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Chapter 9 Interaction, in Intimacy and Community in a Changing World: Sikaiana Life 1980-1993

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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.¹

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 matuamature 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 Hutiula, '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

inoa 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 *inoa* 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.

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- 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 *arofa* on another Polynesian outlier, Tikopia:
- But this *arofa* 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.