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Chapter 5, History, in Intimacy and Community in a Changing World: Sikaiana Life 1980-1993

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TAUPULE'S WARNING: The Historical Context of Sikaiana

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

My first few months on Sikaiana were chaotic.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Taupule

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sikaiana History

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Traditional Sikaiana Society: 1900-1929

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conversion to Christianity: 1929-1941

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

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

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

25).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Mission's Conversion Strategy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

World War II and After

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

New Institutions and Roles

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Emigration and Population Growth

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

trade goods for the island.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contemporary Sikaiana Society, 1980-1993

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sikaiana Attitudes Towards Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Structure of Social Change on Sikaiana

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTES

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

this remains the case until the present (1995).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cooley defined his concept of primary group:

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁸ ADDENDUM 2020

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On Sikaiana houses now have solar panels to provide a small amount of electricity.

Some women still make sleeping mats (*vasa*), although most people sleep on

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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