and take a share of the profits, although there were no net profits between 1980 and 1983. The cooperative bought copra from the people on Sikaiana and then oversaw its transportation and sale in Honiara. With the money from copra sales, it bought supplies from merchants in Honiara and then shipped them to Sikaiana on the Belama. These goods were sold in the cooperative's small store on Sikaiana. From 1980 to 1982 the cooperative was administrated by the Sikaiana women. The store had a secretary, a shopkeeper and a clerk who received small salaries for their work. There were two men employed for small salaries as "copra graders," who examined the quality of the copra to make sure that it had been properly baked. If some of the copra is not properly dried, it becomes moldy and receives lower prices from purchasing agents in Honiara.⁸

In 1980-83, several days before the ship's monthly arrival, Sikaiana's residents work as a group at cleaning, bagging, and weighing the copra which has been purchased and stored by their cooperative society. When the ship arrives, everyone was supposed to help transport the copra across the reef to the ship, unload supplies from the ship and then transport them to the store. There were frequent complaints that some people participated more regularly than others and that often the men, especially the younger men, were too drunk to work.

Government statistics report that between 1975 to 1984, Sikaiana's average production of copra was 50 tons per year. Between 1980 to 1983 first grade copra was being purchased at between SI \$ 200 to 300 per ton (at that time the Solomon Islands dollar was roughly equivalent with the US dollar, although it was devaluing throughout that period).⁹ The cooperative store's records report that SI \$12,000 was received in 1980 for copra, while about SI \$9,000 was received in 1981 when prices dropped. A household which worked hard on copra could earn the equivalent of about SI \$50 to \$60 in one month, although it would be difficult to sustain that every month.

The atoll has a clinic, staffed by a nurse or medical dresser, where minor wounds can be treated and drugs are dispensed. The dresser has some specialized training and his salary is paid by the government. Serious medical cases are sent to Auki and Honiara. In emergencies, a message is sent by the short-wave radio and, if practical and warranted, a boat is sent to Sikaiana. A few women elect to give childbirth on Sikaiana with the help of the dresser. Most women prefer to travel to hospitals at Auki or Honiara for their deliveries.

The Sikaiana are committed to the successful operation of these institutions.

Their enthusiasm is reflected in their complaints: sometimes the religious leaders overstep their authority; the court justices don't understand Sikaiana customary law and traditions in adjudicating cases; young people are not doing as well as they should in school and the province does not give their school enough support; the local council is not properly overseeing the affairs of the atoll; administrators in Auki and Honiara don't understand or care about Sikaiana problems; the cooperative store is mismanaged.

The atoll has many committees that support these institutions including a school committee, a church committee, a kindergarten committee (which was formed in 1981, but so far as I know never met afterwards), a women's club, the religious societies mentioned above, and two cooperative society committees (although in 1980-1983, only one functioned). Most of these committees meet at least several times a year. Membership in most of these committees is open to anyone who wishes to join. Most people participate in several if not most of these committees. The administration of these institutions and committees is considered to be everyone's concern, and there are frequent public meetings involving all residents to discuss projects or issues. These meetings are often held after Sunday Communion outside the church when most of Sikaiana's residents are present. Although most of the discussion is conducted by men, women are encouraged to participate. There are efforts to seek widespread support and involvement in all projects. On Sikaiana, there is strong pressure to administer through consensus. Anyone, regardless of the office that he occupies, who tries to assert his own viewpoint or use his power to coerce other people will find himself both disliked and unsuccessful.

There is also widespread participation in the atoll's institutions and offices. In the last 50 years, new offices have been established including catechists, school teachers, court justices, a court secretary, council members, copra graders, cooperative store clerks, medical dressers or nurses, a radio operator, an area constable, and a provincial assembly representative. Most adult men residing on Sikaiana participate in one or more of these offices. Indeed, the large number of institutions, offices, and committees necessitates full participation of the atoll's residents. Often only a minimal amount of training is necessary for occupying these offices. The positions that require specialized training include those of the priest, school teacher, and medical dresser. Other offices such as the area constable and justices receive some training which is provided after the person has been appointed to the position. Most people, if they are willing, can work in a variety of other local offices including radio operator, copra grader, council member, court justice, court clerk, catechist, shopkeeper, and area constable. Often one individual has held many different offices at various times in his life. For example, my neighbor Johnson Siota served as the radio operator, school teacher, president of the council, court clerk, and representative to the Malaita provincial assembly. Martin Tautai was a court justice, member of the provincial assembly and catechist.

This high degree of participation in the atoll's public institutions preserves traditional patterns of participation in the atoll's ceremonial life. Before the arrival of

the missionaries, traditional ritual offices involved the participation of many different people. The chieftaincy was not consolidated within any single clan or descent line. Three clans, Saatui, Vaka Vusu and Saalupe alternated in succession. There were many ritual offices. The chief had several ceremonial assistants (a *taumunimuni*, *tautuku*, *tama tootoohekau*, and two *pule*). The successor to the chief, the *takala*, was a member of a different clan from the chief and had a different set of men who occupied these ceremonial offices. When the chief died, the *takala* took office as the new chief and new men succeeded to these offices. Still other men are remembered for being ritually powerful as a result of their contact with the spirits of deceased ancestors. These mediums did not necessarily occupy the offices associated with the atoll's ritual ceremonies. One important difference between the present and traditional participation in the atoll's offices is that in the traditional system the knowledge for these roles was held by family descent lines, whereas the knowledge for Western offices is more accessible to everyone. But the general pattern of broad participation is maintained.

Over the past 60 years the Sikaiana have ceased to participate in some ceremonies focused on their community life, especially those rituals that ensured the atoll's welfare such as the *huata*, *teika llee*, and *manea*. The introduction of Western institutions, however, has resulted in new contexts for community activities. In traditional Sikaiana society, the atoll's population joined to perform ritual activities. At present, they come together even more frequently for church services and to celebrate Christian holidays. There are also frequent and recurring secular activities that involve everyone's participation. Every other Wednesday is a "council day" in which people are expected to work at cleaning the areas around their houses. People who do not work are taken to court and, if convicted, they are fined. There are work projects at the school and church. The atoll's residents are expected to clean and bag copra before the ship's arrival. Moreover, all residents of the atoll are often called together for meetings to discuss matters of concern such as the education of their children, the fencing of pigs, and the operation of the cooperative store.

Almost everyone participates in the feasts associated with church holidays or the arrival of an important visitor. During these feasts, people bring food, which is placed in the center of the village path, usually in Loto. People sit in a large rectangle along the sides of the path and around the food. The food is then distributed in equal shares among all the people who are present. Some feasts are small, such as a goodbye party which involves a group of friends and neighbors. Many feasts, however, are large and involve all of the atoll's residents. Usually, the large feasts take place during the Christian holidays. These holidays are also times when most of the atoll's adult population spends several days drinking fermented toddy. Marriage exchanges, which include four separate presentations, and involve the entire island, are often scheduled at these times, as well.

Emigration and Population Growth

Following the conversion to Christianity in the 1930s, there has been a sharp and continuous increase in population. The population residing on Sikaiana has been stable from 1900 until the present at about 200-250 people. But the total population of Sikaiana people has almost tripled. The excess population has emigrated to other parts of the Solomon Islands, especially Honiara. In the 1930s a little less than 20% of the total population of about 300 people had emigrated away from Sikaiana. By the 1950s approximately 40% of a total population of about 400 people were emigrants. By the 1970s and early 1980s about 60% of the total population of about 600 people were living abroad (see Chart I in Appendix).

The stability in the number of people living on Sikaiana during the entire 20th century, despite other changes, suggests that the atoll has the food resources to support a limit of about 200-250 people. Timothy Bayliss-Smith (1975: 295-297), an anthropologist with training in demography, estimates that Sikaiana's carrying capacity will support between 215 and 430 people. **In the official 2009 census of the Solomon Islands, the most recent one available at this writing in 2020, the population of Sikaiana was listed as 249.**

During my stays in the 1980s, many Sikaiana claim that the population growth was the result of Christianity's protection of people from deaths caused by vengeful ancestral spirits. They also claim that under the traditional practice of arranged marriages, couples did not marry until late in life and therefore had fewer children. In the traditional society, population control was probably always important and necessary. At the turn of the century, a visitor wrote:

They were worried about their future because the population in the last few years has increased and that would bring starvation and illness as they knew from experience. (Nerdum 1902:24)

In the 1930s the missionaries effectively forbade the practice of abortion and arranged marriages. Because of opportunities for wage labor in other parts of the Solomon Islands, people were no longer totally dependent on the limited land resources of Sikaiana and there was less economic pressure to limit the number of children. In addition, throughout the period following the arrival of the missionaries, there were improved health facilities available for the Sikaiana people.

Emigration, both before and after World War II, has been motivated by a combination of economic need and the desire for adventure. A report about Sikaiana written by a government administrator in December 1946 notes:

The island is self supporting in the essentials of life and maintains adequate contact with the outside world through the crew of the Kurimarau (government ship). This provides at the same time adventure for youngbloods and a supply of

trade goods for the island.

After World War II, most migrants went to Honiara, the new capital of the Solomon Islands, which was built around the roads, houses and construction materials left by the military operations at Henderson airbase. These migrants settled and raised children who lived most, and sometimes all, of their lives away from the atoll.

The Solomon Islands became an independent nation in 1978. Its population, like that of Sikaiana, is increasing steadily. At the time of its 1976 census, the Solomon Islands had a total population of about 200,000 people and was growing at about 3.3% per annum. The population in the late 1980s approached 300,000. The nation imports most of its manufactured goods, from the bush knives used in every rural village to the automobiles, trucks and boats (and the fuel to run them) used for transportation in Honiara. It exports commodities, mainly copra, fish, timber and palm oil. A large part of the government's finances is dependent upon foreign aid and import duties.

By the 1980s, there were more Sikaiana emigrants living in the Honiara area than were residing on the atoll. Honiara had a total population of about 15,000 in 1976. By 1981, Honiara's population had increased to over 20,000 and was growing at a rate of about 6% per annum. Honiara attracts migrants from the approximately 60 different ethnic and linguistic groups throughout the Solomon Islands. These include Melanesians (about 93% of the total population), Polynesians (about 4%) and ethnic groups who migrated into the Solomon Islands while it was a British Protectorate including the Gilbertese (about 1.5% of the population) and Chinese. Honiara has several banks, an international communication facility, an international airport, a port, the Solomon Island's best-equipped hospital, several Western stores and supermarkets, and is the home for all major governmental offices.

Raised in this multi-ethnic setting, increasing numbers of Sikaiana men and women are marrying non-Sikaiana Solomon Islanders. In the 1980s, almost half of the Sikaiana people who married did so to a non-Sikaiana partner, although usually their parents prefer them to marry another Sikaiana. In 1983, there were 20 Sikaiana males married to non-Sikaiana women and 42 Sikaiana females who are married to non-Sikaiana men. In 1987, I counted a total of 84 marriages (168 people) in which both partners were Sikaiana. At that time, I counted 91 Sikaiana people married to non-Sikaiana. In the period between July 1983 and June 1989, I am aware of 15 Sikaiana to Sikaiana marriages (resulting in 30 Sikaiana people married to another Sikaiana), and 29 Sikaiana who married non-Sikaiana. Of these 29 non-Sikaiana marriages, however, four were with people from Ontong Java, with whom the Sikaiana have traditionally had close ties and intermarried on occasion in the past. Six others included people who were divorced from a Sikaiana partner, old, or for other reasons would have found it difficult to find another Sikaiana to marry.

The Sikaiana population is mobile, and people frequently move back and forth between Honiara and Sikaiana. Small groups of Sikaiana people are also found near Kia

in Isabel Province, and at the Lever Brothers plantation at Yandina. Many Sikaiana people who live elsewhere in the Solomon Islands spend their yearly vacations on Sikaiana. It is not uncommon for people to live on Sikaiana for several years and then leave to work for wages for a few years. Sikaiana is also the home of last resort for people who have lost their jobs or are retired.¹⁰

People temporarily leave Sikaiana for a variety of other reasons: to attend training courses run by the government or religious organizations; for medical and health reasons; to purchase building equipment; to visit relatives; to help relatives with the care of children or with work projects; and to help sponsor wedding exchanges in Honiara. During my stay in 1980-1983, most adults left Sikaiana at least once and some left and returned several times.

Most of the atoll's residents are ethnic Sikaiana, that is to say the descendants of the 19th century inhabitants of the atoll. The exceptions are notable. In 1980-1983, and again for a month in 1987, there was, of course, myself. There is also one Kiribati woman, married to a Sikaiana man and now fluent in the Sikaiana language, who lives there. In 1981, there was a young woman living with Fane who was the daughter of a Sikaiana man and his non-Sikaiana wife. Sometimes non-Sikaiana spouses stay with their families for holidays. Rarely, non-Sikaiana will stay there longer. In 1981-1982, an Isabel man married to a Sikaiana woman stayed on the atoll; by 1987, they had moved away. In 1987, there was a man from Ontong Java who was married to a Sikaiana woman residing on the atoll with his family. One of his daughters married a Sikaiana neighbor.

Some people find that life on the atoll is comfortable, but there are only limited resources and no opportunities for economic or educational advancement. Copra is the only marketable item from Sikaiana, and production is so labor intensive and land so limited that it is not possible to accumulate large amounts of cash.¹¹ With the exception of the medical dresser and school teachers, there are no full-time salaried jobs on Sikaiana. Ambitious young men often use the same terms to describe Sikaiana: a good place for a "picnic," but not a place for someone with "plans." Moreover, life on the atoll poses difficult challenges for young men raised in Honiara who have not mastered the skills necessary for survival on Sikaiana.

Life in the towns, on the other hand, is not very attractive for unskilled laborers. In the early 1980s, the base salary for an unskilled laborer was only about US \$100 per month (although many Sikaiana men earn higher wages). The minimum wage for work in towns in 1985 was about US \$.13 an hour. The lowest paid regular government worker earned SI \$ 2298 per year (about US \$ 1150), the highest regular civil service salary was SI \$ 17,172 (about US \$ 8,500). People who worked for the government on a per diem basis received less; their minimum wage in 1985 was SI \$ 5.76 per day (about US \$2.80). As a result of devaluation, the US dollar has more than doubled its value against the Solomon Island dollar during the 1980s; by 1993 the US dollar had tripled its value. The result, of course, is inflation.¹² Given these

circumstances, some Sikaiana men choose not to work in towns for wages that merely meet bare necessities. They return to Sikaiana where life is more relaxed and many basic resources are available through gardening, fishing, and producing copra. People often say, everything on Sikaiana is “free,” using the English term.

In 1987, it seemed to me that it was harder for unskilled laborers to find work in Honiara than it was during 1980-1983. Even workers with skilled training were having difficulty finding jobs. Some young men living in towns seemed to be facing long-term unemployment. Although I only stayed on the atoll for one month in 1987, my impression is that the young men residing there were different from their counterparts in 1980-1983. In 1980-1983, most of the young unmarried men seemed to view their stay on Sikaiana as only temporary, they planned to leave and go back to work for wages. They seemed mainly interested in enjoying themselves, seeking romance and drinking fermented toddy. In 1987, many young men seemed to be planning to stay there indefinitely. More than their counterparts in the early 1980s, the 1987 group of young men seemed to be more interested in mastering the skills necessary for survival on Sikaiana, including clearing gardens, fishing, and making canoes. These changes may be the result of limited opportunities in finding salaried employment. When I returned in 1993, I was struck even more by how hard it was for young men to find employment. Most of the young men on Sikaiana in 1987 had remained. Several young men looking for work in Honiara in 1987 were still looking for employment in 1993. It also struck me that in 1993 there were many young men who could not find any work and, unemployed (*liu*), drifted from place to place.

Contemporary Sikaiana Society, 1980-1993

Sikaiana material culture was heavily dependent upon trade items by the late 19th century, and manufactured goods continued to be incorporated into the local economy in the 20th century. There has been a loss of traditional techniques in handicrafts and fishing technology. This loss and replacement have taken place in the memories of elder Sikaiana people, although it was most rapid following the Second World War. Most construction is done with manufactured string and rope bought in stores, instead of string made from coconut fiber. All fishing nets in use on Sikaiana were bought in stores, although the material used for bird nets is still homemade string, as is the rope used for supporting the feet when climbing coconut trees and the rope used to tie oneself to a tree when catching birds.

In former times, all clothing was made from material woven on the back-strap loom. Today the loom is rarely used, and most women under 50 years old need assistance from older women in setting up the loom. During the 20th century, a belt made from this loom was still being worn during and after pregnancy to flatten the belly for cosmetic reasons. In the 1980s a few women still followed this practice, but most did not. Handwoven pandanus sleeping mats are still made and most young women raised on the atoll are expected to learn how to plait them, but a lot of people sleep on foam

mattresses. The last outrigger canoe was constructed in the late 1960s. There were none on the atoll during my stays in the 1980s, although I learned that one was constructed in about 1989. The standard canoe for transportation is a single-hull dugout canoe, *manau*, which is an innovation introduced in the lifetimes of older people. No one goes on long distance sailing voyages. People get nervous if they began to drift just a little distance away from the reef into the ocean.

Without outrigger canoes, it is no longer possible to undertake certain ocean fishing techniques such as catching flying fish. Many of the traditional techniques of net fishing are no longer practiced because hand-held nets are no longer made. Older informants remember that fish weirs, man-made walls of coral that trap fish during changing tides, once extended across the entire length of the reef. Only two weirs were built during my stay in 1980-1983. Diving at night with a spear and flashlight, one of the most popular present-day fishing techniques, was introduced after World War II and became popular in the late 1960s.

At present (1980-93), no traditional rituals are still being practiced, and almost all the people who were adult participants in them have passed away. There are occasional re-enactments of traditional ceremonies, most often as part of the ceremonies that are performed when an important dignitary visits the atoll. But these re-enactments are becoming more and more difficult to perform as the older generation who witnessed these events passes on. Traditional midwifery is no longer practiced, although occasionally some older women are consulted for traditional knowledge about pregnancy. Sometimes, but not often, couples follow the traditional practice of separating the husband and wife before the birth of the first child. Post-partum separation of the couple is no longer practiced. There is, however, one traditional medical practice which is still remembered. Several old men still use a traditional method for setting bone fractures.

During my first stay in 1980-1983, older people who witnessed the traditional ritual life remembered the events associated with specific ceremonies, but they rarely knew the significance of the ritual. Mature people were reluctant to discuss any aspect of traditional culture, telling me to consult elders, who themselves claim that they never really learned all that their own elders knew. Frequently I was told that following the conversion to Christianity in the 1930s the older men who knew traditional rituals were very reluctant to teach them to younger people, preferring to follow the new Christian teachings. Moreover, children in the 1930s, brought up in mission schools, recall that they were uninterested in learning the traditional ritual.

Soccer, rugby, netball, volleyball, and cricket are played on Sundays when work is forbidden. A traditional game, *haiumu*, which is similar to "kick the can," was still played in 1980-1983, but apparently not with the frequency of a generation ago. Some games that were popular in the childhood of my elder informants, such as dart throwing and a traditional type of wrestling, are played very infrequently.

Traditional songs are still performed during holidays, as greetings for important visitors, and when elders are drinking fermented toddy. But song composition in traditional genres is decreasing and many younger people do not know most traditional songs and dances. In the late 1960s, some younger men learned to play and compose with the guitar using neo-Polynesian and Western tunes. During the 1960s and 70s, radios and tape-recorders were introduced onto Sikaiana. Recently, however, there has been a revival in traditional dances that will be discussed in a later chapter.

Education, emigration, and contact with other Solomon Islanders have had a strong impact on language use on Sikaiana. Older people claim that the Sikaiana spoken by younger people (and by some older people who have spent long periods of time away from Sikaiana) is incorrect. Many younger people, especially males, consider Pijin English to be their primary language. Some younger males have told me that they "think" in Pijin English, and most spontaneous conversations between them are conducted in that language.

These changes occurred in part as the result of international forces, including British colonial expansion, world-wide trade and market economies, World War II, and the evangelical practices of Christianity. But the Sikaiana also participated in these processes, made choices, decisions and commitments that resulted in many of these changes. New institutions are *their* institutions just as the English language learned by my German ancestors when they arrived in the U.S., now belongs to me.

Sometimes people writing about culture change, including many anthropologists, assert that the people who participate in Western institutions such as Christianity, education, and wage-labor, are the bearers of a "spuriously" borrowed culture rather than a "genuine," traditional one. These condemnations of culture change ignore the fact that people and social systems are always changing and incorporating outside practices. It also is a perverse form of ethnocentrism for an anthropologist to assume that he or she is the judge of cultural authenticity (see Handler and Linnekin 1984 and Keesing 1989).

By and large, the Sikaiana have been enthusiastic to adopt these new institutions. Some of their motivations have been described above. The atoll has limited economic resources. Introduced technologies, steel tools and Western medicine, for example, offer obvious advantages. It is unlikely that anyone will want to continue to chop wood with a shell tool simply for the sake of tradition when a steel one is available, or supplicate their ancestral spirit to cure malaria when there is primaquine.

Readers may find it sad that Sikaiana is losing much of its traditional knowledge, practices, and ways of doing things. But it is inevitable. Western societies also have undergone profound changes since World War II, not to mention since 1900. I won't trade my word processor for a typewriter or a quill pen in order to preserve tradition. I have different views about politics, economics and morality from my parents and grandparents. I won't adopt their views simply to save tradition. I often think that

anthropologists who lament culture change in other societies should be sentenced to live 100 years earlier in their own society.

Sikaiana Attitudes Towards Change

Most Sikaiana people are involved in and committed to these new institutions and practices. There is also, however, a widely held view that present-day Sikaiana society has lost some of its former harmony and happiness.

Traditional Sikaiana culture is referred to by the Pijin term, *kastom* or "custom." *Kastom* means a variety of things, both admired and disparaged. It may refer to customary land tenure, traditional dances and standards for sexual behavior. In some cases, *kastom* is described as good. Other times, *kastom* is seen as evil and fearful, especially when it refers to the attacks of ancestral spirits in their former religion. Sometimes, Sikaiana people lament the loss of traditional ritual which they believe resulted in the welfare of the community or success at specific projects such as fishing. But at the same time, there is a widely held opinion that some of the traditional ceremonies were at best foolish or stupid and at worst resulted in conflict, disease and death.

The Sikaiana, like people everywhere, reinterpret their customs and traditions in light of their present. The Sikaiana refer to some of the practices introduced in the 20th century as part of their traditional culture or *kastom*. The scandal about premarital affairs discussed in the beginning of this chapter was scandalous in terms of Christian morality introduced in the 1930s. It is probably less scandalous when viewed in terms of pre-Christian traditional Sikaiana culture where adultery was prevalent to the point of being normative (see chapter VII). Indeed, for Fane, the oldest person on Sikaiana, the real scandal was not the sexual affairs; rather, it was that the young men had boasted so often about their exploits that the knowledge about the affairs had become public. For the old people of her generation, the scandal was that the affairs became public; for the middle-aged generation, the scandal was that the affairs happened at all. Some activities and practices introduced by the missionaries in the 1930s are now considered to be traditional or *kastom*. The Sikaiana perform songs and dances, which they describe as *kastom*, even though they acknowledge that they were learned during this century from the inhabitants of other Polynesian islands.

There is also considerable ambivalence about Westernization on Sikaiana. The Sikaiana people have a self-deprecating sense of humor when referring to their living conditions and lifestyles as opposed to what they perceive as more sophisticated and desirable Western lifestyles. The term *lokolo* refers to a general lack of familiarity with Western lifestyles. *Lokolo* is borrowed through Pijin English from the English word 'local,' and means 'provincial,' or a 'hick.' It is usually used derisively and humorously, but as in much of Sikaiana joking, it reflects concerns and values. *Lokolo* may be used to deride a person's poor English, lack of mechanical ability, or unfamiliarity with European methods of housekeeping. I was teased as being *lokolo* when I couldn't get

my pressure lamp to work. Underlying the humorous use of this term is the notion that many Sikaiana people have not yet achieved a Western lifestyle, which is viewed as an ideal to strive for. At the same time, a Sikaiana person who acts in a Westernized manner risks criticism for trying to show off and being immodest.

Interactions with other ethnic groups and rapid social change have made the Sikaiana more self-conscious about their own culture. They are aware of alternative ways of doing things and the dramatic changes in their cultural practices which have lobolo taken place during their lifetime. Concepts about culture, such as *kastom* and *lokolo*, underscore this thinking about their own traditions and modernization. *Kastom* is not so much tradition itself as it is a modern conceptualization of tradition.¹³ *Lokolo* reflects a concern with the modern life of Honiara and technological development and the recognition that Sikaiana culture is changing.

Although the Sikaiana are willing participants in new institutions, there is also a general view among many Sikaiana people that their society is changing for the worse. As evidence, they point to alleged improper conduct on the part of younger people, lack of knowledge about traditional songs and dances, changing sexual mores and marriage patterns, violence and property destruction, lack of enthusiasm at festive occasions, and angry disputes about land tenure. Often these changes are attributed to the fact that a generation of people, brought up in towns away from Sikaiana, have not learned proper Sikaiana conduct. In this sense, Sikaiana traditional culture is viewed as good and is seen as being eroded by emigration and the introduction of new cultural traditions and practices. People claim that before the arrival of the government there were no land disputes, in contrast with the very bitter disputes of the past 50 years. They claim that drinking fermented toddy was more moderate and restrained. Elder people claim that food was much more plentiful in the past. Finally, there is a very frequent assertion that people are not as happy or joyful as they once were.

My own view of Sikaiana society is more optimistic than that of many Sikaiana. As an outsider in their society, I regard as important some basic features of their social life which they themselves take for granted. As a native of an industrial society, I see the many ways in which Sikaiana remains different from such societies. Natives of Sikaiana society, immersed in a rapidly changing social system, take for granted the personal and intimate organization of their community. Many areas in which they see change, for example song composition to the guitar and the public drinking which accompanies community celebrations, I see as preserving a close-knit community.

The Structure of Social Change on Sikaiana

There are two main aspects of social change on Sikaiana: (1) the incorporation of outside institutions into the social life of the atoll, and (2) at the same time, the integration of the Sikaiana into regional, national and international systems. Western institutions such as a primary school, medical clinic, store, church, council, and court

have all been established on the atoll. By and large these institutions were introduced by outside representatives of industrialized countries, in particular by the British Protectorate officials and the Anglican missionaries. These institutions are part of regional, national, and international organizations. They are now integral to the social life of the atoll, even more so than their counterparts in many American communities.¹⁴ At the same time, Sikaiana people emigrate from the atoll to continue their education, work for salaries, and use better medical facilities. As emigrants they participate in many of the same institutions that are on Sikaiana. They attend church, send their children to local schools, and elect representatives to the government, but they are not directly involved in managing these institutions. Migrants also are exposed to the cultural practices of other ethnic groups in the Solomon Islands and Western ways.

Sikaiana is no longer an isolated and self-sufficient social system. As a result of trade, colonization and migration, it has become part of a larger and much more diverse social system involving not only the rest of the Solomon Islands but also global political, economic and cultural forces. As part of this "integration" into a world system, Sikaiana's population has undergone some internal differentiation. There are new similarities with foreigners at the same time that there are new differences among themselves.

New institutions and roles are based upon specialized expertise and attached to larger and more distant social systems. This expertise, unlike that of Sikaiana's traditional ritual experts, is developed and systematized throughout the world. The school, church, council and court are part of much larger administrative systems. Sikaiana people who become teachers, priests, accountants, carpenters, mechanics and electricians learn a body of knowledge that is standardized throughout the world. Economic transactions in these new roles are usually based upon earning wages and cash. Systems of expertise and money are able to transcend any particular locality by establishing contacts across large expanses of space and across former barriers of culture and geography. At the same time that they attach the Sikaiana to a larger social system, newly introduced specialized roles have created new kinds of differences among the Sikaiana in knowledge, occupation and wealth. External integration is accompanied by internal differentiation (see Donner 1988b).

In former times, labor specialization was based upon sex, and almost every adult knew the full range of work activities necessary for survival: men knew how to build a house, fish, garden and carve a canoe; women knew how to tend the gardens, harvest crops, weave and plait mats. Although there were some specialized offices, especially ritual ones, these offices were not tied into world-wide systems of expertise. Reciprocity, not money, was the basis of economic transactions and was embedded in personal relations between kin and friends.

As mentioned before, these processes of change are not unique to Sikaiana. They are world-wide and have been a central issue in social theory since its founding in the 19th century. Emile Durkheim (1893/1933) noted that modern, technologically complex

societies are organized around occupational and professional specialization. People devote careers to mastering roles which are interdependent with one another. He contrasted this interdependent "organic" structure with the "mechanical" structure of technologically simple societies where most people are self-sufficient. Max Weber (1922/48, 1968) emphasized the importance of expertise in modern decision-making institutions. Although he worked independently of Durkheim, these modern institutions correspond with a specialized division of labor. Others have argued that social relations in complex societies become more impersonal as they become organized around occupational and bureaucratic specialization. Tonnies (1987/57) described the close, personal, intimate and face-to-face relations in these small-scale societies as based upon *gemeinschaft* or "community" as opposed to the more formal, occupational, bureaucratic and market relations found in towns and cities, what Tonnies called *gesellschaft*, "association" or "society." American sociologist C. H. Cooley (1923) described as "primary" those relations based upon familiarity and intimacy such as in the family, friendships, neighborhood or close associations. Sociologists use the term "secondary" to describe the more impersonal relations found in businesses, modern bureaucracies and mass media.

Later observers generally followed these approaches in describing the specialized and relatively impersonal nature of modern professional relations, the division of social relationships into distinct non-overlapping settings, and the breakdown of small communities as meaningful sources for values expectations in shaping social relationships. Gluckman (1955, 1962) contrasted the diffuse wide-ranging relations of small, multi-plex societies where everyone knew one another with the single-stranded "uni-plex" relations of societies with highly specialized and separate relations. Redfield (1947) contrasted the communal religious folk life as opposed to the more cosmopolitan urban life. Building upon the writings of Durkheim and Weber, Parsons synthesized these changes into a set of pattern variables which were central in his functional sociological theory (Parsons 1951, 1966).¹⁵

In symbolic interaction studies, the relations in small communities are described as based upon personal knowledge of people as individuals with unique "biographies" as opposed to the impersonal role relations associated with specialized professional roles in industrialized societies. Sometimes, these changes are compared in terms of "scale": the low population, rural "small-scale" as opposed to the high population, complex, often urban "large scale" (see Barth 1972, 1978, Benedict 1966, 1968, Lieber 1977, Berreman 1978). Recent writing about Western industrialized societies has continued these themes, describing the breakdown of communal life, the development of specialized bureaucracies, and the increased emphasis upon a highly isolated private sphere of individual experience (for example Bellah et al 1985, Giddens 1990).¹⁶

These approaches describe general trends and tendencies or what Weber termed "ideal types"; every social system deviates from them and every society includes both kinds of relations and institutions (see Bender 1978, Berreman 1978). Even in complex, industrialized societies, doctors can be friendly and family members can be formal.

Traditional Sikaiana had special, if not specialized, offices associated with traditional ritual. Many anthropologists do not like these approaches because they find too much variation in specific societies. Many sociologists lost interest in these issues of change because they are hard to operationalize and measure. I like the approach because it offers a perspective in which Sikaiana is examined part of processes of integration and differentiation that are affecting people everywhere in the world, including industrialized societies. The fact that these issues are difficult to measure and quantify does not mean that they should be ignored.

In a recent discussion of modernization, Anthony Giddens (1990) has described the world-wide processes associated with modernity as resulting in the "disembedding" of relationships from their personal and local context and combining them into more abstract regional systems. In the Sikaiana case, for example, medical practices such as developments in malaria control, connect them with many other places in the world; cash allows them to enter into market relations which ultimately extend across the world. The integration of Sikaiana life into regional processes is not limited to its involvements with the administrative systems of Western institutions. Every area of Sikaiana life is affected by regional and international practices. The Sikaiana have radios that play music which is produced in England, Australia or the United States. Some homes in Honiara have video-cassette players. The Sikaiana play in baseball, volleyball and soccer leagues. Their vernacular language is constantly affected a regional language, Pijin, and Pijin is affected by a world language, English.

But contrary to what Giddens might have predicted, these processes of change have not yet resulted in the complete breakdown or disembedding of communal relations. Most people of Sikaiana ancestry, including both residents of the atoll and many Sikaiana migrants living in other parts of the Solomon Islands, have preserved their social ties based upon intimacy, personal knowledge and shared commitments. The close, personal relations of this social system are grounded in the small size of the population and the fact that the Sikaiana are all closely related through interlocking kinship ties. These close-knit social relations are supported by shared expectations about human behavior and interpersonal interaction which shape motivations and social relations. Reciprocity and sharing further bind the Sikaiana together. On the atoll, widespread involvement in communal activities is preserved by the widespread participation in the atoll's social institutions, including the Western institutions introduced over the past fifty years. In towns, the Sikaiana have developed new activities which unite them including their sports association, marriage exchanges and funerals. Both on the atoll and in Honiara, close relationships are developed in shared events and ceremonies such as song composition, toddy drinking, and marriage exchanges. Many of these community events have been developed recently and serve to maintain familiarity and intimacy in a world that is also rapidly changing and modernizing.¹⁷

The Sikaiana people have incorporated differentiated and specialized institutions and roles and yet maintained a community based upon personal relations, intimacy and familiarity. Present-day Sikaiana relationships with one another are not necessarily the

same as they were 100 years ago in "traditional" Sikaiana society, but they are indigenous and contribute to forming a distinctive group of people both on the atoll and away from it. Their society remains a personal and intimate one.

In the original version of this written in the early 1990s, I concluded that Taupule's prophecy did not fully come to pass because so many indigenous institutions were maintained albeit in new form. But over the past 30 years there have been many more changes and it seems, in many respects, there have been very significant changes in Sikaiana life. These changes are discussed in the following footnote.¹⁸

NOTES

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1. Although I have searched various archives, I have not been able to find any historical reference to these names or this event.
 2. Although it cannot be assumed with absolute certainty that the inhabitants of Sikaiana at Luka's time were ancestral to the present-day inhabitants, his story does fit nicely with Sikaiana legends. Semalu and Kaetekita lived about 10-12 generations ago.
 3. The British established very few "Protectorates" during their colonial period. This type of administration system was based on a policy that the Protectorate would be self-sufficient in paying for its administrative costs. Histories of the Solomon Islands include Fox (1975), Bennett (1987).
 4. The Melanesian Mission later became the Church of Melanesia when it came under the control of Solomon Islanders. By the time of my arrival in 1980, the Church of Melanesia was largely concerned with administering to the needs of its present members rather than converting the few remaining pagans in the Solomon Islands. For a history of the Tasiu or Melanesian Brotherhood, see Fox (1958), Whiteman (1983). A very good description of Anglican missionary efforts in the Solomon Islands is found in Hilliard (1978). White (1991) offers an excellent study of the incorporation of Christianity into the daily life on Santa Isabel Island.
 5. In the late 1940's, a political movement developed, named variously the "Marching Rule" or "Maasina," that strived for greater Melanesian independence (see Allan 1950, Worsley 1957, Keesing 1978).
 - 6 In 2018, I was told some Sikaiana people living in Honiara used the contemporaneous American political term, "fake news" to refer to some political issues in the Solomon Islands.
 - 7 In 2018, there was a middle school, going to about 9 years of education.
 - 8 I was told that the cooperative store never reopened after 1986. As of 2018, there are several private stores operated by Sikaiana people.
 9. From Statistical Bulletin no.9/85, Government Statistics Office, Solomon Islands. The Sikaiana copra was often reconditioned or re-dried in Honiara. This lowered its selling price.
 - 10 During ethnic fighting in the early 2000s, many people left Honiara, where the fighting was centered, to return to Sikaiana.
 11. Following a cyclone in 1986, the Sikaiana stopped harvesting copra. I have been told that

this remains the case until the present (1995).

^{12.} These figures are from the Solomon Islands Statistical Yearbook for 1984/5, Statistical Bulletin no 28/85. Readers should keep in mind that the Solomon Island's dollar lost about 2/3 of its value relative to the US dollar between my first arrival in 1980 and my second departure in 1987.

^{13.} For a discussion of this issue on Sikaiana see Donner (1992b, 1993). For general discussions in Oceania, see Keesing and Tonkinson (1982), Keesing (1989), Jolly and Thomas (1992), Lindstrom and White (1993).

^{14.} I make this statement based on my work as a reporter for a small-town newspaper covering borough and township meetings in rural Pennsylvania. Unless there is a very major issue under discussion, meetings in rural towns usually are unattended by citizens, and there is little interest in them.

^{15.} Parsons presented the pattern variables in contrasts: "diffuse/specific", "particularistic/universalistic", "ascribed/achieved", "affective/affective neutrality". Although these are variables in all social relations, Parsons argued that as societies develop more specialized and differentiated institutions (and in this sense "evolve"), their relationships change in a systematic manner. The kinship relations typical of small-scale social systems often share the features of being ascribed (determined at birth), diffuse (serving many different functions and applying across a wide range of activities), and particularistic (expectations are determined by factors inherent in the individual relationship) as opposed to professional/occupational roles of more complex societies which share the features of being achieved (determined by ability and performance), specific (serve a specific function such as a medical, legal, commercial one), and universalistic (standards for behavior are determined by factors, such as medical knowledge or legal principals, that apply independently of the specific relationship between the individuals involved). As social systems differentiate and specialize, they tend to develop more abstract universalistic values in order to integrate a larger and more diverse population (Parsons 1951, 1966, Parsons and Shils 1951; see also Miner 1968). Although it is now fashionable among sociologists and anthropologists to criticize Parsons, his synthesis of social theory remains an outstanding achievement. Although he eschews Parsonian functionalism, Giddens' concept of disembedding is clearly related to the processes of specificity and universalism noted by Parsons.

^{16.} Anthropologists who have written about comparative issues in societal organization include Wilson and Wilson (1945), Redfield (1947), Miner (1952), Geertz (1963), Benedict (1966), Barth (1972, 1978), Berreman (1978), Whitten (1980), and Goody (1986). Berreman (1978) offers an excellent summary.

^{17.} They have maintained a sphere of personal relations which are *gemeinschaft* as described by Tönnies or "primary" as described by Cooley. Tönnies' concept of *gemeinschaft* has been described in the following terms:

it refers to a "community of feeling" (a kind of associative unity of ideas and

emotions) that results from likeness and shared life experience (Miner 1967).

Cooley defined his concept of primary group:

Perhaps the simplest way of describing this wholeness is by saying that it is a "we"; it involves the sort of sympathy and mutual identification for which "we" is the natural expression. One lives in the feeling of the whole and finds the chief aims of his will in that feeling.

In the very next sentence of his explanation, Cooley notes that conflict, along with empathy, exists in primary groups:

It is not to be supposed that the unity of the primary group is one of mere harmony and love. It is always a differentiated and usually competitive unity, admitting of self assertion and various appropriative passions; but these passions are socialized by sympathy, and come, or tend to come, under the discipline of a common spirit (Cooley 1923:23-24).

Conflict, as I shall explain, is an important aspect of Sikaiana relations (see also Simmel 1908/1955).

Both definitions are vague in the use of terms such as "community of feeling," or the sympathy and mutual identification of a "we." In the following chapters, I intend to be specific in describing the various relationships, interactions, ceremonies and events in which the Sikaiana form a "community" based upon "primary" relationships.

¹⁸ ADDENDUM 2020

I need to add an addendum here based on conversations with Robert Sisilo and Priscilla Taulupo, who resided in New York from 2016-18. Robert was the Solomon Island's representative to the United Nations, to the US and to Canada during that time.

Between 2017-2019, Robert Sisilo was posted by the Solomon Islands as their country's representative to the United Nations in New York City. He was accompanied by his wife, Priscilla Taulupo and some of his relatives. Robert was the first Sikaiana person I met in 1980 while he was studying in Fiji and I have known him over the years. I knew Priscilla from my stays on Sikaiana, 1980-1983. Robert and Priscilla told me about the many changes that have taken place among the Sikaiana people since my stays, 1980-93. Below I include some the changes that they described to me in conversations and in a taped interview conducted in September 2019. Both were clear that they could not speak with much specificity about life on the island of Sikaiana itself because they have not spent extended time there recently. But they are both very deeply involved with the Sikaiana community. They are not responsible for any misunderstandings on my part.

Readers are reminded that the Sikaiana community described here includes the people on the island, and people who have emigrated to other parts of the Solomon Islands including the US and Australia. The majority of emigrants live in and around Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands. It is interesting to me that at least some of these emigrants still refer to Sikaiana island as "home" and their postings on social

media show a continuing loyalty to the welfare of the people, both on the island and elsewhere. As there was from 1980-93, there is still a concentration of Sikaiana people at Tenaru about ten miles outside of Honiara, where there is a settlement, a cultural village established for tourists, and the site of an annual Sikaiana festival, Tuata.

Probably the biggest change concerns language use. The Sikaiana language is not being used very much by anyone, including the older people who as younger people spoke it during my stays in the 1980s. Robert thinks the changes in language loss may have come about in the 1990s. He said that grandparents speak Pijin because they want to communicate with their grandchildren who do not understand the language. Robert and Priscilla said sometimes younger people will make fun of people using the language. There were two young adults at various times staying in his house in New York and neither used the Sikaiana language, although my impression was that they could understand some of the common phrases. Robert and Priscilla said most conversations among Sikaiana people are in Pijin. Robert and Priscilla think that when their generation dies (they are in their sixties), the language will be lost. Robert said that he had visited Luaniua, a Polynesian island which has close historical and cultural ties with Sikaiana, and the people there, unlike on Sikaiana, still spoke Luaniua.

I have seen that many people use social media, especially Facebook, and most of the postings are in English, which is usually quite good. During my stays in the 1980s, few people used English and although understandable, it was not as correct as the postings I see on Facebook. During my stays, I considered only a very few to be fluent.

Robert and Priscilla told me that some traditional work patterns and crafts are still practiced. People still make coconut sap products including *kamaimai* (molasses), *tono* (round sweet), *mea ppili* (taffy-like candy). Taro (*haahaa*, *kapulaka*) and banana (*huti*) are still grown on Sikaiana. People still keep pigs and chickens. Most forms of fishing including diving (*sepu*) and trolling (*hakattaki*) are still practiced. Women still collect shellfish, although Priscilla said there is a different technique that has become popular in which the shell fish are found in sand not on the reef. She described this form of shell collecting as “*sii(r)aku*” and contrasted it with the collection of shellfish (*okoalli*) on the reef that I knew about from my stays. People still dry the shellfish and send them to relatives in Honiara. People still catch birds with a net (*seu manu*).

People still make leaf houses from local materials on Sikaiana. This requires weaving coconut mats (*tapakau*). (During my stays all houses inhabited by Sikaiana people in Honiara and Tenaru were made from manufactured materials, roofing iron, particle board walling and wood, and I assume that is still the case.) Other houses on Sikaiana are made of manufactured materials. At present, Sikaiana houses are set further inland from the shore than in my time because of tide surges, presumably the result of global warming. (A tidal surge ran across Matuavi, one of the smaller of the four islets in the atoll.) Their description is that houses are set somewhat apart and inland with some flowered and gardened entry ways; unlike during my stays when most houses were on both sides of a path that flowed the shoreline and were built open to view to everyone walking along the main path. Physically it seems to me that Sikaiana houses have become more private.

On Sikaiana houses now have solar panels to provide a small amount of electricity. Some women still make sleeping mats (*vasa*), although most people sleep on

manufactured mattresses (I estimate that about half the people slept on *vasa* during the 1980s). The loom (*mea hau*) is still displayed at the cultural village for tourists, and some of the belts (*taakai*) are still made. During my stays in the 1980s only a very few women wore the loom-made belt, *taakai* when pregnant, traditionally it was worn during and after pregnancy. The only times anyone actually worked on a loom between 1980-83 was when I commissioned a loom as part of a museum collection. It appears that the cultural village and tourism has led to a revival of loom making.

Men no longer make the dugout canoe (*manau*). All canoes are fiberglass and imported. Dugout *manau* were the main form of transportation during my stays and most families had several. They were frequently being made in 1980s. In the 1980s, the *manau* was a single hull canoe that had replaced the traditional outrigger canoe (*vaka hai ama*). During my stays, there were no *vaka hai ama* on Sikaiana, although I heard stories that one was constructed after my stay by older men out of a sense of tradition (the *vaka hai ama* could be used to catch flying fish which was seen as a delicacy).

During my stays, there was usually a ship once a month, although sometimes mechanical problems delayed the arrival of ship. At present, the schedule is more irregular, the ship arriving about once every three months, maybe less frequently.

Robert and Priscilla said that families are not as close as they used to be. Children are more independent from their parents and others than in past times. People are more geographically dispersed. A lot of children leave the island to go to school in Honiara. There are several Sikaiana people who have lived in the US for extended periods. There are many more marriages with other ethnic groups (including both of their children). Fosterage, which was very common during my stays in the 1980s, is less common, although some still exists. They cared for their grandson while in New York. Robert thinks that a lot of children stay with their parents to attend schools in Honiara.

They said that the regulations in interpersonal interactions, the “shame” (*napa*) between in-laws are not followed as strongly as when I was there in the 1980s. A few people keep these prohibitions but mostly they are not followed, especially by younger people. They don’t know about how frequently these traditional prohibitions are followed on Sikaiana, but in Honiara they think most younger people no longer follow some of the traditional regulations on cross-sex siblings (*kave*, usually extended to second cousins and sometimes further) which included not touching clothing or bedding which had been touched by a *kave*.

There are more divorces and more casual romances. There also is some relaxation in expectations around courtship. When I was there young men and women should not be seen together in public, either on Sikaiana, or in Honiara and Tenaru. They did not know whether or not this is still the case on Sikaiana, but this custom is not followed among the migrant community in Honiara where couples are willing to be seen together. The guitar dances between young men and women that were popular during my stays and offered some sanctioned opportunity for contact between young men and women, seem to have been discontinued.

I have to note that during my stays in the 1980s, many people complained about the distancing of family relations, the weakening of fosterage, the loosening of restricted relations and the more open courtship patterns. The descriptions of Robert and Priscilla suggest that these relationships have loosened much further.

There are still a lot of land disputes as there were during my stays.

There are still exchanges at marriage (*penupenu*). There is a lot more

intermarriage with other ethnic groups and sometimes there is a *penupenu* as a part of these marriages.

They said that there is less frequent drinking of alcohol than during my stays. Coconut sap (*kaleve*) is no longer collected at the settlement at Tenaru, but some is still collected on Sikaiana. There is still some drinking. Some of the private stores on Sikaiana sell beer, especially for special occasions and holidays. There is drinking of some harder alcohol, which seems to be made by distilling. They used the word *lokol*, ('local'?, meaning locally brewed?). Robert does not think there are no longer the very large drinking groups, which often involved most of the island, and large groups of people at Tenaru. He said that the drinking groups in both locations are much smaller.

When I was on Sikaiana there were church services twice a day, and communion on Sundays. Weekday services were well attended, and almost the entire island's population came to Sunday services for communion. There are still two services during weekdays on Sikaiana, but Robert and Priscilla were not sure about attendance. Robert and Priscilla said that at the church at the resettlement at Tenaru, there is very low attendance during weekdays with a large attendance on Sunday. They are not sure if this is also the case on Sikaiana. But they also told me that there were complaints on Sikaiana when the priest did not hold services on weekdays.

There is very widespread chewing of betelnut, both on Sikaiana and in Honiara, something that was rare during my stays. Betelnut is now grown on Sikaiana; it was not during my stays. People on Sikaiana keep honey bees, as a way to make money, again something that was not done during my stays.

There is no copra production on Sikaiana. Copra was an important source of income during my stays from 1980-83, but there was no production during my stay in 1987, following a major cyclone in 1986 that hit the island. Robert said the price of copra is so low that it is not viable to produce it. A beetle has ended copra production at the settlement at Tenaru, which never very large scale to my knowledge.

There is no longer a cooperative store on Sikaiana (apparently it was disbanded after the cyclone in 1986), but several people have established independent private stores. Robert and Priscilla said it is now possible to buy food on a regular basis, especially for people coming from Honiara for a visit. Someone could go to Sikaiana and pay for food. I never saw this happen on Sikaiana when I was there: food was embedded in family systems of generalized reciprocity. When I told him that I was surprised by this, Robert said, "it is becoming more commercialized."

During my stays, the local school on Sikaiana only went to Standard 6 (about 6th grade in an American school); the Sikaiana school now goes to Form 3 (about 9th grade).

There are some traditional practices that are still performed. Some people still give massages (*amosi*) for health and children of an expert I knew in the 1980s know how to set bones (*tootoo*). There are occasional song festivals (*puina*), usually associated with a special event. The most recent *puina* was performed to celebrate a Sikaiana person who was a priest.

During my stay in 1987, Sikaiana people in Honiara had formed a sports association ("Vania") to support sports teams in Honiara sport leagues and other Sikaiana activities. Vania no longer exists but there are Sikaiana sports teams in Honiara's sports leagues. These teams are named "Hale," the Sikaiana term for 'house' that is also used to refer to the largest islet in the atoll where most people live.

A new ceremony, Tuata ('stand beautiful') was introduced in 2013. It is held

annually at the resettlement in Tenaru and involves games, dances and other ceremonial events. Robert said it is a time to bring Sikaiana people together and is a popular event that brings in Sikaiana people from around the Solomon Islands. Also, there are events at a cultural village at Tenaru that are performed for tourists. These include traditional dances and other ceremonies, including demonstrations of the loom (mea hau).

VII

GENDER ROLES: Ritual Opposition and Daily Support

There are several notable changes since my stays in the 1980s. Relations between young unmarried males and females, at least among those living away from the island, are much more open and free. There appears to be more movement between partners, and more divorces. It seems that there are fewer restrictions on women and more women are becoming educated and working.

In former times, Sikaiana men and women periodically divided into separate groups and composed humorous songs to criticize the opposite sex. Reuben Tenai, my neighbor, was interested in these songs and, as the catechist, often organized the singing and dancing that accompany religious festivities. I had been on Sikaiana for about three or four months when, partly for my benefit but also for his own enjoyment, Reuben got together some older Sikaiana people to sing these old songs. In the evenings at the seashore, a group of seven or eight men and women gathered. After several practice sessions, I recorded these songs on my tape recorder. Later, with help, I transcribed and translated them. Most of these songs had been composed in the 1930s and 1940s. Such songs are rarely composed at present, although the content of the songs is based upon the theme of mutual teasing and joking between men and women which was very much evident during my stays.

A few of these songs were composed for the three fliers who were shot down over Sikaiana in 1942. According to legend, many of the atoll's young women admired and desired the fliers. After the fliers were rescued and left Sikaiana, the young women gathered together to sleep on the bedding upon which the fliers had rested. In jealousy, Sikaiana's young men burned the bedding. The women then composed a series of songs, praising the beauty of the fliers, admonishing Sikaiana's young men not to burn the bedding where the fliers had slept, and comparing the Sikaiana young men unfavorably in appearance and manners with the Americans. But these songs were not composed to praise the fliers; rather, the songs were composed to make Sikaiana's young men feel jealous. Sikaiana gender relations, however, are not only an amusing battle of the sexes. The lives of men and women are not in opposition, although they are often separated. In many of their work activities, men and women are mutually supportive or "complementary." Gender on Sikaiana defines two types of people who are, depending upon the context, complementary, separated, or, as in the case of the above songs, opposed.

The physical separation of men and women permeates the public life of Sikaiana. The inside of the church building is divided into a male side (left side facing the altar) and a female side (right side facing the altar). Before Confirmation, children sit in a center aisle. Men take Communion first; women follow. At community meetings (both in Honiara and on Sikaiana), men and women usually sit in separate areas. At meetings after Sikaiana church services, women stand close together on a little knoll to

the landward side of the main path in front of the church, and men face them in a long semi-circle along the seaward side of the path. When visiting friends and relatives, men and women often divide into separate groups to talk and gossip. Men and women often drink alcohol in separate groups. At meal times, men eat first and women later. Many consider the heads of fish to be women's food; men usually leave them on their plate for the women to eat. When a married couple goes to their gardens in the interior of the islet, the husband usually walks in front carrying his husking stick and his wife follows a few paces behind carrying a basket strapped to her back.

In sport competitions on Sikaiana, men and women often divide into separate single-sex teams that play against each other in netball and volleyball (women do not play soccer). The Men and women also form separate teams to play against one another in games such as the card game, *kaihulihuli*, and a game similar to kick the can, *haiumu*.

In some cases, the separation of males and females reflects the Sikaiana assumption that sexual attraction is a constant factor affecting all relationships between males and females and must be controlled, especially through the control of females. Males travel alone during the day or night and young men are expected to search for potential sexual partners. Women, on the other hand, whether married or single, often travel in groups when going to the interior of the islet during the day, or on trips to the beach to bathe and toilet at night. Suspicion is aroused if a woman is alone and away from the paths and gardens she normally frequents. Some people might suspect that the woman is going to meet a lover. Wives are expected to live with their in-laws when their husbands leave them for extended periods. Some people consider it to be unseemly for a woman to smoke or drink alcohol excessively. One elderly woman told me that in former times, women were discouraged from smoking, because when the supply of tobacco was limited between visits from trade ships, they would be tempted to perform sexual favors in return for tobacco.

Men clear gardens; women plant, mulch, and harvest the taro. Women plait coconut leaf mats which men use for constructing walls and roofs. Women plait the fine pandanus mats used for sleeping. Men construct canoes. By legend, men originally did the weaving on the backstrap loom. But, as one person explained to me, a person must sit with legs stretched out for long periods of time and on the men found that their legs were too cramped to fight in emergencies. As a result, women do all weaving on the loom. Men, however, make the frame of the loom and assist in gathering the materials which are used for weaving. Women do most of the cooking, washing, and housework, and women are usually responsible for the care of the children. Men do all the work that involves climbing trees. They catch birds from tree tops and harvest coconuts and other fruits from trees. They also cut and collect the coconut sap from coconut trees. The women cook some of the sap into a molasses, although much more of it is used by the men to make fermented toddy. Both sexes work at producing copra: collecting, husking, and drying nuts. But men are expected to do a greater share of the heavier copra work such as husking and cutting firewood. At sea, men and women engage in different activities. Men fish with both a line and net. Women collect shells and snails at sea, although men sometimes do this also. In former times, there were some traditional techniques of fishing practiced by women, but these are rarely practiced at present.

This division of labor is not invariable. During my stay in 1987, a husbandless woman frequently went to fish with her daughter. I heard a story, perhaps untrue, that one young man worked in the taro beds because his wife was too lazy.

In Honiara, some women are housewives, that is to say their main activities center around keeping house, caring for children and preparing meals while their husbands work for wages in their occupations. This is a new role for Sikaiana women which is directly associated with the development of a wage economy.

There are different attitudes toward schooling men and women. Males are encouraged to continue their schooling for as long as possible. Many women are discouraged from continuing their education. But many people are coming to value education, and, however reluctantly, more and more families are allowing and encouraging their daughters to continue in their education for as long as they pass their examinations. Some women living in Honiara work as typists, nurses and school teachers. Others work as clerks in small shops in order to earn a little extra money.

Many parents prefer to keep their daughters on the atoll after they have completed a primary education. These parents claim that doing so prevents their daughters from marrying non-Sikaiana Solomon Islanders. Sons are encouraged to continue their secondary education or seek wage employment abroad and then return to Sikaiana to look for a wife during their vacation. This difference in migration patterns reflects an economic strategy. Unmarried men living on Sikaiana are not given many responsibilities and generally do not work very hard until after they are married. Unmarried women work in the gardens and produce copra, which makes them much greater economic assets. As a result, young females often outnumber males on Sikaiana. Young unmarried girls do leave the island for a variety of reasons. Some girls are allowed to attend secondary schools, many reside more or less permanently with their parents in towns, and others are sent from Sikaiana to help other families.

Men participate more than women in the political affairs of Sikaiana. They hold most of the offices that link the atoll with provincial and national administrative services. All the members of the local government council are male, as are the court justices, the area constable, the provincial representative, the priests and catechists. In 1987, two of the teachers at the school on Sikaiana were men; one was a woman. Most of the atoll's public meetings are conducted by men, although women attend these meetings and their opinions are voiced. Within certain land-holding lineages, elderly women are influential, but as explained in the previous chapter, their influence is dependent upon the consensus of males. Women may be called as witnesses, although they rarely represent their lineage in the court. (I am aware of only two cases in which women acted as representatives).

Although they are not fully involved in the political life of the atoll, Sikaiana women, nevertheless, have a history of active involvement in organized groups and committees. In the 1930s, some Sikaiana women suggested to the Bishop of the Melanesian Mission that he form a "sisterhood" modelled on Christian religious orders,

in particular the Melanesian Brotherhood that was responsible for Sikaiana's conversion to Christianity. The Brotherhood was recruiting many young men from Sikaiana at that time (and still does). These Sikaiana women became the first members of a Solomon Islands religious order.

There are several clubs and committees that are run by women, including the Mother's Union. At my first arrival, the woman ran a dance club which, for a fee, could be opened for dances. During the first two years of my stay, women were responsible for the management of the local cooperative store, because the men claimed that the women would not steal the store's money. In 1983, however, at the end of my stay, the men took over the administration of the store after several years of losses. The men complained that, although the women were honest, they did not have enough business experience to adjust selling prices of the store's merchandise for inflation, nor did they lower the store's buying price for the atoll's copra when its prices fell in Honiara.

In the domestic sphere, women participate in making day-to-day decisions affecting the welfare of the household and family. Often there is reserve in the relationship between closely related males such as true brothers, or fathers and their mature sons. Women act as mediators between these closely related males by intervening in disputes and conveying requests or needs between brothers or fathers and sons. Mothers, daughters, and sisters are on easier terms with one another.

In kinship, marriage, and work, male and female activities are mutually supportive and complementary. With marriage, a Sikaiana person achieves a respectability that the unmarried never attain. Several times I heard the same joke: the work of a young man is to find a wife. Finding a spouse, however, is not always an easy matter because courtship must be conducted in private and secrecy.

Across the Reef: Coming Together in Romance and Courtship

Perhaps no intimacy is quite as charged as sexual intimacy. On Sikaiana, this intimacy is further charged because pre-marital liaisons, although common in leading to marriage, must be conducted in secrecy, without the knowledge of public, although a few close associates may be confided in or asked to cooperate. Before the conversion to Christianity when marriages were arranged, it was very common to maintain adulterous relations, sometimes with one partner for extended periods. These adulterous liaisons, also, had to be conducted in secret. Sikaiana is a small society with little privacy, and such secrecy is difficult to maintain. These illicit relations separate couples from everyone else in relations that are both highly intimate and hopefully secret.

Hakasao is the Sikaiana word for bringing the canoes from the calm of the reef across the reef and through the rougher waves of the ocean. It literally means 'to make safe.' A derivative of *hakasao*, *hakasaosao*, describes the activities of Sikaiana go-betweens, who bring together young men and women for a few moments of privacy and romance in a society which does not allow them to be together in public.

The risks and challenges of courtship have similarities to taking a canoe across the reef. Moving a canoe across the reef is a difficult and dangerous task. The waves break at the shore of the reef. Sending a canoe into the breakers at the wrong time can result in catastrophe as the waves break on the canoes. At best, the canoe will swamp; at worst, the canoe will be thrown back onto the reef and shattered, injuring its occupants. Only experienced Sikaiana men try to go across the reef into the ocean. At the edge of the reef, they count the waves in series of threes until a brief calm period occurs. Taking a running start, they leap into the canoe. Then, paddling at full force, their canoe climbs the incoming waves until it has crossed into the sea where the canoe will roll with waves rather than be swamped by them. The challenges of crossing the reef and the gulf between lagoon and ocean are apt images for the problems of bringing together men and women in Sikaiana courtship.

There is a strong romantic streak among the Sikaiana which is expressed in their patterns of courtship and marriage. Before the arrival of the missionaries, traditional Sikaiana society institutionalized romance, but not in marriages which were arranged by parents. Instead, romance took place in adulterous sexual affairs conducted outside of marriage. Following the conversion to Christianity, the concepts of romance in these extra-marital affairs was transferred to courtship for marriage.

In traditional Sikaiana society, marriages were arranged by parents, foster parents or relatives when the children were quite young. In some cases, these marriages were arranged to transfer rights to land between lineages. More often it seems, the marriages were arranged simply out of friendship between the adults. People who were friendly or allied would arrange the marriage of young relatives in order, as the Sikaiana say, to show their joy and happiness in their friendships.

The children were quite small when betrothed. Because in-laws were expected to be ashamed and reserved in one another's presence, small children grew up finding that some people avoided them and they learned to respond with this reserve to their future in-laws. This reserve and inhibition extended to the relationships between the spouses. Even after marriage, some spouses marked this reserve by not using one another's personal names.

Before the conversion to Christianity, it was also very common to have secret sweethearts or lovers, *hina*. The oldest Sikaiana people recall that almost everyone had at least one such lover, and sometimes more than one. These liaisons had to be kept secret, at least as secret as is possible on a small atoll. In the story of Peia's insanity recounted earlier, Tomaniva's extra-marital affairs were not unusual. But, for the Sikaiana, it was wrong of Peia's husband to report them. Romantic love and desire was felt for the secret sweetheart, not for one's spouse. One woman described herself as disgusted when she was brought to her husband on her wedding night. She described her repulsion by using the same Sikaiana word, *ita*, that the Sikaiana use to describe the way some children cringe at being handled by strangers. In 1980, there were three elderly women, all of whom had matured in the traditional Sikaiana society. Among older Sikaiana, everyone agreed upon the name of each woman's secret lover.

In these secret liaisons, a man approached a woman in a secluded place or used a go-between to help arrange meetings. If the woman agreed, the couple began their affair, which might last for a lifetime. In continuing their affair, the couple sometimes used a go-between to transfer gifts and help arrange secret meetings. The go-between, often the man's sister, should be someone who could be seen in public both with him and with his love without arousing suspicion.

There is a widespread story that the last chief of Sikaiana, who lived to be very old, continued meeting his lover into their old age. The meetings included a meal and conversation. Fane Telena, the chief's foster child and one of my main informants, told me that she once joked to him, "you are too old to have a lover, why do you attempt such hopeless things in vain?" To which her foster father replied, "My lover still crawls with a lot of force."

Despite the expectation that everyone had a secret lover, older people remember that there was jealousy and hostility towards a spouse if the identity of the lover was discovered. If a husband learned that his wife had been unfaithful, he probably would beat her and, in some cases, challenge her sweetheart to a fight. An adulterer who was discovered could lose rights to use the land of his lover's husband's lineage.

After the conversion to Christianity, the church discouraged arranged marriages and couples were encouraged to marry through love matches, although some people in the period immediately following the conversion chose to marry their arranged partners. Today, it is considered improper to force a marriage between a couple if they are not in love, although sometimes parents are accused of doing so.

Today's young people are expected to eventually fall in love with one particular individual. The Sikaiana refer to this true love as their *kalemata*, which also the word for 'eye.' Normally it is assumed that a person has one such true love, although sometimes people are described as having "two eyes," "changing their eye," or not yet having a "straight eye." These idioms imply that the young people, most often young men, have not yet decided which of several romantic interests is their true one. Parents and relatives may try to encourage young people to consider factors such as a partner's intelligence, occupation, and family background in choosing a spouse. But often, passion, not reason, seems to win out.

Men are expected to initiate courtship. They approach their desired one, initiate advances and, if truly attracted to the woman, they are expected to try hard to win her love even if initially rejected. Women are often described as doubting a young man's sincerity when making initial advances because men sometimes falsely promise marriage in order to engage in sex, or change their minds about marriage after a sexual encounter. Young men jokingly describe these brief encounters by using the English idiom, "hit and run." By allowing herself to be seduced into these brief encounters, a young woman risks harming her reputation and her desirability as a marriage partner. Young men who have reputations for loving and then abandoning women risk a skeptical reception when they approach another woman.

There is a frequently stated assertion that some people remain committed to former lovers even after marriage to a different person and that a person will be jealous of her or his spouse's former lovers. Young women are warned that if they have many lovers, their husbands will continually suspect them of still harboring desire for these former lovers. Such a woman, Sikaiana parents warn their daughters, will suffer beatings as a wife. Indeed, some do. Nevertheless, most people have had pre-marital affairs before settling with a different spouse. It would be very rude to ask a Sikaiana person about feelings for a former lover, but my impression is that many spouses assume that their partner's former passions for earlier loves have passed.

Sometimes, young men approach parents about marriage before contacting their daughter, but parents are reluctant to give their approval for a marriage without their daughter's prior consent.

More often young men and women begin affairs without their parents' explicit approval or knowledge. All courtship should be conducted in secret, usually at night. In a society as small as Sikaiana, however, it is very difficult to keep a secret and the Sikaiana people seem to be very sensitive to the nuances in behavior of a couple who are romantically attracted. If knowledge of a sexual affair becomes public, the couple will be forbidden from taking Holy Communion until after they have gone through the embarrassment of a public confession before the entire congregation.

There is another important reason for secrecy. Other people with different marital plans for the couple may try to thwart the wedding through gossip or by helping a rival suitor if they learn that the couple intends marry.

Middle-aged people recall that in their youths it was common to write a letter describing one's feelings and proposing a meeting. Some people still write letters, but my impression is that at present most love letters are written during periods of separation after the couple have already made their contacts. In previous times, it was possible to contact a girl during the game called *haiumu*. This game is played at night and its rules involve touching and holding between the players. The teams were boys against girls. During my stay, however, this game was played mostly by younger children.

The recent introduction of Western styles of dancing between young men and women has provided a new opportunity for touching and initiating courtship. In traditional Sikaiana society, young men and women didn't dance face-to-face with one another. At present (1980-87), Western style dances for young people are held after a feast or party and continue throughout the night. These dances are loosely supervised by parents, often the mothers of the young women who are dancing. Usually, a guitar song starts and a group of young women begin dancing with each other. Then groups of young men join in and begin to pair off with women. In the first dances, most couples dance without any physical contact. As the evening progresses, some couples move closer and hold hands. A couple can show their interest without letting anyone else know by clasping their hands more tightly than usual. A young man may try to dance with more body contact, pulling his partner closer to him. Lack of resistance is

sometimes a sign of interest on the part of the young woman. Some older people discourage close dancing, referring to it as *hakappili* 'sticking together' or in Pijin as "plastering." When dancing close, a couple has the opportunity to speak quietly and arrange a meeting.

Sometimes, a young man asks another person, usually a closely related female, to act as a go-between. The go-between will approach the desired woman, try to convince the woman of the man's sincerity, and, if successful, arrange a secret meeting. The go-between can also act as a decoy in setting up the meeting. She accompanies the young woman as if they are going to the seashore to bathe or do some chore together and then leaves her company when they meet the young man at a pre-arranged location. By accompanying the young woman, the go-between makes it appear that there is nothing unusual.

In situations where a suitor meets with opposition from his lover, or her family, he may try to enlist the support of his relatives, especially older female relatives in pleading his cause.

Many initial advances are made by men who have been drinking fermented toddy. Young men rarely dance with women unless they have been drinking. However, young women are more likely to doubt the sincerity of the advances of someone who has been drinking.

At the initial meeting, the couple discusses their feelings for one another and their future plans. It is not infrequent to hear that women resist a man's initial advances and test his sincerity by waiting to see if he continues his efforts. If the couple finds they are mutually attracted, they 'promise', *polopolo*, to remain faithful and eventually marry. The couple might be separated for a long period of time. The suitor may be in school or still working. The young woman may have to accompany her family to other parts of the Solomon Islands. Many couples delay their marriage until they consider themselves financially established. Sometimes, the couple secretly exchange presents to symbolize their love and, whenever possible, they continue to meet secretly. It is assumed that a couple who is alone for any length of time will have sexual relations. Once they have made their promises to each other, the couple is expected not to engage in sexual relations with any other person. If it is learned that the woman has had sexual relations with another man, this usually ends the affair. Women are more likely to be willing to marry a young man even after learning that he had a fling with someone else.

In their initial courting, the couple is often described as being 'embarrassed', 'shy', or 'ashamed,' (*hakanapanapa*). These feelings of embarrassment may continue through the early periods of their marriage. Some Sikaiana told me that couples who are shy in another's presence are likely to be attracted to each other. In contrast, a young man who jokes in public or speaks with a young woman is probably not interested in her as a wife.

The verb *hakataataa* describes the initial advances made in courtship. One

elderly man described the etymology of *hakataataa* in the following terms. The word for chasing fish into a net is *hakataa*. In this method, stones are thrown at a distance behind the fish in a manner such that it is not startled and moves slowly towards the net. Stones should not be thrown too close to the fish or in rapid succession because this will startle the fish and it might dart off away from the net. Courtship, according to this man, must be conducted by young men in the same manner: advances should be made slowly so that the young woman is not startled. In a similar idiom, courtship is described as the process of making a girl 'tame', *hakatala*. *Hakatala* also refers to making a bird come to a person by offering it food. This idiom is developed from the notion that, like animals who are timid at the approach of humans, young women will be easily frightened by the approach of men.

Metaphors of hunting or fishing are also used to describe courtship. A young man looking for romance sometimes jokes that he is going to 'shoot pigeon' (*hiti lupe*). The common term for successfully finding a spouse is *sahe*, the same verb used for 'catch' as when catching fish. Terminology describing 'luck' or success at hunting and fishing, *maalama* and *laoina*, are also used to describe success in romance, usually a man's success with women. *Laoina* is a derivative of *laoi* 'good'. *Maalama* is derived from the word meaning 'to be lit up', as for example the inside of a house is lit up by a lantern at night. The successful person is attractive to women like an area that is lit up by light. Finally, when advances are successful, one person, most often the woman, is described as 'dead', *mate*.

Some men may try to 'creep' or 'crawl' (*ttolo*) into the house of a woman and have sex with her while she is sleeping. Often this activity is described by the Pijin English term, *krip*, derived from the English term, "creep". A few people see this as a demonstration of boldness and virility. But it is more often viewed as destructive and improper conduct, especially by the relatives of the woman involved and Sikaiana's women in general. Men who creep frequently are ridiculed, and, if caught, they are taken to court for trespassing. Repeated convictions can result in stiff jail sentences. (Margaret Mead (1928/1973:93-95) describes this behavior, *moe totolo* or 'sleep crawling' on Samoa; it is not uncommon in Micronesia and Polynesia.)

When ready to marry, a young man should approach the woman's parents and his own relatives in order to obtain their approval. If parents try to prevent a marriage and the couple is determined to marry, they might elope. On Sikaiana, this may be done by secretly leaving Hale and living on one of the other islets at Muli Akau for about a week. When the couple returns, the marriage is usually accepted. Although relatives may be unhappy, they no longer try to prevent it. When a young unmarried woman becomes pregnant, there is an effort to determine the child's father and to pressure the couple to marry. Occasionally, a young man refuses to marry a woman he has made pregnant. I never heard of a pregnant woman who refused an offer of marriage from her child's father.

Many Sikaiana parents complain that in recent years there has been an increase in pre-marital affairs and consider this to be a breakdown in sexual morality. They think this is the result of contact with other cultures and, more specifically, because of

the introduction of foreign traditions such as Western style dancing onto Sikaiana. It is difficult to determine the accuracy of these statements about changes in sexual conduct. Many mature males have different standards for their own behavior as opposed to that of their sisters and daughters. My impression is that for a period following their arrival, the missionaries were successful in their efforts to limit premarital and extra-marital sexual relationships. More recently, there seems to have been some increase in the frequency of premarital affairs, and public knowledge about them.

Ceremonial Opposition between Male and Female: The *Puina*

In their work roles, men and women engage in separate, but complementary activities. In courtship, there is a gulf between men and women that must be bridged. In much of Sikaiana daily joking and teasing, there is opposition between the sexes. This opposition was expressed in a traditional ceremony, the *puina*. During the *puina*, men and women divided into separate groups for several days in order to compose songs. One group went to Muli Akau and composed songs in secret. When they returned to Hale, they sang their songs to the opposite sex. All songs were composed in secret and then sung in public. The opposite sex would try to anticipate the themes of the songs and have a reply ready. Many of the songs used figurative speech to both camouflage and enliven their meanings (see Donner 1987).

After the conversion to Christianity, the missionaries discouraged the performance of these song festivals because they viewed the content of these songs as lewd and hostile. A modified version of the *puina* continued after World War II during the school holidays, *uiki hakamalooloo* (literally 'week of rest'). As in the *puina*, one sex would go to Muli Akau to compose while the other stayed on the main islet. Other competitive activities accompanied these festivities. Young men staying at Muli Akau would plan raids onto the main islet in order to steal garden produce and even pigs. Young women were expected to guard against these incursions and "capture" any young man who landed.

Some of the pre-Christian traditional songs praised a secret lover while taunting and criticizing a spouse by describing the joys of adultery. In one song, a woman boasts that she has made a special rope for her lover, while giving her husband a rope that is not as strong. In another song, a woman boasts that her lover is very clever at arranging their secret meetings, never being found out by anyone else. A song composed by a man boasts about the beauty of his sweetheart's thigh tattoos, which in former times were considered very erotic and were kept covered except in intimacy. Although these songs were sung in public, it was difficult to determine the specific individuals involved; only the composers knew for sure the intent of the songs. The songs were meant to taunt the opposite sex as a group.

The songs composed in the 1940s and 50s continued the themes of taunting between the sexes but dropped the themes of adultery.

The following songs were composed after the mission's arrival, probably in the

1940s. The first song was described in the beginning of this chapter. It was composed to tease Sikaiana's young men for burning the bedding used by the American fliers.

Young men of Sikaiana do not burn the bedding of the beautiful men with
such fair skin who just appeared.

Young men of Sikaiana do not burn the bedding of those lovely rainbows
who just appeared.

I want to sleep close to fair skin of Bini (Harold Bingaman)
I want to sleep with the sweet fragrance of Polo (Paul Knight)

Young men of Sikaiana, you disgust me.
You disgust Kalati (Calvin Crouch).
You are repulsive.

This song praises the beauty of the fliers, making special reference to their fair and fragrant skin, (on Sikaiana, fair complexions are considered attractive.) But these songs were composed not so much out of romantic desire for the fliers as to taunt the Sikaiana young men. I have been able to contact two of these fliers, Paul Knight and Calvin Crouch. Both of them claim that during their few days on Sikaiana, they had no sexual contact with women. They said that they avoided women for fear of antagonizing their hosts.

The following song was composed sometime in the 1940s. The women are taunting the young men's shyness in making advances. The song reminds them that the young women are working alone all day waiting to be approached by a bold young man.

To the false lust of the young men of my age

I walk alone in the interior; I collect food alone in the interior; I work alone in the interior. I don't see you. You wander around without purpose along the shore: you are always drinking fermented toddy; you sleep without purpose inside your house. You don't strive to meet me; you don't show any interest in me; you are mistakenly afraid of me.

My beauty, My beauty.

The men composed the following reply asserting that they no longer have any place to meet in secret with the young girls.

In reply to the speech of the women, I was not being hesitant in making advances.

That is the truth, I always go to you, I am not hesitant, for you have grown into a beautiful woman.

My heart yearns for you, you have grown into a beautiful woman.

I search for you, I always move towards you, I make a play towards you,
 because we are good (together), I make advances to you; but, there is no
 deserted place for us to meet together so that we can talk; there is no place
 for us to make plans in (our) happiness and desire;
 So, I am saying goodbye, this is the end for us----

You can just keep waiting!

These performances became increasingly rare in the 1950s and 60s. In 1969, a song festival with a skit was performed to celebrate the American landing on the moon. Each sex composed songs that had standard Sikaiana themes. The men taunted the Sikaiana women by describing the great beauty of a woman living on the moon who was far prettier than any Sikaiana woman. The men's song was accompanied by a skit in which they re-enacted the American moon landing. One man took the short-wave radio headphones and played the part of ground control. Another tied a rag doused in kerosene to a bird's tail and lit it to represent the rocket. The women composed a reply which included the taunt that this beautiful woman on the moon had no desire for the men of the earth (i.e., Sikaiana) who stole things.ⁱ

In late 1981, the Sikaiana performed a simplified version of the *puina* as part of the Christmas celebrations. In the evenings and on Sundays the atoll's men and women gathered in separate places to compose and practice songs. The songs were composed in secrecy so that each sex could surprise the opposite sex with the content of its songs which were always critical of the opposite sex. I attended the men's composition sessions, which often lasted late into the night.

The themes of the songs composed in 1981 centered on the incidents of the Christmas holiday of the previous year when many of the atoll's young men and women were expelled from church for having sexual affairs. The women's song complained that someone, presumably a boasting young man, had told everyone about his affair when it should have been kept secret. In another song, the women lamented that the young men did not properly care for their bodies, never shaving or washing. The men, who learned of this song's content, were prepared with a reply which boasted that today's young men only had to learn how to play the guitar to make all the Sikaiana women fall in love.

Although the songs were supposed to represent the perspective of the island's young men and women, they were composed by older men and women, and reflected their perspective.

The men's songs contained a backhanded slap at the young men by describing their sole ability at playing the guitar, an ability that most Sikaiana adults consider frivolous. Moreover, the men composed songs which teased specific women by name for their premarital affairs. Although the young men found the songs amusing, they were ambivalent about the songs. Some feared that after their lovers heard the songs, they would be angry and it might be harder to arrange meetings.

Many, although not all, of the atoll's mature men gathered to compose the songs. One of the oldest men present, about 70 years old, went over the verses to make certain they were organized according to proper Sikaiana form. Men younger than him did not seem to be certain about the proper form for the verses. Usually, someone suggested an idea for a song. Then all the men made suggestions to enliven it and offered words for different verses. Eventually, a kind of consensus would be reached about the best wording and phrases. Young single men attended the sessions but did not contribute very much in the composition, even though some of the songs were supposed to reflect their perspective on courtship and young women. Several songs which criticized the young women for their sexual affairs were composed by the fathers and older brothers of these girls.

Traditionally, songs do not mention names, but some of these songs mentioned certain young woman by name. When someone objected to these direct references to several young women, he was told that this was justified because the songs served to instruct the young women in proper behavior.

A man objected that one song criticizing a woman for stealing crops was untrue. But several men replied that they did not care about the veracity of the songs: they were being composed simply to make the women angry.

While the songs were still being composed and memorized by each sex in private meetings, there were constant boasts between males and females about the effectiveness of their songs in criticizing the opposite sex. These boasts took place whenever groups of men and women passed each other: along the way to church in the morning; on the way to work; in the evenings after eating. These boasts were often couched in metaphors of fighting, using both traditional idioms such as 'tucking in a loin cloth' (in former times a way of preparing for a spear fight), and more contemporary idioms such as shooting with a 'gun' and throwing a 'bomb'. After hearing part of the women's song, one well-informed Sikaiana man, who had been reading my news magazines, wryly commented that the women were still using Second World War weapons. He boasted that the men's songs were like the "neutron bomb," (at the time being considered by NATO for deployment in Europe) which would annihilate the women but leave the atoll's buildings unharmed.

This type of traditional song composition is becoming rare. Only older people know the proper conventions for composing traditional stanzas and tunes. These songs, however, are the ceremonial expression of the humorous, opposition between men and women which is a theme in present-day Sikaiana social life. Direct criticism between mature adults is comparatively rare. But at public meetings, there is a frequent banter of criticism between the men and women. This form of teasing and criticism also occurs in domestic settings when men and women often take sides against one another in their informal conversations and joking.

It often struck me that this ceremonial opposition between the sexes could be understood as way to channel hostility in a very small society in which people tried hard

to maintain harmony. Sober adults rarely directly criticize one another. Hostility or anger can be channeled through the division between men and women, either in the ceremonial composition of songs, or in the daily banter between men and women.

Gender Roles in a Changing World

In their daily work activities men and women are mutually supportive and inter-dependent. On ceremonial occasions they are opposed. In romance and love they are co-conspirators in creating special projects of heightened intimacy in a small and constantly observant society. The traditional *hina* relationship included both secret intimacy with a lover, and the general taunting of spouses in song.

The mutual dependency of men and women is continued in their present-day experiences with the modernity. Men on Sikaiana are oriented to the composition sea, travel, and interaction with outsiders. Women are oriented to the household, family and the gardens in the interior. This distinction is also expressed in the integration of new institutions into their social life. Men are more likely to be engaged in the institutions and offices, such as the government council and local court, that directly interact with the outside world. They are expected to be more involved in employment for wages and education. Women are more concerned with domestic activities. Earlier in this century men participated much more than women in wage labor which took them away from the atoll. At present, there are women living in Honiara who mainly keep house and look after children. Theirs is a new role for the Sikaiana: they are housewives.

Women behave in ways that support cultural continuity and maintenance. Although not necessarily "traditional," women participate more actively than the men in many activities which preserve an indigenous stability. Women attend church much more frequently and regularly than men. A few of the atoll's younger men never attend church, but all women attend it regularly. Women never question church authority, but a few men do. Generally, women are more reliable participants in community projects including the preparations for an important visitor, a feast, or a public workday. At the 1981 *puina*, the women's performance was far more polished and better rehearsed than that of the men. Women are more likely to work at preparing and transporting copra to the ship when it makes its monthly visit. They are much less likely to be taken to court for failing to work on the bi-weekly workdays. Women and children attend public feasts during the holidays; often men do not.

More than women, men are encouraged to participate in new institutions and activities which take them away from the atoll and involve them with non-Sikaiana. In comparison with men, women are still discouraged from continuing their formal education and they are less familiar with Western culture, although this is changing and, more and more, women are continuing their education, living in town, and working for wages.

The traditional division in work tasks between men and women is maintained in a new form in present-day Sikaiana society. Women support community continuity while men participate in the roles and institutions that articulate with the larger social

system beyond the community. The separation between men and women provides balance for maintaining a separate community that at the same time is involved with larger social and cultural systems.

ⁱ Sikaiana fairy tales have a standard character, Sina, who the Sikaiana say can be seen on the full moon as she weaves. I actually think I could see the image from Sikaiana that the Sikaiana people were talking about. Since I don't see her in my home in the US, I assume Sikaiana's geographic location provides a different angle for looking at the moon.

VIII

**Individuals:
Diversity in Life Experiences**

When anthropologists do fieldwork, they don't live in other societies; they live with other people. Anthropologists' descriptions of "societies" "cultures," or "social systems," are inferred and constructed from interviews, conversations, observations, and daily events. My understanding of Sikaiana society is derived from interacting with a variety of different personalities under a variety of different circumstances.

FANE

At the time of my stay in 1980-1983, Fane was the oldest person on Sikaiana. The children of her daughters were mature and themselves had children; several of her great-grandchildren were approaching maturity. She had numerous foster children. Many of them were grown with families of their own. Some were living with her.

When Fane was born, no birth records were kept on Sikaiana. Once when I tried to correlate her approximate age with historical events, she pointed to a young girl of about 12 or 13 and claimed she was that age during the time when a trader named Oscar Svensen operated a store on Sikaiana. There are documented accounts that Svensen operated his store in the early 1900s. When the Anglican missionaries arrived in 1929, both of Fane's daughters had been born. These daughters started having children in the 1940s. Her younger daughter was one of the very last women to have her thighs tattooed. Although Fane knew some words of Pijin, she did not speak it. Fane's husband was one of the few people who remained unconverted to Christianity at the time of his death during World War II. During my stay, Fane attended church frequently.

She had spent most of her life on Sikaiana with a few trips abroad, including visits to Honiara, Yandina and the Western Province near Papua-New Guinea. When I knew her, she no longer went into the bush to work in the gardens or feed pigs. She walked with a limp and helped herself with a cane. Sometimes, she plaited mats. She often spent her time in the company of several other widows, who gathered together to cook, talk and gossip. In 1982, the second year of my stay, Fane had been ailing for several months. Her family (her daughter and her brothers' sons) decided to move her to Honiara in order to use the medical facilities there. Like many older people, Fane would have preferred to stay on Sikaiana and, when her time came, to die there.

Fane was an adult participant in many traditional ceremonies which are no longer practiced. Her foster father was Semalu, the last traditional chief of Sikaiana. She learned many traditional songs from him, especially *mako o te henua*, a genre of songs which were learned from other Polynesian islands. Although many of the words in these songs are recognizable as Polynesian, they are not Sikaiana.

Her marriage had been arranged. She explained to me the behavior of secret lovers, *hina*, and recounted some vivid descriptions of her encounters. She had learned the traditional techniques for midwifery. Occasionally, she advised young relatives about their pregnancies, but she was reluctant because the government discouraged people from using customary medicine rather than Western medical practices. John Kilatu, the Sikaiana doctor, objected to some of the practices of the midwives as medically unsound.

She also knew some of the rituals associated with the one traditional ceremonial office held by a woman, the *sapai ulu*. The *sapai ulu* assisted the chief in some of his ceremonial duties by dressing him in his ceremonial ornaments, and in doing so, she apparently transformed his social identity into the ritual one of "chief." When the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands visited Sikaiana as part of a tour in 1982, the Sikaiana performed several traditional ceremonies and songs in his honor. Fane was consulted about the proper performance of these rituals, and she acted the part of the *sapai ulu* in a short re-enactment of these rituals. She is pictured on the front page of the website, next to John Kilatu who took the role of *aliki* ("chief"), in a performance for the prime minister who can be seen between them in the background.

She was an accomplished composer of songs. She had a major role in the song composition session in 1981 described in the preceding chapter. At her goodbye party when she left Sikaiana in 1982, many mature adults, both men and women, gathered to sing traditional songs well into the night. It was one of the rare occasions when Sikaiana's men sang without the stimulus of drinking fermented toddy. She was the main organizer for the performance of a group of songs that I recorded at Easter, 1982. Many of the atoll's older women gathered at her house to practice in the days preceding that performance.

Like many other Sikaiana, she was involved in several land disputes. She was consulted as the oldest and most knowledgeable member of her lineage. The lineage spokesman was her brother's son, who was also one of her foster sons. Other people consulted her about land matters, although she, like every other Sikaiana, was said to have biases determined by her family's and lineage's interests.

In my own work, Fane was a wonderful source of information. She had witnessed many of the pre-Christian ceremonies and participated in them as an adult. She was patient, and willing to struggle with me as I learned the language. She was willing to admit that she didn't know about some topic or ritual (something that some younger men, who had never witnessed traditional ritual, didn't always do). She often insisted that she would only talk about things that she had seen with her own eyes, reminding me that her statements did not include any hearsay. She emphasized that she could not explain the ritual significance of many events which were known to the chief and other ritual specialists, but not to her.

Like many Sikaiana people, Fane sometimes seemed reluctant to discuss traditional rituals. They had not been practiced for a long time, 50 years by 1980, and some people felt that talking about them might indicate that they were not loyal to the

Christian religion. But as soon as she started talking about these rituals, she became enthusiastic and excited. Once, I was interviewing her while she was at another woman's house, she became excited by recounting the fun that people used to experience at one of the traditional rituals. A widow listened while she cooked. This widow, although in her 50s, had been brought up after Sikaiana's conversion to Christianity and had attended mission schools. In disbelief, this widow commented, "Koutou ni hakammate ki na mea ppio" which can be roughly translated as "you (old people) really put a lot of effort into all that bullshit." Both Fane and another older woman, Tekohu, immediately got very agitated, simultaneously exclaiming that the woman had never seen these ceremonies and could not possibly understand the thrill experienced at performing them.

Fane provided me with much of my data about traditional life, including ceremonies, romance, magic, and legends. She also talked to me about present-day romance, kinship, fosterage, and land tenure. She helped me collect songs and explained their metaphors and hidden meanings.

Sikaiana is essentially an egalitarian society. But I sometimes got the sense that there was something aristocratic in Fane's bearing, perhaps because she was a descendant of one of the chiefly clans and a foster daughter of Sikaiana's last traditional chief. Other older women often enjoyed telling obscene jokes. Fane might laugh at their jokes but she was usually too proper to tell such jokes in my presence. I sometimes had the suspicion that she felt partly responsible for my welfare, a Sikaiana version of noblesse oblige. In traditional Sikaiana society, the chiefs had certain powers over strangers and immigrants, who were referred to as their *tonu*. They could kill them, take them under their protection, or assign them to another lineage. As the oldest member of a chiefly clan, Fane may have felt responsible for my welfare as an outsider.

Our conversations were my glimpse of a former Sikaiana life which had faded. She described rituals and ceremonies that will never be performed again. She told me the story of Peia, the woman driven crazy by an angry ancestral spirit. She recalled the various types of love magic which men of former times used in order to help them seduce women. She described the atoll's various traders in the early part of this century. She told me about the day, before the arrival of Christian missionaries, when all the ritual houses were destroyed.

Sometimes when we talked, I would experience a peculiar nostalgia about our changing worlds, and how Fane's life and my own had become intertwined. She was probably a little younger than my grandfather, who was born in 1888, but their lives overlapped. My grandfather was working his way through college to learn engineering when Fane was exchanging copra at Svensen's trade store. He was working in the Navy Department under Franklin Roosevelt during World War I at about the same time that Fane was maturing, entering into romances, and participating in the traditional rituals that ensured the atoll's welfare. In 1921, at about the same time that Fane was having her children, my grandfather's only child, my mother, was born. By the time of World War II, most Western institutions had been established on Sikaiana: the church, court, school and council. Fane's grandchildren were raised in these institutions. My

grandfather was well into his career as an engineer, nearing retirement. The worlds of Fane and my grandfather, which started very far apart, ended up much closer.

I visited Fane in Honiara during 1982 while she was in the hospital. Her relatives had insisted that she leave Sikaiana to get medical treatment. She seemed tired but not too sick. I returned to Sikaiana a little later. One Friday afternoon in July, I walked over to Uriel's household. Laumani was recounting a dream she had just had. Before falling asleep, she had been working on a mat, and it was late in the afternoon. She felt drowsy and lay down to take a short nap. She had fallen into a short but very deep sleep. As she slept, she dreamed that a coffin was being lowered into a grave. This type of dream is not uncommon among the Sikaiana and is taken as a forewarning of the impending death of a loved one. As is typical in these Sikaiana dreams, the identity of the person was not revealed but it was assumed that a close relative would soon die.

Once before Laumani had the same experience. On a boat trip from Honiara to Sikaiana, she fell into a deep sleep and dreamed of a coffin being lowered into a grave. When the boat arrived on Sikaiana, she learned that an elder member of her mother's lineage had recently died. At the time Laumani recounted this dream, she did not say whom she suspected would die, although later she told me she suspected her father's mother, a sickly woman who lived on Sikaiana. Several times before I had some Sikaiana predict impending death, sometimes after hearing the call of a certain bird, or after some unusual event such as a fish tail which keeps flapping after the fish has been caught many hours earlier. At first, I was curious to see if anything ever happened following these premonitions but throughout my first year nothing happened that could be correlated with them.

On the following Sunday morning, we received a message broadcast on the national radio that Fane had just died in Honiara. Fane's deceased younger sister was Laumani's mother.

KILATU

If Fane took me into the past, John Kilatu was the bridge between that past and the present. Kilatu had witnessed the pre-Christian, traditional life as a young boy, and then had been among the first Sikaiana to go away to mission schools. He was fluent in English and also was interested in the traditional culture.

Kilatu was born before records were kept on Sikaiana. The missionaries told him that he looked about ten years old when he started school in 1930. He went to the missionary school with the second group of young men to leave Sikaiana. He was a very good student, although he told me that he was reluctant to return to school after one of his vacation visits to Sikaiana. He finished the missionary school at Pawa in 18 months (the normal time is three or four years).

In 1940 he was sent by the mission to Tulagi, then the administrative center of the Solomon Islands, to work as a clerk for the government. In 1942, when the Japanese

began bombing Tulagi, he moved with other officials to Auki in Malaita, and eventually to Vila in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu). From 1942 to 1944 he worked for the British in Vila and later in Santo.

He had very good relations with Americans there, and I sometimes wondered if his unselfish aid to me was partly a result of these experiences. He said that some American servicemen had recommended that he think about attending medical school in Fiji. There was a delay in receiving permission as letters were sent back and forth between British officials in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. In 1944 he was sent to the medical school in Fiji. In 1949 he finished his education there and returned to the Solomon Islands. The course Kilatu took was designed to train Solomon Islanders in medical skills. Although not as highly trained as British or American medical doctors, these medical officers can treat most diseases, write prescriptions, and perform simple operations.

By the time he had finished his education, he had been away from the atoll for eleven years, although he told me that the time seemed to go very fast. Unlike some students, he told me that he didn't suffer from homesickness. During this leave on Sikaiana, he fell in love with a woman and married her. Unlike Fane whose marriage was arranged, Kilatu, like most others of his generation, chose his marriage partner. He returned with his new wife to Honiara, the new capital built out of the scrap of the American military installations near Henderson Airfield. For the next 25 years he worked as a doctor at various assignments in different parts of the Solomon Islands.

At the time of my stay, Kilatu had retired and was living in a house at one end of the main path along Hale, the main islet. The house belonged to a relative, but he lived there because she rarely came to Sikaiana. His household included some foster children, a son and daughter-in-law, and several daughters.

Nearby, his invalid brother, other relatives and foster children lived in a house that belonged to him. His oldest four children (two sons and two daughters) were all married and working elsewhere in the Solomon Islands. Two younger sons, not yet mature, were living away from Sikaiana with their foster parents.

Kilatu received a retirement pension of several hundred dollars a month, making him wealthy by Sikaiana standards. He moved back and forth between Sikaiana and Honiara where he had a house that was being maintained by his son. At one point he spent a long period of time in Auki, the provincial capital of Malaita. (This was very lucky for me because I was in Auki at the same time working on a dictionary for which he was my main collaborator.)

Kilatu gave me a big break in my fieldwork. I had been in the Solomon Islands for about eight months, most of the time on Sikaiana. I was frustrated by my progress in learning the language. Most Sikaiana were speaking Pijin to me, and although I could understand some Sikaiana, there was a lot that I couldn't understand. I was beginning to feel settled, but I still felt uncertainty in my relationships with many people. One evening after church service, perhaps sensing my frustration or simply out of a

willingness to help, he stopped by my house and offered to work with me on the language. Several days later I took him up on his offer.

Kilatu helped ease a dilemma I was facing in my field research. I don't know about other anthropologists, but my fieldwork involved not only deciding what areas of life to investigate, but also how to handle the people who provided information. How should informants be reciprocated for their help? Fieldwork takes time, and the Sikaiana are busy with their daily work. I had been given the impression by some Sikaiana people that a linguist and an anthropologist who had previously done field research on Sikaiana had paid local assistants. Some people would have been happy if I had hired them. But I was very reluctant to rely upon an assistant or to begin paying cash for help with my research. Hiring anyone as an assistant would alienate people with interests opposed to my assistant's. Moreover, I would feel awkward about paying certain people without paying others. Should I pay Fane for the many afternoons when we conversed? If I paid her, would everybody have to be paid every time I asked a question or sat down to chat. These are decisions that have to be made by all anthropologists. I don't believe that there is a right or wrong way to handle this problem. There are choices and the anthropologist has to live with their consequences. The problem is that many of these choices have to be made before the anthropologist knows enough about the social system to be able to make a reasonable assessment about what those consequences will be.

The Sikaiana have a term for a feeling of 'unfairness', *toonu*. *Toonu* describes the resentment of people who diligently work, for example, on the church or school, while others get away with simply loafing about. Another term, *kaimeo*, describes the envy of unfairness felt when someone else gets a special present or reward. For example, if a parent gives one child a present but ignores another, the latter will feel *kaimeo*. (It was Kilatu who first explained these terms to me.) The Sikaiana are always comparing one another's contributions to projects and the return on these contributions. A consistent theme in their faery tales (*tala*) concerns the unequal distribution of food and its unhappy consequences. I suspect that some of my interactions caused feelings of *toonu* and *kaimeo*. At that time, and still in retrospect, I think hiring assistants would have made matters worse.

Nevertheless, I needed someone who could give me a lot of time to work on specific details of the language. Kilatu's willingness to help didn't solve all the problems of how to reciprocate informants, but it eased a lot of them. Kilatu was wealthy by Sikaiana standards. He didn't need money, and in one case where I offered him some for work on the dictionary, he refused to accept it. He was respected by almost everyone and most Sikaiana accepted him as a knowledgeable and reliable source. He was retired, and although an avid fisherman, he had some time to spare. He had a genuine interest in recording Sikaiana traditions. Finally, since he was fluent in English and had witnessed the traditional culture as a youth, he was a fantastic person to work with.

Kilatu liked to spend time at Muli Akau, the islets at the Western end of the reef, partly because the fishing was better there. One of the happiest times during my stay on Sikaiana took place when he invited me to spend a week with him out there. We went

fishing almost every day, although I was more of a hindrance than a help. After fishing, we returned, washed up and ate fresh fish. Then, with his invalid elder brother, we talked about traditional and contemporary Sikaiana social life. One day he showed me how to cut and drill a necklace of pearl shell. I sent the necklace to my mother as a Christmas present. Although she never wears it, I think of it as the nicest present that I have ever given anyone.

Like me at the time, he chain-smoked (**many years ago I quit**). Although, I sometimes liked to smoke manufactured cigarettes, he almost always preferred twist tobacco rolled in copybook paper. He kept tobacco and precisely cut paper in a metal capsule with a screw cap. He punctuated our conversations by periodically picking up the capsule and placing it before me with a firm tap. For some reason, perhaps because his container kept the tobacco fresh, perhaps because of his company, his tobacco always tasted the best.

He drank only moderately because of his age and health. Unlike most other drinkers he did not drink from a shared cup as part of a large group; rather he kept a separate cup in order to control his intake. I was told though that, when he was younger, he was a much heavier and rowdier drinker.

More than any other person, he taught me the Sikaiana language. Although he was one of the men who spoke English the best, Kilatu was willing to speak Sikaiana with me even when I was first learning it. I collected terms from him that formed the basis for a dictionary. We would list all the different plants on Sikaiana and then the different words used to describe them as they blossomed and matured. He drew maps of the reef and gave me the words for locations, directions, and depths. We collected all the terms for fishing techniques.

He helped me transcribe and translate many of the tape recordings that I collected from Reuben, Fane and others. He patiently helped me work through Sikaiana grammar, giving me derivations for most Sikaiana verbs, and working on various derivational frames that I was using to analyze the grammar. I never would have tried to write a dictionary without his help. He provided new terms and derivations, and he completely checked several versions of the manuscript (Donner 1988a). The dictionary on the website is a result of this effort.

There were times when my presence probably became more tiring than exciting for him. Generally, his wife did not become involved in our work, although if she was present, he would occasionally call out questions to her. At the end of one long day, we were in his house in Honiara. Some Gilbertese visitors had come and left. After they left, Kilatu engaged in metaphorical speech by commenting "na lloo ku llee," "the ants have flown away," referring to the Gilbertese as ants. Such metaphors are often used in speech by the Sikaiana both to enrich and camouflage meaning. His wife, who probably underestimated my ability in the language and familiarity with Sikaiana use of metaphor to hide meanings, replied "*te nei, kaina e te moko ppili*," "now, we are being bitten by the gecko." In Solomon Island's households, there are often small geckos or lizards which crawl along the walls and ceilings. The Sikaiana call them, *moko ppili* `sticking

lizards', because they are able to hold to the wall and ceilings. I was being referred to as the "sticking lizard," an occupational hazard for an anthropologist.

It is hard to imagine what my understanding of Sikaiana would have been without him. I interviewed him about song composition, culture change, kinship relations, and land tenure. Indeed, whenever possible, I tried to check my observations about Sikaiana culture with him. Fane had a fuller knowledge of pre-Christian Sikaiana culture. But Kilatu remembered some things about the traditional culture he had learned from older men, especially his wife's father. Moreover, he had insight into the social changes that took place during his lifetime.

Because of his comparative wealth, his success, his ability as a doctor, and his willingness to help people, Kilatu was an influential man on Sikaiana. In true Sikaiana fashion, he rarely tried to directly force his will or opinion on other people but his opinions carried weight.

Kilatu was a remarkable person. He had been born in a culture believing in spirits and yet he had been very successful in the Western world. He wanted to try to maintain Sikaiana traditions, especially in language, dance, and songs; but, he also encouraged people to continue schooling. Although successful, wealthy and influential, he was not arrogant. Like so many other Sikaiana people, he seemed to find something of worth in almost every Sikaiana, no matter what they had done in their lives. For him, the man who had spent his life on Sikaiana tending to gardens and fishing could be as admirable as the man who had been successful at school and now wealthy. In Kilatu's relations with me (and in my observations of his relations with others), he was always extremely kind and generous of his time, opinion, food, and tobacco. But he was also forceful, neither obsequious nor deferential. He had opinions and he was not afraid to express them. He sternly corrected me if I made a mistake in paddling the canoe when we were fishing; and he would also correct my grammar and challenge my surmises about Sikaiana culture.

In 1986 after Sikaiana was devastated by the cyclone, Kilatu was staying in Honiara and his wife was on Sikaiana. Kilatu, I am told, had a stroke worrying about his wife. About two months before I returned to Sikaiana in 1987, I received a message from some of the Sikaiana that John Kilatu had died on Sikaiana.

Maybe more adventuresome than any of Malinowski's famous Trobriand kula traders, I consider Kilatu to be a true argonaut of the Western Pacific.

BROWN SAUA

Fane was about two generations older than myself, Kilatu was approximately my parents' age. Brown Saua was about my age.

Brown's great-grandparents came from Ontong Java, and for this reason he sometimes speaks of himself as being only "half" Sikaiana, even though only his father's

father was pure Ontong Java and the rest of his ancestry is Sikaiana. In Brown's youth, following a bitter quarrel about whether rights to land could be transferred through a woman, his father went to live on Ontong Java where he eventually died.

Brown attended the primary school on Sikaiana, the mission's school at Maravovo, and then with several other Sikaiana men, he became among the first from Sikaiana to attend the government's new and modern secondary school, King George VI, in Honiara. From there he went to the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. For a time, following in Kilatu's footsteps, he wanted to study medicine. After a few years, he left school to help his family without completing his degree and returned to the Solomon Islands.

He began work in the Protectorate government at the time that it was planning to localize its administration by transferring positions and responsibility from British colonial administrators to Solomon Islanders. He rose rapidly through the ranks of the government service.

The Sikaiana believe that certain traits run in family lines and Brown's family was noted for being intelligent. Brown has three brothers, all of them with advanced education: one is a lawyer; another has a certificate in forestry; a third works as an accountant.

At the time of my arrival in 1980 when I met him in the trailer, Brown was working on government legislation to decentralize political power to the provinces (the Solomon Islands has a federal system with locally administered provinces something like Canada and the United States). The Solomon Islands had just become independent in 1978, and the government was trying to reorganize its administrative system. The national government wanted a decentralized political system with as much power and control as possible to be delegated to the provinces.

During my stay in 1980-83, Brown was promoted several times to high positions in the government administration. After I left in 1983, he was promoted to the position of Permanent Secretary in various government ministries. This is the highest civil service position in the Solomon Islands. In his various postings, he worked hard and tried to be fair and humanitarian. Solomon Islanders and other foreigners who worked with him described him as one of the most capable administrators in the government. He also was courageous enough to take unpopular stands if he thought they were the right ones. He has the respect of many people in and out of government.

When I first arrived in Honiara, I wanted to explain my project to as many Sikaiana people as possible. I was told by many Sikaiana that Brown was an influential person among the Sikaiana, and I was interested in winning his support. He was interested, but initially kept some distance from me. In retrospect, I think he didn't want to become too closely associated with me for fear of biasing my research. As he warned me when we first met, there are many factions on Sikaiana. If I had close friends, I risked acquiring their enemies. But he kept an eye on me and several times helped me. On Sikaiana, his mother, Temotu, probably at his instigation, washed my

clothing, cooked food, and provided advice. Later in my stay, when I was living in Honiara and Auki, I stayed with him and his family. I spent almost all of my stay in 1987 with him and again my short stay of a few weeks in 1993.

Brown moved several times during my stay, and different people lived in his household depending upon where he was residing. At the time of my arrival in 1980, he had three children. Two more children were born during my stay in 1980-1983, one after I left in 1983, and another after I left in 1987. Probably as a result of his comparative wealth, influence, and generosity, all of his children have been taken by foster parents at one time or another. His oldest son was fostered by his wife's father. His next son lived with Laumani and Uriel on Sikaiana (every month a box of snacks arrived with the boat). His third child, a daughter, was taken by his wife's sister. His fourth child, another daughter, was taken by his mother, Temotu, and her own sixteen-year-old foster daughter. Another son was fostered by his wife's mother's sister. He saw his oldest son and daughter on weekends when his in-laws visited Honiara. His mother went back and forth between Honiara, Auki and Sikaiana bringing Brown's second daughter on her visits. He also had two foster children, a boy and a girl, who stayed with him (in 1987 he had taken another foster child). Many other people lived with him from time to time, including myself, Kilatu, his brothers, and others.

Brown often proposed projects and development plans that he thought would help Sikaiana. In 1980-81, he tried to organize a way for the Sikaiana people to acquire land for a resettlement village. He led several meetings to discuss this plan in Honiara and, during his vacation, on Sikaiana. Later, when the local cooperative store on Sikaiana went bankrupt, he organized a committee to oversee it. He also reorganized its finances so that, although the store still didn't become very profitable, it was at least possible to understand its book-keeping system.

When I returned in 1987, he was an active member of a committee that helped plan projects to alleviate the effects of the cyclone on Sikaiana. He was not the chairman of this committee, but the meetings were held at his house. Even though he tried not to take a leading role, claiming that he had too many other responsibilities, no Sikaiana activity was planned without consulting him and enlisting his support. When a fundraising event was planned to be held at the Sikaiana settlement at Tenaru Beach outside of Honiara, the chairman of the committee asked Brown to make the arrangements with the families at Tenaru. The chairman explained that the activity would have legitimacy if it had Brown's support; otherwise people would be skeptical. At his own initiative, Brown planned an application for a special housing project to replace housing destroyed on Sikaiana during the 1986 cyclone.

Brown was an influential leader of the Sikaiana in the sense that he would organize meetings, explain policies and plans. But like other influential Sikaiana people he did not try to force his opinion or will on others. Rather, he organized meetings and tried to reach a consensus. Like Kilatu, he was influential without being coercive.

He also was involved in national activities. He was chairman of the Solomon Islands Olympic Committee and traveled abroad for regional meetings in preparation

for the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, to which the Solomon Islands sent a small team.

I rarely heard him say anything bad about another Sikaiana person, and unlike many other Sikaiana, he rarely gossiped or criticized. When he was drinking, I never saw him get into a fight, nor did he have a reputation for fighting in his youth, somewhat uncommon for Sikaiana people who can be volatile when drinking.

Brown, like Kilatu, was interested in preserving Sikaiana traditions. He had recorded some traditional songs, and on one occasion before my arrival in 1980, he organized a traditional song festival. In proposing his plan for a resettlement village, he emphasized that it was important for the Sikaiana to be able to reside together in order to preserve their traditions. Like many other Sikaiana, though, he was also interested in assimilating Western values and institutions. He supported economic development, and, even more than I do, subscribed to a notion of "progress," believing that life in the Solomon Islands will get improved technology and the standard of living will increase. When his children became old enough to start school, he insisted that they be returned from their foster families so that he could oversee their schooling in Honiara.

He also maintained his ties with other Sikaiana people. Brown married a Sikaiana woman and he is committed to his Sikaiana kinship ties. He often used his yearly leave to return to Sikaiana. In Honiara, he was an active participant in Sikaiana events.

Fane and Kilatu were at the end of their lives when I knew them. They had grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and although their lives were not without challenges, decisions, joys and sorrows, they had some sense of completeness. They were both retired. Fane died in 1982; Kilatu died shortly before my return in 1987. Brown, by contrast, was in mid-career. For the entire time that I knew him, he has been in the midst of making choices and decisions about his work, family and future.

When I returned to the Solomon Islands in 1987, there were changes in Brown's life. After being promoted to a Permanent Secretary (the highest non-elected position in a Westminster type of government), he had resigned to work for a private company. He had various reasons for resigning. He came to be frustrated by some of the infighting in the government bureaucracy. He spent long hours under pressure for pay and benefits that were considerably less than those he received working in the private sector. Like many business people in industrial societies, he had become a vocal advocate of free enterprise and an opponent of government bureaucracies for their inefficiency and waste. He proudly described how he had to be efficient and profitable in his new job. He often teased two of his brothers who were working for the government with examples of governmental inefficiency.

His job with the government was secure, well paying, and influential. He left it to work with a private company where he spent his first six months learning a completely new job. It was a risk because the company's Australian owners were interested in profits. If Brown couldn't bring them in, someone else would be hired. After about a year, he had mastered his job and proved his ability to his new bosses. He was once

again relatively secure, but he felt that he would have more freedom if he went into business on his own. By the time I was ready to leave in late 1987, he was already making plans to start his own business.

When I returned again in 1993, Brown was working for a national development organization. He was once again using his administrative skills but this time in an organization which was not part of the government bureaucracy.

Brown was never as directly involved in the details of my research as either Fane or Kilatu. I talked with him about certain issues, and he reviewed parts of my dictionary. But I did not take information from him as often as I did from Kilatu, Fane, or even many other Sikaiana. Instead, Brown provided me with the kind of emotional and personal support that made my stay much easier. He was a very good friend.ⁱ

SIMON TOKULAA

My relationship with Tokulaa was quite different from the three I have just described. I interviewed him once to ask him about his family background and work history, the interview which I gave to everyone. I spent less time with him than with Fane, Kilatu or Brown. But he stands out in my memory as an unforgettable person.

Tokulaa was a character; he was a Sikaiana cynic.

My first encounter with him was not pleasant. I hadn't been on Sikaiana too long and was with a group of people drinking toddy. As usual, Tokulaa was drinking and drunk. He began insulting me: Why had I come to live on Sikaiana? Why didn't I go back to wherever I came from? In any case, he said matter-of-factly and with an annoying touch of satisfaction, the Sikaiana people will "skin you like a pig," meaning that they would take advantage of me. I had not yet encountered such hostility from any Sikaiana, who are rarely so direct in their criticism, especially to foreigners, and more especially to Westerners.

I was upset and for the next few months I avoided him. He was the priest's nephew and they lived in the same house. Despite our quarrel, and probably at the instigation of the priest with whom he lived, Tokulaa one day shyly asked me to buy him some small rubber fish that are used as lures. I was planning to return to Honiara for a few months. These lures are rare on Sikaiana and hard to come by in Honiara where they are sold in only a few stores. Such direct requests are rare from Sikaiana because people are afraid that they will be ridiculed for begging. Normally, I would have ignored them. It is not a good idea, in my opinion, to develop relationships based upon gifts. Reciprocity, however, is the basis of many social relations on Sikaiana; they often define their relations in terms of visible exchanges. I was curious about Tokulaa, who seemed friendly but shy on those few occasions when he was sober. I decided to look for the lures when I got to Honiara. After a long search through most of Honiara's shops, I finally found a small store in Chinatown which sold them in packs of five for less than a dollar. The search was much more bothersome than the cost. When I returned to

Sikaiana I had a pack of lures for Tokulaa.

He became much friendlier after this small gift and in the following months, we began drinking and joking together. One day he suggested we go together to Matuavi, one of the far islets at the other end of the lagoon. He said it was "fresh" there; Hale, the main islet was over-developed and polluted, by comparison. (It is true that Hale is dirtier and more littered as the result of daily use. I found it amusing that on their seemingly remote and isolated island some Sikaiana people like "to get away from it all" by going to these outer islands.) We took off for several days. Although Tokulaa never went to church, his uncle and housemate, the priest had asked him to bring back a new giant clam shell to be used for Baptisms in the church. He dove for the clam and we spent the next day slowly drilling a hole in it with a hand drill.

Tokulaa was a bachelor in his late forties. A bachelor on Sikaiana is often the object of derision. The one thing that the Sikaiana value is marriage and reproduction. Among the most constant and heaviest drinkers on the atoll, he drank toddy almost every day, and sometimes for several days in a row. He was one of the few Sikaiana people who never went to church, although he lived with the priest.

Sometimes, he had a nasty temper. One night at a dance, without any apparent provocation, he punched another man squarely in the face. The other man was himself an old bachelor, partly blind, at times obnoxious, but in this case, he was simply trying to dance with some of the women. Later, Tokulaa claimed to have been too drunk to remember the incident.

When drinking, Tokulaa often boasted to me that he was the most capable man on Sikaiana in constructing houses, fishing and building a canoe. I was doubtful. When drunk, Sikaiana men often boast, and a lot of the time Tokulaa was drunk. I very rarely saw him sober, except when he was building a concrete house for which his services would later be paid with drink. I somehow couldn't imagine this drunkard being much good at anything.

Tokulaa's words were more than bluster. On the trip to Matuavi, I went in his canoe and it was a very exceptional one, the only if its kind that I had been in. His canoe was very narrow. By that time, I had become used to sitting in the narrow Sikaiana canoes, but his canoe hurt my hips and rear. It was very light with very thin sides. Such construction is uncomfortable for sitting and not very practical for hauling copra. Broad-bottomed, shallow hulls are better for that. It takes both nerve and skill to shape a canoe with such thin sides. One slight slip of the hand when making the canoe and the side will be perforated. The narrow and thin shape, however hard to fashion, makes a canoe that is very fast. It was not very stable, which required adept steering, and it would not tolerate scraping against the coral. It showed gifted workmanship, but lacked practicality for transporting people and supplies. Tokulaa's canoe was something like the Sikaiana version of a Porsche, fast, delicate, and skillfully crafted, but not practical for much of the work that a family man must do.

He was a skilled carpenter and had worked away from Sikaiana. On Sikaiana, he

supervised most of the construction of houses with concrete foundations. He was proud that none of his house foundations ever cracked. I fully appreciated his skill when I returned to Sikaiana in 1987. He had died, probably of pneumonia, during my absence. Two solid houses built by him were standing, both having withstood the effects of the cyclone. No new concrete buildings were being started because, although there were some former carpenters on Sikaiana, no one felt competent to supervise them. A new medical clinic remained an unfinished frame for a year because no one had the confidence to put up the walls. If Tokulaa had been alive, all these projects would have been completed.

Tokulaa was a cynical philosopher. He constantly described Sikaiana as a "bad luck place" with no resources, nothing to build upon, no potential for development. And yet after we became friends, Tokulaa kept telling me to stay there for the rest of my life. He insisted that I could learn the skills necessary for survival. He was convinced that life in America consisted of two things: violence and greed. He explained both with dramatics: pointing his hand into a gun with his forefinger and thumb and saying "ping"; and then rolling his forefinger and thumb into a ring to make a circle to represent a coin.

Tokulaa was not a primary informant, like Fane or Kilatu, and I never knew him as well as I knew Brown. Like everyone else I had contact with, I recorded some aspects of our interactions, especially as they pertained to topics I was researching. I never would have understood about certain skills in canoe construction except for having sat in his fast, but uncomfortable canoe. His discussions about social change made their way into my notes where they were blended with less cynical views about both Westernization and life on the atoll.

There was something I liked about Tokulaa. Tokulaa had a certain dignity in his cynicism. Philosophical and introspective in a religious society, Tokulaa never went to church. A skilled carpenter with a marketable trade, he most often worked his trade in exchange for fermented toddy. A capable man both in traditional skills and in Western ones, he never did the one thing necessary to become respected by other Sikaiana: he never married. Equally a cynic about Sikaiana life and Western life, he, nevertheless, advised me to spend the rest of my life on the atoll.

SALLY TOLOTI (a pseudonym)

Of all the people in this chapter, I had the least interaction with Sally, although I do know some members of her family well. I lived in the house of one of her older brothers for several months, and on Sikaiana often drank with a younger brother. I saw her at the Christmas holiday on Sikaiana in 1981 and occasionally at Sikaiana events in Honiara or when she visited relatives. Sally was less involved in Sikaiana activities than any of the people discussed so far. She lived in Honiara and married a man with mixed Caucasian ancestry.

When I returned to the Solomon Islands in 1987, I wanted to collect life histories. I asked people to talk about their lives and careers, and recorded their responses into a

tape-recorder. I was interested in interviewing Sally because I knew that she was one of the few Sikaiana women who has a profession. She is a teacher. One afternoon, she shyly consented to an interview and then in Pijin, which after many years in Honiara she claimed to be more comfortable speaking, she described some important events in her life.

Sally represents another perspective on Sikaiana life. She is a woman who, against her parents' wishes, received an education and, again contrary to their wishes, married a non-Sikaiana man. She continues to work at her profession, although her husband's job provides her household with a very good income. She has done things that most Sikaiana women don't do and she has been successful at them.

Sally was born shortly after World War II. When she was young, she was raised on Sikaiana by her foster parents. Her father and mother lived in Honiara. She recalled that at the time of her youth, the school on Sikaiana was open only for the young boys because a woman's education was not considered as important.

The Anglican missionaries encouraged the girls to get their schooling at mission schools away from Sikaiana. But Sally's foster parents wanted to keep her with them and would not allow her to leave the atoll to go to school. Her younger sister, raised in a different household, left for school before she did. Sally was envious of the other girls who went to school and who returned to the atoll speaking some English.

When she was about eleven, her father returned to Sikaiana and agreed to let her attend the mission school at Pamua on Makira Island. She attended school there from 1957 to 1959. At first, she was frightened by the new surroundings. She had never spoken any language except the Sikaiana vernacular and had never seen Melanesians before. But she eventually made many friends and impressed her teachers with her intelligence. Her teachers liked her and she liked school.

She returned to her parents' household in 1960 for her Christmas break. Her father decided that she had enough schooling and refused to allow her to go back. With a short laugh during the interview, she said that he must have thought that if she learned how to write her name then that was as much education as any Sikaiana woman needed. She wrote a letter to her school asking the teachers to see if they could persuade her father to change his mind. The teachers asked Sikaiana's priest to write her father a letter trying to persuade him to send her back. But like a lot of Sikaiana parents then, **and even at the time of the interview in 1987**, her father did not think that educating his daughters was so important and would not change his mind.

She gave up any hope of returning to Pamua. But after a delay her father changed his mind and she returned to school by Easter. She finished school at Pamua and was selected to go on to the new teachers' training college. She and one other woman were the first females who went to the school. She finished her courses there in 1967 and then went to Fiji for nine months of special training.

She returned to Pamua to teach for two years and then decided to marry a non-

Sikaiana man. Her parents opposed the marriage. Probably, like most Sikaiana parents, they wanted her to marry another Sikaiana person (although they have another daughter married to a man from another country). Again, she overcame their objections. Her husband worked first for the Church of Melanesia and then started a career in the civil service. She travelled with him to his various postings: Gizo in the Western Province; Auki in Malaita Province; Kirakira in Makira Province; Santa Cruz; Tulagi; and then finally back to Honiara. Whenever possible she took a job as a school teacher. Her husband became influential in the civil service and in the government.

She told me that her marriage to a non-Sikaiana person has caused her to become distanced from other Sikaiana people. They don't ask her to participate in their ceremonies and events. Her children can understand the Sikaiana vernacular, but cannot speak it. She feels sorry for the Sikaiana women who don't get a good education. If they move away from the atoll, they can't find work and then they have to stay around the house. They also have trouble mixing with other non-Sikaiana Solomon Islanders. Their husbands, who are educated, can interact with other Solomon Islanders. She recalled the time at Pamua when she and other Sikaiana school girls imagined going back to Sikaiana and starting a school for girls.

Her husband has a good job with the government and her children are all doing well in school. In the interview she explained, "I'm not really just working for money any longer, I like my work. If I stay at the house-- I could do it for two or three months-- but then I would feel restless. I'm always thinking I should quit my job, but then I think about how much I like the work. I like the work. I like the children I teach. Sometimes the children make you tired, but still they can make you happy."

Diversity

There is no individual who would serve as typical of all Sikaiana. But the Sikaiana people do share a common cultural tradition and history that shapes their lives. Brown's optimism and Tokulaa's cynicism can be understood as different responses to similar historical and cultural processes.

The five people described above are examples of the range of diversity among individual Sikaiana. No one was as old as Fane and by 1987 there were no longer any surviving people who witnessed pre-Christian social and ritual life as adults. Unlike Fane, most Sikaiana are fluent in Pijin; unlike Kilatu and Brown, most are not fluent in English. Many people have less interest in traditional customs and ceremonies than Fane, Kilatu or Brown, but probably more interest than Tokulaa. Most Sikaiana like to drink, but most thought Tokulaa was excessive.

Although many older people attended the missionary schools, Maravovo and Pawa, unlike Kilatu they did not go to medical school. Instead, most men of Kilatu's age returned to Sikaiana or stayed abroad working as electricians, carpenters, crew

members of boats, clerks, and school teachers. Most younger people have less education than Brown, although many have spent some time abroad receiving specialized training. Most women do not have as much education as Sally, and very few work in the professions.

On the atoll, Tokulaa was at a margin in community life because he was unmarried. But Tokulaa was liked by many Sikaiana and, if not admired, at least tolerated by all others. Moreover, he was capable in Sikaiana skills as a canoe maker, fisherman, and house builder. Sally, a resident of Honiara and married to a non-Sikaiana person, is at another margin. She visits with other Sikaiana people and participates in some of their activities, but her children do not speak the language and she feels some distance between herself and other Sikaiana.

Like all Sikaiana, these five people are tied to one another through overlapping networks of kinship, personal commitments and obligations. Kilatu and Fane had entered into a ceremonial "friendship" with each other, and invited one another to events and parties. Fane's foster child, her brother's grandson, married Kilatu's daughter. This couple resided with Fane following their wedding. Fane and Kilatu closely collaborated in the performance of a traditional ceremony for the visit of the Prime Minister. Fane showed Kilatu how to dress in the role of traditional chief, *aliki*, when she took the role of the chief's assistant, *sapai ulu*. When Kilatu resided in Auki for a conference of the Malaita Diocese of the Church of Melanesia, he stayed with Brown. Brown's grandparents were closely associated with Fane's lineage, after they migrated to Sikaiana from Ontong Java. This association was still important at the time of my stays. Brown's family was encouraged to use Fane's lineage land and maintained close ties with her lineage. One of Brown's foster children is the great-granddaughter of Fane and the granddaughter of Kilatu. Sally's mother was a member of Fane's land-holding lineage and her parent's house on Sikaiana was located near Fane's. Sally's foster mother was a close relative of Brown's mother, Temotu. Brown's wife was the foster child of Sally's parents. Sally's brother, Frank was one of Brown's closest friends and, for a while, they were in business together. Tokulaa was a member of Kilatu's clan and a member of Brown's wife's land-holding lineage. When Brown's father-in-law built a concrete house on Sikaiana, he asked Tokulaa to oversee its construction.

The dense and overlapping nature of these relationships is one way in which the Sikaiana are bound together. But the people are not only bound together by the frequency and intensity of interaction and overlapping relationships. In the following chapters, I will describe some of the shared interactional expectations and ceremonies which also unite them.

ⁱ Brown had chronic asthma for the entire time that I knew him. He passed away a relatively young man in 1995.

IX

PERSON AND INTERACTION: The Social Organization of Personal Relations

The people discussed in the previous chapter, like all Sikaiana people, are known to one another as individuals with distinctive personality traits and characteristics. In their interactions and relations with one another, the Sikaiana have shared expectations and understandings that provide guidelines for interpreting the actions and motivations of others. These interactional understandings of Sikaiana social relations include concepts of the individual, personal identity, reputation, and the feelings and thoughts which the Sikaiana experience in their relations. I think of these interactional understandings as at the *interior* of Sikaiana social life because they describe how the Sikaiana evaluate and interpret one another's behavior and motivations. As thoughts and feelings, moreover, these understandings are subjectively experienced; that is to say they are part of an individual's inner experience of self and others. Although they are felt inside a person, these experiences are encoded in a shared language when discussing behavior and motivations. In the following pages, I will describe Sikaiana concepts concerning the individual, emotions, motivations, and interaction. I cannot claim to be able to climb into the mind and soul of a Sikaiana person to experience self and others as they do. But I do understand much of their language and how they talk about individuals, their feelings, their interactions and their relations. In the following pages, I often use the words, phrases, idioms and figures of speech that the Sikaiana themselves use in describing one another's activities, motivations, emotions and reputations.ⁱ

SHORT GLOSSARY OF PERSON, BODY, and SOUL

PERSON

tama person, playing piece in a chess or checker game
child, relative

tapaa tama the little person, the baby

tama *likiliki* baby, child

tamaahine young woman, maiden

tamataane young man, bachelor

tama *matu* mature person, adult

tama *maatua* elder

lautama age group, people of the same age,
young unmarried adults

tama *maa* white man

tama *uli* black man, Melanesian, Solomon Islander

SPIRITS

aitu god, often the atoll's founder heroes; also the spiritual essence in people which
sometimes continues after death

aitu mate the spirits of deceased ancestors who communicate with a chosen
descendant

tupua spirits, who were never human, usually associated with specific localities

BODY and SOUL

aitu the spiritual essence which returns after death as
a spirit

manu the spiritual essence which leaves the body after a fall

anaana the spiritual essence which appears shortly after death

tuputupu character, fashion, manner of behaving, personality
traits

hano manner of behaving

manava belly, the source of feelings and motivations

manava *haeko* to have a bad or angry temperament

manava *hailaoi* to be a kind, generous, considerate person

manava *hatu* to be unembarrassed, strong willed

manava *mmau* to be strong willed

manava *pupu* to be confused

Person and Character

The generic word for 'person' or 'human' is *tama*. This word is compounded with qualifiers to describe social categories determined by race, age, and sex: *tapaa tama*, 'baby'; *tama likiliki* 'child'; *tamaahine* 'young woman' or 'maiden'; *tamataane* 'young man' or 'bachelor'; *tama matua* 'adult'; *tama maatua* 'old person'. *Tama* is also the generic term for a 'kin person', 'relative', or 'child'. *Lautama* (from *lau*, a 'branch' or 'leaf') refers to a group of people who are approximately the same age and mature together. More specifically it refers to the current generation of young unmarried women and men, *tamaahine* and *tamataane*, whose activities, especially in romance, are the source of much interest and gossip. This group matures together and throughout their lives they feel a certain attachment to one another. The Sikaiana also make a general distinction between *tama maa* ('white person') and *tama uli* ('black person'). The Sikaiana will refer to themselves as *tama uli* ('black') in the presence of a white person such as myself. But normally in their discussions amongst themselves, they use the term *tama uli* to refer to the non-Sikaiana population of the Solomon Islands, especially the Melanesians who normally have darker complexions than the Sikaiana.

Traditionally, there were three terms that referred to a person's spiritual essences: *aitu*, *anaana*, and *manu*. In present-day speech, these terms are often used interchangeably, but some older people used them to refer to distinct spiritual qualities. In former times, it was believed that the *aitu* was the spiritual part of a person that continued to exist after death and may eventually return in spirit possession. It was Tomaniva's *aitu* who drove Peia insane. Most people, however, disappeared at death, never returning to possess anyone. Although spirit possession no longer is practiced, many people believe that these spirits could reappear if people ceased to follow the teachings of the Christianity. The *aitu* of recently deceased ancestors who returned to possess their descendants were called "*aitu mate*" 'spirit of the dead'. In describing supernatural beings, the term *aitu* (without the term *mate*) refers to the gods which overlooked the atoll's welfare. Many of these gods, for example Sikaiana's founder heroes Tehui Atahu and Tehui Luaniua, were formerly living people who transformed into gods. There was another class of supernatural beings, *tupua* who inhabit certain localities on land and along the reef. *Tupua* assisted the ancestral spirits (*aitu mate*) in their supernatural activities. Unlike most *aitu* and all *aitu mate*, *tupua* are not transformed humans; rather, they are spiritual entities which seem to have always existed. Some Sikaiana people still believe *tupua* may appear at certain localities, especially at night.

Aitu is now the Sikaiana word for the Christian concept of the 'soul'. The Christian Holy Spirit is the *Aitu Tapu* (*tapu* was used by the missionaries to refer to 'sacred' matters). Some people, however, prefer to use the term *Anaana Tapu* to refer to the Holy Spirit because *anaana* has a less frightening connotation than *aitu*. The *anaana* refers to a spiritual apparition that, in Sikaiana belief, appears shortly after a person's death to notify another person of the death. An elder person is more likely to appear after death than a young child. The power of the *anaana* apparently is associated with maturity and length of life. Some people said that the *anaana* displayed the personality of the dead person: a person who liked to joke would continue to play

jokes on his close friends shortly after death. Many people still believe it is possible to meet the *anaana* of a recently deceased person, especially a close relative.

The *manu* refers to a person's inner spirit while living. It is believed that the *manu* leaves a person's body following some physical injury such as a fall from a tree. After a sudden fall, for example, a person may be disoriented, or as we might say in English, "shaken." Sometimes, people take a blanket to the area where the fall took place and try to gather the *manu* into it. The blanket is then placed over the fallen person in order to reunite the person with his *manu*. I saw this practiced twice during my stay in 1980-1983, although there was some joking skepticism about the efficacy of this activity. Conceptually, the *manu* seems to have been distinct from the *aitu*. When Fane recounted the legend of Peia to me, she referred to Tomaniva as returning after death as an *aitu mate*. But she explained that Peia's insanity was caused by what Tomaniva did to her *manu*. The term *manu* can also be used idiomatically to refer to any living person and, in poetic usages, to refer to a 'lover' or 'sweetheart'. It also is the general term for a 'bird' or 'animal'.

In the English language, the heart is referred to as the source of emotions, especially romantic ones. The Sikaiana also use body parts to describe the source of emotions and thoughts. For them, the 'belly' (*manava*) is the center of both thinking and emotion. Great desires, as for a true love, are described as coming from the very bottom of the belly (*hatu manava*). Someone who is easily confused or mixed up has a 'messy, dirty belly' (*manava pupu*); a generous person has 'kind belly', (*manava hailaoi*); and an evil or bad person is described as having a 'bad belly' (*manava haeko*).

Traditionally, the Sikaiana held that thinking and intelligence also derived from the belly, not from the head or brain as we do. At present, however, probably as a result of borrowing from English idioms, certain kinds of intelligence are associated with the 'head' (*pohoulu*), especially knowledge associated with Western education. A child who is intelligent in school is described as 'having a head' (*haipohoulu*), and a dullard may be referred to as having a 'hard head', (*pohoulu makkatau*). Temotu, Brown Saua's mother, once told me that, although she was skilled with her hands, she was not good at things which involved her "head" such as reading and writing. In 1987, I heard a man, whom the Sikaiana did not consider to be especially capable in the English language, refer to someone as stupid by saying that the person did not have any "brains" (*upullo*), a borrowing from the English idiom which equates brains and intelligence. Although this was the only time I heard a Sikaiana person use this particular idiom, it is likely that English metaphors about intelligence and emotions will continue to be borrowed by the Sikaiana.

An individual's character or manner of behaving is described by the nouns, *hano* and *tuputupu*. *Hano* is also the verb meaning 'to go', a person's manner of behaving also being their manner of 'going'. In the Pijin spoken by the Sikaiana people, I've heard the term, *go-go*, derived from the English word 'to go,' spoken with the same meaning as *hano*. For example, Pijin *go-go bilong em*, means 'her/his character or way of behaving'. When I first arrived on Sikaiana, a man told me that he would be watching my "go-go" in order to learn about what kind of person I am.ⁱⁱ The Sikaiana would

explain differences in behavior by explaining that it was a matter of *te hano o te tama*, 'each person's manner of behaving'. The Sikaiana phrase *tona hano*, 'its manner of going', also describes standardized patterns of behavior in institutions, practices, and events, for example: the sequence of presentations in a marriage exchange, the order of activities in a ceremony, or the expectations associated with fosterage.

The noun, *tuputupu*, also refers to 'character' or 'manner of behaving' and in these senses is synonymous with *hano*. *Tuputupu* may be a derivative of the word *tupu*, which means to 'grow' or 'mature' as children and plants do. Some Sikaiana people glossed *tuputupu* with the English term 'fashion' as in a "fashion of behaving."ⁱⁱⁱ Somewhat like the use of their term *hano* to explain sequences of activities or institutions, *tuputupu* can also be used to refer to traditional Sikaiana practices and culture. In some cases, for example, Fane seemed to use the word *tuputupu* as a synonym for *kastom* or 'customary practices'.

I did not find that the Sikaiana have any elaborate theories or consistent theories about personality development. People frequently talk about physical or behavioral traits as running in families. Intelligence, they say, runs in some families. The propensity to commit incest runs in others. Other times, however, people will explain personality traits as the result of upbringing, not family inheritance. Laziness or industry sometimes are attributed to upbringing. The disobedience of many young men is described as the result of their upbringing in Honiara where they were exposed to the undesirable habits of other cultural traditions. The Sikaiana do not see personality as invariable or inalterable. I have heard people talk about the great changes in character that someone has undergone, for example, as the result of maturing, marrying, or a recommitment to their religion. On the other hand, people also note the consistencies in character that they find displayed across an entire lifetime.

Attributes of the Person

Names are among the most personal of possessions, belonging to and identifying each individual. A Sikaiana individual has several names, each with social significance. At present, babies receive both a Christian name and a Sikaiana or "home" name. The people described in this book have both a Christian name and a Sikaiana name: Simon Tokulaa; Brown Saua; John Kilatu; Lillian Laumani; Robert Sisilo, Uriel Paene. Some families have begun to follow English custom by using the father's Sikaiana name as the last name for all his children. Popular Christian names are Robert, John, James, and Moses. Some Christian names are chosen from men who were influential in Solomon Islands history: Baddley, the name of a former Bishop of the Melanesian Mission, is popular. One Sikaiana young man born in 1969 is named "Armstrong," after the American astronaut who walked on the moon in that year. During my stay in 1987, a baby boy was called "Rambo" by one of his aunts after Sylvester Stallone's movie character who is popular among the Sikaiana. Another young boy bore the name "Travolta," named by his Sikaiana foster parent who admired John Travolta's dancing ability in *Saturday Night Fever*. Some boys are named after towns or places where they were born or where their parents have spent long periods: "Marau

Sound," "Sulufou" and "Siota" are all people named for localities in the Solomon Islands.

Most children are also given a Sikaiana or "home" name by parents and foster parents. The name(s) should be from some ancestor in their family's extended genealogy and should not be the name of any other living person. The names of legendary and historical people discussed in earlier chapters have been given to living people. Alan Piva, Taupule, Tomaniva, Peia, TePeau, Semalu, Kaetekita are all names which are possessed by living Sikaiana. When Kilatu's brother, Kahana, died, Kilatu's next grandson was named Kahana. Like most English names such as Mary and Bill, Sikaiana names are marked for each sex: for example, Lito can only be given to a male; Paakele can only be for a female.

Foster parents sometimes give their foster children a different name from that given by natal parents. Kilatu's name was given to him by his foster parent. This name originally belonged to an ancestor of a clan other than his father's. Foster parents use the names they gave to foster children in addressing them long after the children have left their household. This reminds the foster children of their relationship. Sometimes, names record events. One man, for example, named his daughter Hutuila, 'red banana', after the fact that some bananas turned red shortly before her birth. One young girl was named Hakasau, 'gift' or 'talent' by her admiring grandfather.

Thus, a person may have several names to which he or she may be referred. Usually one name sticks and is most commonly used. One Sikaiana baby was christened with my mother's maiden name, Wilkinson. But he is often called "Tehui Luaniua," the name of one of Sikaiana's founding ancestors of whose clan, Saatui, he is a member. This name was given to him by his great aunt, Fane, when he visited Sikaiana as a small baby. Fane is also a member of the Saatui clan. The use of different names reflects social relationships. One girl was named Kupe after her father's younger sister, who died as a young child. But when Kupe was a small girl, her mother, Vaikona, died. Afterwards Vaikona's relatives began to call the little girl by her mother's name. Today, her father's relatives call her, "Kupe"; her mother's relatives call her "Vaikona."

There is frequent joking about names. As a young man walks down the village path, another may call out to him by using the name of the young man's sweetheart, or the name of his sweetheart's parents. The unsuspecting person may be startled at hearing the name of someone who is on his mind. For example, on the morning after I had danced with a young woman at a party, a young man greeted me by calling me the name of that woman's father. Sikaiana also call one another by the name of their foster parents, something which the Sikaiana find both amusing and mildly insulting because they interpret it as taunting the foster parent. They also may refer to a person by the name of someone else who is that person's associate, usually as a mild taunt. If I had spent a lot of time interviewing one person, other people might greet me by calling me by that informant's name.

In most conversation, there is some reluctance on the part of Sikaiana to use personal names, either in direct address to a person or when referring to someone in conversation. Usually, close relatives summon one another by a distinctive whistle

which becomes associated with their names. Some people told me this is a tradition from pre-Christian times when it was feared that shouting would arouse malevolent spirits. Today, these whistles are very frequently used to summon a spouse or child. In most speech, pronouns and deictics, such as "that person" or "this person," are used to refer to people rather than their personal names. Calling out a person's name sometimes brings an angry rebuke.

On Sikaiana, people are also known by the locations which they frequent, including their residential area, gardens, coconut groves and the paths between these areas. Although it is a small atoll and people are always going places, they are expected to travel to certain areas in the course of their ordinary daily routines. Sometimes, being outside of these areas arouses suspicion that a person is up to mischief. When Sikaiana pass each other, their standard greeting asks about a person's movements: *a koe ni au i he?* 'where did you come from?'; and, *a koe e haele ki he?*, 'where are you going?'. This greeting is the equivalent of our "hello" or "how are you." Sikaiana men often keep track of who has set out fishing, trying to identify people although they are only specks on the distant reef. Some people claim to be able to recognize others by their distinctive paddling styles or the shape of their canoes, even though they cannot distinguish the faces in the distance.

The Sikaiana expect people to be found in certain localities. Someone who is constantly outside of these areas or rambles around aimlessly is criticized by being called *vai saele*. People are especially critical when young women wander around because it implies that they are not serious about their work and are making themselves available for sexual encounters. *Peka*, the word for 'flying fox', is used to deride people who, like a flying fox, wander around at night and by implication might be up to mischief.

This interest in daily behavior and locality stems from the more general expectation that every individual is committed to a household or residential group. A person who frequently changes residence between different households is criticized as a *tama sola*, which is pejorative and means 'a wandering person'. Sometimes, *tama sola* refers to a person who does not have access to any land on Sikaiana or has been expelled from using land to which she or he had entitlement. Because of the strong Sikaiana values for self-sufficiency and their emotional attachment to land, this is a very shameful or embarrassing situation. In other usages, *tama sola* describes a person who frequently changes residence between different households. Such movement implies that the person is unreliable, disloyal, uncommitted to others, and difficult to get along with. *Tama sola* also describes people who constantly beg for food from households where they do not reside or have close ties.

The Sikaiana people claim that visitors to Ontong Java will find their daily movements restricted. Visitors are expected to stay with only one household and curtail their visits to other households. One older man who had married an Ontong Java woman explained that this Ontong Java custom was practiced to ensure that a person did not take food from another household. This would embarrass the household with which he was living by implying that there was not enough food there. Sikaiana people

contrast the situation on Ontong Java with the freedom of movement on Sikaiana, which they consider to be preferable. There are, however, some restrictions on movement on Sikaiana and a person should be committed to his or her household.

Shame and the Regulation of Interaction

Robert and Priscilla told me that many of the traditional restrictions in relationships described below are not followed by present-day Sikaiana people in 2019.

Interaction on Sikaiana is regulated by the restrictions and regulations associated with the term, *napa* which means 'to be ashamed', 'inhibited' or 'embarrassed'. Shame serves to inhibit or limit behavior. It concerns what people should not do. A well-behaved Sikaiana person should feel shame. By avoiding shameful behavior, he or she behaves in a socially approved manner.

People who are not appropriately circumspect in their behavior are sometimes criticized by being referred to as *hellika*. *Hellika* is a compound formed from the negative *he* ('no' 'not') and a derivative form of the verb *likalika*, which means 'timid'. *Likalika* describes birds and fish that are frightened by the approach of humans and rapidly fly or swim away. In Sikaiana thinking, like timid animals, people should feel awkward or hesitant to approach certain other people or engage in certain types of inappropriate behavior. *Hellika*—'not timid'--describes someone who breaks social norms by constantly coming to an area to beg resources or behave in other socially inappropriate ways without embarrassment or shame. This idiom is somewhat similar to the English criticism, "he has a lot of nerve."

Another idiom suggests a similar association between shame and restrictions on behavior. A person who is fearless is described as having a belly that is firm or tough: *manava mmau*, 'strong or firm belly', or *manava hatu*, 'stone belly'. These terms are also used to describe someone who behaves in a manner that disregards public opinion, (although there is also a hint of admiration for people so willful in achieving their goals that they ignore public opinion.)

Napa describes the emotion caused by inappropriate behavior. It describes the feeling associated with a reluctance to ask aid from strangers, or visit with unfamiliar people. In these situations, shame is associated with making inappropriate requests or 'begging' (*kainono*) from people who are not closely involved with a person. Shame often describes the affective condition of interaction with foreigners, especially Europeans. It is the condition that restricts people from drawing attention to themselves and inhibits immodesty. It describes the appropriate resulting emotional state for someone who has committed some social transgression, including pre-marital intercourse, theft, vandalism, or adultery. When drinking fermented toddy, some people engage in erratic, improper and disruptive behavior because they no longer feel inhibited by shame (*e he iloa i te napa*, 'they do not know about shame'). A re-duplicated form, *hakanapanapa*, is used to describe shyness or embarrassment during the initial phases of courtship when the man and woman are often described as inhibited in the presence of someone they find attractive.

Since it is a regulator of social relationships, any loosening of conditions for shame has a widespread impact. People who consistently behaved in socially inappropriate ways were described as "not knowing or understanding about shame." Older people often made this complaint about young people and claimed it was a major cause of culture change and the breakdown of traditional expectations for deference and respect.

In certain specific kinship relationships, interaction is shaped by explicit prohibitions on certain kinds of behavior. These prohibitions are associated with a feeling of *napa* in these relationships. The prohibitions in these restricted kinship relationships define the degrees of formality and informality in social relations, and the interactional behaviors that are appropriate and inappropriate.

Readers of this book are probably more guarded at their first job interview or when first meeting future in-laws than in the company of old friends. Many Americans are likely to be somewhat guarded in talking about sexual matters to members of their immediate family, especially those of the opposite sex or of different generation. On Sikaiana, there are very specific and explicit conventions for defining behavior which is and is not appropriate in the presence of certain kin. These relationships and the prohibitions associated with them, the Sikaiana explain, involve feelings of shame (*napa*).

In-laws, opposite-sex siblings and, in traditional Sikaiana society the mother's brother--sister's child relationship (*inoa*) are all relationships in which the affective state is described as being one of *napa*. The people in these kinship categories include classificatory relatives. For example, opposite-sex cousins, follow the behavioral expectations for opposite-sex sibling, *kave*. The spouses of cousins are considered to be in-laws, *maa*. In these relationships, feelings of shame restrict behavior and also should prevent quarrels between in-laws or sexual contacts between brothers and sisters.

Kinship Relations with Shame (*napa*)

kave cross-sex sibling, brother and sister

inoā mother's brother to the sister's children, also may apply to all people mother calls
kave

maa in-laws of the same generation: brother-in-law, sister-in-law

hunaona in-laws of different generation: mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law,
daughter-in-law,

(All terms may also apply to classificatory relatives)
(See Chapter VI footnote 2)

The feeling of shame in these relations is associated with behavioral prohibitions that ensure formality and decorum in interaction. The prohibited activities are described as being 'forbidden', *tapu*. *Tapu* is the Sikaiana cognate of the common Polynesian term which has been borrowed into the English language as "taboo". In this sense of its meaning, *tapu* is opposed to *tana*, which means 'to be free' or 'unrestricted'. In the thinking of some Sikaiana people, the easing of prohibitions between certain categories of kin can result in inappropriate behavior including incest. A common idiom is often used to describe the breakdown of these prohibitions in present-day Sikaiana life: *tona pukua e tana*, which literally means, 'his or her mouth is unrestricted'. This idiom is frequently used in criticism to describe the improper behavior of people who do not follow the regulations expected for these relationships. It applies in particular to brothers and sisters who speak to one another in a colloquial manner that may be interpreted as having sexual overtones by some Sikaiana.

Brothers and sisters are expected to be *napa* in one another's presence. In this situation the emotion and prohibitions restrict behavior that may be interpreted to have incestuous overtones. These feelings of shame and their associated prohibitions apply to natal siblings and are extended to include first and, often, second cousins, especially if the second cousins are related through male relatives. Opposite-sex siblings should not 'talk dirty' (*sakilikili*) in each other's presence, nor laugh if someone else does. When someone has said something with a sexual connotation or innuendo in their presence, people in these relationships will suddenly avert their eyes and lower their heads. Then, often just as suddenly, they continue their interaction as if nothing had happened. Some people will tease two distantly related opposite-sex siblings by telling mildly ribald jokes in their presence. The situation becomes even more amusing as the couple tries to ignore these comments and keep from laughing in the each other's presence. If such humor becomes too explicit or continues too long, one of the siblings will leave the group.

These prohibitions on behavior between opposite-sex siblings extend to activities that the Sikaiana consider to have a sexual connotation. Brothers and sisters should avoid being seen by one another when going to defecate or urinate. Sisters should not wash their brother's clothing, nor should they wear one another's garments. They should

not sit on the same mat, nor sleep in any bedding used by the other. They should not occupy a doorway if an opposite-sex sibling is likely to frequent the area, because they may accidentally brush against each other in passing.

There is some difference of opinion among the Sikaiana concerning other behaviors to be avoided for having sexual overtones. Some, but not all, informants said opposite-sex siblings should avoid the following behaviors with one another: joking with each other; conducting long conversations in private; being alone together, including riding alone together in the cab of a truck. Many Sikaiana think these behaviors imply a kind of interaction which may have sexual overtones. These prohibitions and avoidances not only restrict the possibility of incest, they also prevent other people from gossiping about the siblings.

Some people said that circumspect behavior was more important with opposite-sex cousins because there is more likely to be public suspicion that the couple's behavior may include sexual relations. Other people said that one should be more circumspect with true brothers and sisters because incest is most abhorrent in these relations. The former viewpoint seems to assume that sexual relations between true siblings are so abhorrent that they are unlikely. The latter viewpoint is that sexual behavior is an inherent possibility in all relations, including between brothers and sisters.

In relationships with in-laws, feelings of shame restrict disrespectful behavior. For opposite-sex in-laws (especially a man with his brothers' wives or with his wife's sisters), there are very heavy prohibitions which include both deference and the avoidance of any behavior with sexual connotations. One man explained to me that if his sister was sitting in a doorway, he could call out to her to tell her to move out of his way. But if his sister-in-law was sitting in a doorway, he would have to enter the house through another door or simply wait until she realized he was present and moved out of the way. Both opposite-sex siblings and opposite-sex in-laws are in a relationship that includes avoidance of sexual impropriety and therefore the man could not pass close to their bodies. Siblings, however, can make demands of one another; ordinarily, unless another relationship over-rides it, in-laws should not give one another orders.

Same-sex in-laws, especially men, should behave in a formal and circumspect manner to ensure harmonious interaction. Their prohibitions include no use of the personal name, no joking, no false speech, no frivolous conversation, no quarreling, no swearing or fighting. A person should fulfill a request from an in-law, if it is at all possible, although in-laws should not shamelessly make unreasonable demands.

Deception is never considered proper, but it is recognized that in a small society certain projects must involve some deception in order to ensure their success. In informal interaction, deception is not condoned, but it is not specifically prohibited, especially on comparatively minor topics. Some Sikaiana people admit that they enjoy exaggerating their stories to add drama. They confess that a fish one foot long can become two feet in the telling. They will warn visitors to be skeptical of the man who says he had such a big catch that he threw it back into the sea because he got tired while paddling his canoe ashore. But the Sikaiana are careful about exaggeration in the

presence of in-laws and the mother's brother because such exaggeration may result in a misunderstanding.^{iv} In-laws should always tell the truth and never lie or speak falsely. Several people explained that these prohibitions ensure that there are no misunderstandings between them.

Quarreling and cursing are considered to be appropriate between parents and children, especially when angry parents are instructing disobedient children. These behaviors, however, are considered highly improper with in-laws. A reserved harmony among in-laws is further enhanced by the fact that people in these relationships should fulfill requests made of one another. Most people said that they are reluctant to make requests of their in-laws, unless it is very important. The normal household commands, which are appropriate between a married couple or among close kin, are not appropriate between in-laws. Hosts should anticipate the needs of visiting in-laws and see to their comfort without waiting to be asked. If a person has an important request, it can be made to an in-law and should not be refused if the in-law is able to fulfill it. Normally, people said that they felt too embarrassed to make direct requests to their in-laws. They prefer to convey the request by sending it through someone else, such as offspring of the marriage which links the two in-laws.

Joking and teasing is frequent on Sikaiana, and a *tama hakaako*, 'a person who jokes' is admired. Teasing, however, is restricted among in-laws. Much Sikaiana joking presumes that the relationship between two people is strong enough to sustain the minor teasing often at the core of joking. People are ridiculed for unusual habits or unsuccessful endeavors, for example: not catching fish, incorrectly making a canoe, weaving crooked lines in a mat, and acting silly while drunk. Joking, especially between parents and children, often includes social instruction and criticism that is conveyed in a humorous message. In the song compositions to be discussed in a later chapter, the humor often contains a social message about proper and improper behavior.

But there are times when joking is misunderstood. People may speak jokingly but be understood to be serious. The converse also may happen. One person may criticize another. Initially, this criticism may be taken as a joke, until the speaker clarifies that the criticism or statement is not meant as a joke.

Laumani once chastised her daughters for some behavior that she considered to be immodest. At first, the girls laughed, assuming that their mother was joking. Laumani angrily rebuked the girls for laughing and began lecturing them about the proper demeanor for Sikaiana young women. After the rebuke, they listened quietly with heads bowed.

In another situation, two men who were drinking fermented toddy began to joke. One man initiated the joking by saying that he was going to divorce his wife, who was the other's cousin, and find a new wife. This is a routine Sikaiana joke which is usually taken as humorous. The other man continued the joke and replied that it was fine to get a new wife. But that man and his new wife would have to move to a new residence because he was living on the land of his wife's lineage. The man who initiated the joking immediately lost his self-control and punched the other. It is embarrassing

for a man to live on land owned by his wife's lineage, because it implies that the resources of his own lineage are not sufficient to support his family. In this situation, the "joking" came too close to real issues, became "serious" and resulted in a fight.

Because they could be misunderstood, people are careful about joking with relatives to whom they are supposed to show respect and deference.

In interviews, the Sikaiana were explicit about the prohibitions that apply to people who are in the categories of *maa*, *kave*, and *hunaona*. But a person often reported that his or her behavior is different with different individuals within the same category. A person may be relatively relaxed with one *maa* and extremely formal and circumspect with another. In general, the most variable and most relaxed in-law relationships are between in-laws of the same sex and generation. In-law relationships between males and females border on avoidance. In-law relationships between people of different generations often involve deference towards the senior person.

The Sikaiana say that variations in behavior in these restricted relationships stem from the character or personalities (*tuputupu*) of those involved. Some people are recognized as being gregarious and ribald, and therefore do not follow the conversational prohibitions normally associated with the relationship; other people are simply more formal across all their relationships.

In present-day (1980-93) Sikaiana society, the relationship between in-laws of the opposite sex often are severely restricted. All the prohibitions concerning sexual avoidance apply to that relationship. Many people do not feel comfortable making a simple request or even conducting a conversation with their opposite-sex in-laws. In some cases, virtual avoidance is practiced. A man may refuse to wait for his brother in the same house with his brother's wife if his brother is not present. Sometimes, the man leaves and returns later. If he decides to wait, he often stays outside of the house. In extreme cases, opposite-sex in-laws move from room to room in a house in order not to be in the same room at one time. The woman may feel uncomfortable performing basic courtesy services normally accorded visitors, such as serving food. Sometimes, this is circumvented by assigning these functions to another member of the household who is not in the restricted relationship. These restrictions not only ensure proper behavior between these in-laws, they also ensure that the spouse will have no cause for suspicion.

Relationships between same-sex in-laws are somewhat variable and depend upon previous familiarity and the personalities of those involved. Many men ignore the prohibitions and engage in relatively informal relations with their brothers-in-law, especially if they were friends before the marriage and are near one another in age. Some women claimed that, unlike men, female in-laws are not normally ashamed in each other's presence, although, as in male in-law relationships, feelings of shame in female in-law relationships varied, depending upon the personalities of those involved and their previous experience with each other. Normally, women who are sharing a residence must cooperate in domestic activities, and usually they report feeling less shame with other female in-laws after they have lived together for a while.

In situations when a much older "sister" has looked after a younger "brother" as part of caretaking, there is a mitigation of the normal restrictions on shame between these people when they are adults. There is a frequently used idiom to describe this situation: the older sister is said to have *ssolo tona mimi*, 'wiped his urine/penis'. The close physical contact of this caretaking relationship pre-empts feelings of shame. Foster children often consider other members of their foster household as relatives rather than as in-laws if a later marriage should put them in an in-law relationship. Relative age is also a factor affecting the intensity of prohibitions. If the spouse's siblings are still young when the couple marries, then many people do not follow the severe shame prohibitions that apply for in-laws who are already mature. In households in towns, older sisters often wash the clothing of younger brothers, at least until the brothers reach maturity or finish their schooling. Usually, long-term residence in the same household results in a freer relationship among in-laws.

Among in-law relationships, a general rule of thumb for determining how to behave is to follow the behavior of the older person in the relationship. If this person behaves with restraint, then the younger person should also follow the restrictive behaviors appropriate for the relationship. If the elder person does not act ashamed, then the younger person may be less restrained also. Some elderly people, however, told me that even though they did not feel shame, their younger in-laws behaved as though they did. As a result, these older people felt compelled to respond in a formal manner appropriate for a shame relationship.

Many of these prohibited behaviors are elaborations of general Sikaiana interactional conventions about proper etiquette. Quarreling, lying, cursing, and refusing requests are all behaviors that are discouraged with everyone, but they are considered worse if they occur between in-laws. Some Sikaiana people always tell off-color jokes that are amusing, even though they may offend some listeners. Others, Brown Saua for example, hardly ever tell off-color stories, even in the most informal company.

Behaviors can be manipulated to express either closeness or respectfulness. For example, one person told me that he wanted his children to treat his brother as if he were their *ino* and not their classificatory 'father', *tamana*. He wanted his children to be extremely deferential and respectful in order to ensure that the relationships between his brother and his children remained harmonious. Two young men described their behavior with their natal sisters as being highly restricted. Both of these men could only talk with them about specific and true matters. They could not conduct a casual conversation with their sisters. Most people said this highly formal behavior was appropriate for opposite-sex in-laws, but that opposite-sex siblings usually have more casual interactions, except in matters concerning sex. These two men wanted to prevent even the slightest hint of sexual impropriety in their relationships with their sisters. Other times, people try to encourage a more casual approach to their relationships. Several men proudly told me that after their marriages, their fathers-in-law told them to treat them as "fathers," rather than the more reserved relationship of "father-in-law."

Old people recall that there were similar variations in how people managed their relationships in former times and these variations derived from the same factors. But every elderly Sikaiana person emphasized that the arrival of the Christian missionaries and the social changes of the past 55 years have resulted in a further easing of the prohibitions associated with these shame relationships. Several people were explicit about the effects of Christian teachings. Using the exact same phrase, they said that the missionaries had taught them to "*talatala ki te tama*"-- "talk to the person" regardless of their kinship relationship. Moreover, the prohibitions between in-laws were much more severe before the atoll's conversion to Christianity when marriages were still arranged. In such marriages, the kin of a future spouse would be extremely reserved and inhibited, even when the children were very young. Children no longer mature with a group of future in-laws who act formal and inhibited in their presence.

Christian teachings have established a highly abstract social identity, a "Christian." At least for the Sikaiana, this social identity entails general expectations for kind and helpful behavior to all people and has implications for their interaction with a large number of people both from Sikaiana and other ethnic groups from the Solomon Islands and elsewhere. After a nasty quarrel between a woman and her brother, I heard the enraged woman say that she was no longer going to consider her brother as someone related by kinship. She added, however, that she would continue to treat him as a 'Christian' (*tama o te misoni*; literally, 'person of the church'). Christianity offers a kind of bedrock basis for interaction on Sikaiana, a set of interactional expectations that always applies.

Intent and Etiquette in Social Relationships

Some writers describe Polynesian behavior as friendly, and harmonious but devoid of deep feelings or sincerity. This stereotype is quite misleading when applied to Sikaiana social relationships. The Sikaiana try hard to maintain harmonious face-to-face relationships. They say, however, that inner feelings and outward behavior are sometimes quite different, and for that reason, they make assessments about inner motivations and intentions even when there is ostensible harmony in a relationship.

Public quarrels, especially between adult men, are very infrequent, except as I shall explain in a later chapter, when they are drunk. Direct criticism to someone's face is most frequently heard between close relatives, often initiated by women towards offspring who are misbehaving. As I explained earlier, criticism is also channeled through the joking opposition between males and females. In this context, the criticism becomes more general and less personal. Ridicule and joking are the preferred means for criticism.

The Sikaiana maintain equality and self-restraint in their interaction. People should be humble. They should not try to prevail over others. They should not boast or show-off. They should not discuss issues about which they have no expertise. The phrase *hakapaapaalalo* is frequently used to describe ideal social behavior. *Paapaa* is the word 'to be flat'; *lalo* means 'below'. *Hakapaapaalalo* literally means 'to make flat to below'. Although a Sikaiana person does not bow, crawl, or lie

flat in normal social interaction, as for example commoners do before chiefs in some Polynesian societies, this phrase reflects a prevalent Sikaiana concern with humility and restraint. *Kkolu* is a verb that is frequently used to describe a person who is trying to force his way or prevail over others in social relationships. *Kkolu* describes the behavior of young children who insist upon having their way, especially when they go into a tantrum. It also describes the futile struggle of people who are trying to achieve difficult physical goals. Once, for example, when Brown Saua repeatedly and unsuccessfully tried to force his truck up a steep embankment, his wife complained about his *kkolu*. *Kkolu* has another meaning, 'to bend', especially as in bending a hard substance such as steel. In proper social interaction, a person should not try to exert pressure, force or "bend" the behavior or opinions of others.

Sikaiana people object to self-praise, and indeed, any praise at all is considered to be inappropriate. To be praised causes embarrassment. One of the terms for 'praise' is *hakanapa* (derived from *napa* 'shame' and *haka-* the causative prefix which means 'to make'). *Hakanapa* could be literally translated as 'to make ashamed', but usually has the meaning of 'praise'. Praise, by calling attention to the individual, can cause embarrassment.

Modesty is especially important for young women. They are discouraged from talking or joking too loudly or being overly coquettish. *Haka-* is prefixed to the words for woman (*hahine*) and man (*tanata*) to describe the action of 'showing off in a feminine manner' *hakahahine*, and 'showing off in a masculine manner' *hakatanata*. These terms are frequently used to ridicule and criticize people whose behavior seems to be directed to attracting the attention of the opposite sex.

Unusual, excessive, or idiosyncratic behavior is also ridiculed and discouraged. Distinctive characteristics, such as blinking, jerking the neck, or a twitch, are described as a *maapu*, and there is usually mild teasing about these traits. In some cases, people extended the term *maapu* to include unusual or peculiar behavioral habits such as a person who is a compulsive peeping-Tom. Overindulgence is also ridiculed and criticized. A person who eats too much is ridiculed as a *haakai*. Often this term is used as a joke or in mild derision, but in some cases there is outright disgust at a person who, by Sikaiana standards, eats excessively. Several terms may be compounded with *saa-* to describe behavior that is excessive: *mitimiti*, 'smoke', *saa-mmity*, 'smoke too much'; *kaleve*, 'fermented toddy'; *saa-kaleve*, 'drink too much kaleve'; *saa-uu* or *sina-uu*, a baby who 'nurses too much.' Both men and women are criticized if, by Sikaiana standards, they seem abnormally interested in sex, although, as explained earlier, it is more stigmatizing for women.

These expectations about restraint and humility in social relationships affect leadership. There are several Sikaiana men who through their achievements and personality are highly respected and influential in the community. During my stay in 1980-1983, they included Alan Piva, the priest; John Kilatu, a doctor; and Brown Saua, who at that time worked in the government. Each of these men had been successful in schools, received advanced training in some specialized profession and helped the Sikaiana people in their respective institutions: religion, medicine and

government. Although these men were influential, they were reluctant to force their will on others and were restrained in asserting their influence. In 1982 Kilatu was elected to the Area Committee, the local government council. He did not stand for the office of president of that council, although I am almost certain he would have been elected had he chosen to do so. During my stay, the priest did not participate in any of the atoll's committees or offices, except those associated with the church.

Normal interaction should be friendly and harmonious. Nevertheless, I was sometimes told that some relationships which appear harmonious on the surface contain animosity at another level. In such relationships, the ill-feeling is described as 'being in the belly' (*e moe i te manava*; the belly is the source of emotion in Sikaiana thinking). People are advised to *hakkii* ('to endure,' 'bear,' or 'hold back') anger in their social relationships. *Hakkii* is also the word for the 'throat'. One person associated this meaning of *hakkii* with the fact that angry and hostile emotions are held back at the throat. If a person is extremely upset then his or her belly is described as on the verge of 'splitting': "his belly is about to split." If hostility spontaneously erupts, it is described as 'bursting or jumping forth' (*sopo*).

Among the Sikaiana, there is both compassion and resentment, both cooperation and conflict. Face to face relations are normally friendly and harmonious, although in some cases there may be underlying enmity and distrust. This is not to say that Sikaiana people are constantly suspicious or skeptical of one another's motivations and intentions. But in their understandings of one another's behavior, Sikaiana people make a distinction between overt behavior and underlying motivations, intentions and feelings.

Deception and sincerity are important concerns in courtship. Young men are known to make false proposals for marriage simply to have sex, and a woman must determine if her suitor is sincere in his proposal. A common expression to describe a deceitful proposal is 'love falsely,' (*hiihai pio*). A woman who has been left by a lover is often described as 'having been lied to' (*lesia*). In both love and marriage, Sikaiana people assume that emotional feelings last long periods. As was described in earlier sections, it is often assumed that true love endures and the promises that couples make to each other at the beginning of their affair will endure for a lifetime. This pattern of enduring love also existed in the extra-marital affairs with the secret lovers (*hina*) in traditional Sikaiana society.

Elder people describe jealousy for a spouse's former lovers with the term *lautona*. *Lautona* refers to an organ which the Sikaiana say is found in some large fishes and turtles. This organ continues to vibrate long after the fish has died. *Lautona* is used metaphorically to describe the enduring jealous feelings for a spouse and the spouse's former lovers that continue long after the couple is married. In some cases, Sikaiana people claim that this kind of jealousy may lead to sickness or death from anguish.

This concern with inner feeling as opposed to expressed behavior extends to all areas of Sikaiana social relationships. In evaluating other people's behavior, people make an assessment about emotions, motivation, and intent. For example, a woman

began crying after her daughter had committed a social transgression. People who were not sympathetic toward this woman claimed that she was not really upset by her daughter's behavior. Rather, she was 'crying falsely' (*tani pio*) simply to appear upset in public view. A drunken young man was criticized for 'laughing falsely' (*kata pio*) in order to show off and attract the attention of young women. People who do not keep their foster children until maturity were described by one elderly man as 'falsely' (*too pio*) looking after these foster children.

Ideally, social relationships and behavior consist of some combination of 'kindness' *hailaoi*, 'happiness' *hakahiahia*, and 'compassion' *aloha*. The Sikaiana admire people who care for and help others. But they also see a darker side to human behavior which manifests itself in malicious harm. A general word to describe such behavior is *hakkinokino*. This term can refer to a variety of behaviors that are considered to be improper, evil, or malevolent. In present-day Sikaiana, Christian concepts of "evil," as in the work of Satan or demons, are described as *hakkinokino*. Incestuous or inappropriate sexual relationships of any kind are described by this term. *Memepuamu* describes the behavior of a small child who is mischievous or destructive. This term is also used by the local court to describe the behavior of adults who damage property (usually when they are drunk). It also describes other adult behavior that is intentionally malicious. I have heard people use it to refer to the action of secretly spearing someone's pig, opening the gate to a pen so that the pigs will run wild, pouring salt water into someone's garden in order to destroy the crops, urinating into a water tank used for drinking, seducing a young woman without any intention of marrying her, or trying to sneak into a house to have sex with a woman while she is sleeping.

A stronger term, *makemakeaa*, refers to the purposeful harming of another person or another person's social relationship, usually through manipulating speech. In explaining the term, people often said that it describes situations in which two people have developed a friendship, and another person started rumors that harmed the relationship. The term *matemate* refers to someone who is 'pretending,' either out of insincerity or to try to trick someone into harm. *Hakaoloolo*, describes the action of introducing a conversational topic which will get other people to quarrel or fight: for example, when a man sitting with a group of people refers to a land dispute knowing that others present are involved in it and may well begin to argue and fight about it.

The word *tuhuna* refers to a person skilled in crafts, especially skills involving making objects in straight lines: plaiting mats, weaving on a loom, and making canoes. But this usage of the term is becoming old-fashioned. In most usages at present, the term has a different meaning that refers to people who are manipulative and deceitful in their speech. They are able to use language in a manner that helps achieve their own goals at the expense of others. The term implies skill at being deceitful, making false hints, and spreading rumors. The Sikaiana would use *tuhuna* to describe Iago's behavior in Shakespeare's play, *Othello*. Its derivation from a term referring to 'craftsman' reflects the fact that people are grudgingly recognized, although not liked, for their skill in manipulating others.

Compassion, Kindness and Happiness

Napa is a term referring to emotions which regulate and restrict behavior. In contrast, *aloha* is a term referring to the feelings of compassion which motivate. A cognate of the Hawaiian term *aloha*, it describes the feeling of sorrow at separation from a relative, friend, or lover. In other usages, *aloha* describes feelings of 'pity', 'sorrow', 'concern', and 'love' for another person. I think that the English words 'empathy' and 'compassion' come closest to its core meaning. *Aloha* describes empathy for another person and often implies the desire to do something for the other person by providing support or material aid.

Aloha may be used to describe one's feeling for other people, either young or old, who are not able to take care of themselves and need the help of others. People often explain fosterage in terms of *aloha*, claiming that they feel *aloha* for the child. A child is not sent to school or to other relatives because his caretaker feels *aloha* for the child. *Aloha* is used to describe and explain the permissive upbringing of children which may result in spoiling the child. Although some parents disapprove of their children's erratic behavior, they do not discipline them due to their feelings of *aloha*.

In courtship, some people said that a suitor can appeal to a woman's *aloha* for him and his feelings of love when he makes his initial advances. On the other hand, a woman sometimes refuses the advances of new suitors, even though she finds them attractive, because of her *aloha* for her current lover. In traditional society, people claimed that some couples refused to take on secret lovers, *hina*, out of *aloha* for their spouses. A husband who constantly prohibits his wife from going shopping is criticized, at least by other women, as lacking *aloha* for her. *Aloha* also describes feelings of compassion for people in unfortunate circumstances such as a widow who has no husband to help her, or people in prison without any food.

Sikaiana people strive to live in an emotional state described as 'happiness', 'joy' or 'rejoicing', *hakahiahia*. This term describes a state of elation or joyfulness and one's general satisfaction with life. If personal relationships are harmonious and people are comfortable, they describe themselves as *hakahiahia*. More specifically, *hakahiahia* is also used to describe the enjoyment of special occasions such as a feast, a marriage, a party, or an encounter with a lover. It also describes the positive emotional feelings which the Sikaiana derive from drinking intoxicating beverages.

In daily interaction, *hakahiahia* is associated with laughter, joking, and social harmony. The Area Constable on Sikaiana told me that loud behavior was technically against the law, but he permitted it because it was a way for people to express their happiness. Older people recall the thrill when they performed traditional ritual events as times for *hakahiahia*. At present, contributions to exchanges, especially at marriages and ceremonial friendships, are described as motivated by the contributors' desire to demonstrate their *hakahiahia* for the people who are being honored. The state of happiness which is desired for festive occasions, such as the Christian holidays and marriages, is closely associated with intoxication. Most people believe that alcohol is necessary for these events to be fully enjoyed. In 1980-1983, people tried to schedule marriage exchanges during the holidays when the women are permitted to drink. Without alcohol, many people claim that it isn't possible to fully enjoy these events.

Sharing and Display: The Evaluation of Social Relations

The Sikaiana person develops relationships and reputations in a matrix of values for generosity, self-sufficiency, and the need for help from others. A person should try to be independent and self-sufficient. It is better to have dependents rather than dependencies. But everyone needs the help of others. Sharing and help are important. A very common theme in Sikaiana faery tales (*tala*) concerns situations in which food is not properly shared among a group or kin, often with unhappy consequences. In seeking the help of others, however, a person must be careful to make sure that he or she is not making excessive or inappropriate demands.

The Sikaiana admire kindness or generosity. These qualities are demonstrated through sharing food, giving to others, making contributions to exchanges, fostering children, and being generous in land use. The term for generosity, *hailaoi*, literally means 'do good'. A person is criticized for being 'stingy,' *kaipulau*. As mentioned earlier, the derivation of this word reflects the importance of food in Sikaiana exchange: *kai* is the word for 'eat' or 'food'; *pulau* means 'stink'. A generous child is admired and described by the compound *kaimalie*; *malie* is a verb for a food that is 'ripe' and 'tasty.'

But a person who is constantly requesting aid or food is condemned for begging, *kainono*, and a serious accusation of begging is extremely embarrassing for a Sikaiana person. People are reluctant to make requests both out of fear of being criticized for begging and because the request indicates that they are not self-sufficient. Many people are reluctant to ask to use objects such as a fishing net or canoe, unless they are closely related or associated with the owners. Sometimes, they are reluctant to ask even close relatives outside of their natal family for aid or food for fear that they will be refused and then feel shame; or if the request is provided, they will be considered to be begging and might be criticized for it later.

Children are taught not to beg or put themselves in situations where their behavior may be interpreted as begging. For example, one afternoon after a man pulled his canoe ashore, a group of children went to see his catch of fish. Being kind and generous, the man gave them some fish to take back to their household. Their mother,

however, rebuked the children for going to the canoe and putting the man in a situation where he might feel obliged to show his generosity by giving them fish.

A person should be self-sufficient, but there are many situations in which the aid of others is necessary. There are some people to whom a person can freely turn for aid. With many people, however, the situation can be somewhat ambiguous.

In marriage exchanges, for example, the groom's relatives give trade cloth to the bride's relatives who reciprocate with food. Each of these "sides" distributes the goods that received after the marriage exchange among the people who contributed to the presentations. Since trade cloth is considered the more valuable exchange item, there is an imbalance in the transactions. By contributing food to the bride's presentation, a person expects to receive cloth in return. Following one marriage transaction, there was a controversy after some of the bride's distant relatives contributed food. These relatives considered themselves to be in an important relationship with the bride. But the organizers of the exchange did not feel this was so. Some of the organizers interpreted the contribution as a form of begging because these contributors expected to receive the more valuable trade cloth when the bridewealth was distributed. There were rumors that these contributors were trying to get cloth, although they were not in a close social relationship with the bride. One contributor was so embarrassed by the rumors that she tried to return the cloth she had received. The organizers refused to accept her return. Although they may have criticized her, they did not want to be criticized themselves for being stingy.

In discussing this situation, one person explained to me that making contributions to the bride's side is always somewhat problematic. The organizers for the bride's sides of the exchange may be reluctant to make a direct request for aid. The organizers hope that the appropriate people will contribute of their own will. Contributors to the bride's collections, however, must be careful that the bride's family wants their contributions because their contributions of food entitle them to the more valuable cloth in return. The people who are normally included in contributions and distributions at other marriages in the bride's family should help prepare food without being asked. But other people should wait to be asked to help.

Many social situations on Sikaiana have this kind of ambiguity. A person assumes that she or he is in a close social relationship with another and therefore may share the other's resources. But the latter may not consider their relationship to be so close. In these situations, there probably will be ostensible harmony while the request is being fulfilled. But criticism of the person making the request may follow later. If the criticism becomes public, it will be very embarrassing for the person who made the request. The situation is quite complex because some other people will, in turn, denigrate those making the criticisms for not being happy to be generous.

Such situations are described by a verb, *tupetupe*. *Tupetupe* describes the behavior of an individual who is friendly to someone in face-to-face interaction, but then criticizes that person at other times. For example, when a visitor arrives at a household, he is treated in a friendly fashion and is offered food or some other resource. But when

the visitor leaves, he is criticized by members of the household which he just visited. *Tupetupe* is shameful for all concerned. The visitor should feel embarrassed at being criticized. But use of the term *tupetupe* also implies criticism of the members of the host's household who are being two-faced in their dealings with visitors.

In evaluating their relations with one another the Sikaiana place an emphasis on visibility or display. Talk is cheap and sometimes deceptive. Concrete and material examples of support are important for the Sikaiana in their evaluation of social relationships. *Aloha*, 'compassion', is often described as the emotion which motivates a person to provide material or visible support. On Sikaiana, objects and gifts are expressions of social relations.^v

This emphasis on visible displays is also expressed in the dramatic property destruction that occurs when people are drunk. Most houses with masonite walls have holes in them left by an angry person who punched his fist through the walling. Destruction of valuable property such as tape-recorders, glass containers and guitars, also occurs when people are drinking. In these cases, the destruction makes a visible statement that valuable objects are unimportant in comparison with emotions and relationships.

Reciprocity also is a mechanism for displaying the importance of a relationship. The Sikaiana live with and cooperate on a daily basis with those people with whom they feel most comfortable. These feelings of mutual cooperation and trust develop as the result of sharing. Unlike some other Solomon Islanders who sell their traditional arts in the market, it is very difficult for the Sikaiana to attach a price to the objects they make. The objects are part of an exchange system, and though the Sikaiana will eventually want something back for them, they often feel awkward at receiving direct payments. I found it difficult to negotiate prices for objects I was collecting for a museum; I also found it difficult to negotiate prices for visitors to the atoll who wished to purchase things. As in many Austronesian languages, the Sikaiana pronoun system distinguishes between whether a speaker is being inclusive and exclusive in referring to listeners: *maatou* refers to "we" but excludes the listeners; *taatou* refers to "we" but includes the listeners. Thus, if I refer to something as belonging to "*maatou*," I am telling the listeners, somewhat rudely by Sikaiana standards, that it does not concern them. If I refer to the object as belonging to "*taatou*," then it means it concerns them. In households, people almost always talk about possessions as belonging to "*taatou*," both speaker and listeners, or everyone in the household.

In courtship, gifts are often exchanged between lovers as part of their promise to remain faithful. Fosterage, land transfers, and contributions to marriage payments are also important in evaluating social relationships.

I have already described the complex network of reciprocity in marriage exchanges in which there are two sets of transactions involving four different sides. Each side collects material before the exchange and then, after the exchange, redistributes what it has received to the contributors. Moreover, the contributors to the groom's sides, expect that in the future the groom and his close relatives will aid them when they are

collecting for themselves or a closely related male relative who is getting married.

Sikaiana people try to maintain a general equivalency in most of their exchanges. But a person who gives only exactly as much as he or she has received can be derided for keeping such exact accounts by being called *kai sui* (literally 'trade food'). The Sikaiana prefer that people not keep exact accounts, but over the long run, things even out.^{vi}

Children are seen as obligated to their parents and foster parents for the care provided to them while young. They are expected to reciprocate when their parents and foster parents are old. The act of taking a foster child can be a part of an exchange over several generations. People sometimes foster the natural children of their foster parents in order to repay them. Lists of contributors to wedding exchanges are written down in order to make sure that goods are distributed in amounts appropriate to previous contributions. The lists are given to the newlyweds so that they will help when the contributors, or the children of contributors, are getting married.

A free gift with no expectation of any return is described as *kkave noa*. This term is used infrequently. I heard it used once to refer to the possibility of attaining resettlement land from the Solomon Islands government without having to pay for it. A far more common term for a presentation is *maanatu*. *Maanatu* means 'to remember'. It is also used to describe food and other goods that are distributed on an informal and daily basis to relatives and neighbors. A man who has been especially lucky at fishing may distribute some fish or birds to other people. The man is "remembering" others through his gift. There is no specific expectation for return of these gifts. But it is assumed that in a neighborhood or among a group of relatives, sooner or later, everyone will have extra resources to share.

A gift with a general expectation for return can be described as *kaikailaoi* (*kai* is the word 'to eat' or 'food'; *laoi* means 'good'.) Some people claim that one of the lines that succeeded to the chieftainship in traditional times attained this right through providing food for one of Sikaiana's founders, Tehui Atahu. Ideally, gifts should be given freely without the expectation of a return; but previous aid creates the obligation for some return.

Some people are described as making gifts not out of simple kindness, but to attain some future favors from the receiver. This manipulation may be described as 'taking aim' *hakauna* or 'making tame', *hakatala*. Normally, such behavior is considered to be improper. Gifts and aid should be made out of a combination of kindness and social obligation without any specific return in mind. But it is recognized that whatever the ostensible appearances of behavior, other motivations may be operating, and presentations create obligations.

Simple work projects are undertaken by a person and his close relatives or friends, and sometimes neighbors. In most projects requiring heavy labor (such as building a house, moving heavy logs, or preparing a garden), people are invited to drink fermented toddy in exchange for their help. House building is often a public activity.

Men congregate to work on a house and then they stay and drink fermented toddy afterwards. Anyone may participate in the work project which then entitles him to participate in the toddy drinking that follows. Sometimes, a husband offers toddy to a group of women in return for making roof mats for his house or providing mulch his wife's gardens.

Although they participate in a cash economy in their interactions with the outside world, they maintain sharing and reciprocity as the main means of social relations amongst themselves. Marcel Mauss (1925/34) discussed such systems of exchange as social phenomena which are not simply economic but also moral, legal, and social. The objects produced on Sikaiana have not become commoditized into specific cash values; instead their value remains embedded in the reciprocity and sharing of human relations. This is remarkable when considered in light of all the other dramatic changes in Sikaiana life.

Robert and Priscilla told me that as of 2019, it is possible to use cash to purchase meals on Sikaiana.

Secrecy and Exchange

Although Sikaiana' life is public and much is known about every person, Sikaiana life also contains events structured around secrecy. Because there is public agreement that certain activities and events must be kept secret, these occasions for secrecy can best be described as institutionalized. I have already described Sikaiana courtship which must be conducted, so far as it is possible, in complete secrecy. In traditional society, adultery was prevalent but also clandestine, a secret which everyone was known to have. In song composition, meanings can be kept secret through the use of metaphor. Some people claim that there are songs highly critical of specific people, but these people are unaware of a song's true meaning. At the *puina* described earlier, men and women composed in secret to surprise the opposite sex with their insults and criticisms. Certain kinds of knowledge, especially of ritual and lineage matters, are considered to be secret.

One example of institutionalized secrecy took place as part of the practice of making ceremonial friendship between two young children, a boy and girl. This friendship is sponsored by the children's foster parents. In this ceremonial friendship, the young couple are expected to be respectful and circumspect to one another. They should not mention the name of their friend, they should not quarrel, curse, lie, or use off-color language. When visiting the household of a ceremonial friend, the guest should receive special hospitality. Some older people told me that this ceremonial relationship only became popular after Sikaiana's conversion to Christianity. The interactional restrictions between ceremonial friends and its sponsorship by foster parents are similar to the practices of traditional arranged marriages. It seems likely that these ceremonial friendships developed in the 1930s as a modification of the practice of arranged marriages, which had been discouraged by the missionaries.

These ceremonial friendships sometimes involve competitive gift exchanges. The

sponsors for one of the children secretly collect goods to be made at a presentation. The sponsors of a boy must present goods associated with the work of men (carved materials, canoes, fish, bird); the sponsors of a girl give goods associated with the work of women (puddings, coconut molasses, and sleeping mats.) The goal is to collect these goods secretly and make a surprise presentation to the household where the other child is living. If successful, the people of the receiving household will be caught unprepared and forced to delay their return or use goods that are immediately available in making the return. Often, however, it is difficult to keep secret the surprise presentation and the other side is already prepared with a counter presentation. Sometimes, these presentations and counter presentations continue for several years. There is competition between each child's sponsors to give more valuable goods than are received and a continuing attempt to catch up and overtake whoever is recognized for having given the most. Contributions to these presentations are described as a sign of the "happiness" (*hakahiahia*) of the foster parents for their foster child. The children involved may continue to exchange goods in their maturity, although this was not frequent. In 1981, for example, a widowed woman made a large pandanus sleeping mat for her friend and he reciprocated by making her a canoe.

In 1981, when Brown Saua was visiting Sikaiana, his ceremonial friend, the step-child of his uncle, was also vacationing on the atoll. Despite his involvement with Western life, Brown supports Sikaiana traditions. He always maintained a formal and reserved manner with the woman. Brown decided to collect some of his friends and catch birds to make a surprise presentation to this woman.

Expecting to surprise the family of his ceremonial friend late at night with the gifts, Brown and his group of friends arrived at his friend's house with the birds. To the laughter of members of the woman's household and Brown's own helpers, he himself was surprised that several large pots of chicken and rice were waiting for him. Brown had tried to surprise his ceremonial friend with his gift, but had instead been surprised by her preparation for him. Someone had unwittingly tipped off the family about Brown's plans.

While I was on Sikaiana in 1987, I saw another exchange involving ceremonial friends. By coincidence, I arrived to take a census at a household which was preparing to make the presentation. Because of the secrecy of the project, no one told me about their plans. As I was interviewing the woman who sponsored the exchange, I noticed that people from neighboring houses began arriving with food. I didn't think anything of it, assuming that there was going to be a party in that neighborhood. Shortly after I returned to my house, I heard loud calls, guitar music and singing. A group came from the neighborhood where I had just been interviewing and made the presentation to the household next door to where I was staying. Apparently, the household had been forewarned because even before the group arrived with their gifts, the members of this household and their neighbors were outside prepared to greet them. That night there were three separate sets of exchanges, as each household and their allies tried to match and then out do the other one. People are expected to be willing to display their generosity by giving away almost everything.

My neighbor's household, from where I watched the activities, was becoming depleted of most of its food and dry goods. But after each presentation, they searched for more supplies and accepted supplies from friends and neighbors. The husband balked only when his wife wanted to give away his supply of tobacco. His household eventually sent two pigs, and they received two pandanus mats. Both a pig and a mat represent a considerable investment for a Sikaiana person, they are each worth about a laborer's monthly wages. Towards the end of the exchanges, my neighbor joked-- somewhat gloomily-- that he still had the walls of his house to send over, if the exchange went for another round. The exchange could be continued at a later time by either side, especially if one side feels that it was not prepared to match the generosity of the other at the last exchange. This particular exchange was a continuation of a series of exchanges which began in Honiara about a year earlier.

These ceremonial exchanges emphasize indigenous values and practices. The young children involved are almost always foster children and their foster parents are the central organizers in establishing and maintaining the exchange. People are expected to show their generosity through giving goods, and in the end there should be general equivalency. In preparing for the exchange, each side relies upon the contributions of friends and neighbors; after the exchange, goods received are distributed to those who helped. Finally, the exchanges demonstrate both the excitement and brittle nature of secrecy on Sikaiana. People like to maintain secrecy and surprise one another in a small society where secrets are difficult to keep.

I thought this tradition seemed to be on the wane in 1980-1983, but in 1987 was surprisingly strong. The fact that these exchanges are being conducted in Honiara, where the late-night exchanges will take place in front of non-Sikaiana neighbors, suggests the resiliency of these indigenous practices.

Secrecy and Social Relations

The secrecy in which these exchanges are prepared suggests the manner in which the Sikaiana use secrecy to form significant social relationships. Surprising someone is difficult in a small society and indicates the strength of social ties.

In a variety of ways, shared knowledge, understandings and secrets among a limited number of people define both temporary and enduring social groups (see Simmel 1950a:Part IV and Goffman 1963 for general discussions of secrecy and social relations). Sometimes, older people speak in Mota, the old lingua franca of the Melanesian Mission, if they do not want to be understood by younger people who are present. Secrecy is important in courtship. In traditional society, it was considered improper to reveal the names of a person's secret lovers. Peia was punished because of her husband's indiscretion in mentioning Tomaniva's lovers. At present, pre-marital affairs have the same kind of information boundaries. Lovers trust only close friends with knowledge of their affairs, although in this small and observant society it is hard to

keep such secrets for long. Modern technology has been incorporated into this system. Young lovers living in Honiara sometimes communicate by telephone when other members of their households are not present. This use of technology circumvents expectations that they should not be alone together.

Songs are often composed in secrecy so that people will be surprised by the song's content at its first performance. Often times, the songs meaning is conveyed through metaphors and idioms which might not be understood by everyone. The Sikaiana also prepare certain ceremonial presentations in secrecy, hoping to catch the recipients by surprise and to overwhelm them with the generous size of the gifts.

In traditional Sikaiana society, the ritual offices concerned with the atoll's welfare were based upon knowledge about the proper performance of ritual. Individual clans and descent lines held different ritual offices with different ritual expertise. A person had to be in a specific line of descent and in a special relationship with the expert in order to be taught the ritual knowledge. In former times, canoe building was done in secret in order to prevent other people from learning a particular technique. To some extent, this is still practiced in present-day Sikaiana society. One young man told me that he was reluctant to watch another person making a canoe for fear that he would be accused of "stealing" the technique. In former times, a compound fish-hook was made for catching bonito fish. These compound hooks were held together by string tied in certain ritual designs which were believed to ensure a good catch. These designs were carved onto sticks so that they could be remembered. The designs were kept secret and only taught to specific people, such as a close relative or foster child. A special technique for catching birds was kept secret in one family line until very recently. In this technique, a captured bird is taken and squeezed in order to call other birds to it and into the net.

One of the most important areas of expertise concerns lineage history, land history, and boundaries. This knowledge is considered to be secret, and it is only transferred to people with whom the possessor has a good relationship. Because many men have spent substantial portions of their lives away from Sikaiana, not everyone in each lineage possesses this knowledge. A person with knowledge about the lineage's land affairs has an advantage over other members of the lineage in making decisions about land use. This expertise includes knowledge of traditional legends which support one's assertions about land holdings, as well as knowledge of the specific boundaries of a lineage's properties.

Normally, parents are responsible for teaching specialized knowledge or expertise to their children. But if children are disobedient or inattentive, the parents are said to be under no obligation to do so. People who are distantly related may share secret information if they are on good terms. For example, a person teaches a distant relative, who in turn teaches the mentor's son. Traditionally, knowledge associated with the ritual activities could only be taught to people in the appropriate clan or lineage. But within this limitation, there was latitude in selecting to whom the ritual expertise was given.

Metaphors and figures of speech also define social boundaries. Metaphors were especially popular in traditional song composition and remain important in the songs younger people compose for the guitar. Secrecy and shared understandings affect allegiance to a household since a person becomes privy to the household's perspective on the atoll's affairs and gossip. These metaphors, shared perceptions and knowledge create groups of people who share a common perspective or knowledge as opposed to others who do not. People may be reluctant to share gossip with members from outside their household, or whom they do not trust, for fear that it will be used against them.

Individual and Community in a World System

Concepts of the individual, personality, emotions and social relations are defined differently in different cultures. Bradd Shore contrasted the Samoan concept of self with that of Western societies, arguing that the Samoans view individual behavior as having many "sides" (*ituu*), "parts" (*pito*) or "characteristics" (*'uiga*) which are formed through interactions and relationships. By contrast, Shore claims that Westerners have a concept of the self as interior and transcending any particular relationship. Shore writes:

While the European concept of the integrated, coherent, and "rounded" personality suggests the metaphor of a sphere, that most perfectly "integrated" of objects, the contrasting Samoan metaphor implicit in the Samoan concept of personality is a many-faceted gem....a faceted gem maintains its own form through differentiation, a maintenance of distinct sides, and a denial of the integration which would render it without sides. (Shore 1982:141).

Although Sikaiana conceptions of self and relations have the special emphases discussed in this chapter, I don't find any simple way to contrast Sikaiana concepts of person and interaction with those in my own society. Even in Western societies where there is a great emphasis upon individualism, concepts of self and relationships are also shaped by roles and contexts (see for example Goffman 1961b). Sikaiana interactions are shaped by the roles and context of interaction but they also have concepts of individual character or self which are independent of the actual interaction and are viewed as continuing across a variety of interactions and settings.

Sikaiana relationships are contextualized in the sense that people conform to conventions for harmonious interaction. Moreover, interaction and relations are shaped by expectations associated with gender, age and kinship roles. Visible displays are important in assessing and evaluating people's motivations, for example compassion and generosity are often evaluated in terms of material exchanges. But the multi-faceted gem metaphor of Samoan social relations is not appropriate for describing Sikaiana concepts of self and relations. The Sikaiana make assessments about one another's character and motivations in their interactions. People become known through their behavior and described as possessing certain behavioral characteristics. Ostensible

behavior is not assumed to always represent the reality of a relationship, and individuals are seen as possessing distinctive interests and characteristics.^{vii}

The Sikaiana do not have the intense concern with the self and individuality that some people argue is characteristic of Western industrialized societies. Writing in the 19th century, Georg Simmel described how people in Western societies emphasize idiosyncrasies in order to maintain a sense of identity.^{viii} Many sociologists follow this theme, arguing that the emphasis on self-actualization and individualistic development is a consequence of modernity. The self becomes a reflexive object, something which has to be developed and constructed by a person over the course of a lifetime (Berger, Berger, and Kellner 1973:91-92, Giddens 1990: 123-124.) In comparison with these perspectives on the Western self, there is less self-conscious emphasis upon constructed individuality on Sikaiana. Again, I must emphasize that I would never describe this as shallow, although it might be described as less intense than relations among middle-class Americans. The Sikaiana do not place as great emphasis upon a few intense relationships as Americans. For most Sikaiana people, they have many more people upon whom they rely for support and to whom they feel obligations. Their intimacy is an extended and communal kind which is spread across a large number of people with whom they live, share, and cooperate.

Although Sikaiana people criticize one another and gossip can be savage, there also seems to be a general acceptance of one another, despite peculiarities. In describing and evaluating one another, the Sikaiana people are much less concerned than the average American in making their assessments based upon single physical characteristics, such as skin color, physical "beauty," or in terms of a person's possessions and status symbols. In this respect--so far from being concerned with only the ostensible content of interactions--the Sikaiana, much more than Americans, base their assessments upon inner character and behavior.

There are definite ways in which Sikaiana interaction and social relations are changing. Older Sikaiana agree that there has been some loosening in the restrictions in relationships between people who should feel shame towards one another, such as in-laws and cross-sex siblings. Those relationships in traditional Sikaiana which were regulated by specific prohibitions on behavior are now becoming more informal and subject to personal choice and variation. Without completely abandoning traditional restrictions, people are influenced by newer cultural values which encourage them to "talk to the individual person." Sikaiana social relations are becoming more informal and dependent upon the desires of the individuals involved rather than derived from regulations and prohibitions associated with kinship relations. Formalized interactions are being replaced by informal ones, especially in those restricted kinship relations which involved shame and behavioral restrictions, in a manner that would be predicted by some writers on modernization (Giddens 1990: 120-124; also Peacock 1968: 228).^{ix}

The Sikaiana claim that over the last few generations there has been a loss of traditional values. Most will assert that there is less *aloha* ('compassion'), *hailaoi* ('generosity') and *hakahiahia* 'happiness'. They will also assert that there is less *napa* ('shame') which results in rudeness and indifference, especially in relations that

previously demanded respect. Nevertheless, in shaping and evaluating their relations, including those restricted relations which are now becoming more informal, the Sikaiana continue to use indigenous values concerning shame, generosity, compassion, and happiness. These values shape the context for reciprocity and sharing which still form the basis for social relations.

i. There is a large body of literature in anthropology on the issues concerning person and emotions (Mauss 1938, Hallowell 1955, Levy 1973, Davenport 1976, Caughey 1977, Shore 1982, Kirkpatrick 1983, Rosaldo 1980, Shweder and Levine 1984, White and Kirkpatrick 1985, Lutz 1988). Once again, it should be added that my approach to these issues also derives from interactional studies in sociology (notably Simmel 1950, Cooley 1923, G. H. Mead 1934, Schutz 1962-1966, and Goffman 1961b, 1963, 1967, 1971).

ii. I do not know whether or not this meaning of *go-go* is standardized in Pijin throughout the rest of the Solomon Islands.

iii. The word *hai* means either 'do, act' or 'deeds,' although often when people refer to a person by the idiom saying "*hai ana hai*," "doing his/her deeds," they are describing improper conduct. In 1987, I noticed that often times *tuputupu* was used in a similar manner to refer to improper behavior, *penapena tona tuputupu*, 'make his manner of behaving'. Priscilla Taulupo, who was living in New York in 1989 told me that in recent times people have begun to use this phrase to describe improper behavior.

iv. In traditional society, deceit between people who considered themselves to be in the *inoa* relationship (mother's brother to sister's children) could result in extreme embarrassment on the part of the deceived, who might go on a suicide voyage away from the atoll in a canoe as a result of his humiliation. Older informants, for example Fane, said she had only one special mother's brother, a distant cousin of her mother, who was ceremonially designated as her *inoa*. Many of their other mother's brothers (including their mother's male cousins) were referred to as "father" and the relationships did not carry the heavy avoidance and formality of the *inoa* relationship.

v. In this respect, *aloha* corresponds closely with Firth's description of the cognate *arofo* on another Polynesian outlier, Tikopia:

But this *arofo* was manifest in practical affairs and material benefits, not in abstract, ideal, emotional relationship[s]. (1959:304)

vi. The preferred Sikaiana relationship is somewhere between "generalized" and "balanced" reciprocity (Sahlins 1965).

vii. It is possible that the Sikaiana sense of individual identity is in part grounded in their land tenure system which provides each person with specific rights to land. In some other Polynesian societies, including Samoa, political standing and land rights are presumed to

be the outcome of constant negotiation and manipulation which Shore associates with the more malleable Samoan concept of personality (see Shore 1982: 141).

viii. Simmel described the predicament of individualism in large, complex, urban, societies in the following terms:

Finally, man is tempted to adopt the most tendentious peculiarities, that is, the specifically metropolitan extravagances of mannerism, caprice, and preciousness. Now, the meaning of these extravagances does not at all lie in the contents of such behavior, but rather in the form of "being different," of standing out in a striking manner and thereby attracting attention (Simmel 1950b:421).

On the other hand, however, life is composed more and more of these impersonal contents and offerings which tend to displace the genuine personal colorations and incomparabilities. This results in the individual's summoning the utmost uniqueness and particularization, in order to preserve his utmost personal core. He has to exaggerate this personal element in order to remain audible even to himself. (Simmel 1950b:442.).

^{ix} These trends to increasing informality seem to have intensified since 1993. One big factor is increased intermarriage with other ethnic groups. But there is also a modernizing trend to greater independence and individualism.

x

TOWN LIFE AND COMMUNITY LIFE

One afternoon in 1987 I was sitting with a mother and her son on the breezy veranda of a house overlooking the coast. The mother and son got into a humorous quarrel about Sikaiana life. The son had an advanced college degree and the mother had received very little formal education, although she spoke Pijin and, like most Sikaiana, can read and write in the Sikaiana vernacular.

The son, a bachelor at that time despite encouragement from relatives to marry, jokingly criticized the Sikaiana women living in Honiara by claiming that they were too unsophisticated or *tu lokolo*, 'too local'. They walk around the streets of Honiara with a simple piece of trade cloth wrapped around their bodies, instead of dresses and skirts. His mother, who usually wore a dress when shopping in town, went to their defense. She had heard that women in Samoan and Tongan towns dress in trade cloth. If this dress was good enough for these people, considered sophisticated by Solomon Islands standards, it should be all right for Honiara. The son laughed and reiterated that many of the Sikaiana women were simply unsophisticated.

The mother, however, was not out of fire. She said that the son did not have any right to talk about sophistication or criticize his fellow Sikaiana for lacking it. After all, she reminded him, she had given birth to him in a leaf house on a leaf mat. With a laugh, she told the son that she could understand if his younger brother complained about someone's lack of sophistication. She had given birth to that son in a hospital. But he, whose entry into life had been on humble leaf mat, should never criticize someone else for lacking sophistication.

This interaction was not wholly serious. The son, one of the most intelligent people I know, doesn't always think in terms of sophistication and Westernization, nor does he really judge Sikaiana women by such simplistic standards. I also know the mother was very proud of her son's education. In this particular encounter, his mother was cutting him down to size by reminding him of his humble origins.

This interaction used a humorous frame and the pervasive opposition between men and women to discuss the social changes. As in much of Sikaiana social life, new practices were being examined in traditional formats.

Generally, the Sikaiana are fascinated with the technology and power of the West. They want to take part in both its material wealth and fashions. But they also are wary about its consequences for their life style and culture. It was to study such issues of change that I had returned to the Solomon Islands in 1987.

Several months later the mother died. Her illness and death were not only attended by her close relatives. Many Sikaiana took off from work to attend her funeral. Most Sikaiana living in Honiara came. Even those with whom she had quarreled attended her funeral. Several flatbed trucks had to be hired to transport people to her

burial. She was buried at Tenaru, after a short ceremony in the church there. Her death was not simply a personal and family event. For the Sikaiana emigrants residing in Honiara, it was also a community event.

Return to the Solomon Islands

In 1987 I returned to the Solomon Islands to do more field work. I wanted to focus on culture and language change and complete the long-delayed printing of a dictionary of their language. I planned to focus my research on social change, especially the development of careers and the manner in which there was change in speaking the Sikaiana language as a result of migration and the use of Pijin and English.

The most obvious change on the atoll was the result of a cyclone in 1986. It was powerful enough to make American newspapers. (In fact, I first learned about the cyclone from a student in one of my classes who had heard me lecture about my fieldwork and had read about the cyclone in the newspaper.) Sikaiana lost all its leaf houses, garden crops, and nuts from its coconut trees. Fortunately, no one died. Rescue teams brought in food and tents for shelter. By the time of my arrival about a year later, the atoll was readjusting. The area at Taha, where the cyclone hit with its fullest force, was smashed. In the interior, trees seemed more crooked and bent than I remembered, but by the time I arrived in July 1987 their leaves had grown back. There were a few benefits derived from the disaster. The leaf houses were all new and much neater. Foreign aid programs built new water storage tanks, a new school building, and the frame for a clinic. The roof of the church was redone while I was there. The atoll had acquired several fiberglass boats left by various relief programs, but they were still without outboard motors for them. The atoll also was provided relief: sacks of rice and boxes of tinned fish. (The tinned fish started a series of Sikaiana jokes which had a theme similar to "ice to Eskimos.") The taro had been killed by salt water which rose underneath the atoll and up through the swamps. Although the taro plants were just starting to mature again, they were later destroyed by a blight. Coconuts were just starting to mature. Life seemed to be going on much as before, although partly subsidized by various relief programs, including those organized by the Sikaiana migrants who were residing in Honiara.

There were some changes on the atoll. The priest had retired and the new one, a younger Sikaiana man, had lifted the restrictions which limited the times when women were permitted to drink fermented toddy. He also had some competition for the religious allegiance of the Sikaiana. A Sikaiana man and his wife had returned from Papua New Guinea and were holding Bible classes for the Seventh Day Adventist religion. Although they had no converts at the time of my stay, some people did attend their Bible lessons. A new law had been passed empowering traditional councils to hear land tenure cases, and Sikaiana was awash with a new set of hearings about some very old disputes. Without any copra to market and with its building completely leveled by the storm, the cooperative store was out of operation.

Nevertheless, I noticed the biggest difference in Sikaiana life not on the atoll, but instead in Honiara. In 1987 there were more events which united the Sikaiana migrants

there. As in 1980-1983, the Sikaiana living in Honiara gathered together for marriage exchanges. In addition, there were new committees and clubs which supported various activities for Sikaiana migrants. A committee collected money to help the atoll recover from the cyclone. An association was formed to foster Sikaiana participation in sports and also to encourage the preservation of Sikaiana activities, especially dances. Moreover, in 1980-1983, I had not been in Honiara for any funerals. In 1987, I became aware that funerals are occasions for Sikaiana migrants to gather together.

Honiara's inhabitants are from all parts of the Solomon Islands. There are over 60 different language groups in the Solomon Islands and this reflects the ethnic diversity of both the nation and its capital. There are Polynesians from Tikopia, Anuta, Ontong Java, Rennell-Bellona, and, of course, from Sikaiana. The Sikaiana feel some general affinity for these Polynesians based upon similarities in language and heritage. This affinity is especially strong with the people of Ontong Java with whom there is a long history of contact beginning with Tehui Atahu and Tehui Luaniua and the legendary founding of Sikaiana. The Sikaiana affinity for the Tikopians is tempered by their disdain for the Tikopian respect system which still honors that island's chiefs. The egalitarian Sikaiana cannot understand why people crawl before someone or give away their best fish to a chief.

Living in Honiara, there are people from Malaita, the island nearest to Sikaiana, which itself has various different language groups and some diversity in cultural traditions. As a group, the Sikaiana regard Malaitans with some timidity for their alleged aggressiveness. But as is so often the case with these prejudices, they are friendly with the Malaitans they know personally and in recent years there has been intermarriage with them. There are people from the Santa Cruz and Makira Islands. There are the very dark-skinned people from the Western provinces, who as a group are among the most Westernized of the Solomon Islanders. Of all the Melanesians, many Sikaiana are most comfortable around people from Isabel Province. Isabelans share the Sikaiana devotion to the Church of Melanesia and are sympathetic to Sikaiana needs for land. There are people from Guadalcanal, whom the Sikaiana regard as fortunate for having rights to land which is located near Honiara.

Honiara Households

When I lived in Honiara, I almost always stayed with Sikaiana families. Like other young men, *tamataane*, I often slept in the large rooms at the houses' entrance. These rooms are truly family or living rooms which are used for eating, sitting and hosting visitors during the day. At night, people sleep in the room, often under mosquito nets. Beyond these living rooms are separate bedrooms where others sleep. Although arrangements vary, a married couple and some of their younger children often sleep in one bedroom, and then unmarried young women and older children in the other.

In late 1982 and early 1983, I stayed with the family of Moses Teui in one of the houses at Vura. This is the house where Temotu died in 1987. The house has two bedrooms and a large living room. Moses is a carpenter who at that time worked for the

town's Housing Authority. Moses had spent several years in Auckland, New Zealand, where he had apprenticed and acquired his certificate as a carpenter. He is a quiet, friendly man, always easy-going. He is one of the few Sikaiana men who never drinks alcohol. Moses had four sons. Three of them were living in his house. One son lived on Sikaiana with his sister. Moses also had two foster children living with him during my stay: Kupe, the daughter of his wife's brother, who in 1982 was a precocious ten year old and in 1987, a fifteen year old student; and the son of a cousin, Armstrong, who was named after the American astronaut.

With him lived Ralph Evesi, his patrilineal first cousin who was helping to pay the mortgage for the house. (On the maternal side of his family, Ralph was the first cousin of Vinta, Mose's wife.) Ralph had worked in various parts of the Solomon Islands as a book-keeper and during my stay was working for one of the shipping companies at its offices in Ranadi. Ralph walked with a limp from polio. He had never married. He was a kind, friendly, intelligent, and well-humored man.

Not far past the road to Vura is another road, leading to Kukum, a settlement of smaller concrete houses, many of which were built by the government. I spent several months in 1981 and 1982 staying with Frank Saovete and his family who lived there. Frank Saovete worked as a mechanic in one of the garages in town. Sometimes, he took moonlighting jobs working on cars, and there always seemed to be a hopeless-looking broken-down car in the back of his little yard. When he was a young man, Frank had been acclaimed among the Sikaiana as one of the most capable composers of guitar songs. He was among the first of the Sikaiana young men to play the guitar and compose. People recall that in his youth he spent all day playing the guitar. When he married, he stopped composing. But many of his songs are still sung and I consider him one of the most lyrical of the Sikaiana composers. His wife, Pookai, was a large funny woman who told me that one time, after her husband had been drinking (by Sikaiana standards he is far from a heavy drinker), she made a point about beer consumption and household finances by presenting him with a pot of cooked beer cans for dinner. Pookai is the oldest daughter of my Sikaiana neighbor, Reuben Tenai.

Frank's house had two bedrooms, a separate kitchen and bath, and a large living room at its entrance. I slept in the living room with a bachelor, Leonard. Leonard was a relative of Pookai's and a friend of Frank's. Like Frank, he had composed songs during his youth. At that time, he worked in the government's printing department. Frank and Pookai stayed there with several of their children. One child was on Sikaiana with Pookai's father, Reuben. Sometimes their son stayed with Pookai's sister, who lived nearby. At times the house was not very crowded, at least by Sikaiana standards. At other times, Pookai's sisters and family came from Sikaiana and the house was packed with people.

For most of 1987, I stayed with Brown. Brown's house is large and luxurious by Solomon Island's standards. The house was built for an ex-patriate during the Protectorate period. There is a small house behind it for the servants, now used by the government for housing. Behind the porch, there is a large, sunny, breezy living room. The room is decorated with shells, paintings and pictures from all around the world.

There is a picture of the British Royal Family. There are several bookcases, a radio-cassette player, and a VCR with television. The house has two separate bedrooms and a storage room that is also used as a bedroom.

The house was crowded. Brown lived there with four of his six children. One of his daughters, Cathy, sometimes stayed with him and sometimes with his mother, Temotu (who, until her death often stayed with her other sons). Brown also had three foster children living with him.

Brown's wife Kate has a sharp sense of humor and tongue to match. Kate's sister, Joan, in her early twenties, usually stayed with the family to help out by looking after the children, cooking and washing. Tui Savalau, a male relative of Kate's, also lived with them. With financing from Brown and his brothers, Savalau had tried to operate a business driving a taxi-van between Honiara and the plantations at the Commonwealth Development Corporation about 15 miles away along the coast. There are numerous privately owned vans which make money by carrying passengers between the center of town and its suburbs. But the van kept breaking down, and Frank Saovete, who usually worked on it, could not get the parts needed to fix it. Savalau helped around the house, until he found a job with the government as a driver.

Erik, a young man, also lived with Brown. Erik's father had taken Brown as a foster son, and Brown had always taken an interest in Erik's welfare and education. A recent graduate of the national high school, King George VI, Erik worked in a bank. Erik's brother Luke also lived in the house. A young man in his late teens, Luke had trouble finding steady work and took on various part-time and temporary jobs. Typical of Sikaiana's overlapping relations, Luke had been the foster son of Kate's parents and brought up in the same household as Kate's sister, Joan.

Life In Town

In contrast to Sikaiana where the daily schedule is structured around the church, the daily schedule for most of the Sikaiana living in Honiara is structured around their employment. Morning meals are simple, often just tea and bread. Wealthier families, such as Brown's, may have jam or butter to put on their bread. About 8:00 AM on weekdays the men leave for work. Many Sikaiana women are housewives: a new role for the Sikaiana where they spend their time looking after children, cooking, washing, and keeping house. Sikaiana women say that their life on the atoll is extremely busy because they must go to the bush everyday to tend taro gardens and harvest coconuts. Life in towns is much less demanding for them, but it can also be boring. Claiming that they don't have time for plaiting when they are on Sikaiana, some women bring pandanus from Sikaiana to town in order to plait sleeping mats. Some Sikaiana women work for wages. A few are secretaries, others are clerks in the stores. A few like Sale are in the professions, especially nursing and teaching.

If people work near home or have their own cars, they sometimes return for a meal at noon. If work is far, then they return in the evening between five and six. Evening meals often include rice and some tinned fish or tinned meat. Sometimes

fresh fish is bought in the market, as is sweet potato, tapioca and other garden produce. Occasionally, the people living in town go fishing but most fish is purchased from vendors. Wealthier families eat fresh meat with their evening meals; poorer families might simply add a little tinned fish to their rice.

In the evenings and on weekends people visit with one another. On weekends, men, especially young men, drink beer. Many Sikaiana living in Honiara attend Sunday church services, and then spend Sunday afternoon visiting with families in Bahai, Kukum and Vura, neighborhoods which are within walking distance of the church. Occasionally, after the Sunday church service, there are meetings of the Sikaiana residents in Honiara to discuss matters of common concern. Usually, these meetings are held in the courtyard behind the Sikaiana residences in Bahai Center.

The Sikaiana have mixed feelings about life in Honiara as opposed to their life back on the atoll. Many adult Sikaiana have lived both in towns and on the atoll. Life in Honiara is sometimes viewed as fearful because of the alleged hostility of some non-Sikaiana Solomon Islanders. Although I am not aware of any unprovoked violence, many Sikaiana say that they fear it. At community events in 1987, such as fundraising activities, participation is restricted to Sikaiana and their guests in order to control fights and disruptions. Occasionally, the Ontong Java people are invited. Choosing to ignore the complaints about drunken young men or night creeping, people claim to be able to walk about Sikaiana without fear. They say that no one is afraid to go anywhere or sleep anywhere on Sikaiana. This, they claim, is not possible in Honiara where they are frightened by possible violence.

People living away from the atoll also say that they fear the use of harmful magic by non-Sikaiana. The Sikaiana claim that they never had any harmful magic (although some people did know love magic, some of which was claimed to be learned from the 19th century Kiribati immigrants). Whenever they explained the word for this harmful magic, *lapu*, they were sure to add that it never existed on Sikaiana. Harmful magic, the Sikaiana claim, is used by people from other lands, not the Sikaiana. There were several cases in which young women were described as behaving in a peculiar or crazy manner and this was attributed to a spell placed on them by a non-Sikaiana. Although such accusations are not frequent, they are a part of Sikaiana life in Honiara. Nevertheless, life in Honiara has its attractions. Some young women once told me that they preferred life in Honiara to that on the atoll because Honiara was "exciting," or as the Sikaiana say, 'it has life' (*hai ola*).

Preferences about living on the atoll or in town are often couched in terms of economic choices and freedom. Some people talk about life on Sikaiana as offering economic freedom. One woman told me that in towns she has to rely on her children in order to survive, but on Sikaiana she is able to work for herself. She prefers the independence offered by life on Sikaiana. A man told me that he quit his work as a mechanic for Lever Brothers because he was tired of working for the profit of others. On Sikaiana, this man works for himself. It is frequently asserted that in town it is possible to die from hunger. Although this has never happened, it reflects the Sikaiana assumption that cash is necessary for survival away from the atoll. On Sikaiana, people

explain that they can have a livelihood through fishing, gardening and harvesting coconuts. In fact, sometimes it is said that a family will go to Sikaiana in order to save money by living on the atoll's resources and collecting copra. But no one ever got rich by collecting copra on Sikaiana.

Other Sikaiana take a different view. They describe working for wages as providing a different kind of economic freedom. This is the freedom to buy the material goods many Sikaiana now consider necessary for their lives. Many people point out that there is nothing to develop on Sikaiana. Nothing to build upon and leave for one's children. People who have saved money and purchased land away from Sikaiana proudly point to this as an accomplishment not possible for those who stay on Sikaiana.

Among some Sikaiana there is a concept of careerism. This is most evident among those who feel that they have had a religious "calling," to be a priest, a catechist, or to join one of the religious orders. Often, this religious calling is first encountered in a dream. One man described himself as having a "gift" for navigating ships and then later a "gift" for work as a catechist. George Vanteiti, a Sikaiana convert to the Seventh Day Adventist religion, has taken upon himself the difficult task of trying to convert Sikaiana's residents to his new religion. He told me that he felt he had to follow his inner beliefs no matter what the adversity. This adversity included a skeptical Sikaiana audience and some opposition from local religious authorities.

Some other people working in the professions told me that they felt that they had certain predispositions to their chosen careers. This predisposition might be as simple as the claim that they chose carpentry as a career because they like working with their hands. At the more specialized extreme, one young man who studied to be a lawyer told me that he wanted to continue his studies as a lawyer for as long as possible out of his own interest in the law. He also wanted to use his knowledge to help his nation and the Sikaiana people.

The Sikaiana often use the English words, "plan" or "hope" to describe their career or life goals. One man, tired of the regimented life of working for wages, told me all his "hopes" were with life on Sikaiana. Another man, frustrated with Sikaiana's lack of opportunity for development, told me that his every "hope" is in the opportunities offered in town.

Many Sikaiana describe their occupational decisions in terms of helping people. They explain that they entered their various professions, such as teaching, law, or medicine, in order to help other Sikaiana people. The older generation of people who attended mission schools were often encouraged to enter certain professions, especially teaching, by the clergy of the Melanesian Mission. This was part of the Melanesian Mission's strategy for conversion. But younger people schooled in the government system also describe their motivations as based upon a desire to help the Sikaiana people. The Sikaiana also mention salaries as a factor in career decisions. Like most Americans, many Sikaiana people keep in mind the pay scales of various occupations and professions when making decisions about a career.

The Sikaiana Community in Honiara

The Sikaiana migrants in Honiara live in more dispersed surroundings than their relatives on the atoll. They do not constantly meet one another during the course of the day as happens on a small atoll. They live in different neighborhoods and work at different jobs. They do not participate as directly in the administrative institutions of Honiara as their relatives do on the atoll. Nevertheless, most of them maintain ties with one another in a variety of ways and participate in communal events.

Small groups of Sikaiana migrants often try to live together in one locality. At the Bahai Center, there are five contiguous houses which are all occupied by Sikaiana families. At Tenaru beach outside of Honiara, six plots of land were bought by Sikaiana families. More recently, a large plot of land contiguous to this one has been purchased by about ten different Sikaiana people. Outside of Kia, Isabel, several Sikaiana families have purchased tracts of land near to one other.

The Sikaiana people living in town unite in several different activities. Marriage exchanges are held there, often in the relative isolation and open space of Tenaru. On these occasions, large numbers of Sikaiana contribute money and clothing, and participate in the exchanges and drinking that often follows. In 1980-1983, many Sikaiana marriages were marked by separate exchanges, one on Sikaiana and another in Honiara. By 1987, it seemed that many people held only one set of exchanges and close relatives travelled to attend these events. Town residents sometimes waited for their yearly leave to hold the exchange of close family members on Sikaiana.

Funerals are another occasion when Sikaiana living in Honiara congregate. During the time when someone is ailing, relatives, foster children and others gather to visit and care for the person. During my stay in 1987, two elderly people died in Honiara. Both of them were placed in the large rooms of a house. Women sat at the side of body, while other people sang hymns through the night. These occasions were not totally somber. Both before and after the death, there were informal conversations among those present. The Sikaiana frequently accept death with resignation. They say that the deceased reached their time to die, *tona aho*, 'his/her day,' with fatalistic matter-of-factness.

The people who come to visit the body and spend the night are fed by the family of the deceased. There are usually one or two feasts which attract large numbers of Sikaiana, including those who were not always on friendly terms with the deceased. Visitors bring trade cloth to be buried with the deceased. At the two funerals I attended, many, if not all, of the Sikaiana residing in Honiara arrived for these occasions. A message is sent to Sikaiana either on the shortwave or on a broadcast of the national radio system. In both funerals, several flatback trucks had to be hired to take people to Tenaru where there was a short service in the church, followed by the interment.

The Sikaiana living in Honiara have organized several committees to represent the concerns of the Sikaiana residing there. One committee was supposed to advise the

representative of Sikaiana and Ontong Java in the National Parliament. Brown Saua organized several meetings to try to establish a resettlement committee for purchasing land for Sikaiana migrants. In 1987, I found that the Sikaiana propensity to form committees had developed among emigrants living in Honiara. They had formed several viable organizations and committees, all concerned with raising money to help various Sikaiana activities, both on the atoll and away from it. There were fundraising activities which collected money for various projects affecting the Sikaiana people as a whole.

After I left in 1983, I was told about a series of Sikaiana fundraising events to collect money to build a new church for the Sikaiana settlement at Tenaru. When I returned in 1987, new pretty church stood completed there. Once a month a priest visited the church and gave Communion. The funerals of both people who died in town were held there.

After the 1986 cyclone, the Sikaiana living in Honiara had organized a disaster committee which raised money to assist the atoll. Walkathons were held in which each person who walked asked others to sponsor a pledge for the distance walked. These sponsors included other Sikaiana, and also people from other ethnic groups. The Sikaiana held fairs in which food, beer, fermented toddy, and raffle prizes were sold. During my first stay in 1980-1983, weddings and holidays (often weddings were held on holidays) were occasions when large numbers of Sikaiana gathered together to dance, sing and drink. In 1987, fundraising events were another occasion for congregating Sikaiana emigrants residing in Honiara.

The Sikaiana living in town also formed their own sports associations. In Honiara there was a woman's netball league which competed regularly. Two teams composed entirely of Sikaiana emigrants entered into the competition (one team included one person from the neighboring Polynesian outlier, Ontong Java). One of the teams, *Uila* ('lightening') consisted largely of younger women; the other, *Kaniva* ('rainbow') was made up of more mature women, many of them married. Both teams had first and second squads which competed in separate divisions of the league. Each team had its own distinctive uniform made by its members. Between the members of the two teams, there was usually a good natured, although sometimes taunting, rivalry.

During my stay in 1987, both teams organized their own fundraising events to support their activities. *Uila* held Western style dances in a clubhouse which they rented. *Kaniva* rented video tapes and charged admission to see them and also charged for food served to people who watched the videos. *Kaniva* also held one walkathon. At about the same time, the Sikaiana men living in Honiara began organizing their own sports club, *Vania*, named after a large and distinctive rock which rises above the shallow water on the reef at Sikaiana. *Vania* was formed to organize the sports activities of Sikaiana emigrants which included their entries into the tryouts for the Solomon Islands team at the 1988 Olympics in Seoul. It also organized sports competitions among the Sikaiana, entered teams in the various sports leagues in Honiara, preserved Sikaiana recreational traditions, and performed Sikaiana dances.

Vania developed a much more formal organization than either *Uila* or *Kaniva*. They organized a supervising committee which held regular meetings and included a president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary, as well as six committee members. There were membership fees and the organization adopted a charter or constitution regulating membership. They planned to incorporate themselves as a charitable trust under the laws of the Solomon Islands.

By the end of my stay in September 1987, *Vania* was successfully organizing events. Every Sunday, after church service, Sikaiana people gathered at the St. Nicholas School sports field which is on a little hill overlooking the Bahai and Kukum sections of Honiara. People came from nearby areas of Honiara and its suburbs. I estimated about 200 people were there on one Sunday afternoon. This is a substantial proportion of the approximately 300 Sikaiana living in the Honiara area. The participants were almost exclusively Sikaiana. There were round robin matches with teams associated with the various neighborhoods where Sikaiana resided (Kolali, Town Ground, Bahai, Tenaru). The teams competed for small prizes.

I attended two fundraising events for *Vania*. One was held at the Sikaiana settlement at Tenaru. Another fundraising event was held at the yard of *Vania*'s president who lives in the Kolali section of Honiara. Both events were similar in organization. By and large, participation was limited to Sikaiana people. Because alcohol is served, the Sikaiana are reluctant to invite other Solomon Islanders whose drunken behavior may prove difficult to control. There are sales of food including baked sausage, mincemeat, pig, chicken, puddings, sweet potato and other dishes. There were raffle prizes. There are games of chance with beer and soft drinks as prizes. A main attraction is beer, which is often bought on credit from Honiara merchants and then sold or raffled at a marked-up price. The profits are used to support the teams. As will be explained in the next chapters, drinking is often a community event integral to the enjoyment of festive occasions including marriages and holidays. At both *Vania* fundraising events, Sikaiana dancers performed dances.

Externally, the sports association represents Sikaiana as a distinctive group, an "ethnicity," to other Solomon Islanders. Internally, among the Sikaiana, it unites the Sikaiana people residing in Honiara for the purposes of participating together in sports and preserving their traditions. Both objectives are explicitly stated in an official charter of the *Vania* Sports Association which explicitly states that the Sikaiana fear losing their traditional culture and formed the association in order to preserve it and display it for others.

Vania is modelled on Western bureaucratic institutions and in part it was formed to organize participation in Western sports, notably softball, soccer and netball. In this sense it is a modern institution derived from Western contact. But its administrative organization is used to preserve traditional activities and maintain ties among Sikaiana emigrants. Its fundraising events often included the consumption of beer and its activities included the presentation of Sikaiana dances. Singing, dancing and drinking are all important ways in which the Sikaiana preserve and develop their community and ethnic identity. The Sikaiana used modern organizational mechanisms to maintain their

distinctive practices and personal relations.

Tenaru

In 1993, I had the opportunity to return to the Solomon Islands for a short visit of three weeks. Brown had moved his family to Tenaru where they lived in a house that he had built while he rented out the house at Lingakiki. Tenaru had changed since I had first been there thirteen years earlier. About fifteen Sikaiana families bought land next to that already owned by other Sikaiana families. Many new houses had been built there and formed small clearings in what had formerly been rice fields and a palm plantation. The church had been enlarged and there were daily services, and a Sunday school.

Brown's house had three bedrooms and a large living room. Brown, his wife and youngest children slept in the main bedroom. The older children and young women slept in another bedroom, and young adult unmarried men slept in the other bedroom. There was electricity and even a telephone line. Several acres were cleared around the house with a few trees. There was more land which was not being cleared inland of the house. Cooking was done outside in a separate shed and there was a large wooden table next to the cooking shed for meals. There were several small structures which Brown had built to raise chickens, although there were not any chickens in them while I was there.

One of the most surprising changes was the introduction of cash into the local social relations of Tenaru's residents. Many families had small businesses. One family baked ringcakes (donuts) every morning and sold them to other families. Another young man sold fish he caught. Another man raised and sold chickens. An older man ran a small store out of his house and sold soap, tobacco and other goods. A man had a VCR and charged a small admission for neighbors to watch films. Later, I learned that another man sold bottles of fermented coconut toddy. Most of the customers for these businesses are other Sikaiana people. Although small in scale they reflect a new form of economic relationships. Most exchanges among the Sikaiana are based upon reciprocity: as mentioned in previous chapters, people provide aid out of kindness or the expectation for support in the future.ⁱ

In my previous stays on Sikaiana, I knew that a few people had started small stores which sold goods to neighbors. But these stores seemed to constantly dissolve as relatives would ask for credit and operators found it difficult to demand payment. There were a few Sikaiana entrepreneurs in town who cooked fish and chip lunches and then sold them in Honiara, although not usually to other Sikaiana people. Several Sikaiana people had opened small chicken businesses in Tenaru where they raised chickens and sold them in town.

These new businesses at Tenaru were quite different in that there was an assumption that goods and services would be sold among the Sikaiana people for cash. It is hard to determine how these new businesses will develop but they suggest an important source of change in Sikaiana relations which may undercut traditional patterns of reciprocity.

In 1993, life in town seemed more difficult. Honiara's population was increasing and the town seemed more crowded with more people who seemed to have less to do. There were many young men hanging around Tenaru who had no steady employment. Some had been unemployed since my last visit in 1987.

But there were also many community activities. Vania had been disbanded, but the Sikaiana people were continuously collecting money for their local church at Tenaru. Whereas in 1987, the main community fundraising was directed towards the Disaster Committee and Vania, in 1993 the church at Tenaru was a continuing community effort. There were competitive fundraising events, raffles and picnics. My first weekend, there was a fundraising event at a local club where people were charged admission to hear a local band and food was sold. The day I left there was another fundraising event for the church at Tenaru in which food was sold and people paid an entrance fee to drink fermented toddy.

The Sikaiana population keeps increasing. The atoll's carrying capacity remains constant and most people must move to town to live. There, they directly encounter a variety of global forces which disembed them from their indigenous relations. For the most part, they need cash to survive and must work for wages to attain it. If they cannot find work, they become totally dependent on the others. They encounter people from other parts of the Solomon Islands who have different cultures. More importantly, they are exposed to the life of Honiara which is constantly changing by creolizing indigenous Solomon Islands values with Western cultural practices, and then recreolizing the synthesis with Western cultural practices. Sikaiana relations become disembedded in a variety of ways, but at the same time there are attempts to re-embed them. People charge relatives for goods and services but they also try to maintain their distinctive communal living in their settlement at Tenaru. They follow the universalistic teachings of Christianity, but focus their religious efforts at establishing their own local church. They follow Western bureaucratic models and practices in developing organizations which raise funds for their local community institutions and activities.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ As mentioned earlier, in 2019, Robert and Priscilla told me that these type of commercial, cash exchanges now exist on Sikaiana.

ⁱⁱ Robert and Priscilla told me in 2019 that for the last there has been an annual festival and celebration held at Tenaru. There are games and other celebrations drawing Sikaiana people from all over the Solomon Islands. In addition, there is now a cultural village at Tenaru, established for tourists, where Sikaiana people display their traditional arts and dances.

XI CEREMONIES of COMMUNITY LIFE

There is a long-debated issue about the consequences of modernization, both in Western societies and more recently in non-Western societies. In social theory there was a definite ambivalence about these processes which can be seen as liberating individuals from the shackles of tradition and ascribed social expectations and at the same time setting them adrift into a fragmented world of isolated individuals and meaningless instrumentality. Weber wrote about the "disenchantment" of modern instrumental rationality which deprives people of any wonderment and spirituality; Durkheim wrote about the anomie of highly differentiated and specialized social systems; Marx described the "alienation" of industrial systems of production. At the same time, all these writers were clearly fascinated by the opportunities offered by industrialization and what might be termed, modern life. This ambivalence about modernity continues to the present, both in the academic discourse and in people's everyday discussions. As I discussed earlier, the Sikaiana people themselves have entered this debate. They are ambivalent about the changes they have seen in their lifetimes. They claim that there is fragmenting in their social relations and less happiness, but at the same time that they enthusiastically participate in new institutions.

In the next two chapters, I will discuss some ceremonial events, songs and drinking, which maintained the Sikaiana community. Both are ceremonies are unique to the Sikaiana and separate them from the outside world. Both ceremonies reflect the intimacy and familiarity of the Sikaiana community. Songs describe Sikaiana individuals and events. Sometimes songs contain hidden meanings which create smaller groups of people among the Sikaiana with shared understandings. Sikaiana drinking is the ultimate occasion for camaraderie, allowing types of intimate interactions which are restricted in sober relations. These ceremonies create a re-enchanting, non-alienated, albeit temporary, world of intimacy and familiarity. But these are not stable activities and the manner in which these ceremonies are integrated into Sikaiana life reflects important changes.

SONGS

Before I went to Sikaiana, I had very little interest in songs or song composition. I have never been able to play an instrument or carry a tune and I had read very little about ethnomusicology. But songs are an important part of Sikaiana social life. In earlier chapters, I have already described the controversy about pre-marital sex and the dances of young people, and how this controversy was incorporated into the themes of songs in the 1981 *puina*. Songs and dances are performed as part of the celebration of holidays. People often explain concepts or describe historical events by referring to songs. The formation of the Vania sports association was in large part due to the desire to practice and perform traditional songs and dances. In song composition, individuals and their activities are recorded and interpreted in terms of shared values. Songs composed in traditional genres describe many important themes in Sikaiana social life. They often include the ridicule and taunting that is a form of social control. Important

events and activities are recorded in them. Moreover, the manner in which new song styles have been incorporated into Sikaiana life and the redefinition of their traditional song genres reflect the major processes of change in their society.

Early in my stay, I began collecting information about songs. During my first year on Sikaiana, I collected traditional songs with the help of my neighbor, Reuben Tenai. At the end of that first year, I participated in the *puina*. During the Easter holiday in 1982, I sponsored the performance of traditional songs by offering to supply beer and toddy to the women who sang them. Fane Telenā led a group of women who spent about two weeks rehearsing traditional songs for this recording.

I also enjoyed composed songs for personal reasons. Song composition is an area of Sikaiana life which is creative. The Sikaiana are not especially artistic. They carve bowls, pestles, and sometimes foot stools. Men are competitive about the aesthetic qualities of their canoes. Women are critical of weaving and plaiting which are not straight, and of mats which do not lie flat on the ground. But aesthetic expression is limited by the utilitarian aspects of these objects. The Sikaiana have no elaborate tradition of painting or decoration. Most body adornments, including necklaces, bracelets, braids are bought in stores. The Sikaiana make flower garlands for their heads, *hau*, which are attractive, but they do not require much imagination and do not last long. In songs, however, the Sikaiana have an opportunity to express their hopes, fears, sorrows, joy, and humor in a manner that is creative. Their songs became a part of my emotional experience of Sikaiana, just as another group of songs from the 1960s are part of my college experience. Perhaps the best way to get to know the Sikaiana is to get to know their songs.ⁱ

Song Composition

There are many Sikaiana songs which are associated with their traditional ritual life and recreational activities which have no recognized composer. They have been passed down from previous times and mostly associated with ritual activities. But there is another group of songs, *mako hatu*, which are composed by specific individuals. These composed songs describe events and personalities in terms of general Sikaiana values. They are a continuing commentary which expresses the personal nature of this community.

One traditional genre of composed songs is the *tani*, literally meaning to 'cry' or 'mourn.' These were funeral dirges are composed after the death of a loved one to commemorate his or her life. These songs are no longer composed, but some old ones are still remembered. These songs reflect the kind of intimacy of a community where everyone is known: the songs often describe personal details about the deceased's life or the circumstances of death. One song, composed by a mother for her deceased daughter, asks how it is possible that a daughter can die before her mother. The song laments that the daughter will no longer call out to her mother or come running into the house. Another song written for a deceased younger brother recalls his determined efforts to help his older brother win their canoe races and fishing contests against other young

men. The younger brother will never again wake the composer and urge him run to the shore and paddle out to sea to compete in the contests.

There is one sad funeral song that recounts the mourning of TePeau for his sister, Peia. Peia was the insane woman who killed her husband and whose death by drowning was recounted in Chapter III. Recall that TePeau, her brother, ordered that Peia be killed because she had murdered her husband. He composed the following song in which he decries his decision to have his sister die and asks for others to share the responsibility. Why did none of Peia's other brothers come forth to make him change his mind.ⁱⁱ

My sister, you and I are separated because I gave the order that you should die.

My sister, you and I are moved apart because I gave the order that you
should die.

I grieve in my heart, I gave the order for you to die.

No man came to try to dissuade me from my decision.

How is it that none of my brothers came forth to try to keep me from ordering
your death?

I grieve that I gave the order for you to die.

Why is it that I never saw our cousin Taukalo come forth to prevent you
from dying?

Other genres of composed songs are concerned with the living and current events. In a previous chapter, I described how song composition in the *puina* both reflected the pervasive division between men and women, and also expressed specific social values and events. Since the late 1960s, the Sikaiana have been composing songs to the guitar which also discuss specific events in terms of general values.

In composed songs, the Sikaiana, like poets everywhere, find it is better to express themselves by not directly saying what they mean. They frequently use metaphor or figurative speech, *hulihulisala*, to describe people or events. The term, *hulihulisala*, is made up of two words, *huli* 'to turn' and *sala* which in this context means 'differently' or 'unexpectedly'. Sikaiana metaphors turn meanings in unexpected ways. The priest explained *hulihulisala* to me by referring to the parables told by Jesus in the Bible. Like parables, metaphors are often used in songs to provide figurative illustrations for proper behavior.

In everyday speech, speakers use metaphors to refer to people, especially to children, when they want to make a comment without being understood. Upon my arrival, before I had a command of the vernacular, Sikaiana people referred to me by the names for various species of fish which, like me, are white in color. As I became more familiar with the language, more elaborate metaphors were developed. When Kilatu's wife referred to me as a gecko who sticks to walls and ceilings, she was using *hulihulisala*. Because the meanings of metaphors are often contextualized in specific interactions, it is sometimes difficult to determine when they are being used.

Sometimes, especially in traditional songs, the entire song is structured around a central metaphor. A man who laments that his canoe is missing certain crucial parts is really complaining that he is a bachelor without a wife. The very fastidious captain of a steamship in another song is actually a reference to a man known for his compulsive cleanliness. A song about a canoe that has not appeared is really an allusion to a man who does not have a son. Other times, especially in the guitar songs, metaphors are used in specific verses. The constantly fuming smokestack of a boat describes a woman who chain smokes. The movement of stars across the horizon is a metaphor for the elopement of lovers. A species of fish noted for being immobile alludes to a lazy person. A grave without a coffin refers to an empty mosquito net at night, whose occupant, a jealous mother, is constantly watching the activities of her mature daughters lest they involve themselves in some illicit romance; in this same song, a channel in the reef that has gone dry alludes to the fact that a young man is having difficulty in arranging a meeting with one of these daughters or, in some explanations, that the mother is no longer capable of bearing anymore beautiful daughters.

In addition to enlivening meaning, metaphors challenge people to interpret a song's message. Sikaiana people are well known to one another and enmeshed in relationships based upon kinship, exchange and past experience. The composer has the satisfaction of understanding the song's meaning and shares this satisfaction with those to whom he or she reveals the song's meaning. Even though someone suspects that she or he is being criticized in a song, metaphors make the songs inherently ambiguous. As discussed in a previous chapter, this shared knowledge creates membership in a distinct informal social group. Others use their knowledge of community events and figurative meanings to suspect (*sanosano*) the intent of the song. Often, the composers (or those who claim to know the composers' intent) say that some songs, which seem to be straightforward, are really highly elaborate metaphors. In other cases, the composers claim that various interpretations deviate from the song's original meaning. Although some metaphors are easily interpreted, others are more opaque because the composer intends to hide his or her meanings. Metaphors and figurative speech are sometimes described as 'to make covered' or 'to hide', *hakalilolilo*. The Sikaiana describe the difference between apparent meaning and inner messages in complex metaphors by using the word *nnoto*, which literally means 'deep' as in the deep areas in the sea.

Songs of Change

Songs composed earlier in this century used traditional tunes and stanza form to discuss many of the changes taking place in Sikaiana life. In form and content, they are

closely related to the songs sung at the *puina*. In the following song, probably composed in the 1930s, a person describes how his passionate love for a young woman overwhelms the recently adopted Christian morality proscribing sexual relations outside of marriage. The young man meets a woman along a path and is overcome by passion. In the view of the church, they sin and fall from grace. In the last lines the young man describes sneaking up to his love's house in order to be near her. Hearing the rustling of branches, his lover's mother mistakes him for a pig that had broken away from its fence. The song is intended to be a humorous look at love and passion.

The people of my age follow the teachings of the church.
And what happened?-- You and I sinned on account of me.
And what happened?--You and I fell from grace because of me.

I am surprised by myself.
We meet by chance along the path.
I lose control, I reach out and pull you to me.
We kiss deeply, our lips opening together.
My heart trembles, my voice quivers,
Our love is so deep, there is nothing else.
We part but my thoughts go with you
We have sinned because of me.
We have fallen because of me.

I stood at the side of your house to hear your soft voice.
Snap! A branch crackled underneath my foot.
Your mother called out from the house, "shoo-- pig-- shoo."
She thought I was a pig who had strayed.

The following song was probably composed after the arrival of missionaries.
Composed by women, it takes an amusing look at a man's fickle interest in a love affair:

Oh, young man, I still hold our promise of love.

Where do we stand?
Why do you move away from me now?

It's your fault
that I am alone.
It's your fault
because my love is still strong.

Oh, young man, we are like the lightning:

It flashes once and we are standing together;
It flashes again and you have left me.

It flashes once and we are hugging;
It flashes again and you are somewhere else.

It flashes once and we are kissing;
It flashes again and you forget all about me.

The excerpts from the following song, probably composed in the 1950s, describe a young student in the new school who keeps thinking about a certain girl. The song begins with his foster parent admonishing him to keep up with his studies so that he can have a good job when he grows up. The foster father says:

I promised your mother that I would make sure you would go to school.
Study hard so that you will grow up to be something better than a cook for some white man.

The song now shifts perspective to that of the young student and his futile efforts at his studies because of his romantic interests.

The bell rings to start classes.
I enter into the school.
I sit down in my seat.
The teacher gives us our examination.

My hand wavers all around the page writing nothing at all.
I'm not interested in school lessons,
The only thing I want to learn about is my sweetheart.

Guitar Music

Sikaiana people often learn and perform songs and dances from other cultures. They like to perform many songs and dances which were learned by their grandparents when they travelled to other islands while working on government ships in the 1920s and 30s. The fact that many of the words in these songs are not understood does not inhibit the Sikaiana people's enthusiasm for performing them. In fact, many of the dances that the Sikaiana perform as their traditional "*kastom*" dances, including those performed by the Vania sports association, were first learned from other Pacific peoples. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Sikaiana people are enthusiastic about learning Western music and dance styles. Learning Western songs and music is entirely consistent with their own cultural tradition of incorporating songs and dances from

other cultures.

Present-day, 2020, examples can be found on YouTube by Island Boy. Some of his songs are not familiar to me but some were sung, during my stays in 1980-93, including the one below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RICKLvQQjwA>

Young men learned English school songs while attending missionary schools in the 1930s. During this time, some of the young men were composing songs in the Sikaiana language using the tunes they learned in schools. At present, the Sikaiana men sing English language songs that I assume were learned at school, on labor plantations, and from soldiers during World War II. Favorite songs include "You are my Sunshine", "Pack up Your Troubles", "There's a Church in the Valley", and the "Halls of Montezuma". A few Pijin songs are sung, including a well-known favorite in the Solomon Islands, "Walkabout Chinatown," and occasionally a song from World War II which ridicules the Japanese, "Japoni haahaa". Most of church hymns are sung in English from the Church of Melanesia's hymnal.

In the 1960s, some young men attending school in Honiara learned to play the ukulele and guitar from other Solomon Islanders. Tunes were taken from a variety of sources including the national radio, and commercial cassettes of Western and neo-Oceanic music. One young man attending a training course in Australia composed a song using a tune he heard on a television show. Although many of these songs use tunes from Western music, their lyrics are always in the Sikaiana language.

At about the same time, young men and women began dancing with each other face-to-face in the Western style. By the time of my arrival in 1980, there were always four or five guitars on the atoll. Many young people, both male and female, could play the guitar, and almost everyone knew at least some of the guitar songs. Dances between young men and women were held once or twice a month, usually as part of holiday festivities or the goodbye parties for people leaving on the monthly boat. At these dances in 1980-1983, guitar music is always played, even though the Sikaiana own tape recorders.

Traditionally, the Sikaiana did not have this kind of intersexual dancing. Some people claim that visitors, such as American servicemen in World War II, first introduced this type of dancing. These dances are called the *hula*, a term that is cognate with the name of the famous Hawaiian dance. But on Sikaiana, it does not refer to the erotic hip-swinging dances of Hawaii. These dances are always accompanied by guitar music and Sikaiana songs.

In many respects, the themes and style of Sikaiana guitar composition are derived from traditional song composition genres. Like traditional songs, guitar songs describe romance and taunt inappropriate behavior; they also use metaphor both to

camouflage and enrich their meanings. Guitar songs, however, use Western stanzas and tunes from Western or commercial music. Traditional songs have a distinctive stanza organization and rely upon traditional tunes and composition formats.

Guitar songs are associated with the life of young unmarried males and females. When a person marries, he or she usually stops composing and playing the guitar. Even many of the best Sikaiana composers stopped playing after their marriages. Some older people do not approve of guitar songs. Several times older people questioned my interest in modern songs by describing them as *mea pio*, 'false or silly things' (closest to the English, 'bullshit'). Adults often complain about the comparatively lax sexual morality of younger people and attribute this, in part, to the *hula* dances that provide opportunities for physical contact between young men and women. When we were working on the language, Kilatu often complained to me that the lyrics for many of the guitar songs were "incorrect" in their use of Sikaiana words and grammar. Guitar songs, nevertheless, like popular music in the United States, express important themes in Sikaiana life. Moreover, since the 1960s, they have been an important expressive medium for every Sikaiana generation.

Throughout 1981, I had made a point of collecting guitar songs, recording them, transcribing them, and whenever possible talking to their composers to learn about the song's meanings. In late 1981, Duke Laupa arrived on Sikaiana to spend his holidays. Duke is recognized by the Sikaiana as one of their most accomplished composers. Unlike most composers, he was married at the time.

Many evenings during that month, Duke and a group of young men gathered to talk about ideas for songs, compose them and then memorize them. We met in the house of a young bachelor, James Sinahenu. Sinahenu, like many of Sikaiana's bachelors, lived in his separate house. Sometimes one or two other young men also stayed there. Almost every night, a group of five or six young men gathered to describe themes and then Duke would compose the tune and lyrics. It was during this time that I composed a song and Duke provided the tune. Some composers work out their lyrics first and then find a tune for them. Duke prefers to find the tune first and then compose the lyrics, although the song I composed with him was an exception.

At Duke's composition sessions in 1981, all the songs were composed to describe a specific event or incident. One young man described a romance which was opposed by his lover's parents. Duke composed lyrics to describe the incident. He composed another song, also based upon a real incident, that described the reconciliation of two brothers who had a long-standing feud. Finally, he composed a song which commemorated a young man's impending departure from Sikaiana. The songs were composed and rehearsed in secret; Duke wanted the first presentation of the songs to surprise everyone, especially the young women.

In explaining the themes of the songs which he composed, Duke was quite explicit about his intent. He composed songs about specific events which illustrated feelings and occurrences that were part of every Sikaiana person's experiences. Duke explained that, after hearing his songs, the Sikaiana people would recall times when they

had similar experiences to those described in the song. Duke, who was a high school graduate, told me that unlike Western societies, Sikaiana has no written history. Songs, he explained, served as Sikaiana's history of events.

Themes in Guitar Songs

In Sikaiana guitar songs, there are several recurring themes: romance, separation, family ties, and ridicule for not following important social norms and values. Many songs combine several of these themes. Although Western institutions are important in present-day Sikaiana life, they are not important themes in these songs. Guitar music focuses on specific Sikaiana events and concerns.

There are some recurrent metaphors found in these songs. Rough seas, strong currents or high winds refer to adversity, and often the gossip and hostility of others. Another frequent metaphor describes the experience of being scattered or set adrift in the currents of the ocean. In a society which emphasizes social ties through kinship, association and exchange, such images of separation, isolation and lack of control are potent symbols for the breakdown of important social relationships. Sweet smelling fragrances, beautiful flower garlands, or attractive clothing are images which refer to happiness, friendship or romance.

Many of the songs are about romance. One of the first songs composed for the guitar, recorded on a tape collected by linguist Peter Sharples in 1967, describes the common feeling of shyness, *hakanapanapa*, many Sikaiana men experience when making advances to a woman. The prose is simple and repetitive. Admittedly, I am not good with tunes, but this tune is the same as the American song, "She's Coming Around the Mountain." The first two verses describe the woman's beauty. In verse three, the woman is going to work in the gardens. This is an opportunity for the young man to make his advances. But, alas, he is too shy.

The woman I love is nearby, nearby
The woman I love is nearby, nearby

Her skin is fair, her hair is black
The woman I love is nearby, nearby

She is going out to work in the taro gardens
She is going out to work in the taro gardens

I am afraid, I am afraid to approach her
The woman I love is nearby, nearby

Sikaiana parents prefer that their children marry another Sikaiana person. In part, this preference reflects a desire to maintain their cultural traditions. Marriage into non-Sikaiana groups, especially for a woman, will involve major adjustments to a

different culture. It often results in some isolation and separation from other Sikaiana. But in Honiara, many young Sikaiana people meet and fall in love with people from other ethnic groups. The following song describes this opposition to marrying non-Sikaiana. The first two stanzas present the viewpoint of a young woman's parents and other conservative Sikaiana: a daughter is criticized for wanting to marry a Melanesian. The Melanesian, whose skin color is darker than the Polynesian Sikaiana, is described by metaphor as a "black lizard." In the last line, however, the song's composer shifts perspective and presents the viewpoint of the young woman. She is explaining to her relatives that they will benefit from the marriage.

Mother, instruct your child
To obey you
So she will understand
Why we are ashamed of her.

Your proper Sikaiana husband has been left by you
Because of your desire for the black lizard.
Your mother is sad as a result of your behavior
Which is different from the other women of Sikaiana.

The daughter's reply:

Mother, Guardian, this will be for your well-being.
Don't try to dominate me.
I will go to seek a new place
For us at the best place in Honiara.

Separation is also a common theme in love songs. There is separation on the atoll because young men and women cannot be seen together in public and must arrange their meetings secretly. There is also separation because many romances are conducted over extended periods of time and the lovers become separated by hundreds of miles as they and their families move around the Solomon Islands. The next song was composed by Sikaiana's young women for a lover who is living far away.

I sleep every night
And I always dream about you.
Please come back to me
Lest you forget me.

When sleeping, I always cry to you,
My spirit searches for you.
Please come back to me
Lest you forget me.

When I sleep in the evening,
Your name is not forgotten by me.
Please come back to me

Lest you forget me.

Young men often feel loneliness when they are away from other Sikaiana while working or studying in school. The following song was composed by some young men and describes this feeling of loneliness at being separated from Sikaiana. Several young men who matured in the 1970s talked about this song with special poignancy. In the first stanza, a young man laments that he is forgotten by the people of his age during his sojourn abroad. Often times, Sikaiana residents send baskets of taro, *haahaa*, back to relatives living in Honiara. This variety of swamp taro is a favorite of the Sikaiana people and they prefer it to the taro grown in other parts of the Solomon Islands. In the second stanza, the young man asks his friends to recall their youthful playing during the school holidays at Muli Akau on Sikaiana.

Oh, The young man who lives abroad,
There is no basket of taro sent to him
Because you have forgotten him.
He is forgotten by his friends on Sikaiana.

Remember the play of our youth
During our school's vacation at Muli Akau.
Nothing wrong ever happened
In our youthful play.

Now you no longer see
You have forgotten me
In your hearts.

I will never forget you,
Even though I live far away.
I remember you, my friends,
It is not possible for me to forget.

Since the early part of this century, separation has been part of Sikaiana life. The monthly arrival of the *Belama* to Sikaiana is a time of both excitement for reuniting with those arriving and sorrow for those who are separating. The next song is one of the most popular on Sikaiana. Although it was originally inspired as a result of a young man's love for a departing young woman, it has become a popular song known to all Sikaiana and often sung when a boat is departing. The song describes the time in the afternoon when a person paddles in a canoe out to the *Belama* shortly before its departure. This is indeed a sad moment for many Sikaiana, because family and lovers become separated. At the time that the boat is ready to depart from Sikaiana, canoes carry people out to say goodbye. Some people stay on the *Belama* to talk with relatives, perhaps make eyes with a loved one, and then jump off and swim to a waiting canoe when the boat starts pulling away from the reef.

Take me to go with you

So that we can go together
On the boat that has just arrived.
To go together will end my sorrow.

My friends do not feel pity for me
On account of my paddling and crying.
My sorrow will end and the time will come
When my love and I will reunite.

Tell me, my love, so that I will know
What time you will return.
So that I can prepare for you
When you are facing towards shore on your arrival.

Ridicule and criticism are common themes in guitar songs and many Sikaiana songs have nasty edges, often expressed in metaphors, which are highly critical of improper behavior. Some Sikaiana young men are notorious for "creeping," or "night-crawling", the practice of sneaking into a young woman's house at night and trying to have intercourse with her while she is asleep. The following lines are from a song which compares such young men to a storm which blows down houses.

The wind shakes
the heart of the island
It swirls around like a cyclone
that destroys houses

Concerns of kinship and family are frequent themes in the songs; most often these songs describe and lament the breakdown of these relations. In the following song, the composer complains that her family, which is angry at her, misunderstands her motivations and actions. The last stanza includes a common metaphor to describe isolation and loneliness.

What is my mother doing?
She misunderstands me.
She does not follow those very teachings
Which she gave to me.

There is so much gossip about me.
Why do you believe such rubbish?
I can't understand how.

You left to live with your sister,
Leaving your true child
To be blown around like the wind.

Most men told me that they feel most comfortable and friendly, not with their

natal brothers, but instead with their cousins. There are several reasons for this. Sikaiana is an egalitarian society, but the oldest brother is often considered to be the leader of his natal siblings. Younger brothers often want to assert their independence and equality. Moreover, natal brothers feel responsible for one another's proper conduct. Brothers are closely allied in their projects and usually mutually supportive, but in one another's presence, they may behave in a manner that is reserved. The following song is an admonition from an older brother to his younger brother about proper behavior. This is a very popular song, especially among the people who matured during the late 60s and early 70s.

Watch carefully my brother
Lest you make any mistakes,
Because the people of Sikaiana watch for those
Who treat their people well.
Do the things that are good for the people
So that you will have a good reputation.
No matter what kind of person you are,
Just make sure that your reputation is good.

Do not desire for everything.
Material things don't last.
The two of us will live only for happiness
For as long as we live in this world.

The final song is one of my favorites. Although most Sikaiana knew it and performed it when I requested them to do so, it was less popular than other departure songs. But the following verse summarize many of my feelings toward my own stay with the Sikaiana.

Sorry, my people
The time has arrived;
There is nothing that can be done-- I must leave.

I will remember
How you helped me
During my stay here.

Forget
The things that I did wrong;
Your teachings remain in my heart.

I recall all
Your kindness.
We must say good-bye.

Although they use borrowed tunes and are a recent genre, guitar songs are an activity which supports a distinctive Sikaiana identity. They describe specific Sikaiana

events and people in terms of Sikaiana values. Moreover, all songs are composed in the Sikaiana vernacular, never Pijin. Younger men claim that, in casual speech with one another, they prefer to speak in Pijin rather than in the vernacular. Nevertheless, they always compose in the vernacular. By composing in the vernacular the audience for the songs is limited, excluding non-Sikaiana people who would understand songs composed in Pijin. Although the songs use Western music and accompany Western style dancing, they remain directed to the Sikaiana people.

Song, Dance and Community Identity

When I first arrived on Sikaiana in November 1980, several of the mature men organized special sessions in which the atoll's young men, who were often described as hopelessly indolent, were taught traditional dances and songs. These songs were then performed as part of the holiday ceremonies accompanying Saint Andrew's Day in November and then during Christmas. Fearing that Sikaiana traditions were being forgotten and supplanted by guitar music and *hula* dancing, older men led these sessions. (My arrival and interest in traditional culture may have been another stimulus.) Although many young men attended these sessions, they preferred to play the guitar or listen to Western pop music on their tape recorders.

There were several other revivals of traditional song performances. In November 1981, most of the atoll's population participated in the *puina* described in chapter VII and it was a frequent topic of conversation and interaction for several weeks. In 1982, Solomon Mamaloni, the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, decided to take a tour of the different provinces and localities in the Solomon Islands. The trip to Sikaiana is a long one and Sikaiana is one of the smallest and most remote places in the Solomon Islands. The Sikaiana prepared to greet him with ceremonies, dances and a feast. They decided to perform several of their traditional rituals for him, including certain parts of the *Teika Llee* and the *Kaitae Hakateletele*.

The *Teika Llee*, literally meaning the 'fish flies,' was performed in traditional Sikaiana society when a very large fish or whale washed ashore on the reef. According to Fane, this fish represented the anger of a spirit of the sea, *Aliko Moana* (literally, 'ruler of the seas'). The fish brought disease and harm unless it was ritually purified. When the fish was found on the reef, everyone stopped working for several days. They performed a series of dances, songs and ritual activities while bringing the fish ashore and purifying it.

The *Kaitae Hakatele* was performed whenever the chief felt that the central spirit house, *Hale Aitu*, had to be rebuilt. Inside the spirit house were the wooden statues of the atoll's founder heroes. Periodically these statues, along with the mats in the spirit house, had to be replaced because they were beginning to rot. These occasions, which Fane and elder people described as times of great excitement, were accompanied by dancing and chants.

Following their conversion to Christianity, neither ritual was performed as part of

a religious ceremony. The Sikaiana, however, had re-enacted the ceremonies for visiting dignitaries, such as the Resident Commissioner when the Solomon Islands was still a British Protectorate. These re-enactments were meant to be displays of Sikaiana traditions or *kastom* and were performed for the amusement of the visitors. The Sikaiana rehearsed for several weeks before the Prime Minister's arrival. Their performance for him combined elements of both the *Teika Llee* and the *Kaitae Hakatele*, although in traditional Sikaiana society they were completely different ceremonies.

The performance of these songs, dances and activities reflects an important change in Sikaiana social life. Activities that were formerly displays of commitment to the atoll's pagan spirits are redefined and recontextualized to be displays of commitment to a separate ethnicity in a modernizing multi-cultural nation. The sacred rituals of former times are now rites of community and ethnic identity which are displayed to foreign dignitaries.

When I returned to the Solomon Islands in 1987, I expected that the performance of traditional songs would be rare. It had been difficult to perform the *Kaitae Hakatele* in 1982. Fane and several other older women had to straighten out the wording and explain the proper activities which accompanied the songs and chants. By 1987 all these knowledgeable women had passed away. During my stay in 1980-83, young men did not seem to be interested in learning traditional songs. The composition of traditional songs, such as those at the *puina*, is rare and given the lack of expertise in composition forms may not recur.

In 1987 the Sikaiana residents of Honiara were practicing and performing dances. Often, they perform the dances at Sikaiana weddings or fundraising events. Other times, they perform at special dance festivals which include presentations by different ethnic groups in the Solomon Islands. Most of the songs and dances they perform are those learned by their fathers and grandfathers who worked on boats during their travels to other Polynesian islands. The Sikaiana find these dances more pleasing than some of their own dances. These introduced dances are described by the Sikaiana as "*kastom*," the term which refers to customary or traditional practices.

Some readers, including perhaps some anthropologists, will consider these borrowings to be examples of how Sikaiana culture has disintegrated as a result of culture contact. I completely disagree. The performance of these songs is every bit as authentic as the incorporation of Scotch fiddling into American folk songs, or American Negro spiritual music via blues into the performances by rock groups. As I mentioned in describing the development of guitar music, the Sikaiana have always been willing to incorporate another culture's songs and dances. Traditionally and still at present, they value the novelty of new dances and songs.

The context for song and dance performances is undergoing a transformation. Many songs, dances, and ritual ceremonies are now being performed for outsiders as representations of traditional Sikaiana culture. In former times, when Sikaiana was isolated, the songs and dances associated with traditional rituals were performed to

communicate with Sikaiana spirits. The encapsulated world of Sikaiana as an isolated atoll, however, no longer exists. Over the last 60 years Sikaiana has become part of a much larger social system. In the multi-cultural setting of the Solomon Islands with over 60 different major linguistic and ethnic groups, Sikaiana ethnicity and cultural identity are expressed through the performance of the songs and dances which were formerly part of their ritual life. Moreover, songs and dances learned by the Sikaiana during this century (20th) are now performed as displays or emblems of Sikaiana ethnicity both at Sikaiana events and for multi-cultural audiences.

Song Styles and Social Change

The forces of regional and international integration are ever present in contemporary Sikaiana social life. Most Sikaiana people own, or have access to, cassette recorders and radios. Sometimes, cassette recorders are used to tape and send guitar song recordings to relatives and friends living in other parts of the Solomon Islands. Cassette players also are used to play commercial folk and rock music which is recorded in Australia, Britain and the United States and which is distributed throughout the world. This international and commercial music is also quite popular among the Sikaiana.

There are several inter-related processes in Sikaiana song performances which are defining Sikaiana identity both within the community and to outsiders. At the performances for the visit of the Prime Minister, pieces of traditional ritual are taken out of their former religious context and redefined to be used as a way to display a Sikaiana identity to outsiders. These "*kastom*" songs represent the indigenous Sikaiana to the outside world. They also contribute to a sense of Sikaiana identity in a multi-cultural setting and are an integral part of the activities of emigrants in Honiara and their sports association. Finally, Sikaiana guitar music is the result of a related process but with a different result: outside traditions are being incorporated into traditional ones to create a musical genre which is distinctively indigenous. The guitar songs discuss Sikaiana persons and events, and then explain them in terms of Sikaiana values. It is significant that none of the guitar songs discuss employment or schooling, except as reasons for people becoming separated. And it is also very significant that they are composed in the vernacular by people who describe themselves as more comfortable speaking Pijin: their choice of language limits their audience to Sikaiana people. Guitar songs, although borrowing from Western musical styles, have become a Sikaiana musical genre. Like so much else about modern day Sikaiana life, it is indigenous, although not necessarily traditional.

Several different musical styles compete on Sikaiana, each representing different processes of culture change and assimilation. Traditional composition style, such as the songs performed at the *puina*, is fading, and may not survive for another generation. Composition for the guitar is a very strong expressive form among young people. But it is possible that eventually this hybrid style of composition will be replaced by a preference for Western rock and folk music cassettes played on recorders and heard on the radio.ⁱⁱⁱ

Western rock singers (from Elvis Presley to Madonna) croon about romance, family ties, and separation. They (or their songwriters) compose lyrics from personal experiences that also appeal to the general experiences shared by others. But when we hear their songs, we share only the general experience, we usually have no knowledge of the individuals involved. As long as Sikaiana continue to compose their guitar songs, the audience often knows the personalities and events being described. In their guitar songs, the Sikaiana are not only consumers of music; they are also its producers. Intimacy and personal knowledge, which were embedded in the traditional funeral laments and in the metaphors in the traditional song festivals, are still expressed in the guitar songs.

i. Sikaiana songs are discussed in several of my papers including (Donner 1987, 1989, and 1992b). Other papers about the importance of music and change in Polynesian societies include Elbert (1967), Monberg (1974) and a volume edited by Nero (1992).

ii The songs are translated by me from the Sikaiana.

iii. In 1993, I had the strong impression that guitar music was no longer so popular among the present *lautama*, group of marriage-age adolescents. Without sufficient knowledge of the Sikaiana language, it seems unlikely that guitar songs are being composed at this present time (2020), although, again, see the incorporation of guitar songs into present-day social media:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RICKLvQQjwA>

XII

**THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF DRINKING:
Alcohol in Sikaiana Life**

Readers should note that Robert Sisilo and Priscilla Taulupo told me in 2019 that the drinking is not nearly as heavy as it was during my stays in the 1980s. It is not as public and drinking groups are not as large, although there is still some heavy drinking.

On my last night on Sikaiana in 1983 I was drinking fermented coconut toddy with Uriel and a few others outside his cookhouse. We drank all night and into the next morning. The *Belama* was due to arrive later in the day. We didn't have a large amount of toddy, but enough to keep us going through the night. It was getting to be the time in the morning when the rooster crows frequently, and the sky lightens a bit. The Sikaiana measure the nights by the crowing of roosters; towards dawn they crow more frequently. (One of Frank Saovete's songs describe the crowing of a rooster at dawn during the last few dances at a goodbye party.) It was time of morning called *sseni* when one can make out the outline of individuals going about chores but not recognize them.

There is a path that goes across the soccer field in front of the school, and then turns into the undergrowth just before a little incline leading down to the shore away from areas in front of houses. I went to relieve myself in the relative privacy along that shore. As I walked back, it occurred to me that this could be the very last time that I would be on Sikaiana, and the very last time that I would be on this particular path, used by lovers to meet at night, by people on their way to work during the day, and by drinkers such as myself who were wandering about. I thought back to the time when I had just arrived two and half years earlier: a young man and I had walked this path to where he turned off to meet with his lover. The following year, they had married. The path took me past some coconut trees over the use of which I had once heard Fane and a young male member of her lineage quarrel. Fane's age and knowledge was matched against the fact that as a male he should have more authority in managing land. Then I walked past Fane's house-- she had died a few months before-- across the path which led to the priest's house, behind the church, and finally back to Uriel's house where we were drinking. The path, which had been so mysterious two and half earlier, now seemed alive with meanings and uses, both personal and shared.

Somewhere along the walk, I started crying. I arrived back where I had been drinking and tears falling, I rejoined the toddy drinkers. One of the older men, more experienced after a life time of moving from place to place, was practical about my emotions, saying, *ka hano, ka hano*, "you go, you go." More tears came to my eyes as I looked at him. I thought that I would never see him again and his mannerisms, nor hear his matter-of-fact manner.

It was becoming light. An adolescent girl came out of her house to start the fire for the morning meal. The sun still had not risen, but there was light enough for her to see my tears. She laughed at me, and then called out "*A Bili ku tani*," ("Billy is crying"),

partly in wonderment and partly in the form teasing that Sikaiana often direct to displays of emotion, especially sentimental ones. More tears came that I might never again hear such teasing, nor watch people go about their simple, daily tasks of starting a fire to heat water.

Everywhere I looked it seemed that I saw something which had become part of my life over the past few years, but would never see again: the kettle with a spout made crooked from a drunken quarrel: Uriel's impassive face as he inhaled a cigarette; the coconut leaf torches his daughter used for starting the fire; the scattered coconut shells used for cooking; the stick tobacco with a knife nearby; a pile of rotting leaf mats; the early morning crow of roosters. I might never again have to wait my turn to drink the harsh, sour toddy. I couldn't stop crying.

I am not an especially emotional person. I had never cried before on Sikaiana, although there were times when I had drunk much more toddy. Later that morning, after I had slept for a few hours, I was more composed as I prepared to take my belongings to the boat. I was sad, but I had to get ready for a boat and felt chastened by the direct midday tropical light.

I suppose my tears, nostalgia and feelings of closeness to Sikaiana can be attributed to, as the Sikaiana so often put it, "something to do with drunkenness." They explain that drunken behavior is different from sober and more ordinary behavior. The Sikaiana get emotional when drunk. Their joking is more dramatic; their anger is volatile; their friendliness is less inhibited; and their sorrows and disappointments become much more evident. And the Sikaiana also say that sometimes drunken people behave in ways which reflect feelings that exist but are not expressed when sober.

TODDY

Everyday, in the morning and evening, Sikaiana men climb coconut trees to collect coconut sap. The shoots of the trees are bound and then cut on the end with a very sharp knife. Throughout the day, coconut sap runs down into a bottle which hangs below the shoot. The shoots must be cut twice a day or the sap will coagulate and stop running. If the person tending the tree cannot cut it, he must find someone else who will or he will no longer be able to collect the sap.

When coconut toddy is first taken from a tree it is very sweet; some people like to drink it that way. When cooked, the coconut toddy can be made into a syrupy molasses which tastes good poured on bananas or bread. Sikaiana children like to sweeten rice with it. Laumani usually kept me supplied with a bottle of this molasses, which I used for snacks with bread or crackers. Sometimes, the Sikaiana mix the syrup with water to make a sweet tasting drink. If cooked enough, the molasses can be hardened into candy.

Most toddy is not collected for these purposes, rather it is collected to be fermented. Left in a glass container, the toddy will turn into an alcoholic beverage. After about a day or so, it will no longer be sweet, but have a kind of bubbly taste which I found pleasant. After several days, when the toddy is fully fermented, it acquires a

harsh, sour taste. By adding new sap every day, the fermentation process is delayed and the amount of toddy increased. Normally, it takes about three or four days to ferment several gallons of toddy. The toddy is about 6% alcohol.

Drinking is a special, but also integral event in Sikaiana life. On the atoll its regulation is coordinated with Sikaiana's religious and ceremonial life. All Christian holidays are celebrated by drinking toddy. Marriage exchanges are organized around toddy drinking on Sikaiana and beer drinking in Honiara. In Honiara, major fundraising events include the sale and consumption of alcohol.

Drinking, like all other human activities, is shaped by social conventions. On Sikaiana, there are times and occasions for drinking. There are standardized rules of etiquette for joining a group and distributing the toddy. Drunken behavior, both festive and disruptive, is to a large extent standardized and recurrent, although it is different from sober behavior and in some respects subverts sober expectations.ⁱ

Regulations and Occasions

The process for fermenting toddy was brought by Kiribati (Gilbertese) castaways who arrived on Sikaiana in the late 19th century. It is likely that the Gilbertese learned the fermentation process from European or Malay beach combers in the early 19th century. On Sikaiana, the collection of sap and preparation of toddy is done by men. Usually one man collects and ferments toddy by himself, although sometimes several men cooperate. When women drink, they must acquire their toddy from a male, often from a close male relative, or in return for some service, such as making mats.

Other fermented beverages are sometimes made, including pineapple wine, and sugar with yeast. Wine, beer and whisky are brought from Honiara, but they are a luxury on Sikaiana because of their high cost. Some people claim that occasionally they drink methylated alcohol, which is sold as a starting fluid for pressure lamps. However, during my stay, I never saw anyone drink it.

Drinking on the atoll is regulated by the local church and the major occasions for drinking are coordinated with the church calendar. During my stay in 1980-1983, women were allowed to drink only on special occasions, usually several days during the major Christian holidays. Men were free to drink at all times, except from Saturday morning until Sunday afternoon, when drinking would affect their sobriety at Confession or Sunday Communion. These regulations were enforced by the Sikaiana priest in consultation with the local church committee. Failure to comply with these church regulations resulted in temporary expulsion from Holy Communion and a public confession before the offender was reinstated. With a very few exceptions, these regulations were obeyed.

For a period before my arrival in 1980, the atoll's women were completely prohibited from drinking at any time. They had lobbied successfully to be permitted to

drink on special occasions such as church holidays. Usually, these were two consecutive days so that the women can continue to drink from one day through the night to the following day. When I returned in 1987, the former priest had retired and was replaced by a new one. The new priest allowed men and women to drink whenever they pleased including on Sundays.ⁱⁱ

Most women are more circumspect in their drinking than men. One time in 1981, the catechist allowed the women to drink on a special church holiday. None of the women joined in. Some told me that they felt it would be unseemly. In Honiara, where there are no restrictions on drinking, women do drink, sometimes heavily, but not as frequently or consistently as men.

The most dramatic occasions for drinking on Sikaiana are during the celebration of major holidays. These holidays include Christian holidays such as Christmas, Easter, New Year, the week devoted to St. Andrew, and some secular holidays such as Solomon Islands Independence Day. During Christian holidays all physical labor, other than what is necessary for daily maintenance, is prohibited for the week. People are expected to spend the week dancing, singing, feasting, playing games, and attending church services. Large amounts of toddy are fermented in preparation for these occasions. Most of the atoll's adult population joins in several large groups to drink, sing and dance. People move between these groups. Some men drink for most of the week, or at least the first two or three days. Increasing numbers of men tire of drinking as the week progresses, although they may start drinking again towards the end of the week when they have rested and more toddy has been fermented. Many Sikaiana people claim that festive occasions such as marriages cannot be fully enjoyed unless people are drinking. In 1980-83, people tried to plan marriages and bridewealth exchanges during these holiday weeks so that women could drink and fully enjoy the festivity.

Men and women often drink in separate groups; although as the drinking continues, men and women may join together. There are two commonly cited reasons for trying to separate the sexes when drinking. First, since they do not make their own toddy, women have a limited supply of it. If they allow the men to join their group, they reduce the amount of toddy they have during their rare opportunity to drink. Second, people claim that there is a greater likelihood of extra-marital sex when men and women are drinking together. On those occasions when young unmarried women are drinking in mixed company, there should be an elder, preferably sober, female relative nearby to act as a kind of chaperon.

Older and younger males often prefer to drink in separate groups. Older men fight less than younger men and are less likely to try to start quarrels when they are drunk. Moreover, older men prefer to sing traditional songs. Most young men do not know these songs and prefer to sing songs that are composed for the guitar. However, depending upon the supply and demand of toddy, there are frequent occasions when men of all ages drink together.

Generally, younger men are heavier drinkers than older men, and the life of many of the young unmarried men, *tamataane*, seemed to be largely concerned with

preparing and drinking toddy. There are a few mature men who are known for their constant drinking, for example, Tokulaa. I know two men who completely stopped drinking, and one young man who was unusual for never starting. There are a few men who only drink at the major festivities. But there are also some mature men who drink once or twice a week. Since people normally drink until the toddy is finished, a drinking session can continue overnight and, if the toddy lasts, continue for several days. The same person may vary in the frequency of his drinking. Sometimes, a man drinks two or three times every week for several consecutive weeks; then, the same man may go several weeks without drinking at all.

Among migrants living in Honiara, the frequency of drinking is limited by the availability of intoxicating beverages. People who own tracts of land with coconut trees, such as those living at Tenaru Beach outside of Honiara, collect and ferment their own toddy. Other people who live in towns must buy beer or liquor, both of which are expensive. During my stay, beer cost about US \$20 a case and a laborer earned about US \$100 a month. Although many Sikaiana people make more than a laborer's salary, buying liquor may prove to be quite expensive, especially given Sikaiana patterns of consumption, which do not encourage moderation. Drinking in towns occurs on holidays, at bridewealth exchanges, fundraising events, and more informally among smaller groups of friends on weekends. It is usually more limited in duration than on Sikaiana because of the expense and people's work schedules. Nevertheless, most important Sikaiana celebrations in Honiara, such as a marriage, holiday, and more recently, fundraising events include alcohol consumption.

Patterns of Participation and Distribution

Toddy is served by pouring it from large glass containers into a small container such as a pitcher or tea kettle. (The large containers hold two or three gallons. They are hollow glass bowls used by commercial fishermen as buoys on nets and they drift to Sikaiana.) The toddy is poured from a pitcher or kettle into a serving glass, metal cup or coconut shell. Usually, the person who fermented the toddy is the one who distributes it. The distributor measures a portion into the cup or shell and then gives it to one person in the group. This person drinks the cup until it is empty, usually in one drink, and then returns the cup to the person who is distributing the toddy. Another portion of the same size is poured for the next person in the circle who is passed the cup. The cup continues to move around the circle until everyone in the group has had a turn. Then the distributor starts another round. Everyone should be given an equal amount to drink, although if a person arrives late, the distributor may offer him a larger portion so that the latecomer can catch up with the people who are already drinking. In larger groups, several cups are passed out simultaneously, but always in a roughly circular fashion so that everyone is given a turn and an equal amount to drink.ⁱⁱⁱ

In deciding how much will go into each cup and how long to rest between rounds, the distributor has control over how quickly people become drunk. Sometimes, if the supply is limited or the distributor wishes to maintain a happy level of inebriation, he slows down the distribution. Other times, the distributor may hasten the pace and

increase the serving size in order to quicken and increase drunkenness. At one toddy drinking session that I attended, the distributor gave each person two full cups to be drunk immediately. After he went through the group several times in this manner, I became as drunk as I have ever been in my life. I was so drunk that after leaving the group for a short while to get some tobacco, I could not find my way back to it and simply went to bed.

Men pride themselves on how much they can drink. A person who refuses a round or retires early from a drinking session may be criticized and ridiculed, especially by younger bachelors. A person who frequently leaves a drinking group, perhaps claiming to go urinate or get some tobacco, will be accused of trying to miss a turn. People who pass out or slacken in their drinking are ridiculed and insulted by being told to go to bed and sleep.

Sikaiana men do not like to eat until they have finished drinking. To some extent, this practice is followed as a matter of dietary preference. They do not like to drink on a full stomach. After three years on Sikaiana, I acquired this habit and for several years I refused food when I was drinking at parties back in the United States. They also find that not eating enhances the effect of the toddy. Further, there is a competitive aspect to not eating. A person who returns to drink after eating has recouped some of his strength and not proven his ability to drink large amounts of toddy. Moreover, some young men explained to me that after people miss a turn or eat, they have an unfair advantage over other drinkers if a fight breaks out.

Most Sikaiana people continue to drink without regard for their level of intoxication. Normally, drinking continues until the toddy runs out or a participant gives up from exhaustion. People drink through the night and well into the following day. On major holidays or when there is a very large supply of toddy, some people drink for several days and nights. People vomit, pass out, or leave to sleep for a few hours and, upon recovering, return to drinking. Sometimes, after a heavy night of drinking, the bodies of some of the collapsed participants are sprawled out along the main village path.

Sikaiana drinking groups are variable in size. At the major holidays, most of the atoll's adult population form one or two large groups. Usually, these groups break into smaller groups as the drinking progresses, although sometimes they will rejoin into a large group later on. Within a large group, several smaller conversation circles form, although they remain part of the entire group's distribution cycle. On other occasions, Sikaiana men drink in groups of five to ten people. Several different drinking sessions may be going on simultaneously at different locations. People move back and forth between these groups, depending upon their personal preferences. If one group's supply of toddy runs out, the participants often join other groups.

The Sikaiana are exclusively social drinkers: it is very, very rare to see anyone drinking alone except when everyone else in a drinking group has already passed out or left to go to sleep. Drinking, especially during the major holidays, is a public event. Participation usually is open to anyone and people often drink in places where

they can be seen by others walking along the main paths. Older people say that public drinking is a recent development. They claim that until after World War II, drinking took place in more private areas in the interior of the islet or inside houses, where the drinkers could not be seen by the public. At present, passersby are often greeted with calls to come drink. Even people who are involved in major land disputes or a public argument will encourage each other to join a drinking group. Drinking offers an important opportunity for adult men to spend time together in an informal and enjoyable setting.

Deportment When Drinking

There are several conventions about drinking behavior which were explained to me when I first arrived on Sikaiana. Since emotions are volatile, no knives should be nearby. But knives are used for cutting stick tobacco and they were frequently nearby. Often these knives are the very sharp ones used for cutting the coconut sap. If a quarrel breaks out, cooler heads remove the knives. No one was wounded by a knife during my stay, although several beatings were severe. (In 1985, one young man living on Sikaiana stabbed himself to death with a knife while drunk.)

Another convention is that people should not discuss land tenure while drinking because land disputes are such a volatile and emotional issue. Nevertheless, when people are drunk, they are less inhibited, and it is at just such times that they argue and talk about land. So far as I know, none of these arguments directly resulted in court cases, although drunken arguments were often remarked upon as possibly leading to cases.

Finally, it was explained to me that whatever is said or happens during a drinking session has no relevance for relationships when people are sober. People argue, fight, or curse each other while drunk, but these should be forgotten when they are sober. As will be explained below, this convention is usually, but not always, followed.

The Sikaiana people say that they drink to be 'happy,' *hakahiahia*. Men will not sing or dance with enthusiasm, unless they have been drinking. (It was often hard for me to get good song recordings from the men because I had to wait until they were drunk enough to ease their inhibitions but not so drunk that they could no longer sing well.) Women do sing and dance without drinking, but they are more enthusiastic when they have been drinking. Drinking is considered necessary in order to participate with enthusiasm at festive events. Most young men do not participate in the *hula* dances with women unless they have been drinking. As already discussed, parents tried to arrange marriage exchanges on Sikaiana during the major holidays so that the women could join in the festivities and fully enjoy the occasion.

Intoxication often is festive. Besides singing and dancing, there are lively conversations, joking and laughter. People engage in humorous public displays. On one occasion, almost all the young men on the atoll shaved each other's heads to the skin. Some of the young men tried to run away and hide, but eventually were caught

and held down so that their hair could be shaved. Afterwards, these young men marched down the village path in a humorous imitation of soldiers or policemen, lining up in front of the courthouse's flagpole and saluting.

When drinking, people discuss personal matters that they are too embarrassed or inhibited (*napa*) to discuss when sober. These conversations concern misunderstandings, accusations of wrong-doings, land use, and potential marriages. Young unmarried males are said to 'show off' (*hakatanata*) when they are drinking. They shout, laugh and sing loudly, and fight in order to attract the attention of other people, especially young women. Drunken young men are more likely to make sexual advances. In six out of the nine marriages which took place during my stay in 1980-1983, the young man married his lover by taking her to live with him on a night when he had been drinking. In these cases, he remained with her on the next morning. It is difficult to imagine the romantic life of Sikaiana without the stimulus of alcohol.

Drinking is not only a festive activity. People also engage in destructive and anti-social behavior. Disruptive behavior is also described as a result of the fact that intoxicated people no longer feel any shame (*napa*). Sometimes, people disobey restrictions for interaction: they quarrel or speak rudely with in-laws; sons get into fist fights with their fathers; close kin fight with each other; some men beat their wives. Occasionally drunken men will walk around naked or defecate in public view. They may chase children, and if they manage to catch them, occasionally beat them. Drunken people are also more likely to break Sikaiana etiquette by asking others for tobacco or food. When sober they would never ask for these things out of fear that someone would criticize them for begging.

Physical fights are quite rare on Sikaiana when people are sober. However, intoxicated people, especially young males, fight with some regularity. These fights rarely result in serious injury, although they may result in broken bones, black eyes, and cuts. During my three-year stay, I am aware of two cases in which a beating was so severe that a person was incapacitated for longer than a few days. Usually, the fights start with a verbal quarrel and other people intervene to keep the people apart, or separate them shortly after the fight starts. Some young men develop reputations for constant fighting, while others very rarely get into fights.

Almost all intentional property destruction occurs when people have been drinking, usually in a display of anger. Most Sikaiana houses with masonite or wooden walls have holes in them from when they were punched by a drunken man. Sometimes, entire sections of a building are destroyed before anyone arrives to restrain the drunken person. Drunken people have smashed expensive tape-recorders, guitars, the glass containers that hold the toddy. They have axed a canoe, burned clothing, and slashed garden crops.

In talking about drunken behavior, Sikaiana people claim that all disruptive behavior which occurs when a person is drunk should have no effect on the sober relationships of those involved. Property destruction, improper behavior, and arguments are usually dismissed as simply due to drunkenness, without relevance for

the future social relationships of those involved, either when sober or drinking together. Such is often the case. The day after a series of drunken fights, I found the former combatants sitting together, joking about their fights, and referring to the wounds they had given each other as "medals."

In some instances, however, drunken behavior has implications for sober behavior. Despite what the Sikaiana say on this matter, I found it is more accurate to say that drunken behavior is examined in the context of an entire social relationship. In some cases, Sikaiana people claim that drunken behavior reflects those inner feelings of animosity that do not surface in ostensibly polite and sober social interaction. If hostile feelings surface when drunk, the behavior may have consequences for the relationship in sober interaction.

Intoxication does not exclude a person from being prosecuted for breaking local, provincial, national, or church laws. Many of the cases in local court stemmed from drunken activities such as fighting, public swearing, and a drunken man not working on public workdays. People are sometimes ashamed of their drunken behavior when they are sober. In several cases, young men on vacation left the atoll because they had caused considerable trouble when they were drunk. Sometimes, men avoid appearing in public after they have committed some especially shameful offense while drunk. One person completely stopped drinking after he had severely beaten a close relative, and throughout my stays in 1980-1983 and 1987, he did not drink at all.

Drunken behavior is sometimes erratic and seems uncontrollable. In many cases, however, this lack of self-control is more apparent than real. Most housing has been damaged by drunks, but during my stay no one touched the local church building. The priest's house was damaged only once, an action that some people considered to be virtual sacrilege. By and large, the priest's house escaped the destruction common for other houses. In the presence of a few influential men, such as the priest, Kilatu, and Saua, drunkards were usually, but not always, more circumspect in their behavior.

Although drinking is an integral and constant part of the ceremonial life of Sikaiana, there is a backlash of public opinion against drunken behavior. On Sikaiana, there are constant complaints that men fight too often, don't get their work done, don't participate in public projects, and don't provide food for their children because of their drinking. Women often make these complaints against men in general, and elder men make similar complaints about younger men. There is a distinction made between happy and joyful drinking on the one hand and drinking that is disruptive on the other. People often say that drinking should be 'good' (*laoi*) or 'happy' (*hakahiahia*) and there are frequent admonishments to "drink happily" without fights or property damage.

Regardless of these complaints, drinking is considered fun and even some of the most disruptive moments are later recounted as amusing when everyone is sober. Drinking behavior, along with food and gossip, is one of the most common subjects of ordinary daily conversation when people are sober.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, both the Protectorate administration and the missionaries tried to prohibit drinking and apparently had a few sporadic periods of success. Somewhat ironically, the success of the missionaries in recruiting Sikaiana students into their schools ultimately undermined their effort to control alcohol use on Sikaiana. The first missionaries on Sikaiana tried to enforce a ban on drinking (these were Solomon Island converts who were members of the Tasiu, Melanesian Brotherhood). In the 1930s, some young men returning from mission schools made it known that the Bible-- at least as interpreted by the Anglican missionaries of the Melanesian Mission-- did not prohibit drinking. Apparently, the missionaries teaching at the mission schools were not opposed to drinking, even drinking heavily. These missionaries were all from England, New Zealand or Australia. John Kilatu told me that he was one of those young men. Based upon discussions with informants, it seems clear that by the time of World War II, young unmarried men were drinking with regularity. Until fairly recently, people claim that there was no drinking at church sponsored festivals and Christian holidays. They recall that the week-long Christian holidays were devoted to enthusiastic participation in feasting, singing, and dancing. At present, the Sikaiana seem incapable of enjoying these festive occasions unless they are drinking.

More recently, people perceive that the level of drinking has increased and become more public and violent. Although it is difficult to evaluate the accuracy of these perceptions, they may reflect a change in demographic patterns in which more younger men have begun to reside on the atoll. One man claimed that while he was staying on Sikaiana in the late 1960s, there were hardly any young bachelors resident on the atoll and therefore much less drinking. At that time, almost every young man was living abroad, either at work or in school. In 1980-1983, there were always a group of ten to fifteen young bachelors, most of whose lives seemed to center around drinking toddy.

Drinking and Social Relationships

Sikaiana drinking has its own organization and even much of the seemingly disorganized behavior can be understood in terms of its integration into Sikaiana social relations. Toddy drinking offers an opportunity to deviate from normal expectations, to do things that are not normally done. In fact, such occasions are not so unusual in social systems, and the very fact of their deviance from normal behavior can be explained in terms of their integration into the social system.^{iv} Toddy drinking is an opportunity for participants to demonstrate that their social identities are not totally subsumed in the ostensible content of their sober social relationships. It also creates a setting or atmosphere with conviviality and lack of inhibition.

Sikaiana drinking is often a community event. Major holidays are celebrated with many people joining together for drinking. Holiday drinking on Sikaiana involves almost every adult resident. In Honiara, marriage exchanges and fundraising events bring together the majority of the Sikaiana people who live there. Drinking contributes to a sense of intimacy within the community by bringing together the Sikaiana people for participation in an activity which is special, close, and personal. On Sikaiana, there

are very few foreigners, so that drinking activities, including both those that are festive and those that are disruptive, involve only Sikaiana people. In Honiara, the large occasions for Sikaiana drinking, such as fundraising events and weddings, involve mostly the Sikaiana themselves. In planning fundraising events in Honiara, the organizing committees discourage the attendance of non-Sikaiana people. They claim that when drunk these people were too disruptive, although, in fact, it is hard to imagine that they are any more disruptive than some of the rowdier Sikaiana. Instead, I think that the disruptive activities are more tolerable for the Sikaiana if they are instigated by a Sikaiana person rather than an outsider who is unknown to the community. In this respect, disruptive drinking behavior builds upon and creates a more intimate sense of community because it is done by people who are known and their behavior is to some extent forgiven.

Although Sikaiana has become more involved in the multi-ethnic nation of the Solomon Islands, Sikaiana toddy drinking is focused upon the Sikaiana community as a distinct group within this larger polity. Festive, erratic and disruptive behavior is limited to the community. The degree to which drinking has become more public on Sikaiana, as is claimed by many Sikaiana, may reflect the redefinition of the total community as private in reference to the outside world.

The restrictions periodically placed on women's drinking reflect differences in role expectations in both traditional and contemporary society. As I explained earlier, Sikaiana men are oriented towards the outside world: the sea, fishing, fighting outside invaders, and traveling on long-distance voyages. Women are oriented towards domestic activities: child rearing and food gathering in the islet's interior. This distinction between outside and interior is reflected in the contemporary division of labor. At present, males are encouraged to continue their schooling for as long as possible and then to work for wages. Women are involved in wage labor less frequently than men. On Sikaiana, men hold most of the offices that interact with the outside world, including court justice, council member and Area Constable.

When men are drinking, women provide some stability to Sikaiana social life by doing their daily chores, looking after the children, maintaining the household, and trying to restrain excessive fighting. It seems reasonable to infer that the men's greater involvement in drinking is related to their greater involvement in the outside world. At the same time, women provide internal stability within Sikaiana society.

Drinking is also an opportunity for the Sikaiana to participate in an enjoyable secular activity. In the past 50 years, many traditional Sikaiana ceremonies and festivities have been discontinued or replaced by Western ones. Toddy drinking is another festive event that is "indigenous," although not traditional or Western. As an indigenous ceremony, it is distinctive from the introduced ceremonies, games and festivities that Sikaiana shares with the rest of the Solomon Islands, and indeed, a large part of the rest of the world. Toddy drinking is an opportunity for a person to take himself outside of his social system and social relationships. But the toddy drinker does so in a specific context that is defined by the community. The person who truly wants to leave the Sikaiana social system may do so in his normal relationships by not main-

taining kinship ties, refusing to foster any children, not participating in Sikaiana dances and sports, not contributing to fundraising collections, and marrying a person from a different ethnic group. Above all, the person who truly wants to leave the Sikaiana social system should not get drunk with other Sikaiana people because at these times he or she becomes accessible and intimate.

Toddy drinking has a contradictory integration into Sikaiana life. It distances people from normal expectations for behavior, but at the same time unites people and reinforces their sense of familiarity.

But the fact that drinking allows individuals to distance themselves from normal expectations also has its costs. Time is lost from working, fishing and planting. Drunkenness takes a toll in property damage. In Honiara, money is needed for food. Salaries are low, and beer is expensive. Drinking can be a significant drain on resources for a Honiara household. Sometimes, it has very destructive consequences for the careers of Sikaiana people working in Honiara. Some people steal money in order to drink. Others neglect their work. There are also social costs in quarrels, beatings and fights, despite Sikaiana claims that drunken behavior should be ignored.

Finally, there is another ominous aspect about present-day Sikaiana drinking. Many men claim that they cannot fully enjoy expressive activities, such as dancing and singing, unless they have been drinking. Drinking offers a way to re-enchant an increasingly instrumental and differentiated world but it also underscores a devaluation or at least re-evaluation of those expressive activities. The old rituals are no longer times of excitement as they were for Fane, rather they are *mea pio*, 'false', 'bullshit'. People remember celebrating festive occasions in song and dance for hours without drinking, but this is now becoming different. Drinking provides the necessary frame for community activities including weddings, fundraising events, and also for enjoying expressive activities including singing and dancing.

Expressive Culture and the Maintenance of Community

Song composition and drinking reinforce a sense of community among the Sikaiana. Both of these activities were introduced into Sikaiana society: the technique for fermenting toddy was introduced in the late 19th century; playing the guitar was learned in the 1960s. Both have undergone substantial changes in evolving into their present-day forms. But they are clearly indigenous and in this sense that they are *Sikaiana* activities. Both activities involve intimacy and personal knowledge, and in this manner serve to preserve Sikaiana as a distinct community of people in a changing world.

Neither activity, however, is stable. Drinking has potentially disruptive consequences as a result of destruction and violence, and, among emigrants, the loss of money that is diverted to buy beer. Song composition and Western dancing styles are replacing the traditional songs and dances. But these new musical genres may be replaced by other regional musical traditions including the commercial rock music heard throughout the entire world.

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- i. General discussions about the alcohol use are found in Mandelbaum (1966), MacAndrew and Edgerton (1969). The reader is referred to Marshall (1979a) and (1979b) for both a general summary of drinking and an in-depth account of drinking in one society; see also Douglas (1987). It should be noted that anthropologists have been criticized for ignoring the detrimental effects of excessive drinking (Room 1984, see also Marshall 1982, Marshall and Marshall 1990, Ogan 1985). I have discussed Sikaiana drinking in a separate paper (Donner 1994).
- ii. In 1987, mature men and women who wanted to drink gathered together after the Sunday morning church service and drank. Younger men still were drinking frequently but the drinking seemed to be more subdued than in my previous stay in 1980-1983. Their diminished drinking, however, may have been due to the fact that Sikaiana had not fully recovered from the cyclone in 1986.
- iii. This feature of toddy distribution has similarities with traditional patterns of the distribution of kava, a drink which was often taken in many traditional Polynesian societies (see Lemert 1964).
- iv. See Turner 1969, Gluckman 1962. In this respect, Sikaiana toddy drinking has something in common with the phenomenon that Goffman (1961a) labeled as "role distance." According to Goffman, people display role distance in order to demonstrate that they have competencies and interests beyond the expectations for the particular role that they are performing. For example, Goffman describes children riding on a merry-go-round. Very young children must concentrate all their attention on riding. Older children display role distance by showing-off and performing tricks to demonstrate that, unlike the younger children, their competencies and identities are not totally subsumed by riding the merry-go-round. In another example, doctors in an operating room display role distance by cracking jokes to show that they have commitments and identities beyond that of "surgeon" or "intern." By showing our individuality we are really conforming, and such conformity is a social phenomenon subject to sociological analysis.

Unlike Goffman's concept of "role distance," the Sikaiana drinkers are not distancing themselves from a specific social role. Rather, they are distancing themselves from an entire set of expectations about behavior that is appropriate when sober.

XIII

CONCLUSION: An Intimate Community in the Late 20th Century

In 1985, I talked with Paul Knight and Calvin Crouch, two American navy pilots who were shot down in combat over Sikaiana in August 1942. Even after 40 years, both still had vivid memories of their few days on Sikaiana. Paul was wounded and told me that he believes the attention his wounds received there saved his life. Calvin commented to me that he felt at home with Sikaiana's simple life style because he had been brought up on a farm.

In separate conversations, both asked me the same question: wouldn't it have been better if the Sikaiana people had been left alone without any of the changes associated with modernization? The Sikaiana needed neither the conveniences nor the worries of industrialized societies; modern technology and Western institutions could only harm their happiness. Life on a Polynesian atoll seems idyllic, especially in the middle of a war.

Anthropologists constantly combat a popular view that societies like Sikaiana are engaged in a raw, simple, pre-rational struggle for existence. In this view of non-Western peoples, Western technology and education are seen as a hope of enlightenment for these primitive societies. But there is another stereotype, just as inaccurate, that culture change is inevitably harmful. In this latter view, societies like Sikaiana were once blessed with a kind of primal happiness, noble savages, only to be ruined by the forces of modernization. It seems that both views are ingrained in the American popular consciousness. Both views are distorted and inaccurate.

I have already discussed the importance of manufactured goods, especially steel tools, for Sikaiana's present economy. Steel is much easier to use than shell, although it means making copra or earning wages to pay for it. Culture contact has introduced new diseases along with unhealthy tastes for tobacco, sugar, and fried food. Nevertheless, the Sikaiana are probably in much better health as a result of vaccines and improved medical care. The Sikaiana can now read books and write letters, and if their eyes are weak, they can get glasses to help them read and write. **More recently, education has given them ability in English and access to world-wide knowledge. They can use the internet to participate in a world-wide forum, which they seem to appreciate.**

The atoll cannot support the number of Sikaiana people who are alive today. Without emigration and culture change, there would only be about one third as many Sikaiana. Whether or not life was better in 1900, without the changes of the 20th century, there would be a lot fewer Sikaiana enjoying that life.

The Sikaiana themselves sometimes claim that there is more conflict in their society today and attribute it to the breakdown of their traditional values. But there was hostility in the traditional society which centered around adultery and the retribution of ancestral spirits. If there are more divorces at present, there is almost certainly less

adultery. The Sikaiana may complain about present-day hostility, but in former times the atoll was vulnerable to natural disasters and marauding invaders. The cyclone of 1986 would have been a devastating tragedy if not for modern relief efforts. In the balance, even with the on-going land disputes, there may well be less conflict in present-day Sikaiana society than there was in 1900. The present-day Sikaiana view of a harmonious past is probably based upon memories of the years between about 1930 and 1950 when there was a period of relative harmony supervised by missionaries and a colonial government. But even in this period, there is evidence from official Protectorate reports that there were conflicts and disagreements, especially over local leadership and land tenure.ⁱ

Many Sikaiana also lament that they are no longer as tightly bound by kinship ties. Fosterage, although frequent, is less prevalent than in former times. There are more family quarrels. People no longer help each other as much. Young people are no longer obedient. More and more, they say, people are going their own way. These complaints, however, could apply to many times in Sikaiana's history. Moreover, there are also new ways in which the Sikaiana are united: the fundraising events for their community activities; the community-wide management of the atoll's institutions; and, in Honiara, their sport's association and dances.

Finally, any discussion of culture change on Sikaiana must recognize that they were often willing participants in the process even though they were not in control of many circumstances or consequences of this participation. In the 19th century, the Sikaiana were eager to sell copra to traders, and some left on visiting ships. The population's friendliness to foreigners, which made it popular with whalers and traders, probably is at least partly the result of an interest in establishing contacts with outsiders and having access to their goods. In the 20th century, men were eager to work on government ships and often complained about Protectorate regulations which restricted labor recruitment. The Sikaiana were enthusiastic to participate in many Western institutions, to earn cash, and to travel abroad. It is true that they were unaware of the consequences of adopting new institutions, practices and technology. In this latter respect, however, they are very much like their contemporaries everywhere in the world, including in Western countries.

At the same time that they participated in new practices and incorporated new institutions into their social lives, they have preserved many indigenous practices and incorporated new ones in a manner which preserves communal values and relationships. Exchange and reciprocity are important in their daily lives. Fosterage maintains ties among extended families. Marriages unite the community, not only at the wedding ceremony, but also in the complex networks of exchanges which accompany it. The integration of governing institutions on the atoll involves widespread participation by most adults. Christian holidays are occasions for communal feasts, singing, dancing and drinking. Dances are now ways to express a sense of ethnic identity to others. Guitar songs are expressions of distinctively Sikaiana concerns. Fundraising events bring Sikaiana migrants together to collect money for community projects.

I don't claim that these communal activities will be maintained forever. There are

constant pressures changing Sikaiana life. People are always distancing themselves from community activities through intermarriage, migration, and lack of interest. Salary differences may increase pressure on people to isolate themselves from others. Perhaps wealthier Sikaiana will distance themselves from other Sikaiana as they join emerging stratified social classes within the Solomon Islands. Perhaps younger people will abandon most Sikaiana practices in order to participate in the more cosmopolitan life of Honiara. On the atoll, there is increased training required for some of the offices including priest, teacher, nurse and justice. There is constant exposure to other cultures through the media: the radio, cassettes and most recently videos. But, thus far, these factors have not resulted in a loss of communal activities, and in many cases new practices have resulted in new community activities. **As of 2020, there are still communal activities, many of them new since 1980, but it does seem that in important ways, Sikaiana has lost a lot of its integration as a community as its people have become more integrated into a regional and global social system.**

The Social Organization of Interpersonal Relations

An earlier generation of anthropologists described the social organization of small societies in terms of relations based upon kinship and descent. Contemporary anthropologists, for a variety of reasons, have lost interest in these issues of social organization. Although no longer fashionable topics in anthropological discourse, kinship and descent are certainly important for understanding Sikaiana social relations. But the study of social organization also concerns how people maintain or develop associations and express various kinds of attachments, familiarity and intimacy. Sikaiana has new roles and institutions as the result of Western contact which connect them with world-wide systems. The study of social organization in present-day societies should include the detailed analysis of human social relationships in small settings and how these smaller groups articulate with larger and more impersonal social groups.ⁱⁱ

Social interaction and relations, moreover, are shaped by cultural definitions about the person, intentions, and motivations. On Sikaiana, interactions and relations are understood in terms of general affective states and dispositions including shyness, compassion, kindness, happiness, trust, distrust, attachment and independence. Sikaiana relations are developed through ties of reciprocity and sharing in many different social contexts: the household, kinship relations, marriage exchanges, and fosterage. Reputations are constructed out of life events which are interpreted in terms of these cultural values.

Not all interactions and relations are familiar and intimate in the same manner. Some relations, such as those involving shame between in-laws, are marked by avoidance of certain behaviors. People have varying degrees of involvement in patterns of reciprocity, ranging from relationships in which goods are shared freely all the time to those in which sharing is infrequent. The same two people may find their interaction quite different depending upon social context. In courtship for example, couples, who must avoid one another in public, have their most intimate moments in secrecy. At the community level, there is a generalized intimacy in which all Sikaiana participate as a

distinct community within the Solomon Islands.

Social relations are not necessarily harmonious; often conflict is inherent in the relationship. On Sikaiana, there are nasty conflicts over land rights. Sikaiana concepts about person and interaction describe their suspicion about the motivations of others and a darker side to human behavior. When drinking, a Sikaiana person may become truculent. When singing, the Sikaiana ridicule and taunt others. Nevertheless, the intensity with which people express hostility and conflict demonstrates the importance of these local concerns in their lives. As one person explained to me, his mother prefers to stay on Sikaiana and continue to live with the people with whom she has quarreled all her life, rather than leave them to live elsewhere among strangers.ⁱⁱⁱ

The introduction of Western occupational roles has only partially resulted in a differentiated social system. Until recently, minimal training was required for many of the new positions on Sikaiana. Most people have served in a variety of offices and on Sikaiana's numerous committees. Moreover, most people residing on the atoll, including those who work for salaries in Western occupations, also fish and plant gardens. These skills have become something of a specialization because men and women brought up in Honiara have difficulty mastering them.

Training and certification in specialized occupations and professions are more important for migrants living in Honiara. There a decent living is dependent upon mastering a skill which involves specialized training. People work as secretaries, carpenters, plumbers, teachers, administrators, pharmacists, lawyers, and nurses. They are specialized in their employment but, as in many Western countries, their private lives are separate. This private life, however, is not an isolated one, but one which often involves other Sikaiana people in communal activities such as the sports association, festive drinking, marriage exchanges, and funerals.

Sikaiana social relations cannot be understood unless they are examined in the context of not only a local system but also how that local system articulates with larger systems. Social organization, as the study of the formation of relations and groups, also concerns differentiation within smaller systems and the integration of these smaller systems into larger ones.

Integration and Differentiation

The Sikaiana have new institutions, roles and identities through which they interact with other Solomon Islanders, and with many other people in the world. They are now "citizens" of the Solomon Islands with all the privileges and obligations entailed by that social category. Like many people in Western nations, they vote in elections, pay taxes, and complain about what they consider to be their government's poor services and policies in health, transportation and education. They are interested in both national and world events which they hear over the radio and read about in papers and magazines. Although Sikaiana customary law influences local court cases on Sikaiana, judicial procedure in the Solomon Islands is based upon British jurisprudence. Criminal

cases and appeals in civil cases are heard by justices and magistrates from elsewhere in the Solomon Islands. Sikaiana students are taught the same subjects as students throughout much of the world. If they pass the qualifying exams, they will attend secondary schools with other Solomon Islanders. After completing school, most Sikaiana males work in an occupation or profession for a salary, at least for part of their lives. These occupations, such as teacher, plumber, electrician, carpenter, accountant, and mechanic, often require expertise which is similar throughout much of the world. Even those who remain on the atoll need some money to survive and find their lives affected by worldwide prices in commodities, especially copra. The Sikaiana are Christian, sharing a set of religious beliefs with many other people throughout the world. Similarities with outsiders also exist in their leisure and recreation. Whether residing in town or on the atoll, the Sikaiana now play soccer, netball and cricket. They dance face-to-face, boy to girl, in styles derived from Western countries. On their radios and cassettes, they play popular music which is heard all over the world.

The new roles and identities that provide them with similarities with outsiders are also creating new types of distinctions among the Sikaiana themselves. Some people have gone to schools and acquired specialized skills. There are salary differences as a result of differing wages in occupations, and some Sikaiana are comparatively wealthy in comparison with others. Moreover, the present-day Sikaiana community is made up of many individuals with different life experiences, varying levels of involvement in Sikaiana and non-Sikaiana activities, and differing attitudes toward these experiences and activities.

Although there are new ways in which they are integrated into an outside world and differentiated among themselves, there are also new ways that they find that they are integrated amongst themselves and differentiated from the outside world. One hundred years ago, when contact with outsiders was still sporadic, the Sikaiana community was defined by the circumstances of birth on an isolated atoll. At present, however, the atoll is no longer isolated and the community is no longer limited to a locality which is encircled by a reef and isolated by hundreds of miles of ocean. The community now includes emigrants to Honiara and is built upon shared relationships and activities which extend across time and space. In traditional Sikaiana society, an ethnic identity centered around the ancestral origins of the various 'clans.' At present, they possess a new sense of ethnicity in a larger social context that defines them as a distinct population in their relations with other cultures in the Solomon Islands.

In the course of this century, life on the atoll has become more public, at the same time that the Sikaiana have developed a sense of themselves as a separate group or ethnicity within the Solomon Islands. Older people claim that in former times households were established in separate settlements throughout the atoll. At present, residence is concentrated along the shore of the lagoon at Hale and people have freer access to one another. Traditional restraints on relationships associated with shame, such as the behavioral prohibitions between in-laws, are less important in restricting Sikaiana relations. In this respect too, people have increased access to one another. Moreover, there are more atoll-wide activities which bring people together: for example, the twice daily church services. According to older people, toddy drinking was formerly

done in private. Now it is a public activity which involves large numbers of Sikaiana during holidays, marriage exchanges and fundraising.

Although life on the atoll is more open and public, the entire social system of the atoll has become redefined as a personal and private one in terms of the outside world. This sense of a private community in a multi-ethnic nation is extended to Sikaiana migrants in Honiara. Non-Sikaiana visitors are welcome and treated with hospitality. But there is a kind of familiarity among Sikaiana that is valued, maintained, and reinforced in their associations, even between people who may be hostile to one another. Public events for these migrants, such as fundraising and wedding exchanges, are often held in the relative privacy of the Sikaiana settlement at Tenaru.

Over 100 years ago, Georg Simmel suggested that group size, sense of identity, individuality and social differentiation were inter-related processes.

The narrower the circle to which we commit ourselves, the less freedom of individuality we possess; however, this narrower circle is itself something individual and it cuts itself off sharply from all other circles precisely because it is small. Correspondingly, if the circle in which we are active and in which our interests hold sway enlarges, there is more room in it for the development of our individuality; but as *parts of this whole*, we have less uniqueness: the larger whole is less unique as a social group (1971:257).

Social groups have to be understood internally in terms of those who participate in them and then also externally in terms of the larger society in which and against which they are defined. The Sikaiana community can be best understood in terms of different reference points, both internal and external. Internally, they maintain some practices which make them distinct from a larger encompassing social system. They have become increasingly integrated into a larger region, the Sikaiana have developed a greater sense of identity of themselves as a separate social group with a shared heritage. They are also self-conscious about their shared and communal activities as a result of the very same processes which are altering those activities. But Sikaiana people also participate as individuals in the larger social system which marks them as distinct from one another in new differences based upon wealth, occupation, and experience.

The Sikaiana Community: Maintained and Constructed

The term "community" is used by sociologists and anthropologists to refer to a variety of different social groupings. Sometimes, they use the word "community" to describe the inhabitants of a locality: something more than a neighborhood but less than a city. In this usage, there is not necessarily the implication that these people maintain any special social relationships other than the fact of proximity. Other times, however, the term is used to imply that members of a group share special relationships although not necessarily a locality. This usage refers to the "community of scholars," or in international relations, the "Atlantic Community," for example. Social groups such as small liberal arts colleges or religious groups sometimes refer to themselves as a

"community," implying a special commitment or concern among their members, even though this special concern and commitment often is of limited duration and includes people who do not know one another.

Sikaiana is a small locality. The relationships of most people are enduring for their lifetimes. The Sikaiana maintain relations amongst themselves which have the special quality of being based upon personal knowledge of one another and shared activities. At the center of this community is a location: the atoll. But the Sikaiana community includes emigrants who live away from the atoll, most of whom still refer to it as "home." Members of this community share a cultural heritage. As a result of their descent-based membership in lineages, they possess specific rights to the atoll's resources. They also are tied together by kinship ties which are reinforced through fosterage, sharing and reciprocity. But more than shared resources and ties of kinship, they hold common concerns, interests, and commitments which are expressed in their ceremonies, festivities and associations.

As a body of people, the Sikaiana community has fuzzy edges and there is constant pressure changing it. There are some individuals who are Sikaiana by birth but do not participate in the community's life. Simon Tokulaa represents the outsider on the inside, a non-conformist and cynic but still an accepted member of the community and, in his manner, a full participant in it. Sale is more conforming than Tokulaa in some aspects of her life style, but she says that her marriage to a non-Sikaiana man places has distanced her from Sikaiana life. Most other people who are married to non-Sikaiana participate less in Sikaiana activities than Sale. A few have emigrated to distant areas of the Solomon Islands, and although they are remembered, these emigrants have only sporadic contact with other Sikaiana. A few women have married ex-patriots and have left the Solomon Islands to live in England, Australia and New Zealand. Some young male migrants seem to be minimally involved in the activities of the Sikaiana. Most people married to non-Sikaiana are less involved in Sikaiana activities. Their children often do not speak the language. They rarely, if ever, return to the atoll. They participate less often in Sikaiana events such as marriage exchanges and fundraising activities.

The organization of the community is affected by the fact that Sikaiana is an administrative unit within the Solomon Islands with certain rights and responsibilities as a self-governing unit. Sikaiana's isolation has the ironic effect of enhancing the introduction of Western institutions. The missionaries and Protectorate government had to establish all their major institutions on the atoll and provide it with basic services. In other parts of the Solomon Islands, regional administrative centers were established which often indirectly administered distant villages. Sikaiana's residents were directly exposed to these institutions and eventually given some degree of local control in managing them.

But the organization of the Sikaiana community is not only the result of administrative circumstance. The Sikaiana have incorporated outside institutions into the social system of the atoll in an indigenous manner which results in maximum participation and control. Moreover, Sikaiana emigrants living in Honiara maintain

special ties with one another even though they are not united as political unit or isolated from other ethnic groups. In Honiara, people are dispersed in their different places of residence, and during the week, they work in separate occupations. The Sikaiana in Honiara live among people from the other ethnic groups of the Solomon Islands. The few hundred Sikaiana in Honiara, a rapidly growing town of about 20,000 people in the 1980s, over 80,000 in 2020], have very little influence in the administration of Honiara's institutions. Nevertheless, the Sikaiana in Honiara are united by sports events, marriage exchanges, fundraising events, and funerals. Many of these emigrants cluster together in residence at Tenaru and Bahai Center. People living away from Sikaiana often take their vacations on Sikaiana and may return there when they lose their job or retire.^{iv}

As mentioned earlier, Giddens (1990) argues that the breakdown of communities is the result of the "disembedding" of social relations from time and locality. Transportation and communication now transcend localities, breaking down boundaries and integrating small communities into larger social systems. Local places no longer exist as the primary locus of social relationships. Time is abstracted to a universal measure applied everywhere in the world also transcending any locality. Systems of international expertise replace those which are developed in each locality. Teachers, lawyers, mechanics, electricians and justices are taught professional expertise which is standardized throughout much of the world. Money is a token which can be used to establish relations between complete strangers, replacing sharing and reciprocity which are built from personal relations.

In this perspective, it is possible to understand how Sikaiana is maintained as a community. The atoll is a small locality, whose isolation, even today, provides the basis for embedded relations. But migrants in Honiara, who live in dispersed areas, re-embed locality into their relations by arranging to meet periodically and by returning to the atoll. Time, as Giddens suggests, is now an abstract concept on Sikaiana, and everyone uses clocks and calendars. But on the atoll, time becomes re-embedded in the community by marking specific community activities. The daily work schedule is organized around morning and evening church services; the weekly schedule around community work days and Sunday communion; the yearly schedule around Christian holidays when people are not permitted to work. The arrival of the ship, announced on radio and scheduled by the government, is a monthly communal event. In Honiara, time-schedules measure not only the workday but also the time-off from workday. Evenings, weekends and holidays are private times which are often shared with other members of the community. Reciprocity and exchange, not money, remain the primary manner in which the Sikaiana interact with one another; money is used in their relations with outsiders. Even when money is used in Sikaiana relations, it is most often part of a reciprocal ceremony such as collections and distributions of cash in wedding ceremonies, or the collection of money at fundraising events.^v Finally, expertise has become increasingly important but thus far it has not torn asunder the boundaries of the community. On Sikaiana, there has been an attempt to incorporate new specialized roles in a manner that preserves community participation. Fishing and gardening are still the basis for economic relations. In Honiara, wages and systems of expertise permeate the life of employment, but there remains the personal time-off, much of which is devoted

to events involving other Sikaiana people. On Sikaiana, isolation makes the communal something which is personal; in Honiara, the personal time away from work is used to participate in activities which are communal.

Modernity and Spheres of Personal Relations

Throughout the world, villages, towns and other local groups are being amalgamated into larger regional systems. American small towns, it is often asserted, have lost their autonomy and self-sufficiency as they become integrated into larger regional and national systems through the mass media, transportation, an integrated, and specialized economy and centralized government planning (see Lynd and Lynd 1929, 1937, Stein 1960, Vidich and Bensman 1968).

Among social theorists, there is a definite ambivalence about this process. Weber wrote about the efficiency of modern administrative institutions, and still lamented modern humans as "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart" trapped in an "iron cage" created by capitalism, industrialization and bureaucratic organization. Durkheim thought that only modern society with its diversity and differentiation offered the opportunity for true individuality and freedom; he also argued that sometimes the costs of this individuality and diversity sometimes included feelings of meaninglessness and despair which he termed "anomie." 20th century writers in social sciences and humanities continue this tradition of ambivalence (see Sapir 1924, Wirth 1938, Stein 1960, Bellah et al 1985.)

Although there is frequent mourning for the loss of community life, popular views of life in small communities are contradictory. Sometimes, small communities are presented as orderly settings for human relations and contrasted with the more impersonal-- if not evil-- social relations found in urban centers. Other times, small communities are described as gossip-ridden, parochial, and bigoted, lacking not only diversity but also tolerance. Social critics in industrialized nations may lament the loss of community life in industrialized society, but they probably never experienced life in a small community and would not find Sikaiana to be a communal paradise. Most Western readers of this book probably would find life on Sikaiana to be confining rather than intimate.^{vi}

There is disagreement about whether or not industrialization and urbanization are necessarily accompanied by the demise of close, intimate relations. There are a few small groups of people in industrialized societies who maintain their distinctiveness. The Amish and Hutterites are among the most publicized examples of such groups in the United States (Kraybill 1989, Hostetler 1974, 1980).^{vii} There are communes and communitarian organizations, and various alternative movements (see Turner 1969; Kephart 1982, also Fitzgerald 1986). Moreover, even if small towns are disappearing in industrialized nations, research on social relations in the United States suggests that this doesn't necessarily mean there is a loss of personal attachments (see Bender 1978). Fischer (1981a, 1981b) has found that, in urban life, intimate circles develop which are organized around shared perspectives and interests in a diverse and heterogeneous society. The ubiquity of fraternal organizations and voluntary associations indicates that

for many people there is a fundamental disposition to create small groups of intense interaction and special commitments. Small cliques of intense association develop in contexts as diverse as urban, ethnic neighborhoods (see Gans 1962) and among in combat soldiers (Stouffer et al 1949). Administrative, bureaucratic and occupational institutions are infamous, not only for their formal ties, but also their personal, informal ones.

People in industrialized societies establish intimate personal relations in various settings or activities: in friendships, school, places of employment, families, sports teams, clubs and other associations. They build up personal knowledge of one another that is recounted, played upon, and joked about. Modernity forces individuals to define themselves through their personal interests and establish highly personal relations with others by "opening out" and revealing one's self to others in the process of establishing trust and intimacy (Giddens 1990:114-124; see also Berger, Berger and Kellner 1973:91-92). Accompanying the breakdown of communities in Western societies, a different kind of intimacy is developed which is dependent upon the shared preferences of isolated individuals rather than shared kinship and communal commitments.

Intimacy and personal relations are not lost with modernization but they are fundamentally altered because of the overall organization of social relations and the manner in which small personal groups articulate with larger ones. In complex societies personal relations are often highly idiosyncratic among a few people, and often there are exclusive circles of privacy. There are no larger groups organized around familiarity which encompass these intimate relations and set them off from other such groups in the social system. For the Sikaiana by contrast, there is a larger sphere of familiar relations which marks the entire community as private in reference to the rest of the Solomon Islands and the rest of the world. Within this communal sphere of general intimacy, there are smaller subspheres of heightened intimacy: lovers meeting late at night; a group composing a song with hidden meanings; the variations in relationships which are expressed in terms of sharing and reciprocity; the special ties created by fosterage. But these special relations can only be understood as secret or private in terms of the larger community of people within which they are defined as special and intimate. The secrecy of romantic meetings is only meaningful and secret for that community of people who care that lovers should not meet and at the same time are excited to learn the names of those who do. The secrecy of songs is only meaningful because it is important to a larger community of people who want to understand a song's meaning and establish identities and events. Sharing and fosterage define special alliances in terms of a larger community within which there is the potential to create special relations through culturally determined practices and understandings. The community as a whole is the locus of meaning for all these activities. The kinds of intimate relations described by writers about modernity in Western societies are not dependent upon a similar encompassing community.

As mentioned in earlier chapters it is often asserted that in small societies relations are "whole person" to "whole person," involving a range of interactions and biographical knowledge. I have found that Sikaiana social relations are shaped by a variety of factors including kinship, gender, age, and interactional conventions about

etiquette and harmony. In this respect, they are not "whole person" to "whole person" and are channeled through expectations about role and interactional etiquette. But there is a sense in which Sikaiana relations are "whole person" to "whole person," not in specific interactions or relationships, but instead in reference to the entire community. Their community is structured by interlocking roles and identities based upon kinship, fosterage, gender, rights to land, and personal knowledge. Marriage exchanges bring together most people to celebrate a ceremony and also tie people in networks of reciprocity. Song composition recounts specific events in terms of general values. Toddy drinking creates a world of conviviality and sociability. Gossip and interest in one another's activities are the daily news events. Such interpersonal relations are the inescapable basis for much that is important in one's life.

Modernization and culture contact have redefined the organization of many personal relations. Some new identities, such as "Christian" and "citizen," create new ways in which the Sikaiana can enter in relationships with other Solomon Islanders, and new ways in which they can interact with one another. These new kinds of interactions have replaced traditional relations, especially those requiring restrictions. In this respect, there is increased emphasis upon individual choices and preferences, as opposed to communally imposed expectations. The Sikaiana now have wider latitude in constructing the content of their interpersonal relations. But these relations are still largely constructed within a community where people know one another and can judge one another by long periods of personal knowledge and previous actions. The revelations of self which some observers (Goffman 1963:64, Giddens 1990:114-124) describe as central in Western relationships are not so relevant in a community where people are familiar with one another over long periods.

Erving Goffman has developed a "dramaturgical" approach to social relations which describes humans as social actors who perform roles in staged encounters. Developing Goffman's stage metaphor, it seems to me that people, whether in industrialized, urban societies or on remote coral atolls, develop their own scripts and stages and then perform to the audiences made up of the company they keep. The difference is that in industrialized and differentiated social systems, these stages include a much smaller number of people, often only one other person. Relationships are isolated as people move between different stages with different actors and audiences. Both for better and worse, there is fragmentation between many different stages with many different actors and audiences. For the Sikaiana people, by contrast, there is one large stage where everyone is partly actor and audience.

The Sikaiana stage for personal relations exists in the much larger context of world-wide economic and political forces which have very important consequences for Sikaiana life, but over which the Sikaiana people have relatively little control. These world forces include a world economic market which affects prices and wages, geo-political pressures which affect the Solomon Islands, and a constant barrage of foreign cultural practices especially in the international, commercial media. As potent and fateful as this large context is, the Sikaiana live their daily lives in a much smaller personal sphere of known people and shared activities. Within this smaller sphere of everyday life there is some sense of control, although some social scientists might

legitimately argue that this sense of control is illusory when examined in the context of the wider world. It is within this smaller world, nevertheless, where the Sikaiana create their lives. Their efforts to maintain this smaller sphere suggests that it is valued for the fact that it is one in which the Sikaiana people can define and construct their relationships. It is their stage upon which they can perform their own drama, where they are both actors and audience.

Polynesian Voyagers in the 20th Century

Throughout their history, the sea and sea-voyaging has offered the Sikaiana both opportunity and danger. As I sated in describing my initial interactions with them, Sikaiana's isolation makes its people both suspicious of and fascinated with outsiders and their traditions. Isolation and interactions with foreigners are constant themes in Sikaiana social life. These themes continue to the present-day, although under changing conditions.

Sikaiana legends depict the vulnerability of the atoll's inhabitants. Its founder hero, Tehui Atahu, staked his original claim when the atoll was still submerged. He returned to find the atoll above water and inhabited by a race of people, whom he deceived and slaughtered. The atoll's vulnerability is recounted in the legends concerning the pirates from Tona and, more recently in the 19th century, the Gilbertese (Kiribati) plot to overthrow their hosts. Although relations with traders were generally good, the story of trader Alan Piva's murder suggests there was some distrust of outsiders. In the 20th century, the atoll's small size and comparative isolation made it vulnerable to outside influence. Western institutions were rapidly introduced into the atoll's social system.

The legendary voyagers, Kaetekita and Semalu, along with the historical Luka whom de Quiros met in Taumako 1606, were motivated in part by the desire to see and meet people from beyond their small atoll. The interest in outsiders is evident in the 19th century when most traders and whalers found the Sikaiana people to be friendly and receptive to outsiders. They also found young men who wished to leave the atoll. In the 20th century, Sikaiana people were interested in leaving the atoll, in part to make money and acquire trade goods, but also for adventure. This desire to interact with the wider world continued to motivate their voyaging even as the outside world and the mode of voyaging and frequency of contacts changed, continually, during the 19th and 20th century. It may also explain why Sikaiana has been so receptive to new institutions and practices in the 20th century.

The present-day population is much more mobile than their ancestors were. Over the past four centuries, the modes of transportation have changed. Voyaging is no longer undertaken in outriggers. Instead, the Sikaiana travel in boats and on airplanes. The percentage of the population which travels has increased dramatically. In Luka's time, long distance voyaging was probably quite rare, the activity of a few adventuresome men. By the 19th century, contacts with outsiders were much more frequent and there were opportunities for a few to voyage with traders and whalers. During the 20th century, travel abroad offered not only adventure, but as the atoll's population

increased, travel abroad also became an economic necessity. As manufactured products became important in the local economy, and as the Sikaiana became partial to many consumer goods, people felt obliged to emigrate to earn money. In the early 20th century, people worked abroad to earn cash, usually with the intention of returning to the atoll. After World War II, many Sikaiana became permanent emigrants and their children were raised in towns away from Sikaiana. These people maintain ties with other Sikaiana and visit the atoll, although by and large their lives are organized around living away from it.

The Sikaiana have been consistently interested in meeting foreigners, and over the past 50 years in adopting and participating in Western institutions. But in doing so, whether in Honiara or participating in the Western institutions established on the atoll, they have preserved institutions and practices which contribute to maintaining Sikaiana as a separate community. By choice, they are no longer isolated. More than most other local communities in the Solomon Islands, they have adopted Western institutions and participate in them. But if no longer isolated, many Sikaiana, by choice, remain separate. Whether working in Honiara or residing on the atoll, they remain-- at least through the latter part of the 20th century-- a group of people with special interests in one another.

In confronting the processes of modernization and change, the Sikaiana have managed to preserve, and indeed create, relations among themselves based upon familiarity and intimacy. They provide a perspective through which to better understand the variety of possibilities in personal relations and community life which develop in response to processes affecting everyone in the world.

i. For a discussion of how Christian concepts have been incorporated into present-day views of tradition in the Solomon Islands see Keesing (1989), again White (1991).

ii. Writing in the 1930s for the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Robert Lowie defined social organization in the following terms:

Every human group is organized; its individual components do not behave independently of one another but are linked by bonds, the nature of which determines the types of social unit. Kinship, sex, age, coresidence, matrimonial status, community of religious or social interests, are among unifying agencies; and in stratified societies members of the same level form a definite class.

Later editions of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* do not have an entry for "social organization." Lowie's list of unifying agencies are no longer adequate to describe all the kinds of bonds and social units even in remote societies such as Sikaiana.

iii. Simmel (1908/1955) has discussed the importance of conflict in social relationships.

iv. One might think of the Sikaiana as an "ethnic" group both in the popular sense of sharing a common genetic ancestry, and in the more accurate sense of sharing a separate sense of identity, history and traditions in a multi-cultural (and "multi-racial") society. But the term ethnicity does not convey their mutual interest, face-to-face interaction, and the intensity of Sikaiana social ties. Some large ethnic groups, Italian-Americans for example, include individuals who have very little if anything to do with one another. Popular conceptions of ethnicity often serve to define a cultural identity in a diverse social system. I use the term ethnicity in referring to how the Sikaiana interact with, and are perceived by, other Solomon Islanders. In contrast, the notion I want to convey by the term "community" is a special, internal cohesion among a group of people. The Sikaiana are an ethnic group in the Solomon Islands, as are descendants of Italian immigrants to the United States. But the Sikaiana also maintain personal ties and interests in one another that do not necessarily unite many ethnic groups.

v This was written from the perspective of my stays in the 1980s. Robert and Priscilla tell me that it is now possible to pay for food on Sikaiana.

vi. Both views of small towns are offered in *Mainstreet* by Sinclair Lewis. The issue of community life is not only of concern for social theorists, but is also a central theme in American culture. Although Americans often talk about individualism, the concept of community is also ingrained into our national consciousness. The Puritan settlers founded small self-governing communities, John Winthrop's "cities on a hill". De Tocqueville wrote that the system of townships, local government and voluntary organizations formed the basis for American democracy and political life. See also Donner 1998.

vii. Unlike the Amish or some Mennonites, the Sikaiana embrace modernization. Moreover, the Sikaiana religion, very unlike that of the Amish, serves to unite them with other groups far more than it isolates them. Although public opinion is important on Sikaiana, there is nothing similar to the Amish mechanism of "shunning" and expulsion for maintaining social control.

APPENDICES

POPULATION and EMIGRATION

(See Explanation at end of chart)

Year	People on Sikaiana	People away from Sikaiana	Total Absent/	Total	total %
1847 (Cheyne)					
	171		u	171	u
c 1900 (Svensen, estimate BSIP 27/vii/5)					
	500	u	500	u	
c 1900 (Nerdum 1902, estimate)					
	200		u		
1906 (Woodford, estimate)					
	250	u	250	u	
1924 (Census WPHC 1924:2802)					
	268	u	268	u	
1930 (Bishop of Melanesia BSIP 27/vii/5, Lambert 1934)					
	u	u	235	u	
1932 (Census BSIP 49/6 item 10)					
	285	u	285	u	
1934 (Bishop of Melanesia BSIP 27/vii/5)					
	u	u	308	u	
Year	People on	People away	Total	Total	

Sikaiana 1980-1993

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	Sikaiana	from Sikaiana	Absent/	Total%
1936 (Census BSIP 27/vii/5)				
	242	50	292	17%
1939 (Census BSIP 49/6 item 29)				
	240	52	292	18%
1940 (Census BSIP 49/6 item 54)				
	272	58	330	18%
1941 (Census BSIP 49/6 item 83)				
	257	60	317	19%
1945 (Census BSIP 27/vii/5)				
	u	u	318	u
1948 (Census BSIP 49/6)				
	u	u	294	u
1953 (Census BSIP 49/6 item 67)				
	269	94	363	23%
1955 (Census BSIP 27/vii/5, ADM/A/13 item 28)				
	224	156	380	41%
			originally 144	

Year	People on Sikaiana	People away from Sikaiana	Total Absent/	Total
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Total%

1956 (Census ADM/A/13 item 27)

228	174	392	44%
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1957 (Census)

240	138	378	34%
-----	-----	-----	-----

1959 (Census)

216	174	390	45%
-----	-----	-----	-----

%

1963 (BSIP M 11/1/3)

162

1966 (BSIP M 11/1/3 item 175)

170

1970 (Census--government)

188	179	366	49%
-----	-----	-----	-----

1976 (Census- Friesen)

235	342	577	59%
-----	-----	-----	-----

1981 (Donner)

248	357	605	59%
-----	-----	-----	-----

1982 (Donner)

178	428	606	70%
-----	-----	-----	-----

1986 (government)

222

u

u

"U" means unavailable.

The first column lists the date of the census. The second column lists the total number of Sikaiana people residing on Sikaiana. The third column lists the total number of Sikaiana people including both people living on Sikaiana and emigrants. The fourth column lists the total population at the time of the census. The final column is the percentage of population that has emigrated. All entries marked "census" are government conducted censuses found in the National Archives. Fluctuations in some of the years reflect the problems in taking a census among a highly mobile population. See also Woodford 1906, 1916, Bayliss-Smith 1975; BSIP 1 III F 49/6, BSIP 27/VII Item 5. The 1970 figures are found in Groenegwan 1970. The figures for the 1976 census were tabulated from the government census by Ward Friesen of the University of Auckland. Donner's figures are based on household censuses and include only Sikaiana speaking people with two Sikaiana parents. Children resulting from marriages with non-Sikaiana are not enumerated (except for one household living on Sikaiana in which the children are being brought up speaking Sikaiana.) People outside of the census area (Sikaiana, Honiara) were estimated on basis of genealogies and statements from informants. The 1982 census does not accurately reflect population growth since the Honiara census was done during a different month from the Sikaiana census. At the time of the 1982 Sikaiana census, the atoll had an unusually low population.

Proper and Place Names

- Auki** the administrative center for Malaita Province.
- Bahai Center** a neighborhood in Honiara where several families of Sikaiana live near to one another.
- Belama** the copra boat which normally makes monthly trips to and from Sikaiana.
- Bellona** a Polynesian outlier in the Solomon Islands with similarities to Sikaiana.
- Bungana** a school run by the Church of Melanesia.
- Commonwealth Development Corporation** a company which operates plantations east of Honiara.
- Guadalcanal** the island where Honiara is located.
- Hale** the largest islet on Sikaiana where all institutions are located.
- Hale Aitu** the central ritual house where traditional ceremonies were performed. Located inland from Loto Village, it was destroyed in the late 1920's and never rebuilt.
- Henderson Airport** the international airport outside of Honiara; also the base for American operations during the Battle of Guadalcanal in World War II.
- Hetuna** by legend, the original inhabitants of Sikaiana who were killed by Tehui Atahu and his followers.
- Hitiana** a spiritual location where Tomaniva took Peia to harm her.
- Honiara** the capital and main port of the Solomon Islands.
- Isabel** a province in the Solomon Islands; several Sikaiana families reside there.
- Kaetekita** a legendary long-distance voyager who lived several hundred years ago.
- Kapingamarangi** a Polynesian outlier with cultural similarities to Sikaiana.
- Kiribati** formerly known as the Gilbert Islands.
- Kukum** a residential area in Honiara.
- Kopuria, Ini** the Solomon Islander missionary who led the conversion of Sikaiana.
- Kurimarau** the name of one of the government ships on which many Sikaiana worked as crew members shortly after World War II.
- Levao** an ancestor of the Saakava clan, by legend an immigrant from Samoa.
- Leitaka** the legendary opponent of Vaeoma and the Tona invasion.
- Loto** a residential area on Hale, Sikaiana.
- Luaniua** the larger village on Ontong Java, another Polynesian outlier. By legend the home of Tehui Luaniua, one of Sikaiana's founder heroes.
- Luka** The Sikaiana name of a man who met de Quiros on Taumako in 1606.
- Malae** the ceremonial grounds located near Hale Aitu in former times. Now the site of a new school.
- Malaita** the island nearest to Sikaiana and the province within which Sikaiana is an administrative unit.
- Maravovo** an Anglican mission junior school which many Sikaiana attended, located on the northwest coast of Guadalcanal.

Matanikau River a river through Honiara where Chinatown is located.

Matuavi the islet on Sikaiana which is located at the southwest corner of the atoll.

Matuiloto the islet on Sikaiana which is located on the western side of atoll between Matuavi and TeHaolei.

Mota the language used by the Melanesian Mission as its lingua franca in the 1920s and 30s.

Muli Akau the collective name for the three islets at the western end of Sikaiana: Matuavi, Matuiloto and TeHaolei.

Nukumanu a Polynesian Outlier which cultural similarities to Sikaiana.

Nui An island in Tuvalu or the Ellice Islands which is the home of Taupule.

Ontong Java a Polynesian outlier with many historical and cultural relationships with Sikaiana which continue to the present.

Pawa the Anglican mission's senior school at Ugi Island near Makira, which many Sikaiana attended.

Peia A Sikaiana woman who according to legend was driven crazy and eventually buried alive at sea.

Pedro the name given to Luka by de Quiros after they met on Taumako in 1606.

Pelau the smaller village on Ontong Java.

Pileni a Polynesian outlier with historical and cultural relationships to Sikaiana.

Blea the Sikaiana pronunciation of a captain who took Taupule from Nui.

Red Beach the landing site for the First Marine Division when they attacked Guadalcanal in 1942. Now inhabited by a settlement of Sikaiana families. Also known as Tenaru.

Rennell a Polynesian outlier in the Solomon Islands with cultural similarities to Sikaiana.

Saakava one of the commoner clans on Sikaiana.

Saalupe one of the claimants to being a chiefly clan on Sikaiana.

Saapei one of the commoner clans on Sikaiana.

Saatelua the name for two of the commoner clans on Sikaiana.

Saatui one of the chiefly clans on Sikaiana.

Santa Cruz an island group in the Solomon Islands, located in Temotu Province.

Semalu one of the legendary long-distance voyagers who lived several hundred years ago.

Sokelau a territory on Sikaiana associated with the Saatui clan.

Svensen, Oscar a trader who worked on Sikaiana about 1900.

Taha a location on Sikaiana where Hale meets with the reef. This is where three American fliers came ashore in August 1942.

(Actually pronounced Ttaha,)

Takuu a Polynesian outlier with cultural and historical relationships with Sikaiana.

Talappa a territory on Sikaiana located on the Tua side of Hale and associated with the Saalupe clan.

Tapuaki a spirit whose locale was the site of the Sikaiana school until it was destroyed by the cyclone in 1986.

Tasiu the Mota name for the Melanesian Brothers. People from the group converted Sikaiana to Christianity.

Taumako a Polynesian outlier with historical relationships with Sikaiana.

Taupule a woman from Tuvalu (Ellice Islands) who arrived on Sikaiana in the late 19th century.

TeHaolei the islet on Sikaiana located at the northwest corner of the atoll.

Tehui Atahu one of the legendary founders of Sikaiana.

Tehui Luaniua one of the legendary founders of Sikaiana.

Tenaru a river near where the First Division of American Marines landed on Guadalcanal in 1942; the name of the locality of the nearby Sikaiana settlement also known as Red Beach.

TePalena a shallow area along the north part of the reef of Sikaiana; by legend a former islet where Vaeoma and his band stayed.

Tikopia a Polynesian outlier in the Solomon Islands with cultural similarities with Sikaiana.

Tomaniva by legend, the man whose ancestral spirit drove Peia insane.

Tona the marauders under Vaeoma who, according to legend, invaded Sikaiana several hundred years ago

Tua literally 'the back'; the eastern shore of Hale.

Tulagi the capital of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate before World War II.

Tuvalu the modern name for the Ellice Islands.

Vaeoma the leader of the band from Tona who attacked Sikaiana several generations ago.

Vaka Vusu one of the Sikaiana clans who assert their rights as a chiefly clan (pronounced vakaavusu).

Vania a small outcropping on the reef of Sikaiana; now, the name for the Sikaiana sports association in Honiara.

Woodford, Charles M. the first resident commissioner of the Solomon Islands; he visited Sikaiana in the early 1900's

Yandina the location of the Lever Brothers Plantation in the Russell Islands. Some Sikaiana people live and work there.

Glossary

A

aho day, time

aitu mate in traditional belief, a dead ancestral spirit who possessed a descendant

aitu spirit, god, the founder heroes of Sikaiana

Aitu Tapu Holy Spirit

alapou state of women during first pregnancy; in traditional Sikaiana, she should not have intercourse with her husband.

aliki chief, ritual leader

aloha compassion, love, sympathy, pity

anaana a person's spiritual essence, usually associated with a person's appearance to others shortly after death.

H

haahaa taro

haakai eat excessively

hahine woman, female

haipohoulu smart, intelligent, especially in schoolwork

hai do, deeds, actions; have, possess

hailaoi kind, generous, good, admirable

haiumu a traditional game, often played between teams of boys and girls which is like kick the can and hide and seek

haka- prefix meaning "to make"; causative prefix

hakaako joke, tease, make fun of

hakahahine for women to show off, flirt, attract men's attention to themselves oneself

hakahiahia happiness, joy, rejoicing

hakalilolilo cover, hidden

hakamalooloo rest, vacation, holiday

hakanapa make ashamed; praise

hakanapanapa shyness and embarrassment between young men and women, especially in courtship

hakaoloolo cause others to argue

hakapaapaalalo humble

hakappili make stick; dance man to woman, body to body as in Western styles

hakasao make safe; take canoes across the reef

hakasaosao act as a go-between in courtship

hakataa chase fish into a net

hakatanata for men to show off, flirt, attract women's attention to oneself

hakataataa initiate courtship

hakataaute decorate; mulch taro gardens

hakatala make tame, ingratiate; in courtship, win over
 someone of the opposite sex
hakaauna take aim; ingratiate oneself to another
hakkii the throat; bear, endure, suffer
hakkinokino bad, disgusting, evil
hale aitu the central spirit house in traditional times
hale akina clan, each of which is named
hale henua ritual houses associated with clans in traditional times
hano go, travel; a fashion of behaving, personality trait(s)
hatu manava deepest feelings
hau flower garland
he(e) negative particle: no, not
hellika without shame, insolent, incorrigible
henua island, land, country
heto aliki chiefly clans
hiihai sexual desire, lust, love
hiihai pio false love
hina secret lover in adultery in traditional times
hiti shoot (a gun)
Huata a harvest ceremony in traditional times
hula dance in Western style, woman and man facing one another
huli to turn
hulihulisala metaphor, figure of speech, idiom, speech with a hidden meaning, a
 parable
hunaona in-laws of different generations

I

ihi a tree species, bears a chestnut-like food which is eaten
inoa mother's brother and sister's children

K

kaaina territory, estate, neighborhood
kai eat, bite, etc.
kaihulihuli a card game
kaailaoi gift given with the object of receiving something in return
kaimeo a feeling of unfairness that someone else has received a benefit
kainono beg, to improperly ask for resources
kaimalie for children to be kind, generous, to share
kaipulau greedy, stingy, refuse to share, to be mean
kaisui give the exact equivalent in exchanges
Kaitae Hakatele a ritual prayer performed in traditional times when the central ritual
 house was being refurbished
kai poloaki goodbye party

kai taa the lands clearance which some people claim formed the basis for each lineage's rights to land
kai taka land which is transferred by a lineage to a woman at her marriage
Kai Tapu Holy Communion
kake te niu, "climb coconut trees"; an idiom for sexual potency
kalemata eye, face; one's true love
kaleve, coconut sap, especially fermented toddy
kammanu the government, administrative authority from outside the atoll both during the Protectorate period and at present
kaniva rainbow; a beautiful person
kano hale land-holding lineage, descent line, extended family, nuclear family, household
kapulaka taro species
kastam or *kastom* customary practices, traditional culture and practices
kata laugh
kave opposite-sex sibling and cousin; brother and sister
kkave give, send, convey
keli swamp land
kkolu bend a sturdy object; try to force one's will on others
koo stick for husking coconuts
kupena fish net; to fish with a net
 modern Japanese fishing technique

L

laakau branch, tree, genealogy
laoi good, fine, generous
laoina lucky
lapu black magic, harmful spells
lau leaf, branch
lautama age group, generation, groups of people who mature together
lautona enduring feelings
lesia lied to, deceived
likalika timid, untamed
likiliki small, little
liu deceive, mislead
llico drive out, expel
lokolo unsophisticated, inept at Western practices, local
lulusa restless
lupe a bird species, *Ducula pacific*; a lover

M

maa in-laws of the same generation
maa white

maalama lit up; lucky
maanatu remember; an informal presentation or gift
maapu habitual characteristic
maatau fish with a line
maatua elderly, old, an elder, a lineage leader, parents
makemakeaa harm others for malicious reasons
makkatau hard
mako song, usually with movements
malama moon, month
maliu deceive
manau the single hull canoe used for transportation at present
manava the belly, stomach; a kinship relationship, often through a woman; the source and center of thinking and emotions
manava haeko bad or angry temperament
manava hailaoi kind, generous, considerate person
manava hatu unembarrassed, strong willed
manava mmau strong willed
manava pupu confused
Manea traditional ceremony to refurbish the central spirit house
manu a bird, a land animal; a spiritual essence which is lost from a sudden shock such as falling from a tree
manu kava urinary smell
manu kulii smell like a dog
manu paipu smell like tobacco
manu peka smell like a flying fox, pungent body odor
manumanu tama smell of human flesh and blood, from fairy tales
mata aliki the chiefly clans
mate dead, die; in courtship, to fall in love
matemate pretend, mislead
matua mature, ripe; an adult
mea do, make; a thing, it
memepuamu cause harm, vandalize, destroy
misoni the mission, any organized religion, a church, Christianity
mmao far away
moko ppili gecko, lizard
mokupuna grandchild

N

napa shame, embarrassment, inhibition, shyness
natu a tree species, bears a soft mango-like fruit which is eaten
nnoto deep, both of ocean and metaphorical meaning

O

oku possessive pronoun, my
ola alive; life, excitement

P

pale support, lean against; relatives who support a person
peka flying fox
pinipini a tree species used for making canoes
pio false, exaggerated, bullshit
pohoulu head
pohoulu makkatau to be hard headed, stupid
polopolo promise
poulitau very dark
ppula ona kalemata look with sexual interest or desire
puina traditional song festival, performed occasionally at present
pule ritual specialists in traditional society who oversaw the atoll especially in respect to harvesting prohibitions
puni blocked, as a drain pipe; the condition of a descent line without offspring

S

saa appear; a prefix for most of the *hale akina* ('clans')
saa- prefix meaning to overindulge;
saa-kaleve drink too much fermented toddy
saa-mmiti smoke excessively
saa-uu for small children to drink too much breast milk
sahe catch a bird, fish; in courtship to catch a spouse
sahio smell of perfume from a passing woman
sakamani small human-like creatures said to inhabit Muli Akau
sakilikili talk dirty, swear
sala sin, error, mistake, differently
sapai ulu a ritual female assistant to the chief in traditional times
soa friend, companion, lover
sseni dusk, early dawn when figures are visible but faces can't be recognized
ssiki midwife in traditional times

T

tahito base, origin, trunk of tree
tai, seaward
takala the ritual successor to the chief in traditional times

taku possessive pronoun; my
tama person, relative, kin, piece in board game
tamaahine young woman, maiden
tamana father, uncle
tamataane young man, bachelor
tama likiliki child, infant
tama maa white person, Caucasian, European
tama maatua old person, elder, lineage leader
tama matua adult, mature person
tama sola homeless person, wanderer
tama tootohekau a ritual specialist in traditional times
tama uli black person, Melanesian, Solomon Islander
tana unrestricted
tanata man, male
tani cry, grieve; a funeral lament or dirge
tanta-vale the commoners and their clans
tapaa very little, tiny
tapu forbidden, prohibited; in Christianity, sacred, blessed
taumunimuni a ritual specialist in traditional times
taupili close
tautuku ritual specialist in traditional times
Tehui title given to the founder heroes of Sikaiana
Teika Llee ritual performed when a fish washed ashore in traditional times
toki the shell tools of Sikaiana ancestors
tona third person possessive pronoun: his, hers, its
tonu foreigners who arrived on Sikaiana and were under authority of the chief; also the fish that washed ashore in the *Teika Llee* ceremony.
too take, received
toonu feeling of unfairness as when one person works and another loaf
ttolo crawl, to night-crawl or "creep"
tuhuna wood plane, a skilled craftsperson; a deceitful person
tupetupe insult another behind their back, especially after being kind in their presence
tupua spirits who inhabit localities on land and in the reef
tupuna grandparent, foster parent, ancestor, guardian
tuputupu fashion of behaving, character, personality trait(s); *tuuhoe* song sung by long-distance voyagers
tuumaitu the night without a moon; the darkest night on Sikaiana

U

uiki week; a prohibition on collecting coconuts for a week
uiki hakamalooloo a week-long school vacation
uila lightening
uli black

unu drink
uta landward

V

vahi side; group in a marriage exchange
vai saele walk around without purpose, wander

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