RICE AND TEA, FISH AND TARO: SIKAIANA MIGRATION TO HONIARA

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For the past seventy years, the people from Sikaiana in the Solomon Islands have been migrating away from their atoll. After World War II, most Sikaiana migrants settled in Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands, located on Guadalcanal Island. Several generations of Sikaiana people have matured in Honiara, and, during my stays in the 1980s, the Sikaiana population in Honiara outnumbered the population on Sikaiana. In Honiara, Sikaiana migrants have developed many activities that bring them together as a community, including a residential settlement, funerals, wedding exchanges, and fund-raising events. Sikaiana people living on the atoll form a small face-to-face community of biographically known others. Sikaiana migrants in Honiara have developed institutions and events that maintain this kind of intimate community, but economic and demographic factors are not stable, and the lives of migrants are changing in ways that may alter their communal activities. Collective ownership is being replaced by individual ownership, generalized reciprocity is replaced by new market relations, and most Sikaiana migrants are now dependent on earning wages in an uncertain economy and social system.

Polopolo mai te tinana koe ka hano ki Tapuaki
Sulu tahi ki too sikulu ko he naenae noa i te kuki

I promised your mother to make you go to school.
Always study hard so that you will not end up making yourself tired working as some white man's cook.

Noho lautama tanata o te moana
Heai mana he kete haahaa ki kaveiholia

Pacific Studies, Vol. 25, Nos. 1/2—March/June 2002

Mai tona male ku heai i a koutou
Tona lautama e noho i Sikaiana

The young man living abroad
He is not sent any baskets of taro.
He has been forgotten by you,
The young people of Sikaiana.

THESE ARE TWO SONGS from Sikaiana.[1] The first song was written in traditional style in the 1950s and describes a guardian who is concerned about a young man's education. He wants the young man to learn at school so that he will be able to find a good job rather than work as a cook or house servant for a white man. The second song is composed in the guitar style that became popular among young people in the 1970s. A young Sikaiana migrant, away at school or work, laments his separation from Sikaiana. He has not received a basket of taro from Sikaiana and fears he has been forgotten by his friends and relatives there. Taro, *haahaa (Colocasia antiguorum),* is a main staple on Sikaiana. Sikaiana people often send baskets of taro to relatives who have migrated to other parts of the Solomon Islands, especially Honiara, the nation's capital and largest city, located on the island of Guadalcanal. These songs reflect a central theme and at times contradictory tension in Sikaiana life: the desire to maintain close communal relations and the desire to participate in modern and Western activities.[2]

It is within this tension that the modern urban community of Sikaiana migrants in Honiara must be understood. Migrants want to participate in many modern activities, but they also have developed and maintained many activities and institutions that define them as a distinct community. This urban community is not only a "moral" one of shared values and interests, it is also an interactional one of known individuals who participate together in the same events and activities. But this community is not stable, and its composition and internal cohesion are constantly affected by the problems of living in a multicultural society and making a living in a market-oriented economy. Some Western cultural practices have been incorporated into communal ones, but other Western and modern cultural influences have the potential to erode the ties that bind Sikaiana migrants together into a community.

Migrants must earn wages to survive, while life on Sikaiana can be managed with mostly local resources. Often, this aspect of the dichotomy between life on the atoll and in town is expressed in idioms concerning food. People, jokingly, describe the harshness of life in town as based on a diet of rice and tea, commodities that are imported into the Solomon Islands. On Sikaiana the main diet is based on locally produced resources, especially fish and the

preferred variety of local taro, *haahaa,* described in the song above. In Honiara there is the excitement of a diverse, consumer economy, but one must have income to survive; on Sikaiana life may seem less exciting, but there is access to local resources.

Sikaiana is an intimate society. The 250 Sikaiana who live on the atoll can be described as a "primary" group, that is, everyone is involved in intense, emotional, and continuing interaction (Cooley [1909] 1923). People are known as biographical others with shared personal life histories. There is not only a shared set of ideas, values, knowledge, and morals, but also especially intense interactions among people as known biographical others. In a small community, everyone is famous.[3]

Migrants have developed activities and institutions that not only reflect shared interests and commitments, but also preserve their face-to-face intimacy. They have established a resettlement community, Tenaru, outside of Honiara, where many Sikaiana reside near one another on contiguous plots of land. Moreover, migrants, whether or not they reside at Tenaru, participate in common activities including fund-raising events, sports teams, dance groups, weddings, and funerals. Migrants not only form a moral community with shared values, but also have occasions when they form an interactional community. Although it can still be lonely for people who attend schools or work in remote areas of the Solomon Islands or in other countries, there is a large and well-organized community of Sikaiana migrants living in Honiara.

But this migrant community is not stable. Since 1999, there has been intense ethnic fighting in and around Honiara, where most Sikaiana migrants live. More generally, the atoll's resources can support only a limited number of residents, and with the population rapidly increasing, the number of migrants in Honiara continues to rise. These migrants are dependent on earning wages in an uncertain economy. Moreover, migrants engage in new activities and relationships that are not so easily incorporated into community life and may weaken ties among themselves.

Context

Sikaiana is located about 160 kilometers east of Malaita Island in the Solomon Islands. Sikaiana is small, four small islets with about four square kilometers of dry land. In the nineteenth century, Sikaiana became a popular stop for whalers and acquired a reputation for being friendly to visitors. By the late nineteenth century, trade goods were essential in the local economy, and almost all tools were steel. Trade goods were acquired in exchange for copra and coconut oil and, in a few cases, the wages received by the Sikaiana men who worked away from Sikaiana.

The British incorporated Sikaiana into the Solomon Islands Protectorate in 1897, but administrators visited only sporadically until the 1930s. In 1929, Anglican missionaries from the Melanesian Mission established a permanent mission on Sikaiana, and most of the atoll's population converted to Christianity in the 1930s. The Sikaiana claim that their elders decided it was important to learn to read and write in order to maintain access to important trade goods, and they wanted missionaries on Sikaiana so that younger people could be educated.

During the 1930s, the Melanesian Mission was the main source of contact with the outside world. It ran a school on Sikaiana, and it sent a boat to Sikaiana every year to take young men and women to mission boarding schools in other parts of the Solomon Islands. The mission hired some Sikaiana men to work for them throughout the Solomon Islands. Apparently concerned about overpopulation, the mission also organized a small resettlement community on Isabel Island. Although this community did not last long, it foreshadowed later efforts to establish resettlement communities.

After World War II, new institutions besides the church became integrated into Sikaiana life. These new institutions include a primary school, a local court, an elected council, a cooperative store, and a clinic. At the same time that these institutions were being integrated into daily life on the atoll, the Sikaiana people were becoming integrated into a larger social system that extended beyond the atoll. People left the atoll for schooling and to find work. Many migrated permanently from Sikaiana. Although they returned for their yearly holidays or even for longer visits, migrants and their children became established in other parts of the Solomon Islands, and these children were raised away from Sikaiana.

By the time of my first arrival in 1980, Sikaiana was isolated only in a geographic sense; in other respects it was firmly involved in global economic and cultural processes. There was a shortwave radio that had daily contact with Honiara (once, my sister called from Pennsylvania). Half the houses were made of concrete and masonite with iron roofs. Most families owned a radio–cassette player and listened to the national radio system. Young people listened to Western rock and popular music. Most people spoke Solomon Islands Pijin; some young people preferred it to Sikaiana in their informal conversations (see Donner 1996).

For the most part, the Sikaiana people were eager participants in these changes. They acquired a reputation among Europeans and Americans for friendliness in the nineteenth century, and they found that there were benefits in maintaining ties to the outside world. For many years, they pressured the British government to offer them access to wage-paying jobs. They became enthusiastic Christians. Formal education became valued and success

in Western occupations admired and praised. But despite these changes, Sikaiana remains a tightly knit, intimate society. People know one another and prefer one another's company to that of outsiders. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, moreover, Sikaiana migrants self-consciously redefined and maintained their community.

Emigration and Population Growth

Following the conversion to Christianity in the 1930s, there was a continuous increase in population. The population residing on Sikaiana had been stable from 1900 to 1987 at about 200 to 250, and this is probably the number of people who can be supported by its resources.[4] The total Sikaiana population, however, increased rapidly, and people migrated away, mainly to Honiara. In the 1930s, a little less than 20 percent of the total population of about 300 people had emigrated from Sikaiana. By the 1950s, approximately 40 percent of a total population of about 400 people were emigrants. By the 1970s and early 1980s, more Sikaiana people were residing abroad than on Sikaiana.

The Sikaiana say that population growth was the result of Christianity's protection of people from deaths caused by vengeful ancestral spirits. Older people recall that the spirits of deceased ancestors *(aitu mate)* used their supernatural power to harm those who offended them or their descendants. They also claim that, under the traditional practice of arranged marriages *(aavana puluna),* couples did not marry until late in life and therefore had fewer children. Moreover, they say that, before Christianity, people practiced abortions. Christian missionaries discouraged abortions and arranged marriages. Couples chose their own partners, married at an earlier age, and had more children. In addition, improved health programs became available. There were opportunities for wage labor in other parts of the Solomon Islands, and Sikaiana people were no longer totally dependent on the atoll's limited land resources. Migration, both before and after World War II, has been motivated by a combination of economic need and the desire for adventure (see Donner 1995). After World War II, most Sikaiana migrants went to Honiara, the new capital of the Solomon Islands, which was built around the roads, houses, and construction materials left by the American military operations during the war effort. These migrants settled and raised children who lived most, and sometimes all, of their lives away from the atoll.[5]

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 percent per annum (in 1986 there were about 30,000 people). In terms of population density, Honiara hardly qualifies as an urban center. But if the term "urban" refers to an array of cosmopolitan processes, then Honiara is

urban (see Mayo 1987:101).[6] Honiara has a diverse population, attracting migrants from all of the approximately sixty different ethnic and linguistic groups throughout the Solomon Islands, including Melanesians, Polynesians, and other ethnic groups who migrated to the Solomon Islands while it was a British protectorate, notably Gilbertese (Kiribati) and Chinese. Honiara has Western institutions associated with a specialized, differentiated economy, including several banks, an international communications facility, an international airport, hotels, the Solomon Islands' best-equipped hospital, several Western-style stores and supermarkets, and the main government offices. There are telephones, electricity, plumbing, and video rental stores.

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 migrants 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. People temporarily leave Sikaiana for a variety of reasons: to attend training courses run by the government or religious organizations; for medical and health reasons, including the birth of a child; 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 stays in the 1980s, few people lived the entire time on Sikaiana. Most people left Sikaiana at least once, and some left and returned several times.

Town Life, Atoll Life: Migration as a Cultural System

Two Sikaiana men described the consequences of change, migration to towns, and development in terms of different concepts of freedom and opportunity. One man had lived abroad and worked for wages for a while. He married a woman from another ethnic group, but he decided to return to Sikaiana and live there. There, he said, he did not have to work for a boss; no one else profited from his labor. He lived as he wanted, and most things on Sikaiana were "free," whereas cash was required to buy things in town. By contrast, another man who had spent most of his life working for wages explained his reasons for staying in Honiara. A man who had money could buy anything he wanted: different varieties of food, a radio, land, and other consumer goods. Life on Sikaiana provides a person with the resources to live, but there is limited opportunity; life in town can be more exciting with more diversity, but a person is dependent on earning money to survive.

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. There are no large development projects on Sikaiana. There are very limited resources, and there is little land for developing coconut plantations. The Sikaiana people consider the people of Ontong Java to be wealthy, because they have large numbers of islets along their long reef where they can harvest coconuts, bêche-de-mer, and trade shells, such as trochus.[7] Sikaiana's reef is plentiful with fish, but it is not practical to freeze the fish and then transfer them on the monthly boat to markets in other parts of the Solomon Islands.[8]

Life in the towns, on the other hand, can be unattractive 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 lowest-paid regular government worker earned SI$2,298 per year (about US$1,150); 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 U.S. dollar more than doubled its value against the Solomon Islands dollar during the 1980s; by 1993, the U.S. dollar had tripled its exchange value since my first arrival in 1980; in 2000, the exchange value of U.S. dollars had increased fivefold (SI$5 = US$1) since my first arrival in 1980, when the currencies were about equal in exchange.[9] 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 and fishing.

Life on Sikaiana can be managed with a small amount of cash, but it does require some income. People consume imported foods and goods, including rice, tea, sugar, soap, and tobacco. Everyone wears manufactured cloth. Fishing line and hooks must be purchased. Everyone owns a machete for work in the bush, and people have axes, hammers, sickles, and other tools. Most people need kerosene to fuel their lanterns. Many families own a radio that needs batteries, especially if younger people are playing their cassettes. Flashlights are used when diving for fish at night. Other purchased goods include cosmetics, bedding, lumber, ornaments, and packaged foods.

On the atoll there are several sources of income. Some people work in jobs that pay salaries, although most salaries are small. These jobs include the teachers at the local school, the area constable, a local medical dresser,

the village priest, the radio operator, local court justices, a court clerk, and copra graders. In 1980–1983, Sikaiana people could also make copra and sell the copra to the local cooperative store, which resold it in Honiara. A family that worked hard could earn as much as the equivalent of about US$50 in a month from copra, although it would be hard to sustain that level of income across several months. After a cyclone in 1986 destroyed the coconut crops, the Sikaiana people stopped harvesting copra (they had not resumed in the early 1990s). Some Sikaiana leave the atoll to earn wages for a while and then return to Sikaiana with supplies. Sikaiana families also send special items from Sikaiana, such as dried sea snails, taro, and pandanus leaves for making sleeping mats *(vasa),* and in return they receive goods from relatives in Honiara.

The atoll is viewed as a place that has good local resources in coconuts, fish, and taro but nothing that can be developed: a good place for a rest, retirement, or if one tires of working for wages. One young man who took his yearly leave on Sikaiana described it to me as a good place for a "picnic" but not a place for someone with "plans." Town life also offers excitement that is lacking on Sikaiana, and some Sikaiana describe Honiara as *hai ola* (literally, "having life"). *Hai ola* may refer to a variety of stimulating or exciting situations, including romantic ones. Honiara has stores full of consumer goods. There are a variety of foods. In the early 1980s there were movie theaters, and by my return in 1993 several families owned their own VCRs. Most people who continue their education beyond the primary level must do so in Honiara. New dance styles, music, and technology come from town.

Life on Sikaiana by comparison can be somewhat boring and provincial. There is a Pijin word, *lokolo,* derived from the English word "local," which describes a kind of provincialism or lack of sophistication (*bus,* "bush," seems to be an equivalent in older Pijin). A person who fumbles with technology or is unfamiliar with current fashions may be derided as *lokolo.* Although most often used jokingly, the term reflects a real concern with the modern and sophisticated. People, especially women, who have been raised on Sikaiana are sometimes teased for being *tu lokolo,* that is, for being unsophisticated about modern practices. These terms can be used in a variety of contexts: When I could not get my pressure lamp to operate properly, a Sikaiana man joked that I was *tu lokolo.*

But in town, the necessity of cash makes Sikaiana migrants dependent on the labor market. In 1993, there were many young men who did not have jobs and were living with relatives. Unemployed people are described somewhat derisively by the Pijin term *liu.* Sometimes they are also described, again derisively, as *fulbai,* which implies that they are living off the wealth of others. Although these terms are used jokingly, they reflect migrants' de-

pendency on wage labor and cash. Most people can expect to be supported by their extended kinship relations. But unemployed young people can become a strain on household resources. The number of unemployed young Sikaiana men living in Honiara seemed to me greatly increased in 1993 compared with 1980–1983 and 1987. Moreover, I know some young men who were unemployed in 1987 and still had not found any steady work by 1993 (see Jourdan 1995 for a relevant discussion of the concept of *liu*).

Life in town can be especially intimidating, moreover, because of the diversity of ethnic groups. Although this diversity offers some fascination for the Sikaiana people, there is also some fear of the malevolence of foreign ethnic groups, both for their physical violence and for the alleged use of sorcery. The Sikaiana claim that they never used sorcery. The Sikaiana term for such harmful magic is *lapu,* and it is always used to describe the malevolent magic of other ethnic groups. Almost all accusations of sorcery are leveled at foreigners. The accusations of *lapu* and the more generic use of the term *kastom* or *kastam* (customary practices) to refer to the harmful magic of other islanders reflect the distrust and fear that the Sikaiana people feel toward the motivations of non-Sikaiana people.[10] The recent ethnic fighting of 1999–2000 is another indication of the vulnerablities of migrants.

Like Louis Wirth (1938), Sikaiana people feel that life in towns can lead to immorality and social disintegration. The excitement of town life is often described as corroding traditional practices, including knowledge about indigenous traditions, sexual propriety, obedience toward elders, and willingness to work. Town life includes contacts with foreigners whose motivations are feared and whose cultural practices are often ridiculed. The priest on Sikaiana felt that living in town could have a harmful effect on church attendance. Whereas the twice-daily church services on Sikaiana are well attended, few people living in town attend church on days other than Sunday. In 1980–1983, drinking alcohol was curtailed on Sikaiana by the local church committee: Men could not drink Saturday and before the afternoon service on Sunday; women could only drink on special holidays. No such prohibitions were established or followed among migrants in Honiara. The church on Sikaiana had a policy of temporarily expelling young people who had premarital intercourse until a public confession. Such policies were never implemented for the large, multiethnic congregation in town, where it was difficult to monitor the activities of young people. Sikaiana people often complained that living in town resulted in sexual licentiousness and even prostitution.[11]

Many Sikaiana parents complained that younger people were disobedient and violated Sikaiana traditions because of their upbringing in towns and exposure to other ethnic groups. Parents and elders described this disobedience in a variety of ways. They complained about the premarital sexual rela-

tions of younger people. They said that many younger people lacked the knowledge about their extended family and descent that is considered necessary to legitimate one's rights to land on Sikaiana. Some young people were criticized for not following traditional prohibitions *(tapu)* on interpersonal relations, especially between in-laws and cross-sex siblings. Generally younger people, especially men, were considered to be lazier than their parents and incompetent in traditional crafts such as canoe making and weaving. Heavy, disruptive drinking was considered to be a relatively recent development and a sign of a general social disintegration associated with modernization. Although there are a fair number of marriages with other ethnic groups, there is a general preference among Sikaiana parents that their children marry within the Sikaiana ethnic group (see Feinberg's contribution to this volume). Almost all marriages with other ethnic groups take place in town.

Sikaiana Community Events in Honiara

Although town life can be viewed as having a corrosive effect on the Sikaiana people and their relationships, the residents of Honiara are involved in several activities that maintain and support them as an ethnic community. Some of these activities maintain traditional Sikaiana practices; others develop a sense of shared community and ethnicity among Sikaiana's migrants in new ways. Large numbers of Sikaiana migrants gather at funerals and the feasts that follow. Weddings are also occasions for community involvement. Present-day weddings include a Christian marriage ceremony followed by an indigenous exchange, *penupenu.* This marriage exchange involves exchanges between the extended families of the groom's father and the bride's father, and then between the extended families of their respective mothers. Cloth is collected and then redistributed among a broad range of relatives. Most weddings also include several days of feasting, drinking, and celebrating. Many Sikaiana families like to have exchanges both on Sikaiana and in Honiara. The exchanges in Honiara often include most Sikaiana migrants who live there.[12]

The Sikaiana migrants in Honiara have also formed organizations to raise money for various Sikaiana projects, including a sports league, a disaster relief campaign, and a church at the Tenaru settlement. These fund-raising activities include walkathons in which people are asked to give money to sponsor a person who participates in a walk. There are parties at which people pay for food, fermented toddy, and beer. Activities at these parties include raffles, gambling, and paying to sponsor the performance of *kastom* dances. Money is also raised by charging admission to dances with rock music held at clubs. These activities not only raise money for Sikaiana interests, the events themselves bring together large numbers of Sikaiana migrants and

generally focus on the participation of Sikaiana people rather than people from other ethnic groups (Donner 1992b).

In 1986, a major cyclone struck Sikaiana, destroying many houses. Sikaiana people in Honiara formed a disaster relief committee that raised money to help the people on Sikaiana. The committee held several different fund-raising events that involved most of the Sikaiana people living in Honiara. In the mid-1980s, some Sikaiana migrants began gathering to practice traditional, or *kastom,* dances and songs. Eventually, these people formed an informal dance troupe that performed at community events such as weddings and at special events in Honiara. In 1987, some Sikaiana women formed sports teams to play in a Honiara netball league. Shortly after, the Sikaiana men formed a sports league, Vania, which sponsored sports events and teams that played in Honiara sports events. Vania also became the main sponsor for the rehearsal and performance of *kastom* dances.

Drinking alcohol has been integrated into many Sikaiana communal events. On Sikaiana most alcohol is made from fermented coconut toddy; in Honiara people often drink beer. In Honiara, there are frequent fund-raising events to support Sikaiana activities that include the consumption of alcohol. Sometimes beer is bought in stores and then resold at marked-up prices; other times fermented toddy is sold. Alcohol consumption among smaller and more informal groups in Honiara also takes place on many other occasions (see Donner 1994).

Land and Resettlement

Land is one of the most important resources on Sikaiana, and the significant corporate groups on Sikaiana are landholding patrilineages, *kano hale* (see Donner 1992a). Among migrants, there is a widespread interest in acquiring rights to land in other parts of the Solomon Islands. In the 1930s, the Melanesian Mission resettled some Sikaiana families on mission land in Isabel Province. After World War II, other migrants tried to purchase rights to land outside of Sikaiana. By the time of my first arrival in 1980, several Sikaiana families had purchased land rights in other parts of the Solomon Islands. Usually, these rights were based on agreements with customary landowners, and they consisted of long-term (ninety-nine-year) leases rather than fee simple ownership.[13]

Until the ethnic fighting of 1999, the largest resettlement of Sikaiana people was at Tenaru, about twenty kilometers outside of Honiara. By my arrival in 1980, about seven extended families had bought long-term leases for contiguous plots of land there. Tenaru is often used for activities that involve most of Sikaiana's migrants, for example, marriage exchanges or fund-

raising events. These activities often include the consumption of alcohol and may continue for several days. Tenaru provides an area that is large and relatively isolated for large community activities.

In 1980, a large number of Sikaiana people met in Honiara to discuss establishing a resettlement community on government land. Several other ethnic groups, including the Tikopians and the Gilbertese, had been given land to resettle under the former British protectorate government (see Larsen 1966, 1977; Knudson 1965, 1977). The Sikaiana wanted to find a large tract of land so that they could establish their residences near one another.[14] The project never was accepted by the government, but one influential Sikaiana person suggested that they start to collect money to purchase some resettlement land on their own without government aid. This meeting in 1980 foreshadowed the expansion of the settlement at Tenaru.

In 1987, about fifteen Sikaiana families began the process of purchasing a long-term lease on a large tract of land adjacent to the settlement at Tenaru. The tract of land was a former palm-oil and rice plantation. When I stayed at Tenaru for a few weeks in 1993, I found that most of these families had built houses on this tract of land. Many of these people worked at jobs in Honiara and commuted from the settlement. The size of the Tenaru settlement increased about threefold between 1980 and 1993. Unlike the Gilbertese and Tikopian settlements, both of which were sponsored by the protectorate government, the settlement at Tenaru had been established by the Sikaiana people themselves.

Tenaru offers the Sikaiana people the opportunity to live together, produce food, and still work for wages. Residents own land where they can grow coconuts, tapioca, yams, and bananas, and also keep some animals. The settlement is along the shore, and although it lacks the reefs preferred by the Sikaiana, it is possible to go fishing. Since the settlement is only about twenty kilometers outside of Honiara, many people commute to their places of work. It is also a center for Sikaiana activities: funerals, weddings, fund-raising and other community events. Other authors in this volume (e.g., Tapsell) have noted the symbolic importance of land in establishing an urban community among Pacific Islanders, and more generally land is an important source of identity throughout the Pacific (see Lundsgaarde 1972). For the Sikaiana, Tenaru offers economic resources as well as a locale for community activities. By the time of my return in 1993, Vania, the Sikaiana sports association, was no longer functioning, although several people said they wanted to start some kind of sports club again. But considerable communal effort was put into fund-raising for the church that was being built at Tenaru. During my first stay in 1980–1983, there were plans to raise money to start a

church. By 1987, a small church had been completed. After 1987, there were continuing efforts to collect money to enlarge the church. During my short stay in June 1993, there were two different fund-raising events for the local church. One was a party at Tenaru, the other a dance at a nearby social club.[15]

Social Differentiation

Sikaiana migrants in Honiara have developed community activities and maintained personal interaction. But life in town includes some significant changes in Sikaiana social relations. On Sikaiana it is rare to use money in any social relationship. Economic relations are organized around reciprocity. Very rarely are any goods sold. When people help others on work projects, they are often rewarded with participation in a toddy-drinking session (see Donner 1994). When I returned to the Solomon Islands in 1993, I found that many families living at Tenaru had started small businesses in which they charged money to their Sikaiana neighbors for food and services. One man went fishing and then sold his fish to other people in the settlement. Another family sold small "ringcakes" (donuts) in the morning. Several families raised and sold chickens. Another family had a VCR and charged admission to see videos. In 1994, I learned that a man was selling fermented coconut toddy, a drink that is usually used in patterns of generalized reciprocity.

In the past, several people tried to start small stores on Sikaiana in which they had supplies sent from Honiara and then resold them after a markup. These enterprises usually failed, because relatives would ask to be given credit to buy goods but would never settle their accounts. Struggling entrepreneurs were caught between the need to make a profit and social obligations for sharing with kin. One successful businessman acquired the reputation for being a very hard man who was willing to make money by limiting his obligations to kin. Some Sikaiana people expressed grudging admiration for his willingness to acquire wealth at the expense of his kinship obligations. Several Sikaiana people told me that they feel they must limit their obligations to other Sikaiana compatriots, or *wantok,* if they are to achieve success in a Western economic system (see Feinberg, this volume).

Kinship and social relations remain important in towns, but there are some changes that suggest increasing differentiation and attenuation of kinship ties. Fosterage is a very important institution on Sikaiana, and many children spend considerable lengths of time with foster parents. In three separate censuses in 1980, 1982, and 1987, I found a consistent pattern in fosterage: about 50 percent of the children living on Sikaiana

were living with foster parents, whereas about 25 percent of the children living in Honiara were doing so. Rates of fosterage are high by any standard, whether in town or on the atoll, but clearly rates are lower in Honiara (see Donner 1999).

Land on Sikaiana is held by corporate patrilineages and for the most part is not partible among its membership (see Donner 1992a). Because of a population increase, the number of people entitled to a lineage's land has increased greatly. All of these people have rights to use their lineage's land, although there is not enough land should everyone decide to return to Sikaiana to exercise their rights. By contrast, land purchased in other parts of the Solomon Islands is owned by an individual and is inherited by that person's children, both male and female, not by the patrilineage. Whereas the control of land on Sikaiana has emphasized the solidarity of expanding patrilineages, Sikaiana land tenure in other parts of the Solomon Islands emphasizes individual rights and inheritance in the nuclear family. Several men proudly told me of the land they had purchased in other areas of the Solomon Islands and that they planned to leave that land as an inheritance for their children. The land at Tenaru is held in long-term leases by specific individuals.

Migrants attend schools with people from other ethnic groups. Schools and life in town expose them to other cultures, in particular Western influences. Assimilation is evident in language use: Pijin and to a lesser extent English are replacing the Sikaiana vernacular in many spheres of usage. Many younger people, especially males who were raised in Honiara, are much more comfortable speaking in Pijin than in the vernacular (see Donner 1996).

It seemed to me during a short visit in 1993 that there had been a noticeable increase of unemployed young people. The total Sikaiana population is increasing rapidly, but the population that the atoll can support is limited. Most of my research was done in the 1980s, when the atoll could support about a third to half of the people who had claim to its resources. The Sikaiana have a rapid rate of population growth, and the atoll supports a diminishing percentage of the total population. Moreover, during my research in the 1980s, the first generation of people who had been raised in Honiara were coming to maturity. These people are now approaching middle age, and a second generation has matured in Honiara. Finally, a primary force affecting migrants' lives is their economic situation. Although there are opportunities for earning wages in Honiara, migrants are dependent on general economic conditions in the Solomon Islands, which are shaped by global social and economic forces. Whatever the tenacity of Sikaiana efforts to maintain their community and culture, these economic conditions may have very severe consequences, both for individual migrants and for their communal institutions.

Ethnic Warfare in the Solomon Islands

As mentioned throughout this essay, the situation of migrants—and Sikaiana life in general—is not stable. Since the conference session leading to this volume, there have been dramatic events in the Solomon Islands that have affected Sikaiana migrants. Beginning in late 1998, there has been violent ethnic conflict on Guadalcanal Island, the location of Honiara and the largest settlement of Sikaiana migrants.

A group of Guadalcanal people known as the Isatabu Freedom Movement has attacked settlements of non-Guadalcanal people living on Guadalcanal. The main targets were migrants from Malaita, the most populous of the islands in the Solomon Islands. In late July 1999, the group raided the Sikaiana settlement at Tenaru and forced the removal of almost the entire population. In June of 2000, a group calling itself the Malaita Eagle Force and claiming to represent the interests of displaced Malaitans, counterattacked, taking guns from the police armory in Honiara, forcing the formation of a new national government, and launching a counteroffensive against the Isatabu Freedom Movement. Eventually, an armistice was signed but as of November 2001 the situation remains tense. For a time, the entire Sikaiana population had to evacuate Tenaru, and many returned back to their atoll. More recently, some Sikaiana people have returned to Tenaru and some have collected compensation for lost property. The long-range effects of this ethnic warfare on the Sikaiana people and their settlement at Tenaru are still unclear.

I expect that these events will, at least initially, further enhance ethnic identity and community support as the Sikaiana people living in Honiara help those from Tenaru and are reminded of their shared interests and heritage. But these events also point to the complex and constantly changing circumstances of life all over the world, including in the Solomon Islands. If Tenaru is eventually lost as a settlement, Sikaiana migrants will also lose an important location for community events. These recent events seem to justify the combination of a fascination with a wider world and a general distrust of that wider world found in Sikaiana thinking about culture change and modernization (see Donner 1995).

Discussion: The Organization of the Sikaiana Community

Vern Carroll once argued that Nukuoro migrants were too individualistic to form migrant communities (1977), contrasting them with other Micronesians and Polynesians, such as the Kapingamarangi, who do form migrant communities (see Lieber 1977). Sikaiana migrants in Honiara clearly form a commu-

nity. The formation of a resettlement community, fund-raising activities, *kastom* dances, funerals, and weddings are collective events, both representing a "moral" community of shared meanings and values, and also bringing people together as participants in an interactional community. The Sikaiana community in Honiara is not simply a residual one derived from a common ancestry on the atoll; it is also one that is constructed and developed. Since my arrival in 1980, Honiara migrants expanded the Tenaru settlement, built a church there, and organized numerous fund-raising activities and associations. They also maintained traditional community practices such as fosterage, wedding exchanges, funerals, and drinking festivals among many other social gatherings.

Residents of Sikaiana can easily form a face-to-face community because of the atoll's small size. Sikaiana residents of Honiara do not necessarily come into daily contact with one another. Nevertheless, throughout my stays in the 1980s, migrants maintained a community of association at marriages, funerals, and community fund-raising events. The settlement at Tenaru, at least until 1999, has been a setting for both daily and festive interaction. The Sikaiana community is not so much a Durkheimian "mechanical" society structured around similarity as a communal society based on familiarity and association. There is, for example, considerable conflict and a strong undercurrent of gossip within the community. The Sikaiana do not always like one another, but they maintain institutions that assure their interactions with one another.[16] Several situations described in this volume refer to a kind of abstract "imagined" community (see Anderson 1991). But Sikaiana migrants form and maintain an interactional community that does not require much imagination, and many of the activities of migrants in Honiara emphasize this interactional aspect of the community.

Essays in this volume describe the formation of communities not only as maintaining a unique identity, but also as exhibiting Gramscian mechanisms of resistance in oppressive conditions (for example, Modell, Rosenblatt, Macpherson, and Tapsell). Sikaiana differs from these situations in a significant respect. Most of the other communities described in this volume developed in a clearly visible, industrialized, Western context where there was a visible gulf between the bearers of a dominant culture and the immigrant communities. The Maoris and the Hawaiians are now a minority in their own homelands. The Samoans in New Zealand and the Marshallese in Oklahoma are migrants in industrialized nations. The Solomon Islands is not an industrialized nation, and within the Solomon Islands there are about sixty different ethnic groups. The Sikaiana do not directly confront the racism or oppression of being a minority in a society with a clearly defined, dominant cultural group. The present ethnic fighting suggests not the domination of one group, but the diversity of interests among different ethnic groups.

The essays by Merry and Modell raise important issues about the kinds of control that colonialism and imperialism can impose. Sikaiana is complicated, because in some respects Western systems of control are most evident on the atoll, where life is confined and the church effectively permeates significant aspects of social life. Church restrictions on drinking and premarital sex are more strictly enforced on the atoll than in Honiara. Some Western practices are less pervasive and dominating in Honiara, with its greater anonymity and diversity, because there is a less tightly structured community to enforce them.

Furthermore, many of the communal institutions and practices, both in Honiara and on Sikaiana, are derived from Western and modern influences. On Sikaiana, church events are some of the most important community events. In Honiara, the organization of fund-raising events for Sikaiana interests, the building of a community church, and the formation of a sports club are derived from Western institutions, although they are also self-consciously oriented to maintaining a distinct community. The purchase of land at Tenaru was based, in part, on Western concepts of leases deeded to individuals; nevertheless, the Sikaiana use the settlement to preserve a collective identity.

In some important respects, however, town life is shaped by the kinds of transformations of relations described by Merry and Modell. Becoming wage earners in a market economy is among the most challenging changes associated with town life, and in some respects, the shift dominates individual choices and lifestyles. For Sikaiana migrants, there is less control over personal morality than on the atoll, but there is the necessity to labor for wages. In Honiara, Sikaiana migrants become producers and consumers in a global economy and must find paying jobs to survive. As producers and consumers, moreover, they are vulnerable to global economic conditions that are shaped by the actions of wealthier and more powerful foreign nations.[17]

Unlike Sikaiana migrants, Anutans who live in Honiara do not seem to form an urban community (see Feinberg, this volume). Compared with Anuta, Sikaiana has a longer history of emigration, and there are many more Sikaiana emigrants living in Honiara. But very much like the Anutans, the Sikaiana feel the same tension between the desire to participate in a larger, mainly Western and modern, global system and the desire to maintain their distinct cultural traditions. This tension is expressed in the songs at the beginning of this essay. The Sikaiana are devout Christians. They enjoy Western videos and music. They are interested in world events. But they also, thus far, form a community of shared interests and commitments to one another. They enthusiastically participate in modern life, but they also lament the harmful changes that they think it has brought into their social relations.

Urban communities are not stable, as is clear from the recent ethnic fight-

ing in the Solomon Islands. But beyond these recent events, a certain amount of instability is inherent in Sikaiana migration. In this volume, Macpherson suggests that the community of Samoans in New Zealand may be weakening among younger generations of Samoan migrants. Tapsell describes the competing interests among Maoris in defining an urban identity. Sikaiana migrants in Honiara face continuing pressures that could alter their activities and relationships. Moreover, there is an important demographic factor affecting the Sikaiana migrants. The population of the Sikaiana people is increasing, but the atoll's resources support only a limited number of people. More and more people must live in Honiara, where they must find work in order to survive. Living in a market economy and a diverse modernizing social system, Sikaiana migrants face pressures to distance themselves from other Sikaiana migrants that may ultimately corrode their communal identity. They are vulnerable to the problems of being wage earners in an uncertain and ultimately global economic system. On the atoll, with its small population, new cultural practices can be transformed into communal ones with relative ease. But in town, the community must constantly be reestablished and reasserted.

NOTES

1. I lived with the Sikaiana people from October 1980 to July 1983 and March 1987 to September 1987. For several weeks in May and June 1993, I lived at the Sikaiana settlement at Tenaru, outside of Honiara. It is important to emphasize that this essay applies mainly to Sikaiana life during my periods of stay. In 1999, after most of this essay was written, the Sikaiana people living at the resettlement community at Tenaru were forced to leave there as a result of ethnic fighting in the Solomon Islands. Although there is an uneasy truce, the outcomes of this ethnic fighting still remain unresolved at the time of this writing (November 2001). Most of the discussion in this essay describes the situation at Tenaru before this ethnic fighting.

2. The songs themselves, moreover, reflect a combination of the modern and the traditional. Song composition is a traditional expressive medium. The first song was written in traditional style but concerns a modern theme. The second song was composed to guitar music, a newer style that was introduced relatively recently (see Donner 1987).

3. For discussions of the concept of "biography," see Simmel 1950:307–376; Simmel 1971; Schutz 1962:17–19; Goffman 1963; and Lieber 1977.

4. Bayliss-Smith estimates that Sikaiana's carrying capacity will support between 215 and 430 people (1975:295–297).

5. 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 percent per annum. The population in the late 1980s approached 300,000.

6. During my last visit, in 1993, there was something of a local debate in the Solomon Islands about whether Honiara should be labeled a "town" or a "city."

7. Although hundreds of kilometers distant, Ontong Java, another Polynesian outlier, has close cultural and historical relations with Sikaiana. The Ontong Java people are described by the Sikaiana as much wealthier than the Sikaiana people but also far more conservative in their cultural practices.

8. Occasionally, a few people speculate about the possibility of mining phosphorous, and some even hope for oil. When I first arrived in 1980, some young men speculated about the feasibility of building an airstrip on Sikaiana.

9. Some of these figures are from the *Solomon Islands Statistical Yearbook for 1984/5.*

10. During my stays in 1980–1983 and 1987, I never heard any accusation of sorcery being used by one Sikaiana person against another Sikaiana person. In 1993, someone recounted one incident of alleged use of sorcery by one Sikaiana person on another Sikaiana person. There were, however, accusations of sorcery performed by outsiders against Sikaiana individuals. The term *kastom* can be used to refer to a variety of traditional practices, including some that are seen as constructive and others that are now considered to be harmful (see Donner 1993).

11. Merry's contribution to this volume examines the redefinition of sexuality among Hawaiians. The Sikaiana adopted missionary standards for sexual morality (their traditional sexuality included secret adulterous relations, *hina*). Now they often see extramarital sex as the unhappy outcome of foreign influence. The prohibitions on premarital sexual intercourse are derived more from Christian teachings than from pre-Christian traditional culture. For most Sikaiana parents, Christian teachings were an essential part of their upbringing and are now viewed as traditional, or *kastom* (see Donner 1993).

12. Again, the word "tradition" must be used advisedly (Donner 1993). The marriage exchanges, *penupenu,* were modified in this century after the Sikaiana accepted Christian prohibitions on their traditional practice of arranged marriages. But these *penupenu* are now seen as traditional.

13. Solomon Islands law makes it very difficult to sell customary land.

14. They hoped to find land in Isabel Province. Isabel people have a reputation for being friendly; like the Sikaiana, they are mostly members of the Church of Melanesia. I once heard a Sikaiana woman in a casual conversation with another Sikaiana person describe a region she had visited in Isabel Province as *taulekaleka,* "wonderful, excellent." When I asked her why she thought this area so wonderful, she replied that it had a reef and added—for my benefit as an inquiring anthropologist—that for the Sikaiana people any place with a reef is wonderful.

15. In 1994, there was another large fund-raising event for the Tenaru church (I received a request by fax for a contribution).

16. As Georg Simmel made clear (1956), conflict can be one of the most intimate kinds of relations.

17. I think the ethnic conflict is, at least partly if not largely, based in the problems of finding work and opportunity for everyone in a developing market and wage economy. As stated above, my impression in 1993 was that there were a lot of unemployed young people in Honiara, not only among the Sikaiana people but among other ethnic groups as well.

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