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**For love or money? Interhousehold exchange and the economy
of Rotuma**

Rensel, Janet Patricia, Ph.D.

University of Hawaii, 1994

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FOR LOVE OR MONEY?
INTERHOUSEHOLD EXCHANGE AND THE ECONOMY OF ROTUMA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

ANTHROPOLOGY

MAY 1994

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ABSTRACT

Studying the social implications of economic change in Pacific Islands is made more difficult by a set of pervasive assumptions, deeply rooted in Western tradition. These concern not only the nature of island life and historical processes, but also the agency and direction of change, and the transformative power of money. In addressing the place of money in social interactions on the island of Rotuma, Republic of Fiji, this dissertation carefully examines local history within larger economic and political contexts; analyzes quantitative data about sources, amounts, and uses of money over time; and explores the ways in which Rotuman values shape forms of interaction.

Historical and ethnographic research reveal that a variety of external forces have combined to promote change in Rotuma. Despite two centuries of Western influence, Rotumans persist in enacting their own agendas and seek to control their economic destiny. Local cooperatives handle copra exports and commerce. Most households rely on subsistence food production as well as a combination of income sources, including wage employment, on-island food sales, occasional exports, cash gifts for services to each other, and periodic tourism.

This dissertation documents how migration has created a dramatic impetus to change in recent years. Seventy percent of Rotumans now live away from Rotuma, pursuing further education and job opportunities, especially in urban Fiji. The ties they maintain with their home island take many forms, from reciprocal

visiting and sharing of resources, to support for local projects and assistance with income-generating activities. Migrant involvement has significant impact on material living standards. Trucks and motorcycles are increasingly common, and Rotuman-style thatched dwellings have largely disappeared, replaced by cement and corrugated iron structures with plumbing, electricity and modern appliances. Forms of social interaction are implicated in a shift from mutual aid to paying cash for help with house construction and transportation. But an intensive study of village interactions reveals a continuing emphasis on interhousehold sharing of food and assistance, both in the context of feasts and informal events. Underlying the apparent changes are enduring Rotuman values, embodied in expressions of generosity and reciprocal exchange.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Distorted Visions

Does increased access to money inevitably lead to the demise of an island economy previously characterized by reciprocal exchange?

This is the question that initially guided my archival and field research on the island of Rotuma. When I mentioned to people that I was studying the impact of money on socioeconomic relationships on a remote South Pacific island, most of their responses indicated they assumed the worst: that money would "spoil everything," or to put it more academically, that the incursion of the monetary economy invariably sounds the death knell for indigenous exchange practices, if not for island lifestyles generally.

These informal responses reflect what I believe to be pervasive and largely unexamined assumptions on the part of scholars and non-scholars alike concerning the realities of island life, the practice of reciprocal exchange, and the power of money to affect social relations. It is necessary to begin by unpacking multiple layers of our own cultural attitudes on these topics.

Pacific Islands

In recent years numerous authors have critiqued the interpretations westerners imposed on Pacific Islanders since their early encounters in the sixteenth century. The portrayal of islanders as noble or ignoble savages, primitives to be civilized or models to be emulated depended less on the islanders' activities than on the

current state of political and social thought in Europe, and later, America. Whether westerners viewed the islands as a lost paradise or a heathen world in need of enlightenment, the underlying model was a social evolutionary one, with western society at one end and Pacific Islands at the other, confounded with our own imagined past.

Through much of the twentieth century ethnographies depicted island cultures as static. Descriptions of normative roles and the common use of the ethnographic present served both to mask diversity and to deny history. Homeostatic models of harmonious island life (e.g., Thompson 1949) explicitly located the agency for change outside island life. Models that allowed for internally-derived change portrayed it in evolutionary stages propelled by broad general imperatives such as population and distribution of resources (Sahlins 1958) or cultural principles such as status rivalry (Goldman 1970). Until recently anthropologists have given short shrift to historical process in Pacific Island societies (Thomas 1989).

Island Economies and Change

An aprocessual view limits our understanding of Pacific Island economies. Typical descriptions contrast indigenous practice of reciprocal exchange and redistribution with introduced market exchange, implying discrete stages with distinct characteristics. Models of reciprocal exchange too often leave out the fluctuations and complications of daily life and interpersonal histories, yielding an improbable portrait of a continuous flow of generalized or balanced exchanges. We tend to ignore internal factors that

potentially could change economic practices, in favor of the agency of outside forces. This is as true of those who have a positive appraisal of the process as of those who condemn externally-imposed change.

The notion that island economies can be affected from outside had an optimistic cast in the eyes of development economists, starting with Rostow (1960) and Fisk (1962, 1964). Building on the experiences of European reconstruction after World War II, modernization theorists assumed a model in which external remedies such as monetary aid and know-how, access to markets and increasing the natives' known wants would help to develop island economies. When such inputs failed to result in desired economic changes, theorists recognized the power of cultural factors such as land tenure and hierarchical systems, but blamed them for impeding progress (e.g., Fox and Cumberland 1962, Lockwood 1971).

The failure of Pacific Islands economies to develop along lines predicted by modernization theory finds alternative explanation in dependency and world systems theories, which emphasize the role of the global capitalist context in creating conditions that affect small third world countries (see e.g., Frank 1967, 1969, 1979; Wallerstein 1974, 1979, 1980, 1989). Developed originally in Latin America, dependency theory portrays a process of imposed change more sinister than modernization or development models, wherein core nations deliberately maintain underdevelopment in marginal countries (periphery) because an inequality of power relations is essential to maintaining the economic superiority of the core. In his

initial formulations of the world systems perspective, Immanuel Wallerstein incorporated many of the concepts and basic tenets of the dependency school, but later moved beyond them. The world systems approach calls for a synthesis of history and social sciences, embracing the whole world as unit of analysis, and focusing on the long term context of cyclical expansion and contraction of the capitalist world economy.

Early applications of dependency theory were particularly subject to criticism for overemphasizing the determining power of external conditions at the expense of internal processes. Critics also cited proponents of this perspective for a tendency to lapse into rhetoric and deductive logic, ignoring or selectively interpreting local history to support foregone conclusions (So 1990:131-2). James (1988) notes such problems in Gailey's (1987a, 1987b) study of the role of missionaries and capitalism in promoting commodity production and state formation in Tonga.

Others have criticized dependency theory for having limited applicability to Pacific Islands. Geoffrey Hayes (1991) summarizes many of these criticisms. In contrast to Latin America, the incidence of absolute poverty in Pacific Islands communities is very low. There exist adequate alternative explanations for the relative absence of industrial capitalism in the Islands: a general paucity of raw materials, isolation from markets, high costs of transport, small scattered populations making for small domestic markets, high supply price of labor due to virtually universal access to land for subsistence needs (Hayes 1991: 25-26; see also Peoples 1978).

Nonetheless, recognizing varying forms of dependence upon the world system in which they are incorporated is essential to understanding changing economic conditions in Pacific Islands.

In recent years modernization, dependency and world systems perspectives have undergone modifications along lines that converge (see So 1990:266-267). Each of the three dominant schools of development is bringing specific history back into the picture in place of ideal types or dichotomies (modern vs. traditional, core vs. periphery). New studies are examining the complex interplay between different institutions (e.g., family, religion, ethnic groups, the state, the world economy) rather than focusing on one internal or external variable. And both the beneficial and harmful effects of development are acknowledged in particular cases, not prejudged on the basis of ideology.

Recent modernization studies in the Pacific have re-examined the assumption that tradition impedes progress, for instance demonstrating how indigenous conceptions and practices are compatible with market economies (e.g., Finney 1973) or how islanders' choices reflect rational assessments of economic opportunities (e.g., O'Meara 1986). More sophisticated applications of dependency theory have ameliorated the tendency to neglect roles played by islanders in shaping their own history by incorporating local historical process within regional historical contexts. Focusing on both external and internal processes has yielded important insights, for instance, in the study of the socioeconomic history of the Lau Islands in Fiji (Knapman 1976; Bayliss-Smith et

al 1988); Marcus (1981) has used a world systems viewpoint in exploring Tongan offshore employment.

Money as Change Agent

The love of money is the root of all evil
(St. Paul's letter to Timothy, Chapter 6, verse 10).

*Money is like manure; if you spread it around, it does a lot of good.
But if you pile it up in one place, it stinks like hell*
(Clint Murchison Jr., American millionaire oil man).

The theoretical models used to analyze the interaction of Pacific Island economies with the market economy reflect our western cultural ambivalence toward monetary exchange. In the introduction to their recent edited volume, Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry (1989) trace the fluctuating history of western attitudes toward money-making and commercial exchange. Money along with trade was condemned by Aristotle, who considered profit-seeking exchange to be contrary to nature and destructive of bonds between households. Thomas Aquinas resurrected Aristotle's writings in the thirteenth century and used them in support of the Church's position on material acquisition. From the late Middle Ages on, the official ideology gradually shifted to suggest that avarice, greed or "love of lucre" was a lesser vice than sexual lust or ambition, and potentially could be harnessed to serve public good. Dr. Johnson pronounced money-making a harmless pastime in the eighteenth century, and Adam Smith positively celebrated the pursuit of monetary gain.

Two influential nineteenth century writers emphasized the power of money to transform social life, promoting individualism

while undermining community solidarity. George Simmel (1978) viewed money itself as the principal catalyst of social change, advancing human freedom through developing cognitive powers of rational calculation, and making way for a new form of social integration. For Karl Marx (1961), production for exchange created the need for the abstract money medium, but he saw the resulting transformation as a degradation from a former condition in which production for use had upheld communal bonds.

Whether for good or for ill, in our cultural tradition money is fetishized. We perceive it "as an incredibly powerful agent of profound social and cultural transformations" (Bloch and Parry 1989:3). We expect that wherever money is found, "it represents an intrinsically revolutionary power which inexorably subverts the moral economy of 'traditional' societies" (Bloch and Parry 1989:12). This assumption blinds us to the real complexity of causal factors at work as cultures become involved with the world capitalist market. We further assume that this assessment of money's agency will be perceived by actors in other cultures and represented in their symbolic constructions (e.g., Taussig 1980).

In fact money is symbolized variously in different cultures, and can mean different things within one culture. As demonstrated in studies of societies in South and Southeast Asia, Africa, South America and the Pacific in Parry and Bloch's volume, "What money means is not only situationally defined but also constantly re-negotiated" (Bloch and Parry 1989:23). Our analyses are flawed

insofar as we forget this contextual diversity, and attribute to money in general the meanings derived from our own culture.

In western discourse money represents the impersonal, transitory and calculating transactions of market exchange. We consider such transactions fundamentally inappropriate in the context of personal, enduring and altruistic social relationships (Bloch and Parry 1989:9). Although westerners do give and receive money as a gift, there is a sense of awkwardness about it; we prefer to reserve money to a strictly separate economic sphere. We tend to assume gifts and commodities are fundamentally and universally opposed.

This ideological division of economic and social within our culture we project onto our constructions of other economies and societies. The opposition between monetary and non-monetary domains is frequently confounded with other dichotomies-- "traditional" and "modern", pre-capitalist and capitalist, and so on-- with money seen as index of, if not catalyst for the difference (Bloch and Parry 1989:7).

Building on this confusion, we romanticize gift exchange as non-exploitative and innocent; ignore the uses of money in "traditional" economies; and variously categorize societies where money has intruded as tainted, compromised, modernized, monetized. We assume that money carries with it the conceptual baggage of our own cultural logic, mandating impersonal, capitalist relations and commercial transactions wherever its simple presence is found. Despite ethnographic evidence to the contrary (for instance Western

Samoa), we expect the eventual eclipse of other forms of interaction by commercial exchange. This expectation is explicit in evolutionary models of economic development as we have seen above (see also Hill 1986), and implicit in linear models opposing reciprocal or in-kind exchange with market exchange.

Evolutionary assumptions about the relationship between reciprocal and market exchange even underlie models, such as Marshall Sahlins' (1965), of reciprocal exchange itself. Sahlins proposes a continuum of reciprocity from generalized to balanced to negative, based on the stipulation for material return and degree of altruism. Generalized reciprocity is characterized by toleration of material imbalance and concern for the other; balanced reciprocity by more immediate return and mutuality of interest; and negative reciprocity by maximization of utility at the other's expense. While acknowledging that these forms of reciprocity co-exist, Sahlins found generalized exchange to be most widespread in "primitive" societies, that is, cultures lacking a political state, in which the "economy and social relations have not been modified by the historic penetration of states" (Sahlins 1965:141). In contrast, balanced exchange is more prominent in hinterlands "engaged by petty market trade--and perhaps also by political dominance--to more sophisticated cultural centers" (Sahlins 1965:179). By extension, one could infer from Sahlins' argument that negative reciprocity is the rule in modern political states.

The portrayal of types of exchange within an evolutionary framework is misleading and unnecessary. Karl Polanyi (1971), who

distinguished between reciprocity, redistribution and market economies, pointed out that all could occur within one society, although one might be dominant. Similarly, Alan Page Fiske (1991) proposes four basic forms of social interaction--communal sharing, authority ranking, equality matching, and market pricing. In Fiske's theory, these models comprise a fundamental psychological "grammar" of social relationships. People draw on combinations of these basic models to construct relationships at all social levels, from interpersonal dyads to more and more complex institutions, groups and societies. Thus all forms may co-exist within any cultural setting. Although Fiske hypothesizes that the four forms develop in sequence within each individual, I believe that his discussion of motivation undermines the assumption of a singular direction for socioeconomic evolution. Fiske demonstrates the existence of important social motives toward communal solidarity, hierarchical ordering, and balance, explicitly contradicting the essential premise of formalist economics: a universal motivation to maximize self-interest.¹

Corrective Lenses

Local Agency, Regional Historical Context

Along with the romantic misrepresentations of Pacific Island lifestyles by our predecessors, we must jettison evolutionary models that consider contemporary societies to represent less-developed stages along a hypothetical continuum progressing towards that represented by our own. We must acknowledge their

historical context in the larger world, but avoid applying models with heavy ideological loads that obscure rather than illuminate process. While recognizing the power of global political and economic forces, we must examine local processes and factors that interact within the larger setting over time (see Brookfield 1972, Peoples 1978, Hayes 1991, James 1988). Sahlins admonishes us not to deny the historical agency of local actors: "Everyone hates the destruction rained upon the peoples by the planetary conquests of capitalism. But to indulge in what Stephen Greenblatt calls the 'sentimental pessimism' of collapsing their lives within a global vision of domination, in subtle intellectual and ideological ways makes the conquest complete" (Sahlins 1993:7).

Bruce Knapman and Timothy Bayliss-Smith et al. recently have provided exemplary applications of the local action-regional context approach in their respective studies of the Lau Islands in Fiji. Knapman (1976) traces the Lauan's long involvement in the market economy, illustrating indigenous response to the world market. The historical geography of the area by Bayliss-Smith et al. (1988) also notes the history of regional trade, as well as colonial and post-colonial politics and government policy, national and international economics, and environmental changes. Tim O'Meara's (1986) painstaking study of factors affecting economic decision-making in Western Samoa locates village-level data on labor, production, and income within the context of national economic forces and changing social institutions.

Recognition of both the larger political and economic setting and local agency in responding to alternatives characterizes Bertram and Watters' (1985, 1986) work on MIRAB (Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy) countries including the Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Kiribati and Tuvalu. Their emphasis on the benefits of the MIRAB process in terms of cultural continuity and living standards questions the applicability of development models that stress local production as the basis for economic growth. Some aspects of the MIRAB model have been challenged, such as the emphasis on kin group rather than individual decision-making regarding allocation of labor, and the salience of remittances over other forms of interaction for maintaining transnational kin ties (see James 1991). Further fieldwork can inform the MIRAB model. My research suggests, for instance, that returning or visiting emigrants who maintain a presence on the island can exert significant influence on local economies by initiating enterprises, providing skills and know-how, exerting influence in off-island networks, investing capital and enabling loans (see Chapter 5 and Rensel in press).

Cultural Meanings

We must separate the meanings money has in our own tradition from the meanings in other cultures, and forego superficial classification based simply upon the fact that money changes hands in transactions. Our task is to discover the cultural matrix into which money is incorporated over time, including ideology, terminology, attitudes and behavior. "Western capitalism is planetary in scope but it is not

a universal logic of cultural change....The agenda now is how it is worked out in other cultural manifolds" (Sahlins 1993:21).

Anthropologists have been seeking to explicate indigenous categories of exchange since Malinowski (1922), whose list of Trobriand gifts, payments and commercial transactions inspired Mauss (1925) and Sahlins (1965) in their contributions to exchange theory. The study of the incorporation of cash and imported goods into indigenous categories has nearly as long a history, from Hogbin (1932), Salisbury (1962), to more recent studies (e.g., Brady 1972, Sansom 1976, Gregory 1982).

The tendency to attribute to money the power to undermine local economic conceptions is illustrated by Paul Bohannon's (1959) contention that general purpose money eroded the traditionally separate spheres of the Tiv economy; a look at the wider context reveals other significant factors such as the involvement of external traders, missionary pressure, and finally colonial regulation (Bloch and Parry 1989:12-14). Rather than assume that money "ruins everything," we need more close-grained contemporary ethnographies focusing on the sociocultural contexts in which cash and certain foreign goods become meaningful and desirable.

How people talk about exchange is not isomorphic with how they think about it. As Anne Chambers (1983) demonstrates in her classification of Nanumea exchange transactions, one must go beyond terminological distinctions. We must recognize the range and ambiguity of potential applications of indigenous terms. For instance, in Rotuman the verb *togi* can refer to what we call

commercial exchange, wages, debt repayment, balanced reciprocal exchange as well as punishment, reward, succession, substitution, or response (see Chapter 7).

Several authors address the symbolic representations of money in a range of different cultures in Parry and Bloch's 1989 volume. How people evaluate different uses of money and other resources is tied up with notions of cultural identity (e.g., Linnekin 1985, Scott 1981), and images of "the good life" (Philibert 1981), as well as cultural imperatives toward generous giving, making return and maintaining balance in exchange (see Chambers 1983). Culturally-rooted expectations also prompt certain types of transactions and limit others under different circumstances such as community celebrations, life-crises, illness, opportunities of various kinds, and the arrival or non-arrival of the supply/copra boat. The tendency to share rather than sell staple foods points to both the widespread symbolic significance of sharing food as well as its necessity (Sahlins 1965; see also Chapters 6 and 7). Cultural values not immediately appearing related to economic behavior are also salient; for instance I find that the Rotuman valuing of autonomy is relevant to the maintenance of exchange relationships between households as well as to the sending of remittances by migrants (see Chapters 4 to 6).

Cultural Practice

The study of uses of money includes gathering quantitative data about transaction events--what is transacted, when, how often,

under what circumstances, between whom--as well as contextual information about relationships between the people involved. Any observable patterns in the transaction events can be analyzed in the light of this contextual information to suggest possibly influential factors. Sahlins (1965) proposes that kinship distance, relative rank, wealth and need correlate with types of reciprocal exchange. Others suggest that reality is more complex than this simple correlation (e.g., Brady 1972, Lebra 1975). My findings show that interpersonal histories, especially recent alliances and conflicts, are relevant to the intensity and direction of reciprocal exchange; household composition and size are also indirect, but important factors (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Not only the uses of money but the means of access to it have implications for social relations. As Antony Hooper and Judith Huntsman (1973) found in Tokelau, remittances may be treated differently from copra earnings. In addition, the process of earning money takes time away from other activities, including communal or shared labor events. The personal interactions of wage earners and casual laborers, as well as people who engage in periodic sales of produce, fish, or animals, are partly shaped by these activities, in terms of how much time is spent, in what locations, with which people, in what roles (see Chapter 7). Even receiving remittances may impact activity patterns; for instance, maintaining the channels for remittance flows sometimes take the form of fostering children or hosting overseas visitors (see Chapters 5 and 8; see also James 1991).

Information about practice must, however, be situated within the multiple contexts of cultural meanings and local and regional history outlined above. An uninformed outside observer cannot understand or categorize a transaction without this knowledge. The material content of the transaction does not determine whether it is a commercial exchange or two gifts flowing in opposite directions. Neither can one assume that knowledge about the immediate context, e.g., the kin relationship between transactors, alone can determine or limit the form of transaction. My findings indicate for instance that pairs of siblings interact in a range of ways, and in fact the transactions of each pair take a variety of forms (see Chapter 6).

Interpreting today's exchange events necessitates awareness of the history of relationships, of the community, of cultural meanings, and of islanders' interactions with the world beyond the reef. Although the cumulative effects of actions are not necessarily predictable, they create history and have weight in conditioning future actions. By locating micro-level studies within macro-historical context we can inform our models and contribute substantively to the dialectic between ethnography and theory.

Overview of Dissertation

In this dissertation I attempt to address the question of the impact of money on interhousehold exchange practice within the contexts outlined above.

In Chapter 2, I review the development of my methodology and the processes involved in my field and archival research, and lay out

field site characteristics and circumstances contemporary with my study.

Rotuma has been involved in commercial trade for over two centuries. I sketch out key aspects of the island's participation in the wider economy in Chapter 3. This includes types of trade and employment and how they were affected by colonial incorporation with Fiji, as well as changes in Rotuman income levels and uses of money over time. Their history demonstrates the keen interest Rotumans have had in controlling their economic activities, and in maintaining options for flexible response to changing events.

Flexibility and autonomy are themes that pervade Rotuman society. In Chapter 4, I examine life on Rotuma from the perspective of kinship and authority relations. Rather than emphasizing hierarchy or rigid protocol, Rotuman social organization is based on a principle of reciprocity by which relationships at every level are established and maintained.

Even when the community is dispersed geographically, reciprocal involvement keeps ties alive. With 70 percent of Rotumans now living away from Rotuma, the processes of migration, remittances and other types of long-distance interaction have social and economic impacts on island lifestyles and aspirations. Chapter 5 focuses on these impacts as well as the relative importance of government employment and foreign aid, which along with migration and remittances have been identified as key components of contemporary Pacific Island economies.

Chapter 6 introduces a closer look at Rotuman cultural practice by exploring the centrality of feasting and other social situations promoting interhousehold exchange. Drawing on data from an intensive study of household activities I conducted in a Rotuman village in 1989, I discuss patterns of reciprocal sharing and assistance and assess the importance of kinship, geographic proximity, particular events and interpersonal history in shaping interactions.

In Chapter 7, I reflect on Rotuman reciprocal exchange in terms of the categories proposed by Alan Page Fiske (1991). Based on a consideration of Rotuman terminology, and evidence presented in prior chapters, I conclude that Communal Sharing is the predominant form of reciprocal interaction between households. I then look at how money was used in the various forms of exchange recorded during the village study, and under what circumstances modes other than Communal Sharing (e.g., Market Pricing or Equality Matching) were invoked. The impact of household income level on exchange practices, as well as variables such as household size, composition and productivity, are also examined.

The construction, maintenance and use of Rotuman houses provides an important venue for the practice of reciprocity on the island. It is also an arena strongly influenced by the increased use of cash and imported materials. Most of the varied social, demographic, economic, and environmental changes that have affected life on Rotuma can be reprised in a consideration of the changes in Rotuman houses over time. Chapter 8 examines the

history of housing on Rotuma in response to historical circumstances and how changes in materials and building processes in particular implicate social relationships.

In Chapter 9, I conclude that formulations implicating "money" as the sole or even primary agent in changing forms of social interaction are overly simplistic. The Rotuman case provides evidence of the variety of forces--both foreign and indigenous--that have combined and continue to shape contemporary practices of reciprocal exchange.

Note to Chapter 1

¹For Fiske, maximization is not a necessary feature of market pricing. Market pricing simply is characterized by a consideration of values in terms of a single measure. In the market pricing mode, people organize and evaluate their interactions with references to ratios, e.g. prices, wages, rates of return. Fiske suggests that we have added cultural baggage to this concept:

In our own culture, we assume that when people operate in a Market Pricing mode they are individualistic, selfish, maximizing, and competitive. We also tend to assume that Market Pricing is associated with materialism, that it must involve free choice, and that the primary obligations entailed in Market Pricing are contractual. In fact, all of these are to some degree optional features of Market Pricing, controlled by implementation rules that may specify otherwise in other cultures. In a given cultural context, Market Pricing may involve any or none of these optional features (Fiske 1991:396).

At the same time, any of these features may be associated in different cultural contexts with the other forms of social interaction.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY AND FIELD SITE

In the first part of this chapter I discuss my research methodology, both as I structured it and as it worked out in process. Although I planned my approach in careful detail, serendipity played a large part in the outcomes. Neither my topic nor the exact field site were what I originally intended. Some of the richest insights arose from unplanned developments. The opportunity to return for varying periods of fieldwork over five consecutive years offered special rewards. It allowed me to intersperse field study with comparative reading and archival research. It also afforded me the opportunity to observe how particular relationships were enacted over time and in changing circumstances. The changes I observed from year to year reinforced my awareness of the importance of historical context.

Location and timing of my fieldwork clearly influenced my findings. In the second section of this chapter I describe my field site and identify important events that were taking place there, affecting the interactions I came to study. I then outline the questions that guided my archival research and the resources I consulted, followed by a brief discussion of analytical process.

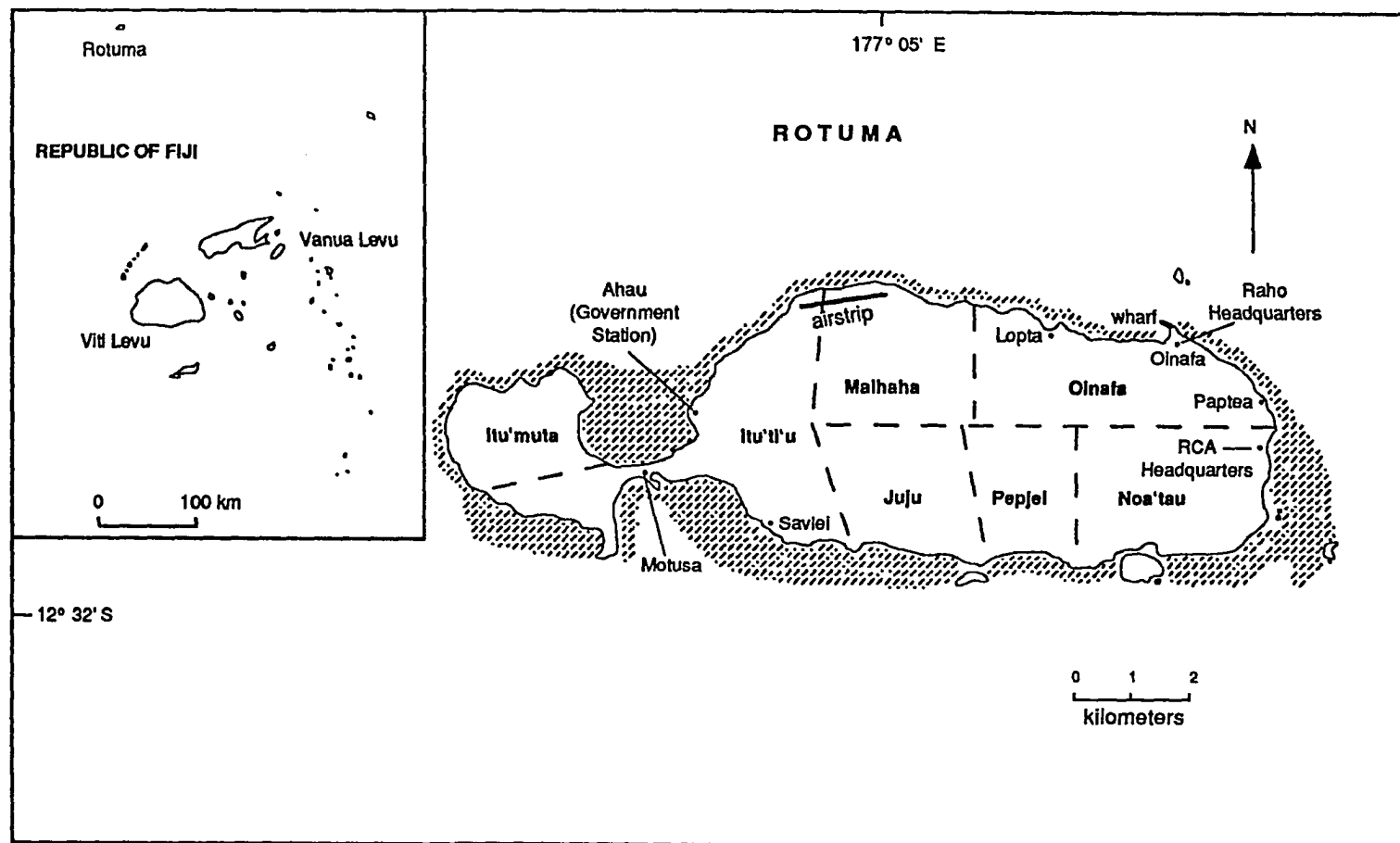
Field Research

Entry into the Field

When I first went to Rotuma in 1987 I was interested in studying environmental knowledge, attitudes and practices. My husband, Alan Howard, and I expected to locate in the village of Savlei on the south

side of the island (see map, Figure 2.1). There are no public accommodations on Rotuma; visitors must be hosted by families. We had planned to stay with an old friend of Alan's, Elisapeti Inia, a retired teacher who lives in Savlei. Elisapeti's daughter, Betty, with whom we had confirmed the arrangements in Suva, had sent a telegram advising her mother of our arrival on the weekly plane. As it turned out, the telegram was delivered on Monday--two days after we got there. Things were complicated by the fact that Ratu Mara, the Prime Minister of Fiji, was in the midst of campaigning for re-election at the time, and flew to Rotuma on the same plane we did. Elisapeti was one of the people who attended a formal reception for the Prime Minister, but did not go to the airport to meet him--or us.

On the airplane we had struck up a conversation with another Rotuman woman, Tupou Taukave. When she saw that there was no one to meet us, Tupou suggested that we go home with a relative of hers, Tarterani Rigamoto. As it happens, Tarterani is the nephew of Josefa Rigamoto, another old friend of Alan's. Josefa had alerted Tarterani of our impending arrival and had asked him to assist us however he could. Tarterani loaded our things into a borrowed truck and took us home, to Oinafa, on the northeast end of Rotuma. While Tarterani's family quickly made up the best bedroom for us, relatives from neighboring households provided us with lunch. We stayed with Tarterani for the entire two weeks of our 1987 visit. Because of the welcome we received from his and the other households in Oinafa village, we decided to explore the possibility of returning there for fieldwork. With the consent of the elders of



Adapted from maps drawn by Joan Lawrence; since interior district boundaries are problematic they have been drawn with dotted lines.

Figure 2.1 Map of Rotuma with fringing reef

Tarterani's *kainaga* 'extended family' we arranged to pay for reconstructing a small cement storage building into a dwelling place. This house was available to us for most of the periods of fieldwork over the next three years: for three months in 1988, six months in 1989, and two months in 1990. The last 10 days of our 1990 visit we spent on the western end of the island in Itu'muta district, where Alan had conducted his initial research in 1960. In 1991 we returned for a week and stayed with Elisapeti Inia in Savlei, but visited several households in Oinafa.

Emergence of Research Focus and Preliminary Studies

The location settled, I began to have second thoughts about my tentative research topic. Two aspects of daily life in Oinafa struck me most vividly during my initial visit: the frequency with which members of different households borrowed, shared, and gave each other resources, and the apparently marginal place of commercial transactions. At the same time, people obviously had access to money and imported goods; a few in the village had full-time jobs and others were receiving cash and supplies from relatives in Fiji and abroad. In contrast to the situation on Rotuma in 1960 when Alan conducted his initial fieldwork, many island residents now had modern houses, comfortably furnished in urban style, as well as motorcycles or trucks. How was this material affluence affecting people's values and relationships with one another? That it was an issue for people became obvious from the topics of their conversations with us. People frequently commented on how others were getting, using, saving or mismanaging money. The impact of

increased access to money on island lifestyles was an open question. Soon after our return the next year Tarterani told us that for Rotumans, "If you follow the old ways you'll love the island; if you don't, even though you have money you won't be happy."

After that first visit to Rotuma, I read several studies about Pacific Islands economies, paying particular attention to research methods. During the three months I spent on the island in 1988, my goals were to learn as much as possible of the Rotuman language and the pragmatics of daily life. Although most Rotumans can speak English, they commonly speak Rotuman on the island. Alan and I arranged to spend a day each week with Elisapeti Inia for Rotuman language lessons. Drawing on my observations and previous readings, I developed and tested sample questionnaires about daily household income and expenditures, productive activities and interactions with other households. I also worked with Alan to conduct a preliminary survey of all the households in Oinafa district, using questions parallel to those he used for a survey of the whole island in 1960. After returning to Hawaii, I added questions on exchange practices to the survey for island-wide use and developed a more detailed questionnaire for an intensive study of household activities. I arranged for Elisapeti and two other Rotumans, Jieni Howard and Vilsoni Hereniko, to translate and back-translate both questionnaires. Although my subsequent field research included participant observation and informal interviews as well, it centered around gathering data through the administration of these two questionnaires.

Rotuma Census Questionnaire

The Rotuma Census Questionnaire (Appendix A) was designed for use with some 400 households around the island, to gather data comparable to that obtained in an island-wide survey by Alan Howard in 1960. The resulting information is useful for a variety of purposes beyond the scope of my study. The following outlines the particular information I sought and its relevance for my research.

Question 1 asked for basic information on household members by age, gender, relationship, church affiliation, employment and income. (To cross-check responses about income I obtained information on salary levels from government and cooperative employers.) These data were useful to my study in a number of ways. Household size and structure have direct implications for productive capacity of households, and affect options for engaging in reciprocal exchange. Church affiliation, type of employment, and income level also impact exchange patterns. Although the precise ways in which these factors influence household interactions was the focus of the close-grained study in one village (see below), the background data allowed me to draw generalizations about household size and composition, percentage of wage employment and distribution of income for all of Rotuma.

Questions 2-3 sought similar information to that in Question 1, for people not considered household members who were visiting the household, as well as members staying elsewhere. Visiting is one indication of ties with other households. Data on off-island

connections provided profiles of migrant destinations, activities, and involvement with island family members.

Questions 4-15 concerned connections with land. Information about relationships between current and previous heads for each household, and about the house site, indicated whether houses and lands were purchased or obtained through kin group processes. Responses also helped me to identify relationships and to construct genealogies for those participating in the intensive study (below).

Questions 16-17 focused on descriptions of houses, how they were built and who contributed to their construction. I anticipated that housing histories would provide cases in which goods and labor were provided free of charge as well as instances where people bought materials and paid workers. The information also allowed comparison with earlier island-wide tallies of house types by materials.

Question 18 dealt with remittances from elsewhere on the island or overseas, identifying senders by relationship and location. I was not concerned so much with obtaining accurate information about amounts as a general indication of which categories of people contributed to the household, for what purposes and how often. (More reliable data on actual amounts and types of goods received were recorded during the Household Daily Activity Survey; see below.)

In a similar vein, Question 19 asked respondents about most intensive exchange relations with other households on the island. To encourage accuracy I requested details on the most recent exchange

events. Again, more precise information was obtained through the intensive study of daily activities.

Question 20 concerned trips away from the island, destination, dates, length of stay, and purposes. This provided information on migration patterns as well as indications of off-island ties, especially when people reported staying with kin overseas. Questions 21-22 sought information about marriages and children.

The last part of the Census Questionnaire consisted of an inventory of household furnishings, appliances and vehicles, including how and when they were obtained. Items included on the list were selected, based on a pretest in 1988, as representing significant cash investment by island households and/or their support networks.

Household Daily Activity Questionnaire

I designed the Household Daily Activity Questionnaire (Appendix B) for use with a limited number of households over an extended period of time. This questionnaire served three purposes. One focus was the daily in- and out-flow of household resources including money, food and other material items, meals, transport and labor. The second thrust of the study concerned how people interacted and with whom. From this perspective, the data revealed instances of buying and selling, gift-giving and helping. Thirdly I hoped to derive a picture of the major productive and social activities in which people were involved, as contexts for interaction. The categories I included were in all cases based on my observations and interviews conducted during preliminary visits to the island in 1987 and 1988.

Questions 1-4 concerned cash expenditures and income. I followed local distinctions between purchases (Question 1) and other uses of money (Question 2). Similarly, Questions 3 and 4 addressed receiving money, from earning it or receiving it as a gift. (Note that if money was given in thanks for transportation or assistance, this information could also appear in response to Questions 9, 15 or 16.)

Questions 5-6 asked for information about other items given or received by household members. Meals provided for guests, or eaten somewhere else by household members, were addressed in Questions 7-8.

If anyone went beyond the village I asked them to record the details in response to Question 9. This not only provided information on transportation assistance and how it was reciprocated, but also gave indications of activities and relationships outside the immediate area.

Question 10 sought information on fishing activities, including who participated, what they caught and whether and with whom the catch was shared. Question 11 concerned gardening. Because of the great variety of crops and diversity of procedures involved, I developed a supplemental Household Daily Production Questionnaire (Appendix C) on which I asked respondents to tally garden activities. The crops included starchy root and tree crops, coconuts, fruits and vegetables. I asked for amounts harvested, sold, given away, used by household, or planted each day. Some of the responses on this tally sheet as well as answers to Question 10 about fish distribution

served as cross-checks with information recorded in answer to previous questions about giving things (Question 5) or obtaining money (Question 4).

Question 12 addressed copra production. Responses here were also compared with the Daily Production Questionnaire, and with answers to Question 3 about earning money. In addition, the local branch of the Rotuma Cooperative Association gave me copies of their monthly records for each household account, including copra sales as well as total amount of store purchases. (The latter provided a way of checking the accuracy of expenditures recorded in Question 1.)

Because preparing a meal in an earthen oven (*koua*) was a fairly labor-intensive task, albeit it one that could be undertaken on ordinary as well as special occasions, I included a question about this work in Question 13. This provided information on whether men worked alone or had assistance in each case.

In Question 14 I asked women to record weaving or sewing activities, including where they worked and how long, what the projects were, and what if anything they finished on a given day.

Questions 15 and 16 directly addressed the issue of assistance, asking whether anyone from the household helped someone else, or was helped each day. These questions were used to confirm and supplement responses to preceding questions about labor and production (10-14).

The final question concerned participation in community activities. Based on my preliminary study I was aware that a

considerable amount of time was devoted to meetings, rehearsals, church services or other gatherings. I also included this question as a gauge of social involvement beyond the interhousehold level.

The Questionnaire Experience

I conducted the intensive survey of daily household activities for a total of 13 weeks, from July 31 through the October 29, 1989. Three factors dictated the timing and duration of the study: the availability of the survey forms; the intensity of other activities in Oinafa village; and stamina--both mine and the villagers'. When Alan and I returned to Fiji in June, 1989, I arranged to have the questionnaires printed in Suva and then shipped to Rotuma. In the meantime Alan and I flew to the island and got settled--and waited for the boat, which did not arrive until July 29. Meanwhile, however, there was a great deal going on in Oinafa, and people there would have been hard pressed to give any attention to participating in my study. During the month of July alone, I counted a total of 25 events in the village involving multiple households. One week of activities was devoted to preparing for and celebrating a large, traditional style wedding (see Howard and Rensel in press b for a detailed account). Other events celebrated a smaller wedding in the neighboring village of Lopta, three 21st birthdays, and the arrival or departure of visitors. Several households travelled to the south side of the island to commemorate the first anniversary of a family member's death with day long ceremonies for erecting a tombstone (*höt'ák hāfu*). Members of nearly all Oinafa households attended the annual Methodist Church fundraising conference held July 15; leading

up to this, many participated in dance and choir rehearsals, as well as in evening gatherings for family devotions.

Once the boat arrived with the survey forms, I quickly sought the permission of the district chief and the people of Oinafa village to conduct the daily activities survey. By this time I had spent four and a half months in the community and people were used to having me around. I believe that another reason people were willing to work with me was because of Alan's reputation from previous fieldwork, and his book, *Learning to Be Rotuman* (Howard 1970), with which at least some were familiar.

The 17 households forming the contiguous core of Oinafa village agreed to take part in my study. This involved providing written answers on the Household Daily Activities Questionnaire and Household Daily Production Questionnaire forms, every day for 13 weeks. Tarterani, who had helped to explain my study during the village meeting, accompanied me from house to house every day during the first week of the study to make sure people understood the questions and filled out the forms properly. Thereafter I continued making daily visits to each household to pick up their completed forms and drop off new ones. I spent a few hours each day reviewing and comparing the forms with each other, with my observations, and with institutional records I collected from the local cooperative store, the bank, and the church. Sometimes this review yielded inconsistencies or circumstances I wanted to explore more fully. Initially I had been shy about interviewing people, but because they had given me permission to undertake the study I felt

increasingly comfortable asking people questions to clarify and amplify their written answers.

My daily rounds intensified as I used the opportunity to discuss what was going on with members of various households. These interviews provided me with a much richer understanding of the contexts for, and expectations of exchange behavior. My relationships with people also became increasingly cordial; when I thanked people for their assistance each week with a small gift of cash (\$F5), they often thanked me in return for the work I was doing for Rotuma, and several gave me gifts of food. Finding myself with more bananas or pumpkins than we or our host family could consume, I began to bake breads and cakes and give these as return gifts to one household after another. Many days it was all I could do to make my rounds, collect and distribute forms, interview, write up my notes and journal, and bake and give away banana bread.

By the end of October, the weather was growing ever hotter and more humid. Demands on people's time were intensifying as they prepared for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Methodist Church in Rotuma (see below). We were all relieved to finish the study after 13 weeks.

Meanwhile the island-wide study had gotten underway. In July Alan and I had met with the Rotuma Council and obtained their permission to conduct the study. We initiated the survey during the two week school break in August, with the help of fourteen school teachers. We hosted them to a full-day training workshop and luncheon before they set out to conduct the survey. As each teacher

finished interviewing the households in their assigned area, we reviewed their answers and made lists of questions needing clarification. On Tuesdays, which were school banking days, we rode around the island with staff from the bank, meeting with teachers at each school while the children did their banking. On the whole this approach worked very well. Unfortunately the individuals enlisted to survey the district of Pepjei and part of the district of Noa'tau were unable to complete their assignments. However, by December, 1989, the remaining teachers had completed surveys of 85 percent (415) of Rotuma's households.

The island-wide survey provided important background and comparative information, particularly about absentee household members, remittances, household inventories and housing histories (see Chapters 5 through 8). The breadth of this survey complements the richly detailed but geographically restricted daily activity survey I conducted in Oinafa. At the same time, context is clearly central in the latter. In the next section I examine the idiosyncracies of the location and timing of my intensive study.

Field Site

Rotuma Island

Rotuma is relatively remote, located 465 kilometers northwest of the northernmost island in the Fiji group, and only slightly closer to Futuna, its nearest neighbor (see map, Figure 2.1). Although politically affiliated with Fiji for more than a century, Rotuma's

people are culturally and linguistically distinct, with strong ties to Polynesian islands to the east such as Tonga and Samoa.

A volcanic island of 43 square kilometers, Rotuma's interior is hilly with its highest crater rising to just over 200 meters above sea level (Woodhall 1987:1, 9). Most people reside along the coast, which is surrounded by a fringing coral reef and a small number of offshore islets. The reef varies in width and productivity; likewise, there are differences in soil development around the island. On the western side of Rotuma, older volcanic flows have weathered sufficiently to form a deep, fertile soil, but about a third of the island, including most of the eastern end, is composed of rocky soils (Ladefoged 1993:82, 120).

Rotumans recognize several other features which distinguish one place and its people from another. In Rotuman cosmology, the east is associated with chiefly status and the west with commoner status, so the easternmost districts of Noa'tau and Oinafa are considered chiefly in contrast to other districts (Howard 1985, 1986a). The seven districts on the island also differ in size and population, and each district has its own history and unique characteristics. For instance, in colonial times, the government station was established at Ahau in the district of Itu'ti'u, and nearby Motusa became the "town" of the island, with trade stores and a cinema. Motusa's salience declined after the departure of the foreign firms and the rise of the Rotuma Cooperative Association, whose headquarters were established in Noa'tau district in the 1950s. Rotuma High School, and the island's airstrip which opened

in 1981, are located in Malhaha district, making it another kind of gathering place. After the wharf was constructed in Oinafa in the 1970s, Oinafa assumed greater prominence as a port.

Oinafa District

In 1989 there were 316 people in 67 households in Oinafa District, which is composed of three villages--Paptea, Oinafa and Lopta. Compared to districts in the west and south, Oinafa has very rocky volcanic soil. Gardening is difficult, but in response to this challenge many Oinafans consider that they have developed a tradition of working harder than others on the island. Oinafa's environmental limits may have contributed to inter-district aggression in previous centuries, according to a recent thesis by Ladefoged (1993).

Among Rotumans, those from Oinafa have a reputation for being particularly concerned with status, and conservative with regard to custom and protocol. Rotumans from other districts comment frequently on a tendency for Oinafans to intermarry, and genealogical information supports this view: most of the household heads or spouses who participated in my study are related to others in the village in multiple ways, sometimes through both parents (see Oinafa genealogies in Appendix D; see also Chapter 6).

Among the many Rotuman migrants who have succeeded in obtaining good positions in government and business, Oinafans are especially prominent. The pride Oinafa takes in such migrants is reflected in a booklet created by Oinafans at home and in Fiji for the 1989 celebration of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of

Methodist missionaries in Rotuma. Ten pages of the 36-page booklet are devoted to listing the educational and occupational accomplishments of Oinafans. In 1989, Oinafa counted among its sons and daughters the permanent secretaries for the Fiji Ministry of Health and Ministry of Finance, the chief manager of the National Bank of Fiji, the chief of staff of the Fiji Military Forces, the Commissioner Northern, the chief administrative officer of the Prime Minister's office, the chief education officer for secondary schools, and the principal of the Fiji College of Agriculture. Four migrants from Oinafa were ordained ministers, three were doctors, one was a lawyer and two were studying law. Many more were nurses, teachers, accountants, engineers and other professionals, and numerous Oinafa migrants served in the Fiji military and the police forces.

The Context of Events

The events surrounding the missionary commemoration strongly affected the lives of Oinafa residents during my 1989 fieldwork. The organizers decided to hold two events, one in November and one in December. The first was scheduled to reflect the actual anniversary of the November 1839 arrival of the missionaries, and involved primarily Rotumans from the island with a few honored guests from abroad. The December event was organized for the convenience of migrants who could travel to the island more easily during the Christmas holidays. Preparations for both celebrations impacted daily life for months ahead of time as men planted extra taro, yams, pineapple and watermelon, fattened pigs and bought

cows. Women put in long hours plaiting mats to be used and presented during the celebrations, as well as baskets, fans and other items to be sold at bazaars in Suva to raise money for the anniversary events. District and subdistrict groups met frequently to discuss the programs, the construction and layout of shelters (*ri hapa*) and contributions of materials and food. They planned a series of clean-up days leading up to the celebrations, in which groups convened at one area after another to cut grass, pull weeds and trim trees. For weeks in advance, evenings were devoted to rehearsals of hymns by the choir, and dances (*tautoga*) by Oinafa men and women, elders and children alike. In addition, many households readied themselves for visitors by repairing or building extensions to their houses. Relatives in Fiji or abroad helped by sending money, building materials and foodstuffs.

In short, the anniversary celebrations in 1989 provided a focus for activities on many levels for several months. In some ways this is not unusual. A full-scale Rotuman wedding, such as the one that had taken place in Oinafa in late July, can engage the concentrated efforts of a large number of people. The annual island-wide Methodist Church Conference, held in different districts each year, also requires long-term planning and effort, especially on the part of the host district. But the 1989 celebrations in Oinafa were special in involving not just the relatives of a bridal couple, and not only the Methodists of the island. They were designed to bring together Rotumans from Fiji and beyond, with all those who live on Rotuma, including those of other faiths, to celebrate the island's

Christian heritage. And they were intended to recall both Oinafa's role in having welcomed the missionaries, and the subsequent successes of the district. For these reasons, displays of prosperity in dwellings, food and mat production were essential to their goals. Intensive levels of interaction and cooperation were required for months prior to the actual events.

This is not to say there were no disputes. Early on controversy erupted over the venue of the celebration, as a part of the village separated from central Oinafa by uncleared land claimed that the celebration should be centered there, where the missionaries had actually landed. Hard feelings resulted when they were over-ruled by those in the central village. Simmering in the background were other disputes over issues not related to the celebration. In the mid-1980s Oinafa village had installed a large diesel generator, paid for in part by Oinafa migrants in Fiji and in part by a Fiji self-help grant. The use of the generator was plagued with problems, however, because people in the village could not agree on how to pay for fuel and maintenance costs. Disagreements grew so heated that eventually two households cut themselves off, not only from the village electrical system but for many months from almost all village events. In 1989 they were again taking part in community affairs, but maintained their own power supplies. The generator remained a source of contention, and by 1991 it was sitting in the bush, partially dismantled and overgrown with weeds.

During the same period, Oinafa district had split over whether a tourist ship should be allowed to land its approximately 1000

passengers for a day on the beach. Many in the district, especially in Lopta village, were upset with the chief's decision to permit the event. Thereafter Lopta restricted their cooperation in district-wide projects; for instance, they would not assist in laying water pipe beyond the boundaries of their village. Visits by the tourist ship continued nevertheless, including one in 1989; however, disputes over how the landing fees should be distributed led to a two-year moratorium on visits beginning in 1991 (see Chapter 3).

In 1990 feelings against the district chief reached a peak when he, along with some other chiefs, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister seeking the ouster of two Rotuman government officials, and complaining about two Rotuman bank officers, all of whom were from Oinafa. Most of the district were disturbed by this and by the chief's subsequent refusal to apologize for not consulting them before he acted. Although the old chief clung to his title and position, a large segment of the district has since thrown their support behind a new leader whom they now regard as their district chief (see Howard and Rensel 1993; see also Howard 1990). As a result of this dispute interactions among certain households became very constrained, and some people avoided each other entirely for a matter of several months afterwards.

As it happened, however, the only overt dispute in Oinafa in 1989 was the relatively small one over the location of the celebration. During that period the level of community cooperation and solidarity was very high, especially in Oinafa village. The upcoming celebrations provided strong incentives for the people of

Oinafa to pull together and work cooperatively for the honor of their village and district. I believe that had I attempted to conduct my intensive study of interhousehold exchange in 1990, or even in 1988, the pattern of interaction it revealed would have been significantly different--if indeed I could have gained sufficient participation to do it at all.

My experience in returning five years in a row to the same field site highlights the importance of context for research. Clearly there is no ethnographic present, only ever-changing moments in which actors respond to myriad influences and themselves affect changes. Through repeated field trips I was able to observe and document many of the fluctuating circumstances affecting the interpersonal relationships and the conduct of daily life.

Historical and Archival Research

Although the material affluence of most Rotuman households was significantly greater in the late 1980s than in 1960, I was aware that money has been in circulation on the island for more than a hundred years. In order to assess the impact of money on contemporary social relations it was necessary to trace the economic history of Rotuma. I wanted information about available sources and amounts of income in different periods, how Rotumans responded to and created economic opportunities, and for what purposes they used money. I also sought clues about Rotuman exchange practices over time, and the impact of missionaries and

colonization. Fortunately there are ample records available from which to piece together such a history.

I began with the materials Alan had collected since 1959. Of primary interest were excerpts from outgoing letters and reports from colonial representatives on Rotuma, and Minutes of the Rotuma Council, from 1879 through the 1940s. In addition, Alan had amassed numerous published and unpublished records about Rotuma, such as ships' logs and other reports by visitors to the island in the 18th and 19th centuries. There was an assortment of letters and reports from both the Methodist and Catholic missions beginning in the mid-1800s. Other valuable unpublished documents included the field notes of A. M. Hocart, who conducted research on Rotuma for four months in 1913; the notes of Gordon MacGregor, whose 1932 fieldwork was sponsored by the Bishop Museum; a confidential report by J. W. Sykes, an administrative official of the Fiji Government sent to Rotuma to assess island governance, copra production and education in 1948; and notes compiled by Dr. Humphrey Evans, an amateur ethnographer who was District Officer and Medical Officer on Rotuma in 1950. Alan's publications about Rotuma as well as his 1960 field notes were especially helpful.

As part of our 1990 research Alan and I spent several days copying additional materials from the Central Archives of Fiji in Suva and the District Officer's files on Rotuma. Of special value were Rotuma Council Minutes, and quarterly, annual and special reports from the island from the 1950s through the early 1980s. On the island I obtained Rotuma Cooperative Association reports going

back to its inception in 1953. I was also granted access to account records from the Rotuma branch of the National Bank of Fiji, established in 1987.

A 1991 visit to the Mitchell Library in Sydney yielded more in the way of missionary records. With the permission of the Methodist Church we copied letters and diaries from missionaries on Rotuma dating from the mid-1800s. At the Turnbull Library in Wellington, New Zealand, we reviewed the Pacific Manuscript Bureau's microfilm copies of Catholic and Methodist papers, and arranged for copies to be sent to the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii.

Analysis

Compiling the materials, like conducting the field research, was just the beginning. I spent several months perusing the various records, pulling out statistics, drafting diagrams, developing chronologies, comparing interpretations of events, identifying biases, wrestling with inconsistencies.

Meanwhile, Alan and I and a devoted friend, Danielle Juzan, entered the data from the island-wide survey into the computer. This information is now readily available for many kinds of analysis, such as that represented in the study of absentee household members and remittance-sending behavior in Chapter 5.

It took me another year to analyze the information I collected from the daily activity survey. I developed for each household a profile of its income and expenditure patterns, contextualized by

information about household size, composition, and productive activities by household members during the survey period. I tallied the more than 2000 recorded transactions between households in the study, by content of exchange and household pair, on a computer spread sheet which ran over 40 pages. I summarized the exchange networks each household maintained with other households both in and outside the study, evaluating intensity by frequency and types of interaction. I drafted countless kinship diagrams, finally linking them in four which, by going back no more than five generations, represent the blood relationships of all adult members of Oinafa village (Appendix D). This allowed me to identify kinship closeness and evaluate it, as well as comparative wealth and geographic proximity of households, as factors in explaining intensity of interaction. I also considered the history of different relationships, which I had observed and heard about during repeat visits to Oinafa.

Five years after my first visit to Rotuma, I was ready to begin writing this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3

THE ECONOMY OF ROTUMA 1791-1992

In order to appreciate Rotuma's current economic situation it is necessary to consider how it has developed over time. The history of how the inhabitants of this small, remote island have participated in the economy beyond their shores is the focus of this chapter. Rotumans continuously have demonstrated an eagerness for travel and a shrewd interest in trade. But their aspirations have been thwarted by persistent problems of geographic isolation, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of business training. Factors beyond their control, from hurricanes to world-wide political and economic conditions, have impacted local opportunities.

Two themes emerge prominently from a consideration of the economic history of Rotuma over the past two hundred years: flexibility in the face of fluctuating circumstances, and attempts to assert control over some of those circumstances. In this chapter I examine the multiple strands that have contributed to Rotuma's livelihood: local production, external trade, cooperatives, on-island employment, various small-scale enterprises, outmigration and remittances. I then present an overview of income levels and uses of cash in the context of historical periods over the last century. Finally, my 1989 field data permits a discussion of inequalities in income distribution and levels of expenditure among island households.

Local Production

Nineteenth century visitors to Rotuma remarked repeatedly on the island's luxuriant vegetation and appearance of great fertility. Many accounts mention the abundance and variety of trees and garden crops (see e.g., Bennett 1831:198-200, Lesson 1838-9:425, Forbes 1875:223, Allardyce 1885-6:132). Allen's (1895) report is typical:¹

Rotuma has been called the "Garden of the Pacific," because of its beauty and fertility. Whichever way you approach it from the sea, no barren rock meets the eye--it is evergreen. From the highest peak down to the water's edge there are to be seen tens of thousands of cocoanut palms, waving their plume-like heads in the breeze.... The fertility of the soil is very great; everything grows luxuriantly and quickly (Allen 1895:559-60).

Rotumans have long cultivated a range of starchy staple crops (*tē la'ā*, 'food' or literally, 'thing to eat') including taro, yams, sweet potatoes, breadfruit, and bananas, as well as coconuts and numerous fruit varieties (*hue ne 'ai*) such as oranges, papaya, mango, pineapple and watermelon. In recent years cassava and a few non-starchy vegetables have gained in popularity; cucumbers, eggplant and leafy greens (*rau 'ai*) such as Chinese cabbage and *vāti* (called *bele* in Fijian) are being grown by the more adventurous, including classes of schoolchildren. Most Rotuman households keep chickens and pigs, and some raise a few goats or cows as well. Meat (*'i'ini*) from these animals, fish, shellfish, and sometimes seaweeds are eaten as accompaniment to the basic *tē la'ā*.

Despite the island's fecundity, there are limits on the number of residents its natural resource base can support. When Howard

conducted research on Rotuma in 1959–60, the population had surpassed 3000. Rotumans relied on the land not only for subsistence agriculture but also for their primary cash crop, copra. Howard attributes the high number of land disputes during that period to an increased people to land ratio (Howard 1990:265), and concluded that the main stimulus for people leaving Rotuma was population pressure.

By 1986 the total number of Rotumans in Rotuma and Fiji had approximately doubled, but 70 percent resided away from their home island (see Table 3.1). The population on Rotuma has dropped by several hundred since the 1960s, and has remained fairly steady at between 2500–2700, according to both the Fiji Censuses and annual on-island counts during my fieldwork. This would seem to be consistent with the carrying capacity argument.

Over the same period, however, production of local food crops has fallen (Figure 3.1), and the Rotuman diet includes growing proportions of imported foods such as rice and noodles, tinned mackerel and corned beef. There is other evidence of increasing consumer affluence on the island, in the numbers of western-style dwellings built (see Chapter 8), and motor vehicles and household appliances acquired (Table 3.2). Income from copra has increased somewhat since the 1960s, but profits have not kept pace with store expenditures (Figure 3.2). No other major resource-based industries have been developed. It is increasingly obvious that sources of income originating outside Rotuma are supplementing the island's standard of living. While interaction in the regional economy has

Table 3.1
Distribution of Rotumans in Rotuma and Fiji, 1921-1986

Year	Rotuma			Fiji			Total Rotumans	
	Number	Percent of Total	Percent Increase	Number	Percent of Total	Percent Increase	Number	Percent Increase
1921	2112	94%		123	6%		2235	
1936	2543	90%	+20%	273	10%	+122%	2816	+26%
1946	2744	83%	+8%	569	17%	+108%	3313	+18%
1956	2993	68%	+9%	1429	32%	+151%	4422	+33%
1966	3235	56%	+8%	2562	44%	+79%	5797	+31%
1976	2707	37%	-16%	4584	63%	+79%	7291	+26%
1986	2554	30%	-6%	6098	70%	+33%	8652	+19%

Source: Fiji Government, Census Reports

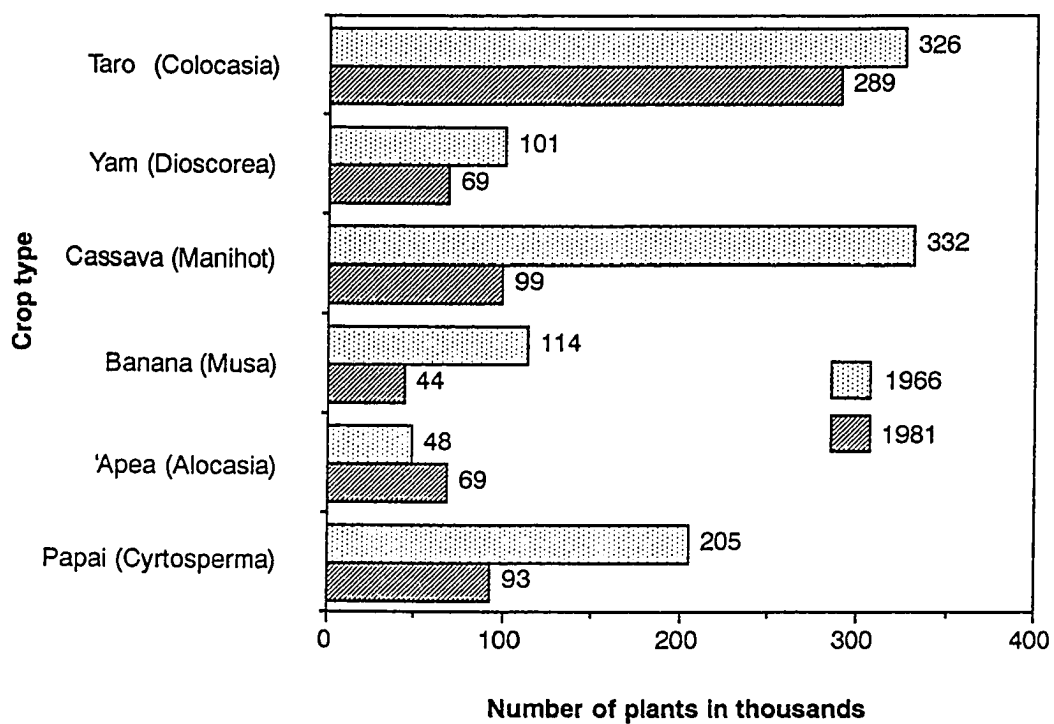


Figure 3.1 Crop plant counts in Rotuma, 1966 and 1981

Source: Records of Rotuma Council, compiled and reported by district chiefs

Table 3.2
Selected consumer goods on Rotuma by years obtained

ITEMS	no date	pre-1970	1970-74	1975-79	1980-84	1984-89	Total Owned
Sewing machines	38	68	55	51	79	59	345
Refrigerators	6	8	8	18	43	38	121
Motorbikes	9	2	9	28	53	75	176
Lawnmowers	4	1	6	9	29	43	92
Bicycles	2	1	5	8	26	38	80
Freezers	3	1	0	5	8	20	37
Generators	1	1	2	1	8	26	39
Cars & Trucks	4	0	0	4	5	18	31
Videos	0	0	0	0	4	22	26
Washing machines	0	0	0	0	1	9	10

Source: 1989 survey of 415 households conducted by Jan Rensel and Alan Howard

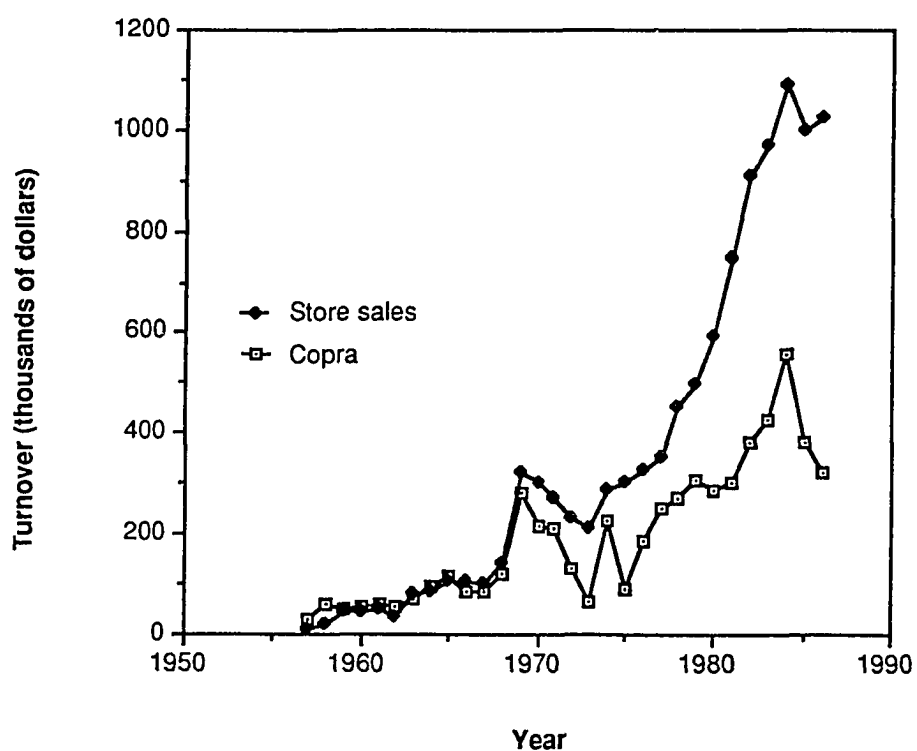


Figure 3.2 Rotuma Cooperative Association turnover, 1957-1986

Source: Rotuma Cooperative Association: Comparative Figures for the years 1957-1986

intensified in recent decades, Rotumans have been engaging in trade outside their island for more than two centuries.

Early Trade

Although there is no indication of a great voyaging tradition, Rotumans have long displayed an orientation toward travel. Legendary and/or linguistic evidence suggests that in the past Rotumans had periodic contacts with Samoa, Tonga, Futuna and Fiji, as well as Tikopia. A likely motivation for venturing to other islands was to seek desirable resources lacking on Rotuma. Rene Lesson, a naturalist aboard the *Coquille* which visited Rotuma in 1824, noted that although there were no oysters on their shores, Rotumans possessed pearl shell ornaments. These were valued highly, along with ivory ornaments made of whale's teeth, and Rotumans were eager to trade even fine woven mats to obtain them (Lesson 1838-9:422). Captain Peter Dillon, who came to Rotuma three years later, reported:

The Rothumans give an account of several islands being in their neighbourhood, one of which they name Vythuboo [Vaitupu, Tuvalu]. As this island abounds with a kind of white shells much in demand at Rothuma, the natives of that island make frequent voyages to Vythuboo for the purpose of procuring them.... There are at present residing at Rothuma some natives of Vythuboo and of the Newy Islands [Nui, Tuvalu], who expect to sail homeward in a few weeks (Dillon 1829:103).

The first European ship to record interaction with the people on Rotuma was *HMS Pandora* in 1791, searching for mutineers from the *Bounty*. According to Captain Edwards of the *Pandora*, the Rotumans

at first seemed cautious and prepared to make war with them, but the ship's crew eventually overcame their reluctance with encouragement and presents, and successfully negotiated for water and other supplies (Thompson 1915:64-66).

By the early nineteenth century, Rotuma was a favorite stopping place for whaling ships. Whalers could obtain such provisions as coconuts, yams, pigs, and chickens, tobacco, as well as "some very fine mats" in exchange for whales' teeth, tortoise-shell, beads, and tools such as knives, axes, and fishhooks (see e.g., Dillon 1829:94; Bennett 1831:475; Lesson 1838-9:424). The number of documented visits by whaling ships peaked in the 1840s (see Figure 3.3). By the 1870s, however, some ships' captains were complaining about the high prices demanded by Rotumans. Reverend William Fletcher, a Methodist missionary living on the island in 1875, wrote:

Persons well acquainted with business transactions with the natives of Samoa, Fiji, Tonga and many other places have expressed much surprise on coming to Rotuma. A trader venturing here with or without his family might find that he cd. [sic] supply his most moderate wants but with the greatest difficulty, if at all, and at exorbitant prices (Methodist Church of Australasia, Letters Received, May 24, 1875).

A ship's doctor, Litton Forbes, made a similar observation during his time on the island in 1872, saying that basic foods were not nearly so cheap as in the New Hebrides [Vanuatu] or the Admiralty Islands, and that "Of late years the wealth of the little community has largely increased, and the price of every kind of provisions has become so high that whalers have almost ceased to visit the island" (Forbes 1875:226).

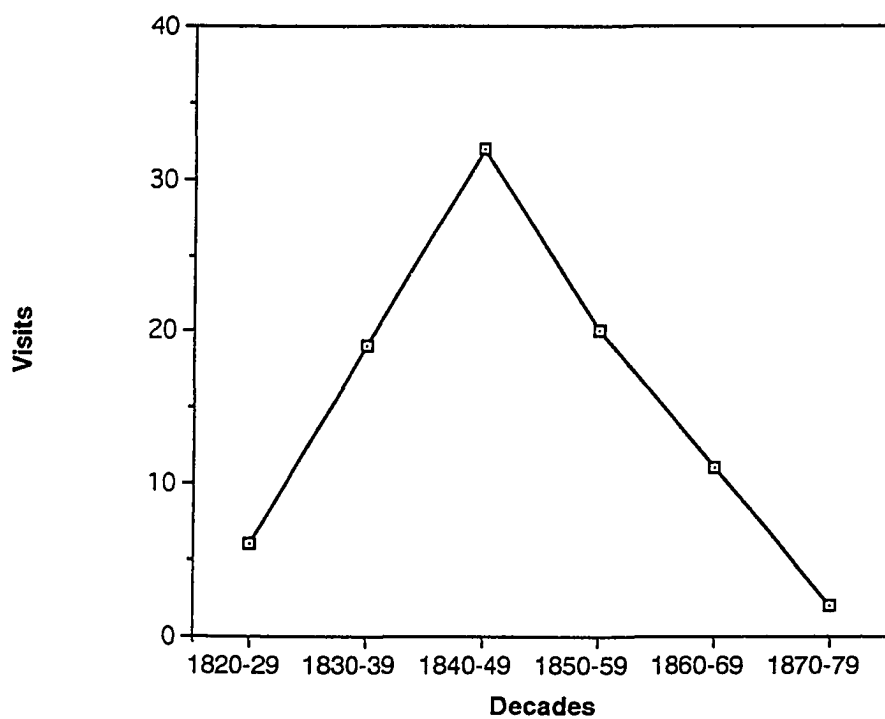


Figure 3.3 Documented visits to Rotuma by whaling ships

Source: Pacific Manuscript Bureau, Whaling Logs

Sailing and Copra

Rotuma's wealth was growing from two other sources. Following the incursion of Europeans into the Pacific, Rotuman men eagerly seized opportunities to sign on as crew for passing ships, earning both good wages and a reputation for competence and reliability (see e.g., Boddam-Whetham 1876:272). Besides sailing, a considerable number of Rotumans worked in the pearl fisheries in the Torres Straits, not only diving but managing the boats (Rotuma District Office, November 24, 1884; Allardyce 1885-6:132). Going to sea became an expected part of the life cycle of young Rotuman men (for an in-depth study of Rotuman seafaring, see Howard in press a). Sometimes chiefs were given trade goods such as cloth, rifles and jew's-harps to allow their young men to emigrate (Forbes 1875:247). The money and goods the men sent or brought back to their families were valued income sources (see e.g., Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1886).

Rotumans also began a brisk trade in coconut oil, which gave way to copra in the 1870s. By the early 1880s there were five trading firms on Rotuma, exporting about 250 tons of copra annually (Allardyce 1885-6:137). Coconut oil and copra rather than cash were often used as payments, for instance, of the taxes assessed by the colonial government (see the Rotuma Council Minutes of February 5, 1942, for a history of taxation on Rotuma). Both Catholic and Methodist missionaries, who became established on the island around the mid-nineteenth century, also encouraged their Rotuman

converts to make contributions and to pay fines for breach of regulations in the form of coconut oil or copra.² Rev. Osborne recorded an instance in which some of the chiefs asked his help in trading coconut oil for a couple of whaleboats (Methodist Church of Australasia, Letters Received 1872).

After cession to the British Crown in 1881, Rotuma was incorporated into the Colony of Fiji, and was closed as a port of entry. Rotumans continued to seek opportunities for earning and adventure on ships, though they had to go through Fiji to do so. Copra also had to be shipped through Fiji. Until 1904 the trade was carried between Rotuma and Fiji on sailing ships, but in 1905 a steamer service was initiated (Rotuma District Office, July 27, 1911). Various firms handled copra and sold imported foods and other goods on Rotuma, the most long-lived being Morris Hedstrom and Burns Philp.

Over the past century Rotuma's copra production has fluctuated dramatically (Figure 3.4). Several factors have contributed to the fluctuations, including environmental and other conditions on Rotuma, demand for copra on the world market, and local prices offered by the firms handling copra sales. Hurricanes in 1939, 1948 and 1972 resulted in marked drops in production. The annual report of 1943 blamed an outbreak of coconut bud rot for low yield in that year, and the 1968 report cited aging trees for falling production. Local infrastructural factors also affected copra sales. The availability of motorized transport allowed increased output in 1924, while insufficient drying and storage facilities, combined

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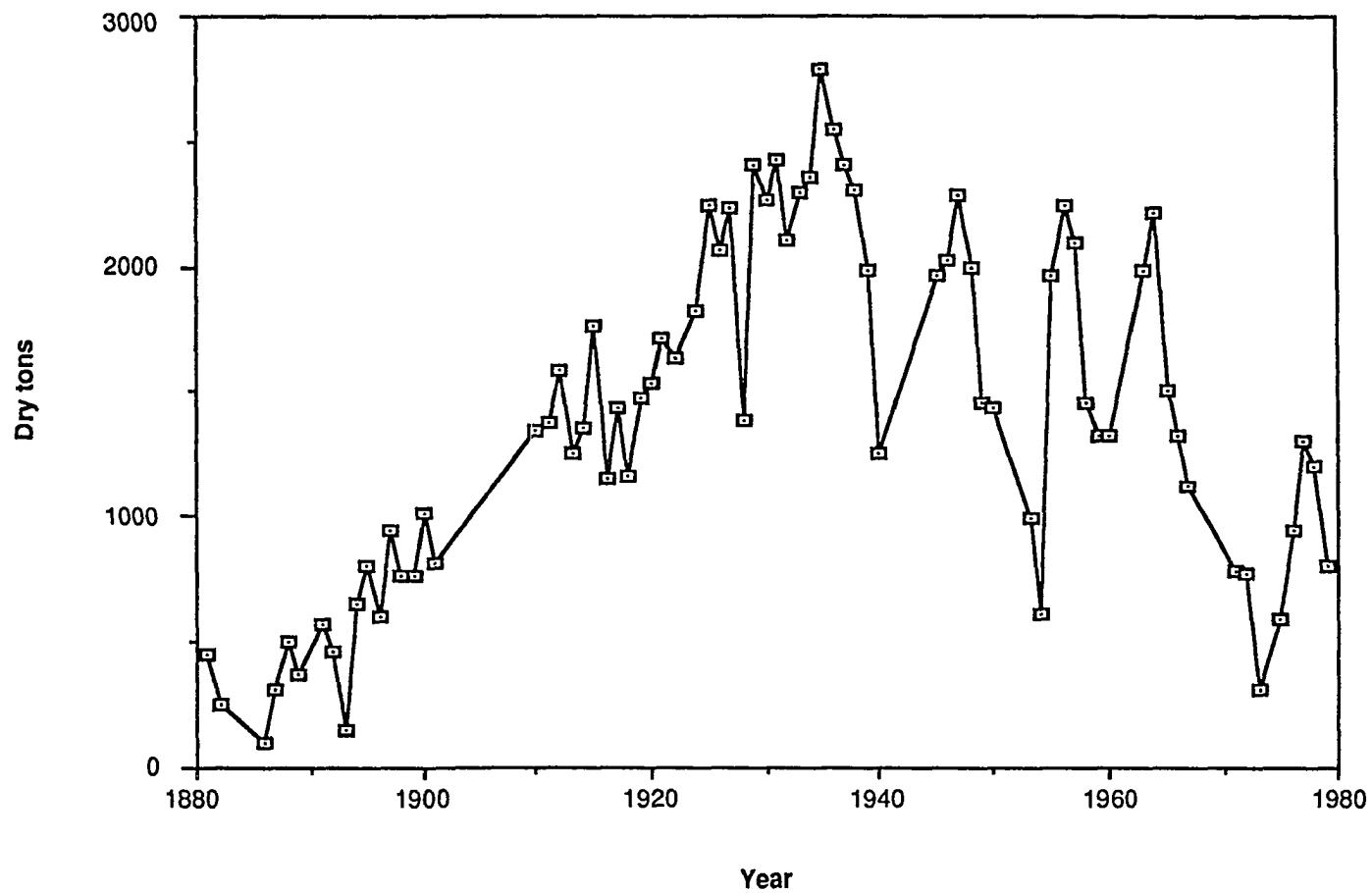


Figure 3.4 Estimated copra exports from Rotuma for selected years, 1881-1979

Source: Rotuma District Office, Outward Letters: Annual Reports

with inadequate shipping, forced Rotumans to limit production in the 1940s and the late 1960s.

Copra prices also had an impact on the amount of copra Rotumans cut, though the result was not always consistent. In 1935 Rotumans produced a record amount of copra when the price was low. More often however they responded to low prices by turning to food gardening, or to raising pigs which "always command a large money price on the island" (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1886). When demand for copra increased, as it did during World War II, Rotumans "dropped everything and cut copra," so much so that the Rotuma Council decided to limit the number of days people could make copra in order to ensure they also worked in their gardens (Rotuma Council, March 5, 1942).

Although world demand set the overall price for copra, local prices paid on Rotuma reflected additional costs in bagging and shipping it to ports in Fiji such as Suva or Levuka. This discrepancy in price was an issue of much concern among Rotumans, who were also upset about price fluctuations, and suspected the firms handling copra sales on the island of treating them unfairly. In 1926 Rotumans boycotted the firms for about six months, buying nothing and selling no copra (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1935). Resident Commissioner Hugh MacDonald explained to the chiefs the mechanics of the copra trade, including the extra costs of shipping to Fiji, but relations between Rotumans and the firms were not congenial except when prices improved on the world market (see Rotuma Council Minutes from 1914-1921).

Another source of contention was the wage paid to the men who worked for the firms, drying and bagging copra and loading vessels. When copra prices rose, Rotumans could earn more by cutting copra than by working for the firms, who then were hard pressed to find laborers. Sometimes Rotumans even hired Fijians or other Rotumans to cut their copra (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1920; Rotuma Council, October 8, 1942 and March 14, 1952; Sykes 1948). In order to pay higher wages and maintain their profits, the firms cut the rate paid for copra and charged high prices for store goods (Rotuma District Office, Quarterly Report July 1, 1924; Rotuma Council, January 7, 1943).

The Cooperative Movement

Rotumans made a number of attempts to gain control over the copra trade and shipping. Acting Resident Commissioner A. E. Cornish recorded some of this history in a 1934 letter to the colonial secretary in Suva:

(1) They bought a schooner, the 'UJIA', and carried their copra in their own vessel to Fiji. This vessel was later wrecked at Rotuma, uninsured [in 1903, per Eason 1951:113].

(2) They invited the Fiji Planters Cooperative Association to open branches at Rotuma. In this case they gave all labour for the loading of vessels, bagging of copra etc., free. Upon the withdrawal of this concern from the Island, many of them lost sums of money up to £40 for copra owing to them.

(3) They later subscribed a sum of about £1120 for the initial payment for a schooner which was to cost £5000. This was for the purpose of carrying their copra to Sydney and to return with goods. The sum was later dealt with in the Rotuma Shipping Fund.

(4) They invited A. M. Brodziak Ltd. to trade in Rotuma and supported that firm with free labour etc. as in the case of (2). In this case they also signed contracts for the supply of quantities of copra over a period of one year.... The contracts were broken to an extreme by A.M. Brodziak three months after signing but the signees still sold their copra to Brodziak Ltd. for the remainder of the year at £1 per ton less than other traders offered simply because they had 'signed.'

(5) They invited the owner of the 'LEI VITI' to make periodic trips to Rotuma for the purpose of bringing their copra to Suva for sale. In this case although they were definitely receiving, after all expenses were paid, at least £1 per ton less than they could have got at Rotuma with no trouble to themselves, they persisted with this scheme for about 18 months.

(6) They commenced, in a small way, in 1933 a Cooperative Association, called the Rotuma Cooperative Association. This concern is supposed to be registered in Suva...they sold shares and opened a store. The store is now closed and the shareholders are wondering where is their money (Rotuma District Office, November 16, 1934).

The move to form local cooperatives got a boost in 1947 when the colonial administration passed an ordinance (No. 11 of 1947) establishing the position of Registrar of Cooperative Societies. Several groups on Rotuma decided to form cooperatives, and eventually five "canteens" emerged around the island. They struggled to survive with little capital, no management or bookkeeping experience, and antagonism from the firms, who sometimes refused to do business with the co-ops or any of their members.

Things came to a head with an incident in 1951. A shipment of goods was off-loaded at Motusa, and in order to distribute it the various cooperatives needed a truck. Previously they had rented

trucks from the firms, but this time the manager of Burns Philp refused. Rather than allow their stock to rot in the sun, the cooperatives mobilized to transport the goods on foot. The image of co-op members carrying sacks of flour and sugar, cases of corned beef and other foods, and rolling 44-gallon drums of fuel along the island's rough roads had a strong impact on other Rotumans and emboldened them to join the fight against the firms.

In 1953 a Rotuman named Wilson Inia, who had been teaching school in Fiji, came to Rotuma on furlough and was invited to found a high school on the island. He accepted, and in the interim was appointed headmaster of one of the primary schools. He immediately took interest in the fledgling cooperative movement. Inia arranged for the Registrar of Cooperatives to send someone to teach basic business skills and advise the people about cooperative management. Besides his school responsibilities, Inia held informational meetings around the island and taught adult bookkeeping classes. He emphasized that careful accounting and regular audits were essential, for in order to survive the cooperatives had to earn people's trust (for more on Wilson Inia see Howard in press b).

Inia helped to organize an association of the local co-ops called the Rotuma Cooperative Association (RCA). Under his guidance, RCA flourished at a time when cooperatives in Fiji were foundering. By 1961 the subscribed capital of RCA was approximately four times that of the combined Fijian societies for that year (£23,754 compared to £5797), although the Rotuman membership (485) was less than half the number of Fijian

cooperative members (1293) (Howard 1970:153). RCA continued to grow, taking over an increasing share of the copra trade (see Table 3.3). By prohibiting transactions between their members and the firms, the RCA succeeded in weakening the firms' business. Morris Hedstrom and Burns Philp finally were forced to close up shop on the island by the end of 1968.

For the next 20 years RCA dominated copra trade and store sales on the island. After the death of Wilson Inia in 1983 the RCA continued to apply his principles of accounting, but the leadership suffered from lack of business acumen and vision. Customers who desired better service and a wider range of products grew dissatisfied with RCA. Personal conflicts also contributed to attempts over the years to form rival co-ops, such as the Rotuman Planters' Association (1963-67) and the Rotuman Development Corporation (1975-79), but these efforts were short-lived.

The Raho Cooperative, begun in 1977, originally faltered under financial mismanagement, but was reorganized in 1990 with help from Rotumans in Fiji with business experience and an American, John Bennett, who is married to a Rotuman. With the aid of several grants and a few bank loans Raho has expanded and improved its infrastructure including new copra dryers, fuel dispensing facilities and a walk-in freezer for frozen foodstuffs. The new Raho management has made a conscious practice of responding to customer demand for products and offering a better price for copra than RCA. By 1992 Raho reportedly was handling more copra than RCA and an ever increasing share of store sales.

Table 3.3
Tons of green copra purchased on Rotuma

1953-1967						
Year	Total	BP	MH	RCA (% of total)		PA
1953	1980	724	1256			
1954	1218	614	604			
1955	3929	1715	2214			
1956	4503	1523	2545	435	(10%)	
1957	4196	1042	2021	1133	(27%)	
1958	2912	595	878	1439	(49%)	
1959	2643	417	605	1621	(61%)	
1960	2653	361	425	1867	(70%)	
1961	4421	740	619	3062	(69%)	
1962	3794	591	426	2777	(73%)	
1963	3964	633	300	3025	(76%)	4
1964	4440	686	404	3349	(75%)	0
1965	3017	403	267	2346	(78%)	0
1966	2744	291	22	2431	(89%)	0
1967	2242	61	0	2071	(90%)	109

1975-1980				
Year	Total	RCA	RDC	Raho
1975	1184	1078	107	
1976	1883	1772	112	
1977	2612	2497	115	
1978	2410	2052	65	293
1979	1612	1310	294	8
1980	2290	1965	0	326

Source: Rotuma District Office, Outward Letters: Reports

Figures are rounded off to nearest ton, so combined subtotals do not always add up exactly to totals.

BP = Burns Philp; MH = Morris Hedstrom; RCA = Rotuma Cooperative Association; PA = Planters' Association; RDC = Rotuma Development Corporation

Employment on Rotuma, 1960-1992

The exodus of the firms in the late 1960s due to the rise of the RCA meant a loss of some jobs at a time when there were few opportunities for earning wages on the island. In his 1960 study, Howard had recorded 16 Rotumans working for Morris Hedstrom & Burns Philp, not only as copra handlers but as clerks, storekeepers, carpenters and other skilled laborers. Other employers were few in 1960: 28 Rotumans reported working for the government, including 14 teachers, 1 nurse and 3 clerks. The nascent RCA employed 23 Rotumans as storekeepers, secretaries, skilled workers and other laborers. Three other people worked for private individuals and one, a minister, was employed by the Methodist Church (Howard field notes 1960).

Although still very limited, opportunities for employment on Rotuma have more than doubled in the past 30 years. According to the 1989 survey, 174 individuals earned wage income, and the numbers have grown since then. The Fiji government continues to be the largest employer on Rotuma. According to 1992 government figures, there are 37 school teachers and 69 other government employees. In the same year, the RCA listed a total of 78 workers, making it still the second largest source of jobs. The Raho Cooperative has grown from two employees in 1989 to more than 30 employees in 1992.

Other than working for the government or one of the cooperatives, there are few other wage-earning opportunities on

Rotuma. A small number of Rotumans work for the various religious denominations on the island, for the local branch of the National Bank of Fiji, or for Fiji Air. In 1989 three people reported owning retail shops, and seven individuals were hiring themselves out as skilled or domestic workers. In addition 15 retired government workers reported pension income. A total of 201 individuals, all between the ages of 16 and 76, were listed as earning income on the 1989 survey. This represents 16 percent of Rotuma residents between those ages, or one in six. Because 28 households included two, three, or even four persons with earned incomes, only 167 (40 percent) of the 415 households surveyed included wage, pension, or self-employed earners.

Other Contemporary Income Sources

There are a variety of other ways to obtain cash on Rotuma, though opportunities come and go, and income from these sources tends to be small and sporadic.

Casual Labor

Periodically Rotumans earn money by working on short-term projects for the government or one of the cooperatives. For instance, the Post and Telegraph hired laborers for several weeks in 1989 to dig trenches for laying the wire for the new radio telephone system from the government station in Ahau to other villages in Itu'ti'u district. More frequently, men can make small amounts of

money from the co-ops by helping to load and unload copra and supplies from the boats, or by drying copra.

Copra

Copra has declined in importance as a major source of income, although it remains Rotuma's main export. Because of the world wide slump in prices it is difficult for people to earn large sums through copra sales. Income from copra has not kept pace with store expenditures at the RCA for more than 20 years, and the gap increased dramatically in the 1980s (refer back to Figure 3.2).

Today copra cutting is pursued only by those without other earning options, or on occasion for special purposes, such as a church fundraiser. During my 13 week survey of activities in Oinafa village in 1989, only six out of 17 households cut any copra, and one man recorded using his copra earnings exclusively for cigarettes.

Other Exports

Periodically, Rotuman entrepreneurs have exported to Fiji surplus crops such as yams and taro, or fish, lobster and other seafoods. Rotuma's fruits, especially its delicious oranges, have also been sold in Fiji from time to time, but for a variety of reasons the bulk of the annual orange crop simply rots where it falls after the island's residents have eaten their fill (see e.g., Rotuma District Office, Annual Reports of 1937, 1971, and 1980). Export enterprises are plagued by problems of storage, shipping, marketing and management, and most have met with only small scale, short-term success.

Dried kava was a moderately successful export in the late 1800s. A few tons exported annually earned kava producers perhaps two hundred pounds a year, but few producers export it today. Occasionally over the years Rotumans have attempted producing other cash crops such as coffee, cocoa, vanilla, maize and peanuts, usually at the urging of the government. But difficulties with poor seed or complicated cultivation techniques, added to problems of transportation and marketing, have doomed most projects to failure (see e.g., Rotuma District Office, Annual Reports of 1884, 1918, 1940-43). In 1980, crops other than copra made up less than 14 percent of Rotuma's exports (MAF "Rotuma Resource Survey", 1981 Vol. II p. 4. cited in Fiji Government 1982).

Rotuman mats and other handicrafts are occasionally exported, particularly to migrants in Fiji for their own use or for sale. For instance, in 1993, a Rotuman woman from Lautoka was contacted by a friend in the hotel business who usually procured pandanus baskets and trays for the hotel chain from Tonga. The friend indicated it would be cheaper if she could find someone locally, within Fiji, to make the items. The Lautoka woman went to her relatives on Rotuma and demonstrated the type of products that were needed. Women from around the island heard about it and asked the Lautoka woman to show them how to make the items too. In all the women earned over \$F2000 in a matter of days for their labor, and eagerly await another such opportunity.³

On-island Trade

More successful than export projects have been Rotumans' efforts to tap the cash resources of others on the island. Because pigs are always required for Rotuman feasts, raising and selling them to one another has been a reliable way to make a small profit for over a century (see Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1886; Lambert 1941). Cows are also butchered for sale, sometimes commanding high prices for the meat; in 1947 District Officer Josefa Rigamoto felt compelled to ask the Rotuma Council to fix prices for cattle and other animals in order to protect the public from the exorbitant prices some Rotumans were charging (Rotuma Council, April 10, 1947).

Most Rotuman households still maintain root crop gardens and raise at least a few animals for food. Although giving each other food remains an important sign of kinship and *hanisi* 'love, compassion', most people buy food items from other Rotumans from time to time (see Chapter 7 regarding reciprocal and monetary exchange). Rotumans continue to sell each other pigs and other animals when a need arises. Those who are successful fishing, especially the few with boats which can go beyond the reef, find many on the island who are eager to buy their catch. Besides at least seven small retail shops selling imported food and goods, many roadside stalls have sprung up recently to sell local produce, especially near the government station. While usually those who buy taro and yams are wage-earners, some are farmers whose own crops are not yet mature or adequate when a need arises.⁴ Those who

grow kava are also finding a ready market on the island. In 1960, kava-drinking was reserved primarily for ceremonies, but many Rotumans today, influenced by experiences in Fiji, drink kava socially on a regular basis.

Rotuman handicrafts, including pandanus leaf fans, baskets, hats and mats, are sometimes sold on the island, especially in the context of fundraising bazaars. Fine white mats (*apei*), which are the highest indigenous valuable, are usually given to others in formal ceremonies, but occasionally Rotumans have to buy them from women who produce them. In recent years fewer young women are learning the painstaking art of making *apei*, to the dismay of their elders. With fewer producers, but a growing population, the increased demand has driven up the price of a small *apei* (6' x 4') from £3-4 (\$US7.50-10.00) in 1960 to \$F200-400 (\$US134-268) in 1993. Inflation alone cannot account for this dramatic increase.

Labor and Services

Colonial representatives frequently reported that Rotumans hired each other (or Fijians) to cut their copra or work in their yam gardens (see e.g., Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1920; Lambert 1941; Rotuma Council, October 8, 1942; January 7, 1943; and March 14, 1952; Sykes 1948). During my fieldwork in the late 1980s and early 1990s I observed several instances in which money was received in exchange for labor, such as help with gardening, cooking or laundry (see Chapter 7). Although in many cases the amounts given were fairly standard for a day's work, those I

interviewed insisted these money transfers were not wages, but *te fakhanisi* 'gifts' in thanks for services. This was particularly the case between close relatives and co-residents of a village. Some went to great lengths to ensure that transactions were couched in terms of reciprocity, by providing meals and other small gifts such as cigarettes or items of clothing in addition to cash.

There are two arenas however in which it has become more usual to pay a set rate for services rendered. One is house construction, especially when skilled workers do plumbing, electrical wiring and so on (see Chapter 8). Another is the provision of transportation. Increasing numbers of Rotumans own trucks and offer rides to individuals or groups at standard rates depending on distance. Even relatives accept this practice, acknowledging the cost of fuel and maintenance (see Chapters 6 and 7).⁵

Tourism

To date Rotuma's tourism potential remains largely untapped. Divisions on the issue are rife on the island, both as to the potential benefits and drawbacks to permitting tourism, and with regard to how any income would be distributed if it were allowed. There have been some experiments. Visitors come to the island from time to time, having arranged accommodation with families, and generally reciprocate their hosts with gifts and/or money.

The first large-scale tourist venture took place in 1986, when Atfoa Varea, a retired Rotuman civil servant living in Suva, arranged to have the Australian tourist ship *Fairstar* stop at Rotuma. The

plan was for the ship to disgorge its approximately 1000 passengers for a day on the beach at Oinafa where they could swim, sunbathe, be entertained by groups performing traditional dances, have lunch and buy Rotuman handicrafts. The idea met with spirited debate on Rotuma. Opponents, led by Methodist clergy, argued that Rotuman moral standards would be threatened by the immodest dress and behavior of the tourists. Some felt that Rotumans would become greedy and money-grasping given this type of opportunity. Those on the other side emphasized the monetary benefits accruing to the island, and the limited effect of hosting people for a day compared to the heavier impacts of hotel development. Eventually the Rotuma Council voted against allowing the ship to come to Rotuma. However, Kausiriaf, the chief of Oinafa district (and brother of Atfoa), decided to defy the Council's ban and allowed the ship to visit.

Although many residents of the district objected, the *Fairstar's* 1986 visit occurred without incident. The ship paid \$F4000 in docking fees to Kausiriaf to cover expenses with the remainder to be distributed to the kin groups holding beachfront lands. Reportedly an additional \$F6000 was earned by Rotumans selling food and souvenirs to the tourists. Because of this success, the *Fairstar* was allowed to make repeat visits over the next few years, including once in 1989 during my fieldwork. In addition to selling food and handicrafts, Rotumans with vehicles made money by giving tourists rides around the island or renting out their motorbikes. Disputes between some Oinafa landowners and

Kausiriaf, however, forced the cancellation of a scheduled *Fairstar* visit in 1991. The shipping company, beset by letters of complaint from factions competing for control of landing fees, has declared a two-year moratorium on visits to Rotuma (see Howard and Rensel 1993 for more background on the dispute). Meanwhile an island-wide committee has been formed to discuss the tourism issue, to formulate policies and to determine how any future revenues should be distributed.

Bank Loans

Although loans are not income, they are a significant means of access to ready cash and affect economic behavior on Rotuma. In 1988 the Rotuma branch of the National Bank of Fiji began granting loans to individuals with wages or other demonstrable means of repayment. A few Rotumans took out business loans, for instance to stock a retail shop, supply a bakery, finance a yam export project, and purchase trucks to be hired out to the Raho Cooperative. In addition, from January 1988 to June 1990 more than 130 individuals took out personal loans, ranging from \$F58 to \$F27000; the average loan was about \$F3300. Personal loans usually were intended to pay for housing improvements or to purchase vehicles, household appliances and furnishings. According to bank records, most of the loans were being repaid on schedule. In a few cases relatives in Fiji or abroad had to contribute a significant share toward repayment, in effect as remittances.

Remittances from relatives who have migrated to Fiji and abroad are perhaps the most significant source of cash and material goods for Rotumans today. In the next section I briefly outline the employment of Rotuman migrants and the extent of financial support they provide to their families back home. I analyze remittances in more detail in Chapter 5.

Outmigration and Remittances

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, 70 percent of Rotumans now live in areas of Fiji other than Rotuma. Given the limited money-making opportunities on Rotuma, this should not be surprising. Fiji's diversified economy provides a much broader employment base. In 1960 Howard conducted a survey of Rotumans in several locations in Fiji: Suva, Levuka, Lautoka, Vatukoula, and Tavua. He found 294 Rotumans with jobs--four times as many as on Rotuma that year--including 85 employed by the government, and 133 working in the gold mines in Vatukoula (Howard field notes 1960). At the mines a higher percentage of Rotumans than of Fijians had risen to supervisory positions (Howard 1970:152-3). Such mobility was also apparent in other occupations including the professions, where Rotumans were over-represented compared to other ethnic groups based on proportions of the total population of Fiji according to the 1956 Fiji census.

As migration to Fiji continues to swell, the numbers of Rotumans employed there also grows. According to the 1976 census, 583 Rotumans in Fiji worked for the government while 1042 held

positions in the private sector.⁶ Although quite a number of Rotumans in Fiji earn low wages, Rotumans as a whole continue to hold more than their proportion of professional positions and top civil service jobs relative to the population of Fiji (see Kaurasi 1991:168; Bryant 1990:142-3).

Since early on, when Rotumans made money abroad they frequently sent or brought it back to relatives on the island as cash or materials goods (see e.g., Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1886; Rotuma Council, December 3, 1942).⁷ In 1976 the Rotuma District Officer estimated that an average of \$F5000 to \$F6000 per month were telegraphed to Rotuma's Post Office (Plant 1991:210). Although prices on Rotuma for some commonly purchased foodstuffs such as tinned corned beef have more than doubled in recent years, the flow of TMO funds has at least been keeping pace; monthly amounts for the years 1982-1988 averaged over \$F10,000 in telegraphic money orders.⁸ These figures do not include cash or checks mailed or brought to the island by visitors. In addition, migrants send material support such as foodstuffs, vehicles, building materials and household goods. Although not all Rotumans receive them and the amounts and frequency vary greatly, remittances in cash and kind are of great importance to the standard of living on the island.

In summary, for most of the past two centuries people on Rotuma have relied on copra sales as their main source of cash income. In recent decades wages and remittances have surpassed copra in importance. A number of individuals earn money from on-

island sales and services, while a few supplement their income with sporadic exports or occasional tourist monies.

Income Levels, Uses, and Distribution

Little longitudinal information on income other than copra revenues has been recorded on Rotuma. Even using available information on copra income, assessing the financial prosperity of the island over time is a complicated process. Records are fragmentary, reported in different terms by successive colonial officials (for example, copra income before or after taxes, value of copra shipped or copra produced). In addition currency values⁹ fluctuated, as well as local prices of consumer goods. Per capita estimates give the impression that all households participated in copra production, and that households with many dependents produced proportionately more, which is not necessarily the case.

However it is possible to get a general sense of income levels in various periods from colonial records. I have attempted to contextualize income estimates for each period with examples of contemporaneous monetary needs and uses. Data on income distribution among households is drawn from fieldwork conducted in 1989.

1881-1899

In the first two decades of colonial rule the Resident Commissioners estimated annual per capita income by dividing copra revenues by population. From 1881 to 1899, yearly income per person ranged

between a low of 6 shillings (in 1887) to a high of £2/5 (in 1894), averaging a little over a pound and a half. Resident Commissioner Mackay reported that incomes were supplemented by remittances (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1886).

To help defray some of the costs of government Rotumans were required to pay taxes, which were assessed proportionally on the districts according to land area. For the first 40 years, districts paid in the form of coconut oil or copra which the government sold.

Since taxes were not paid in cash, Rotumans only needed money for licenses if they had dogs, guns, or bicycles.¹⁰ People also used what money they had to buy clothing, tools and luxury foods when possible. In 1888 for instance, Resident Commissioner Mackay noted that the island's financial prosperity was reflected in the large amount of store goods purchased around Christmas time (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1888).

1910-1927

Following the practice of early colonial administrators, I obtained estimates of annual per capita income for later periods by dividing copra income by population.¹¹ Per capita copra earnings generally increased in the decade 1910-1919, fluctuating from around £6 to a high of £11, with an average of £8/12. Yearly income peaked at over £20 per person in 1920, then averaged £10/12 over the next seven years.

In 1922 Dr. Hugh MacDonald, the Resident Commissioner, demanded that thenceforward taxes be paid in cash, totaling £500

per annum (see Rotuma Council, February 5, 1942). With a population averaging 2200 through the 1920s, the annual tax per capita would have been between 4 and 5 shillings. Rotumans used after-tax income mainly for store purchases such as imported foods.

1930-1941

Few figures are available for copra revenues in the 1930s, but income evidently slumped with the world-wide economic depression. In 1938 the estimated annual per capita income from copra was about £3, dropping to £2 in 1939 and just under £1 in both 1940 and 1941. Rotumans fell back to relying on food from their gardens. Reflecting on the abundance of locally-produced food, Resident Commissioner Cornish suggested that Rotumans were better off in 1938 than they had been in 1921 when they had more money but spent it all on imports:

Although the price of copra was low, no real hardship occurred unless the shortage of money in a land of plenty can be termed a hardship. Rotuma is one of the lands which prove the adage that money does not necessarily bring happiness. Here, money frequently only brings to the people such luxuries as might very well be done without (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1938).

In Cornish's 1940 annual report he continued to laud the island's non-monetary fortunes, including a description of a huge feast which, other than his contribution of a small case of tinned meat, consisted totally of native products: beef, pork, turtle, fowl, duck, yams, taro, bananas, breadfruit, watermelons, pineapples, and various native puddings. Annual taxes were reduced to between £220-£289 during the 1930s. The Rotumans were, however, cash

poor during this period, and many were unable to pay taxes or license fees. Beginning in 1933, Rotumans were legally obliged to work 12 days a year on island road or pay a commutation fee of 10 shillings. Whereas in 1936 they were all paying the road duty commutation, from 1938-1940 many Rotumans elected to work on the roads instead (Rotuma District Office, Annual Reports of 1936-40).

In 1936 school attendance for children ages 6-14 was made mandatory. The Fiji Education Department covered salaries for school headmasters and some teachers, but a local fund was set up to cover costs of assistant teachers, materials, equipment, building repairs and so on. During the second half of 1940 many people could no longer pay their school fees in cash because the firms had stopped paying cash for copra and had instituted a barter system. The money paid by those who could afford it was set aside for school maintenance; other parents were allowed to pay teachers in Rotuman products such as yams, taro and chickens, to the value of their fees (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1940).

1942-1951

Monetary income picked up sharply during World War II. Estimated annual copra earnings rose in 1942 to about £7 per capita, and over the next 10 years soared to an average of £18. Also in 1942, a platoon of 28 Rotumans was drafted to the artillery of the Fiji Defence Force. In addition 173 men, representing about 31 percent of the men from each district, were recruited as laborers. They were given quarters, rationing and wages, plus free transportation to and

from Fiji. These men were employed in Fiji until May 1943, at which time others volunteered to take their places (Rotuma Council, July 2, 1942, and May 6, 1943).

Around this time the commercial firms found it difficult to get enough men to work for them drying and bagging copra. The manpower shortage caused by the war was exacerbated by the fact that while the firms were offering 4 shillings/day, Rotumans were paying each other up to 10 shillings per day to cut copra, and around 7 shillings a day for assistance such as planting yams (Rotuma Council, October 8, 1942). The firms resorted to reducing the price they paid for copra in order to raise the wage they paid copra workers to 6 shillings/day. The chiefs tried, with difficulty, to convince their people to pay one another less, but the people resisted; by 1952 some Rotumans were giving £1 plus food to those who cut their copra. It was also during this period that the Rotuma Council moved to set fixed prices for cattle and other animals in order to prevent their people from charging each other exorbitant prices.

Rotumans were concerned to support the British in the war. In February 1940 they held a special Red Cross fund-raiser on the island but only managed to raise a little over £37. They made no further collections that year because of the lack of available cash, but did send Rotuman mats to Suva for the Red Cross Carnival, where they were sold for high prices (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1940). In 1942 the Rotuma Council discussed how they might contribute to the Fiji Fighter Fund, since they by this time

"had money to spare" (Rotuma Council, May 7, 1942). At the District Officer's suggestion they set up a voluntary program of deductions from copra earnings. The going price for green copra was 1 shilling for 19 pounds; the people unanimously agreed to accept 1 shilling for 20 pounds, with the balance donated to the Fighter Fund.

After three months, the Colonial Secretary sent a telegram to the Rotuma Council, thanking them for their generous support but suggesting that only 25 percent of the monies collected in this way be given to the Fighter Fund. He suggested that the balance be put into the Savings Bank to form a fund for Infant Welfare or other community purposes after the war. While the money was deposited in the Savings Bank, he explained, it was remitted to the United Kingdom and was thus helping the war effort. The Council agreed to this arrangement, and the Rotuma Provincial Fund was established (Rotuma Council, August 13, 1942).

In 1951, District Commissioner Southern, J. W. Skyes, met with the Rotuma Council and reported that in 1951 approximately £90,000 would be paid for copra purchased from Rotumans; given a population of fewer than 3000, the average income per person was over £30. The minutes of the meeting include his reflections:

Evidence of the wave of prosperity that [is] sweeping the island [is] provided by the large number of new bicycles, radios, and expensive store goods purchased by the people and also by the fact that three cinemas [are] able to exist and presumably make a profit. [I understand] that a fourth cinema [is] to be opened early next year and also an ice cream factory¹² (Rotuma Council, December 14, 1951).

The District Commissioner suggested that, given their current state of financial affluence, the Rotumans might want to set aside some of the surplus to benefit the island's future. His proposal to create a Rotuma Development Fund by imposing an assessment ("cess") of £10 per ton of copra met with the Council's enthusiastic approval (Rotuma Council, December 14, 1951). These monies were used for a variety of purposes including supplementing teachers' salaries, running school buses, and an overseas scholarship fund.

1960

Howard's (1970:18) estimate of income per household converts to a range of £14-30 per person in 1960.¹³ Although the subsistence economy was still flourishing, Howard notes that by this time many European products had become necessities rather than luxuries. Tools, building materials, cloth, and kerosene for lanterns and cook stoves were essentials. Tea, biscuits, butter, salt, and sugar were used on a daily basis; corned beef was important for special meals and feasts. A wedding might be postponed if copra prices were too low, because people needed money and the things money could buy in order to put on a proper ceremony. If Rotuma were cut off from access to imported supplies for an extended period, Howard suggests, people would suffer as much as they would in rural communities in Europe or the United States (Howard 1970:18). In addition, Rotumans continued to pay taxes, licenses and fees, and to make donations to churches and other community purposes.

1977-82

Writing in 1977, Chris Plant estimated Rotuma's cash income per capita at \$F233 before taxes (Plant 1991:212). This figure includes remittances (based on an average monthly for the island of \$F5500), but not the value of material gifts sent by Fiji relatives. Nor does it reflect the subsistence agriculture component, which remained significant in supporting the population. While the distribution of cash income was not known (Plant 1991:213), "Rotuman aspirations for the status acquired by possession of European goods" was widespread (Plant 1991:204). Motorbikes were ubiquitous, along with modern house furnishings and luxury goods such as radios and cassette recorders.

A study of Rotuma land development conducted in 1982 reported that all (419) households were involved in agriculture to some extent. In addition, households obtained varying levels of disposable income from wages and casual labor, copra, sales of local produce, remittances, and sales of handicrafts. Expenditures also differed among households, relative to income or lifestyle. Teachers' tax bills, for instance, ranged from 25-30 percent of their gross income, while most other income earners paid a minimum tax of 5 cents on a dollar. Teachers and other wage earners purchased local produce (presumably, rather than relying on their own gardens). Motorcycle owners paid about \$F260/year for fuel and \$F36 for licenses. No fees were charged for primary school children, and low income families could apply for an exemption from paying secondary school fees (Fiji Government 1982).

1989

It is problematic to estimate average annual per capita income for Rotuma in 1989. Aside from the difficulties of obtaining information on unreported income sources discussed above, there is a wide discrepancy between households in the amounts of earnings and remittances received. One in six Rotumans between the ages of 16 and 76 reported wage income, but amounts ranged greatly. Full-time government employees and pensioners generally reported higher incomes than other wage-earners, an average of over \$F200 per fortnight in contrast to only \$F35 for RCA employees, for instance. Only 28 households (7 percent) listed earnings of \$F200 or more per fortnight. On the other end of the spectrum, 51 households (12 percent) reported nominal fortnightly wages of less than \$F50, and 248 households (60 percent) listed no wage income at all.

Reported remittance income also varied widely. Only 48 percent of households reported receiving remittances. Of these, some listed as many as seven persons sending cash support, while others reported only one or two. Total annual amounts remitted ranged from \$F10 to \$F4000. And 64 households reported receiving wage income as well as remittances (see Figure 3.5). In addition, Rotumans often gave gifts of money as well as material items (usually food) to others, but it is nearly impossible to track such transfers except in an intensive study such as the one I conducted in Oinafa over 13 weeks--one quarter of a year (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Based on the data from my village study, which included government and cooperative employees as well as copra cutters and

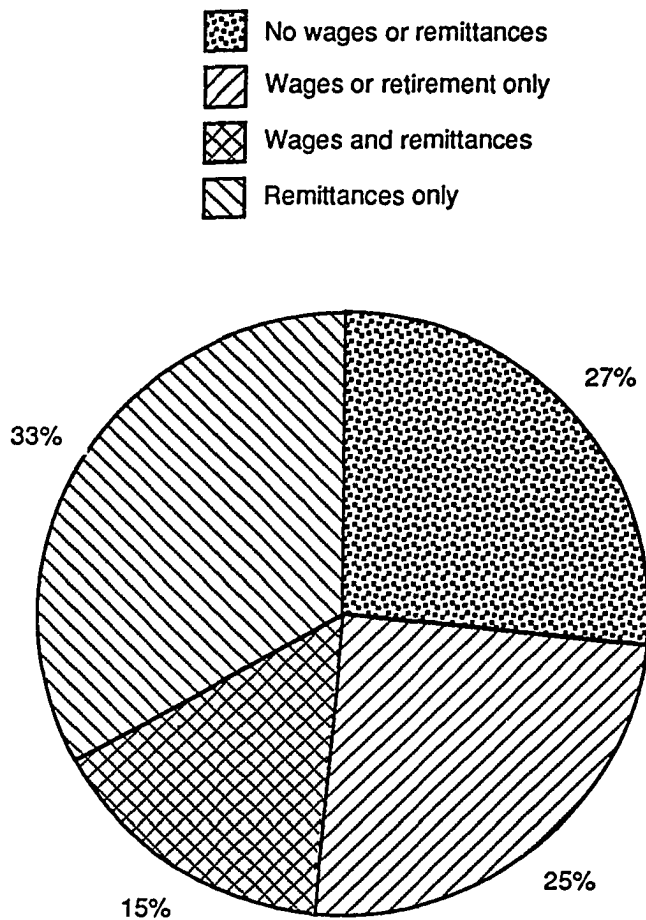


Figure 3.5 Rotuman households reporting income from wages, retirement and remittances in 1989

Source: 1989 survey of 414 households conducted by Jan Rensel and Alan Howard

cultivators, average annual per capita income could be estimated at \$F1420, with a range of \$F356 to \$F5507. Estimated average annual expenditures per person work out to \$F994, ranging from \$F259 to \$F3935. It must be remembered that both income and expenditures were inflated in Oinafa in 1989 due to the upcoming celebration of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Methodist missionaries. Besides the typical household expenditures outlined previously, many people in Oinafa were making house improvements and purchasing large quantities of food in preparation for the festivities, and had received remittances expressly for these purposes. In addition, three households were making car or truck payments. Other minor expenditures reported during the survey included water bills¹⁴ and contributions toward the cost of running the village generator. A telephone exchange was set up in 1989 for the western end of the island (near the government station) but telephones were not yet available to homes in Oinafa.

The income sources recorded by the households participating in the village study are summarized in Table 3.4. These data can be used to make a number of key points related to this discussion.

1) Opportunities to earn large amounts were limited. Immediately salient is the income received by the truckers who hauled copra for the Raho Cooperative, accounting for over 31 percent of total village income during the survey period.

2) Copra production was among the least significant of income sources. Copra cutters from seven households earned an average of less than \$F63 during the survey. The only source providing less

Table 3.4
Reported income by source and percentage of village total

Income Sources	Number of Households	Amount Reported	Percentage of Total Income
Government			
Employees	4	\$F 3,706	11.6
Casual Labour	2	265	0.8
Retirement	1	1,542	4.8
Rotuma Coop. Assn.			
Employees	2	1,052	3.3
Casual Labour	3	335	1.0
Raho Cooperative			
Employees	1	540	1.7
Copra Truckers	2	10,077	31.4
Methodist Church			
Catechist	1	378	1.2
Retirement	1	144	0.4
National Bank of Fiji			
Employees	1	779	2.4
Driver	1	360	1.1
Remittances	13	4,495	14.0
Tourism	12	2,204	6.9
Survey	17	1,020	3.2
Copra	7	439	1.4
Interhousehold Transfers			
Gifts	10	1,524	4.8
Services	10	1,559	4.9
Transport	7	956	3.0
Food/other sales	6	687	2.1
Total Reported Income		\$F32,062	100.0

Source: Daily activity survey of 17 households in Oinafa village, July 31-October 29, 1989

income was participation in the survey, for which each household received a gift of \$F60.

3) Income inequalities were mitigated somewhat by inter-household transfers among several households. Recirculation of cash in the form of gifts, thank you payments for services or driving, and food sales accounted for some 15 percent of reported income. What does not show in the cash tally are the more than 2000 in-kind exchanges between households that took place during the survey in the form of shared meals, reciprocal assistance, food gifts and free transportation (see Chapters 6 and 7).

4) The Fiji connection is central to employment and retirement income. All employers other than the cooperatives--the government, the Methodist church, and the national bank--are Fiji-based. A total of 9 households drew income from these sources during the survey; one household, with two casual labourers and one full-time employee, tapped three.

5) Involvement of migrants, especially those in Fiji, contributed directly or indirectly to the income of several households. Remittances were received by 13 households, and amounted to 14 percent of the total income received by households in the study. Migrant involvement was also key to a number of other income sources in the village. Migrants organized the 1989 visit of the tourist ship, which netted 12 households earnings from their shares of landing fees, and giving rides or selling food to the visitors. The success of the two cooperatives continues to depend on the combined efforts of professionals in legal, accounting and

government positions in Fiji along with those of capable and hard-working Rotumans on the island. Besides the two villagers who were financing their trucks by hauling copra for Raho, members of five households earned money working for one or the other co-op. (For a more detailed examination of Rotuma's migrant connections see Chapter 5.)

6) All villagers made use of a variety of income sources. Every household drew upon at least three income sources; the average was five to six. The array of possible ways to obtain money, together with the base of local food production, allowed flexibility in choosing among strategies.

Conclusion

Rotuma's economy has been and continues to be affected by a multitude of factors over which Rotumans have no control, including hurricanes, political relationships between powerful nations, and American attitudes toward high cholesterol and consumption of tropical oils. When events on the world stage impact this little island, people need sufficient options upon which to fall back as necessary. When opportunities are available Rotumans eagerly seek to earn money, and use it to improve their standard of living. They purchase convenient and high status foods, household items, building materials, vehicles and fuels. They sometimes pay others to do work they would otherwise have to do. They pay taxes and fees, and make contributions to church and community funds and humanitarian efforts beyond their shores. But when money is hard to come by, or

supplies are unavailable due to shipping problems, Rotumans return to greater dependence on their gardens, animal husbandry, fishing. This is true for the island as a whole as well as for individuals. Whether they are comparatively well-off financially or have fewer options for obtaining cash, all households engage in diverse strategies, including reciprocal exchange of local produce and assistance (see Chapter 7).

But flexibility on the local front is not a total solution. As lifestyles on Rotuma have become more dependent upon imports such as fuels and manufactured items, people find it increasingly important to assert control over their economic interactions with the outside world. Rotumans' struggles to manage their own copra trade, to oust the commercial firms and to establish successful cooperatives illustrate their drive to conduct their own affairs. After decades of frustration with infrequent and unreliable shipping and previous failures with owning boats, two Rotuman groups recently tried again. The Raho Cooperative bought a 50 percent share in one vessel in late 1991. A Rotuman investment group associated with the Rotuma Cooperative Association bought another boat in 1992, but it ran aground on a reef in August, 1993. Despite continuing difficulties, control over transportation is undoubtedly key to the future development and diversification of Rotuma's export industry.

Notes to Chapter 3

¹Contrary to other accounts, Dillon (1829:94) notes that "the productions of the island are not abundant" and because of the dense population, "the surplus produce is but inconsiderable at all times." Dillon (1829:93) also mentions Rotumans telling of a devastating hurricane a few years earlier, but he fails to take this into account when generalizing about the islands' productivity.

²The beginnings of the Methodist mission in Rotuma are traced to the 1839 visit of John Williams of the London Missionary Society. Two Samoan teachers were left on the island, followed by four Wesleyan Tongan teachers in 1841, and several Fijian pastor-teachers. Rev. William Fletcher built on their efforts when he established the Wesleyan mission on Rotuma in 1865. French Catholic Priests had preceded the Protestants in establishing a European-led mission on the island in 1846, but were forced to close it down in 1853 due to persecution and lack of converts. Fathers Trouillet and Dezest reopened the mission in 1868 with more success.

³I am grateful to Vilsoni Hereniko, a Rotuman playwright and faculty member at the University of Hawaii-Manoa, for this account.

⁴I appreciate this insight from Maniue Vilsoni, a Rotuman who is both schoolteacher and cultivator on the island.

⁵Note that one relative of a fisherman defended his giving money to kin in return for fish on the basis of contributing to fuel costs for the boat.

⁶The 1976 Fiji census is the most recent one in which economic activity was analyzed according to ethnic backgrounds.

⁷Cash remittances historically flowed from Rotuma to Fiji as well as in the other direction. See e.g., Rotuma Council, January 8, 1915, and Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1940.

⁸A one pound tin of corned beef at the RCA, sold for \$F1.10 in 1986, costs \$F2.38 in 1993.

⁹Currency in Rotuma was British pounds until Fijian independence in 1970; thereafter it has been Fiji dollars (\$F). In 1989 a Fiji dollar was worth about \$.67 in U. S. dollars.

¹⁰Stores and vehicles were also licensed, but until the 1980s most of these were owned by either the commercial firms or cooperatives.

¹¹For years in which population figures are not available I estimated population based on intermediate values between years when censuses were reported.

¹²To my knowledge no ice cream factory was ever opened on Rotuma.

¹³Howard (1970:18) estimated 1960 household income to be between \$US250-500. Given an average of 6.9 persons per household in that year (Howard 1991:241), the average annual per capita income would be between \$US36-72. I used a conversion figure of \$US2.50 to the pound to obtain an estimate of £14/8-£29/16 per person.

¹⁴A system of piped water from reservoirs replaced most catchment tanks in Cinafa in 1986.

CHAPTER 4

RECIPROCITY IN ROTUMAN SOCIETY

Reciprocity is central to social life on Rotuma. On a daily basis, Rotumans choose among numerous opportunities to contribute labor and material resources toward one another's welfare. For the impending wedding of a close relative, there are pigs to slaughter and taro and yams to harvest, food to cook, and fine mats to finish and present. Because an elder kinsman has fallen ill, someone massages him each morning and evening, takes him his favorite foods, including tinned peaches. And one should always be prepared for a sudden funeral, with gifts of mats or cloth or money set aside. Meanwhile, a cousin is hoping to rebuild his kitchen, and women are gathering to weave the thatch roofing while the young men erect the pole structure from the trees they cut and barked last week. There are choir and dancing rehearsals in the evening for the upcoming church conference, and when the tide is right, a group are planning a fish drive.

These scenarios and countless more represent what I mean by reciprocity in the Rotuman context. For purposes of this discussion, distinctions between pooling and redistribution (characterized by Sahlins (1965:141) as collective action within a group) and reciprocal exchange (action/reaction between two parties) are less germane than the qualities these social interactions have in common as demonstrations of commitment and opportunities for sociability. (See Chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion of formal and informal occasions for reciprocity.)

My use of the term reciprocity to describe Rotuman practices of mutual support is close to Sahlins' (1965) "generalized reciprocity" in that goods or favors are given in a disinterested way; that is, giving is prompted by a concern for social relationships more than for material gain. (Certainly Rotumans are interested in benefiting socially from their reciprocal interactions, whether by gaining or reinforcing the recipients' loyalty and support in the future, or by being perceived as generous within the larger group.) Although a return in some form is desirable, promptness is not an issue. Waiting and watching for an appropriate opportunity to help out is a clearer way of demonstrating one's *hanisi* 'love, compassion'.

Sahlins proposes that generalized reciprocity correlates inversely with kinship distance, flourishing among close relatives; that generosity can be either a responsibility of higher rank or a means toward it; that those with greater wealth maintain sociability by greater altruism (Sahlins 1965:149-170). These guidelines are helpful but not sufficient for gaining an understanding of reciprocity in Rotuman society. The nature of kinship and authority in Rotuman society, and certain pre-eminent cultural values, lay the parameters for reciprocal relationships. Particular historical circumstances shape and complicate actual behavior. An awareness of cultural, historical and interpersonal contexts is vital for understanding the work of reciprocity: how it operates and what it does.

Pervading Rotuman social organization is a strong element of choice. For example, bilateral kinship reckoning provides multiple

alternatives for group membership. Descent groups exhibit fluid boundaries and *ad hoc* rather than enduring corporate identity. Competing interests fuel persistent tensions that frequently erupt into disputes, leading to shifts in alliances. In addition, chiefly authority in Rotuma is such that compliance is voluntary. Hard work and group cooperation are socially valued and rewarded, but the penalties for nonparticipation are mild.

My intention in this chapter is to demonstrate that reciprocity is the primary vehicle for maintaining harmonious relationships in a society in which there are strong centrifugal forces of self-interest. I begin by outlining the ideal and pragmatic sides of Rotuman kinship, emphasizing the place of social action in defining group membership. I then examine the nature of authority in Rotuman social organization, and the implications for choice in the enactment of social relationships. Finally I explore cultural values that give reciprocity its special prominence in Rotuman experience.

Kinship: Consanguinity and Commitment

In the broadest sense the Rotuman term *kainaga* refers to things belonging to the same category, such as types of trees or animals, or nationalities of people. But the most common uses of the term have to do with two aspects of Rotuman kinship: kindred, and descent group. In both cases blood relations are the basis of *kainaga* membership, but active demonstration of commitment is central in supporting kinship claims.

In the first sense, *kainaga* refers to one's blood relatives, but especially those upon whom one can rely for help in the event of life crises (weddings, deaths, births), or when one is seriously ill or otherwise in need of assistance. One's *kainaga* as personal kindred manifest themselves on these occasions. Consanguinity is the basis of *kainaga* membership, and reciprocal interaction the proof.

In a second, more restricted sense, one's *kainaga* includes those who can trace common descent from an ancestor who lived on and had rights in a named house site. Through bilateral reckoning Rotumans theoretically can claim membership in many *kainaga*, ideally eight (including one's great-grandparents on both sides). Descent group membership is essential to asserting rights to a house site, the use of associated lands, or chiefly titles if any. Genealogical connections provide the basis for eligibility, but to be recognized as belonging to a *kainaga* requires group acceptance, won through developing a history of commitment to individuals in the group. The requirement for social action sets practical limits to the number of descent group membership claims Rotumans can support. Of necessity they emphasize some connections while other potential claims remain dormant.

In some societies cognatic descent groups, while optative, maintain a strong ideology of corporateness. A Maori *hapuu* asserts claims on the labor, savings and production of each of its members (Webster 1975) and Samoan *matai* ideally control and allocate 'aiga resources including land, goods, money and labor (Tiffany 1975). But changing economic circumstances affect actual behavior of such

groups. O'Meara (1986, 1987) finds that despite the persistence of Samoan ideology and government assumptions to the contrary, in fact few *'aiga* any longer pool resources under *matai* control, and a modified system of individualized land tenure has been in use on some lands for as long as sixty or seventy years. O'Meara cites these developments as practical responses to the introduction of cash cropping.

On Rotuma, likewise, pragmatic considerations take precedence over ideology. For instance, ideally all Rotumans who can trace their descent from a particular house site meet and choose a *pure* 'decision-maker' to live on that house site and control any associated garden lands. In fact, unless a chiefly title is associated with the house site, the role of *pure* more often is transferred informally from parent to child, or between siblings. Again, in theory the *kainaga* owns the associated lands in common and the *pure* merely controls them at its behest, but in practice most land is treated as belonging to the *pure* as an independent agent. Although *kainaga* living in other households have a right to ask the *pure* for use of copra land connected to the house site, Howard found that, in 1960, they seldom did so (Howard field notes 1960).¹ When requests for copra cutting rights are made, the current state of relationship between petitioner and *pure* is more important than an abstract conception of rights to the land (Howard 1963a:419).

As in Samoa, the development of external trade, especially copra exports, affected the value and treatment of lands on Rotuma (Howard 1964:34). Historical evidence suggests that individualized

control of land was already prominent by the 1880s (see e.g., Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1881). But in addition, the ideology of kin group corporateness appears to be much weaker on Rotuma than in Samoa, particularly as manifested in the power of chiefs to control and allocate resources. In the next section the nature of Rotuman chiefly authority is examined through myth and history.

Authority and Autonomy

District Autonomy

Each of Rotuma's seven districts² has operated more or less independently from pre-colonial times to the present, although the paramount chiefs from each district meet in an island-wide council. According to Captain J. G. Goodenough, who visited the island in 1874:

The island is in seven districts.... These divisions come down from old times, and they have always been independent. No one is higher than another, but they speak of Maraf [of Noa'tau] as being the highest, while I should think that Albert of Ituten [Itu'ti'u] is really the one of most influence. He seems to have most people.... They told me that they have a meeting of chiefs occasionally, which they call Fon [*fono* 'food eaten by chiefs after drinking kava'] and another name; and that before attending this meeting they speak each to their own people and ascertain their wants (Goodenough 1876).

Visiting Rotuma twenty years later, the naturalist J. Stanley Gardiner was told that in the past, "The government of the whole island was in the hands of a council, formed of the chiefs of the several districts, when they were not at war with one another"

(Gardiner 1898:428). Prior to cession to Britain in 1881, the districts repeatedly formed varying alliances to compete with each other in battle. The paramount chief of the district that headed the latest victorious alliance held ceremonial precedence among his fellow chiefs, and it was he who filled a position called *fakpure*. The *fakpure* convened and presided over the council of chiefs, but otherwise held no authority in districts other than his own.

The *fakpure* also appointed two other positions of pan-Rotuman significance, the *sau* and the *mua*. Although the term *sau* has been glossed misleadingly as "king," the *sau*'s primary role was not one of political control but of ritual intercession with the gods to ensure the prosperity of the island. Little is known about the *mua*, except that he is described as performing a priestly role.³ The terms of office for both positions were normally six months (one ritual cycle), but could be extended. The honor and burden of hosting the *sau* passed from district to district, requiring each to provide large amounts of food and kava for ceremonial feasts and daily consumption by the *sau* himself.

In no other institution was Rotuma's unity embodied as in the *sau* and *mua*, but by the early 1870s missionaries succeeded in eliminating both positions. And with cession to Great Britain effectively ending the interdistrict wars, the district chiefs recorded a memorandum of agreement affirming their essential autonomy vis-a-vis each other:⁴

The Chiefs recognize Marafu as the head chief of the island, but he has no authority to make agreements in their name, without their consent. Each chief rules in his own

district, and all agree to keep peace with each other, until the answer of the Queen of England [regarding the petition for cession] arrives. Marafu may call meetings of the chiefs, but they are not obliged to attend. Those who wish may go, but no law can be passed unless all chiefs are present. This arrangement holds good for one year. Wednesday July 16, 1879 (Sgd) G. Bower, Lt. Commdg., H.M.S. *Conflict* (Eason 1951:62).

District Chiefs and Their People

Prior to the colonial period there are few written records describing relations between Rotuman chiefs and their people, although oral traditions provide important clues. Howard (1986) found that Rotuman myths are preoccupied with just this topic.⁵ Like other Polynesian groups, Rotumans conceive chiefly potency to be both spiritually sanctioned and popularly supported. Howard's analysis of Rotuman myths suggests that it is the balance between these two sources which is problematic; either extreme must be avoided. A chief demonstrating insufficient spiritual efficacy (*mana*) cannot last; one who is unconcerned for the populace can be resisted and overthrown.

A proper chief is one whose *mana* is potent but sufficiently domesticated to be directed toward the welfare of the entire population under his dominion. He eases rather than exacerbates the burdens of his subjects. He is entitled to first fruits and a reasonable portion of the produce of the land, but he cannot demand too much. The core of the issue lies in the requirement that a chief demonstrate his *mana*, which encourages the exercise of power in the form of demands. To be able to make strong demands and back them up is to display potency, but it also intensifies the tension between chiefs and their subjects. Chiefs who go too far are the conceptual equivalents of cannibals--they ravage their people by consuming their crops and labor. They also fail to inseminate the land, endangering fertility and prosperity.... These

excesses...justify rebellion in the context of Rotuman cultural logic (Howard 1986:23).

The behavior of Rotumans toward their chiefs over time is consistent with this mythical charter, continually demonstrating both passive and active resistance to chiefly excess.

Some indication of how relationships between chiefs and people were enacted historically can be found in the letters and diaries of Catholic and Wesleyan missionaries, who first arrived on Rotuma in the late 1830s. Although the missionaries tried to work through the chiefs to spread the Christian message, it is telling to note that they often won over the people before their leaders came around. This created difficulties when the missionaries forbade the new converts to contribute to or participate in feasts for unconverted chiefs or for the *sau*. Backed by the new spiritual authorities, people successfully resisted chiefly demands (Methodist Church of Australasia, Wesleyan Missionary Notices No. 34 (January 1866), No. 5 Vol. II (April 1868), No. 13 Vol. III (April 1870)).

Richer sources of information about the interactions between Rotuman chiefs and their people can be found in the records of British colonial officials, for whom authority relationships were of central concern. The British model of indirect rule depended upon an effective chain of command. Problems with implementing such a model on Rotuma cropped up even before cession to Great Britain became official in 1881. In a letter written the previous year, Deputy Commissioner Hugh Romilly expressed his apprehensions:

In my opinion the great difficulty to be contended with here is the want of obedience and respect paid by the young

men to their chiefs. The chiefs are chiefs only in name and though anxious for power are afraid to enforce any commands of their own or indeed to give any commands at all to their people (Rotuma District Office, September 25, 1880).

In this letter Romilly attempted to account for this disturbing lack of authority in a number of ways. He blamed the missions for eroding chiefly powers and castigated the Rotuman lay teachers of the Wesleyan Mission in particular for refusing to obey their chiefs. He cited the propensity of young men to go away to sea and to live in foreign places, returning with new ideas which undermined old customs. And he noted the widespread assertions of chiefly status among the people:

They say they are all chiefs and indeed it is difficult to discover who are the common people if any such exist. They can all trace their ancestors back many generations, many of them, my interpreter for instance, for some 300 years. As the population was never very large every man's ancestors have at some period or another married into a noble family and he is in consequence noble himself (Rotuma District Office, September 25, 1880).

As Rotuma was administered through the previously established colony of Fiji, contrasts between Fijian and Rotuman chieftainship frequently surface in colonial reports (see e.g., Rotuma District Office, January 10, 1882; February 11, 1882; March 20, 1931; Annual Report of 1928; and Rotuma Council, October 7, 1937). Like Fijian *yavusa* chiefs, Rotuman district chiefs (*gagaj 'es itu'u*) are responsible for organizing activities and arbitrating disputes among their people. Both Fijian and Rotuman chiefs are honored ceremonially in feasts and kava drinking rituals, and traditionally

received a portion of the first fruits. But as a consequence of differences in social organization--whereas Rotuman kinship is cognatic, Fijian kinship is structured patrilineally--processes of chiefly selection and socialization in the two cultures are distinctive.

Fijian chiefs are chosen on the basis of primogeniture. The elder sons of reigning chiefs are treated with considerable respect from birth, and are socialized in anticipation of fulfilling chiefly roles. From childhood on, their peers learn subordination to their wishes. Rotuman chiefs, in contrast, are selected as adults by a group of kin (*mosega*, literally 'bed') who hold rights to a title by virtue of shared descent from a common ancestor. Because descent is traced bilaterally, the potential number of contenders for a title may be quite large. The individual chosen is unlikely to have enjoyed any special privileges previously.⁶

Different conceptions of chieflihood are reflected in terms of address and reference. As Romilly's successor, Resident Commissioner C. Mitchell noted in 1881:

The word "gagaja" chief is used when speaking of the chiefs of districts, but it is also used by the landholders to each other in common conversation. They do not give their chiefs titles such as "Ratu" in Fiji but call them simply by their names (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1881).⁷

Rotumans use the term *gagaja* to refer respectfully to people of a particular district or village in songs (such as those quoted in the final section of this chapter), to greet them in speeches (e.g., "*Gagaj fā, gagaj haina, gagaj 'atakoa*" 'Gentlemen, ladies, everyone'), and in

polite but informal encounters (e.g., "*Noa'ia, Gagaj*" 'Greetings, Sir/Madam'). Whereas the Fijian referent *Ratu* denotes clear status differences, the widespread use of the Rotuman term *gagaja* suggests an essential identity between chief and people. Rotuman kin groups give one of their number a chiefly title in order to represent them. In his chiefly role, a *gagaj 'es itu'u* ideally embodies his people. Rotumans respect the title, and therefore the titleholder, but their support and cooperation are not guaranteed. A Rotuman chief exercises authority with the consent of his people, and leads only insofar as his people are willing to follow.

In a meeting with the chiefs shortly after they had signed the papers for cession, Rornilly explained the colonial policy of governance, and said:

The Council of Chiefs will remain the same. I promise you to be guided as far as possible by your experience and advice. I have observed however with pain that some of you chiefs are not treated with proper obedience and respect by your young men. In some instances you have found it difficult to get even small things done by them without much grumbling on their part. If I am to introduce English law here I can only do it through the chiefs and it is absolutely essential that you should insist on the strictest obedience from the people you have under you...

I hear that some of your young men have often said 'You must not be hard on us or make us do this or make us do that or we will not get in the government copra' [tax]. You chiefs must not allow them to talk like this. They must obey your commands without questioning (Rotuma Council, September 28, 1880).

But the limits of chiefly prerogatives were brought to the fore immediately upon cession, when 103 Rotumans submitted a petition for re-cession of their island from Great Britain. The basis of the

petition was that the chiefs of the seven districts had offered Rotuma for cession "without consulting them, the landholders of the country, which was a most important omission where natives occupy the independent position they do here" (Rotuma District Office, October 12, 1881). Deputy Commissioner Mitchell wrote to the Governor in Fiji:

I am quite certain that the offer of Cession to England was made without the consent of the landholders having been obtained. This the chiefs had no right to do as the landholders here occupy a very independent position, the relations between chiefs and landholders being very different from what they are in Fiji....

So far as I can judge it appears to me that the chiefs found their control over the people gradually slipping from their hands and imagined that if Great Britain took over the Island it would reverse this and place them in the position that Fijian chiefs occupy to their people (Rotuma District Office, October 12, 1881).

By the time the colonial government responded to (and refused) the petition several months later, Acting Resident Commissioner W. Gordon, noted that the petitioners had changed their minds anyway. The real issue, he had been told by Fagmanuia, chief of the petitioners, was a fear of "the imposition of fresh taxes for the purpose of paying large salaries to the chiefs, who had no right to them" (Rotuma District Office, October 20, 1882).

Resident Commissioners (or later, District Officers) on Rotuma continued to complain about the independent attitudes of Rotumans, and what they perceived to be a lack of leadership on the part of the chiefs (see e.g., Rotuma District Office, Annual Reports of 1928, 1930, 1931, 1937, 1939). Some of the colonial

representatives took an active role in deposing and replacing individual chiefs (see e.g., Rotuma District Office, May 25, 1900; February 5, 1931) or in selecting among candidates brought forward by the people (see e.g., Rotuma Council, September 1, 1910; Rotuma District Office, January 30, 1939).

The process of chiefly selection was targeted by two proposals for reform in the hopes of stimulating more effective leadership. In 1939, Resident Commissioner A. E. Cornish introduced term limits of three years for a chief, after which the *mosega* that had selected him would vote again whether to retain him or to select a new chief. When the first chief appointed under this procedure failed to be re-elected, he complained to the colonial government on the grounds that the new process was not in accordance with Rotuman custom. Cornish had died in the meantime; the chief was reinstated and the new procedure was effectively abandoned (Sykes 1948). In 1948, J. W. Sykes was sent to Rotuma to investigate island administration, and proposed that the Council of Chiefs be abolished in favor of an elected council (Sykes 1948). But this proposal was emphatically rejected by Dr. H. S. Evans, appointed District Officer in 1949 (Rotuma District Office, September 22, 1950). Evans argued that the island was prospering and that there was no call for sweeping interference: "The chiefs effect exactly what they are there to do, which is to advise the centre on what their people wish and to persuade their people to what is agreed to be good for them" (Evans 1951). Although Evans' view was decidedly

colonial, his expectations of chiefly roles were closer to the indigenous model than those of many of his predecessors.

The ideal relationship between Rotuman chiefs and their people is essentially one of reciprocal commitment. People work for their chief and provide him with food and other resources; chiefs represent the wishes of their people in council, and the dignity of their people in ceremonies. With an agreed-upon course, chiefs organize and people follow.

Historical circumstances have eroded some opportunities for demonstrations of mutual support between chiefs and people. Interdistrict warfare, rampant during the latter half of the nineteenth century, placed a premium on strong leaders and willing, faithful followers, but was ended with Cession. Conversion to Christianity severed overt ties with the old gods, the spiritual power of the chiefs and basis for first fruits offerings. Colonial officials intervened in chiefly selection and reduced chiefly roles to middlemen between themselves and the districts. Increasingly, Rotumans find alternative leaders in non-titled but educated Rotumans, such as Wilson Inia, who have returned and taken guiding roles in island affairs (see Howard 1963b regarding the emergence of nontraditional leaders in Rotuma). Even migrants off-island with more resources, experience and connections for getting things done sometimes command more loyalty than district chiefs (see Chapter 5 regarding the potential conflict this engenders).

In some instances, individual chiefs undermined the bases for their own popular support. A striking example is the case of Albert,

chief of Itu'ti'u district, who "sometime before cession gave up his right to contributions in kind from his tribe and accepted s1 [1 shilling] from each of the adult males in the district" (Rotuma District Office, February 11, 1882). Albert came to regret his decision⁸ and asked Deputy Commissioner Mitchell to order the landholders of Itu'ti'u to get food for him, but Mitchell refused to intervene (Rotuma District Office, January 10, 1882). Earlier, Romilly had proposed to the Council of Chiefs that a tax in copra be levied on the people to pay salaries to the chiefs, but the chiefs demurred (Rotuma Council, September 28, 1880). When Mitchell asked the districts directly, only one approved the idea unanimously, and four districts preferred to maintain the custom of giving their chiefs food. The chiefs concurred, suggesting that "if the people begin to give us money in this way they will then say 'we have paid our money and have nothing more to do with you'" (Rotuma Council, July 5, 1881). It is possible the chiefs were reflecting on Albert's situation.⁹

Despite historical changes, there are numerous contemporary contexts for mutual support between chiefs and people. As explored in more detail in Chapter 6, ceremonial events are central for this purpose, but ordinary tasks also provide venues for reciprocity. Elisapeti Inia, a retired schoolteacher and writer of Rotuman linguistic and cultural teaching materials, gave this example:

If a chief asks the men to cut his copra, he should give them a good breakfast beforehand, and a good dinner when they finish. If he does this, at the end of the day he will find more copra than he expected. If the chief does not feed the men,

they will be reluctant to come the next time he asks; perhaps only his *kainaga* would come.

The ideal remains the same: people give their chiefs labor and material support; chiefs promote the welfare of their people. The way this ideal works out in practice, and the impact of personal choice at all levels of Rotuman social organization, are the focus of the next section.

District Organization

Ho'aga

Within each district (*itu'u*) there are groups of cooperating households, known collectively as *ho'aga*. Membership in a *ho'aga* is determined primarily on the basis of working together under the direction of a subchief or untitled leader, the *fā 'es ho'aga* 'man of the *ho'aga*'.

Ho'aga work as teams to accomplish community projects such as clearing vegetation from the sides of roads, weeding graveyards, or laying water pipe. For feasts and other special occasions, men work together constructing temporary shelters and preparing the foods to be cooked in the *koua* 'earthen oven'; the women also help each other, for instance, in weaving any mats or special baskets that are needed. Relationships within *ho'aga* are reinforced not only by repeatedly working together for common purposes, but by members' helping each other in numerous informal ways: *ad hoc* assistance and spontaneously shared meals, gifts of raw or prepared foods, borrowing tools, providing transport.

Fā 'es ho'aga act as intermediaries between the district chief (*gagaj 'es itu'u* or *fā 'es itu'u*) and the people. After discussing with the chief what work must be accomplished, they meet with their respective groups to decide who specifically will be responsible for what tasks. A *fā 'es ho'aga* supervises the work of the men in his group, and his wife or appropriate female relative, that of the women. In addition, the heads of *ho'aga* communicate the wishes of the people to the district chief, so that the chief may represent their desires to the island-wide council (as Goodenough 1876 indicated, above).

Ho'aga leaders and their people do not always cooperate with the district chief. In his description of Rotuman social organization at the turn of the century, Gardiner reported:

The power of the *gagaja* in his district was not arbitrary; he was assisted by a council of the possessors of the *hoag* names, which might reverse any action of his. Conflicts between the chief and his council were rare so long as his decisions were in accordance with, and he did not infringe, the Rotuman customs (Gardiner 1898:430).

Colonial officials also remarked on the independent behavior of individuals and *ho'aga* in relation to their chiefs; for instance:

Another outstanding feature in Rotuman life is the complete absence amongst the people of any sense of respect for their chiefs. They listen to their Chief if his words suit them, but if otherwise, they turn deaf ears to him. This attitude permeates through every stratum of Rotuman life. If the Petty Chiefs [titled *ho'aga* leaders] do not agree with their Chiefs, they abstain from carrying his will to the people, and again if the people do not care for what their Petty Chiefs say they are similarly heedless to their orders (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1930).

At times certain *ho'aga* or even whole districts have resisted the will of their chiefs to such an extent that the chiefs gave up their positions. In 1900, Resident Commissioner H. E. Leefe called a meeting of the Noa'tau people who were in "a state of incipient rebellion" because their chief, Maraf, had "attempted to exalt his brother over the heads of the petty chiefs who formerly took precedence over him." At the meeting, "the whole district, with the exception of Marafu's father-in-law, expressed their distrust of him as their chief, upon this Marafu resigned and I accepted his resignation. The people of Noatau then with one accord asked that Konrote Mua should be appointed as their chief and I acceded to their request" (Rotuma District Office, April 17, 1900 and May 25, 1900).¹⁰ In another case in 1931, "The resistance of the people of Itumuta caused the District Chief, Fagmanuia, to resign because the people refused to listen to him" (Rotuma District Office, February 5, 1931).¹¹

Similar cases occurred in two other districts while I was in Rotuma in the late 1980s. In Juju, a subchief who was elected district representative to the Rotuma Council argued publicly with the district chief and, with some other subchiefs and their followers, refused to cooperate with the chief for several years. In 1989, a clash between a subchief and the chief of Itu'muta factionalized the district and ultimately led to the chief's being deposed and a new chief installed.¹²

Ho'aga themselves also splinter because of political disputes. The process of faction formation was played out in Oinafa over the

course of my fieldwork. In 1989 I observed model cooperation between district chief, *fā 'es ho'aga* and *ho'aga* members during the preparations for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Methodist missionaries in Oinafa. Group solidarity was at a peak and participation widespread and enthusiastic. The following year, a severe dispute erupted over actions taken by the district chief and his refusal to be held accountable to his *mosega*. This split the district so that 80 percent of the members resolved not to follow the chief any longer (see Howard and Rensel 1993 for a complete account of this dispute). Although the chief refused to give up his title, the dissidents selected and installed their own chief. Since that time the two groups largely have refused to cooperate, functioning effectively as two separate districts, with segments of former *ho'aga* in each group.

Even in less dramatic circumstances, disputes between member households result in changing *ho'aga* configurations, as households drop out or join other *ho'aga*. In the conflict over fuel payments for the Oinafa generator, mentioned in Chapter 2, two households from different *ho'aga*, separated from each other by several other households, withdrew from wider participation and supported each other (see Chapter 7 for more on this dispute). *Ho'aga* are thus not necessarily composed of adjacent households or close kin. And although most households align themselves with one *ho'aga* or another, at any given point in time some exercise the option of nonparticipation. An indication of this can be seen in the responses to the 1989 island-wide survey. Twelve households out of

the 415 surveyed (2.9 percent) named no one as their *fā 'es ho'aga*, and seven (1.7 percent) listed an individual whom no one else named; that is, they identified themselves as belonging to a *ho'aga* with an apparent membership of their household alone.¹³

Village and Church Organization

Households residing in dwellings scattered along or near certain sections of the road encircling the island have come to be known as villages¹⁴ (*hanua noho*). Oinafa village, for example, includes 23 households. Although six households are separated from the rest by a short stretch of vacant land, there are much greater tracts of *gaogao* 'uninhabited places' on either side of the village. Because a Rotuman village has no chief or formally designated leader, it is generally less a social unit than a geographical one. But villages function as cooperative work groups on occasion. For instance, the three villages of Paptea, Oinafa and Lopta take turns mowing the grass and cleaning up the grounds of the district primary school.

The fact that the three recognized villages in Oinafa district are associated with three Methodist church congregations gives village divisions added prominence in social interactions. Approximately two-thirds of Rotumans on the island are Methodist; most of the remainder are Roman Catholic, with small numbers of Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists. Church (*rotu*) activities predominate in social life. For Methodists for example, in addition to several church services on Sundays there are services on Wednesday evening and early Saturday morning, and additional prayer meetings for men, for women, and for young people. There are roles

for men and women as lay preachers, stewards, choir members and directors, as well as more specialized roles as catechists and deaconesses. The Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF) provides a variety of activities for young people, frequently highlighted by hosting visiting MYF groups from other districts for a day or evening of preaching, hymns, religious skits and refreshments.

For one week a month, small geographical subdivisions of each Methodist congregation, perhaps three or four households, meet every evening for "family devotions" (*rot kaunohoga*) at each other's houses. On designated days, such as the first Sunday of the month, these households come together for a shared meal. *Rot kaunohoga* form the basis for hymn-singing and fundraising competitions. They combine forces for village level contests, and villages join as districts for island-wide events. Village congregations also take turns hosting other villages for special church services and quarterly circuit meetings with attendant meals. The annual Methodist conference brings together the whole island (in recent years non-Methodists have participated as well) for formal feasting, fundraising, and hymn and Rotuman dancing competitions.

For Catholics as well as for the smaller denominations on the island, church activities similarly structure much of social life, focusing members' time and effort on group activities and events. Church participation, especially in small groups such as the family devotion gatherings, may be usurping some *ho'aga* functions by providing even more frequent opportunities for cooperative

interaction and mutual support. Relationships among church group participants tend to be highly solidary.

Even church groups, however, are not immune to the effect of disputes. Respected members of the church, especially catechists and deaconesses, help to mediate when problems arise within their congregations. But in the heat of conflict some members opt out of attendance at family devotion meetings with opposing households, or stop attending church services all together.

Households

People who usually eat and dwell together constitute a household (*kaunohoga*). While the core of most Rotuman households is a nuclear family with various bilateral relatives attached (Howard 1970:29), precise boundaries are ambiguous and fluid. For instance, young unmarried men often sleep on their own as a group but return during the day to their parents' households to help cook, and eat most meals there. An elderly person might have his or her own house to sleep in but when no one is there to provide meals, eat at a relative's house. Children go to live with other relatives for various periods, becoming *de facto* members of those households for the time being. Although membership fluctuates, the household retains its identity as a unit, referred to by the name of the house site.

Households are generally self-sufficient, although in 1989 more than 10 percent of Rotuman households consisted of only one person or a couple.¹⁵ Single persons are often hard-pressed to both provide for themselves and contribute to others; they frequently rely on others on- or off-island for support (see examples in Chapter 6

and 7). Adult men are expected to provide their households with food, especially starchy root crops, and to handle heavy work such as cooking in an earthen oven, house construction and repairs, and clearing land. The only arena which is strictly female is plaiting ordinary and fine mats, but women usually are responsible for indoor cooking, sewing, and keeping the family compound clean and in order. Activities such as fishing, care of animals, washing clothes and looking after pre-school children are shared among older household members including siblings, aunts and uncles and grandparents.

As outlined above in the discussion of kinship, the authority of *pure* has to do primarily with *kainaga* lands; their control over people is less defined. During my study of household interactions I found individuals frequently go their own ways without the knowledge or consent of the household head. *Pure* do not coerce individual compliance or group cooperation. Youngsters may be disciplined with a verbal reminder or a light slap, but physical punishment is limited. The weakness of indigenous authority relations troubled British colonial officials such as Carew, who noted in 1930 (with some exaggeration):

The outstanding feature in Rotuman life is the complete nonacceptance, by the young Rotuman, of the principle that to his elders some deference and obedience is due, and to his community and country certain duties are also due. From the time the Rotuman youth leaves school until he reaches the age of thirty or so, he concludes that his main object in life is 'play.' In this he is more or less tolerated by his parents who openly state that they do not like to see their children work (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1930).

A contemporary example of parental tolerance for children's autonomy: Our host in Oinafa told us about an incident when he was making a cement post. His 18-year old son was helping him. While our host went to mix the cement, some of the son's friends came along and the son went off with them. With the cement already mixed, the father had no choice but to pour the cement post himself, heavy work. He told us at dinner that he felt like "taking a shovel" to his son when he came back, but by the time the son returned he had cooled down and did nothing about it. When my husband pressed him later about why he did not enforce compliance, he reflected a while and then explained, "I want them [my children] to have a choice."

Freedom of choice applied to earnings as well. In 1989 I found that individuals with cash income could opt to contribute all, some or none of it to the household. When interviewed, many *pure* claimed not to know how much others in their households earned. *Pure* may have had hopes of benefiting from their income, and may have proposed or cajoled household members to contribute, but did not force them to share their money, or determine how it is used. Frequently wage earners simply bought food or household goods to bring home. A young woman who had grown up on the island returned after finishing her nursing degree to work at the hospital on Rotuma, and stayed with the household of her uncle, who had brought her up and whom she called "Dad". At Christmas she bought the family a sofa and two upholstered chairs; the *pure* protested that she should not have spent the money. But several months later when she came back from a holiday in Suva with a radio tape player and tapes, he

told us, "If it was me, no." When we asked him what he would use the money for, he said, "For the house...."

Personal choice and pragmatic considerations outweigh also ideology in matters of marriage and residence. In the past, marriages ideally were arranged by elders with the involvement of the chiefs, especially between high ranking families. Even under such circumstances, young women usually exercised some degree of choice. Elisapeti Inia explained to me that in an extreme case a reluctant bride might submit to the wedding ceremony but run away to a sympathetic relative immediately afterward, causing the marriage to be annulled. In recent years arranged marriages have all but disappeared. The basic rule of post-marital residence is for the couple to stay at the wife's place, at least until after the birth of the first child. But again practical matters, such as the availability of land and other resources, are paramount (see Malo 1991:75-76). Couples often move several times before settling down.

In cases of severe disagreement with the household *pure*, children, siblings, even spouses may choose to go live somewhere else for a time while tempers cool. Occasionally a *pure* orders a member of his household to leave because of a deep-seated conflict. Because Rotumans generally have options of several places to live, this can be a socially acceptable, if risky, step. In recent years one man forced his brother out of the household because of a dispute over profits from a family bakery; another man told his grandson to leave because of the young man's reputation for sexual adventuring. There are social limits and costs, however, to such radical exercise

of authority. In 1990 one household *pure* attempted to evict a family living in an adjacent house, claiming it was not their land. Although the *pure* had the backing of the district chief, the family resisted, having written records documenting their rights to the site, as well as the support of the majority of the *kainaga*. Eventually the matter was dropped. In another case *kainaga* members strongly expressed their disapproval of a *pure*'s action in ousting someone, to the extent that a highly regarded *kainaga* member, living in Suva, came to Rotuma and publicly renounced all association for himself and his descendants with the house site where the *pure* resided. This is an extreme statement of censure, given the importance of land connections in Rotuman identity.¹⁶ These two incidents occurred during the height of the political dispute in Oinafa; usually intrahousehold differences are handled more quietly and without involving the wider community.

Conflict and Harmony

Within households, *ho'aga*, villages, church groups and districts, there is marked leeway for the expression of autonomy; with so many decisions negotiable, there is also significant potential for disputes. Rotumans have a history of persistent disputatiousness. Interdistrict conflicts in the pre-contact period have been attributed to chiefly rivalry and competition over resources (Howard 1989, Ladefoged 1993). In the wars of the latter nineteenth century, religious differences exacerbated status struggles between district chiefs (Howard and Kjellgren in press). During the colonial era disputes centered primarily on conflicting land claims at the

interpersonal and small group level. Howard attributed the level of conflict to population pressure on land as a valued resource both for gardens and for copra income (Howard 1963a). By the late 1980s land had receded as a focus of conflict, likely due to the depressed copra market and the rise of non-land-based income sources, as well as a drop in island population (Howard 1990:267). Following Fiji's independence and the return of decision-making power to Rotuman chiefs, there has been a resurgence of political rivalry on the island (Howard 1989). While on the surface not all disputes have economic implications (for instance, Catholics in Juju district recently split over religious terminology), the control and use of valued resources clearly underlie recent political disputes in Oinafa.¹⁷

Whatever the grounds for disputes, Rotumans place a high priority on reducing or containing potential disagreements. And although most people are aware of conflicts, they strive to promote at least the appearance of good will and group unity.¹⁸ The importance of social harmony is reflected in the array of cultural strategies Rotumans employ to maintain or restore it. Howard (1990) identifies a number of Rotuman practices for dispute management. Some of these deal with disputes once they have erupted into the social scene, including the role of chiefs as mediators, and a ritual apology which under most circumstances must be accepted by the aggrieved party. Other mechanisms operate to discourage provocative actions. Rotuman socialization minimizes aggressive behavior and generates acute sensitivity to social approval. Physical punishment is rare; shaming by ridicule is

effective in teaching proper behavior. Growing up Rotuman, youngsters learn which contexts and relationships allow for relaxed interaction and which call for restraint, respect and humility, in order to avoid provocation (Howard 1970:37-44). A belief in immanent justice--that ill-fortune follows from wrong-doing¹⁹--operates both before and after conflicts emerge. It can either serve to discourage people from entering into contentious situations, for fear of the consequences, or it can be invoked once a dispute has taken place, to console oneself or one's side that eventually, the truth will come out. A Rotuman saying frequently heard in such circumstances is, "*Hanua ma 'oris 'al*" 'the land has teeth'.²⁰

Rotumans commonly resort to avoidance in order to limit occasions for potential offense or to prevent outbursts between those who already have quarreled. People employ various degrees of avoidance, from restricting interactions to formal settings in which conventional scripts maintain the semblance of courtesy, and taking circuitous routes through the village so as to limit casual encounters, to the extreme of moving temporarily or permanently to another location, sometimes even dismantling one's house in the process. (This last option is made more difficult with the prevalence of concrete houses; see Chapter 8.)

Hereniko points to the effectiveness of humor as an additional strategy for making social commentary while diffusing occasions for offense (Hereniko in press a). There are also socially-sanctioned contexts for channeling rivalries, such as sports. Once Rotumans competed in wrestling and *tika*, a form of dart-throwing; now school

children and young adults form teams to play cricket, rugby, and netball. Church and other organizations sponsor frequent fund-raising, hymn-singing and Rotuman dancing contests. Agricultural shows were inaugurated in 1931 and remain a popular event (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1931).

But on an everyday basis, the power of reciprocity for preventing or mitigating conflict must not be overlooked. As Malinowski (1961 [1922]) discovered, reciprocal interactions are significant in promoting social cohesion. They provide a means of affirming relationships and forestalling misunderstanding. In addition, in conjunction with apologies or mediation, reciprocal gifts and assistance help to re-establish connections after estrangement. Reciprocity is the key, positive means by which Rotumans defuse the potential for disputes and repair relationships afterwards.

In one way, Rotuman emphasis on personal autonomy assists in ameliorating divisive situations. Individual members of households are free to maintain reciprocal ties with one another despite any current conflicts between other members of their respective households. During the height of the political dispute in Oinafa in 1990, young men from the whole village continued to cooperate in the heavy cooking, and young women continued to serve food for church events as well as family occasions hosted by households on either side of the dispute. Children visited each other's houses freely, and I frequently observed the wives of two of the disputants sitting together chatting or walking arm in arm. A number of times

I heard people explaining that the dispute was only between certain individuals, and had nothing to do with other relationships.

In other ways however, the principle of autonomy which pervades every level of Rotuman social organization does not provide a stable basis for enduring relations. Groups are not corporate in any practical sense; hierarchy is weak and authority conditional; disputes are endemic and a constant threat to social harmony. Valued relationships must be continually reaffirmed in action. Reciprocity is critical to giving them stability. In the final section of this chapter, I explore Rotuman values which shape the practice of reciprocal relationships: the importance of work, the expression of appreciation, and the need to balance priorities.

The Work of Reciprocity

Reciprocity not only does work, i.e., functions to establish, express, and reinforce relationships; it is, practically speaking, work. Social merit in Rotuma is attributed largely on the basis of working hard and being generous (Rensel and Howard 1993; see also Howard 1970:88, 97-98). Chiefly status is honored, and wealth of resources admired; proper behavior in public (*ag fakgagaj*) is appreciated. But no matter how poor in resources, lineage or manners, anyone can earn respect through working hard and looking after one's responsibilities. For Rotumans, a good man or woman is one who looks after his or her family and contributes to the community.

Numerous Rotuman sayings emphasize the importance of work (*garue*) in Rotuman society. Some of them express admiration for

those upon whom people know they can rely, for instance "*Tutur pout ta'a*" 'That is a hardwood post' [a pillar of the community] or "*Tit müf he*" 'A worn leaf girdle' [said of someone who carries such a burden that his girdle drags on the ground and is worn down; said especially of leaders who take on the most responsibility]. Many other sayings are critical of those seen as lazy or shirking their part, such as: "*A'u'ua ne täväke*" 'repose of the tropic bird' [said of someone who, like the tropic bird, takes long periods of rest while there is work to be done] or "*itake 'ipe te Kā' ta*" 'like the dove at Kā' ta [a natural stone archway on the south west coast of Rotuma]' [referring to behavior like that of a dove who starts to fly, inciting other birds to take flight, but then settles back on its perch].²¹

The essence of Rotuman reciprocity is time and effort expended on behalf of one another. In 1960 Howard reported that on the island, a gift (*te fakhanisi*) was evaluated, not so much by its utility or cash worth, as by the work that went into producing it (Howard 1970:93-94). The concept of *hanisi* is not so much affection as kindness in action. "*Hanisi* implies willingness to give tangibly, rather than an emotional state" (Howard 1970:33). To value a relationship is to be willing to take pains over it.

Rotuman discourse emphasizes gratitude as prompting reciprocity. Providing meals or small gifts of food, cigarettes, or cash, for instance, are spoken of as ways of thanking people for assistance. Repeated acts of generosity, such as the parental indulgence of children in displays of affection and material giving, build a sense of obligation for the recipients. Howard found

Rotumans were motivated by gratitude and obligation to do whatever their parents asked. As one young woman told him, "They were always so wonderful to me--they never denied me anything they could give. How can I do anything but comply with their wishes!" (Howard 1970:114-115).

The roots of common Rotuman greetings also suggest acknowledgment of effort expended. The salutation *noa'ia* is actually the ingressive tense of the stative verb *noa* 'to be tired, weary'.²² Similarly, another prominent greeting used on Rotuma, *faiàk se'ea*, is a form of the stative verb *faiàki*, to be tired. Although Rotumans today do not consciously make this connection between wearing oneself out and their forms of greeting, they regularly use both phrases to express goodwill, congratulations, or gratitude (Churchward 1940:62). Either greeting frequently is supplemented with other verbs that focus attention on the action prompting the expression of appreciation, for example, *noa'ia 'e la'ot* 'thank you for journeying', *noa'ia 'e hanisit* 'thank you for your kindness', *faiàk se'ea 'e hāiasoaga* 'thank you for helping'.

The fact that these two greetings are used constantly and in both informal and formal contexts underlines the notion that efforts should be appreciated and not taken for granted. When Rotuman husbands return from their gardens, their wives properly greet them, "*Faiàk se'ea 'e garue* 'thank you for working'." One hears the same expression when a relative finds someone sweeping the verandah, or a passerby comes upon someone picking up leaves from the roadside.

Manifestations of appreciation feature even more prominently in formal settings.²³ In speeches at weddings or funerals, church gatherings or other celebrations, the expressions *noa'ia* and *faiāk se'ea* are heard over and over again. When I attended feasts during my first weeks on Rotuma, I kept asking a Rotuman friend to tell me what the speeches were about. The first time I inquired, he listened to the speaker for a few moments and then informed me, "He's saying thanks." When I asked again a little later, he listened and responded, "He's thanking people." The words sung during traditional Rotuman dances (*tautoga*), composed especially for each occasion, also focus on the expression of appreciation. The following song texts²⁴ are typical:

Haina sua ka fā la hi	The women will sing
Noa'ia Tarau ö'ö' ne Losa	while the men will [drone the] <i>hi</i>
E t̄ariag ne garue maha	Thank you Tarau, people and elders
Te mamfua 'ir 'ea'ea	of Losa
Usa vilvil kotä' la' soan	for this occasion and the hard work
	of hosting it
	But as our elders used to say,
	It rains, but then it stops
	[the hard times come to an end].
Noa'ia fā huā' ta	We thank the catechist
ma te' ne gagaj atakoa	and everyone else
Gagaj 'es Pure noa'ia	Thank you, District Officer
a h̄iasoaga	for your assistance
Garue mah noanoa gagaj	and for the hard work which
ne 'aus rē vāhia	all of you have completed
Se ravā, ko Gagaj ma 'on fäega:	Do not give up, for the Lord says:

"Leum te' ne 'aus ne noa
 ka töl tē maha
 Gou tāla nā se 'ausa a'a'ua."
 'Omus garue maha
 ma 'omus pumahana
 Fürmaria la pō 'e Karisto ta.

"Come to me all of you who are
 weary and heavily burdened,
 and I will give you rest."
 Your hard work
 and your sweat,
 Bring them to Christ
 and He will give you peace.

Noa'ia gagaj Rejieli, Kaitu'u
 ma Luisa
 Noa'ia gagaj Petera ma te'ne
 hāian gagaj
 Noa'ia a'sokoag ne garue maha e
 Losa
 Noa'ia Noa'ia Noa'ia
 Gagaj Tarau, Gagaj Tigarea ma
 Gagaj Vaivao, gagaj fā
 ma te' ne au fau gagaj.

Thank you Rejieli, Kaitu'u
 and Luisa
 Thank you Petera and all
 the women
 Thank you for the hard work of
 bringing about this occasion in Losa
 Thank you, thank you, thank you
 Gagaj Tarau, Gagaj Tigarea and
 Gagaj Vaivao, the men
 and all the young people.

Reciprocity is also work in that it requires attention. On a daily basis, Rotumans watch for occasions to help those whose relationships are important, guarding against inadvertently giving offense by neglecting opportunities, balancing the desire to be generous with the needs of one's family and the limits of one's resources. One must anticipate and be prepared to respond to relatives' requests for mats, pigs, money and other kinds of help for important occasions or special needs. Again, Rotuman sayings illustrate cultural priorities, with admonitions against neglecting to support those whose aid one may in turn require: "*Ou telu/ mahmahan heta 'āe hoa'hoa' tūen*" "Your warm *telulu* [fish cooked in banana leaves] you have been giving to the wrong one', or about

wasting effort on those who will likely disappoint: *“‘Uh ‘eseat ma nā ‘en kaläe”* ‘You have only one yam but give it to the swampen’.

Conclusion

The centrality of reciprocity for Rotuman society stems from the nature of Rotuman kinship and authority relations. Kin are recognized by both blood connections and behavior; repeated demonstrations of commitment are essential to maintaining ties. Relationships between chiefs and their people are also primarily reciprocal, in that leaders earn the loyalty and active support of followers by continued hard work, generosity, and responsiveness to the people's needs and wishes.

At every level of Rotuman social organization there is an emphasis on autonomy for individuals and groups, resulting in conflicts of interest, group fissioning and realignment. At the same time Rotumans place a high value on social harmony and efforts expended on behalf of others. The resulting tension gives reciprocal exchange its paramount role in promoting social order and the stability of relationships.

Notes to Chapter 4

¹Of 18 *pure* from Itumuta district questioned on the use of land by *kainaga*, 12 said no one ever asked for copra rights; four reported single requests; one said no one asked but he told two less-well-off *kainaga* to cut some copra; and one held the land in trust for *kainaga* on the other side of the district and in return they asked for an annual cut on the land (Howard field notes 1960).

²The number of districts has varied somewhat over time. It is generally acknowledged that there were five districts before two of them were divided, making the seven districts of the past century.

³See Howard 1985 for a discussion of the complementary nature of *sau* and *mua*, symbolizing vitality and domestication, respectively.

⁴See Howard 1985 for a more extensive discussion of pre-missionary political organization; for an alternate perspective see Ladefoged 1993. Regarding the religious and political bases for the wars of the latter nineteenth century, see Howard and Kjellgren in press.

⁵The earliest written collection of Rotuman oral traditions are those compiled by a French missionary, Father Trouillet, who arrived on the island in 1868. For his analysis Howard examined English translations of these texts along with other accounts collected over subsequent decades.

⁶See Howard 1966:67-68 and Howard 1970:103-104 for further discussion of the distinctions between Fijian and Rotuman chieftainship.

⁷Following independence from British rule, the chiefs decided to append the term "Gagaj" to their chiefly names, e.g., Gagaj Maraf, Gagaj Kausiriaf.

⁸I believe it is Albert to whom Rev. William Fletcher refers in this extract from an 1874 letter to Rev. B. Chapman in Sydney: "It is far easier amongst these people to pull down than to build up. One chief

on coming into power resolved to adopt a new course. All the recognised claims of chiefs were in his case commuted for a tax of five gallons of oil per man but he finds it would have been well to have made haste more slowly" (Methodist Church of Australasia, Letters Received, October 27, 1874).

⁹Ironically, in 1884 some of the chiefs, led by Maraf of Noa'tau, were the ones to propose that the practice of first fruits be commuted to a fixed payment. This time Acting Resident Commissioner Gordon strongly recommended against the step unless the chiefs first were able to secure the "direct and unmistakable consent of the people" (Rotuma District Office, November 17, 1884). Romilly had included chiefly salaries in the government budget starting in 1881 without any reference to first fruits customs (Rotuma District Office, January 15, 1881).

¹⁰Marafu is the full form of the chiefly title more commonly referred to as Maraf.

¹¹The people's resistance in this case was provoked by an unpopular demand by Resident Commissioner Carew, that the men spend four days a week clearing their gardens. The chiefs had approved this measure in the Rotuma Council and it was their responsibility to administer it. When the people of Itumuta refused to comply, their chief resigned.

¹²For detailed accounts of these cases see Howard 1990:276, 283-285.

¹³The term *kaugaruega* (literally 'work group') is sometimes used instead of *ho'aga*, reflecting the *ad hoc* nature of group cooperation, and de-emphasizing the role of a institutionalized leader in forming such groups.

¹⁴Some Rotumans gloss *ho'aga* as village when speaking English. I am using the term village here to refer to subdistrict divisions which may or may not coincide with *ho'aga* boundaries. Oinafa village includes two *ho'aga*.

¹⁵Based on a comparison of island-wide surveys conducted in 1960 by Howard and in 1989 by Howard and Rensel, there were

proportionally more households consisting of single persons or married couples alone in 1989 (11.2%, compared to 3.3% in 1960). The average household size on Rotuma has dropped from 6.9 to 5.3 persons. This correlates with an increase in the overall number of households (from 417 to 489), especially smaller households of one to three persons (from 46 to 123). See Howard and Rensel in press a regarding the impacts of migration on Rotuman household size and composition.

¹⁶Colonial records from 1931 also mention incidents of "tyrannical" *pure* ordering spouses of *kainaga* members out of houses on *kainaga* land; these efforts were thwarted by Resident Commissioner Carew who reinstated the people and admonished the *pure* involved (Rotuma Council, January 8, 1931).

¹⁷Issues included the previous misuse of cooperative and church funds, current division of responsibility for generator fuel costs, distribution of income from tourism, competition between cooperatives and another proposed business venture, and access to funds in Fiji for a new school bus. See Howard and Rensel 1993.

¹⁸See Rensel and Howard 1992 for further discussion of Rotumans' concern for bodily and social surfaces.

¹⁹Rotumans speak of immanent justice with or without spiritual agency. See Howard 1992 regarding the disappearance of Rotuman spirits from contemporary discourse.

²⁰Elisapeti Inia, who has spearheaded the development of teaching materials on Rotuman language and culture, compiled a typed list of some 458 Rotuman sayings. Over the course of several weeks in 1988 Mrs. Inia reviewed this entire set with me, in Rotuman and English, explaining uses and clarifying ambiguities. The sayings included in this chapter are taken from her unpublished collection. Aubrey L. Parke of the Fiji Museum also compiled a collection of 162 sayings, published in 1971 as *Rotuman Idioms: Fäeag 'es Fūaga* by the Linguistic Society of New Zealand.

²¹For a more thorough examination of how animal metaphors in Rotuman sayings express cultural values, see Howard and Rensel 1991.

²²According to Churchward, "the ingressive tense expresses, or emphasizes, the transition from not doing to doing, or from not being to being, that which the verb signifies" (Churchward 1940:24). Thus a literal translation of *noa'ia* might be "to have become weary."

²³In the feast context Rotumans also express gratitude nonverbally, for instance by repeatedly perfuming and powdering the dancers as they are performing, and the chiefs and other honored guests as they watch. Another way of indicating appreciation and support for dancers is by jumping up and dancing with them, as though one is so inspired by their performance that one can no longer hold back.

²⁴From a *tautoga* performed by Oinafa district at the annual island-wide Methodist Church conference in Losa, Itu'ti'u district, in July, 1988.

CHAPTER 5

STAYING CONNECTED: MIGRANTS AND CHOICE

The importance of reciprocity for Rotumans in maintaining relationships persists in the face of changing circumstances, and combined with the cultural emphasis on personal choice, helps to explain the nature of interaction between Rotuman migrants and those who stay on the island. As an heuristic device, I describe Rotuman migration patterns and post-migration behavior in the context of the MIRAB (Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy) model outlined by Bertram and Watters (1985, 1986).

In brief, the MIRAB model focuses on the geographic spread of kin groups from islands of origin to urban centers and beyond national borders. Large proportions of the labor force have emigrated while a smaller but in many cases stable population remains on the sending islands. These dual communities maintain ties by sending remittances and visiting back and forth between relatives. Bertram and Watters suggest that both migration and post-migration behavior are more the result of corporate than of individual decision-making, as family units rationally assess alternatives for the profitable allocation of household resources.

Bertram and Watters also point out that, in addition to remittances in cash and kind, foreign aid and government employment ("bureaucracy") compose the major income sources for many Pacific Islands. Rather than fueling development, such income has led to greater consumption of imports. Agricultural production has declined, but continues to provide a basis for subsistence as

households make use of other opportunities. To Bertram and Watters the MIRAB patterns appear sustainable at least until the turn of the century.

In developing the MIRAB model, Bertram and Watters focused upon aggregate economic indicators rather than detailed fieldwork, but find their results to be consistent with reports of field research they have reviewed. While some aspects of the MIRAB model fit Rotuma's case, there are important differences revealed by in-depth field study. A large proportion of migrant Rotumans do not maintain active ties with relatives on Rotuma. Those that do, I argue, are not being compelled by kin group decisions so much as acting voluntarily. Cultural variation in degrees of personal autonomy and hierarchical coercive power precludes any across-the-board application of Bertram and Watters' notion of "transnational corporations of kin". Also, in addition to remittances, migrants offer non-material resources in the form of expertise and influential connections for succeeding in the wider economic context. Key individuals can help to facilitate some kinds of economic development.

I begin with a brief consideration of the role of government aid in Rotuma, which is relatively minor compared to some other Pacific Islands. Government employment on Rotuma has a more significant, though limited, impact on the island's economy and social relations. But migration and the ways migrants remain connected with Rotuma are the factors which have the greatest effects in shaping

contemporary Rotuman lifestyles and aspirations, and are the main focus of this chapter.

Aid and Bureaucracy

Government and Overseas Aid

Overseas aid is a significant part of the economy of the island states of the South Pacific, amounting to over one billion Australian dollars in 1980, or \$A213 per capita, according to Bertram and Watters (1985:507). Dissociated from any directly productive activity, aid in these societies comes as a sort of rent from donor countries such as the United States and France which maintain military presence and programs in the islands. Rather than supporting local development efforts, such aid promotes otherwise unsustainable living standards and levels of import consumption (Bertram and Watters 1985:508). The long and difficult debates in Micronesian states about changing the form of political ties to the United States reflect apprehension about the loss of external support mechanisms and anticipated changes in lifestyles. With the temporary suspension and possible permanent cessation of France's nuclear testing program, future directions for French Polynesia's economy are also a matter of great concern (Poirine 1992, reviewed in Finney 1994).

Direct overseas aid has not played a large part in Rotuma's economy; rather, aid is funneled through the Fiji government. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to address foreign aid to Fiji.¹ Suffice it to say that, inasmuch as foreign assistance contributes to

the national government, some portion is represented in the government's allotment to Rotuma. The Fiji government provides infrastructure and supports personnel for health services, education, public works, communications, etc. The government subvention to the Rotuma Island Council has increased substantially in recent years, from \$F52,000 in 1984 to nearly \$F135,000 in 1992 (Parliamentary Debates, December 11, 1984; Personal communication, District Officer, Rotuma, 1992). In addition, the Fiji government contributed to the construction of district meeting halls and continues to support other self-help projects on Rotuma through annual grants; from 1989-1992 self-help grants amounted to \$F10,000 each year.

One of the most dramatic infusions of government funds came after Hurricane Bebe in 1972, when the Rotuma Island Council was given a \$F100,000 loan for rebuilding homes, nearly all of which were damaged or destroyed. That Rotuma was given hurricane relief in the form of a loan rather than a grant--at the insistence of the Rotumans, and in contrast to the rest of Fiji--is significant. Rotuma's cultural emphasis on autonomy carries over to the relationship between the island and the Fiji government. As another example of self-reliance, the Rotuma Council decided to send back to Fiji a boat of relief supplies which arrived soon after Hurricane Bebe struck. Rotumans acknowledged that while they might need help in the future, they had plenty of food at the time and suggested others might be in more desperate straits.²

Fiji government support of Rotuma's infrastructure perpetuates the priority given to public welfare in the form of health, education, and communication by the colonial powers (Bertram and Watters 1985:508). Assistance for economic development has been comparatively minor. Foreign aid for development schemes has been sought, though on a small scale, and success depends largely on personal connections with people who know how to access funding sources. For instance, after a representative of a Dutch foundation visited the island to assess economic development needs, retired Rotuman schoolteacher Elisapeti Inia wrote a letter to the foundation on behalf of one of the island's women's groups, and obtained a \$F6000 grant for fishing equipment. Raho Cooperative has also benefited from the involvement of people skilled at obtaining grants. Recently Raho was awarded \$F7000 from New Zealand for a second copra dryer, \$F3000 from Australia for office equipment, \$F1500 from Fiji Gas toward a bulk liquid propane gas facility, and \$F5000 worth of dispensing equipment from Shell Oil for a bulk diesel line facility. A grant proposal to Australia for equipping a Raho maintenance garage is currently pending, according to John Bennett, one of the cooperative's key organizers (see below).

Schemes for larger development projects have been discussed for years, such as a cannery for the juice from Rotuma's annual bounty of oranges (see e.g., Plant 1991:207). No progress has been made to date, however, possibly because of communication and transport problems, and the lack of reliable power supplies. In 1990

a representative of the European Economic Community visited to assess whether Rotuma should receive a diesel-powered generator to provide electricity island-wide. Although Rotuma was assigned a low priority at the time, a number of people have told me the island is indeed slated to receive a generator.³

In recent years, some Rotumans have begun to think of foreign aid as a means to bettering their circumstances. One group, with members on the island and overseas, argued that foreign aid in rents for fishing rights would allow Rotuma to be independent of Fiji. Most Rotumans, however, recognize the economic lifeline which ties Rotuma to Fiji. In the foreseeable future, employment, migration, remittances and other forms of kin-based assistance are likely to remain of far greater importance to Rotuma than foreign aid.

Government Employment

In MIRAB economies, government is the dominant cash employer. For example, the government sector accounts for 52 percent of total cash employment in the Cook Islands, more than 60 percent in Tuvalu, 80 percent in Kiribati and 90 percent in Tokelau (Bertram and Watters 1985:500).

The importance of government employment on Rotuma is a matter not only of numbers of jobs but of higher salary levels and greater opportunities for educated Rotumans.⁴ As stated in Chapter 3, the government is the largest single employer on the island, with 106 employees in 1992. Combined, the two cooperatives (RCA and Raho) employed approximately the same number of workers (108) that year, but co-op wages were much lower; for instance, the

average salary for schoolteachers was six times that of the average RCA worker (\$F200 per fortnight compared to \$F35). The types of work also differ. One third of co-op positions involve copra handling or truck driving; another third of employees are shopkeepers; only the remaining third require special skills or training for carpentry, electrical, clerical or administrative positions. In contrast, approximately two-thirds of government jobs on Rotuma require advanced education or training (schoolteachers, medical staff, agriculture officer, meteorologist, clerks, technicians).

Though limited in numbers, the higher level jobs allow some Rotumans with advanced education and training to return to the island and make a living. Government employees often contribute not only money, but ideas and skills to family welfare and that of the larger community. But more numerous and more lucrative job opportunities in Fiji, in both government bureaucracy and the private sector, continue to draw away the bulk of educated Rotumans.

Migration

In the MIRAB scenario (Bertram and Watters 1985:503, 504), a large proportion of the working population lives overseas or in key employment centers within the country. A smaller, but in many cases stable population remains on the sending island.

Fiji census reports over the past several decades document a dramatic shift in the distribution of Rotumans, with an ever-increasing proportion recorded away from their home island (refer to Table 3.1). While the total population of Rotumans in Fiji

(including Rotuma) has almost quadrupled over the past 65 years to 8,652 in 1986, the population on Rotuma itself has been declining since 1966, dropping by 16 percent in the decade 1966-1976 alone. According to the 1986 census, 70 percent of Rotumans in the country lived away from Rotuma, with 46 percent concentrated in the Suva area. Although official counts in other countries do not enumerate Rotumans separately, my data suggest that several hundred Rotumans have migrated internationally (see Howard and Rensel in press a). Around the turn of the century colonial officials and Rotumans alike had worried about eventual depopulation of Rotuma,⁵ but these concerns have not been realized; in 1986 the number of Rotumans on the island was nearly the same as it had been 50 years earlier (2,554 compared to 2,543).

Bertram and Watters (1985:503) note a stabilization of resident population in the Cook Islands and Tokelau between 1951 and 1981, despite an upsurge in migration to New Zealand. Although initially age- and sex-specific, migration in recent years has included more family dependents. The main impact of migration has been to drain off net population increase. For Rotuma, the scenario is similar. Early on, young men were the most likely to emigrate, leaving a surplus of females in the 15-40 age group.⁶ In recent decades this imbalance has equalized, and in fact shifted slightly in the other direction. From 1956-1986, the male/female ratio for ages 15-39 on the island increased steadily from 90/100 in 1956 to 117/100 in 1986.⁷

Meanwhile, the proportion of children under 10 on Rotuma has consistently declined (from 34.2 percent in 1956 to 27 percent in 1986). Although the percentage of children age 10-14 has fluctuated, there has been an overall decrease, such that the total proportion of children under 15 has dropped by nearly 10 percent (from 48.4 to 38.8 percent). This change may be attributed at least in part to changing migration patterns. An examination of dependency ratios over time is instructive.

Bryant (1990:140) points out that according to the 1976 census the dependency ratio for Rotuma was high (118 dependents to 100 adults of "working age," that is, ages 15-59). Bryant suggests that since fertility on Rotuma is actually declining, the high proportion of dependents on Rotuma can be attributed in part to the tendency of Fiji-based Rotumans to send their young children to Rotuma to be cared for by grandparents and other relatives (Bryant 1990:141). But by 1986 the dependency ratio for Rotuma had dropped to 96/100. Furthermore, a comparison of the Fiji censuses from 1956-1986 shows a steady increase in the dependency ratio for Rotumans in Suva, from 58/100 in 1956 to 67/100 in 1986. Whereas previously the Suva population of Rotumans included a higher proportion of pioneers, without spouses and children, as they establish families--and keep their children with them--the population profile approaches that for the overall Rotuman population. The dependency ratios for Rotumans on Rotuma and in Suva both appear to be converging toward the overall dependency

ratio for Rotumans, which in 1986 was 76 dependents per 100 of working age (Figure 5.1).

Although the dependency ratio is dropping on Rotuma, the percentage of the population over 60 has more than doubled, from 4.3 percent in 1956 to 10 percent in 1986. Whereas 30 percent of the total Rotuman population were on island in 1986, 50 percent of Rotumans 60 and older lived there. This may be due in part to the fact that Rotuma provides an environment in which older people are valued for their knowledge, wisdom and other contributions to their households and communities. In contrast to urban Fiji, where older people have fewer opportunities to be productive, on Rotuma men and women of advanced age regularly participate in household labor. It is not unusual to see men in their 70s going to work in their gardens, or women of similar age plaiting mats. Older Rotumans easily can remain active in community affairs on the island, which are more readily accessible than events in urban centers.

Migrants from Rotuma are mostly younger people, seeking further education and job opportunities. Many of them opt to stay away, to marry and establish families and residences of their own; some choose to return to Rotuma, for shorter or longer periods, to visit, take a job, find a spouse, or to resettle (see Howard and Rensel in press a for a more detailed treatment of Rotuman migration). While there is no evidence that kin groups make the decisions, as Bertram and Watters suggest, migration in both directions is obviously facilitated by relatives (similarly, see

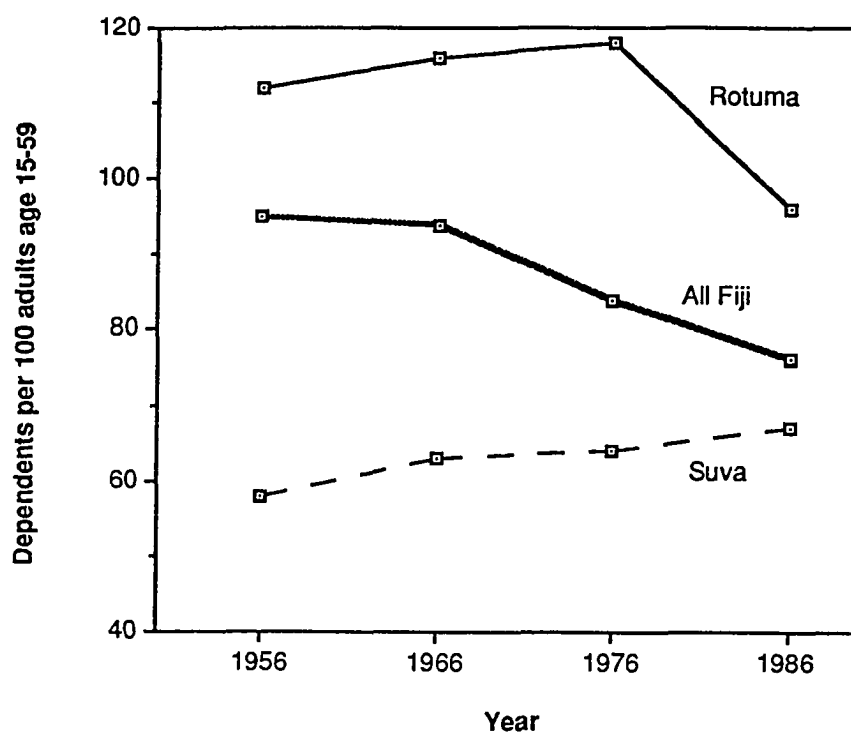


Figure 5.1 Dependency ratios for Rotumans, 1956-1986

Source: Fiji Government, Census Reports

James 1991; Hayes in press). Such help is just one form of reciprocal connection between Rotumans at home and abroad.

Maintaining Kin Connections

Although geographically extended through migration, Rotuman kin groups maintain ties in a number of ways. Reciprocal hosting and sharing of resources are two important means of reaffirming connections (Bertram and Watters 1985:499, 503), but for Rotumans there are additional forms of interaction of equal and growing salience. In the remainder of this chapter I explore the various ways members of multilocal Rotuman communities choose to express continuing reciprocal support.

Reciprocal Visiting

Rotumans on the island frequently host visiting relatives. Between July 31 and October 29, 1989, 13 of the 17 households in my intensive study hosted company from Fiji or overseas (Table 5.1). The district chief (Household B) welcomed official visitors such as ships' captains or government representatives as well as two tourist couples, and few other households hosted friends. Twice Household K hosted guests who came to visit my husband and me. But most visitors were *kainaga*, including siblings, children, first or second cousins and more distant relatives. Stays ranged from part of a day to over a month. Guests generally stopped longest with their closest relatives, going to other households for shorter periods, just a meal or two, or overnight.

Table 5.1
Visits between households in Rotuma and off-island

Household	Visit Off-island	Host Visitor
A	1	4
B		7
C	1	1
D	2	9
E	1	7
F		
G		
H		4
I	1	1
J	1	
K	1	9
L	1	4
M		
N		3
O	1	1
P	1	4
Q	1	3
Totals	11	57

Source: Daily activity survey of 17 households in Oinafa village, July 31-October 29, 1989

Some Rotumans who settle in Fiji still send their children to the island to be cared for by grandparents, often at the latter's request. Children provide a focal point for households, and are treasured and indulged (Howard 1970:32-34). Older children help out with chores before and after school. During the 1989 study, four of the 17 households included as long-term members children of sons and daughters who lived off-island. Subsequently three additional households arranged to bring infant grandchildren to stay with them.

Rotumans from the island go to stay with their families in Fiji or overseas, for months or even years at a time, while attending school, seeking employment, working, or simply on holiday. According to the islandwide study in 1989, 953 of 999 adults on Rotuma over the age of 20 (over 95 percent of those for whom information was collected) had been away from the island at least once. Fifty-seven (6 percent) reported having travelled away from Rotuma more than 10 times. One hundred sixty nine (17 percent) had been employed while away, and many of these had married and had children before returning with their families to live on Rotuma.

During the intensive village study in 1989, members of 11 of the 17 households left to visit relatives in Fiji (Table 5.1). Some trips had special purposes: four young men on the Rotuman rugby team participated in the national games, another attended a Methodist Youth Fellowship conference. One man was invited to a training program for the Public Works Department, one was trying to set up a new business on the island, and two people shopped for supplies to refurbish their houses. Most travelers, however, went on

holiday (*la' mane'a*), simply for a change of pace and the chance to see kin.

Lavenia Kaurasi's 1975 study of Rotumans in the Suva area (Kaurasi 1991) offers a perspective from the migrant household. She found that 56 Rotuman families in the Raiwaqa community had a total of 80 relatives staying with them. She interpreted this as evidence that "a Rotuman new to Fiji always has someone related to him who would give him a roof to sleep under until he settles down" (Kaurasi 1991:171). Hosting visitors may expand to other kinds of assistance: at least 30 of 50 employed Rotumans interviewed said that another Rotuman had helped them find their present jobs (Kaurasi 1991:172). Visitors are not simply taking advantage of their hosts. They find ways to help the household, especially on special occasions or during life crisis events when their assistance in feast preparation and looking after additional guests is especially valued. Kaurasi notes that kinship bonds are measured by "how much trouble one takes to help one's kinsman when he is in need" (Kaurasi 1991:170).

Transportation improvements in recent years have increased opportunities for travel. An airport was opened on Rotuma in 1981, and Fiji Air began offering round-trips to Suva once or twice a week.⁸ Rotumans with less money and more time (those without government jobs, usually) prefer to book passage on one of the copra boats that call about once a month at the island. A new and more reliable radiophone was installed in 1990, allowing Rotumans to call their relatives and suggest a visit (and ask for money to pay the

fare). The flow of people from Rotuma to Fiji continues to intensify, with an accompanying rise in the flow of information and material goods.

Reciprocal Sharing of Resources

As noted in Chapter 3, cash remittances are an important part of Rotuma's economy. Of the 415 households surveyed island-wide in 1989, 201 reported receiving gifts of cash from Fiji or overseas.⁹ Cash was sent primarily for general purposes, that is, to be spent on food and other household needs. In addition, remitters sent money gifts to meet specific needs, such as school fees, or special occasions, including Mother's and Father's Day, Christmas, birthdays and funerals. These amounts tended to be small, though many indicated that remittances for general support were received fortnightly or monthly. Larger amounts were sent (often solicited by those on the island) for church fund-raisers, and for house construction or extension projects.

But money gifts represent only one of the many ways Rotumans exchange resources to demonstrate their commitment to each other, even across great distances. Migrants bring or send purchased goods to their families on Rotuma; those on the island reciprocate with local produce, prepared Rotuman foods, and handicrafts. Boats which call at Rotuma every few weeks are packed both coming and going with food and goods for relatives. In addition, the weekly plane provides a means for Rotumans to send each other perishables, including frozen foods from Fiji and delicacies from the home island.

Sixteen of the 17 households participating in the 1989 daily activities survey exchanged money, food, other goods and/or assistance with relatives or in a few cases, friends, living outside Rotuma (Table 5.2). The intensity of interaction varied, as did the forms of reciprocity. Fourteen households received gifts of money, ranging from a few dollars to several hundreds. Fourteen households received food of various kinds (such as rice, flour, tinned or frozen meat) and nine received other goods (including cloth and clothing, household furnishings, a wheelchair, and a set of a dozen tea cups). Special occasions prompted some of these gifts, such as a wedding, a severe illness, and preparations for the upcoming Methodist anniversary celebrations in November and December. Guests also brought gifts with them when they came to visit.

The data from this study show clearly that gifts flowed in both directions. Fourteen households shipped food to Fiji, several repeatedly (Table 5.2). Typical food gifts were baskets of taro, yams, and coconuts, as well as island fruits such as bananas, oranges, melon, pineapple, and papaya. One household sent two gifts of *tahroro*, a sauce made of fermented coconut and salt water which Rotumans relish, and one sent their guest back to Fiji on the plane with a package of *telulu*, fish cooked in this sauce, wrapped in leaves. Five households sent or gave Rotuman mats, fans, and a broom made from coconut leaf midribs (*taufäre*) to departing visitors. Money gifts from residents to non-residents were not common¹⁰, but one household gave a visiting Fijian ten dollars as a parting gift.

Table 5.2
Exchanges between households in Rotuma and off-island

Village Household	Received Money	Gave Money	Received Food	Gave Food	Received Goods	Gave Goods	Received Help	Gave Help
A	2		1	1				1
B	5		5	4	2			
C	2		1	1				
D	3		3	14	1	1	4	7
E		1	1	7		1	2	3
F	1				1			
G	2		2	2				
H			2				1	1
I	4			3	1	1		4
J			1				1	
K	1		2	12	1			4
L	2		3	2	1	1	1	
M	2		1	1				
N	2		3	1	1			
O	9		1	4	1	2		10
P	11		4	3	2	1	1	1
Q	3		2	2			3	
Totals	49	1	32	57	11	7	13	31

Source: Daily activity survey of 17 households in Oinafa village, July 31-October 29, 1989

While money is appreciated, remittances in the form of goods are often preferred. Valuing of items because of the time and effort required to produce or procure them applies both to traditional gifts of food, mats and other locally-produced items and to purchased goods. A great variety of desirable items are hard to come by on the island and must be ordered from Fiji; the process takes time, know-how, and connections. The store-bought foods, household goods, building materials, appliances and vehicles sent by relatives in Fiji concretely represent efforts expended on behalf of those on Rotuma, in terms of ordering and shipping as well as paying for the items. Likewise, Rotuman handicrafts, especially fine mats (*apei*) and the Rotuman pandanus to make them, are hard to come by in Fiji; gifts of produce are very helpful in urban areas where garden space is scarce; and prepared Rotuman specialty foods are relished. These items also have special significance in representing ties to home and cultural identity. In contrast the material goods migrants send to Rotuma have value and utility that would be apparent to most people around the world. Although the two-way flow of resources is not equivalent in monetary terms, and the things flowing to and from Rotuma represent different systems of value, gifts in both directions are welcomed as tangible signs of *hanisi*.

Reciprocal help is often hard to measure and therefore may be left out of accounts focused on remittances. But assistance is salient among the expressions of mutual support between Rotumans on the island and elsewhere. During the intensive 1989 study seven households gave help to, and seven households received help from

relatives in Fiji and abroad, in addition to the other forms of support discussed above. Members of three households sent money to relatives in Fiji to buy specific items for them, such as a replacement burner for a kerosene-powered freezer, a school bookbag, or a motorbike. I did not tally such goods as gifts because the recipient paid for them, but the intermediary nonetheless provided a service in obtaining and sending them. In addition, visiting relatives helped with gardening in two instances and with funeral preparations once; two other guests undertook house extension projects. For their part, Rotumans residing on the island helped absent or visiting kin in various ways. One man supervised the construction of a house for a cousin residing in England. Two women responded to requests from Fiji-based *kainaga* by weaving or paying others to weave special Rotuman baskets (*tauga*) which they then shipped to Suva for a fundraising bazaar. One man took two visitors fishing; several people who owned vehicles provided guests with transportation during their visit, and one man repaired a motorbike belonging to a visiting friend.

Remitters and Absentee Household Members

The results of 1989 island-wide survey include two indicators of the extent to which Rotuman migrants remain involved with their home island. In response to one question Rotumans identified a total of 359 people as remitting cash to their households; 346 of these remitters were living off-island. Another question asked people to list household members present and any who were away. In addition to the 2,219 individuals recorded as present in the 415 households

surveyed, people listed 208 household members living elsewhere on Rotuma, and more than 1,000 household members (548 males, 509 females) staying off-island.

Characteristics of the two groups are strikingly similar. Those identified as remitting cash were primarily very close relatives of the household *pure* and his or her spouse (Figure 5.2). Fifty-nine percent were grown children: sons (31 percent) or daughters (28 percent). The next largest group of remitters were siblings of the *pure* or spouse: brothers (15 percent) and sisters (13 percent). Parents, spouses, or affines each accounted for 1 percent or less of the total number of cash remitters, and more distant relations made up the remaining 10 percent. The proportions of types of relatives listed as absentee household members are much the same (Figure 5.3): children (33 percent sons, 26 percent daughters) make up the largest group, followed by siblings (10 percent brothers, 9 percent sisters), parents (4 percent), spouses (3 percent), affines (2 percent), and more distant kin (13 percent).

The locations of those listed as remitters and as absentee household members are also parallel. Of the reported off-island remitters, 78 percent were residing in Fiji, with 60 percent in Suva alone (Figure 5.4). The remainder were in Australia (8%), New Zealand (4%), other Pacific islands (2%), the United States (2%), Europe (2%), sailing (2%), or serving with the military in the Middle East (1%). Similarly, 81 percent of the absentee household members were reported to be in Fiji, including 61 percent in Suva (Figure 5.5). An additional 14 percent were reported to be staying in Australia,

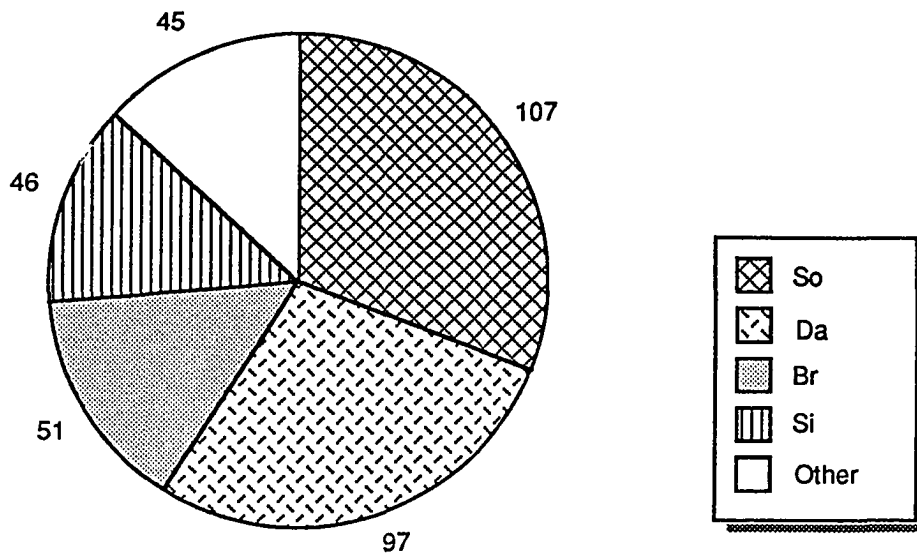


Figure 5.2 Relationship of remitters

Source: 1989 survey of 415 households conducted by Jan Rensel and Alan Howard

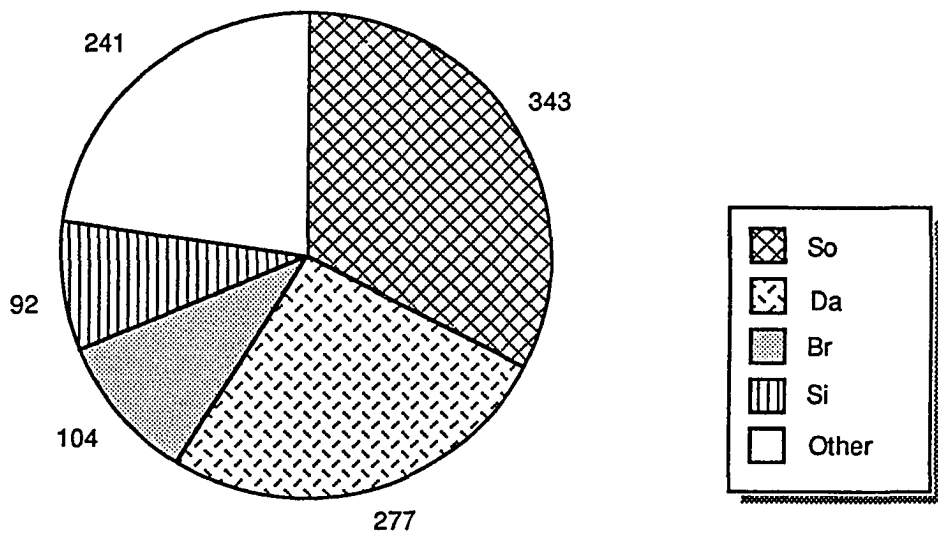


Figure 5.3 Relationship of absentee household members

Source: 1989 survey of 415 households conducted by Jan Rensel and Alan Howard

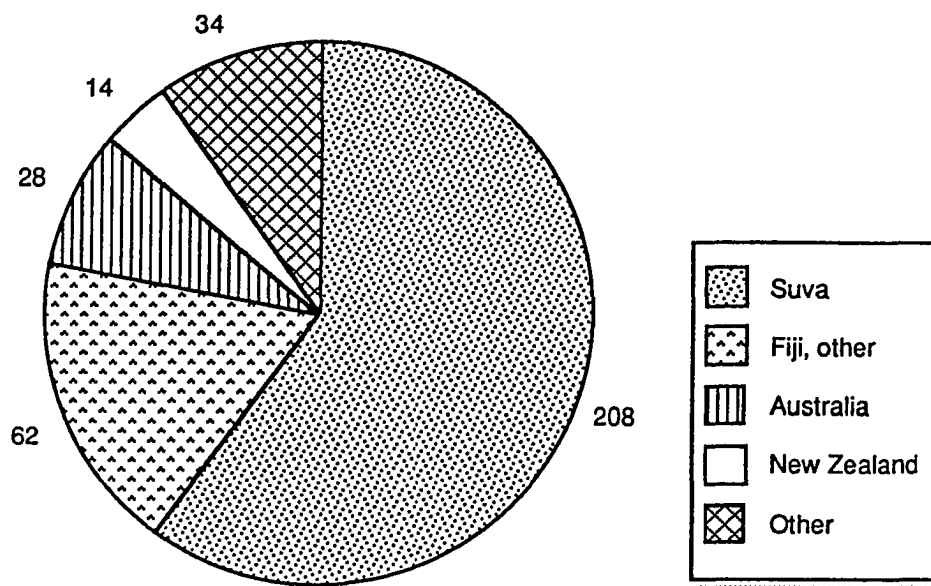


Figure 5.4 Location of remitters

Source: 1989 survey of 415 households conducted by Jan Rensel and Alan Howard

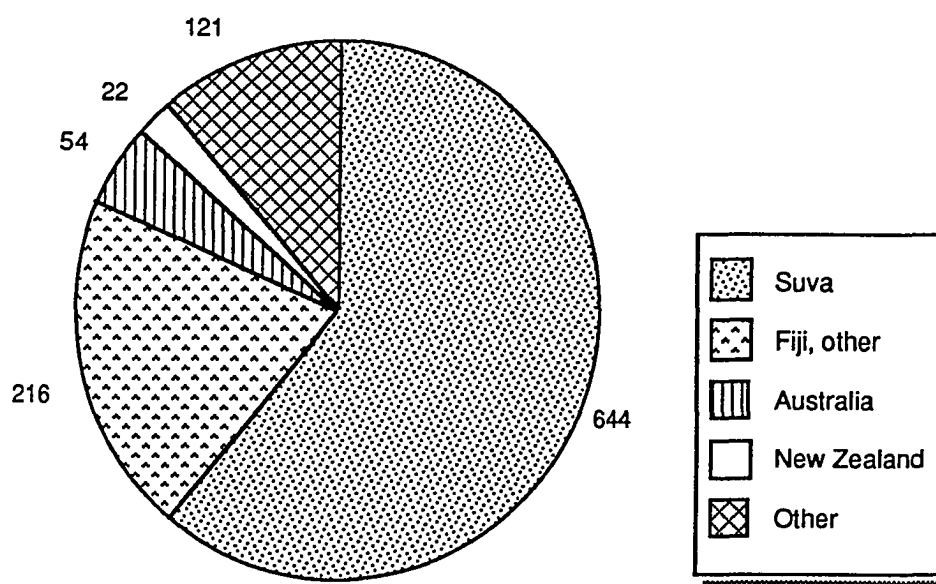


Figure 5.5 Location of absentee household members

Source: 1989 survey of 415 households conducted by Jan Rensel and Alan Howard

New Zealand, other Pacific Islands, North America, Europe, the Middle East, or sailing. For 5 percent (53 individuals) no location was given.

The predominance of close kin in both cases does not surprise, nor does the centrality of Fiji and Suva in particular, given proximity and the high proportion of Rotuman migrants who live there. The comparable characteristics of those listed as remitters and as absent household members, however, should not be taken as an indication that the first group is simply a subset of the second. In fact, over one-third (125) of those identified as remitters were not among those listed as absent household members, and 79 percent (838) of the individuals listed as household members away were not reported as remitters (Figure 5.6).

The extent to which the two groups do not overlap may result from a variety of factors. For example, individuals who have only just left the island may not be in a position to remit, or may be only away on holiday and expected to return shortly. Of the 921 household members for whom there is information on date of departure, 146 (16 percent) left Rotuma in the year of the survey, 1989. Only five (3 percent) of these individuals were reported as sending remittances. On the other hand, 401 or 44 percent of those reported as absent household members have been gone for more than ten years.¹¹ A much greater proportion (27 percent) of the latter group were recorded as sending remittances. This is higher than the percentage of all absent household members acknowledged to be remitters (21 percent). Looking at it another way, of the 201

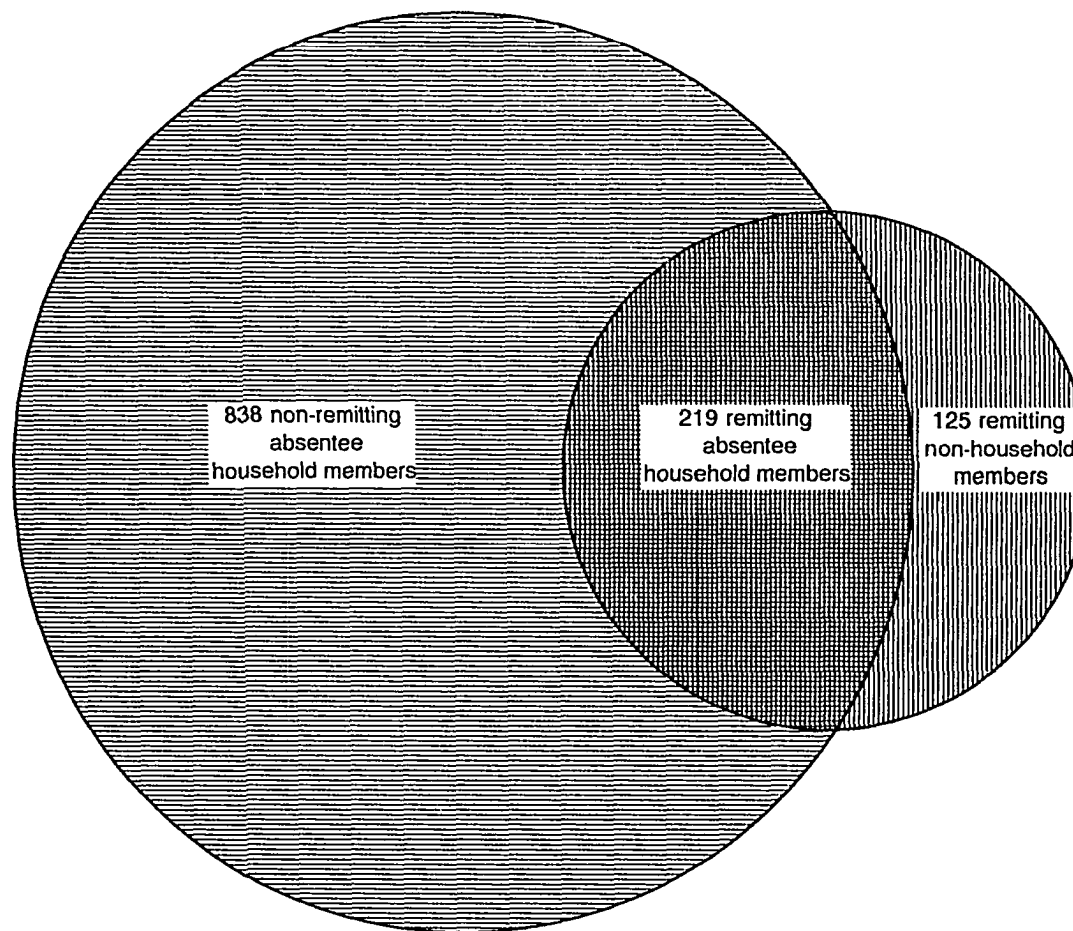


Figure 5.6 Overlap between household membership and remittances

Source: 1989 survey of 415 households conducted by Jan Rensel and Alan Howard

individuals listed as both remitters and absentee household members for whom information on date of departure was obtained, 115 (57 percent) had been away from Rotuma for more than ten years.¹²

A migrant's occupational status also has some impact on his or her ability to remit. None of the 147 absentees listed as students were recorded as sending contributions to their households. Employment is no guarantee, however; only 31 percent of the 489 absentee household members identified as employed were noted as sending remittances. Regardless of financial ability, Rotuman migrants evidently exercise choice with regard to whether to send money home.

Some of the differences between the lists may be artifacts of the interview process, such as time constraints, the way the questions were asked, the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, etc. In addition, responses may have been shaped by the interviewees' own purposes. For instance, some may have elected to list certain relatives as household members, acknowledging their rights to family land as a defense against other potential claimants on the island who are more distantly related. A recording bias may have resulted from concerns for social approval --reluctance to report remittances on the one hand, and eagerness to claim overseas kin on the other. Whether or not the children currently contribute financial support, parents are proud to list as household members those who have gone away and made a life for themselves elsewhere, especially if they have good jobs. Thus

respondents also exercised choice in terms of their acknowledgment of remitters and household members.

Like any interview data, the information on absentee household membership and remitters must be interpreted with some caution (Howard 1986b:175-176). These caveats notwithstanding, the survey data are a reasonable indicator of the involvement of Rotuman migrants with their home island. The fact that the lists of remitters and absentee members only partially overlap suggests that sending remittances and belonging to a household may be separate issues, with neither one a necessary or sufficient condition for the other. A strong element of choice is at work both on the part of both survey respondents in acknowledging household members and remitters, and on the part of those listed--to the extent the survey reflects their efforts to maintain connections.

I suggest further that reciprocal activities instead of or in addition to sending of cash remittances serve to maintain awareness of migrants' status as *kainaga* and household members. In combination with the results of the intensive study discussed in the previous section, the evidence suggests that Rotumans living away are considered members of households on the island for a combination of reasons: close kinship; being considered a credit to the family; and reciprocal graciousness in a variety of forms.

"Transnational Corporations of Kin"?

Bertram and Watters (1985:498-9) suggest that, rather than being a matter of individual choice, migration represents a collective decision by the migrant's family unit, aimed at profitable allocation

of household resources. Furthermore, they interpret the prevalence of post-migration behaviors such as the sending of remittances and reciprocal visiting among geographically-distant family members as evidence of the emergence of a new institution, "the transnational corporation of kin" (Bertram and Watters 1985:499).

Insofar as the notion of a "corporation" implies bounded groups, coordinated group decision-making, and especially hierarchical considerations, it is inappropriate to apply to Rotumans. As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, the composition of Rotuman groups is characteristically fluid, and leadership non-coercive. Although kin assistance is important to successful migration and access to opportunities in education and employment, and ties to the island also have advantages, individuals on Rotuma and away continually exercise personal choice with regard to whether and how they interact with their relatives near and far.

Another way in which the Rotuman case goes beyond the MIRAB scenario is the emerging practice of Rotuman migrants' choosing involvement with home communities rather than strictly family groups. Several examples are outlined in the next section.

Beyond Family Ties: Other Forms of Migrant Involvement

Migrant Rotumans have become involved with their home island in significant ways that go beyond interactions with specific relatives. Notably, these include district-based fundraising and large group visits, events focused on policy and governance issues, and collaboration and support in business affairs. While some

interactions have been fraught with conflict and long-term results are variable, these forms of involvement serve the purpose of allowing migrants to remain connected with their home island, and directly or indirectly affect Rotuma's economic well-being.

Group Visitations and Fundraising

In addition to reciprocal visiting and remittances between family members, Rotumans in Fiji and overseas organize various activities including fund-raisers and visits to the island. Rotuman migrants in Suva have formed groups based on their home districts on Rotuma. These groups hold meetings, dances, bazaars and other events both to interact with each other and to gather money for projects on Rotuma. For instance, the Oinafa organization contributed to the purchase of a diesel generator for their district; other groups have joined fundraising competitions for improving the schools which serve their home localities. In this way migrant contributions benefit each district as a whole rather than individual households.

District organizations also arrange group visits to Rotuma for Christmas and other special occasions. Such visits often involve hymn-singing and Rotuman dancing competitions, feasts and other formal events. Organized visits provide opportunities for Rotumans, especially those who may not have established or maintained close kin ties on the island, to share a short and activity-packed stay with other visitors with whom they are more familiar. The visiting groups also mobilize large contributions of food and money for Rotuma residents. The 1989 celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Methodist missionary arrival on Rotuma brought several hundred

visitors to the island, preceded by substantial remittances of cash and goods to allow those in Oinafa district who were hosting events to make housing improvements and food preparations. For Christmas 1991, at least three separate Fiji-based Rotuman groups chartered boats to the island, bringing people and large amounts of food. International group visits are less frequent, but the New Zealand Rotuman community, including some 62 families as of 1991, hosted a visiting party of Rotumans in 1990, and is planning a group trip to the island at Christmas time in 1993.

Special Events Focused on Policy and Governance Issues

Rotumans in Fiji are well-represented in the professions and in public service (see Chapter 1; also Bryant 1990:142). Many of them are interested in improving conditions on Rotuma in various ways, and are willing to share their skills and experience with island leaders. In 1989 a group of Rotumans in Suva organized a special retreat in Fiji for the seven district chiefs of Rotuma, focused on leadership skills. In 1991, another group, under the sponsorship of the Fiji Centre of the University of the South Pacific, developed a series of lectures and panel discussions on Rotuman issues, including land rights, tourism, leadership, and tradition and change for Rotuman women. In both cases, Rotuman teachers, lawyers, doctors, business leaders and others participated.

Concrete results from such discussions are slow in coming. Tensions persist between Rotuma's district chiefs and educated Rotumans in Fiji who are in powerful positions in business and government. While the island potentially could benefit from the

assistance offered by migrants, the chiefs especially are wary of outside interference. This was illustrated in 1990, when five of the district chiefs petitioned Fiji's Prime Minister to oust two Rotumans from senior government posts, also Rotumans, for interfering in island affairs. The officials had come to Rotuma in 1989 as government representatives to help settle the dispute concerning Itu'muta's district chief (see Chapter 4; also Howard and Rensel 1993). The chiefs also complained about the lack of respect shown by two Rotuman bank officers when the chairman of the Rotuma Council could not get an appointment to see them about a loan for school buses.¹³ Although people on Rotuma recognize the potential benefits of assistance from their urban kin, they do not always receive it graciously.

Promotion of Business

More significant in terms of generating income is the involvement of migrants in collaborate business ventures on the island, especially in the formation and management of cooperatives, the provision of bank loans, and attempts to initiate tourism. Each of these is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, so I recapitulate only briefly here, with a few additional comments.

Most attempts to form cooperatives on the island have drawn on migrant assistance. The role played by Wilson Inia, who returned from Fiji to teach school and guide the fledgling Rotuma Cooperative Association, was key to RCA's long-lived success. In the 1980s, a group in Malhaha district established a cooperative to manage the airport and start a fishing enterprise. With aid from migrants they

purchased a freezer and two boats, but conflicts within the group on Rotuma and between the Rotuma and Fiji contingents led to the failure and dissolution of this co-op in 1991.

The Raho Cooperative, reorganized in 1990 with help from Rotumans in Fiji, has now superseded RCA's position as the dominant trade organization on the island. The success of Raho can be attributed in part to the involvement of John Bennett, an American married to a Rotuman woman. Formerly a teacher on the island, Bennett resides part-time in Suva and part-time with his wife's family on Rotuma. His experience with international business and finance, combined with practical skills, personal knowledge of Rotuman life and ability to speak the language make Bennett uniquely qualified to assist in development projects. His facilitation is central in coordinating the efforts of professionals in legal, accounting and government positions in Fiji, with those of several capable and hard-working Rotumans on the island.

The availability of bank loans on the island of Rotuma can be traced to the appointment of a Rotuman migrant as chief manager of the National Bank of Fiji (NBF) in 1987. Following his directive, the Rotuma branch of the bank began granting loans to island residents. A number of enterprises got their start as a result. The impact of the availability of business loans can be seen in the case of two households in Oinafa village. Both households obtained loans to purchase trucks which they subsequently hired out to the Raho Cooperative. By hauling Raho's copra, these two households earned

by far the highest incomes of all those participating in the 1989 intensive survey (see Table 3.4).

Rotumans in Fiji who are from Oinafa district, where the wharf was built in the 1970s, have assisted their counterparts on Rotuma in initiating limited tourism. After much community dissension, they managed to arrange for a cruise liner to stop at the island and disgorge a thousand or so passengers for one day, in 1986. This practice continued once or twice a year until, by 1989, Rotumans from around the island were taking advantage of the opportunity to sell food, souvenirs, or sightseeing rides in their vehicles. Gradually disagreements mounted over the distribution of landing fees, resulting in the cancellation of two trips scheduled for 1990 and 1991. According to a March 1991 Fiji Times article, this resulted in a loss to Rotumans of some \$F20,000 per trip.

Aside from questions of longevity or financial success, all of these joint enterprises demonstrate the continuing interest of Rotuman migrants in the welfare of their home island. Although such groups usually originate from ties of kin or locality, they selectively incorporate individuals (including outsiders) who are capable of contributing to their goals.

Conclusion

Forms of interaction between Rotumans at home and abroad have multiplied and intensified dramatically since 1960 when Howard (1961) characterized Rotuma as a "hinterland." Flows of people, information, and resources in both directions are clearly facilitated

by relatives, although there is no evidence that family groups make decisions for individuals as suggested by Bertram and Watters "transnational corporations of kin." In fact, ties between Rotumans on the island and elsewhere go beyond kinship. Migrant assistance has district-level impacts through group visits and fundraising projects, and affects the whole island through involvement in leadership and policy discussions, and promotion of business and income-generating opportunities.

A model of migrant involvement which focuses primarily on cash remittances is misleading insofar as money flows mostly in one direction, to Rotuma. Even adding reciprocal visiting tells but part of the story. An accurate scenario of interactions between migrants and those on Rotuma must include as well the complementary sharing of different types of foods, goods and support. Along with sending cash remittances and reciprocal hosting, these actions embody the basic value of Rotuman reciprocity: effort expended on one another's behalf. The contents of transactions cannot be evaluated simply in their cash equivalent; they represent the investment of time and effort and care which Rotumans call *hanisi* --love in action. For those who choose to enact them, the two-way flows of resources and assistance between those on Rotuma and those away help to maintain relationships across the miles and over the years.

Notes to Chapter 5

¹According to Figure 1 in a recent article by R. G. Ward (1993:4), Fiji's aid per capita in 1988 was among the lowest in the South Pacific, and her domestic exports outstripped aid by a factor of six.

²These decisions were promoted by Rotuma's Senator, Wilson Inia, and were the subject of some contention among the other members of the Rotuma Council (Rotuma Council, October 31, 1972 and November 4, 1972; see also a speech by Senator Inia in Parliamentary Debates, December 14, 1972).

³This idea has also been years in the works. Plant (1991:215) reported that in 1975 the District Officer on Rotuma expected a diesel generator, funded by the EEC, to be completed on Rotuma by 1979.

⁴A similar point is made by Connell (1992) regarding the significance of government employment in Micronesia. Note that most government jobs on Rotuma are held by Rotumans.

⁵When Gardiner asked Rotumans about the declining population in the late nineteenth century, they cited emigration as the first cause (Gardiner 1898:497), but Gardiner himself, as well as colonial officials such as Resident Commissioner Leefe, tended to blame widespread illness caused by inbreeding (Eason 1951:88, 122-123).

⁶The first census taken on Rotuma, at the time of Cession to Great Britain (1881), tallied a total population of 2491, including 638 females and 440 males between the ages of 15 and 40. The male/female ratio for the 15-40 age group was only 69/100. Charles Mitchell, Resident Commissioner at the time, attributed the surplus of females to the fact that so many young men had left the island (Rotuma District Office, October 1, 1881).

⁷For the overall Rotuman population in Fiji (including Rotuma), the male/female ratio for ages 15-39 has remained nearly equal from 1956 to 1986, ranging from 97 to 103 males per 100 females. As in Rotuma, rural sex ratios have also increased slightly for Fiji as a

whole since 1966, from 103.6 to 104.8 males per 100 females. Meanwhile urban sex ratios dropped from 104.1/100 in 1966 to 99.7/100 in 1986.

⁸Fiji Air service to Rotuma was suspended in late 1993. Air transport is currently available to the island only on a charter basis.

⁹This figure is likely under-reported. I was conducting my daily activity survey during the same period as households were being interviewed for the island-wide census. On the daily survey, 14 of 17 households reported receiving cash remittances, but only 10 of those households told the census interviewer that they received cash remittances.

¹⁰Rotumans have sent monetary support to kin in Fiji in the past, especially students away at school. See also Rotuma Council, January 8, 1915, about sending money to a relative in Fiji for a funeral feast; and Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1940, regarding how the need for cash to send "remittances to relatives in Fiji" prompts Rotumans to cut copra.

¹¹Many of those who left Rotuma several years ago and are listed as absentee household members have established their own households elsewhere by marrying and having children in the interim. This apparently has no predictable effect on whether or not people are considered members of households on Rotuma.

¹²This appears to support Bertram and Watters' contention (1985:501) that MIRAB patterns are not ephemeral but capable of continuous reproduction, at least until the turn of the century. It also suggests a contrast with problems of sustaining remittances by Samoan migrants to New Zealand noted by Macpherson (1992).

¹³The letter was summarized in an article in the Fiji Times, June 19, 1990.

CHAPTER 6

THE STRUCTURING OF RECIPROCITY

A variety of events and circumstances in Rotuman society combine to structure forms of reciprocity. Both formal and informal occasions give focus to Rotuman social interactions and prompt particular contributions of goods and labor. In this chapter, I begin by looking at historical influences that affected the practice of formal feasting, then turn to an examination of contemporary feasting practice. The following section introduces a range of informal situations that promote interhousehold exchange, with examples from my study. In response to these formal and informal situations, I found Rotuman villagers generally emphasized relationships with a few households and maintained lower levels of interaction with others. Variations on this pattern, as reflected in intensity of interaction between pairs of households, illustrate the importance of not only kinship and geographic proximity but particular circumstances and interpersonal histories in shaping interhousehold exchange.

Formal Feasts

Feasting is the single most important venue for Rotumans to demonstrate mutual support. The importance of feasting is illustrated by the longevity, persistence, and pervasiveness of practice. In Rotuman myths and throughout recorded history, despite religious, political, and economic changes, feasts for many purposes

and of various sizes and levels of formality continue to be a focus of social existence.

Missionary Influences

Rotuman legends, such as those concerning the founding of Rotuma and the establishment of the first Rotuman kings, prominently feature feasts and attest to the importance of key feast components: kava, a whole pig and other cooked food (Churchward 1937a, 1937b).¹ During the 18th century, Christian missionaries who recorded accounts of feasts held in honor of Rotuman *sau* noted these components and soon recognized their religious significance. In particular they were concerned that the kava rituals, and the songs and dances performed, involved invocations of Rotuman *atua* 'spirits' (Methodist Church of Australasia, Wesleyan Missionary Notices No. 31, April 1865; No. 34, January 1866; and No. 37, October 1866) and that the *sau* himself was revered as a sort of "living god" (Methodist Church of Australasia, Wesleyan Missionary Notices No. 5, April 1868; No. 13, April 1870).

Reverend William Fletcher's account of a feast held November 4, 1865 is particularly vivid in depicting dress and demeanor, the presentation of food, dancing and singing, and the distribution of the feast:

Started early to Kuteu, the far end of the island, to be present at a great heathen gathering. It had just commenced as I reached the place. At one end of a large open square were several sheds of cocoa nut leaves, in which respectively were the *sau*, the *mueta*, the *sau's* lady, and other great folks. Now and again, men, and children too, came into the square, shouting as in defiance of an enemy. Clubs were brandished,

and guns leveled, which after a series of movements, as if dodging the adversary, were fired off. The dresses were fantastic, one in a black suit with black cylinder hat, others with scarlet knee breeches, and soldiers' coats, topped with woolen caps. Others darted about with the true native dress in the nearest approach to nudity. The object of the whole appeared to be general amusement. Food was presented in detail from the tribes, and piled up before the respective tents. This was slow work, and took up three or four hours, and under a burning sun. This over, the sau and mueta left to put on their official dresses, for the dancing or singing, called mak poki. The said dress consists of a girdle, several fringes deep, made of leaves, much in appearance like the leaves of the pandanus. They are prepared by duly qualified women, and dyed a beautiful deep crimson. The two, in their attractive attire, walked across the square, and were then joined by about thirty chiefs, all in new mats, with girdles of the variegated ti. Some had necklaces of native flowers, which gave off an agreeable perfume. Each performer had a small paddle in his hand. The sau and the mueta stood together, all the rest squatted down near them. Rising up, they commenced a song, raising the legs alternately, and brandishing the paddles. The song over, they rushed one half one way, and one half the other way, and meeting in the centre of the square, stood in two lines, the sau and the mueta being in the centre of the front line. A man sat before a native drum to beat time, and lead the chanting. All joined, moving the legs, and gently brandishing the paddles, now giving them an oscillating movement on the front of the head, and again striking them gently with the tips of the fingers of the left hand. At intervals, the back line dividing into two went round and joined again in front of the line, where stood the sau and the mueta, which line in its turn divided, and passed to the front. In each song these evolutions were gone through five or six times. The whole may have lasted about half an hour.... The songs appear to be invocations to the atua, or various gods. This being over, the performers with guns and clubs again came on the scene.... The feast was distributed to the spectators, of whom including all, there may have been two hundred. Afterwards an unusually long list of the atua and deceased Chiefs was called over. Looking at the whole, I saw how desirable it was to substitute a Christian

meeting for those who have at once abandoned heathenism and heathenish festivals (Methodist Church of Australasia, Wesleyan Missionary Notices No. 37, October 1866).

The missionaries resolved to forbid their converts from contributing to or participating in feasts honoring the *sau* (Methodist Church of Australasia, Wesleyan Missionary Notices No. 13, April 1870), and eventually, any weddings or births not blessed by the Christian church (Methodist Church of Australasia, Miscellaneous Missionary Notes, Rotuma Circuit Meetings 1881–1882; 1884). The withholding of support from the *sau* and unconverted chiefs had dramatic social and political consequences, contributing to the so-called "religious wars" of the 1870s (see Howard and Kjellgren in press) and the demise of the position of *sau*. The missionaries also tried to turn their new followers away from persistent "sins" such as drinking kava, going to Rotuman singing houses, and "heathen" dancing (Methodist Church of Australasia, Miscellaneous Missionary Notes: Rev. Fletcher's notebook).

Wisely, the missionaries substituted other venues for sociability. Reverend Fletcher's account of a Wesleyan "festive gathering" held December 26, 1865 sounds very restrained compared to the "heathen" gathering above (recounted some weeks earlier), but the event was apparently acceptable to the Rotumans:

In the hope of pleasing the people, and especially the young folks, there was a general festive gathering at my suggestion at Oinafa today. I had been too busy to arrange any programme of proceedings, and all was left to the teachers. All the schools met, and gave us pieces of scripture, after their own native style, and any scraps of geography or history they had managed to gain. All were well dressed. Evidently

much pains had been taken by the teachers. We were favoured with fine weather, and all were I believe very well pleased with their Christmas meeting. Before the people dispersed, I collected all the children together. I asked questions on Scripture subjects, added a few simple questions in arithmetic. The whole then chanted together the multiplication table. This was followed by a hymn, and with a short address and prayer, we concluded. Many heathen were present from all parts of the island. We would show these that our people in abandoning meaningless gatherings in the names of the atua, gain everything in the way of sound sense, and real enjoyment (Methodist Church of Australasia, Wesleyan Missionary Notices No. 37, October 1866).

Feasting itself was not eliminated, but accommodated to the new religion. Rotuman feasts came to incorporate Christian elements along with indigenous traditions. Despite the disappearance of the *sau* and the *mua*, and with them the overt connections between Rotuman leaders and spiritual power, feasting retains a sacred quality. The presence of chiefs elevates the significance of an event, as does the presentation of white mats. Sacrificial pigs, cooked whole, are essential. A Christian prayer precedes the kava ritual and blesses the food. The lyrics sung to Rotuman dances acknowledge the Christian God as well as the chiefs and the people (see example in Chapter 4).

Colonial Restrictions

Some colonial officials complained that Rotuman feasts, especially those surrounding weddings, were burdensome, wasteful, and unfair to the poor. Resident Commissioner John Halley articulated this view in a meeting of the Rotuma Council in 1909:

I again desire to draw your attention to the extraordinary feasting which takes place on the occasion of marriage.... It has...been brought forcibly home to me...how greatly these stupid feasts are responsible for very many heavy debts.... You probably know more about the matter than I do but I question if any one of you could tell me offhand how many feasts occur in connection with the betrothal and marriage of parties in Rotumah. So as an example I shall detail to you what actually took place on the occasion of the very last marriage which culminated the other day.

First of all, the prospective bridegroom approached the parents of the girl to receive consent. He brought the kava root and then consent having been given, Feast No. 1. All parties appeared before the Chief to get his consent, Feast No. 2. Male side approached female side to fix a day on which to appear before the Pure [Resident Commissioner] to give notice of intended marriage, Feast No. 3. A week or so later male side approaches female side to counsel as to day on which to return to Commissioner or Pure (date already fixed by Commissioner and known to all parties) to receive certificate, Feast No. 4. Female side approaches male side a few days later, just really to finally settle the date of receiving certificate, Feast No. 5. Day of receiving certificate and of marriage, a really big feast: No. 6. Then for two days after marriage on female side and by different parties, Feasts No. 7 and 8. Then bride's people visited Bridegroom's and two separate days feasting took place, No. 9 & 10 and finally No. 11, the feast that was prepared on the newly married couple's returning back to the house from which they were married. Now this marriage was according to your ideas a poor one and yet 11 feasts took place, at which at least one large pig each occasion was killed and on the marriage day 5 pigs, not to count fowls and so forth.

One might not think so much of it were you to confine yourselves to what by your own industry you cultivate, or breed; but you invariably launch out (notwithstanding there is more food than can even be eaten at the feast) into cases of tinned meats or fish, biscuits and so forth--with the result that the waste is alarming, and the persons interested heavily in debt to the Trader. And yet throughout all this feasting the parties who have to pay the piper grumble at expense but are afraid to object openly because of false pride and silly conceit.

Another thing: all mats, bedcovers and so forth given as marriage presents, are, to recompense the feast makers and others who have taken trouble, shared among them, including one white mat to the chief or his wife as otherwise to the person of highest rank present; and what then is left to the bride--nothing. Poor bride and groom are shown the mats and so forth--in fact the latter are ostensibly displayed to them--and then they are whisked away and the newly married couple are left as matless or penniless as they were before marriage (Rotuma Council, February 4, 1909).

In response, Halley recorded a proposal from the chiefs that the number of feasts to celebrate betrothal and marriage be limited to two. Although the chiefs indicated that they preferred to keep the custom of presenting a white mat to the chief man or woman present, they agreed that the couple should be allowed to keep the rest (Rotuma Council, February 4, 1909). In 1916, however, this "Marriage Feasts Regulation" was repealed when the Council acknowledged to Resident Commissioner Hugh MacDonald that the ruling interfered too much with Rotuman custom, and people simply were ignoring it. In 1925 Resident Commissioner W. D. Carew proposed a regulation similar to that of 1909, in another attempt to curtail what he saw as wasteful competitiveness in marriage feasts. It, too, had little effect.

Currently Rotuman custom allows a range of options from very small, quiet weddings to elaborate multi-day events, only somewhat abbreviated from that described by Halley.² In the remainder of this section, I draw primarily on my observations of feasting practice on the island in the late 1980s, to discuss scheduling and types of feasts, and their meaning in the context of Rotuman values.

Socioeconomic Impacts on Periodicity

Feasts punctuate island life, with periods of intensive feasting followed by lulls. Scheduling is affected largely by pragmatic concerns. Formerly, a primary concern was the availability of appropriate local foods. Rev. Fletcher, for instance, noted after a hurricane in February 1874 that there were no weddings for several months. He inquired, and learned that it ultimately had to do with the lack of coconuts, needed to feed pigs. "Many pigs have been killed off because there have been no nuts to feed them.... No bridegroom would come forward without a creditable pile of pigs and taro, and so bridal days wait on the brighter days, which we hope are coming" (Methodist Church of Australasia, Letters Received, October 27, 1874).

Because of the geographic extension of the Rotuman community abroad, a major practical concern currently is the ability of off-island guests to attend important feasts. Thus for example, while a funeral must take place within twenty-four hours of death, the first anniversary *höt'āk hafu* is a moveable feast and can be scheduled to accommodate travelers. Oinafa arranged to hold two celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Methodist missionary arrival, one on the actual November date and one in December when Rotumans from Fiji and abroad could come during their Christmas holidays from school and work.

The participation of migrants also impacts the availability of feast resources. Whether or not they can attend, Rotumans in Fiji send money and food contributions in support of special occasions.

Of the remittances reported by Oinafa village households during the 1989 survey, 28 percent (\$F1265 of \$F4495) was designated for food purchases or other household preparations for feasts.³

Types of Feasts

Events scheduled by Christian denominations on Rotuma provide many contemporary opportunities for festive gatherings (*kato'aga*). In 1989 for instance, the annual island-wide Methodist fundraising conference, the visit of the head of the (Catholic) Marist missionaries in the Pacific region, and the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Wesleyan missionaries all prompted huge celebrations, each involving several hundred people. Secular feasts at the district or island level regularly commemorate holidays, honor important visitors such as government representatives, or celebrate special occasions, such as the departure of the Rotuman team to compete in the national rugby competition, or the acquisition of a new bus for the island.

Important personal events, especially weddings, funerals, and first birthdays, all require formal feasts--several in the case of a full-scale wedding, as noted above. Other occasions for which feasts are held include the first anniversary of death when family members erect a gravestone (*höt'äk hāfu*), a person's return to the island for the first time (*mamasa* from the verb 'to be dry'). Occasions such as a guest's departure (*ag forau*) and other birthdays (21st, 50th) may be marked with somewhat less formal, but still festive group meals.

Religious and secular feasts held during my research differed from personal events in that equal contributions to the former were generally required from each household. For the quarterly meeting of the Methodist circuit in Oinafa, for instance, the men were each asked to give a basket of food (*rē 'afa*). For the 150th anniversary celebration, the women of each household in Oinafa were asked to make five mats for people to sit on. Other than the expectation that chiefs will bring white mats (*apei*) when attending weddings or funerals, contributions to personal feasts are far more variable (see examples below).

Feasting as Work

In Chapter 4, work (*garue*) was discussed as the basis of social merit and reciprocity. In this sense, feasting is perhaps the archetypal form of work for Rotumans. There is no single term for "feast" in Rotuman; what it is called depends on the purpose of the gathering. But at least two types of feast historically were called simply *garue* 'work'. According to Rev. Fletcher's dictionary (ca. 1865), *garue* was the feast given by someone who is ill to the doctor, and A. M. Hocart was told in 1913 that the main funeral feast was called *garue ne al* or *garue ti'* (literally, 'work of the dead' or 'big work') (Hocart 1913, field notes 4769, 4755). Whatever the purpose of the feast, participants demonstrate their commitment and *hanisi* primarily through their contributions of work.

The actual day of a formal feast is but a culmination of weeks and sometimes months of preparation. For a formal wedding, for

instance, close relatives of the groom (*kau fā*) and of the bride (*kau hāni*) meet separately to determine what resources are needed for the several feasts and who will contribute what and how much. The men on both sides must provide kava, pigs and other food including perhaps a cow, and usually chickens, corned beef, taro and yams, *fekei* 'pudding', coconuts, sugar cane, and fruits such as pineapple or watermelon. The women must supply fine white mats and ordinary mats, changes of clothing for the couple, lengths of cloth and other items such as mosquito nets and bedding. Ideally the men draw upon their own gardens and the women plait their own mats, so months of advance notice allow time for extra planting and mat-making. It is also acceptable to request (*fara*) needed items such as pigs, cows and fine mats from *kainaga*, mobilizing reciprocal networks in a fashion similar to that described by Tiffany (1975) in Samoa. Alternatively pigs and cows, and infrequently mats, may be purchased for the purpose of feast contributions⁴. In addition, money is needed to acquire the imported items that have become essential to feasts, such as corned beef and formal wedding attire.

A young man of Oinafa village (Household D on Oinafa map, Figure 6.1) was married in December, 1989. One of the series of feasts leading up to his wedding, the *sūf hāni* (literally, 'request the woman') took place in October, during the survey period. The district chief, subchiefs and relatives of the young man took kava and a prepared *koua* including a pig and taro to the young woman's place on the other side of the island, in Juju district, to formally request her hand and set the wedding date. The day before this feast, members

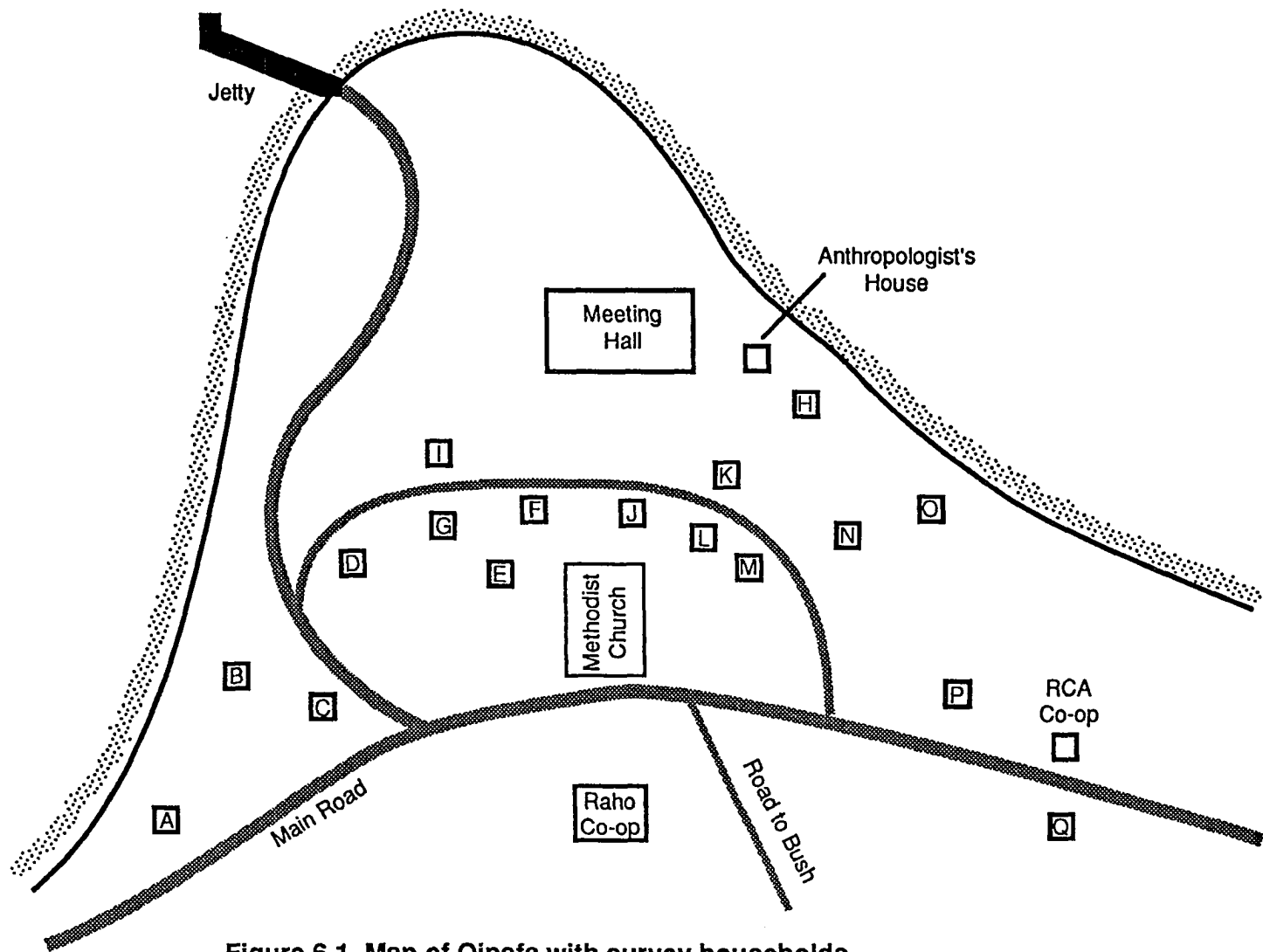


Figure 6.1 Map of Oinafa with survey households

of eight other Oinafa households gathered at the young man's place to help prepare the *koua*. Many of the helpers brought gifts of taro, breadfruit, chickens and corned beef, and all were hosted to lunch and dinner by the young man's household. Early the next morning, before the delegation set out, people from the whole village and other relatives gathered at the household for a morning feast. Then the delegation, including the groom-to-be, left for the bride's place, while close relatives spent the day with his household, discussing plans and awaiting the news about the wedding date.

Preparations intensify as the feast days approach. In the weeks leading up to the 150th anniversary *kato'aga* in November 1989, the men and women of Oinafa district gathered ever more frequently for planning meetings, choir and dance rehearsals, and work parties. The women from each household wove five ten-foot long mats for people to sit on, along with special baskets (*tauga*) for presenting the food. The people who painted the Oinafa church and catechist's house, and those who cut grass and pulled weeds throughout the central village, were thanked with meals and refreshments provided by those who lived nearby. In the ten days preceding the *kato'aga*, the men of the three *ho'aga* of central Oinafa district worked every day but Sunday on group tasks. They collected firewood and lava rocks for the earthen ovens (*koua*), harvested and transported hundreds of baskets of taro and other root crops, and hundreds of pineapples and watermelons. They cut and buried eighty bundles of bananas to hasten their ripening, and scraped cassava (*tapiko*) and prepared the other ingredients (such as taro or bananas)

for Rotuman pudding (*fekei*). The men also finished constructing a huge shelter (*ri hapa*) for which the women had plaited coconut frond roofing in addition to the usual corrugated iron. Immediately prior to the celebration the three *ho'aga* slaughtered and cleaned a total of 22 pigs, 11 cows, and 56 chickens for cooking. While the men labored over the *koua*, some of the women went to the shore to clean cow intestines, while others prepared food for all the workers.

Presenting and serving a feast is also labor intensive. At any feast, chiefs and other special guests are honored in several ways. They are garlanded with *tē fui* (Rotuman-style lei) and anointed with perfume. Sometimes mats or other gifts are given. Kava is ritually prepared and presented. Food is ceremonially presented, announced, distributed and served on low tables to the chiefs and honored guests. Music may be provided, either Rotuman dancing or, more commonly at weddings, contemporary dance music played by a band of local musicians. The men who cook and present the food, the women who prepare and serve the kava and the food, the dancers and musicians, and everyone else who assists must be thanked in some way. Contrary to the sensibilities of colonial officials, most of the mats given for weddings and funerals are precisely for the purpose of thanking those who help, not for the couple to keep. Mats are given to the most important helpers; the workers stay to eat after the dignitaries have finished; and those who serve the food are expected to take home whatever is not consumed by those they served.

Funerals differ from other feasts in that they often must take place suddenly, with little time for advance planning. Rotumans know they must be prepared for this eventuality, with mats and food to contribute and a willingness to give up other plans in order to assist people in their time of need. One household in Oinafa village (Household L) hosted a funeral during the first week of the survey. In the middle of the night the village was awakened by the beating of the *lali* (Fijian 'slit drum'). By the time my husband and I arrived, a messenger had already been sent to notify relatives around the island, and neighbors had gathered to begin preparing a *koua* and erecting a temporary shelter for the expected guests. In the morning men dug the grave. Women prepared food for the workers and the arriving guests, who brought mats, food, cloth and money. People gathered to sing hymns, attend the funeral service and see the old man buried, then share in the feast. There was no *fekei* 'pudding' but plenty of pig and corned beef and taro. The funeral household hosted group meals over the next four days as well, including the ritual fifth day (*terán lima*) on which the grave is supposed to be covered with cement.⁵ In all, 14 of the 16 other households in Oinafa village rallied to assist with the funeral work. Five gave mats, several gave food, and the chief gave an *apei* as well as a pig. One household contributed 15 litres of diesel to run the generator for lights during the night-time preparations. Afterwards, in thanks for their help, the four grave diggers were each given a mat. One or two mats were given to members of six other households. The chief also received the head of a pig and a basket of cooked food.

In summary, Rotuman practice related to feasting reflects responses to changing historical forces. Feasts recognize the Christian God in place of the *atua*, but retain essential symbols in the kava ritual, the ceremonial pig, and the exchange of mats. Resisting colonial pressure, Rotumans have persisted in defining weddings not as single events but as a series of stages marked by feasts. The periodicity of feasts adapts to socioeconomic circumstances such as the schedules of migrants and the availability of resources, including the cash and other purchased items migrants provide.

Formal feasts of all kinds continue to provide occasions for intensive demonstrations of commitment through contributions of labor and resources, sharing of food, and expressions of gratitude through the later distribution of mats. In requiring extended cooperative interaction, formal occasions also promote increased informal exchange among feast contributors, whose personal relationships are reinforced by the generally convivial experience of working together. In the next section, I outline other types of occasions prompting reciprocal assistance among households.

Situations Promoting Informal Interhousehold Exchange

Although simple interest in good relations prompts many instances of reciprocal gift-giving and assistance, there are a variety of informal situations which typically result in members of different households helping each other with labor or material resources. Among the most common are bouts of severe illness, specific

requests occasioned by need, work projects best expedited by many hands, and periodic bounty. Examples of each type of situation, that took place during the 1989 study of interhousehold exchange, serve to illustrate how people respond to such situations.

Illness

Responses to serious illness are important indicators of kinship. Wilson Inia, the RCA leader who became Rotuma's first senator, put it succinctly in a speech: "You will notice that when a [Rotuman] is sick, all his relatives come to see him, and if you do not come, you are not a member of the tribe. You have no relationship with him. [You] only know who [your] real relatives are when you are sick and when you are dead" (Parliamentary Debates, December 15, 1981).

On the first day of my study, the father of the district chief, himself a titled man, suffered a stroke. He was partially paralyzed and recovered only slowly. The old man was staying with another son who also lived in Oinafa village (Household N). The father's illness, along with his 80th birthday a few days after his stroke, prompted an intense outpouring of support from most of the other households in the village. When people heard about the stroke several visited the household, bringing special food gifts such as *telulu* (fish baked in leaves), baked goods, tinned peaches and porridge. A second cousin and her husband⁶ immediately came to stay with the household, she helping the son's wife with cleaning and mat-making and he giving the father daily massage (*sarao*) and helping the household *pure* with cooking, gardening and other work.

For the birthday celebration, 12 of the 16 other households in the village helped with food preparation; seven gave food gifts including pigs, a goat, and root crops; two households gave mats and two gave cash gifts. In addition, the visit of a daughter and a son from Suva also provided opportunities for others to help the household with gifts of food and help with cooking, housecleaning and transport over a period of about two weeks. Three neighboring households offered continued assistance over the next few months, particularly in frequent food gifts: bananas, melons and root crops; crabs, fish, chicken and corned beef; cakes and buns, Rotuman *fekei* (pudding); and for 17 days, a rare treat--fresh milk from someone's cow. These combined events--the father's illness and special birthday, along with the visit of the Suva children--accounted for most of the interactions of Household N with other households in the village.

Requests

While formal events may prompt Rotumans to approach others to request (*fara*) important resources such as pigs or mats, ordinary circumstances also lead to people's asking others for specific items which are needed and not available at a given moment. During the study such requests did not occur frequently, but members of various households did report giving items such as cooking oil, matches, soap, and *tahroro* in response to requests.

Resources more frequently requested were tools, equipment, appliances and means of transportation. In 1989 the ownership of such items was somewhat uneven among the seventeen households

participating in my study (Table 6.1). Even lanterns and lawnmowers, which were fairly common, were borrowed from time to time. People also asked for space in other's refrigerators and freezers, or sometimes for ice. The most intensive focus of requests had to do with transport. In the 1989 study, seven households owned trucks or cars, three had motorcycles and two had bicycles in working order. Individuals from other households occasionally needed rides to special events, to the post office or hospital at the government station, to visit relatives in another district. Some required help hauling cargo or running other errands. When the school bus broke down, children needed rides to school. Over the thirteen weeks of the study, there were 194 instances of transportation assistance: loans of trucks, cars and motorcycles (16) or bicycles (14), rides (151), and other errands (13). (See Chapter 7 regarding reciprocation of transportation assistance.)

Projects

There are numerous work projects in daily life on Rotuma which can be accomplished more quickly and enjoyably by a group than by one person. Small groups of women gather to help each other process pandanus and plait mats, or to go fishing. Sometimes men (and occasionally women) garden or cut copra together. On a regular basis perhaps the most common arena for group assistance is food preparation. Especially when a man is making a *koua*, even for an ordinary meal, it is not unusual for other men who happen by to stop and help, and be asked to stay and eat when the food is ready.

Table 6.1
Inventory of selected consumer goods in Oinafa village by household

HOUSEHOLD	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	Total
sewing machine	3	1	1		1		1		1			1	1	1	3	1	2	17
benzine lantern		1	1	1	1	1		2		1	1	2	1	1		2	1	16
kerosene lantern	1	1	4					1		1	1	1	1	1	2	2		16
gas stove or oven	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1		1			1	2		1	13
radio		1	1	1	1			1	1	2			1		1	1	1	12
fridge or freezer	1	1		1	1				1			1		1	1	1	1	10
motor-cycle	2		2	2					1						2			9
car or truck	1	1		1	1				1		1				1			7
bicycle			1		1	1						1					2	7
lawn-mower	1	1		1	1				1						1		1	7
kerosene burner		1	2		1			1			1						1	7
tape player			1								1				2			4
generator	1	1			1													3

Source: 1989 survey conducted by Jan Rensel and Alan Howard

Although women from different households may get together to make jam or bake cakes, indoor kitchens limit opportunities for informal, *ad hoc* assistance (see Chapter 8 regarding the social implications of changes in housing).

A practice which exemplified informal assistance in Oinafa in 1989 was the weekly *tāriga*, a special meal for whichever lay Methodist preacher was visiting the congregation. Every Saturday, one household after another took turns preparing the meal to be served Sunday mid-day for the preacher, the resident catechist and the chief and/or subchiefs of the village. Although one household each week was responsible for providing the food, men from other households, especially the young unmarried men, unfailingly came to help. This often involved late nights tending the *koua*, and early mornings mixing and cooking a large batch of *fekei*. The helpers stayed to a hearty breakfast and went home with bundles of *fekei*. Despite the tensions between Oinafa households in 1990, young men from throughout the village continued to help with every household's *tāriga*; testifying to its social value as a cooperative enterprise.

Another important venue for mutual assistance is house construction, although with the increase in the number of dwellings built of imported materials, reciprocal support in this arena is on the wane (see Chapter 8). Rotumans continue to use local materials (poles and thatch) to construct their kitchens (*kohea*) which shelter earthen ovens (*koua*), as did Household O during the 1989 study. The project took place over a total of 18 days and involved a recorded total of 269 person-hours. Twenty-seven relatives and friends from

four households from within the study area and seven from neighboring villages helped with various stages of construction: cutting, transporting and peeling the bark from the poles, cutting and plaiting the thatch, erecting the pole structure and fastening the thatch. The helpers were thanked in a variety of ways, most with meals, some with gifts of food to take home and ten dollars in addition to one couple.

A few months prior to the study this household also built a modern kitchen/dining structure of cement and corrugated iron with wooden cupboards and shelves. Two of the *pure's* cousins, a woman from Noa'tau and a man from Oinafa (Household K), were skilled at construction and helped significantly in the process. The man, who knew he would be hosting our stay in the village later, refused a gift of money for his help but asked instead for help in providing garden produce during our time there. Over a period of 13 weeks Household O gave him nine baskets of root crops. (See Chapter 7 for other examples of how construction help was reciprocated during the 1989 survey, and Chapter 8 regarding changes in housing and social relationships over the long term.)

Bounty

Bounty may result from one's own labor, such as gardening or fishing, or come from others, such as relatives in Fiji. Whatever the source, large supplies of food provide opportunities to share. Household O, which reported the most garden visits and hours of the 17 households in the study, planted a huge crop of watermelon in

preparation for the 150th anniversary celebration in Oinafa. Just prior to the November event the household pure and men from four other households in the study harvested hundreds of watermelons. Although some melons were for the upcoming feast, Household O gave each household in Oinafa village at least one watermelon, and two melons to people with chiefly titles or church positions.

This demonstration of largesse on the part of one household was more dramatic than the typical sharing episode, such as when seasonal crops such as oranges or pineapple or breadfruit are ripe, and the fruits of the harvest are given freely by many households. Boat days, when gifts of food and other items arrive from relatives in Fiji, also engender sharing. For example, during the 1989 study Household P received large bags of rice and flour from their son in Suva. They shared this bounty with the wife's sister in Household Q, a second cousin in adjacent Household O, and the husband's mother's sister in the next village.⁷

Villagers also took the opportunity presented by their hosting a *tāriga* feast for the visiting preacher to create bounty in the form of extra *fekei* 'native pudding.' In distributing *fekei* to other households, each host household got a turn demonstrating largesse. The practice of giving *fekei* also permitted food gifts to flow between households not on particularly close terms--keeping the doors open to potentially warmer relations.

Intensity of Interaction between Households

During the 1989 survey of interhousehold exchange behavior, 17 households recorded on a daily basis the food, money and other resources they gave and received, episodes of assistance in various forms, and meals shared with others. The content of exchange interactions, and in particular the influence of money on exchange patterns, is discussed in detail in Chapter 7. To assess the importance of formal and informal occasions in structuring the interactions of each household, as well as the influence of kin closeness, geographic proximity and other circumstances, it is useful to condense the survey results into overall numbers of exchanges between each pair of households, as a measure of interaction intensity. In tallying the exchanges, transfers in each direction were counted. For example, if a member of one household helped another household build something, and the second household thanked him with a meal, that was counted as two actions. Similarly if a person brought a gift of food, helped with meal preparation, and stayed to eat, three actions were tallied. But if someone sent food and did not attend a gathering to assist or eat, that counted as only one action.⁸ By greater intensity of interaction I mean more frequent and/or multiple forms of exchange between households.

Given 17 households, there were 136 potentially interactive household pairs in the study. While 16 pairs of households recorded no interactions at all during the 91 days of the survey, most

interacted on a number of occasions, and two household pairs did so more than 100 times. The average was 15.5 interactions per household pair over the 13 weeks.

Looking at the data in terms of each household's pattern of interaction it becomes clear that village households typically maintained intensive exchange relations with a few other households, while sustaining a lower level of interaction with a greater number (see Table 6.2). This is to be expected, in that having a reliable circle of strong, supportive relationships ensures not only economic but social survival. There are certain people one feels one can count on in times of crisis, whether for help with important ceremonies or backing in political issues. Because there are practical limits to the number of intensive relationships one household can maintain, priority is given to sharing resources with those few (see "The Work of Reciprocity" in Chapter 4). Maintaining good relations with a wider network is of secondary importance. Although most households followed this pattern, three (Households D, K and L) interacted with more households more intensively than others, and several households maintained levels of interaction markedly lower than the average.

Two questions arise from a consideration of these data: on what bases did households choose their most intensive exchange relationships? and what factors influenced the interaction patterns of those households which varied from the typical exchange profile?

Sahlins (1965) proposes kinship and geographic proximity as two of the most important influences on reciprocal exchange

Table 6.2
Number of interacting households by number of interactions

<u>Household</u>	<u>Number of Interactions</u>					
	<u>0</u>	<u>1-10</u>	<u>11-20</u>	<u>21-30</u>	<u>31-40</u>	<u>41+</u>
A	2	7	3	3	-	1
B	2	10	2	-	-	2
C	5	9	2	-	-	-
D	-	2	7	3	3	1
E	1	7	3	3	3	1
F	6	5	1	2	2	-
G	-	12	1	-	2	1
H	7	8	1	-	-	-
I	-	8	6	-	2	-
J	2	7	4	2	-	1
K	-	4	1	3	3	5
L	1	5	4	5	-	1
M	3	10	2	1	-	-
N	1	7	2	3	1	2
O	1	7	5	1	-	2
P	1	8	2	1	2	2
Q	2	9	3	1	1	-
Mean	1.9	7.5	2.8	1.6	1.1	1.1

Source: Daily activity survey of 17 households in Oinafa village, July 31-October 29, 1989

behavior. The closer people are by blood and in space, the more they will interact with each other. Distances of either kind are not great in Oinafa village, but degrees of closeness do seem to make a difference. A rough measure of adjacency is defined here as two households being within 50 feet of each other with no other houses between them. By this definition, 26 pairs of households in the study can be considered adjacent. The mean number of interactions between adjacent households over the 13 weeks was 27.1, more than twice the mean for non-adjacent households (12.8) (Table 6.3). Close kinship also had an impact. Whereas the average number of interactions for distant relatives or non-kin was 12.4, households related as primary kin (siblings or parent/child) engaged in an average of 43.1 interactions, and for secondary kin (first cousins, uncle/niece) the mean was 21.6.

A look at the range of numbers of interactions for household pairs in each category, however, indicates that some non-adjacent households and distant relatives did interact intensively (Table 6.3). For example, the second highest level of interaction occurred between two households which were neither adjacent nor closely related. At the other end of the spectrum, three pairs of adjacent households recorded only two interactions each. Other factors undoubtedly were operating to promote or inhibit exchange relations. Given that in Rotuman society, kinship networks are activated most intensively for life crisis events, one would predict that those households having a large number of close relatives and hosting formal feasts during the survey would have the most interactions.

Table 6.3
Numbers of interactions between types of household pairs

Category	Household Pairs	Interactions	Mean	Range
All pairs	136	2111	15.5	0-124
Adjacent	26	705	27.1	2-124
Non-adjacent	110	1406	12.8	0-119
Primary kin	9	388	43.1	7-124
Secondary kin	16	345	21.6	4-90
Other	111	1378	12.4	0-119

Source: Daily activity survey of 17 households in Oinafa village, July 31-October 29, 1989

Table 6.4 demonstrates that this was in fact the case. Of the households with the most first and second degree relatives in the village, those hosting feasts generally recorded higher levels of interaction.⁹

A closer look reveals other mitigating elements which are more individual and less easily quantified. For four households I was unable to discover specific kinship links to anyone in the rest of the village. Two of these households (F and H) consist of single men living alone.¹⁰ The man with the least involvement with others (H) had a mental disturbance which made it difficult to converse normally with him, although he was capable of physical labor and did interact successfully with a small circle of neighbors. The other single man (F) had legs crippled from childhood polio. He walked only with difficulty, getting around better on a bicycle. His upper body was quite strong, and he was willing and able to help others with normal village work such as cooking, cutting wood, and plaiting coconut leaf baskets, as well as some carpentry. In fact his household interaction profile was as or more intensive than three households having more close kin (Q, B and M).¹¹

Social handicaps were at least as important as physical or mental problems in shaping patterns of interaction among households. The second lowest level of interaction was that of Household C, composed of a retired minister, his wife, granddaughter and sister's daughter son. They had only just moved into Oinafa village and although they said they were related to people in most of the other households, they were unable to give specifics, nor could

Table 6.4
Kin closeness, feasts and interhousehold exchange

Household	Primary Kin ^a in Village	Secondary Kin ^b Kin Village	Total Close Kin	Personal Feasts During Survey	Households with >10 exchanges
A	3	3	6		7
Q	3	3	6		5
B	2	4	6		4
K	2	4	6		12
L	3	2	5	funeral	10
N	2	3	5	80th birthday	8
D	1	4	5	suf hani	14
I	1	2	3	80th birthday	8
P	1	2	3		7
E	1	2	3		8
J	0	2	2		7
M	1	0	1	funeral (with L)	3
O	0	1	1		8
C	0	0	0		2
F	0	0	0		5
G	0	0	0		4
H	0	0	0		1

^asiblings; one parent

^bfirst cousins; one father's brother

Source: Daily activity survey of 17 households in Oinafa village, July 31-October 29, 1989

anyone else. Without strong kin or territorial ties, the most intensive relationships of Household C were those between the 15-year old boy and other households with youngsters. When I returned to Oinafa in 1990, the family had moved to Fiji and their thatched house stood empty.

Household G also claimed kin ties with ten households in the village, by tracing back three generations (see Oinafa Genealogy IV in Appendix D); others acknowledged a distant connection but no one described the exact linkage. Part of the problem was the absence of men in the household. The household *pure* did not marry either of the men who fathered her children, a son who lived on the other side of the island and her daughter (who stayed in Household G). Nor did the daughter marry the man who fathered her child. The women's status in the village suffered somewhat as a result, although certain households took responsibility for sharing food with them, and the daughter did her share by helping other households, including us, with cooking and housework.

Two other households with stronger kin ties exhibited low levels of interaction in the village. The sister of the *pure* of Household M lived adjacent to him in Household L. When their father died, it was Household L that hosted the funeral; few people interacted directly with Household M. One isolating factor here was religion; Household M was the only Jehovah's Witness household in Oinafa. Secondly, the wife was Tongan and had no kin on the island. This combined with their church affiliation sharply reduced opportunities for close interaction in the village. Members of

Household M interacted socially with Jehovah's Witnesses in Noa'tau district and with the *pure's* kin in the neighboring village more often than with others in Oinafa village, including his sister next door.

Geographic isolation mitigated kin closeness for Household Q. Besides being located at the extreme eastern end of the village, their house (the only one on the inland side of the road) was blocked from view by tall bushes. In behavior the members of this household reinforced their physical separation; for instance, only the 83 year old mother attended church regularly, and she left for Suva three weeks into the survey. The daughter and her husband did not participate often in church services or other community events, giving as explanation that their three year old son was too unruly. When the daughter's brother visited from Suva, other households interacted with Household O more frequently. Similarly, involvement increased when the mother and brothers of the daughter's husband visited the village (staying at Household A). But only a daughter in Household P interacted with Household O on a regular basis.

The low level of interactions maintained by Household B is perhaps most interesting. This is the household of the district chief. Despite very close kin ties with six of the other 16 households in Oinafa village, this household's profile most closely matches that of the two isolated households just considered, M and Q. The chief and his household engaged in fewer intensive exchange relationships in the village than did the crippled single man in Household F. Two conditions help to explain this pattern. First of

all, it is a district chief's responsibility to interact with outsiders, such as visitors to the district and chiefs of other districts. As chief, the *pure* of this household attended meetings of the Rotuma Council and formal events around the island such as weddings and funerals, representing the people of Oinafa. He had numerous brief interactions with an extensive range of people from outside the village during the survey period. The time and resources available to devote to specific relationships in the village simply may have been limited. A second ingredient, however, involves the particular history of disputes involving the chief with members of the district. As recounted in previous chapters, Oinafa village and district were repeatedly divided over issues such as control over tourism, responsibility for the generator, and other problems having to do with financial resources. The chief previously had been implicated in misusing church, district and RCA funds (see Howard 1990, Howard and Rensel 1993, Howard in press b). Many villagers maintained a veneer of respect for his title without enthusiasm. Although a few gave him symbolic food gifts such as the head of the pig from a family feast or a portion of fish caught, villagers seldom contributed labor to the chief's personal projects; for instance, the chief had to recruit men from Itu'muta District to help him clear his yam garden. Even the appearance of respect shattered in 1990 when 80 percent of Oinafa district decided to choose a new chief. The low level of interaction the chief maintained with other households in the village during the survey can be seen, in retrospect, as indicative of the strain between the chief and his people. In addition

to kinship and geographic closeness, Sahlins (1965) identifies rank as a principle promoting reciprocity. If anything the 1989 study provides a negative example, in that the chief and people of Oinafa were not maintaining strong mutual support.¹²

Conclusion

Opportunities for reciprocity attendant upon formal feasting as well as venues for informal exchange have changed over time in Rotuma, adjusting to numerous factors. These include missionary and colonial influences, Rotuman migration and growing participation in the wider market economy.

Prompted by formal and informal occasions, members of households on the island engaged in reciprocal interactions with members of other households. More intensive interactions generally occurred between adjacent households, or households whose members were closely related. But particular patterns of interaction are best explained by taking into account additional factors, such as mental and physical disabilities, religious differences, and histories of disputes.

As suggested by this brief examination of events promoting reciprocity, cash and imported resources are sometimes incorporated into reciprocal exchange. At the same time, there are certain arenas of social life on Rotuma in which behaviors we would classify as commercial exchange--buying and selling, hiring and working for money--have become more prominent. House construction is an important example, examined in more detail in

Chapter 7, and in historical perspective in Chapter 8. In Chapter 7, I also examine the influence of circumstances such as the levels and sources of income, and household size, composition and productivity, on patterns of interhousehold support.

Notes to Chapter 6

¹Both stories, well-known among Rotumans, feature accounts of birth feasts for key figures in Rotuman mythology. In most of the other sixteen legends recorded by Churchward, kava and food-sharing are prominent in a variety of contexts such as hosting guests (Churchward 1938a:355-357, 1938b:482-497), reciprocating hospitality (Churchward 1939a:331-335), and transferring authority at a chiefly installation (Churchward 1938a:357-360). One legend explains the significance of the pig as a substitute for human sacrifice (Churchward 1939b:462-469). Although only two of the Rotuman legends Churchward collected feature mats, the presentation of mats (especially *apei*, fine white mats) is key to formal feasting. See Hereniko in press a regarding the spiritual significance and power of fine mats.

²For a detailed account of a contemporary Rotuman wedding see Howard and Rensel in press b.

³These included a funeral, a wedding, two 80th birthdays, and preparations for the upcoming celebration of the 150th anniversary of Methodist missionary arrival.

⁴Although those on Rotuma seldom have to buy them, Elisapeti Inia has told me that it is increasingly common for Rotumans in Fiji who need fine mats to send money to relatives on the island in exchange for *apei* or the coils of processed pandanus leaves (*hual sa'aga*) to plait them.

⁵As with the *höt'ák hāfu* 'gravestone placing', the fifth day is a moveable feast. Because a daughter and her family were visiting from Norway and were scheduled to leave the following weekend, the father's grave was cemented on the third day after the burial.

⁶This couple had moved back to Rotuma from Vatukoula only recently, when the man received a subchiefly title from the district chief. They were living in a Rotuman-style thatch house in nearby Sauhata. Because they came from outside the study area, their

assistance is not included in the village interactions discussed in Chapter 7.

⁷Although money is generally not handled in this way, our host in Household K treated the \$F800 we gave him in 1988 for his research assistance as a windfall. He gave \$F300 of this amount to pay for repairs to the village generator, and began making weekly donations to the church in amounts equal to or exceeding those made by others with full-time wage employment. At this time we had committed several thousand dollars to the reconstruction of a building on his family's land to serve as our house during field work. Because he took pains to talk to others about how our being in the village would benefit not only his family but the whole community, we interpreted his behavior with the cash we gave him as intended to deflect any potential jealousy that might arise over his good fortune in our financial support. It may also have served the purpose of allowing him to demonstrate largesse and thus raise his status in the village.

⁸I also counted actual total days of interaction between households, but the alternative measure of total interactions explained here represents more accurately the level of intensity of interaction.

⁹The exception is Household K which recorded the second highest level of interaction but hosted no feasts during the survey. The interactions of this household with others in the village were inflated somewhat by their hosting me and my husband. For instance, of 49 interactions with Household G, 40 were related to housework done for us by Household G.

¹⁰The man living in Household H had a brother living on the island and several siblings in Fiji, three of whom visited him during the survey. Thus the effective size of his household for the period was 1.6.

¹¹See Rensel and Howard 1993 regarding the impact of disabilities on social exchange relationships on Rotuma.

¹²Sahlins' consideration of the influence of relative wealth and the centrality of food in exchange are pertinent to the discussion in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7

MONEY AND PATTERNS OF INTERHOUSEHOLD EXCHANGE

While reciprocal sharing is central to their social interactions, Rotumans continually have demonstrated their interest in obtaining and spending money, and in having access to the things that money can buy. How does participation in a market economy affect Rotumans' practice of reciprocity? In addressing this question, I examined exchange behavior at the interhousehold level, focusing in particular on how money was used in transactions, and on whether level of income had any predictable impact on patterns of interaction. I found that while a number of variables provide or limit options, there is fairly wide latitude for personal choice in exchange practice. Before turning to my findings, it is useful to reflect on the work of Alan Page Fiske (1991) regarding four "elementary forms" of human relations.

Fiske's Elementary Forms of Reciprocal Exchange

The Ideal Model

Fiske's hypothesis is that people generate social relationships out of four basic models, which he labels Communal Sharing, Authority Ranking, Equality Matching and Market Pricing. Fiske (1991:41-138) investigates manifestations of these "elementary forms" in various domains of social life, including reciprocal exchange, work, contributions, constitution of groups, moral judgment and so on. While social relationships in different cultures generally may emphasize one or another of the basic forms, all four forms co-exist

within every culture and variously predominate in different social domains.

Briefly, Communal Sharing is based on group identity. People who consider themselves to be of the same kind, or kin, exhibit kindness and generosity to each other.¹ "[W]hat one person gets from another does not depend on what she has given, and does not create obligations to give anything particular in return" (Fiske 1991:52). Authority Ranking has to do with hierarchical prerogatives and responsibilities. Successively higher ranked individuals control more people, things or land than others. Subordinates give deference and render homage to leaders who in turn give protection, aid and support. In the Equality Matching mode, individuals are separate but equal, and insofar as rights or duties are concerned, interchangeable. The emphasis is on balance, manifested in various social domains as turn-taking, quid pro quo, an-eye-for-an-eye. Market Pricing is characterized by proportionality, and expressions of value in terms of a standard ratio or price. Participation is ideally open to anyone with something to sell or money to buy.

Applications to the Rotuman Case

I have found two aspects of Fiske's model especially helpful in investigating the place of money in Rotuman exchange practice. Firstly, Fiske (1991:18) identifies and eliminates several nonessential characteristics of the Market Pricing mode, such as individualism, selfishness, competitiveness, maximization of return. These qualities may or may not be present in Market Pricing

interactions, but none of them are inherent in the basic form. Secondly, Fiske avoids the dichotomization of reciprocal and market exchange by identifying reciprocal exchange and other types of social behavior as domains within which participants operate in one of the four basic modes. Market Pricing, along with Communal Sharing, Authority Ranking and Equality Matching are simply alternative principles for engaging in reciprocity, organizing work, determining contributions etc.

Given that the four models are ordinarily combined in any culture to yield complex structures, inconsistent and incompatible rules and standards may operate side-by-side in the same social system. People generally take cultural rules for granted, and rarely make conscious choices among models (Fiske 1991:141-142). But the existence of alternative organizational principles may be foregrounded in certain situations, as happened in the case of the dispute over paying for the cost of running the Oinafa generator.

Each household in Oinafa village had at least one power point and two light fixtures installed, courtesy of the government, when the power lines were hooked up to the generator in the early 1980s. While some houses paid extra for additional power points or fixtures (some as many as eleven), they all decided to forego having meters as too expensive (\$F15 each).² The village started out charging each household a monthly fee based on number of power points and light fixtures. Even without meters, this practice reflects the Market Pricing principle: those who use more, pay more. When some people complained that they could not afford even the minimal charge of

\$F5, Oinafa decided to leave it up to each household to pay what they chose. Although on the surface this suggests Communal Sharing, we were also told that people hoped those who had more money would contribute more. Insofar as the wealthy are expected to be generous, and generosity enhances status, this implies the Authority Ranking mode.

The first month the "pay what you like" scheme worked; the village even realized a surplus. Thereafter, however, Oinafa had problems collecting enough money to cover fuel costs, much less pay for a maintenance contract with the Public Works Department. The district chief proposed a third option: each household should pay the same amount (Equality Matching), but this was seen as even more burdensome for those with few power points and lights and little cash income. The issue was not resolved by the time the generator broke down in 1987. Because the maintenance fees had not been paid, the generator languished for months without being repaired. Although it was again working in 1989, paid for by individuals with sufficient income as generous contributions to the community (Authority Ranking), in 1990 the generator operated only when a particular group, needing lights for a special evening activity, bought the fuel (Market Pricing).

Manifestations of Fiske's four modes in Rotuman social life seldom contrast so sharply as in the foregoing example, usually representing a more subtle interplay of diverse cultural values. For instance, because of the conditional nature of Rotuman chiefly power (see Chapter 4), the Authority Ranking principle applies less

often to individuals who merely hold chiefly titles than to anyone, titled or not, who displays largesse to the group. Even the pooling and redistribution activities associated with Rotuman feasts (see Chapter 6) emphasize Communal Sharing, or (in the case of structured contributions for religious or civic feasts) Equality Matching principles, rather than the chiefly control prerogatives implied by Fiske's ideal Authority Ranking mode.

The emphasis on autonomy in Rotuman society also shapes expressions of Communal Sharing. Fiske's model identifies two characteristics of Communal Sharing in the domain of reciprocal exchange: (1) people give what they can and (2) take what they need from group resources (1991:42). The first is clearly the case on Rotuma, where choosing to give is key to demonstrating group membership. The question of free access to group resources, however, differs from Fiske's ideal. For resources which are widely available, such as oranges in season or coconuts for drinking, Rotumans indeed help themselves. But under certain conditions and with other kinds of resources there is a recognized hierarchy of rights, such that people seldom take or borrow things without asking permission and expressing gratitude. Before cutting coconuts to make copra, one should acknowledge the *pure* of the land.³ If a man wants his brother's help with a project, he should first seek the consent of his brother's wife.⁴ People at home often greet passersby with the cry, *Leum la 'ātē* 'Come and eat', but only their closest relatives are likely to take them up on it.⁵ Most Rotumans ask for things only when they are in real need, preferring to be self-

sufficient. A concern for not being perceived as taking advantage of others in a relationship generally prompts reciprocation in some form.

In general I found that whether or not money was a part of transactions, Rotuman exchange practice could be characterized as predominantly Communal Sharing, with periodic recourse to the other three modes in specific circumstances. In support of my contention, I begin with a consideration of key Rotuman terms for exchange and their various applications. Drawing on data from my 13 week study of exchange interactions among 17 households, the remainder of this chapter gives an overview of the forms and content of more than 2,000 recorded interhousehold transactions. Case studies detailing exchange patterns of households with different levels of cash income illustrate the interplay of additional circumstances, including household size, composition and productivity, as well as personal preference, in shaping transaction behavior. I conclude with a brief consideration of factors affecting interaction patterns with households beyond the study area.

Talk about Exchange

A number of Rotuman terms came to the fore during my study of household interactions, terms which were used to refer to behavior such as exchanging, buying and selling, helping, giving, thanking, and earning money. An examination of the potential range of application for these terms yields clues to how Rotumans perceive various transactions, or how they attempt to frame others' perceptions.

Equality Matching is strongly suggested by the essential meaning of the verb *togi* and its causative form, *tög'aki*: to get or give something in exchange for, or in place of something else. The various applications of both forms of *togi* all emphasize equivalence and reciprocity, whether referring to exchange in a generic sense; to response, as to a question; or to compensation, as in payment, reward, punishment or revenge. *Togi* is also used in the sense of substitution or replacement, as in succession to a chiefly title (as *togi* 'official name to which a person succeeds') (Churchward 1940:331–332). In reference to commercial transactions such as store purchases and wage payments Rotumans commonly use *togi* 'to buy, to pay' and *tög'aki* 'to sell, to spend', thus invoking the Market Pricing mode. But distinctions between sales, purchases and wage payments on the one hand, and equivalent reciprocation on the other, cannot be made on the basis of Rotuman terminology, and must be defined situationally and behaviorally.

The prefix *haji-*, along with the gerundial suffix *-ga*, form reciprocal verbs, for example, *feke* 'angry' becomes *haji fekega* 'to be angry with one another, to quarrel'. Similarly *hanisi* 'to love, to be kind' becomes *haji hanisiga* 'to love or be kind to one another'. Churchward lists nearly 70 examples of reciprocal verbs in his 1940 dictionary, and I found their use to abound in contemporary Rotuman discourse. For instance, I seldom heard the verb *asoa* 'to help' in its simple form; rather, Rotumans spoke of *haji asoaga* 'to help one another', stressing the reciprocity inherent in the action even when it appeared assistance was flowing only one way at the moment.

The most frequent response to my questions concerning why people gave gifts such as food was "*la hāiasoaga* 'in order to help [each other]'. In speaking of reciprocal relationships Rotumans also use the expressions *hāireaga* 'to attend to, to provide for one another' and *hāi'ioaga* 'to look after one another.'

Resonating with the earlier discussion of *hanisi* as kindness in action (Chapter 4), the verb *nā* means to give or to exert effort. While in-kind contributions to feasts such as mats or baskets of food are called by various terms reflecting specific purposes, the general phrase *nā tē* 'to give things' has come to be used primarily for church contributions, especially money. *Nā fakhanisi* (literally 'to give in the manner of kindness') usually applies to personal gift giving. *Tē fakhanisi* applies to gifts presented as signs of caring, especially on special occasions such as birthdays, or to children or people in need; it is also used to characterize items given to acknowledge help. Food, cash, fuel or other gifts in this context are usually presented immediately after someone gives assistance. But because *tē fakhanisi* are considered a token of thanks rather than full compensation for services rendered, these transactions are cast in the Communal Sharing rather than Equality Matching mode.

I found that Rotumans were careful to distinguish *tē fakhanisi* from wage payments. The notion of earning money is expressed *ao selene* 'to seek money'.⁶ This phrasing, used unambiguously in reference to wages or copra earnings, emphasizes active intention on the part of the earner, focused on financial gain. When Rotumans work for one another, the intention of benefiting from the

interaction generally recedes from discourse. In the reciprocal context, contributions of labor, like material gifts, are given *la hāiasoaga* 'to help.' Earnings purposefully sought also contrast with gifts received as thanks insofar as the provider of the service can count on receiving an established rate (Market Pricing), while the form and amount of *tē fakhanisi* are decided by the giver, consistent with the principle of Communal Sharing. In some arenas such as house construction, however, workers' expectations of financial compensation appear to be shifting into a Market Pricing mode (see Chapter 8).

Another way of referring to wages comes from the trade store/cooperative context. *Fā'i* 'to make a mark on, to write' also means 'to put down to one's account' as a debit or a credit, and reflects the practice of having one's wages recorded, and taking store goods against the balance. The causative verb *vil'āk* 'to cause to drop (from a total amount of money, weight etc.), to deduct,' also comes from the store records context and was the term suggested for my survey to express the idea of "other uses (expenditures) of money" (see Household Daily Activities Questionnaire, Appendix B).

The association of writing with wages and store transactions carries over into household practice. Not only does the RCA, for instance, keep and post records of members' copra earnings and store expenditures, but some households maintain their own financial accounts as well. Church contributions are also recorded in writing, and announced publicly. But while some Rotumans, especially in urban areas in Fiji, may keep written track of funeral

or wedding gifts, on Rotuma there is no formal custom of recording feast contributions. At a wedding, white mats are displayed but their donors are not verbally identified; well-informed observers who watch closely can identify individual mats and keep their own mental tally. Food contributions are called out publicly only for the group, e.g., the groom's or bride's side, and announcements are expected to be exaggerated rather than strictly accurate counts. Outside of my daily survey of activities, villagers told me they did not keep count of interhousehold exchanges, much less write them down. Commonly, people retain a general sense of who has been good to them, occasionally recalling specific instances when they have occasion to reciprocate.

The process of marshaling resources for Rotuman feasts emphasizes sociability and mutual support (which would be recognized in Fiske's terms as Communal Sharing) or sometimes Equality Matching (when each contributes the same to a church or civic event), more than tribute or service to chiefs (Authority Ranking).⁷ Possibly due to the repeated disputes in the district, there were but few occasions during my research when the people of Oinafa directly assisted the district chief, and those episodes mainly involved food preparation for hosting visitors. Neither did terminology pertinent to the Authority Ranking mode feature prominently during this time. Throughout Rotuma, the presence of chiefs is essential to formal feasts, where they are ritually honored with presentations of kava, food and fine mats. But outside of ceremonial occasions, titled individuals interact with others much

as ordinary people. Practices such as offering chiefs first fruits (*mafmoea*), first fish from a fish drive (*luagvao*), and a gift of cooked food at the end of the year (*tukag'omoe*) are occasionally followed, but more often chiefs are recognized in informal and ad hoc fashion, as when one household in Oinafa sent the head of a pig cooked for a family feast, and another brought one of the fish caught on a successful expedition. Demonstrations of status-enhancing largesse, such as the distribution of watermelons or the contribution of fuel for the community, were not marked by the use of any special vocabulary, represented simply as *nā fakhanisi*.

Two themes emerge saliently from this brief consideration of the ways Rotumans talk about exchange. Firstly, there is significant ambiguity inherent in the meanings of key terms, allowing flexibility in their application. And secondly, while all four of Fiske's elementary forms of social interaction are represented to some degree, Communal Sharing interpretations clearly predominate.

The remainder of this chapter explores two dimensions of the impact of money on interhousehold exchange practice: (1) the actual use of money in transactions between households--how often it occurs and in what contexts; and (2) the patterns of exchange behavior of households with different cash income levels and sources. I draw on general observations from my 1987-1991 field research (referred to in the present tense) and specific results from a household level survey of daily activities conducted from July 31 - October 29, 1989 (referred to in the past tense). The interactions tallied for this analysis include only those which took place among

the 17 households in Oinafa village, including contributions for personal feasts. Not pertinent to this discussion are contributions to church and community events, such as the quarterly meeting of the Methodist church circuit or the village work done in preparation for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the missionary arrival. Exchange patterns with households outside the study area are considered in the final section of this chapter.

Uses of Money in Interhousehold Exchange

Over the course of the 13 weeks, participants in the daily activities survey recorded more than 2400 interhousehold transactions, including gifts of food and other material items, meals, assistance and transportation. Of these, only 141 (less than eight percent) involved a direct money transfer. Money was also used in indirect support of in-kind exchanges, when people bought something in order to give to other households. In the majority of cases, transfers of cash were clearly framed as Communal Sharing transactions, with a few instances of Equality Matching. The Market Pricing mode was reserved for transactions within certain realms. A closer look at the range of forms and contents of reported transactions helps to clarify the contexts in which money was used.

Food Transfers

Interhousehold exchange was dominated by gifts of food, especially local garden produce (see Table 7.1). Gifts of animals and basic starchy vegetables were given primarily for feasts and special occasions. Other gifts were expressions of *hanisi* and/or sharing of

Table 7.1
Food transactions between households

Type of Food Transacted	Given as Gift	Exchanged for Money
LOCALLY PRODUCED FOODS	390	23
Starches	172	0
Taro	52	0
Banana	50	0
Breadfruit	28	0
Other	42	0
Non starch	104	7
Melon	35	0
Corn	17	6
Mango	8	0
Cucumber	5	1
Other	39	0
Protein	114	16
Milk	54	0
Fish	39	11
Other Seafood	7	0
Chicken	7	0
Pig	5	4
Goat	2	0
Cow	0	1
IMPORTED PURCHASED FOODS	111	0
Starch	27	0
Bread	11	0
Rice	7	0
Other	9	0
Protein	51	0
Corned beef	31	0
Other tin meat/fish	7	0
Other meat	6	0
Eggs	4	0
Milk	3	0
Other	33	0
PREPARED FOODS	266	3
Fekei	117	3
Baked goods	66	0
Cooked meat	35	0
Other	48	0

Source: Daily activity survey of 17 households in Oinafa village, July 31-October 29, 1989

bounty. For instance, one woman provided daily gifts of fresh milk to an old man in a neighboring household who had suffered a stroke. Oinafa's premier fisherman (Household D), who had a boat equipped for deep-sea fishing as well as inshore nets, often shared his catch with other households. Another man celebrated a huge harvest of melons with village-wide distribution.

Prepared foods were also popular for giving, most frequently extra bundles of *fekei* 'native pudding' prepared by the households hosting the weekly *tārīga* meal for the visiting lay preacher (as explained in Chapter 6). Portions of cooked meat and other special foods left over from *tārīga* or other feasts were also shared with close relatives. People were delighted with gifts of jam, baked or steamed breads, cakes and pies from others in the village.

Many of the prepared foods given as gifts included purchased ingredients such as salt, sugar, flour, and butter. Outright gifts of store-bought foods were less common, but still account for over 14% of food gifts. Because corned beef is an important part of any special meal or feast it is not surprising that it represented over one fourth of imported food gifts. But while in 1987 I was told by one Oinafa man that no one would just buy a tin of corned beef to give to someone else, his daughter twice did just that during the 1989 survey. (She had gotten a job in the interim and gave the meat along with candies and other treats to two little children and their family, *la hāiasoaga* 'to help'.) Other gifts of purchased food, including flour and rice were shared out as "boat day" bounty, or given in thanks for help (see section on Assistance, below).

Of the 793 transfers of food between households in the village, only 26 involved cash (Table 7.1). One should be cautious in terming these transfers "sales" in the Market Pricing mode, because of the ways people framed them in word and action. The leading fisherman gave fish to four other households in exchange for money a total of 11 times, receiving a total of \$F172. Interestingly, the fisherman also gave fish gratis 21 times, including 12 gifts to three of the four households which had given money for fish on other occasions. And in at least one instance the fisherman tried to refuse the cash offered by the recipient of the fish, but the latter insisted on giving the money. The man who gave the money in this case explained to me that it was good to give the fisherman some money for his fish because he has to buy fuel for the deep sea fishing boat. But amounts given were not "prices" in that they were not set by the seller, were not always offered, nor always accepted. Money seemed to be given in an Equality Matching rather than a Market Pricing mode. Other people, who fished on the reef using canoes, nets, lines and spears, gave 18 gifts of fish and seven of seafood--crabs, eels, seaweed--with no money involved (Communal Sharing).

The largest sums of money were involved in transfers of live animals: five pigs and one cow were exchanged for a total \$F440. Again a close examination of context is instructive. Pigs are required for feasts and preferred for smaller occasions including the weekly *tārīga* for the visiting preacher. Most households raise their own pigs; in 1989, 12 of the 17 households in Oinafa village had at least two and as many as 20 pigs. It is not uncommon on Rotuma for

people to give money for pigs when their own animals are not sufficient. Amounts were somewhat conventional in 1989: about \$F20 for a small pig and \$F60 for a large one. During the survey, three households bought pigs from other villagers, and seven households purchased pigs from elsewhere. Most people referred to these exchanges as *togi*, allowing interpretation either as buying and selling (Market Pricing), or exchange in the sense of compensating someone for their time and effort (Equality Matching).

Cows generally are reserved for large events with hundreds of people in attendance, although once in a while they are butchered and sold specifically to raise money, in a Market Pricing context. Fewer Rotuman households raise cows than pigs, and in smaller numbers; only nine households in Oinafa village had cows at the time of the survey, a total of 35 cows in contrast with 149 pigs. The *pure* of Household D, preparing to host a wedding, gave his brother in neighboring Household E \$F300 for a cow. Two factors are important in interpreting this transaction. The households of the two brothers engaged in frequent reciprocal exchange and assistance during the survey (the most intensive in the village). The money for the cow was remitted by their cousin in Suva specifically for the wedding. The man gave his brother the same amount of money for his cow that he had earlier given a non-relative living outside the village for another cow, suggesting the existence of a conventional price. But the exchange of cow for money between the brothers was couched in a frame of on-going Communal Sharing of resources, whereas the

transaction with the non-relative, a one-time event between the two parties, fits the Market Pricing context.

Other interhousehold transfers involving money were minor. A few people raised non-traditional crops such as corn and cucumber which they offered for sale, sometimes placing them on the counter in the cooperative store. The same household (D) that sold fish, sold corn. Again, Household D gave away more corn than they sold (17 gifts versus 6 sales), including gifts to the households which bought corn at other times. Household M sold cucumber once, but gave it away five times. The food sales, especially those that took place inside the cooperative store, fall clearly into the Market Pricing mode, although those who sold and bought on certain occasions, gave and received the same resources in a Communal Sharing mode at other times.

Finally, one man (Household P) made a large batch of *fekei* 'pudding' specifically to sell at the end of term sports day at the high school. The practice of preparing *fekei* and other sweets for sale is more often followed by groups such as the Methodist Youth Fellowship in their "bring and buy" fundraising evenings, but individual households occasionally take advantage of secular, island-wide gatherings to earn a little money. Before the man left the village, members of three Oinafa households bought bundles of *fekei*, including a neighbor who had helped him make it. Such behavior expresses kindness and support more than need on the part of the buyers, especially given the number of gifts of *fekei* (117) circulating in the village during the survey.

All household pairs that engaged in money-for-food transactions also engaged in giving food gifts, often involving the same items. Relationships embraced various styles of interaction, among which Communal Sharing dominated. Further, besides purchasing imported food and ingredients in order to make gifts to others, five households bought a total of four pigs, one goat and three baskets of taro to be given away. Thus money was used indirectly to support Communal Sharing of food. As we shall see below, some households bought large amounts of local food from outside the village for both personal consumption and giving away.

Gifts of Cash

Survey participants gave each other cash gifts 22 times, totaling \$F133. Thirteen of the 17 households gave at least one gift of cash during the survey. Amounts ranged from \$F1 to \$F10, and were given on special occasions (funeral, birthdays), when someone was going to Suva, to children, or in one case, as a contribution to a larger money gift to be given to a Rotuman masseur in thanks for treatment (*sarao*).

In general, gifts of money between households on Rotuma are confined to important events. At weddings the couple are sometimes bedecked with a garland of \$F1 and \$F5 bills, in addition to the traditional Rotuman flower garland (*tēfui*), and money gifts are appreciated especially by the hosts of large feasts. If people have money resources to devote to giving, more often they translate the cash into some material form. While cash is appreciated, it does not have the physical qualities of providing a tangible or lasting

reminder of the giver's *hanisi*. In addition, those with higher incomes on the island may not want to encourage others to come to them for money, so choose to give in other forms. And there are other contexts where money gifts can be used to greater effect. For instance, contributions to the church, especially those pooled into large donations, reflect on the relative status of the group or district. Those on the island often encourage migrant kin to send remittances for these purposes.

Other Material Gifts

Interhousehold gifts of material items other than food were also comparatively rare in the village. Most were Rotuman mats (*'epa*) and fine mats (*apei*), exchanged on two special occasions.

Household L hosted a funeral and received one *apei* from the district chief and eight mats from seven other households; they gave away a total of 14 *'epa* to members of 10 households. Not all households that contributed mats received them; some which did not give mats but helped in other ways were thanked with mats. The man in Household N who celebrated his 80th birthday received three *'epa*, and reportedly gave no mats to any of the villagers on that occasion. Mat exchange, although infrequent, generally invokes wide participation. All but two households of the 17 in the village gave and/or received a mat during the survey. The two which did not participate included one household which was not present at the time of the funeral (Household I), and one household composed of a single man with a mental disability (Household H; see Chapter 6). It

should be noted that the other household composed of a single male (Household F) did receive a mat for his help with the funeral.

Other material items were given only 13 times. Two households exchanged lumber for paint, in what was clearly a barter arrangement (Equality Matching). Other items were given as thanks (not compensation) for assistance. For instance cigarettes were given to men who helped with construction work (in addition to money and meals), and the family of the man who suffered the stroke gave a new shirt to a young woman who helped with housework during his illness. Some gifts were responses to occasional requests for utilitarian items such as soap, matches, and fuel. A few material items were given as expressions of caring and *hanisi*, for instance, a man returned from Suva and brought his brother a new shirt; a couple with older children gave used clothing to another couple who suddenly found themselves with several younger grandchildren to look after; one household gave three bags of cement to the household of the man who died, for covering his grave. In addition, fuel was sometimes given as thanks for transportation (see below). All material gifts but the barter transaction expressed the Communal Sharing principle.

Assistance

Households in Oinafa village recorded a total of 776 person-days of helping one another.⁸ On 701 of these occasions people were reciprocated primarily with meals, less often with just a word of thanks or a small gift of food to take home. Cooking was the most frequent type of assistance (294 times); more than half of these

(157) involving *koua* 'earthen oven' preparation. There were a great variety of other forms of help which took place only infrequently, such as digging a grave, dismantling an old house, or sewing for a wedding. Motorcycle repair was notable among the incidental forms of help in that people always thanked the mechanic with cash rather than a meal or food gift, possibly in recognition of the professional training and skills required.

House expansion and improvement projects provided the second most common venue for interhousehold help during the survey period (160 person-days), given special urgency by the upcoming 150th anniversary of Methodist missionary arrival. People anticipated that the November and December celebrations would bring hundreds of guests to Oinafa, including off-island visitors who would stay with village households. A total of 10 households enlisted the aid of others with various construction projects during the survey. Two households (J and L) extended their cement dwellings with the aid of neighbors and relatives, thanking them simply with meals and food gifts.⁹ Although the other eight each gave some helpers gifts of money, they did so in strikingly different ways.

In all cases but one, gifts of money as *tē fakhanisi* were only given to helpers from outside the village. Three households built Rotuman-style thatch structures (*ri ota*), one a traditional kitchen (*kohea*) and the other two sleeping houses (*ri mosega*). In building a thatch kitchen, Household O mobilized a large network of kin in Oinafa and Noa'tau districts to provide materials and erect the building; all were thanked with meals or gifts of food, and one

couple from Noa'tau was given \$F10 in addition for their help (see Chapter 6 for more detailed description of this project). Household A asked the Methodist Youth Fellowship in Lopta village to make the thatch for a new sleeping house and thanked them with a donation of \$F60. The *pure* of Household A reported that he offered to give them more, but the MYF group refused. Young men from three other households in the village helped with the actual roofing, and were given meals. A third household (I) got help constructing their sleeping house (and painting the interior of their cement house) from four young male relatives from Juju district, who were brought over to stay during the weeks leading up to the celebration. The young men considered it a sort of holiday and a chance to get to know others of their age in Oinafa. They were thanked for their help with meals, a place to stay, one gift of \$F10 and periodic transport back home. A group of relatives from within and outside the village also cut and prepared the thatch one day.

Four other households arranged for skilled help from outside the village. Households D, E, and P gave one man from Itu'ti'u district \$F94, \$F40 and \$F30 respectively, for plastering and other finish work at a rate of \$F10-\$F12 per day, in addition to meals. Household E also gave \$F52 (plus meals) to a Noa'tau man for tiling their bathroom. A brother of the single man dwelling in Household H arranged for his wife's father, a skilled carpenter, to come and build a cess pool, washhouse, and add a loft over the main house. He and his siblings in Fiji paid for the work and materials, but the amounts were not recorded in the survey.

The eighth case, Household K, is unusual both in the total amount of money given for assistance, and in that fellow villagers as well as outsiders were given cash for construction help. The fact this household is the one which hosted my husband and me for most of our fieldwork is implicated directly and indirectly. In 1988 we had given Household K money to refurbish a small cement storehouse as a dwelling for us to use, and had contributed to the purchase of a used Land Rover. We also gave them weekly sums to help with food, fuel and other expenses throughout our stay. Our financial support inadvertently initiated a significant flow of money to others. To look after us, our hosts arranged for a young woman from Household G to help with our laundry, housework and occasional meal preparation. During the survey they gave her \$F221 for 34 days of help. In addition their daughter, who had a full-time entry level position at the bank, gave another woman \$F88 for 13 days of help with her laundry. Although having a "house girl" to do laundry and housework is relatively common in urban Fiji, only two other households in the village gave women money for washing their clothes during the 1989 survey--the district chief (Household B), and a retired schoolteacher with a sizable pension (Household A).

The Land Rover required repeated repairs, but fortunately a first cousin who lived nearby (in Household O) was also a skilled mechanic. Our hosts gave him \$F60 for working on the car nine times. But the most significant use of money in thanks for assistance was that given by Household K for construction help. Our hosts elected to build a large extension to their house, adding two

bedrooms, a shower and toilet, and doubling the size of the sitting room. They were able to get a bank loan on the strength of their daughter's employment and that of a niece working as a nurse. They used the money for materials as well as to reciprocate help. Two villagers who assisted for 9 days and 1 day were given \$F65 and \$F8 respectively. The household also recruited assistance from seven relatives outside the village, to whom they gave a total of \$F457 for help over the course of several weeks. The money was also used to buy food to host the workers to two or three meals each day, along with cigarettes and fuel to transport them to and from their homes outside the village. When we discussed the project with the household head he stressed repeatedly that all those who were helping were *kainaga* and that they were assisting out of *hanisi*. The meals and other favors framed the money-for-work exchanges in a context of Communal Sharing.

Transportation

As noted in Chapter 6, there were 193 occasions during the survey when villagers provided some form of transport to members of other village households. Interestingly, most transportation assistance was not immediately reciprocated, even though three trucks belonged to individuals who regularly hired them out at set rates for transporting copra or groups of people (Households D, E, and I). Only 16 trips were reciprocated with cash and 13 with fuel. A total of 164 trips were provided gratis; 14 involved borrowing a bicycle, the remaining 150 were made by motor vehicle. The individuals who did give money or fuel for transport did not do so on every occasion, but

those who received frequent or regular rides or required drivers to make special trips gave fuel or cash most often.

Providing transportation for members of the same village clearly fell into the realm of generalized reciprocity, as one form of assistance. The question of appropriate reciprocation was left largely to the discretion of the one receiving the assistance.¹⁰ Food gifts and help in other forms were acceptable as ways of expressing appreciation for transportation and maintaining a sense of balance in relationships.

Meal Sharing

Meals given in thanks for help, such as house construction or *koua* 'earthen oven' preparation, have already been mentioned. Group *koua* were made not only for formal feasts but for smaller personal occasions such as greeting or bidding farewell to a visitor, or for a Sunday gathering of *rot kaunohoga* 'family devotion' groups. Other circumstances such as the absence of other household members also prompted two or three households to pool resources, cooking and eating together several times during the survey. Such casual sharing, combined with special events such as funerals and 80th birthdays, resulted in 586 meals being hosted by village households for members of other households.¹¹ Of all interactions, shared meals came closest to Fiske's ideal definition of Communal Sharing in that participants generally contributed what they could and took what they required.

Summary

During the 1989 survey in Oinafa village, cash was seldom used directly in interhousehold exchange. Indirectly it played a somewhat larger role, allowing people to buy local and imported foods to give to each other, and to share the use of durable items including modes of transportation. In the realms of feasting as well as most of the informal occasions for household interaction identified in Chapter 6 (illness, requests, and bounty) the Communal Sharing mode dominated, regardless of whether money was transferred or not. Among the various projects, house construction presented a mixed case, with Communal Sharing emphasized in some cases and Market Pricing emergent in others. The implications for social interaction of changes in housing will be considered in a broader perspective in Chapter 8.

Household Income and Exchange: Case Studies

As discussed in Chapter 6, intensities of interaction between households varied depending on occasions, kinship and geographic proximity and interpersonal histories. The particular forms and contents of interhousehold exchange also differed, influenced though not determined by an interplay of circumstances including household income levels.

Discussions of the impact of different levels of cash income tend to begin with several assumptions. At the most basic level, one might expect that households with higher income would simply use money more in their transactions than would households with less

access to cash. This could take the form of buying food rather than producing it; giving cash to helpers in lieu of in-kind reciprocation; emphasizing gifts of money or possibly purchased imported goods over locally-produced items. In addition to the change in the content of exchanges, one might anticipate that with increased cash flow into the village, people at all income levels would seek to increase Market Pricing transactions at the expense of interactions in a Communal Sharing mode: selling food rather than giving it away; ceasing to help one another without cash compensation.

In response to such assumptions, some of my survey findings were not surprising, but others were unexpected. A sampling:

- The highest income household did little gardening during the survey, relying heavily on purchased food. But the household with the second highest level of income engaged in extensive food production, ranking second in number of garden visits and third in fishing trips (see Table 7.2).
- The six households with the highest cash incomes all gave money to others for helping with construction projects. But the seventh household giving cash for building assistance ranked 13th for total income (and 17th for per capita income).
- Of the households which gave the most assistance to other households, four were among the five with highest income.
- The 13 households that gave cash as gifts represented all ranges of monetary income; in fact the two households with the greatest financial resources gave only one cash gift each (\$F1 to a

Table 7.2
Household size, income rank, and food production

Household	Household Size ^a	Income Rank	Person-trips	
			Garden ^b	Fishing ^c
A	9.0	5	56	0
B	5.0	7	86	20
C	3.9	15	22	15
D	4.4	2	88	28
E	5.5	4	0	41
F	1.0	17	8	0
G	2.6	14	0	5
H	1.6	16	12	0
I	7.0	1	57	8
J	2.8	12	11	1
K	10.3	3	61	4
L	7.0	8	34	7
M	6.0	9	70	27
N	4.6	11	28	10
O	10.8	6	112	45
P	5.6	13	55	6
Q	3.2	10	71	0

^aHousehold size takes into account the absence of regular household members for portions of the survey period as well as the presence of visitors.

^bGarden person-trips averaged 3-4 hours for the 15 households that gardened during the survey.

^cFishing person-trips ranged from 15 minutes to several hours, depending on method and type of fish or seafood sought.

Source: Daily activity survey of 17 households in Oinafa village, July 31-October 29, 1989

child and \$F2 for a funeral), whereas the household with the lowest reported income gave \$F5 as a birthday present.

- Rather than giving cash, households at all levels of income used money to buy food, both locally produced and imported, to give as gifts.

- Only six households engaged in transactions of food for money with other villagers, and most did so only once during the survey. The majority of such exchanges involved the household with the second highest income, but much more often this household gave food as gifts, including the same kinds to the same recipients.

- Seven of the eight households with means of motorized transport shared them on occasion, and were reciprocated with cash at least once. But even though the three truck owners followed a Market Pricing arrangement for transporting groups around the island at set rates, they gave rides on other occasions without compensation.

- Receiving money for help from others in the study area was not a major source of income for most households. Of the five households which reported receiving money as *tē fakhanisi* for service, four were directly or indirectly affected by the cash flow we instigated: our host household, the woman they arranged to help with our housework, and the men who assisted with extending their house or repairing the car we helped buy. The only other cash "thank you" between villagers was the dollar given to a small boy for helping to clean the fisherman's boat.

In the remainder of this chapter I examine interhousehold exchange patterns reported by households with various levels of income, paying attention to a number of additional variables which appear to affect the form and content of exchanges: sources of income and the associated demands on time especially out of the village; and productivity, as related to household size, especially in terms of the number of available able-bodied participants. However, with one exception, no clear associations emerge between income levels, sources, productivity, household size and interhousehold exchange behavior. Rather, each household in the survey employed a variety of strategies for survival and interaction with others, making use of available opportunities, manifesting personal preferences, and maintaining their freedom of choice.

High Income Households

Two households (I and D) reported cash incomes clearly higher than the rest; taken together they account for over 47 percent of the total money received by the village during the survey period (see Table 7.3). A large portion of the income for both households was earned by hauling copra for the Raho Cooperative, supplemented by smaller amounts earned by transporting groups of people around the island. Because 20 to 30 percent of their total earnings went toward truck loan payments of \$F550/month, their reported expenditures were also among the highest in the village. Beyond these similarities, however, the economic strategies and exchange behavior of two households differed in several ways.

Table 7.3
Reported income sources and percentages

Household	Copra	Copra truck	Wages	Retirement	Tourist	Survey	Food sale	Driving	Service ^a	Gifts	Remittances	% of village income
A	√			√	√	√	√	√		√	√	7.7
B			√		√	√	√	√		√	√	4.2
C				√		√			√	√	√	1.2
D		√			√	√	√	√		√	√	18.9
E			√		√	√	√	√				8.2
F						√			√	√	√	0.5
G	√				√	√			√	√	√	1.5
H	√				√	√						0.5
I		√	√		√	√		√		√		28.6
J	√		√			√						1.7
K			√		√	√		√	√		√	8.3
L			√		√	√					√	3.8
M	√		√		√	√	√			√	√	3.0
N	√				√	√				√	√	1.9
O			√			√		√	√	√	√	6.3
P	√		√		√	√	√			√	√	1.6
Q			√			√					√	2.1
% of village income	1.4	31.4	23.1	5.2	6.9	3.2	2.1	3.0	4.9	4.8	14.0	100.0

^aService includes money received from other households in thanks for assistance; for Household K this includes money for hosting the anthropologist.

Source: Daily activity survey of 17 households in Oinafa village, July 31-October 29, 1989

(1) Household I

The *pure* of Household I (age 65) had a wage position managing the Raho Coop store, in addition to earning money by hauling copra for Raho and transporting groups of people in his truck. His 60 year old wife, a Fijian from Labasa, worked full-time as a nurse at the hospital at the government station on the island. The *pure's* daughter's son (age 3) stayed with them, along with the *pure's* 80 year old father. There were no adult children present in the household, but a young woman whose mother was also Fijian from Labasa, then living in Malhaha district, stayed in this household with her own infant son; she helped with housework and child care. The household was a gathering place for young people, a number of whom were distant relatives from Juju district invited to come and stay while they assisted with constructing a thatched sleeping house (mentioned above). In addition, young adults who were Raho employees were hosted to lunch by this household nearly every day.

Other than that done by the 80-year old father, Household I engaged in little gardening (see Table 7.2). The woman went fishing only eight times, though usually with success. They kept only a few animals including four pigs, seven goats and one cow. For the most part, they relied on purchased food, including groceries from the RCA shop, fresh fish and numerous baskets of root crops, especially from farmers in Juju district. Besides what they bought for their own use, this household bought local food to give to others, including two baskets of taro (and one of their own goats) to Household N for the old man's 80th birthday, two baskets of taro to other nurses at the

hospital, and a total of eight baskets of taro or yams to relatives and friends in Suva. They received several small gifts of cash from other villagers, along with remittances from Fiji, on the occasion of the *pure's* own father's 80th birthday. But they did not make a practice of giving money to other households, either as outright gifts or in thanks for assistance. Within the village they gave one gift of \$F2 for a funeral, and to outsiders a total of \$F25 for special occasions. Although they charged groups for the use of the truck, they received money for only five of the 30 times they transported individual villagers, and were given fuel just twice.

The *pure* of this household has been the elected district representative (*mata*) to the Rotuma Council for several years. Council meetings, along with the work commitments of the *pure* and his wife frequently took them out of Oinafa and limited the time they had available to lend personal assistance to others in the village (16 person-days compared to the average of 46). In summary, this household engaged in little primary production but used their high cash income to support capital investment in the truck, personal consumption, food gifts, and hosting meals for younger helpers and co-workers. They seldom used money directly in an interpersonal context, except when buying fish and other local foods.

(2) Household D

The 56 year old *pure* of Household D owned two boats and bought a new truck in July 1989. Two sons (ages 19 and 24) normally drove the truck to haul copra for Raho Cooperative, although they were

both away in Suva with the Rotuma rugby team for approximately one third of the survey period. The remainder of the household consisted of the *pure's* wife (age 48) and a 3-year old grandson. In addition to driving the truck in his sons' absence, the *pure* used his boats for deep sea fishing, and fished with a net inshore, selling a portion of his catch in the village. Through an arrangement with Fiji Air the household hosted a young German couple for one week, earning \$F270. Gifts and remittances also contributed significantly to household income during the survey. The son whose little boy was staying with Household D was a policeman, living on the island at the government station. He gave the family over \$F1100, some of it intended for the wedding of his 19 year old brother, and some for the purchase of a cow for the Methodist anniversary celebration in November. A first cousin in Suva contributed \$F400 toward wedding expenses as well.

Despite a high level of cash income, Household D engaged in high levels of local food production. The *pure* fished frequently, at least once each week, and his sons helped occasionally. Their household ranked second in the village in terms of the reported number of garden visits (see Table 7.2). The *pure* himself provided more than half the garden labor, planting and harvesting root crops such as taro, yams, and cassava. He also grew corn, which he sold six times to other households in the village (for a total of \$F7) and gave away, to the same and other households, 17 times. His sons helped with the gardening sometimes, and on two occasions the *pure* gave money (\$F52 total) to people from neighboring villages for

working in his garden. The household kept 23 pigs, 50 chickens, six goats and a cow during the survey period. A high level of food production enabled this household to give food gifts in abundance to others in the village (Table 7.4) as well as to the policeman son and other relatives on the island. They also sent 19 baskets of taro to *kainaga* in Fiji during the survey.

All adult members of this household assisted other households in various ways, slightly more often than the average household helped others (63 times). The young men in particular provided labor for construction projects, harvesting, *koua* preparation and other heavy work. In hosting events leading up to the December wedding of their son, this household received 101 person-days of similar help from other households, more than twice the average. For skilled labor (repair of oven and motorbikes, plastering) and the gardening mentioned above, this household gave a total of F\$249, of which \$F53 was given to people in the village. Other kinds of help were reciprocated with meals or food gifts, or verbal expressions of thanks. They gave two gifts of \$F10 each for special occasions outside Oinafa village, but only \$F1 as a gift to a child in the village. Of the 29 times they gave rides to fellow villagers, they received cash payment only three times.

The *pure* of Household D held a subchiefly title and was well respected for his hard work, productivity and generosity. Villagers sometimes gave him cash in return for the special things he had to offer (fish, corn, transport) but other times these were treated like other resources in a reciprocal sharing framework. Although

Table 7.4
Exchanges between study households by type

House- hold	Food given	Food received	Money given	Money received	Help given	Help received	Transport given	Transport received	Meals hosted	Meals attended
A	50	48	\$9		63	40	7	7	18	29
B	40	22	\$7		58	19	9	5	38	48
C	16	19			25	22	0	8	2	3
D	127	59	\$1	\$40	63	101	29	1	83	34
E	48	50	\$60		67	39	30	18	51	45
F	0	8	\$5		42	1	11	5	0	66
G	20	47	\$5	\$7	71	30	0	14	12	63
H	0	8			14	4	0	3	4	21
I	49	43	\$2	\$19	16	25	30	7	22	28
J	36	50	\$5	\$5	47	50	0	9	42	36
K	55	110	\$14		113	127	48	13	76	91
L	44	41	\$10	\$13	45	115	3	30	67	20
M	10	18			41	20	0	11	2	19
N	22	105	\$7	\$22	9	102	0	14	75	8
O	109	62		\$5	58	53	27	6	32	25
P	136	59	\$3	\$15	38	27	0	28	32	33
Q	30	44	\$5	\$7	13	8	0	15	30	17
totals	793	793	\$133	\$133	783	783	194	194	586	586
average	47	47	\$8	\$8	46	46	15	15	34	34
median	40	47	\$5	\$5	45	30	3	11	32	29

Source: Daily activity survey of 17 households in Oinafa village, July 31-October 29, 1989

Household D reciprocated skilled labor with money payments, they emphasized food gifts over cash.

Moderate Income Households

Four households had moderate levels of income during the survey; they each maintained average to high levels of interaction with others in the village. Interestingly, three of these households (A, K, O) were the largest in the village, having nine or ten members, and the fourth (E) was medium-sized with six. Ways of earning money had some impact on the amount of time members were available to engage in social relations, but this was mitigated by the participation of other household members. Following are two examples.

(1) Household E

The *pure* of Household E was head teacher at the Paptea primary school. He and his wife had three children of school age and a young adult son who returned from working on his uncle's farm in Fiji at the beginning of the survey period. They bought a truck during the survey and to generate income to pay off the bank loan, the son drove groups to destinations around the island for a set fee.

This household did no gardening during the survey although they did keep many animals (30 pigs, 30 chickens, a horse, 7 cows and a goat). The *pure* often went fishing in the evening or on weekends, with his brother in Household D or with his wife and children. Household E received baskets of taro and other starchy roots from a relative in Itu'muta (who had initiated the arrangement); in turn they gave him occasional gifts of \$F5 – \$F10. They

shared this local food, as well as food they bought or prepared, as often as the average household, and managed, with the involvement of the wife and children, to maintain a comparatively high level of assistance to other households.

(2) Household K

This household, whose practice with regard to giving money for construction assistance is discussed at length above, had a moderate level of income during the survey, some 40 percent of which was money he received for hosting my husband and me. The *pure* and his wife had three young adult children and three of school age, and the *pure's* elderly father lived with them. The old man looked after their five pigs and did most of the gardening, going to the bush several times a week to plant and bring back food. They also received several baskets of food from Household O, in continuing thanks for the *pure's* having assisted with construction earlier in the year. The *pure* devoted much of his time during the survey to remodeling their own house. The grown sons earned small amounts for a week or two of casual labor. The grown daughter had a full-time job at the bank, and the *pure* earned additional \$F30/week by driving her and another bank clerk to the five schools on the island for school banking day each Tuesday. He also gave rides to other villagers but received money for doing so only once, and fuel for transport just three times. This household emphasized generosity to other households, giving assistance most often of any in the village (see Table 7.4), more than the average number of food gifts, and participating in a high level of shared meals.

Low Income Households

Households with low cash incomes also exhibited a variety of strategies. Those capable of producing food sometimes shared it with other households; others gave labor when material resources were unavailable. Still others kept to themselves, sharing but little of their produce or labor. Most low income households were also small in size; the largest of the following examples (Household P) was able to maintain the highest level of interaction with others in the village. Five other households with low cash resources are considered briefly.

(1) Household P

This household, composed of the *pure* and his wife (both in their 50s), a son and a daughter (24 and 27) and two 2-year old grandchildren, had the lowest per capita income in the village during the survey (see Table 7.3).¹² During the survey a son and the *pure's* sister sent remittances from Suva amounting to one third of household income for the period. Copra sales accounted for another 10 percent; remaining income resulted from household members' efforts in taking advantage of special circumstances, rather than reliable and sustainable income sources. The son earned money working as casual labor for Fiji Post and Telegraph during the last two weeks of the survey. Household B, which hosted two tourists from Germany and guests from the tourist ship *Fairstar*, gave the daughter a share of the money they had received. The small cash gifts (F\$5/week) for participating in my survey amounted to slightly more than their copra earnings. The *pure* made a little money (\$F15)

selling *fekei* 'pudding' at the island-wide gathering celebrating the end of the school term.

Significantly, most *fekei* was sold to people outside the village. Household P did not attempt to raise money by selling food to neighbors. They had the resources, had they chosen to do so. Father and son regularly planted and harvested taro, cassava, yams and breadfruit; they also produced a great variety of fruits and vegetables (pineapple, banana, eggplant, beans, corn, tomatoes, potatoes, pumpkin, oranges and mangos). They kept many animals, including 20 pigs, 60 chickens, 10 goats and three cows. The *pure* fished three times alone, and his daughter participated in three group fish drives, bringing home her share of the catch. Rather than using their produce to get money, this household emphasized generosity. Of all the households in the village Household P gave food gifts most frequently--three times more often than the average (see Table 7.4). With four able-bodied adults in and around the village most of the time, they also managed to give and receive help to other households, although slightly less often than the average. When they extended their house, they relied largely on help from neighboring households, engaging skilled assistance only toward the end of the project for which they gave \$F30. Building materials were provided by the wife's brother in Suva. Household P maintained active exchange relationships with kin in neighboring villages as well. Overall they survived by generously contributing resources available to them--time and food--and receiving from others in-kind.

(2) Other Low Income Households

Other households with low income followed varying courses. Most such households were limited in their ability to engage in food production, due at least in part to small household size or particular composition. For instance, Household C, composed of an elderly retired minister, his wife and two young *ma'piga* 'grandchildren' relied on a small pension from the church and remittances from grown children. They gardened and fished a little, and kept a few animals, but also received baskets of food from an adult son and daughter living in Itu'ti'u district. They gave relatively few food gifts and a limited amount of assistance to other households.

The man with a mental disability in Household H relied almost totally on his siblings; those in Fiji regularly sent foodstuffs and other goods on the boat, and a brother living in Pepjei district visited often, bringing baskets of taro or cassava. Other than helping out with the funeral at Household L, this man was very isolated, maintaining no real exchange relationships.

The catechist and his wife, and their adopted 4-year-old grandchild in Household J, also produced very little food on their own. They were supported by a stipend from church donations and a designated household in the village provided their food. (This responsibility rotated periodically.) They, however, maintained nearly average levels of helping and giving food to other households, sharing what they received.

Two other low income households which produced little food emphasized giving labor to others and being helped in return with

meals and food gifts: Household G with three females (mother, adult daughter and two-year old granddaughter) and Household F, composed of a single male with crippled legs. In addition to receiving money for helping our hosts in Household K, Households G and F each assisted a few other households on a regular basis.

Although fairly small in size (a woman and her husband, 3-year-old son and 83-year-old mother), Household Q logged a relatively high number of garden visits during the survey. They however gave very few food gifts, keeping largely to themselves. Their most intensive relationships were with the woman's siblings in Fiji who visited occasionally and sent remittances, which made up 87 percent of their total reported income during the survey.

The paralyzing stroke suffered by the father of the *pure* of Household N undoubtedly shaped this household's activities. The *pure* continued to cut copra, in fact produced the most copra of any household during the survey period. But his food production time was limited. Most of the interactions he, his wife and father had with others in the village were in the form of receiving help and food gifts, and hosting meals through which helpers were thanked.

Summary

The above close-grained analysis of interactions among households within the study area reveals the influence of a variety of conditions on exchange behavior: household income, time constraints due to job commitments, household size and composition, and food production. At this level of analysis few generalizations emerge. The two smallest households (F, H) had the

lowest incomes, and interacted with the fewest other households, but in most cases no variable looms large as having a predictable impact on social interactions in the village. On the other hand, the element of personal preference emerges saliently. Within the limits and opportunities provided by their respective circumstances, members of households clearly exercised latitude regarding the form, intensity, and focus of their interactions, the types of production they engaged in, and the use of the resources available to them at any given time.

Within the study area, most households interacted with all, or nearly all other households over the course of the 13-week period. In addition, all households engaged in, and recorded, interactions with a number of households elsewhere on the island.¹³ A brief consideration of interactions outside the study area reveals somewhat more variation and supports the idea that two characteristics, household size and especially relative income, may be especially important in shaping exchange relations.¹⁴

Interactions Outside the Study Area

As within the study area, most households interacted on a limited basis with a relatively large number of households elsewhere on the island, while maintaining more intensive interactions with a smaller number (Table 7.5). In general, the households recording the most extensive networks and most frequent interactions were those with higher reported incomes, and to a lesser extent, those with larger household size. The largest networks were reported by six of

Table 7.5
Interactions with households on Rotuma outside study area

Study household characteristics			Numbers of households engaged in interactions			
Income Rank	Household	Size	1-10 Times	11+ Times	Total	Commercial Only
1	I	7.0	39	1	40	7
2	D	4.4	44	3	47	12
3	K	10.3	33	5	38	7
4	E	5.5	37	1	38	5
5	A	9.0	12	6	18	1
6	O	10.8	41	6	47	2
7	B	5.0	42	3	45	10
8	L	7.0	20	3	23	3
9	M	6.0	13	3	16	2
10	Q	3.2	26	1	27	3
11	N	4.6	26	1	27	0
12	J	2.8	25	4	29	0
13	P	5.6	24	1	25	0
14	G	2.6	6	3	9	0
15	C	3.9	26	2	28	1
16	H	1.6	1	1	2	0
17	F	1.0	6	0	6	0
Totals		90.3	421	44	465	53
Averages		5.3	25	3	27	3

Source: Daily activity survey of 17 households in Oinafa village, July 31-October 29, 1989

the top seven households ranked by reported income. Three of the lowest income households, which were also the smallest in size, recorded interactions with markedly few households outside the study area. But the correlations of household income and size with extent and intensity of outside interaction are not without exceptions. For instance, two moderate size households (D and B) reported networks as extensive as the two largest households (O and K). The third largest household (A), with the fifth highest income, maintained a smaller than average network, while the fourth smallest household (C), with income ranking 15th of 17, interacted with more than the average number of households outside the study area. Obviously other factors, such as those discussed above with regard to interactions within the study area, also help shape patterns of interaction.

I suggest that the general correlations of household income and size with extended networks primarily reflect the opportunities and limits of resources, in this case personnel and cash. Smaller households--especially those with fewer than three members--tend to lack the time or labor power to invest in maintaining as many relationships as larger households. Furthermore, because of the emphasis on personal autonomy in Rotuman culture (discussed in Chapter 4), household members can each maintain their own networks of relationships. These networks may or may not overlap with those of other members of the same household. During the course of my fieldwork I frequently observed that in cases of disputes between members of two households, other members of the

same households nonetheless maintained close relationships, reciprocating help and gifts. Since households entail the cumulative networks of their members, larger households are more likely to have larger networks.

Cash income also represents a resource which can be invested in relationships. While the study households used their money primarily to meet their own needs,¹⁵ all but one also gave money to other people on the island, in return for local foods or services or as gifts to individuals. Not surprisingly, those with greater access to cash devoted more to such purposes; 95 percent of the total dollar value of cash transfers with people elsewhere on the island involved the eight households with the highest reported incomes. As discussed above, cash income also allowed people to give non-cash gifts, for instance by buying food to give others.

Another factor helps to explain the variation in size of networks for households with different levels of income: availability of transport. Four of the lowest income households have no vehicles; another has only a bicycle (refer to Table 6.1). Members of these households could travel around the island only if they took the school bus, or arranged a ride with someone who had a vehicle. Household C, while having a low income, did own a motorbike, thus enabling visits outside the area, enlarging its network accordingly.

Ownership of personal motor vehicles, and the practice of maintaining frequent interactions with households scattered around the island are both fairly recent developments on Rotuma. According to Alan Howard (personal communication), in 1960 Rotumans usually

visited people in other districts on special occasions only. Few households had motor vehicles (refer to Figure 3.2); most relied on bicycles, horses, or went on foot to their destinations. The recent increase in private transportation has greatly enhanced opportunities for inter-district interaction, both at formal gatherings and among individuals (though even today at islandwide gatherings many Rotumans tend to cluster with close kin and neighbors, reluctant to interact with strangers from other districts).

Another notable difference between interactions within the study area and those with households elsewhere was the occurrence of what may be considered Market Pricing transactions. I counted interactions as Market Pricing if transfers of money for goods or services involved a set price or were not contextualized with any type of sharing behavior, such as sharing a meal, or giving in-kind gifts. That Market Pricing transactions, thus defined, occurred with households outside the study area is understandable in that people generally interacted less frequently overall with those outside their immediate residential area, giving fewer opportunities for framing with a variety of forms of transaction. In addition, many of these interactions were with non-kin. Of the 51 outside households that participated in commercial transactions with those in the study, 35 (67 percent) involved people identified as not related. A few individuals were identified simply as "the one who sells fish" or "the one who makes furniture," suggesting that commercial-style interactions were common with them. On the other hand, kinship did

not preclude such transactions. The sole interaction between a man in the study and his brother in an adjacent village consisted of giving cash for eggplant. Another man bought a fish from someone he described as "no relation, but he acts like *kainaga*." This comment could be interpreted to mean that there were other, on-going interactions with him over time, either unreported or taking place beyond the study's time frame. It also suggests that cash transactions are not considered to be defining characteristics of relationships.

Conclusion

Despite Rotuma's involvement in the market economy, the use of cash in interpersonal transactions assumed a low profile compared to in-kind exchanges of food and assistance in my study. When cash transfers did take place among members of households within the study area, they were framed within a context of on-going Communal Sharing; outside the immediate residential area this framing was more attenuated, as people interacted with more households less intensively.

The availability of money to households in the study supported reciprocal exchange in at least three ways: money was given as gifts; people used cash to buy food and other items to give as gifts; and people used things that cost money to purchase and operate, for others' benefit. Examples of the latter included sharing access to refrigerators and freezers, lanterns and generators (discussed in

Chapter 6), as well as providing transport. Owning motor vehicles further facilitated interactions beyond the immediate area.

The fact that larger networks on the island were maintained by households with higher incomes (even after deducting households which engaged solely in commercial interactions) reflects the use of greater resources, including transportation. Higher income households also had generally larger networks off-island; the eight higher income households had more such ties than average, along with two lower income households. To a certain extent this pattern also depends on the use of resources by study households, for instance in visiting or hosting visitors. But unlike connections on island, overseas ties often exerted a significant influence on the material well-being of study households in terms of cash income and access to imported goods (see Chapters 3 and 5). The impact of migrant involvement can be seen most clearly in the arena of house construction and improvement, which is the focus of Chapter 8.

Notes to Chapter 7

¹Fiske notes that both kind (type) and kin "come from an Old English word meaning birth, nature, race, family" and kind (warmhearted) derives from an Old English word meaning natural or innate. Further, all three words are derived from an Indo-European root meaning to give birth or beget (Fiske 1991:14). The Rotuman concept of *kainaga* as both kind (type) and kin, and behavioral emphasis on kindness (*hanisi*) to relatives, echo these associations.

²One household installed ten lights but thought they would economize by not installing switches. Thus whenever the generator was on, all ten lights were on, whether or not people were in the rooms or even at home.

³One may approach the *pure* directly and ask permission to cut copra on the land he holds. Alternatively, as Elisapeti Inia explained to me, one may cut copra first and ask later, provided one piles up the coconut husks and covers them with leaves. This action is a sign to the *pure* that the person who cut the copra is *kainaga*, and recognizes his rights as *pure*.

⁴For example, when an Oinafa man went to Fiji to invite his brother to come to Rotuma and accept the chiefly title of Poar, he first asked the brother's wife whether she would be willing for her husband to do so.

⁵One young man in Oinafa continually flaunts convention by taking such invitations literally. He is considered somewhat foolish by others in the village, but because he is friendly and helpful, most people make him welcome. (See Rensel and Howard 1993 regarding behavior toward people with disabilities.)

⁶While the Rotuman term for wealth or valuables, *koroa*, is cognate with the Proto-Polynesian *koloa*, Rotuman words for money are borrowed from English: *selene* (from 'shilling') and *monē*.

⁷It is likely that prior to Christian influence, when the chiefs and the *sau* represented spiritual connections, the Authority Ranking principle was more in evidence.

⁸A person-day was reckoned for each person who was listed on the survey as helping on a certain day, for any length of time.

⁹Relatives in Fiji and abroad provided the money for the materials for Household J. The house of the catechist (Household L) belonged to the Methodist Church, which paid for the paint, cement, louvered windows, linoleum and roofing iron.

¹⁰In 1988 my husband asked the owner of a motorcycle how much they would like us to give them for letting us use it for several weeks. She replied with a smile, "It's up to you." We came to understand this meant it was our responsibility to find out what was considered conventional and fair. Since as visitors we were not equipped to reciprocate in other ways, we resorted to cash.

¹¹Shared meals were counted on the basis on the number of people being hosted to each meal by the household where the meal was eaten. Contributions of food or labor given by those who attended meals were tallied as food gifts and person-days of assistance, respectively.

¹²The son was gone for 33 days to Suva for rugby; hence household size was computed as 5.6 persons for the survey period.

¹³The same types of events and circumstances that prompted interactions within the study area promoted visits across greater distances: attending feasts, responding to illnesses, sharing bounty, helping with projects, and making requests. In addition, excursions to destinations elsewhere on the island provided interesting breaks from routine as well as opportunities to escape temporarily from simmering disputes at home.

¹⁴Unlike data about interactions among the 17 households participating in the study, I was unable to cross-check questionnaire responses about interactions outside the study area. These data therefore should be viewed with more caution.

¹⁵Income was primarily used for household consumption or invested in durables (especially housing improvements, furnishings, appliances and vehicles). Feast contributions were also important, especially for households that purchased cows, pigs, or cases of corned beef. But benefits to immediate households were more pronounced than any income leveling effect of redistribution through local cash transfers.

CHAPTER 8

CHANGES IN HOUSING AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Houses--their construction, maintenance, use, and even their location--have been central to the social reproduction of Rotuman kin groups for centuries. As described in Chapter 4, *kainaga* membership is a matter of both blood relationship and active commitment. Blood ties are reckoned on the basis of a common ancestor who lived on or had claim in a named house site. And commitment to a kin group is demonstrated by giving materials and labor to building, maintaining and furnishing a house, as well as being a part of activities which take place in and around it. By attending gatherings, contributing resources, helping prepare food, and eating together with those who dwell in a given house, Rotumans further proclaim their interconnectedness. Rotuman houses stand as tangible reminders and powerful symbols, embodying the responsibilities and relationships of all who participate in their construction, repair, and use.

An examination of the social meanings and processes embodied in Rotuman housing brings together many of the issues of concern in this dissertation. It is a dynamic story. Since the earliest recorded descriptions of Rotuman houses in the 19th century, there have been many documented changes in house styles, materials, and construction techniques. Contributing factors range from missionary influence and increasing external trade, to hurricanes, relief programs, and migrant involvement. The social outcomes are

many, some dramatic, others more subtle, and all still evolving. This chapter is concerned with tracing changes in housing on Rotuma, identifying significant influences producing those changes, and exploring implications for Rotuman social behavior, particularly in the realm of reciprocal exchange.

Early Descriptions

Building Materials and Styles

An idea of housing styles on Rotuma from the early 1800s can be gleaned from the accounts of some of the first European visitors (Bennett 1831; Eagleston 1832; Osborn 1834-5; Cheever 1834-5; Lesson 1838-9; Lucatt 1851; Haley [1851] 1948). Houses were constructed of poles and logs, with thatched sago palm roofs and plaited sago or coconut palm walls. Most dwellings were described as "small," enclosing a space perhaps 15 to 20 feet wide (Eagleston 1832:409). Chiefs' houses were noted as being larger, for instance 40 by 16 feet (Haley 1948:259) and 25 feet high (Lesson 1838-9:433). These early written accounts describe Rotuman houses as rounded at the ends, but Elisapeti Inia told me that the rounding was due to Samoan or Tongan influence; the ends of Rotuman houses were originally flat (*tarut fāri*).

Low doors, which admitted little wind as a protection against hurricanes, required people to enter on hands and knees. Floors were composed of earth, dry grass, pebbles or small pieces of coral, covered with rough mats of plaited coconut leaves (*farao*); sometimes with a pandanus mat (*'epa*) overlay.

Cooking and eating took place outside or in a separate outbuilding (*kohea* 'kitchen'), also made of poles and thatch. In practice, these spaces were more accessible to members of other households than the inside of dwellings. This facilitated the Rotuman custom of assisting others with cooking in the *koua* 'earthen oven' as well as that of sharing meals.

Young unmarried men ordinarily slept away from their parents and siblings. It was considered improper for them to sleep inside the house, in close proximity to their sisters. Groups of young men sometimes built their own thatched sleeping houses, sometimes on high poles (*rī sipakit*). By staying together, as well as participating in other joint activities such as preparing *koua* and gardening, youths strengthened not only their relationships with each other but ties between their respective households.

Rotumans customarily built their houses upon a foundation, or *fūag ri*, of raised earth, surrounded by stone walls (Osborn 1834-5; Cheever 1834-5; Lucatt 1851:167). Most reports indicate that foundations were from two to four feet high, but descriptions range from one foot (Allardyce 1885-6:134) to six feet high (Allen 1895). Foundations up to 12 feet high, presumed to have been used for chiefly dwellings, were discovered inland by Gardiner (1898:433). Some writers suggested these raised house sites were useful in keeping the floors dry during periods of heavy rains (Osborn 1834-5; Lucatt 1851:167; Boddam-Whetham 1876:266). For Rotumans, however, *fūag ri* were and are significant in notions of kinship. It is the house foundation to which Rotumans generally refer when they

describe how they are related to someone, for example: "My mother's mother is from the *fūag ri* where he stays," or "He is related to that *fūag ri*." *Fūag ri* are also the reference point for eligibility to stewardship of associated *kainaga* garden lands, and some foundations carry with them chiefly titles.

Home Furnishings and Housekeeping

Early visitors to Rotuma reported but little in the way of house furnishings: "mats, carved bare wood pillows, a few clubs, spears and drinking vessels of coconut shells" (Osborn 1834-5). Lesson (1838-9:434) mentioned low tables for eating. Coconut shells strung on sennit for carrying water could be hung up in the house (Eagleston 1832) and "in the centre of the house is generally slung a little koop net on which are deposited their provisions etc." (Cheever 1835). A more elaborate description of a storage device is given by W. L. Allardyce, who was acting Resident Commissioner in 1881:

There is scarcely a house which does not possess, suspended from the ridgepole, a kind of large four-sided swinging basket, called *kokona*, which serves as a larder and cupboard, and general receptacle for things which are intended to be out of the way of the children and rats. To guard against the latter a piece of circular wood, a foot or more in diameter, is obtained, and a hole bored in the centre, through which the main string of the *kokona* passes. Underneath this piece of wood, when a suitable height, a knot is made, not large enough to pass through the hole in the wood, which is thus kept stationary. However, the slightest weight on any part of it, at once gives the wood a sudden tilt downwards, and the rat is dropped on to the floor, clear of the *kokona*, and alongside of the cat (Allardyce 1885-6:134).

Given the importance of mats as primary furnishings as well as items in ceremonial exchange, one could assume that plaiting them took up much of women's time. Mat-making is often a cooperative activity, with women helping each other process pandanus and taking turns working on each other's mats. Cleaning a Rotuman style house includes sweeping the floor, sunning the mats, and picking up leaves and other rubbish in the compound. Although some 19th century European visitors found Rotuman houses "small, dark and dirty" (Forbes 1875:227), others were impressed with how neat and "scrupulously clean" they were (see e.g., Lesson 1838-9:434; Bennett 1831:201; Haley 1948:258). Timing may have affected observers' impressions: for instance, according to Rotuman custom, when men went out deep-sea fishing, women were not to clean the house. Similarly, during the period between burial and ceremonies marking the fifth day (*terán lima*), houses of families in mourning remain unswept.

House Construction and Repairs

Customarily, Rotuman house building is a group process, although it may be guided by one who is particularly skilled (*majau* 'expert, carpenter'). Members of the *kainaga* along with neighbors and friends assist. With thatched structures, women as well as men contribute materials and labor, helping to collect and prepare the poles and sago or coconut palm fronds. Host household members may also work on the building, but more of their efforts go toward providing food for the other workers. As noted in 1913 by Hocart, the host household prepares a feast for the *majau* both before and after the

house is built, and provides meals for the workers every day on which they work (Hocart 1913, field note 4846). In addition, members of the household remain indebted to those who help them. They should be ready to reciprocate with their labor when needed. A house on a *fūag ri*, or on *kainaga* land, is subject to use rights by members of the *kainaga*, and these claims can be strengthened by contributing labor toward construction.

Rotumans valued sago palm as more durable than coconut palm for roofing thatch (Bennett 1831:201; Evans 1951, note 25); according to the report of a Methodist minister who stayed on the island for several years in the 1880s, a sago palm roof "put on nicely is said to last without rethatching for twelve or sixteen years" (Allen 1895). To protect thatched roofs during strong winds, pairs of coconut palm fronds were (and are) laid over the roof vertically, tied together at the top. Still, thatched roofs and plaited walls must be periodically replaced. As with the process of building a new thatched structure, rethatching is an activity which typically involves a group of relatives and neighbors contributing materials and their labor on a reciprocal basis and being thanked with food.

In their location on named *fūag ri* 'foundations', and in the processes of their construction and maintenance, Rotuman style thatched houses served as constant reminders to their inhabitants of the network of kin relations that supported them. Over the past century, however, several influences combined to effect wide-reaching changes in house materials, styles, construction and repair practices. In the next section I consider how a range of social,

environmental, demographic and economic variables affected Rotuman housing standards, and in turn, the place of houses in the enactment of social relations.

Factors Affecting Housing Change

Missionary Influences

The missionaries who arrived on Rotuma in the mid-nineteenth century affected housing on Rotuma both intentionally, as an explicit agenda, and indirectly, by introducing new building materials and techniques. The British Methodists in particular associated material lifestyle with spiritual orientation, and consciously tried to provide models of dress, cleanliness and housing for Rotumans to emulate. Brother Osborne, writing from Australia after leaving Rotuma in March 1873, praised the work of his predecessors, Reverend and Mrs. William Fletcher and other Methodist teachers, and credited changes in housing to their efforts:

Before Wm. Fletcher's last appointment to the island, there was a comparatively large number of Christians, but they were necessarily very ignorant...their houses were the meanest hovels imaginable, and they themselves were unutterably filthy.... Through the instrumentality of Mr. & Mrs. Fletcher, and several really superior Fijian teachers, the most gratifying changes were effected. Hundreds lotu'd [entered the church]...then they purchased soap...then they grew dissatisfied with their hovels, and commenced the erection of substantial and neat houses. So rapidly did they advance, that when I was appointed to take Mr. Fletcher's place, nearly four years ago, I found that there was a membership of upwards of 450, & a large attendance at the schools. There were also scores of well-constructed wattle and lime houses neatly whitewashed, having doors and glazed windows (Methodist Church of Australasia, Letters Received, March 1, 1873).

Rev. Fletcher recognized and continued to use the power of example and intergroup competition to effect changes in construction practices when he returned to the island after Brother Osborne's departure. Following a severe hurricane which devastated crops and destroyed buildings in 1874, he wrote from Rotuma:

The people see the need of better houses, and will gradually I think use stone instead of the plaited cocoa-nut leaves, or even lime. I have just completed a stone room for myself, which will be invaluable as a refuge, should my family need one in another storm, and meanwhile I have a capital study. It serves too for the weekly meetings of my teachers. The building is about twenty one feet by fourteen feet inside. The walls are seven feet high from the floor and twenty inches thick. It is my first attempt as a mason-& may it be my last! It is the first building entirely of stone on the island. I was induced to undertake it partly to encourage the people to let the roofs of their chapels rest directly on the walls. Doubting the security of this arrangement, they preferred to erect the whole framework of the building, and then fill in between the posts with stone and mortar. I have prevailed on the Noatau people, amongst whom I reside, to leave the posts they had prepared, and they are now putting up a new chapel of stone fifty feet by thirty. The height will be about eleven feet.... And as the power of rivalry is strong amongst the chiefs, the erection of one good stone place of worship may result in the erection of many more (Methodist Church of Australasia, Diary of Rev. Fletcher, October 27, 1874).

Brother Osborne was caustic in his assessment of the effects of the work of the two French Catholic priests on the island, in part because the Catholics did not put the same emphasis on changing the domestic conditions of the Rotumans:

It is painful to be compelled to state that Roman Catholicism in Rotumah is really no better than heathenism. It does not raise the people socially or morally; their houses and their persons are nearly as filthy as ever they were (Methodist Church of Australasia, Letters Received, March 1, 1873).

The Catholic priests, rather, focused on building two huge churches and school complexes on the island. Virtually all the materials for the churches--including wood, stained glass windows, altar, statuary, bells and even gargoyles for the clock tower--were imported from France. The building process took decades. The priests involved the local people in the construction and decoration of these buildings, thereby teaching them new skills. By 1938 the British Resident Commissioner, A. E. Cornish, reported:

The new school and dormitory at the Rotuman Catholic Mission, Sumi Station, is now nearing completion and a very worthy and solid building it will be. When completed this will be the best building in Rotuma, even the churches, as buildings, cannot be compared with it. The Sumi Mission school offers more opportunities to boys than ordinary school lessons. Most of the boys turned out by this school are good carpenters and have a good knowledge of cement work, engines etc. The girls at these mission schools do excellent needle-work, frequently gaining prizes at the Suva Show (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1938).

In the following year's report Cornish noted the completion of electrical wiring, painting, and building of cupboards at the school, commenting with pride, "Any visitor would be amazed to find such a building in an isolated island such as this" (Rotuma District Office, Annual Report of 1939).

Environmental, Social and Economic Impetus to Change

The work of the missions--both through inculcating their values about appropriate housing and through teaching construction skills--undoubtedly influenced Rotuman aspirations for European-style housing. But the preference Rotumans demonstrated for new housing styles may have its roots less in ideology than in practical response to opportunity. A number of factors combined in the late 1800s to make a switch to new house styles both possible and desirable.

Rotuma is periodically subject to hurricanes, often necessitating the reconstruction of buildings island-wide. Unfortunately, the supply of thatch is frequently depleted at the very time it is most in demand. A hurricane in 1874 destroyed virtually all the houses on the island (Boddam-Whetham 1876:262), and replacement thatch was scarce (Rotuma District Office, November 24, 1884). The resulting housing crisis may have been aggravated by the behavior of the victors in one of a series of religious wars about the same time. The Methodists reportedly burned houses belonging to Catholic and "heathen" Rotumans (Forbes 1875:242), although such behavior is specifically denied in the accounts given to Gardiner (1898:470) some twenty years later.

When Europeans introduced lime (*soroi*), made from burnt coral, as a building material in the 1870s, Rotumans greeted the innovation enthusiastically. At first they plastered it over their thatched walls, then began to build new stone houses (*ri hafu*), plastered inside and out with lime (Gardiner 1898:435). By 1884, Resident Commissioner Gordon reported that "stone-and-lime houses

which are well built and accurate in dimensions, are rapidly taking the place of the present thatch houses" (Rotuma District Office, November 24, 1884).

To the extent that the new style houses were built of local resources, obtaining and preparing materials and erecting structures remained processes dependent upon *kainaga* support. Like Rotuman thatched houses, limestone houses were built upon named foundations and embodied in tangible form the *hanisi* of the relatives who contributed to their existence. However, they also set a new standard for what constituted a good house. According to Allen (1895), the Rotumans building stone houses used "wooden doors, and windows of European manufacture." They began to incorporate other imported materials as well, such as cloth curtains and corrugated iron roofs. Acquired through barter or purchase, these materials reflected increasing participation of Rotumans in the market economy through sailing and copra trade, as well as widening exposure to alternatives for house styles and furnishings.¹

The proportion of *ri hafu* steadily increased over the next several decades. In a report commissioned by the colonial government, Sykes (1948) wrote that "most of the houses are built of stone cemented with a mixture of coral lime and sand and covered with a roof of sago palm leaf thatch." He noted that there were also many European style houses with wooden walls and iron roofs, although these were not well maintained. One would gather from his report that there were few, if any, houses with thatched walls on the island. But just a few years later, District Officer H. S. Evans

(1951, note 25) provided a numerical assessment of housing types which indicates they had persisted to some extent. He reported that "[r]ather over one third of the houses are attractive cottages of coral lime concrete, brilliantly white with lime wash; rather less than one third are Rotuman houses with sago leaf walls; twenty-four percent are timber houses and the remaining nine per cent of corrugated iron." Most roofs were still thatched, with no more than 12 percent of the houses having iron roofs.

By 1966, according to a report prepared by the Rotuma Council in 1966 (see Table 8.1), more than half the houses had stone or cement walls (also called *ri hafu*). Thatched houses (*ri ota*) had decreased to less than one-fifth, houses with iron walls (*ri pota*) had increased to 18 percent, and only 13 percent were timber houses (*ri 'ai*). Fifteen years later, in 1981, the Rotuma Council reported that 83 percent of houses had stone or cement walls. Wooden and iron-walled houses constituted 10 and 8 percent of island houses, respectively. These changes, and especially the fact that there were virtually no Rotuman-style thatch houses standing, were due in large part to the 1972 hurricane named Bebe and the relief program that followed.

Hurricane Bebe

Hurricane Bebe destroyed or damaged most buildings on Rotuma. Afterwards, under the provisions of a government disaster relief program, Rotumans were given small loans (averaging about \$F274) in the form of materials, typically including six bags of cement for a house foundation, eight galvanized iron pipes for supports, timber

Table 8.1
Rotuma house styles, 1951-1989

	1951 ^a		1966 ^b		1981 ^b		1989 ^c
Walls of:							
Limestone or Cement	(35%)	240	(51%)	269	(83%)	361	(82%)
Wood	(32%)	60	(13%)	31	(10%)	24	(5%)
Iron	(9%)	84	(18%)	25	(8%)	46	(10%)
Thatch	(24%)	89	(19%)	0	(0%)	8	(2%)
All Houses	(100%)	473	(101%)	325	(101%)	439	(99%)

^aReported by H. S. Evans, Resident Commissioner of Rotuma. Percentages only.

^bRecords of Rotuma Council, compiled and reported by district chiefs.

^cSurvey of 414 households (85% of all households on Rotuma) conducted by Jan Rensel and Alan Howard.

for rafters, roofing iron and nails. The New Zealand Army came to Rotuma to assist with the rebuilding effort, and brought the materials. The rafters were cut and assembled at one village, then loaded onto a truck with the other materials and delivered to sites around the island. A model house was built in one district, with two or three men from each district assisting. These men then worked along with one soldier, assigned as foreman, to direct construction by eight-person teams in their own district. After pouring the foundations, the teams placed iron posts upright in the cement to act as roof supports, then erected the rafters. People were left to choose and build their own walls out of whatever material they could afford and obtain.²

The construction teams competed to see how fast they could build the basic structures. The work of the New Zealand Army and their Rotuman assistants has now assumed legendary status on the island: during a period of 21 days, it is said, they built 302 new housing units. As can be seen from the house counts in Table 8.1, three hundred houses represents a significant proportion of the dwellings on the island.

Besides the obvious physical differences, this massive reconstruction provided opportunities for other kinds of change. Some families chose not to rebuild their houses on family *fūag ri* 'house foundations'.³ According to the 1989 survey, only 58 percent of island households were located on *fūag ri*. Although the majority of Rotuman homes are still built on *kainaga* land,⁴ those located away from *fūag ri* may be less subject to claims by other *kainaga*

members. Those investing time and materials in a more permanent structure may have been hoping to ensure its being passed on to their own offspring.

Hurricane Bebe and subsequent government aid provided significant impetus to housing changes on Rotuma. However, the overall trend toward more elaborate, individually-owned housing is sustained to a great extent by the outmigration of Rotumans to paid positions abroad, and the cash and imported materials these migrants send back to the island.

Migrant Involvement

As discussed in Chapter 5, there has been a dramatic increase in the proportion of Rotumans living in Fiji over the past four decades. Although the population remaining on the island has remained fairly stable over this period, average household size has decreased, from 7.4 to 5.8 persons (Table 8.2). Much of this can be attributed to a marked increase in the number of households with one to three persons. While Howard found that such small households made up only 11 percent of Rotuman households in 1960, almost 30 percent of households fell into this category in 1989. At the same time, the percentage of households on the island composed of ten or more people dropped from 17 percent in 1960 to only 7 percent in 1989 (Figure 8.1).

The increase in small households may be attributed in part to return migration by individuals who choose to establish separate households rather than to join existing ones. In addition, some formerly larger households now are represented by a single

TABLE 8.2
Persons per household on Rotuma, 1956-1986

Year	Persons per household	Rotumans on Rotuma
1956	7.4*	2,993
1966	7.1	3,235
1976	5.9	2,707
1986	5.8*	2,588

*Approximate figures, based on total of "Other" households (non-Fijian, non-Indian) and thus including some "Part-Europeans" and "Other Pacific Islanders"

Source: Fiji Government, Census Reports

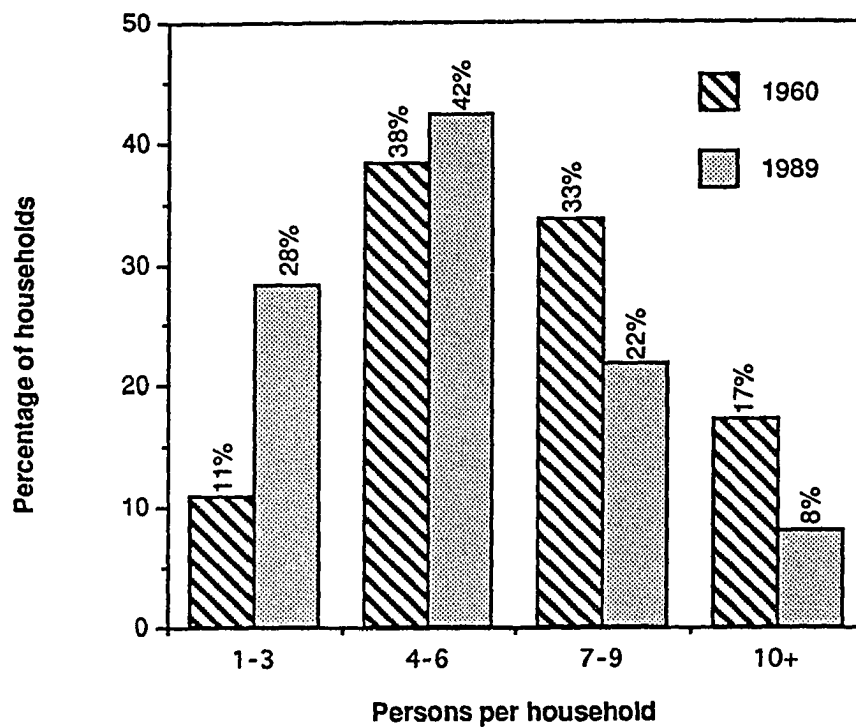


Figure 8.1 Household size, 1960 and 1989

1960 data from unpublished survey by Alan Howard

1989 data from survey conducted by Jan Rensel and Alan Howard

individual, who has been designated caretaker for the family home. He or she maintains the house with the financial support of family members abroad. Small and large households alike benefit from remitted cash and materials for house construction, improvement and expansion.

The transformation in housing materials implicates a corresponding shift in relationships that supply them. Thatch, stone and lime can be obtained locally on land belonging to *kainaga* and with the help of relatives near at hand. The use of imported materials requires access to money or to people with money, generally migrant relatives. Relationships with *kainaga* off-island who provide such support thus assume a higher value. Besides nurturing these ties by sending periodic gifts (as discussed in Chapter 5), those on the island try to provide them with comfortable accommodations when they visit. Comfort is defined increasingly in terms of the urban settings from which the visitors come, i.e., a European-style house and furnishings.

Rotuman Houses 1989

Building Materials and Styles

According to the 1989 island-wide survey findings, the typical household compound included one or more cement dwellings (*ri noho*) with separate outbuildings for cooking (*kohea*), shower and toilet.⁵ The 401 households providing information on structures included a total of 439 dwellings, 352 of which had cement walls (80 percent); most had corrugated iron roofs. Only 9 stone-and-lime houses were

in use as dwellings, although a number of such buildings were standing empty. There were 24 houses with walls of wood. *Ri noho* with thatched walls numbered 8, representing a slight comeback from 1981 (see Table 8.1). In addition 30 of the 46 iron-walled houses had thatched roofs. Thatch was much more commonly used for constructing shelters for cooking and eating; 72 percent of such structures were thatch roofed, with walls of iron, wood, thatch, or simply no walls at all.⁶

Many dwellings surveyed in 1989 consisted primarily of one large room divided by curtains, reproducing in cement the layout of thatched houses. But in newer buildings it was more common for interior walls of wood or cement to separate sitting room from bedrooms. Interior walls have been found to provide superior structural support in the face of hurricanes.⁷ They also add privacy; as one result, it is now acceptable for young men to sleep at home rather than somewhere else.⁸

Piped water from the underground freshwater lens has been available on Rotuma beginning in the late 1970s. It has taken several years to establish the island-wide system of reservoirs and pipelines, and the job is not yet complete. A recent government aid program also provided water-sealed toilets, although most of these were installed in outbuildings. In recent years some houses have been constructed with kitchen, washroom and toilet facilities under the same roof with dwelling spaces. Although many prefer the outdoor *koua* for cooking local foods, with greater use of imports like rice, noodles and tinned meat it is more convenient to prepare

meals inside. Participation in cooking and eating are correspondingly more restricted to members of the household.

Construction Processes

Despite changes in materials and styles, reciprocal labor arrangements for building projects have persisted. Nearly all households surveyed in 1989 indicated their houses had been built by family members, neighbors and friends; only nine households island-wide reported having hired labor for house construction.⁹

Reciprocal assistance is particularly prevalent in building thatch or corrugated iron dwellings, *kohea* or other shelters. But for wooden and cement buildings the different requirements for strength and skill limit participation, particularly of women, although there are a number of capable female carpenters on the island.

Further, there are indications of a growing tendency toward paying laborers for house construction and renovation. In Oinafa village in 1989, eight out of ten households engaged in construction projects gave money in varying amounts to non-household members who assisted (see Chapter 7). I heard from others on the island that Rotumans are increasingly reluctant to help build houses, especially modern cement and wooden structures, without being given money. Some of the trend toward paying workers can be explained in terms of a need for skilled labor to install windows, ceramic tile, and other imported features.¹⁰ Other reasons may be grounded in a perception that those who are building more elaborate homes have access to money and therefore should share this resource, not just

the conventional meals and implicit promises of in-kind reciprocation.

The matter of relative wealth is especially prominent in the case of migrants building homes on the island--returning retirees, or Rotumans who live abroad but want a place of their own to stay when they come on holiday. In the late 1980s, for example, an Oinafa migrant in London sent money to a relative in the village to hire and supervise laborers in constructing a home her family could live in when visiting the island. In neighboring Lopta, two medical doctors (one a Rotuman, one an Australian married to a Rotuman man) were paying workers to build elaborate, architecturally designed homes. In contrast, other returnees build traditional thatch houses; recently two men who came back to Oinafa district from Fiji to take chiefly titles chose to construct *ri ota*, assisted without financial compensation by their people.

House Repairs and Improvements

Types of housing repairs, and the processes for accomplishing them, have also changed as materials have changed. Rotumans were receptive to a longer-lasting alternative when lime was introduced as a building material. Lime-and-stone houses, however, require periodic white-washing with additional lime (Evans 1951, note 25). Likewise, wooden houses need paint and are subject to termites, and iron roofs eventually rust and must be repaired or replaced (Sykes 1948). One advantage of cement houses is that they require little maintenance, especially if left unpainted. Increasingly, however, householders on Rotuma are choosing to paint their cement

structures, and add features such as indoor plumbing, electrical wiring, and bathroom tile. As noted above, individuals with special skills are sought for the renovation work, and are compensated in cash. In 1989, 145 households island-wide reported having made renovations to their dwellings in the preceding year. The projects, such as reroofing, painting, and adding extensions, cost from a few hundred to several thousand dollars, paid for by employed household members or remittances.

Furnishings and Housekeeping

In 1960, Howard conducted an island-wide household survey which included an assessment of dwellings as "European" or "Rotuman" style. Howard's Rotuman research assistants classified the houses based on their own criteria. They characterized Rotuman style as houses with mats on the floor and very little furniture. European style referred to houses with enough furniture (tables, chairs, sofas, beds, cabinets etc.) to accommodate a European guest comfortably. By these criteria, 33 percent of houses were assessed as European style (Howard field notes 1960).

In the 1989 survey, more detailed inventories of household furnishings and appliances were undertaken. These revealed increasing purchases of imported durables over the past 30 years, illustrated by a tally of selected consumer items by years obtained. The majority of households reported some European furnishings: for instance, 65 percent had chairs, 79 percent tables, and 87 percent beds. Although some furniture was and is built by the residents or occasionally by a carpenter on the island, building materials are

usually imported; and virtually all other furniture is purchased and shipped to the island.¹¹

With more and more Rotuman houses equipped with Western-style furniture, mat-making assumes a smaller portion of women's responsibilities. Although mats remain highly important for ceremonial exchange, and commonly are used as floor coverings or beds, women reportedly spend less time plaiting mats than they used to, and young women often do not learn how to plait mats at all. When I asked what women are doing instead, people suggested they were spending more time looking after their houses. Respondents to the 1989 Oinafa village survey reported activities such as sewing curtains and bed sheets, making doormats, and crocheting doilies, not to mention washing and ironing household linens. Much attention went into the appearance of houses, with borders of colorful bougainvillea and croton bushes planted outside and containers of fresh or plastic flowers, pictures and other ornaments decorating indoor spaces. The care of houses seems to have assumed greater importance in Rotuman perceptions than in 1960 (Howard, personal communication). Although some activities, such as needlework, are pursued in social settings such as women's groups, more of the house-related work done by women today is done individually.

Social Implications of Housing Change

Valuation and Support of Relationships

Changes in housing on Rotuma obviously go far beyond physical structures. The decision to invest in a new house has significant

implications for a household's relationships in the Rotuman community. In choosing to build or extend with imported materials, one frequently is emphasizing ties with migrants over those with local *kainaga*. Participation in the work process is limited, including fewer women and only men with particular skills. While a house built of local materials by a large cooperating group stands as a constant reminder of their *hanisi* and support, one constructed by few, paid workers embodies correspondingly less social meaning.

Subsequent activities are also affected. With the increasing practice of giving money for help and materials, reciprocal assistance is downplayed. With changes in the form and furnishing of dwellings, opportunities for shared activities between nearby households are diminished. For households with fewer members, correspondingly greater attention may be devoted to supporting relationships with off-island relatives by sending produce and hosting visits.

Location and Permanence

Since Rotumans reckon rights to house sites rather than to specific structures, a house built on family land but not on a traditional foundation may be reserved for one's children without contention. The construction of permanent houses on *fūag ri* will necessitate some renegotiation of criteria for claims to the site. It appears that capital investment in a house is being recognized as sufficient justification for a lineal family group to remain on a *fūag ri*. This has the added implication of strengthening the claims of immediate

descendants, by their continuing presence, to not only the site but associated garden lands and title, if any.

The shift to permanent buildings itself has implications for Rotuman dispute management. As mentioned in Chapter 4, a major strategy for dealing with conflict is avoidance. A serious falling-out may result in one party's relocating in order to avoid contact with the other. One such instance arose in Lopta in 1989, when a household tore down their thatched dwelling and rebuilt it at the other end of the village because of a disagreement over claims to the first site. This option is also practicable for people with corrugated iron or wooden houses, but out of the question for those with cement buildings. People may be able to get away temporarily by visiting relatives elsewhere on the island, in Fiji or abroad, but eventually have to return or face having to give up a sizable investment of cash, labor and materials. Even more difficult are disputes over land claims in which someone else attempts to force a household to leave. Bad feelings are exacerbated by the specter of losing not only the land but a permanent house and the work and relationships it represents.

Wealth, Rank, and Social Merit

Rotuman concepts of what constitutes a good house have been shaped by missionary teaching and example, experiences with other outsiders, and concerns for practicality and convenience. Whatever its genesis, the predominance of European-style housing bears witness to a valuing of imported over indigenous models. The

switch to concrete structures after Hurricane Bebe was not only impelled by practical concerns and a desire for stronger materials, but also by a pursuit of European goods for status purposes. By embracing Western-style goods as status markers, Rotumans perhaps inadvertently have contributed to changes in social relationships.

Over the past few decades, according to some observers, a Rotuman's house has become the "measuring-stick whereby one gauges people's wealth and status" (Plant 1991:205). Prior to Cession in 1881 there was little material difference among Rotuman houses in style and furnishings. Chiefs' houses were distinguished primarily by their larger size, which reflected chiefly responsibility for hosting visitors. In the past chiefs could call upon community labor to build their houses, but today if they want something other than a thatched dwelling they are in the same position as everyone else: materials, and to some extent labor, cost money. A related change is an apparent decline in the custom of claiming the particular house site that goes with a title when a person is made a chief. When a man appointed to a certain subchiefly title moved back to Oinafa from Fiji in 1988, the *pure* staying in a house on the site affiliated with that title adamantly refused to allow the returnee to move there. The new subchief subsequently built a thatched house on other *kainaga* land.

At the same time, for some, Western-style houses may be becoming increasingly important for establishing claims to chiefly titles. While our host in Oinafa, Tarterani Rigamoto, was discussing

with my husband and me the qualities to look for in a candidate for chieftainship, he listed the following, in this order:

1. a handyman who works hard and can do a lot of things well;
 2. someone who participates in the community – not a loner;
 3. a Christian who is active in church affairs;
 4. someone who looks like a chief and has a good house and therefore can be looked up to;
 5. someone who speaks well;
 6. one who is educated and can speak English well;
 7. one who loves the people, that is, takes care of them.
- [emphasis added]

The inclusion of housing in such formulations was not noted during previous anthropological research on the island in 1960 (see Howard 1970). A negative example is the case of one district chief who is currently subject to criticism for having a humble thatched dwelling rather than a "proper house" in which to entertain visitors. At present, the houses of most district chiefs are cement structures, but neither the largest nor the most imposing in their districts.¹² Rather, people with higher earned incomes, or financial support from off-island, command the resources to develop elaborate housing.

A Good House--and A Good Provider

Evaluation of social merit aside from rank considerations seems also to have been affected by increased access to Western-style housing. Customarily, a Rotuman's ability to provide an abundance of food, primarily garden produce, has been of central importance in evaluating social merit. Recently, however, there is some suggestion this measure has been eclipsed by one's ability to provide a Western-style house. Senator Wilson Inia said in a speech in

support of the savings and house loans programs of the Fiji National Provident Fund:

One of the great responsibilities of a father to a family is to provide a house while he is alive, or if he has passed away, to leave behind sufficient funds for the mother or the children to build a house. That is good advice to a Rotuman whether he be in Suva or in Rotuma. Any father who cannot provide that is a bad father (Parliamentary Debates, October 14, 1974).

Tarterani Rigamoto told me in 1988 that there is a Rotuman saying: *"Nōnō ka rī lelei, ma 'inea ne huā' lelei."* 'When the house is good, you know the occupants are good.' But this may not represent as much a disjunction from former bases for attributing merit as it may at first appear. Rotumans who are long term residents on the island, and are aware of the social histories of buildings, are more likely to distinguish between merely having a nice house, and having done the work to procure the materials and build one. Not taken in by appearances, those who know whose work is represented can judge houses much as they evaluate food production and contributions.

Social pressure does not deter Rotumans from trying their best to build and furnish their preferred house in whatever ways are open to them. But not all Rotumans make the same choices. Over the past decade, the advent of two-story houses on the island represents one extreme. The man who built the first such house was subject to criticism from others for his ostentatious display, but others have since begun to follow his example: the 1989 survey turned up six houses with two stories. These have been built with migrant or returnee money and represent a valuing of comfort and status

(defined in urban wage-earner terms) over fitting into the community. In fact such elaborate houses have a distancing and intimidating effect for people with less urban experience. At the other end of the spectrum are the examples, mentioned above, of two migrant Rotumans who built thatched houses when they returned to the island to accept chiefly titles. Their decision to do so may reflect practical considerations, such as a desire to limit monetary investment in imported materials until they could see how the new positions would work out. But by electing to build traditional Rotuman houses with the help of the people they came to lead (and serve), these new chiefs gave priority to reconnecting with the community through the familiar and time-honored practice of reciprocal labor.

Notes to Chapter 8

¹Through their own experiences abroad as sailors, and the example of visiting Europeans, Rotumans were exposed to and adopted a number of innovations in furnishing their houses. For instance, a Mr. Emery, former mate of an English whaleship, settled in Rotuma around 1829 and built a wooden house on the offshore islet of Uea. He had English furniture, cooking utensils, and pictures on the walls. Emery married a Rotuman woman, and lived on Uea with about 60 other Rotumans who treated him as their chief (Cheever 1834-1835). Another sailor from a whaling ship, visiting in the early 1850s, noted that brightly colored curtains were used to screen the sleeping areas of a large house he and his mates visited. He surmised these had been traded by some whaling captain for hogs and other provisions (Haley 1948:258).

²Due to lack of funds, and competing demands for what money some families did have available, many houses took years to complete.

³Paul Vaurasi, a Rotuman who worked for many years in the Fiji government's Public Works Department, informed me that new *fūagri* are sometimes constructed in order to create level ground on which to build.

⁴Of the 414 households responding to the 1989 survey, 306 or 74 percent said their houses were located on *kainaga* land. Other possibilities were *hanua togi*, land owned outright as a result of purchase from other Rotumans (9 percent); *hanua nā*, land owned outright as a gift (2 percent); *hanua pau*, land owned outright by those residing there, the only claimants as a result of attrition (3 percent); *hanua hāisasigi*, land belonging to siblings (3 percent); lands belonging to government (2 percent) and church (3 percent), and no information given (4 percent)

⁵As in English usage, there are several euphemisms for the toilet in Rotuman, including *ri mea'me'a* 'little house', *ri la'oaga* 'house for going' and *fā'u* 'out back' as in *ia la' se fā'* 'he went out back'. When Howard conducted his fieldwork on the island in 1960, outhouses were located either inland (the back, according to Rotuman

orientation) or at the end of a wooden pier leading from the beach to beyond the high tide mark (Howard 1970:31).

⁶When roofing iron is replaced on dwellings, the old iron is often re-used for *kohea* or other outbuildings.

⁷I am grateful to Paul Vaurasi for pointing this out.

⁸Howard reports that in 1960 only in a few villages did the boys build their own sleeping house; more often they used a structure that was temporarily available, or went to the home of an older single or widowed man (Howard 1970:66). During my fieldwork in the late 1980s, I observed that while some slept in the home of their parents, many of the young men in Oinafa village took their mats and mosquito nets to the community hall and slept there.

⁹Responses to the survey may reflect rhetoric more than reality, especially in cases in which people did not know the details of their dwelling's history.

¹⁰Some Rotumans pay skilled laborers cash for their work, recognizing that government and other organizations pay them for doing this type of work. In other cases, such as the flurry of house renovations in Oinafa in 1989, skilled assistance is in great demand and short supply; people essentially competed for the worker's time by offering \$F10 to \$F12/day.

¹¹Interestingly, I observed that when a Rotuman household hosts a large group inside the dwelling, for instance for a small ceremony or a prayer meeting, they often pushed aside chairs and sofas or removed them from the area, spreading mats upon which people sat. Although household members used their furniture on an everyday basis, with the arrival of even casual visitors everyone frequently ended up sitting on the floor.

¹²An exception is the case of the chief of Noa'tau district. A large guest house with a high roof and commanding aspect was constructed to house visiting VIPs during the 1981 celebration of the centennial of Cession to Great Britain. After a new district chief was installed in 1983, he claimed the guest house as his residence.

CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Pacific Islands societies have undergone, and are still in the process of experiencing, far-reaching political, social and economic changes. Typical scenarios depict shifts in population to urban centers in search of education and employment, accompanied by lowered subsistence production, growing dependence on cash and imported goods, erosion of traditional authority, declining communal labor, fragmentation of community, and loss of traditional skills, knowledge and values. The general prognosis is bleak, the prime suspect, money--as a metonym for involvement in the world economy through commercial trade, wage employment, remittances and government aid. I argue in this dissertation that an in-depth examination of both particular history and contemporary practice is necessary to assess the full range of contributing factors and actual outcomes. The case of Rotuma illustrates that in addition to economic factors, external religious and political forces as well as indigenous cultural variables and individual and group choices have shaped the course of change. A close-grained analysis of resultant circumstances reveals important differences from the standard portrayal of social upheaval and cultural decline.

Local Actors in Regional Historical Context

Rotuman Agendas

Prior to and throughout recorded encounters with outsiders, Rotumans have enacted their own agendas. Indigenous issues, such

as the limits of chiefly authority and the essentially reciprocal nature of relationship between people and their leaders, emerge prominently from oral traditions as well as early written accounts of Rotuman actions. Engagement with European traders, missionaries and colonial officials took place from the Rotuman perspective within the context of on-going local dynamics, from interpersonal histories to interdistrict rivalries.

Opportunities for trade and employment added to the possibilities for Rotumans to pursue their own goals. To the consternation of outsiders Rotumans insisted on setting high prices for provisioning whalers; they repeatedly acquired and tried to run their own ships; they established a series of cooperatives to compete, first with commercial firms and then with each other. The history of Rotuman economic endeavor reveals persistent efforts to assert control and maintain flexibility in the face of ever-changing circumstances.

Religious and Political Influences

Nineteenth century expansion of economic opportunities took place in the context of other profound sociopolitical changes, including conversion of the Rotumans to Christianity and the introduction of British colonial administration. Such contextualization for the introduction of money is generally the case. Even Bohannon, while indicting "the Western economy" for undermining the Tiv exchange system, acknowledges, then ignores the fact that the colonial government had established regulations on exchange (Bohannon 1955:67).¹

In Rotuma missionary and colonial influences directly affected the nature of chiefly authority, and thus of social organization. Religious conversion weakened the chiefs' spiritual connection, lessening their power in the eyes of the people while elevating the authority of missionaries and lay church teachers. Colonial officials, frustrated with the appearance of ineffectual leadership on the part of the chiefs, abrogated chiefly prerogatives and reduced their role to that of messenger. Contemporary Rotumans remember the prevalence of communal labor in the colonial period and tend to blame its demise on economic change, forgetting that prior to Fiji's independence, the district officer had the power to demand such participation. Now that administration of island affairs is back in the hands of the chiefs (with the district officer as advisor), extent of cooperation in communal projects depends on the relationship between a chief and his people.

In order to maintain the support of their people, chiefs are expected to work hard for them and be generous with resources. The fact that non-titled individuals frequently enjoy larger sources of income, not to mention more education, professional experience and off-shore connections, can put Rotuma's chiefs at a disadvantage in their ability to impress and assist others, especially as economic ties widen. But to credit money as the prime force shaping authority relations on Rotuma is a vast oversimplification.

Multiple Forms of Economic Participation

Pacific Islands clearly are engaging in the world economy in ways other than those envisioned by earlier theorists. Bertram and

Watters (1985, 1986) took a useful step in acknowledging the roles of government aid and employment, migration and remittances (MIRAB) in shaping contemporary Pacific Islands economies. While many islands rely on all of these in some combination, it is crucial to differentiate the proportion and extent of dependence on each.

In contrast to many of the Pacific Island economies characterized by the MIRAB model, foreign aid has played only a small part in the economy of Rotuma, as in that of Fiji as a whole (Ward 1993:4; see also Baker 1992). Questions of the environmental, political, and other costs of accepting aid aside, Rotuma and Fiji thus are not confronted with post-Cold War prospects of drastic economic change such as those facing the Federated States of Micronesia, where funding from the United States is declining under terms of the 1986 Compact of Free Association (see e.g., Connell 1992), and French Polynesia with the possibility of permanent cessation of France's nuclear testing program (Poirine 1992; see also Finney 1994).

Government employment is important on Rotuma, though not so much in terms of number of employees (just over 100 in 1992) as in providing relatively high salaries and opportunities for educated Rotumans to return to the island and contribute to the community. Local cooperatives employ comparable numbers of Rotumans on the island, at much lower wages. But rather than relying on employment most households draw upon a combination of income sources. These include copra cutting and drying; boat loading and unloading and casual labor for the government, cooperatives or other Rotumans;

gifts and remittances; periodic on-island sales of produce and meat; occasional exports of food, kava, handicrafts; and other entrepreneurial activities as they arise. Pursuing multiple options, while not relying greatly on aid, allows Rotumans to remain flexible in the face of local and world-wide economic fluctuations.²

Unalienated Land Base

The adaptability which characterizes Rotumans' participation in the market economy is further predicated upon retaining control of their land. Although some Rotumans have purchased land from one another, it may not be sold to non-Rotumans. Most households engage in subsistence production activities; access to land for growing food is readily available to all on the island.

Other examples which highlight the importance of an unalienated land base and local production include Ke'anae, Hawai'i (Linnekin 1985) and Erakor, Vanuatu (Philibert 1981). In the latter case, 90 percent of villagers' monthly income came from wage earnings in 1973, and over 90 percent of all households included at least one wage earner. But villagers maintained a wide range of production activities, land was still held by corporate groups, and village labor had not become commoditized. Bertram and Watters (1985:511) also point to the importance of maintaining a subsistence base for the viability of MIRAB societies.

Because copra remains Rotuma's primary export, and copra prices are low, land has not assumed great monetary value as a commodity.³ In sharp contrast is the situation in Tonga, where vanilla harvests bring in up to six times as much income as copra

(van der Grijp 1993:236). Commoditization of land as the basis for widespread commercial agriculture, combined with population growth and a land tenure system that distributes land by hereditary entitlement have resulted in a large proportion of the population being dispossessed. By the early 1990s, 75 percent of Tongan men eligible for garden land had none. Although it is possible to lease or borrow garden land, some 37 percent of households in Tongatapu (where 70 percent of Tonga's population reside) produce no agricultural products (James 1993:221). Tongans are successfully pursuing a variety of income-generating opportunities (see below), but have lost the self-provisioning alternative Rotumans still enjoy through access to kin-held garden lands.

Migrant Involvement

The continuing involvement of a proportion of migrants in Fiji and abroad benefits Rotumans in a number of ways. Nearly half of Rotuman households on the island in 1989 reported receiving remittances, primarily from kin in Fiji. Amounts vary, and may be less significant than other sources of income for many households; remittances accounted for only 14 percent of the total income recorded in my intensive 13 week study. But for some households and some purposes (notably feasting and house construction), remittances are key. Were it not for migrant contributions, weddings and funerals on Rotuma would likely feature fewer cows, cases of corned beef and other costly items. And monetary help from migrants is a central factor fueling the building and remodeling of Rotuman houses.

Direct contributions of cash and imported goods benefit larger groups as well. Like other Pacific Islanders, associations of Rotuman migrants in Fiji and abroad raise funds to support projects in their home districts. But other forms of migrant involvement are even more significant in contributing to the material standard of living and the success of business enterprises on the island. Migrants played central roles in creating and sustaining the Rotuma Cooperative Association and the Raho Cooperative, both of which handle copra sales, provide jobs, and make imported foodstuffs and other desired material goods readily available. Small independent shops and other business ventures have benefited from the loan policy instigated by the Rotuman manager of the national bank. Rotumans living in Fiji helped to set up the tourist ship experiment, and periodically promote other income-earning opportunities for people back home.

Other Pacific Islanders similarly benefit from migrant assistance with small enterprise. For instance, James (in press) describes how Tongans are creatively using connections with migrants to develop new and durable forms of economic activity in Tonga. Examples include Tongan migrants in New Zealand sending fabric and sewing machines to women in Ha'apai to make school uniforms for the New Zealand families; Tongans informally exporting root crops to overseas kin as return gifts for hospitality or to sell for them through private networks, to an estimated annual value of T\$2 million; and Tongan families taking excess goods sent by relatives to sell in flea markets (James estimates turnover for

1993-94 at T\$3 million). But unlike Tonga and other Pacific Island nations such as Western Samoa which are strongly reliant on international migrant links (see e.g., Shankman 1978, 1993; Macpherson 1992), most of Rotuma's migrants live in the same country. Balance of trade problems and immigration restrictions are moot for Rotumans, who enjoy freedom of movement and commerce with the rest of Fiji.

The Fiji Connection

The impact of Rotuma's political incorporation with Fiji cannot be overstated. Upon cession to the British in 1881 Rotuma was closed as a port of entry; since that time trade and migration have focused on Fiji. Numbers of colonial officials present on the island were small, and administration largely indirect, through headquarters in Suva. Yet the colonial government managed to provide Rotuma with schools, medical facilities, roads, and means of transportation to and communication with Fiji. Since 1970, when Fiji gained independence from British colonial rule and Rotuma chose to maintain its affiliation with Fiji, the national government has continued this legacy of support for public welfare.⁴

As the Rotuman population grows, migration to Fiji functions as a safety valve, reducing overcrowding and lowering the potential for disputes over land claims. Rotumans seek further education and job opportunities in Fiji, where far from being considered second class citizens, Rotumans enjoy a well-earned reputation as reliable and fast-learning employees, and have succeeded in obtaining positions at all levels of government and private enterprise. Some

migrants return to re-establish residence on Rotuma but most stay in Fiji. The relative geographic closeness and lack of political barriers allows migrants to maintain ties easily with those at home, in multiple ways described above.

Summary

By and large, Rotumans enjoy a comfortable standard of living on their home island with plenty of food, adequate housing, and ever-increasing numbers of motor vehicles and household appliances. Their lifestyle is supported by a combination of local production, earned income and reciprocal exchange with Rotuman migrants, most of whom live elsewhere in Fiji. Political incorporation with Fiji and an unalienated land base are important factors allowing Rotumans to choose among a variety of income sources, and to respond flexibly to fluctuating circumstances.

Money and Reciprocal Exchange

Forms and Contents of Interaction

Increasing monetary and material affluence has not displaced the centrality of reciprocal exchange for Rotumans. As Linnekin (1988:6) put it, "Economic transformation of non-Western societies does not spell the end of precapitalist modes of exchange." Although Rotumans have been involved in market exchange for over a century, commercial transactions play only a minor role in interactions among individuals on the island. In my 1989 study, money and purchased, imported goods were used in a variety of transactional forms, without undermining Communal Sharing as the dominant mode

of interaction between households. Even close relatives participated in exchange of goods or services for cash, but usually within the context of an on-going series of in-kind exchanges and reciprocal assistance. The introduction of money and imported goods to Rotuma has added resources to give to and share with others. Money also makes commercial exchange possible, but Rotumans do not widely choose this alternative for interactions with each other. The low frequency of money use in exchange has less to do with active prohibition than with the absence of strong meanings associated with more tangible material gifts, especially food.

Money is used in support of indigenous exchange practices in many other places in the world, including Papua New Guinea (Gregory 1982), South Africa (Sansom 1976), and northern Quebec (Scott 1981). Although ideologies often privilege in-kind gift-giving between close kin, other forms of interaction are increasingly common and acceptable. Like Rotumans, the Rapanui people (Easter Island) have been making and using money since at least the 1880s. During a study conducted by Grant McCall in 1972-74, closely related Rapanui frequently engaged in transaction forms such as trading or selling, despite an ideology that because kin have common rights in things, transfers between kin should be in the sharing mode (McCall 1980:5-7). In a study of exchange events among 30 households on each of two islands in the Ellis Islands (now Tuvalu) in 1969, Ivan Brady (1972) found that foodstuffs predominated but purchased foods and ingredients were included, as in Rotuma.

Villagers participated in a range of transactional forms including gifting, barter and sale (*tongi*). Because close kin engaged in barter and occasionally *tongi* (especially by using the cooperative store as a venue for sales), Brady argues against the strict linear progression suggested by Sahlins' (1965) model correlating generalized-to-balanced exchange with increasing kinship distance.

Factors Affecting Exchange Patterns

Kinship for Rotumans is a matter of both blood and repeated demonstrations of commitment. With kin group membership optative and chiefly authority dependent on populist support, autonomy is exercised by groups and individuals at every level of Rotuman society. Pursuit of self-interest frequently results in disputes, group fissioning and realignment of loyalties. Reciprocal exchange is of paramount importance in maintaining social order and stability of relationships. Although alternative forms of interaction are available, Rotumans continue to give priority to reciprocal exchange in interacting with each other.

Despite religious and colonial pressures, feasting retains its power to organize and punctuate Rotuman social life, allowing for public displays of kin connections through contributions of food, mats, money and assistance. In addition, opportunities abound for people to show their support and appreciation, whether for special events or illness, in periods of bounty or of need. In response to formal and informal occasions, kinship and geographical proximity strongly promote reciprocal sharing. Interpersonal histories, especially disputes, affect the focus and intensity of household

interaction patterns. Other variables shaping exchange practice include household size, composition, health and productivity and cash resources. In my study, smaller households tended to have lower incomes and smaller networks.

Severance (1976:150) similarly identified material, social and ideational constraints that "prevented, limited, augmented, [or] rewarded" various transactions among the Pis-Losapese. Among the factors affecting exchange behavior were geographical proximity, size and quality of land and reef available, personal histories and temporary disputes, and the presence or absence of key kin. Severance further stressed competing values of generosity and an emerging emphasis on individual rights.

New Distinctions in Exchange Practice

While not pre-empting reciprocal sharing, involvement with external economies has had some impacts on exchange practice. Rapanui kin, for instance, distinguished merchandise purchased in Chile, as well as skills learned there (e.g., electrical wiring) as things over which kin do not have a claim, although one can choose to be generous with them (McCall 1980:6). Severance (1976) found that the Pis-Losapese partially had incorporated cash and imported goods into the indigenous exchange system. But under some circumstances people refused to share labor, fish caught with new individualized technology, and purchased goods such as gasoline and outboard motors. Sharing with kin was still emphasized but within a narrower range, focused on lineal descendants rather than the wider lineage. "While new resources such as cash and imported material

goods are subject to the traditional demands for sharing, [a] new ideology of individual rights allows one to assert more control over the degree and direction of sharing and exchange" (Severance 1976:159).

These cases have parallels on Rotuma, where people sometimes give money for transportation or fish caught from a motorized boat, in acknowledgment of fuel costs. Those providing foreign-learned skills (e.g., car repair, European-style house construction) are also likely to be given money for their assistance. But in any of these cases, Rotumans may also express their thanks simply with words, shared meals or in-kind reciprocation.

The narrowing of rights to property is most salient in the arena of housing. With the advent of permanent, Western style buildings, the children actually born in a house, whether or not it is located on a traditional house foundation, expect to inherit it directly from whichever parent has rights to it. Claims of more distant relations, formerly reinforced by contributions of unpaid labor in construction and maintenance, are given less consideration.

Reciprocity and Cultural Identity

Maintaining reciprocal exchange practice among themselves is often a conscious choice on the part of indigenous peoples interacting within a wider political and socioeconomic context. Hawaiians on the Ke'anae peninsula of Maui practice in-kind exchange among themselves in contrast to the commercial transactions (wage labor) through which they interact with outsiders (Linnekin 1985, 1991).

The practice of reciprocal gifting and assistance serves as a conscious marker of Hawaiian cultural identity.

On Rotuma, where nearly all residents are Rotumans, the distinction between insider and outsider is not so salient. Given the island's geographical isolation, history of a small colonial presence, limited foreign involvement in development, and the filtering effect of interacting internationally only through Fiji, ethnicity is not problematic. As Rotumans move away from the island, however, issues of cultural identity are of increasing concern (see Howard 1977, Hereniko in press b).

For many Rotuman migrants, continuing to engage in reciprocal exchange with other Rotumans is key to affirming who they are. Maintaining ties with those at home is especially important. Reciprocal exchange with kin on the island gives migrants access to material items redolent with memories and associations, especially favorite foods such taro and yams, coconuts and oranges, *tahraro* and *fekei*. Supplies of mats, especially fine mats or the Rotuman pandanus to make them, allow those away from the island to continue to participate in traditional ceremonies. Other island-made items such as fans, hats and brooms, or thatch to construct a Rotuman-style sleeping house outside one's home in urban Fiji, serve as reminders of home. While the dollar value of items received from Rotuma may be much lower than that of remittances and goods sent by migrants to the island, indigenous items are highly significant in themselves, as well as in the form of interaction through which they are transmitted.

When migrants return to Rotuma it is the way people interact with each other which is salient in their experience. Visitors often comment on the physical changes that have taken place during their absence, especially in housing and transportation. If material circumstances were central to their sense of home it would be ironic, since much of the change has resulted from migrant involvement. But it is the generous hospitality which surrounds them during their time on the island that spells "home" for Rotumans. Some who return on holiday from school have reported being so overwhelmed by how well they were treated that they were tempted not to leave again.

Researchers have questioned whether the persistence of traditions in remote rural areas have more to do with value to migrants than with internal viability. Lowenthal and Comitas (1962) propose that places like the island of Ithaca in Greece purposefully maintain an appearance of stability and unchanging community solidarity, in order to sustain the inflow of remittances. Inhabitants mask the extent of social change, despite the fact that their institutions have lost "all but nominal functions; their economic and social structures are shored up by remittances and by imported technology and medicine; [and] personal values and goals [are] less community-centered, more oriented toward the world outside" (Lowenthal and Comitas 1962:210). Hau'ofa (1987:12) further suggests that emerging elite among Pacific Islanders often seek to maintain social stability, and their own privileged positions,

by forcing the poor to follow certain traditions they would not otherwise prefer.

Rotumans have valued the appearance of social harmony since long before migrants played important roles in island life (Howard and Rensel 1992). Various forms of Communal Sharing through formal and informal venues promote such harmony and help to mitigate disputes. The significance these practices have for visiting migrants undoubtedly reinforces their persistence, and certainly many of the resources migrants supply are incorporated into in-kind exchange. But reciprocal gift giving and assistance are practiced on Rotuma less because "that's who we are" than because "that's the way things are done." Social life on Rotuma is vibrant and all-absorbing, despite the fact that most Rotumans are also engaged in the modern world context as part of a multilocal community.

In contrast to his earlier view (Hau'ofa 1987), Hau'ofa (1994) extols the vitality of reciprocity among Pacific Islands people, and recognizes its benefits for both migrants and those who remain at home. The Rotuman case is consistent with this portrayal:

In general, the living standards of Oceania are higher than those of most Third World societies. To attribute this merely to aid and remittance--misconstrued deliberately or otherwise as a form of dependence on rich countries' economies--is an unfortunate misreading of contemporary reality. Ordinary Pacific people depend for their daily existence much, much more on themselves and their kin, wherever they may be, than on anyone's largesse.... The funds and goods homes-abroad [sic] people send their homeland relatives belong to no one but themselves. They earn every cent....

On the other hand Islanders in their homelands are not the parasites on their relatives abroad that misinterpreters of "remittances" would have us believe. Economists do not take account of the social centrality of the ancient practice of reciprocity, the core of all oceanic cultures. They overlook that fact that for everything homeland relatives receive, they reciprocate with goods they themselves produce, by maintaining ancestral roots and lands for everyone, homes with warmed hearths for travelers to return to permanently or to re-strengthen their bonds, their souls, and their identities before they move on again. This is not dependence but interdependence, which is purportedly the essence of the global system. To say that it is something else and less is not only erroneous, but denies people their dignity (Hau'ofa 1994:157).

Conclusions in Process

The findings of my study, conducted at a microlevel within a macrolevel, historical context, echo Raymond Firth's (1959) view of social change in Tikopia. Firth similarly identifies a range of external forces--economic, religious and political--combining to promote change. He also recognizes the importance of choices made by individuals and groups within society.

Firth (1959:342) points out that "the potentials for social change exist in the expansible character of the wants of society." Money and consumer goods, not to mention opportunities for education, employment, and adventure in the wider world have not been thrust upon Rotumans; they are eagerly sought. Driven by these wants, the actual course of social change depends on a number of variables, including access to and control of resources, differential responses to new opportunities, and not the least, the unexpected,

unintended, possibly imperceptible repercussions of the process of striving to meet new expectations (Firth 1959:342).

Philibert (1981) makes a similar point with regard to the inadvertent consequences of cumulative choices. Contrary to earlier predictions, Pacific Islands societies in the colonial period demonstrated "demographic resilience, social adaptability, and cultural discernment in their contacts with Europeans" (Philibert 1981:87). But internal, ideological factors may be leading to more destructive change. Emerging images of "the good life" involve high standards of consumption modeled after the lifestyles of urban wage earners. By pursuing the trappings of increasing material affluence, villagers such as those Philibert studied in Vanuatu may be unwittingly undermining what has been until now a successful social adaptation to the wider socioeconomic context (Philibert 1981:92).

Have Rotumans been, and are they now sowing the seeds of profound social disruption in times to come? What I have seen in my study of Rotuman history and contemporary life suggests to me that overall, reciprocity retains its central position in social life, for reasons at once symbolic and practical. Within the confines of the island itself, reciprocal interaction has multiple benefits. Although households are generally capable of self-sufficiency, exchange of material resources and labor with others on formal and informal occasions provides meaning, structure, and variety to daily activities. It reaffirms kinship ties in public and tangible ways; it reinforces loyalties and helps to ensure support in the face of

periodic material need or potential disputes. Within the geographically extended community, embracing migrants in Fiji and abroad, reciprocal exchange allows access to otherwise rare resources. For migrants these include not only material items such as Rotuman fine mats and foods from home, but the sense of identity that comes from knowing and being able to return to one's roots. For those on Rotuma reciprocal ties bring things and opportunities more common in the wider world--but it is not insignificant that the means of access to what they desire is primarily through reciprocal relationships.

For now, conditions exist in Rotuman society that support the centrality of *kainaga*, the value of *hanisi*, and the widespread practice of reciprocity. As for the future, like Firth, I am reluctant to play the role of soothsayer. The interplay of external factors is complex; the multiplicity of options among which local actors can choose must not be underestimated. "Alternatives for choice have always been possible. The existence of such alternatives, including those between material and symbolic satisfactions, renders it impossible for any social analysis to predict more than in a very tentative way the future history of a society" (Firth 1959:354). Rotuman society may undergo dramatic changes in the future. But to undermine its foundations will take a lot more than money.

Notes to Chapter 9

¹Bohannon (1959) cites the introduction of general purpose money as the root cause for the transformation of Tiv economic behavior, but as Bloch and Parry (1989:12-14) elaborate, other factors had far greater significance. It was not just the incursion of money per se but participation of Ibo traders in the Tiv economy, paying cash for agricultural produce which they in turn exported, that drove up prices and created shortages in Tivland itself. In addition, under missionary pressure, colonial authorities outlawed exchange marriages, resulting in disruptions to the formerly separate spheres of exchange and abrogating the control of the elders over access to women.

²Wallerstein and Smith (1992) note that reliance on other sources of income in addition to wages ("incomplete proletarianization") is the norm for both periphery and core of the world system. Low wages in the periphery contribute to maintaining partial self-subsistence, as well as petty market operations. Incomes for households in the core are no more wage-exclusive than in the periphery; lower income households rely on welfare while middle-class households, even those with two incomes, increasingly are turning to a kind of "self-provisioning" including do-it-yourself services and projects (Wallerstein and Smith 1992:253-262).

³In late 1993 the Raho Cooperative instituted a practice of leasing rights to copra produced on Rotuman landholdings. The *pure* who agree to such an arrangement are given an amount of credit at Raho in exchange for copra produced over a certain period of years on their land. This gives landholders access to lump sums large enough to purchase motorbikes or building materials, for instance, that otherwise would be difficult to obtain from piecemeal copra earnings. The practice is very controversial, however, raising concerns among extended family members and migrants who fear loss of control of *kainaga* land.

⁴The level of government support provided for Rotuma has not always been up to Rotuman expectations. In 1989, for instance, a number of Rotumans complained their island was being neglected by

the Fiji government. At the time a small but vocal minority was discussing independence from Fiji. A group of government officials soon visited the island, listened to the concerns of the people, and discussed possible options for additional government assistance. According to one official who spoke to me, however, the visitors were impressed with how well off Rotuma was, and how little in need of aid, compared to other rural areas of Fiji.

APPENDIX A

Rotuma Census Questionnaire

1. Regular members of the household who are staying here now:

1. *Iris ne noh 'e kaunohoag ta 'e 'on 'i'i:*

- | | | | | |
|-----------|---------------------------|---------------|--|--|
| a. Name | b. Gender | c. Birthdate | d. Birthplace | e. Relationship to Household Head |
| a. Asa | b. Fā/Hāni | c. Terān a'sū | d. Utut ne a'sū | e. Hāikainagag tapen se ia ne puer se kaunohoag ta |
| f. Church | g. Schooling Finished | h. Employment | i. Income: for 1 week, 2 weeks, 1 month? | |
| f. Rotu | g. Rako (kilas lamlam ta) | h. Garue | i. Togi/tōg ta rē 'e kisi ma hisi? gasavat, hulet? | |

2. Members of this household who are staying somewhere else now (on Rotuma or off the island):

2. *Iris ne mou se kaunohoag ta ka kat noh ra 'e ri te'is (tape' ma se iris ne noh 'e Fiti/hanua):*

- | | | | | |
|-----------|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------|--|
| a. Name | b. Gender | c. Birthdate | d. Birthplace | e. Relationship to Household Head |
| a. Asa | b. Fā/Hāni | c. Terān a'sū | d. Utut ne a'sū | e. Hāikainagag tapen se ia ne puer se kaunohoag ta |
| f. Church | g. Schooling Finished | h. Employment | i. Staying where? | j. In what year did they leave? |
| f. Rotu | g. Rako (kilas lamlam ta) | h. Garue | i. Iris noh 'e tei? | j. Fau tes ta iris rou Rotuma? |

3. People staying in the household who are not regular members:

3. *Iris ne noh 'e 'on 'i'i, ka kat mou ra se kaunohoag ta:*

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|-----------|
| a. Name | b. Gender | c. Birthdate | d. Birthplace | e. Relationship to Household Head | f. Church |
| a. Asa | b. Fā/Hāni | c. Terān a'sū | d. Utut ne a'sū | e. Hāikainagag tapen se ia ne puer se kaunohoag ta | f. Rotu |
| g. Schooling Finished | h. Employment | i. How long have they been here? | j. Where is their regular home? | | |
| g. Rako (kilas lamlam ta) | h. Garue | i. Tapen roa ne 'or nohot 'e te'? | j. Ka iris noh a'mou 'e tei? | | |

k. When are they leaving?

k. *Ka iris la hō' 'e kis?*

4. Name of the land on which the house is located:

4. *As ne pear ta ne rī ta fū sin:*

5. Is the house on a fūag rī? If yes, which one?

5. *Ka rī ta fū 'e ta fūag rī? Kepoi ka 'i, as ne fūag rī ta:*

6. If the house is not on a fūag rī, is the land associated with a fūag rī? Which one?

6. *Kepoi ka igke', ma pear ta hāikainagag ma fūag rī tese? As ne fūag rī ta:*

7. What type of land is the house on?

7. *Ka kainag hanua tese ta rī ta fū sin?*

a. *hanua togi***

b. *hanua ne kainaga*

c. *hanua pau*

d. *hanua nā fakhanis*

e. *as ne hanua*

f. *hanua ne hāisasigi*

g. *hanua ne 'on tore*

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** a. 1. If the land was bought, when?

a. 1. *Kepoi ka hanua togi, ka hanue ta tōg 'e kis?*

a. 2. From whom did you buy the land?

a. 2. *Ka hanue ta tōg 'e sei?*

a. 3. Are you related to those you bought the land from? If so, how?

a. 3. *'Āe hāikainagag ma iris ne 'ae tōg hanue ta? Kepoi ka 'i, 'aus hāikanagag tapen?*

a. 4. Where are they now?

a. 4. *Ka iris noh 'e tei 'e 'on 'i'i?*

8. Name of the head of the ho'aga:

8. *As ne fā 'es ho'ag ta:*

9. Name of the pure of the fūag rī; or (if no fūag rī) name of the pure of the household:

9. *As 'on fā puer ne fūag rī ta; ne as 'on fā puer ne kaunohoag ta:*

10. Where does he or she live?

10. *Ia noh 'e tei?*

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11. Who was the previous pure of the fūag rī, or of the household?

11. *Ka sei ta puer mumua 'e fūag rī te' ne se kaunohoag ta?*

12. Where does he or she live, or when did he or she die?

12. *Ka ia noh 'e tei, ne ia a'u'ua 'e kis?*

13. How is the current pure (of the fūag rī, or of the household) related to the previous pure?

13. *Ka ia ne puer 'e 'on 'i'i hāikainagag tapen se ia ne puer mumua?*

14. How is the pure of the fūag rī related to the pure of the household?

14. *Ka ia ne puer se fūag rī te' hāikainagan tapen se ia ne puer se kaunohoag ta?*

15. How long has the current household pure been living here?

15. *Tapen roa ne noh 'on ia ne puer se kaunohoag te' ma 'aus?*

16. How many buildings belong to this fūag rī?

16. *Ma rī his 'e fūag rī te'is?*

17. What types of buildings are they? (e.g. main house, cookhouse, wash house)

17. *Ka kainag rī tapen? (fak se rī noho ne rī ti' ta, kohea, rī sopoag hā'u)*

[Sketch the household compound and number the buildings to correspond with the questions below:]

For each building: (se rīit ma:)

a. number

b. type of building

c. what are the walls made of?

d. what is the roof made of?

a. *nampa ta*

b. *kainag rī*

c. *ka pa'akiagne rī ta rē 'e tes?*

d. *ka rī ta hat 'e tese? poat, ota, ne simāne?*

e. how many stories high?

f. when was it built?

g. who built it?

h. who helped build it?

e. *ka rī ta tampa his?*

f. *ka rī ta fū'āk 'e kis?*

g. *ka sei ta fū'āk se rī ta?*

h. *ka sei ta hāiasoag ma fū'āk se rī ta?*

i. who provided the money?

j. how much did it cost to build:

for materials:

for labour

i. *ka sei ta hāiasoagam (fak selen)?*

j. *ka hisit ta a 'es'ao'āk ma fū'ākia rī ta?*

*ka hisi ta tög ne pota,
simāne, fa'a, 'ai ma 'ia?*

*ka hisi ta tög
'on famör
fū'āk rī?*

18. Does anyone (not living here now) contribute money or send goods to the household?

18. *Ka ma 'on hāiasoag fak selen ne tē ne rī leum 'e Fiti ne hanua se 'omus kaunohoag ta?*

If so:

Kepoi ka 'i:

a. Name

b. Relationship to Household Head

c. Where do they live?

a. *Asa*

b. *Hāikainagag ma ia ne pure*

c. *Ka ia noh 'e tei?*

d. Date they last sent money or goods

e. Amount of money or what things sent

f. Why was it sent?

d. *'Aus pō selen ne tē fakhanis fakmūr 'e kis?*

e. *Tapen ti' ne monē ne tē ne 'aus pō?*

f. *Ka tē'i nām la tes?*

g. Amount of money or what goods sent in the past year:

g. *Tapen ti' ne mone ne tē ne 'aus pō 'e faut ne ōf se:*

19. With which other households do you often exchange food?

19. *Kaunohoag tes ta 'aus a'mou hāirēag lelei ma?*

a. Head of household

b. How related to head of this household

a. *As 'on ia ne pure*

b. *Ka 'aus hāikainagag tapen se irisa?*

c. What did you most recently give them?

d. When?

c. *Ka 'aus hāitogiag hanis tapen ma kaunohoag ta'a? Ka tes ta 'aus kotā' ma nā sema se irisa?*

d. *'e kisi?*

e. What did they most recently give you?

f. When?

e. *Ka tē tes ta iris kotā' ma nām se 'ausa?*

f. *'e kisi?*

For all persons age 13 or older (born before 1977) who are residing in the household at the present time, ask:

20. Have you ever resided outside of Rotuma? yes no
 20. *Ka ma 'on av het 'äe noh tū 'e Rotuam 'i?* 'i 'igke'

a. Name of person b. Location of residence c. From what year? d. To what year?
 a. *Asa* b. *Ka 'äe noh 'e tei?* c. *Ka faus ta 'äe/ia kamat noho e 'e tei?* d. *Ma faus ta 'äe/ia roue täe?*

e. Occupation f. How many times have you gone abroad to Fiji or elsewhere?
 e. *Garue* f. *Tapen 'on ma'oi ne av ne 'äe rou Rotuam 'i ma la' se Fiti ne ta ut hoi'äk?*

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21. Are you married now? yes no
 21. *Ka 'äe 'inos 'e 'on 'i'i?* 'i 'igke'

If no, ask:

Have you ever had any children? yes no
Ka 'äe ma 'ou lelea'? 'i 'igke'

Record the number in (h) below.

If yes, ask:

Is this your first marriage? yes no
Ka te'is 'ou 'inos mumue ta? 'i 'igke'

If yes, fill in (a), (b), (c), (d), and (h) below.

If no, ask:

What was the name of your first husband/wife?
Ka sei ta as ne 'ou vävān/hān mumueta?

and fill in (a) through (h) below. Complete this information for each marriage up to the present one.

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. Name of person | b. Date of marriage | c. Name of husband/wife | d. Home of husband/wife |
| a. <i>Asa</i> | b. <i>Teranit ne a'lele</i> | c. <i>As 'on vāvān/hān</i> | d. <i>Vāvān fā/hāina hān ne tei?</i> |
-
- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| e. If spouse is deceased, date of death | f. If separated, date of separation | g. If divorced, date of divorce |
| e. <i>Kepoi ka vāvān/hān ta atia, ma 'ia al 'e kis?</i> | f. <i>Kepoi ka uf ma, uf 'e kis?</i> | g. <i>Kepoi ka uf fak matanitū ma teranit ta ufue?</i> |
-
- h. How many children did you give birth to during this marriage? How many are still living? How many have died?
- h. Ka 'auar ma le' he his 'e 'omuar 'inos a' ta'ag? Ka 'auar ma le' his māūr la'mou? Ka le' he his al?*

After completing information for all marriages, ask:

Have you given birth to (or been the father of) any other children?
Ka 'āe ma 'ou lelea' hoi'āk?

If so, record number still living and number who have died under (h).

Ask of women only:

22. What was the date (day/month/year) of your first child's birthday?

22. *Ka terān a'sū ne 'ou le' mumue ta?*

23. Selected Household Inventory

Ask whether the household owns any of the items listed below. For each item they own, ask:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| a. How many do you have? | a. Ka 'aus ma tē his? |
| b. When did you get it? | b. Ka tē 'i 'āe ho'am 'e kisi? |
| c. Did you buy it, or was it a gift? | c. Ka tē 'i 'āe tōg ne tē nā fakhanis? |
| d. Who paid for it? | d. Ka sel ta tōg se? |
| e. How much did it cost? | e. Ka tōg 'e hisi? |

For vehicles, boats, appliances, ask:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| f. Is it working? | f. Ka tē 'i garue lelei la mo? |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|

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Vehicles:

car	motoka
truck	lori ne vān
motorbike	motopāeke
bicycle	tokir het

Boats:

canoe	vaka
dinghy	tigki
launch/inboard motorboat	tima
catamaran sailboat	kāria

Appliances:

generator	misin ne mere
boat motor	injinia he
refrigerator	'aisi ('aisi tapen?)
deep freeze	'aisi ('aisi tapen?)
lawnmower	misin 'alag mā'usu
chain saw	sō ma misin
other electrical tools	tē garueag ne mere
gas stove	oven kāse
with oven?	oven la fun keke
kerosene burner	oven karasini

light fixtures	puloi ne mere
benzine lantern	puloi pensini
kerosene lantern	puloi ne lāg
sewing machine	misin susuag hā'u
washing machine	misin sopoag hā'u
radio	ritiō
tape player	ritiō ma 'on taip
video	vitiō
electronic keyboard	pian mea'mea' he

House Furnishings:

floor tile
linoleum or carpet
kitchen or dining table
other tables
wooden chair
upholstered chair
sofa
bed
food cabinet
shelves (e.g. bookshelves)

tail ne pupui
'eap ne koroa
tepel 'ātēaga
tepel ne laloag ri
nofoa 'āi
nofoa ne laloag ri
sofa
takag 'āi ne 'ia
sefe
tē tārtār (fak se tē tārtār naag puku)

Animals:

pig
chicken
duck
horse
cow
goat
dog
cat

puaka
moa
tāku
hāsu
kāu
kunel
kamia
pusi

APPENDIX B

Household Daily Activities Questionnaire

Household Number _____ Date _____ Day of the week _____

Please answer the questions below. Circle yes or no for each question. If you circle yes for any question, answer the rest of the question. If you circle no, go on to the next question.

Figalelei ma togia saio' ne fā' se 'e lopo. 'Äe la sah kākā 'i ne 'igke' se saio' heta. Nono ka 'äe sah kākā 'i, ma 'äe la togia tōr ne saio' heta.

1. Did this household purchase anything from shops or from other people today? yes no
Ka 'omus kaunohoag ta tōg tē 'e koroa ta ne 'e ta famōr hoi'akit 'e 'i? 'i 'igke'

a. what? b. quantity? c. cost? d. where?
a. ka tes ta 'aus togi? b. tapen 'on ti'u ne ma'oi? c. hisit ta tōg ta? d. tōg 'e tei ne sei?

2. Is there anything else this household used money for today? yes no
Ka ma 'on tē hoi'akit 'aus vil'āk selen sin? 'i 'igke'

a. what was it used for? b. how much money? c. who gave it? d. to whom?
a. selene nā la tese? b. hisit selene? c. sei ta nā? d. se seia?

3. Did any member of this household earn money today? yes no
Ka ma 'on le'et 'e 'omus kaunohoag ta ao selen 'e 'i? 'i 'igke'

a. how much money? b. for doing what? c. where from? d. who earned it?
a. hisit selene? b. pō tapen? c. sei tala togia ia? d. sei ta aom selen ta?

4. Did any member of this household receive money as a gift today? yes no
Ka ma 'on le'et nā fakhanisim se 'omus kaunohoag ta selen 'e 'i? 'i 'igke'

a. how much money? b. for what? c. from whom? d. who for?
a. hisit selene? b. nām la tes? c. sei ta nām? d. nām se seia?

5. Did any member of this household give away any things today? yes no
Ka ma 'on le'et 'e 'omus kaunohoag ta nā ta kainag tē se ta le'et 'e 'i? 'i 'igke'
(fak se tēla'a ne 'epa) [such as food or mats]
- a. what was given? b. to whom? c. who gave it? d. why was it given?
a. tes ta 'aus nā? *b. se seia?* *c. sei ta nām?* *d. la tese?*
6. Did anyone give anything to any member of this household today? yes no
Ka ma 'on le'et nām ta teet se 'omus kaunohoag ta 'e 'i? 'i 'igke'
- a. what was received? b. who received it? c. who gave it? d. why was it given?
a. tes ta 'aus pō? *b. nām se seia?* *c. sei ta nām?* *d. la tese?*
7. Did any household members eat meals provided by someone else today? yes no
Ka ma 'on le'et 'e 'omus kaunohoag ta 'ātē 'e ta ri tuut 'e 'i? 'i 'igke'
- a. who? b. at whose house? c. breakfast, lunch, dinner, all three meals?
a. sei? *b. ri 'on sei?* *c. 'iom ti, 'ātē ianian, 'omoe, 'ātē a'fol?*
8. Did any guests eat meals with your household today? yes no
Ka ma 'on famör hoi'akit 'ātē ma 'omus kaunohoag ta 'e 'i? 'i 'igke'
- a. who? b. where do they live? c. breakfast, lunch, dinner, all three meals?
a. sei? *b. noh 'e tei?* *c. 'iom ti, 'ātē ianian, 'omoe, 'ātē a'fol?*
9. Did any member of this household leave the village on a trip today? yes no
Ka ma 'on le'et 'e 'omus kaunohoag ta la' ās ne seksek se ta utut 'e 'i? 'i 'igke'
- a. who went? b. where to? c. why? d. if they did not walk, how did they go?
a. sei? *b. la' se tei?* *c. la' la tese?* *d. kepoi ka ia kat la' lā, ma ia la' 'e tese?*
- e. if they went by car, motorbike or bicycle, whose was it?
e. kepoi ka ia la' 'e ta motokaat ne motopaek het ne tokir he, ma sei ta 'on 'on?
- f. did they pay for transport or not? g. if yes, how much?
f. ka ma 'on tög sala ne 'igke'? *g. kepoi ka 'i, ka hisi ta on tög sal ta?*

10. Did any member of this household go out fishing last night or today? yes no
Ka ma 'on le'et 'e 'omus kaunohoag ta la' hagoat 'e pōg ta ne 'e 'i? 'i igke'

a. who? b. with whom? c. how many hours?
a. sei? *b. sei ta la' ma ia?* *c. tapen roa ne la' hagoat ta?*

d. what was caught (number/type)? e. how was the catch distributed?
d. ka ia' he his iris pō, ma kainag ia' tapene? *e. ka hagoat ta vāevāe tapen?*

11. Did any member of this household go to work in the bush (gardens) today? yes no
Ka ma 'on le'et 'e 'omus kaunohoag ta la' la garue 'e ufa ('e veko) 'e 'i? 'i igke'

a. who? b. how many hours? c. where? d. what work was done?
a. sei? *b. tapen roa ne 'on la' uaf ta?* *c. 'e tei?* *d. ka garue tes ta ia la' ma rē 'ia?*

12. Did any member of this household cut copra today? yes no
Ka ma 'on le'et 'e 'omus kaunohoag ta 'ol niu 'e 'i? 'i igke'

a. who? b. how many hours? c. where? d. how many baskets?
a. sei? *b. tapen roa ne 'ol niu ta?* *c. 'e tei?* *d. ka 'af niu his?*

13. Did any member of this household make koua, or help make koua today? yes no
Ka ma 'on le'et 'e 'omus kaunohoag ta rē koua, ne hāiasoag la rē koua 'e 'i? 'i igke'

a. who? b. host of koua? c. purpose of koua? d. where was koua made?
a. sei? *b. sei ta 'on'on koue ta?* *c. koue ta rē la tese?* *d. koue ta rē 'e tei?*

14. Did any member of this household weave or sew anything today? yes no
Ka ma 'on le'et 'e 'omus kaunohoag ta sa' ne sus tē 'e 'i? 'i igke'

a. who? b. where was work done? c. how many hours did she weave/sew?
a. sei? *b. ka garue sa' ne sus tē ta rē 'e tei?* *c. tapen roa ne 'on sa' ne sus tē ta?*

d. type of things worked on? e. how many and what type of things did she FINISH today?
d. kainag tē tes ta ia sa' ne sus 'e 'i? *e. ka tē tese ma tē his ia sa' ne sus ma VAH 'e 'i?*

15. Did anyone else help this household in its work today? yes no
Ka ma 'on le'et hāiasoag 'omus kaunohoag ta la rē ta garuet 'e 'i? 'i igke'

a. who helped? b. what work did they help with? c. where?
a. sei ta hāiasoag? *b. ka kainag garue tes ta iris rē?* *c. 'e tei?*

d. how many hours? e. what did you do or give to thank them?
d. tapen 'on roa ne garue ta? *e. ka tes ta 'aus nā ne rē la 'ua'ua'akia irisa?*

16. Did any members of this household help another household today? yes no
Ka ma 'on le'et 'e 'omus kaunohoag ta hāiasoag se ta kaunohoag hoi'akit 'e 'i? 'i igke'

a. who helped? b. who was helped? c. what work did they help do?
a. sei ta nā ta hāiasoaga? *b. sei ta 'aus hāiasoagan?* *c. kainag garue tes ta 'aus hāiasoag
ma rē ia?*

d. where? e. how many hours? f. what did they give or do as thanks?
d. 'e tei? *e. tapen 'on roa ta?* *f. ka tes ta iris nā ne rē la 'ua'ua'akia 'ausa?*

17. Did any household member participate in a village or church activity today? yes no
Ka ma le'et 'e 'omus kaunohoag ta la' se ta garue taunā'it 'e 'i? 'i igke'

a. who? b. what group? c. what activity? d. where? e. how long?
a. sei? *b. garue taunā' tese?* *c. garue tes ta 'aus rē?* *d. 'e tei?* *e. tapen 'on roa ta?*

APPENDIX C **Household Daily Production Questionnaire**

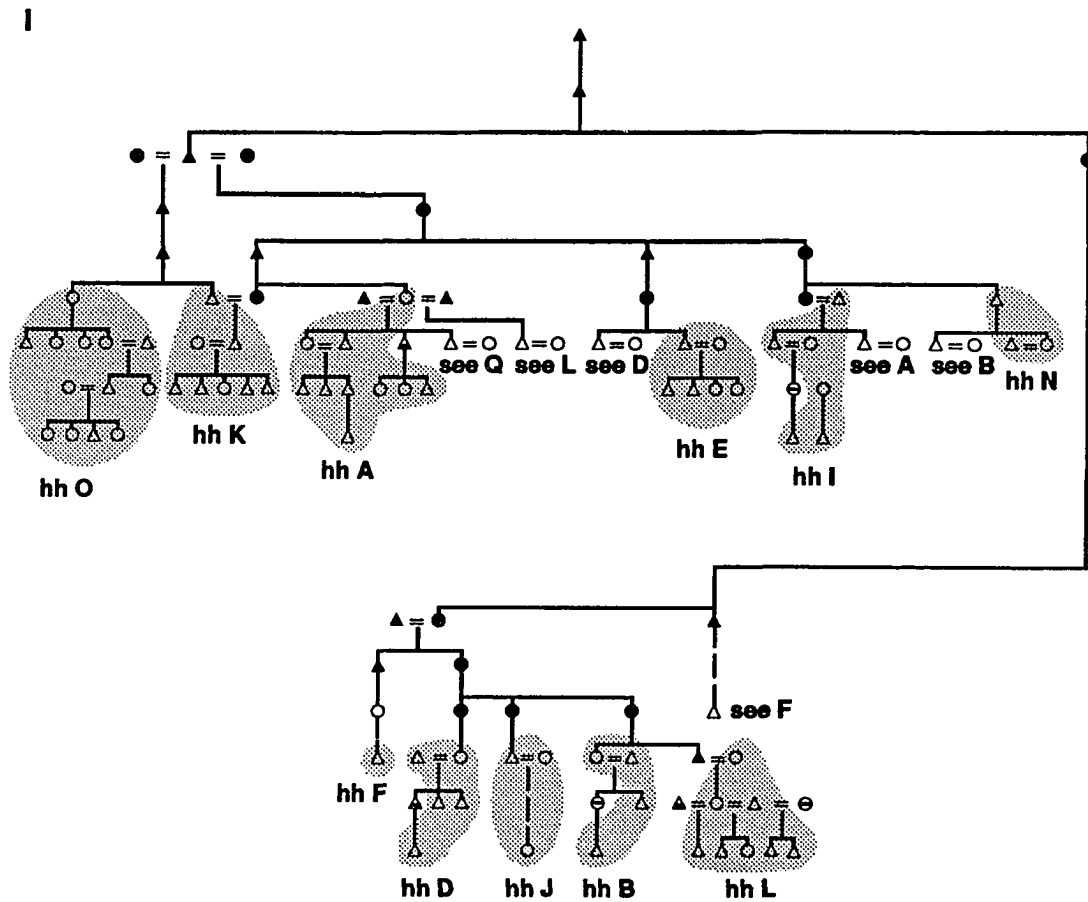
	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
Coconuts (niu)							
nuts gathered (tapen ma'oi ne niu maf fakput?)							
nuts husked (ka niu maf he his soa'?)							
drinking nuts sold (ka niu la 'imo he his tög'äk?)							
nuts given away (ka niu maf he his nã fakhanis?)							
nuts used by household (niu maf he his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
nuts fed to pigs (niu maf la haq'ia puaka?)							
nuts fed to chickens (niu maf la haq'ia moa?)							
baskets of copra sold (ka 'af niu his 'oi?)							
kg of copra sold (ka hisi ta mah ne niu 'oi ta?)							
trees planted (ka niu hũ his hao?)							
Taro ('a'ana)							
baskets harvested (ka 'af 'a'an his huh?)							
roots sold (ka 'a'an us his tög'äk?)							
roots given away (ka 'a'an he his nã fakhanis?)							
roots used by household (ka 'a'an he his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
taro planted (ka 'alaq hũ his hao?)							
Swamp taro (papai)							
baskets harvested (ka 'af papai his huh?)							
roots sold (ka 'af papai his tög'äk?)							
roots given away (ka papai he his nã fakhanis?)							
roots used by household (ka papai he his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
swamp taro planted (ka papai hũ his hao?)							
Yams ('uh)							
baskets harvested (ka 'af 'uh his so'am?)							
baskets sold (ka 'af 'uh his tög'äk?)							
yams given away (ka 'uh he his nã fakhanis?)							
yams used by household (ka 'uh he his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
yams planted (tapen ma'oi ne 'uh ne hao?)							
Cassava (tapiok)							
number harvested (ka tapiok hũ his huh?)							
baskets sold (ka tapiok 'af his tög'äk?)							
number given away (ka tapiok he his nã fakhanis?)							
number used by household (ka tapiok he his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
cassava planted (ka tapiok hũ his hao?)							
Breadfruit ('ulu)							
number harvested (ka 'ul he his 'aus jolim?)							
number sold (ka 'ul he his tög'äk?)							
number given away (ka 'ul he his nã fakhanis?)							
number used by household (ka 'ul he his 'aus a'esaoak?)							
trees planted (ka 'ul hũ his hao?)							

	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
Bananas (pari)							
bunches cut (ka pār 'ai his 'aus mut?)							
bunches sold (ka pār 'ai his 'aus tög'äk?)							
hands given away (ka pār if his nā fakhanis?)							
hands used by household (ka pār if his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
banana plants planted (ka pār hū his hao?)							
Oranges (mori)							
baskets harvested (ka 'af mör his 'aus taum?)							
fruits sold (ka mör he his ['af his] tög'äk?)							
fruits given away (ka mör he his 'aus nā fakhanis?)							
fruits used by household (ka mör he his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
trees planted (ka mör hū his hao?)							
Pawpaw (esu)							
fruits harvested (ka es he his taum?)							
fruits sold (ka es he his tög'äk?)							
fruits given away (ka es he his nā fakhanis?)							
fruits used by household (ka es he his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
trees planted (ka es hū his hao?)							
Mangoes (magko)							
fruits harvested (ka magko he his 'au ne fui?)							
fruits sold (ka magko he his tög'äk?)							
fruits given away (ka magko he his nā fakhanis?)							
fruits used by household (ka magko he his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
trees planted (ka magko hū his hao?)							
Watermelon (merene)							
melons harvested (ka meren he his taum?)							
melons sold (ka meren he his tög'äk?)							
melons given away (ka meren he his nā fakhanis?)							
melons used by household (ka meren he his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
melons planted (ka meren hū his hao?)							
Pumpkin (paukena)							
number harvested (ka paukean he his taum?)							
number sold (ka paukean he his tög'äk?)							
number given away (ka paukean he his nā fakhanis?)							
number used by household (ka paukean he his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
pumpkins planted (ka paukean hū hi hao?)							
Pineapple (ponapa)							
number harvested (ka ponap he his taum?)							
number sold (ka ponap he his tög'äk?)							
number given away (ka ponap he his nā fakhanis?)							
number used by household (ka ponap he his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
number planted (ka ponap hū his hao?)							

	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
Cucumber (kukama)							
number harvested (ka kukam he his taum?)							
number sold (ka kukam he his tög'äk?)							
number given away (ka kukam he his nā fakhanis?)							
number used by household (ka kukam he his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
number planted (ka kukam hū his hao?)							
VatI							
bunches harvested (ka vāt us his mutum?)							
bunches sold (ka vāt us his tög'äk?)							
bunches given away (ka vāt us his nā fakhanis?)							
bunches used by household (ka vāt us his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
plants planted (ka vāt hū his hao?)							
VI							
baskets collected (ka 'af vī his fakput ne au?)							
fruits sold (ka 'af vī his tög'äk?)							
fruits given away (ka vī he his nā fakhanis?)							
fruits used by household (ka vī he his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
trees planted (ka vī hū his hao?)							
Fava							
baskets collected (ka 'af fao his aum?)							
baskets sold (ka 'af fao his tög'äk?)							
baskets given away (ka 'af fao his nā fakhanis?)							
baskets used by household (ka 'af fao his 'aus a'es'ao'äk?)							
trees planted (ka fao hū his hao?)							

APPENDIX D

Oinafa Genealogies

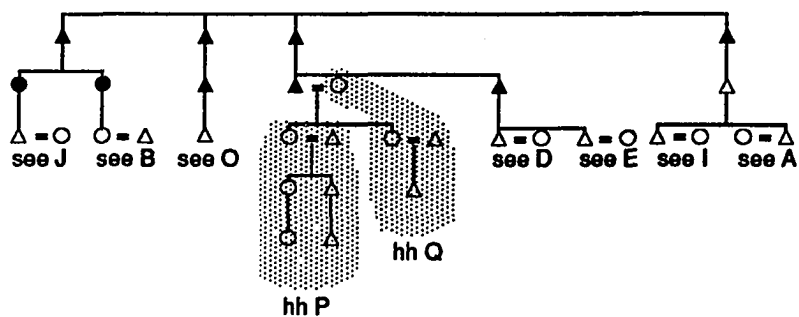


△ male, present	△ male, absent	▲ male, deceased
○ female, present	○ female, absent	● female, deceased

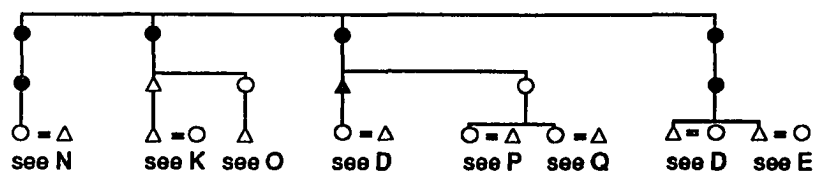
hh = household

See Map of Oinafa with survey households, Figure 6.1

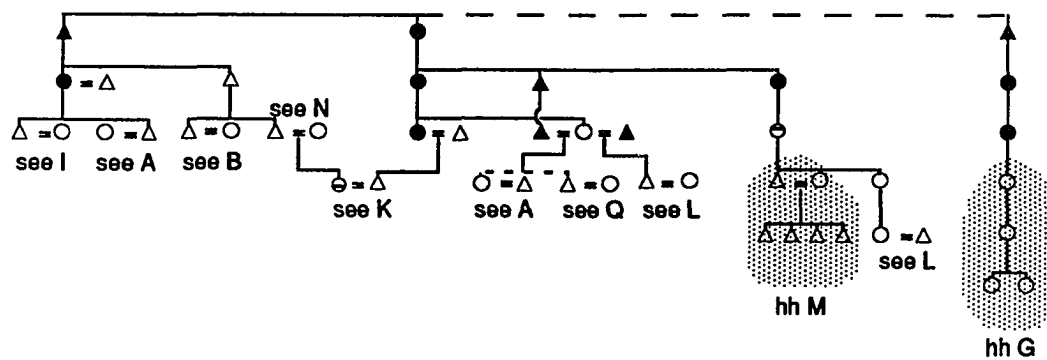
II



III



IV



GUIDE TO PRONUNCIATION AND GLOSSARY

Guide to Pronunciation

The spelling of Rotuman words in this dissertation is based on the orthography introduced by Churchward (1940). Howard (1970:171-2) provides a guide to pronunciation as follows:

a	as in clam, but shorter unless written <i>ā</i>
ạ	as in want
à	as in cat
ă	as in fan
e	as in bet
f	as in fish
g	as <i>ng</i> in sing
h	as in heart
i	as in sit
j	as <i>tch</i> in pitch
k	as in rake
l	as in laugh
m	as in mask
n	as in nine
o	as in obey
ö	pronounced as in German, somewhat like <i>er</i> in her
p	pronounced as in English, but blunted somewhat toward b
r	pronounced with a slight trill
s	between English <i>s</i> and <i>sh</i>

- t pronounced strictly dental, the tip of tongue being pressed against the back of the top teeth
- u as in put
- ü pronounced as in German. This sound may be approximated by endeavoring to pronounce ee as in see, with the lips rounded
- v as in vat. When v falls at the end of a word, or follows an a, it is often imperfectly articulated and sounds like o
- ‘ glottal stop

Glossary

Terms Used in Dissertation

<i>ag fakgagaj</i>	proper behavior in public
<i>ag forau</i>	guest's departure; literally, 'to face a voyage'
<i>ao selene</i>	to seek money, to earn wages
<i>apei</i>	finely woven white mat
<i>asoa</i>	to help
<i>as togi</i>	official name to which a person succeeds
<i>‘atakoa</i>	all
<i>atua</i>	spirit
<i>‘epa</i>	ordinary pandanus mat
<i>fā</i>	man, male
<i>fā ‘es itu‘u</i>	district chief
<i>fā ‘es ho‘aga</i>	'man of the <i>ho‘aga</i> ', leader of group of cooperating households
<i>faiāk se‘ea</i>	greeting; thanks; from <i>faiāki</i> , to be tired

<i>fə'i</i>	to make a mark on, to write; to put down to one's account as a debit or credit
<i>fakpure</i>	pre-Christian position of paramountcy held by foremost district chief
<i>fara</i>	to request
<i>feke</i>	to be angry
<i>fekei</i>	Rotuman-style pudding
<i>fono</i>	food eaten by chiefs after drinking kava; basket of food given to a chief as his share at a feast
<i>fūag ri</i>	house foundation, house site
<i>gagaj 'es itu'u</i>	district chief
<i>gagaja</i>	chief; or a respectful term for people
<i>garue</i>	to work
<i>garue ne al, garue ti'</i>	main funeral feast, literally 'work of the dead' or 'big work'
<i>həiasoaga</i>	to help one another
<i>həifekega</i>	to be angry with one another, to quarrel
<i>həihanisiga</i>	to love or be kind to one another
<i>həi'ioaga</i>	to look after one another
<i>həina</i>	women, female (plural of <i>həni</i> , woman)
<i>həireaga</i>	to attend to, to provide for one another
<i>hanisi</i>	love, compassion
<i>hanua noho</i>	village
<i>ho'aga</i>	group of cooperating households
<i>höt'ək həfu</i>	ceremony for erecting a tombstone
<i>hual sa'aga</i>	coils of processed pandanus leaves
<i>hue ne 'ai</i>	fruit

<i>'i'ini</i>	animal food eaten with starchy vegetables (<i>tē la'a</i>)
<i>itu'u</i>	district
<i>kainaga</i>	things belonging to the same category; kindred, descent group, extended family
<i>kato'aga</i>	festive gathering
<i>kau fā</i>	relatives of the groom
<i>kau hani</i>	relatives of the bride
<i>kaugaruega</i>	work group
<i>kaunohoga</i>	household
<i>kohea</i>	kitchen, cook house
<i>koua</i>	earthen oven or the food cooked therein
<i>lali</i>	(Fijian) slit drum
<i>la' mane'a</i>	to go on holiday
<i>luagvao</i>	first fish from a fish drive
<i>mafmoea</i>	first fruits offering to a chief
<i>mamasa</i>	to be dry; feast for someone who returns to the island for the first time
<i>mana</i>	spiritual or superhuman efficacy
<i>ma'piga</i>	grandchild, grandparent
<i>mosega</i>	group of kin who hold rights to a chiefly title by virtue of shared descent from a common ancestor
<i>mua</i>	key priestly position in the pre-Christian Rotuman religion
<i>nā</i>	to give or to exert effort
<i>nā fakhanisi</i>	to give as a gift
<i>nā tē</i>	to give things, esp. church contributions

<i>noa</i>	to be tired
<i>noanoa</i>	difficult
<i>noa'ia</i>	greetings; thanks; literally 'to be tired, weary'
<i>pure</i>	decision-maker; head of household
<i>rē 'afa</i>	to give a basket of food
<i>ri hapa</i>	temporary shelter
<i>ri ota</i>	Rotuman-style thatch house
<i>ri mosega</i>	sleeping house
<i>ri sipakit</i>	house built up on very high legs or piles
<i>rau 'ai</i>	'plant leaf', leafy green vegetable
<i>rot kaunohoga</i>	'family devotions', prayer meeting held by a group of households
<i>rotu</i>	church
<i>sarao</i>	to massage
<i>sau</i>	a ceremonial position representing all of Rotuma in ritual intercession with the gods, misleadingly glossed 'king'
<i>sūf hani</i>	one of a series of feasts leading up to a Rotuman wedding; literally, 'request the woman'
<i>tähroro</i>	a sauce made of fermented coconut and salt water
<i>tapiko</i>	cassava
<i>tařiga</i>	feast given to a visiting preacher
<i>taufäre</i>	broom made from coconut leaf midribs
<i>tauga</i>	type of basket
<i>taumaka</i>	rehearsal
<i>tautoga</i>	traditional Rotuman dances

<i>tē fakhanisi</i>	gift, especially in thanks for a service
<i>tē fui</i>	garland hung around the neck, usually made of sweet smelling flowers
<i>tē la'ā</i>	food, especially starchy vegetables; literally, 'thing to eat'
<i>tēlulu</i>	fish cooked in <i>tahroro</i> , wrapped in leaves.
<i>terān lima</i>	ritual fifth day on which the grave is covered with cement
<i>tika</i>	a form of dart-throwing
<i>togi</i>	exchange, wages, debt repayment, punishment, reward, succession, substitution, or response
<i>togi</i>	to buy, to pay
<i>tög'aki</i>	to sell, to spend
<i>tukag'omoe</i>	gift of cooked food to a chief at the end of the year
<i>vati</i>	a kind of bush with edible leaves (<i>Abelmoschus manihot</i>)
<i>vil'āk</i>	to cause to drop (from a total amount of money, weight etc), to deduct

Sayings and Expressions:

A'u'ua ne täväke

'Repose of the tropic bird' [said of someone who, like the tropic bird, takes long periods of rest while there is work to be done]

Faiāk se'ea 'e hāiasoaga

'Thank you for helping'

Faiak se'ea 'e garue

'Thank you for working'

Hanua ma 'oris 'al

'The land has teeth'

'Itake 'ipe te Kā' ta

'Like the dove at Kā' ta [a natural stone archway on the south west coast of Rotuma]' [referring to behavior like that of a dove who starts to fly, inciting other birds to take flight, but then settles back on its perch]

Leum la 'ātē

'Come and eat'

Noa'ia 'e la'ot

'Thank you for journeying'

Noa'ia 'e hanisit

'Thank you for your kindness'

Nōnō ka ri lelei, ma 'inea ne huā' lelei

'When the house is good, you know the occupants are good'

Ou telul mahmahan heta 'āe hoa'hoa' tūen

'Your warm *telulu* [fish cooked in banana leaves] you have been giving to the wrong one'

Tutur pout ta'a

'That is a hardwood post' [a pillar of the community]

Tit mūf he

'A worn leaf girdle' [said of someone who carries such a burden that his girdle drags on the ground and is worn down; said especially of leaders who take on the most responsibility]

'Uh 'eseat ma nā 'en kalāe

'You have only one yam but give it to the swamphen'

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