Part 2

Life Stages on Rotuma, 1890–1960

Chapter 13
Childhood

A striking feature of life on Rotuma is the extent to which children were generally indulged by parents and grandparents and, frequently, by other kin as well. They were often being fed first and given the best food, and they were rarely punished with severity. Children were regarded as extraordinarily precious, in part, perhaps, because high rates of infant and child mortality in years past made their survival problematic.

A number of Rotuman sayings gave expression to this love of children, or to a specific, pet child. Terms of endearment, as expressed by mothers, included *'Oto finäe pupu* (A piece of my intestine); *'Otou le'et gou 'es* (A child I bore); *'Otou fanau* (The one from my womb); and *'Otou manman moit* (My little bird). Specially favoured children were alluded to in the sayings *'On mean mat het* (One's wet turmeric powder) and *'On joan ru he* (One's painful sore [from yaws]).[1]

The life story accounts reveal some pervasive themes and significant variations in the childhood experiences of Rotumans growing up in the period we are concerned with in this book. Variations include the size and composition of households within which individuals were raised, the wealth and status of families within the community, the nurturing and disciplinary roles that different individuals played in the children's socialization, and the emotional overtones that these adults attributed to their childhood recollections.

Household Size and Structure

A number of variables affected the size and form of households in which children were raised during the first six decades of the twentieth century: a high birth rate, changing rates of infant and child mortality, the longevity of older adults, the deaths of one or both parents, and parental separations and divorces.

The birth rate remained high throughout the period at 40+ per 1,000, while death rates ranged from a high of 81.3 per 1,000 in 1910–1914 (primarily as a result of a devastating measles epidemic in 1911)[2] to a low of 8.6 per 1,000 in 1955–1959 (primarily as a result of introduced wonder drugs such as penicillin). Infant mortality ranged from a high of 524.4 in 1911 to a low of 34.5 in 1959. The combination of a steady birth rate and a falling death rate resulted in an increase of Rotuma's overall population from 2,112 in 1921 to 2,993 in 1956 (and an increase in the number of Rotumans in Fiji overall, including Rotuma, from 2,164 in 1921 to 4,471 in 1956) (figures from the 1956 Fiji Census).

Table 1
Number of Women by Age Group
and Number of Living Children (Rotuma 1956)

Present Age of Mother	no children	1-3 children	4-6 children	7-8 children	9 or more children	Total No. of Women
25-39	40	153	138	23	18	372
40-59	19	68	115	38	28	268
60+	8	24	36	8	7	83
Total	67	245	289	69	53	723

Table 1, extracted from page 160 of the 1956 Fiji Census, provides a general idea of the range of family sizes at the time, based on the number of a woman's surviving children in three age brackets. The actual number of children born to women was significantly more, but given high rates of infant mortality, particularly in the early part of the century, the number of surviving children was substantially reduced.

Among those who mentioned such information in their life stories, there was considerable variance regarding the number of children in their families, with six individuals reporting that they had been only children, and five saying that they were one of ten or more (see Table 2).

Table 2
Occurrences of Number of Children in Family as Reported in Life Stories

Number of children in family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Occurrences	6	8	5	6	3	5	6	5	0	2	0	3

However, the number of children in a family does not necessarily correspond to the sizes of households within which children are raised because many households in Rotuma during this period included grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, as well as more distant relatives. A household census conducted by my Rotuman assistants in 1960 revealed the following variations in overall household size: 46 (11%) households containing 1–3 persons; 158 (38%) with 4–6 persons; 141 (34%) with 7–9 persons; and 72 (17%) with 10 or more persons.

Of equal or often greater relevance than household size is the question of who is present in a household and who takes primary

responsibility for raising a child. While the great majority of households in our 1960 survey (80%) can be classified as nuclear (containing a married couple and their children), 27 percent of them included a grandparent and grandchildren, and 26 percent included nonlinear relatives such as uncles, aunts, cousins, namesakes, and more distant relatives or nonrelatives. In addition, among the 20 percent of non-nuclear (or sub-nuclear [for example, one-parent]) households, 9 percent included a grandparent and 7 percent included nonlinear relatives or nonrelatives.

A caveat is in order here: Household size and composition in 1960 almost certainly vary from the periods during which our life story tellers were raised, between 1890 and the 1940s, when population fluctuations on the island were quite dramatic. However, we can reasonably assume that the presence of grandparents and other relatives in households was common throughout the period insofar as it reflected the Rotuman cultural values of inclusiveness and accommodation. This assumption is supported by comments in the life stories by those who chose to live with and help their siblings, parents, or other relatives, or who, in their later years, came to stay with and rely on members of younger generations.

Also affecting household composition and the socialization of children is the death, divorce, or separation of parents. Among 70 individuals providing relevant information about their childhood in their life stories, the great majority (51, 73%) reported being raised in households containing both their parents; nine (13%) reported being raised primarily by their mothers, with or without stepfathers; four (6%) by grandparents; and four (6%) by aunts and uncles. One person reported being raised by his father and stepmother and another by nonrelatives whom he referred to as "uncle" and "aunt."

Of Poor and Rich

Overall, the dominant theme in recollections of childhood is a concern for material well-being, both in the form of being well fed and in having one's wants fulfilled by parents and other caretakers. Associated with this is a recognition of the hard work required by one's elders to meet children's needs and wants.

Fifteen individuals described their families as "poor," mostly to emphasize the difficulty their caretakers had to fulfil their needs and wants. For example, a woman who was born in the 1920s gave the following account of her childhood:

> I was the youngest in a family of six children, and we all lived together with our parents. They were very good and kind to us but we were poor, and sometimes we could read on their faces that they were worried about something…. My father worked very hard and tried every means he could to earn money for us. They used to tell us sometimes that if we wanted something and my father could not provide it right away, we should try not to cry out and should be patient, because my father was poor and if he could, he would get it for us afterwards.

Even in dire circumstances, expressions of gratitude for the efforts of parents to provide are pronounced in these accounts. As a woman born in the 1910s put it:

> I was the oldest of three children who had different fathers and were brought up in three different homes. I can remember being brought up by my dear mother without someone to care for us. Poor me and my mother, who was doing all she could to provide us with food and to earn money for our living. She was strong enough to work like a man. I had everything I wished for and all the food I wanted. There were only two of us in the family then, and she really did enough to support us. She used to speak about the wealthy people and the poor ones; they live the same and death

> came upon everyone, whether rich or poor. She always told me to keep quiet about the things that wealthy children had because she couldn't provide them as I didn't have a father to help her give me all that I needed.

And in more "normal" circumstances, a man born in the 1890s related that "our parents were good people, but they were poor. They did their best to supply us with everything that we needed. I know they were kind, because whenever we wanted something, and they were unable to get it at the time, my mother would tell us to wait, and eventually my father would get it for us."

In a couple of instances individuals described their families as "rich," including a woman also born in the 1890s, who related: "I can remember that nearly all the families in that district were my parents' friends. I don't know if it was because they were kind, or because they were richer than the rest of them."

The notions of "rich" *('es koroa)* and "poor" *(keia)* families in early twentieth century Rotuma requires some explication. These terms relate less to any form of accumulated wealth than to available productive labour. To be well off, a family needed both male and female workers, given the normal division of labour, with women taking care of the domestic chores (such as keeping the housing compound clean, nurturing children, preparing meals) and weaving pandanus mats. Fine white mats in particular *(apei)* were the highest valuables in Rotuman society and central items of ritual exchange in nearly every type of ceremony.

Men were primarily responsible for planting, caring for, and harvesting food crops and for cutting copra, which was the main source of income for all but a few wage earners. Plantation labour and cutting copra was hard work, requiring considerable physical effort; if it could be shared

by several males in a household, so much the better. They would be able to produce more than enough food and income from copra to provide for a family's needs and wants. In contrast, families lacking a productive male often found themselves in dire straits, with a single mother having to do the work of a man (and woman) in order to survive.

Indulgence of Children

As pointed out in the foreword, the Rotuman term *hanisi,* which is generally translated as "love," refers less to an inferred emotional state than to an indulgent pattern of behaviour. What is remarkable in the life histories is the extent to which childhood memories focus on how children's needs (such as food and clothing) and wants (for example, toys) were provided for by those who reared them. This is something Westerners might take for granted, but for Rotumans it is a way of indicating their satisfaction, and indeed gratitude, for the way they were raised. Mothers and mother substitutes were almost invariably described in terms of indulgence, as were most fathers, although in a few instances fathers were characterised as strict, punitive, miserly, or simply as less indulgent than mothers.

The characterization of stepparents was interesting in this regard. A man in his 40s commented that "if you live with your stepmother or stepfather they will treat you differently than their own children," and a woman in her 20s, remarking about her sequential stepfathers, said that "all of my stepfathers were very kind to me, but still it wasn't like having my own father. I had to show respect to my stepfather … [and] I was afraid to ask them for the things I wanted." However, four others who commented about their treatment by stepparents (all of whom were stepfathers) were unequivocally positive in their assessments. Thus one

man in his 60s said that his stepfather "loved me very much"; a man in his 40s remarked that his stepfather "loved me [and] … took me everywhere he would go" and "bought me anything I would ask him for." A woman in her 30s described her stepfather as "a kind man" who treated her like a pet and gave her whatever she asked for, and another woman (age unknown) simply stated that "my stepfather supplied us with food and all that we needed."

In sum, the recollections of the great majority life story tellers were positive concerning the way they were treated by their parents and parental substitutes. This corresponds with my observations during field work in 1960 and during subsequent visits to the island that, in general, young children are indeed indulged and treated with considerable tenderness and kindness.

However, it would be wrong to portray childhood as universally idyllic; a few individuals recalled their childhood as an unpleasant time. For example, a woman in her 50s recalled:

> When I was still an adolescent my parents died and my brother and I lived with our relations. What a pity to see us. We didn't know how to work properly to please our new family, so many times we hardly had enough food to eat. Sometimes we had only one meal in a day. We didn't blame ourselves because we knew our parents had spoiled us and by then they were dead and we were badly treated by their relations.

Another woman, also born in the 1910s, was even more harsh in her assessment:

> Remembering the past times when I was living with my uncle, I think I was the saddest living creature ever to exist at that time. My poor mother was living with her brother and his wife, and I was with her. I remember well that I had a bad time with my uncle.

> They had many children and yet they hated me like an animal. I grew up without knowing my father, and my mother never mentioned to me who and where my father was, dead or alive.

But these were rare exceptions to the positive tenor of the great majority of childhood recollections—that it was a happy time.

Learning Morality

A second theme in the accounts of childhood is the role that parents and other child rearers played in teaching children to be kind and generous, primary virtues in Rotuman culture. To cite just a few examples, a man born in the 1910s reported that his parents "were really kind and always told us to play and love each other, even to love our neighbouring friends, never mind that they would insult us." A man born in the 1890s remembered his mother "telling us to grow up to love each other and not to fight, especially since we would have children of our own one day"; and a woman of about the same age recalled that "my two brothers and I … heard our parents' voices telling us that we should be kind to each other [and they] also told us what we should do if we wanted to grow up to be good men and women. Every day they would instruct us about the right way to act."

In counterpoint to this emphasis on proper decorum is the acknowledgement by seven individuals that they misbehaved in a way that translates as "cheeky" *(faktagata)*. For example, as a woman in her 60s recalled:

> Sometimes I overheard [my parents] saying that they should try their very best to give me whatever I wanted because I was their only child. I stayed with my mother every day, and when she would tell me to do some work for her I would usually do it, but if I

> was in a bad mood she could say a hundred things and I wouldn't do it. I became very cheeky and sometimes I noticed that they looked angry, but I wasn't frightened of them.

And a woman in her 30s confessed that, as a child, she "didn't know how to wash my clothes and [my uncle] washed them for me. I became a cheeky child and most of the people hated me for my pride. They said that my uncle and aunt petted me too much; that was why I became this sort of a child."

In comparison with reports of indulgence, there are remarkably few reports of punitive discipline. Only a couple of individuals reported receiving "hidings," which I interpret as some form of physical punishment. A woman in her 40s remembered being given hidings by a mother substitute "when she wanted us to do something and we did not" and a man in his 20s related that his father "would tell me something once, and would never repeat it. The second time he would give me a hiding, or make me skip a meal." In addition, a man in his 50s described two instances in which he had misbehaved as a young boy. In one case his father gave him and his brother hidings for damaging their father's knife while trying to sharpen it; in the other his mother hit him on the bottom of his foot with a stick for concealing himself from her.

But others who told about responses to their misbehaviour reported much milder discipline. For example, a man born in the 1890s related that his parents "would punish us if we did something that we already knew was wrong. But they were always kind to us and I remember that sometimes I was naughty but they just scolded me and that was all." Men and women of various ages described actions they avoided (inappropriate joking, grumbling, staying away from home too long without permission) so as not to be punished, and a woman in her 20s put

her incentive to avoid misbehaviour in reciprocal terms, saying that her mother "never used harsh words on us or even scolded us once. She was so kind that I never thought of disobeying her words."

Siblingship

Insofar as families varied considerably in size, some children grew up in households with several siblings, others with few or none. Comments in the life stories regarding relations with siblings were relatively few compared with reflections about treatment by parental figures, but indications are that brothers and sisters were affectionate toward one another in general. Several individuals men and women, old and young, openly spoke of the love between siblings in their families, while others told of how they missed siblings who had left the household.

Nevertheless, there are indications that children with siblings had a sense of favouritism regarding their treatment by parents and parent substitutes. Thus, ten men and women of various ages described themselves as having been the "pets" of their families. Here are some of their commentaries:

> *Woman age unknown:* I was the eldest in a family of eight children. As far back as I can remember my parents loved us, but I was the pet. I knew they were poor, but whatever they had on hand they used to keep for me …. They … told me not to cry for anything, because they were poor and were doing their best to satisfy our needs. They really did, because I cannot remember ever crying out for want of something.

> *Woman age unknown:* I was the youngest of the seven children. I can remember that my parents treated us so kindly but of course I was the youngest and I was the pet. My mother always took me wherever she went.

Woman in her 60s: There were ten of us in our family and I was the youngest…. My sister and I helped our mother, but I had a bad leg and was the pet of the family. I wasn't strong enough to help my mother properly and yet I did all my best to do what I could for her. My parents loved me as if I were a child and everything I would ask for was always given to me.

Woman in her 40s: There were five of us in our family in which I was the second youngest…. We were kindly brought up by our parents … but I was the real pet in the family. The others could cry for something and my parents would provide it in two or three days, but for me they were in great haste to bring it to me…. Many times I overheard … my mother … say that they had to do their very best and bring home whatever I would ask for because when I grew up I would be the most beautiful girl on the island, so they had to see that I wouldn't be in want of something…. I never did anything at home, just roam, eat, and sleep, because I was the pet and nobody in the family was allowed to say something to me except my mother.

Woman in her 30s: I was the youngest in a family of six children…. I was the youngest and really was my parents' pet. They always did whatever I asked them to do for me…. It came about that all the others had gone to school except me, and then I realized that my parents loved me much more than the rest. They took me with them every place they went and whatever I asked for they always got for me.

Man in his 30s: Because of being the youngest, I was a pet in the family. They treated me more or less like a grandchild. When I was 6 my next oldest brother was 16. If anything ever happened between me and my brothers, my parents would always shield me from them. If we had a fish that wasn't enough for all, I looked upon it as my due. Of course mother and father would agree.

Man in his 20s: I am the second youngest out of a family of eight children, seven boys and a girl…. When I was small I seemed to be the pet of the family…. I remember that never once did I disobey my parents' words. I think that was why I became a pet of theirs. The older children seemed to hate me because they all noticed how our parents treated me.

And although he did not refer to himself as a pet, a man born in the 1920s remarked, "I felt that [my parents] loved me more than my half-brothers and half-sisters. The way my parents treated them was very different from the way they treated me."

Being the only boy or girl among siblings of the opposite sex also seems to have had its advantages. One man in his 20s, who was the only boy in a family with five children, reminisced about enjoying living with his sisters "because we would go to school together and at home we used to play and joke all the time. My sisters loved me very much and they always took real good care of me because I was their only brother." And a woman in her 60s reported: "My brothers and father were very good to me; they let me do whatever I liked because I was the only girl. I was really happy at that time. I really loved my brothers because they always gave me anything I wanted. They used to take me to every kind of thing they used to go to—dances, *makrotuam, tika* matches."

Reports of friction between siblings were quite mild. For instance, one man, born before 1900, remembered, "I was the black sheep of the family and whatever happened in our home I got blamed for it." Another man, born in the 1930s, acknowledged that he would fight with his brothers and sisters sometimes, but he characterised it as "just the usual sorts of thing."

Chapter 17, which focuses on parenting, provides additional insights into Rotuman childhood, particularly from the standpoint of fifty mothers who were interviewed concerning their child-rearing practices.

Notes to Chapter 13

[1] The reference to turmeric powder derives from the earlier custom when it was used as a protection against insect bites and as an antiseptic salve for wounds. Children were smeared with turmeric to protect their skin. Yaws was a common skin disease that resulted in painful sores, and children would cry when they were touched. As Elizabeth Inia commented in *Fäeag ʻes Fūaga,* "The saying suggests that when a favourite child cries and wets the turmeric on his or her cheeks, the child should be given whatever he or she wants."

[2] See "Extreme Mortality after First Introduction of Measles Virus to the Polynesian Island of Rotuma, 1911" by G. Dennis Shanks, Seung-Eun Lee, Alan Howard, and John F. Brundage, *American Journal of Epidemiology* 173 (10): 1211–1222 (2011).

Chapter 14
Schooling

'Uam'ak sio te a'at (Dig your toenails in a bit harder)
A Rotuman saying used to encourage children to improve their school performance so they will place higher in their class standings.

—Elizabeth Inia, *Fäeag 'es Fūaga*

A Brief History of Rotuman Schools[1]

The history of formal education in Rotuma dates from 1839, when the Reverend John Williams of the London Missionary Society stopped there and left two Samoan teachers; the original purpose of schooling was to facilitate religious instruction. The Samoans were not very successful either as missionaries or as teachers, largely because they failed to master the difficult Rotuman language, despite the fact that much of its vocabulary is shared with Samoan. Tongan teachers of the Wesleyan mission followed in 1841 and fared somewhat better, although progress was painfully slow. It was not until 1857 that the first biblical translation was available in the Rotuman language.

In 1864, James Calvert visited Rotuma and reported that 1,200 persons were professedly Christian and that 230 persons were attending class.[2] Later that year, the Reverend William Fletcher and his wife established residence on Rotuma. They supervised the teachers, who held classes in the various villages. The curriculum is reflected in a letter from Fletcher dated January 1866:[3]

> 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 teacher. Before 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.

The Catholic mission also established schools and, by 1870, the majority of the young people were receiving a least limited instruction. For the remainder of the nineteenth century, education on Rotuma was entirely in the hands of missionaries. The pattern that was established by the Methodist schools was for the children to meet with their teacher in a schoolhouse three days a week, from 6 to 9 in the morning. School attendance was compulsory and parents who failed to send their children were liable to a fine. Teachers were supplied by the mission, but every Methodist household was required to give something quarterly toward the teachers' support.

The Reverend William Allen served as a Methodist missionary on Rotuma from 1881 to 1886. In an account published in January 1895, he wrote, "All the boys and girls on the island can read, write, and have some knowledge of arithmetic and geography."[4] This was perhaps an exaggeration, for the 1911 census of Rotuma recorded only 1,331 persons out of a total of 2,293 (58 percent) as literate. Nevertheless, if allowances are made for very young children and those too elderly to have received instruction, it is apparent that the literacy rate was quite high.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Methodists established a school at Tia, near the main village of Motusa in the district of Itu'ti'u; it provided a higher standard of education than was available in the ordinary village schools. The school was run by European Mission Sisters together with a native assistant and provided instruction up to the

third standard (Class 3), although some students received education beyond this level. Promising students were sometimes sent to mission schools in Fiji where they could get advanced academic or vocational training.

The Government of Fiji took over responsibility for educating native peoples in the late 1920s. They established standards and provided supervision and grants-in-aid. Although the Catholics continued to administer their own schools after this reorganization, the Methodist mission relinquished its educational role in favour of government-run institutions. In 1936, school was made compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 14, and since then all Rotumans were supposed to receive a minimum of eight years of education. Failure to send children to school was made punishable by a fine, or in default of a fine, by short-term imprisonment of the responsible adult.

By 1960, there were seven schools in Rotuma. Three of these (two primary and one secondary) were Catholic. The other four (three primary and one secondary) were under government control. All the schools were coeducational with the exception of the Catholic secondary school, St. Michael's, which was for boys only.

The basic curriculum in all schools was set by the Board of Education and was modelled after the Australian and New Zealand modifications of the standard English curriculum. The history and geography of the British Empire was stressed, with special attention given to the South Seas area that includes Rotuma. English was taught as a second language from Class 1, and by Class 3 or 4 most of the instruction was in that language, with Rotuman resorted to mainly to explain concepts. The available literature was virtually all in English; with the exception of the Bible and some government pamphlets, very little had

been translated into Rotuman. In addition to academic subjects, children received instruction in religion, and in the government-run primary schools a few hours a week were spent on learning traditional Rotuman customs and lore.

The majority of students passed each year, but there was little reluctance to hold poor students back, and a substantial minority repeated at least one class in their academic careers. If students progressed normally, they would complete Class 8 by age 14, after which they might leave or go on to a secondary school. If they had not completed Class 8 by that time, they could continue for an additional two years, up to age 16. Secondary schooling in Rotuma (Forms III and IV) was largely oriented toward passing the Fiji Junior Examination, a standard test given throughout Fiji. Passing this exam was a prerequisite for continuing one's education in the more advanced schools in Fiji.

After completing Form V, a student could take the Fiji Senior Examination and, if successful, could obtain a School Leaving Certificate that qualified them for a variety of positions in government and private enterprise. Alternatively they could go on to one of the professional schools in Fiji, which offered training in such things as teaching, agricultural science, and medicine. All of these schools were oriented toward creating a cadre of professionals to serve the needs of the colony. Another possibility was to sit for the University Entrance Examination. If students passed this, they qualified for entrance to most Australian and New Zealand universities.

Education beyond Form IV was expensive and few were able to continue past that point. Students had to travel to Fiji and either live with relatives or board at school. Besides tuition and books, the cost of clothing and incidentals had to be considered. Advanced education thus could cost

several hundred pounds per year, creating an insurmountable barrier for most families. Nevertheless, many Rotuman parents were willing to sacrifice a great deal for their children's education, and if they could possibly afford it they usually made an effort.

Given these circumstances, it is therefore not surprising that 43.1 percent of the adults over the age of 50 on the island in 1960 reported having received no formal education, while this was the case for only 9.3 percent in the 40–49 age group, 3.8 percent in the 30–39 age group, and 0.4 percent (one person) in the 20–29 age group (see Table 1). At the other end of the spectrum, 9.2 percent of those in the 20–29 age group reported completing Form III or above, while this was the case for 4.2 percent of those in the 30-39 age group and only 2.6 percent of those age 40 and above. Females were at a slight disadvantage, with 89.1 percent not progressing past Class 6, while this was the case for 82.7 percent of males, and only 2.7 percent of females attended Form III or above compared to 7.6 percent of males.

Data for Table 1 (on the next page) were drawn from my island-wide census of adults on Rotuma in 1960. The census questionnaire included an item regarding the highest school level completed. Comparable figures were obtained from Rotumans living in urban areas in Fiji (Suva, Lautoka, Levuka, Tavua, and Vatukoula) during 1961 and not surprisingly showed somewhat higher levels of education there, with 9.2 percent of females and 17.6 percent of males having a Form III education or higher.

Table 1
Educational Attainment by Gender and Age Group
Rotumans on Rotuma in 1960

Level	Gender		Age Group				Total
	M	F	20–29	30–39	40–49	50+	
None	53	59	1	9	18	84	112
%	12.5	12.3	0.4	3.8	9.3	43.1	12.4
Classes 1–4	113	162	30	88	100	57	275
%	26.7	33.8	11.0	36.7	51.6	29.2	30.5
Classes 5–6	184	206	185	122	55	28	390
%	43.5	43.0	67.8	50.8	28.4	14.4	43.2
Classes 7–8	41	39	32	11	16	21	80
%	9.7	8.1	11.7	4.6	8.2	10.8	8.9
Forms III–IV	19	6	14	6	3	2	25
%	4.5	1.3	5.1	2.5	1.5	1.0	2.8
Forms V–VI	2	–	1	–	1	–	2
%	0.5		0.4		0.5		0.2
Advanced	11	7	10	4	1	3	18
%	2.6	1.5	3.7	1.7	0.5	1.5	2.0
Totals	423	479	273	240	194	195	902
%	100	100	100.1	100.1	100	100	100

The Schooling Experience

The life stories collected in 1960 reflect this changing history regarding educational opportunities. Among the older generation (those born before 1911), many had no schooling at all or received only a primary school education. Some reported that, because "there wasn't any school" when they were young, it was their parents who taught them "how to work and behave themselves" and "how to grow up to be good men and women." Some of the older men remembered that there was school (up to Class 5), but they differed in their recollections about whether attendance was compulsory.

Memories also varied regarding what was taught. One Rotuman man in his 50s, whose father had been a catechist, recalled that in the village school he first attended, "the main subject during that time was memorizing the Bible, and simple addition." A few years later, he started going to Tia, the Methodist school in Motusa, where his father was appointed to teach in place of the missionary sister who left the island:

> My father … was in charge of about 100 children. I was in the top class—Class 4—but since my father didn't know English, he only could teach other subjects, like history, arithmetic and religion. I stayed in this school for three years [until 1920]. Father was very good in arithmetic, and I learned it well, as well as some history and geography.

Among those in their 30s and 40s (born between 1911 and 1930), some had gone on for secondary education in Fiji, although the majority left school for good around age 14 or younger to begin taking on adult responsibilities, the boys working on the family plantations and the girls helping look after the family at home. Those in their 20s (born between

1930 and 1940) tended to stay in school longer and many went on to secondary, or occasionally tertiary education (university) abroad.

Particularly among the older generations, there seems to have been less incentive for women to receive more than a rudimentary education, in large measure because they were expected to spend time at home helping their mothers and attending to women's chores in the household. As a woman born in the 1920s reported, "[My mother] sent me to school but I was a poor student and spent several years in school without getting promoted to a higher class. I felt bad to see my mother working so hard so I stopped going to school in order to stay home and help her."

Attitudes toward school differed markedly among the life story tellers, with some professing to love it and others stating flatly that they hated school. Those who found the experience exhilarating often mentioned the pleasure they took in getting to know and play with other children, while others took pride in their successes in being regularly promoted and achieving high rankings in their classes. Some simply expressed a joy in acquiring new knowledge.

Among the reasons given for disliking school, and providing disincentives for attending, were learning difficulties, which often resulted in being held back in the same class, in some cases for several years, or regularly coming in toward the bottom of classes in accomplishments; punitive teachers who struck children physically for misbehaviour or poor performance; and a preference for spending time with one's parents and siblings rather than with other children. Clowning in class, to the amusement of other children, rather than paying attention to the teacher, was also mentioned by some as a hindrance to learning and achievement. In boarding schools, both in Rotuma and Fiji, complaints were common

about being required to work hard doing manual labour as well as caring for one's own needs, and in some cases the poor quality of food.

As students reached adolescence, some were drawn home to help with their family's subsistence activities, while others were attracted to the freedom offered Rotuman youths for playful activities and courtship, leading them to drop out of school. Finally, a number of interviewees reported that they did not go to school, or dropped out, because their families were too poor and could not afford to pay the fees involved, buy school supplies, and clothe their children properly.

It's important to recognize that attitudes toward school, and performance, often changed through time, depending on schools attended, teachers, and personal circumstances. As a man in his 20s (who later became a teacher) recalled:

> I started to go to school when I was 6 years old. I went to the Paptea school. There were only two teachers in the school at that time. I liked it then. I think most of the boys and girls in Rotuma like school when they first go. You have a chance to play around with your friends. There were only a few teachers, so you had plenty of freedom. I came in first in Class 2, a class of about thirty something. The schools then were giving out better prizes than they are nowadays. I can remember that I got one shirt and a pair of pants for coming in first.
>
> I liked school when I was little, but when I got to Class 3 or 4 they began to give corporal punishments, cracking you on the head for just about anything. At that point I dreaded going to school just about every morning.

For one woman (age unknown), change came about as a result of her realizing how much money her father was paying for her education:

> Father sent me to school when I came to the age of 6. During the first year I felt very lazy during school lessons and most of the time I spent playing and looking around and teasing the other children in the class to play with me. I had no interest at all in learning. For three years I came last in my class, so thinking of the money my father was using on me, I thought to change my mind. I then became a hard-learning child and so very eager to know my lessons and always ready to answer whatever question my teacher could ask. I did very well until I reach the highest class in my school, so I was told to go to Fiji for further education. My parents agreed and I entered the girls school in Navesi. There I did very well and at the end of four years I passed my qualifying exam.

Those who went on to continue their educations in Fiji, or ultimately abroad, faced additional challenges in addition to being away from home and often family. One man in his 50s told of his experience at Lelean Memorial Primary School in Fiji, where he entered Class 4 at age 13:

> I lived in a boarding house. We had one house for the Rotuman boys and there were thirteen of us. It was a bit strange at first; I had to do everything for myself—wash my own clothes, iron, do my own cooking. Everything except English seemed too easy for me because I had been studying them in Rotuma for the past three years. In every subject except English I did very well. I stayed in Class 4 for two years because of my English, and in the third year went into Class 5.

Another man's experience at Queen Victoria School (QVS) in Suva three decades later was not uncommon insofar as Rotuman students often did very well in the end, despite the hardships of adapting to the new environment:

> Going to QVS was totally different than anything I had known. I was one of the smallest boys in the school. You can imagine how I felt looking at the older fellows. My first year was horrible; as I was an outsider, the older boys always used to bully me. I made some

> very good friends, though. Some of the big boys used to give me a hand with things. Besides school, we had to cut firewood and do an hours work every morning, before school, from 6 to 7 am. It was a boarding school. The food wasn't very good; we had meat only about once a week. We had to wash our clothes and iron them. This was the first time I ever had to do this kind of thing and I found it tough. The big boys used to help sometimes, though, and the washing wasn't too bad, although you can imagine how clean the clothes got. But the ironing was difficult, and sometimes you would spend fifteen minutes with a shirt and get nowhere.
>
> During the first week at the school I got the measles and was sent to the hospital. I felt awful and missed my parents very much and the care they used to give me. I'd say I really missed home for about the first three months, but once you got to know the boys you tend to forget them. In the first exam I came last, mostly because I came back from the hospital only about three weeks before the exam.
>
> The first year was preparatory and once we passed that we went into Form I. After failing that first exam I felt like chucking Suva altogether and going back home, but some of the boys encouraged me to carry on. It was worse because they arranged us in class according to the way we did on the exam—the person who did best in the back and the one who did worst right up in front. On the next exam I did better, though, and in the final exam at the end of the year I came in tenth out of about 35 pupils.
>
> I spent seven years in the QVS, through Form VI. During the later years in the school I liked it very much and did quite well. I got through the Junior and Senior Cambridge exams all right, and during the fifth year I became one of the three house captains and head boys of the school.

For the few who went on for tertiary education in places like New Zealand, a whole other level of adaptation took place as they were confronted with an unfamiliar cultural milieu. A man who got a scholarship for teacher training college when he was in his 30s reflected in detail on his experience:

I left for New Zealand in 1956. It took me almost six months to adapt myself—particularly to the social life there, The college I went to was co-educational and residential. Social life there was very high—very advanced in comparison to what I had experienced in Rotuma. Here, there are a lot of restrictions between boys and girls, but there, there was almost complete freedom. I liked it from the beginning, but several things kept me out of the scene. One was that I was conscious all the time that I had been sent by the Rotuman people and I felt obliged to accomplish something and bring it back to them. My main aim was to succeed in my studies. The other thing that kept me out of the social life for the first six months was the attitude of the Europeans in Fiji and Rotuma for the natives. I felt inferior and was very reluctant to take an active part in the social life. But this inferior feeling gradually wore off and I began to make friends and got to know most of the students. I found that there was in fact very little feelings of colour superiority among the European students and the faculty. After the first six months I was very well adapted—too well adapted in fact.

I think that one of the things that made me popular there was the part I played in college sports. They're not quite like the Americans, but they're quite keen in sports. I played rugby as one of the first fifteen (first team varsity); participated in track and field—I threw the shotput, javelin and discus; I played soccer on the first eleven, and finally became a representative player for the South Auckland County provincial team. I began to take a very lively part in most of the social functions there. I went to nearly all the social dances and joined several college groups. At first I was very reluctant to partake in dating, but l was more or less encouraged by the friendly response of the girls. To be honest, when I started dating I was still conscious of the fact that I was different. I was always sure that a boyfriend of mine and his date were along. Soon I got used to dating on my own and my self-consciousness died out. In fact I got really used to dating, and perhaps I overdid it. I felt that it was an honour and a privilege to go around with European girls, since it was something that was not practiced here in Fiji. But even then I felt that it was just a temporary sort of thing. I was never convinced that any of these girls would ever be willing to lead an island life, so I felt that there was no sense proceeding with a romantic affair where one finds it hard to turn back. For me it was just like playing a game. There

> were times when girls got infatuated, and mistook it for love. Maybe it's because they were young—only around 19 or 20. I made sure to tell them the facts about island life and made it clear to them that it was hopeless—that they could never be happy in an island life. I considered staying in New Zealand to get an advanced teacher's certificate, but I never considered staying there permanently.
>
> In school, those subjects concerned with education I found to my liking from the beginning and I did well in them. I also took courses in art, science and English during the first year. The only thing I really found tough was English. I finished the two-year program and received the certificate.

Another man of about the same age was made more acutely aware of cultural differences as a result of his experiences in New Zealand:

> After getting my teacher's certificate, I was appointed to Queen Victoria School as an assistant master. That was a good opportunity for me because I worked with people who were experts in their various fields. I learned quite a bit there from the masters themselves. I taught three years there and after that I went to a training college in New Zealand; it was a two-year course. I studied in a general training program and one year of the university course directed by the University of Auckland. New Zealand was absolutely new. It was as big a jump from Suva as Suva was from Rotuma. The first year was quite different for me. The Europeans in Suva don't mix freely with the coloured people. In New Zealand, the people don't seem to realise you're black or brown. There's no colour bar. It might be there, but I didn't suffer from it. The people were friendly. One thing that impressed me was the general high standard of living compared with Rotuma and Suva. The methods of teaching also impressed me. There was more freedom for the students. For example, if you strike a student in New Zealand you can be prosecuted for assault. In Fiji and Rotuma, the teachers strike the students quite often, even though there are rules against it. Also the abundance of material things, like books and general school equipment, like sports equipment.
>
> I had about five months of student teaching, not all at one stretch. I taught European children, and sometimes the children

> would tell me that their mother wanted me to come for tea, but they usually lived too far. European children are not shy. Even if you're new to a class, if you ask them to tell stories there will be many hands up. In my opinion it was harder. First of all, they're so active. You have to keep moving all the time. Rotuman children are not so very active. They're very passive.

From the Teachers' Perspective

While in Rotuma in 1960, I invited the teachers to answer a seven-point questionnaire regarding their teaching philosophy and practice. Twelve of the teachers, representing Class 1 though Form IV, replied. In an appendix to this chapter their responses are presented in full (slightly edited for clarity) as a way of offering insight into the schooling experience both for teachers and students. In addition, I have included comparable information from interviews at Upu Catholic Mission School with Father Beattie and Sisters Elizabeth and Madeleine.

The cover letter and questionnaire (next page) read as follows:

Questionnaire For Teachers

As a fellow educator I am very much interested in the methods used by teachers in Rotuma. I would therefore appreciate it very much if you would answer the following questions as fully as possible.

Please send them to Mr. H. S. Kitione, Malhaha Central School, well before our next meeting as I would like to browse through them in preparation for my next speech.*

Thank you,
Alan Howard

*I had been asked by the Headmaster of Malhaha Central School to give some lectures to the teachers regarding education in the United States.

1. Name of teacher

2. What class do you teach?

3. How many boys and girls are there in each of your classes?

4. Describe as clearly as you can the methods that you use to teach your students. For example, if you divide your children into groups and have the groups compete with each other, describe how the groups are formed, how the leaders are selected, etc. If you use different methods to teach different subjects, describe them separately.

5. How do you reward your children for doing good work? (Note: A reward does not have to be something material. Words of praise are rewarding for children, as are symbols like merits or ranking of any kind).

6. For what thing do you punish your children? (Note: Include punishments for bad behaviour such as fighting amongst themselves, disrespectful acts, etc., as well as any punishment for bad work. As in the case of rewards, punishment does not have to be tangible, but may be in the form of scolding, etc.)

7. As a teacher what do you hope to achieve? What benefits do you expect your students to get from your teaching? Explain as best you can the reasons why you chose to become a teacher.

Here is an overview of teacher responses in terms of class size, teaching methods, rewards and punishments, and educational aims:

Class size: Table 2 (on the next page) summarises the number of students in each class. The average for Classes 1 through 7 was 30 per class. For Forms III and IV, the average was a much lower 11. This discrepancy can be accounted for by a high percentage of children dropping out after completing the Class 7, either because they were quitting school or going on to Fiji to further their education there.

Table 2
Number of Students in Classes

Teacher	Class	Boys	Girls	Total
Sarote F. Ralifo	1a	12	14	26
Emily S. Emose	1b	16	16	32
Fauoro Olsen	2	14	15	29
Mosio M. Penjueli	4	14	16	30
Anamarie K. Aisea	5a	16	18	34
Ieli Irava	5b	15	13	28
Ieli Irava	6a	13	13	26
Faga K. Solomon	6b	15	11	26
Elizabeth Inia	7a	16	19	35
Avaiki Konousi	7b	23	14	37
Average for Classes 1-7		15	15	30
Aisea Aitu	Form III	6	9	15
Father Beatie	Forms III/IV	7	—	7
Iliese Atalifo	Boys' Crafts	Avg. = 10		10
Jiurie M. Samuela	Girls' Crafts		Avg. = 12	12

Methods: What is striking about the methods described by the teachers is the pervasiveness of groupings as a basic way of organizing classroom activities. Starting in the earliest grades, group work dominated, with children assigned to groups according to their abilities, and the brightest selected as group leaders. Although some teachers had the groups compete with one another, on the whole this emphasis on group work is a reflection of Rotuman culture's emphasis on cooperation rather than competition,

and although students were rewarded for their superior abilities by being chosen group leaders, their roles were mainly to provide support for their cohorts. Bragging and prideful demonstrations are strongly discouraged in Rotuman society, while humility and making quiet contributions to group welfare are encouraged and admired. In contrast to the emphasis on individual achievement in so many Western classrooms, in Rotuma at the time it was commonplace if not the norm for groups of students to work together to solve mathematical problems or read texts out loud.

Rewards: The predominant type of reward for good work mentioned by the teachers was verbal praise. In the earlier grades, this was sometimes accompanied by showing one's work in front of the class, eliciting applause from a child's fellow students. Teachers of the more advanced classes also mentioned such responses to good work by featuring it in displays, moving children to honoured seating positions in the classroom, promoting children to higher achievement groups, or making them group leaders. Some of the teachers also mentioned report cards in the context of rewards. The only mentions of physical rewards were from two nuns who taught at the Catholic Primary School at Upu, Sister Elizabeth and Sister Madeleine. Both mentioned giving students religious pictures as rewards.

Punishment: Most of the teachers mentioned two types of conduct that provoked some form of punishment: poor work and misbehaviour. Poor work was generally attributed to carelessness or laziness and was usually dealt with by scolding, shaming, and making the student redo their work. Misbehaviour, including such offences as bullying, fighting, lying, stealing, using obscene language, and disrespecting the teacher, was generally met with some form of corporal punishment (with a stick or strap) according to

the teachers' reports, although technically only headmasters were authorized to dispense such treatment. However, it is apparent from the life histories, and from different teachers' self-reports, that some relied on corporal punishment more than others and developed a reputation for being harsh, while others were much more reluctant to administer it. In general, it was my impression that misbehaviour by the children and corporal punishment by teachers were not common occurrences in most classrooms. For the most part the students appeared to be well behaved and compliant, and although Avaiki Konousi expressed the view that Rotuman children were different from Europeans and could not learn without the aid of the rod, she went on to point out that punishment resulted in children avoiding misbehaviour and endeavouring to learn. She also commented that she was careful to avoid inflicting injuries. My interpretation of her remarks is that the threat of physical punishment acted as an effective deterrent to misbehaviour, and that when administered it tended to be relatively mild. Perhaps even more to the point was Sister Madeleine's comment that "you can't punish them too much, because you want to teach them to be kind, and how can you do that if you are not kind to them yourself?"

Aims: The main emphasis in the teachers' expressions of their aims as educators was to affect their students' character development—to nurture them to become good citizens of their communities and kind, caring human beings. Other concerns included imparting knowledge so as to improve the standard of living and health standards on Rotuma, and to cope better with everyday problems their students would face as adults. Noteworthy as well were frequent expressions of their love of children and love of teaching.

Notes to Chapter 14

[1] This historical section is based on chapter 4, "School: Preparation for a World Unseen," of *Learning to Be Rotuman,* by Alan Howard (New York: Columbia University Teachers College Press, 1970).

[2] Calvert's comment was included in *Fiji and the Fijians; and Missionary Labours among the Cannibals,* by Thomas Williams and James Calvert (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1870, p. 585).

[3] Fletcher's letter was published in the *Wesleyan Missionary Notices* in October 1866.

[4] Allen's account, titled "Rotooma," appeared in the *Report of the Australian Association for Advancement of Science* of January 1895.

Chapter 14 Appendix:
Responses to Teacher Questionnaire

1. **Teacher:** Sarote F. Ralifo

2. **Class taught:** Class 1

3. Number of children in class: 12 boys, 14 girls

4. **Methods of Teaching:** In Class 1, the teaching of subjects like Vern[acular] Speech Training, V. Reading, V. Spelling, etc. and Number Work are based mostly on group work. The class is divided into four groups. The best child becomes the group leader. New work is taken with whole class, then work in groups. One group remains at the Blackboard while other groups move to places where various Reading activities or Number Work activities have been set out. The teacher must go round checking their work and helping the weaker ones. They change groups after a few minutes. For subjects like English Oral we use a different method altogether. This subject is entirely oral and no words are to be printed on cards or on B. board. The words are taught in sentences by dramatization, use of real objects, pictures, drawings, and blackboard sketches. Children hear the new word in sentences, and acting while saying what he or she is doing. Teacher asks questions and children try to answer. Later on one child comes in front and be the teacher and asks other children questions. They must not answer in unison. They put up their hands and teacher calls on one child to answer. They may answer together after individual children have already given answers.

5. **Rewards**: If a child does good work, e.g., gets his sums right, or answers the question correctly, or his handwriting is improving, etc., the teacher will praise him and let him stand in front of the class and show his good work to other children. The children will of course clap for his good work.

6. **Punishment:** The stick or the strap is given to those who behave badly, such as fighting, swearing, stealing, disobeying the teacher, or destroying somebody's property or good work. For careless and lazy work, the teacher will correct the child's work and let him rewrite it again.

7. **Aims:** My aims in teaching children are to enable them to speak, write and read their own language correctly, as well as other languages such as English, to help them solve everyday problems, and above all to train them to become good citizens.

The reason why I chose to be a teacher is because I love children and I like to help them, to work with them, to play with them, and to train them to become good people and useful in their own country as well as other peoples & countries.

1. **Teacher:** Emily S. Emose

2. **Class taught:** Class 1

3. **Number of children in class:** 16 boys, 16 girls

4. **Methods:** "Group Work" or working together in groups is the main method used in this class for most subjects. All groups are of 4–8 in each group. The children are divided into their groups according to their knowledge, e.g., by putting the bright ones together and the dull ones together. This allows the bright children to go ahead rather than having to lose a lot of time waiting for the dull ones to catch up. In other cases grouping of the class is mixed instead (bright ones with dull ones). This is done only when most of the class is found too far behind the bright ones. By doing this there may be a chance for the dull ones to pick up far quicker than by having to wait for the teacher's help. The brightest one in the group is always selected leader for she is expected to help the others when in difficulty while the teacher is busy attending another group. All activities given for group work are introduced to the class as a whole first. In this class the groups do not compete against each other for each group has a different activity to do, changing when told. Groups are changed now and again. English Oral: This subject is taught by (a) Demonstration and (b) Showing or having the real thing or object. When introducing a new word the "Direct Method" is used, i.e. Making the children see and understand the meaning of the word by themselves than by telling them the meaning of the word in the vernacular.

5. **Rewards:** Rewarding in this class is mainly by praising them in front of the class, telling the class to give her a clap or allowing her out for intervals before the class.

6. **Punishment:** Punishments are given for:
   a. Forgetting to do their duties
   b. Telling lies
   c. Stealing
   d. Swearing or saying nasty words to others
   e. Fighting, etc.

Punishments are scolding them, kneeling them in front of the class, making them stand behind the door, keeping them in during intervals.

7. **Aims:** As a teacher I hope to achieve a higher education for the children of my people to help in bringing up of Rotuma and her people in future. At the end of each year I expect my children to reach the standard of knowledge expected for a Class 1 pupil ready for promotion to the next class in the following year.

1. **Teacher:** Sister Elizabeth [From an interview]

2. **Class Taught:** Class 1

3. **Number of children in class:** No information

4. **Methods:** At first I teach them to count and the alphabet in Rotuman, but soon after that I begin to instruct them in English. The main task of the first graders is to learn simple arithmetic and to understand English. I teach them mainly by games and songs, as well as a certain amount of instruction.

5. **Rewards:** If the children do very well at a lesson I may give them religious pictures or Christmas cards. I also praise them for a good performance. Sometimes I have the other children clap when one of the children performs well. Sometimes I put the child who does best in the front seat. The children like the front seat and try hard to "win" it.

6. **Punishment:** If they do poorly at a task, I show them how to do it. If they misbehave, I scold them and tell them the right way to act, but if they continue to act badly I may (1) use the stick, (2) make them kneel, or (3) make them stand at their desk in front of the others, thereby shaming them.

Sometimes I punish the children if they refuse to do the work. If they fight, I give them the stick right away. The small ones don't get angry when you hit them because they want you to love them. They come right back to you. If they cry when I hit them I threaten to hit them again and they stop. It's not good for the children to be frightened of the teacher, so I try not to hit them much. If they are afraid of the teacher, it's not good because they won't tell her things.

7. **Aims:** I became a teacher to help others. If you're a teacher you help them—show them what is the good thing and the bad thing. I want to teach them not to be lazy but to be able to do things for themselves. I like to teach because I feel that what I teach them will help to make them good for their community, their village—to be good citizens.

1. **Teacher:** Sister Madeleine [From an interview]

2. **Classes Taught:** Classes 2 & 3

3. **Number of children in classes:** No information

4. **Methods:** The best way to get the children to work is to give them group work. This is especially true for the slower children. If left to work individually, the slower children get easily frustrated and stop making an effort. On the other hand, if they are broken into work groups, with the brighter children acting as leaders, the children do not get so easily frustrated. For example, I will have a whole group read together instead of each child individually. This way the slower children can follow along with the group. I find that individual reading skills improve by this technique. With arithmetic, I have the children give group answers to the problems. They have to work it out together and reach a single decision. After doing this for several days, I hold a competition between the groups—adding up the sums of correct answers in each group, this time having the children work out their answers individually. I find marked improvement in individual skills by using this group technique.

5. **Rewards:** I praise good work by one of the students in front of the others, and pet them sometimes when they have done good work. If I had punished a child earlier in the day I make a special effort to reward them if they do something good later on. If the whole class does well at an

assignment I sometimes give them some extra recess time—something they like very much. Sometimes, if a few of the children do well at an assignment I give them religious pictures as a prize.

6. **Punishment:** To punish children if they are bad, I usually begin by scolding them and telling them the right way. I always scold them first and warn them; the second time I also scold them but the third time I give them the strap. It's not good to hit the little ones right away because they might not know the right way, but after I have told them the right way and warned them, I use the strap. For instance, when the children disobeyed me several times and ran to the bus before it had stopped I had to do something or someone might have gotten killed.

For school work I may punish the children for being lazy or not working well by shaming them in front of the class. For general work, the European system of report cards to the parents, and grading of individual assignments is used.

If children fight, I hold an inquiry to find out who started it and what happened. If nothing serious has happened, for example, if they were only pulling at each other, I let it go with a scolding and give weekly lessons in decorum, using breaches as examples. If one of the children gets malicious, like striking another child with a stick, I use the strap.

If a child acts cheeky to me, I bring them in front of the class and scold them, which shames them. They don't like that and it's a good means of control.

You can't punish them too much, because you want to teach them to be kind, and how can you do that if you are not kind to them yourself?

7. **Aims:** Being a teacher is very important because it affects the lives of the children so much. A good mother can do a better job, but the mothers in Rotuma only know some things. The important thing is not only to teach English and arithmetic, but to teach them to be kind and friendly and to get along with each other. They remember what you taught them, and sometimes they come back to you after a year or more and remind you of something you taught them a long time ago and something you've forgotten about.

The children are very sensitive. If you show them love and affection, they will do anything for you. Even if you hit them they come back as soon as you show them some affection. I have a real problem with some of the children, since they get jealous whenever I show affection to someone else. Also, sometimes a child will cry when a teacher tells them to do something they don't want to do or are afraid they cannot do well.

I love teaching very much! Children are wonderful and I can understand why the Bible teaches that it is easy for a child's heart to find the way to heaven. You can learn a lot from children.

1. **Teacher:** Fauoro Olsen

2. **Class taught:** Class 2

3. **Number of children in class:** 14 boys, 15 girls

4. **Methods:** In every subject, new work is taught to the whole class, then they split up into three groups to do different activities, revising work already taught or newly taught work. In number work, Monday is the day in which new work is introduced. It's mostly oral and practical work. Then written work comes in the other days. Those who finish before time can go on with harder sums printed on cards.

The method used in teaching English Reading—the new word is used in many sentences. With words like run, jump, hop, etc., dramatise meanings. If nouns, like box, door, mat, etc., real objects are shown. The word is printed on the blackboard several times for children to see and say it. Then, they go to their seats and copy it four times, saying it at the same time. After writing it down, they go to group corners to do activities set out for them, like word matching, sentence matching, flash cards, etc. Group leaders are in charge. One group will stay with me at the blackboard. After each child in the group has read two lines from the passage, I'll leave them to the group leader, but go and check the other two groups. After that they change to the next activity. When all the groups have had a turn in reading the passage, apparatus are put away and the children come down to the floor. I will read the passage over to them or sometimes get the best reader to do so.

If the reading matter is suitable for dramatisation, then the children can dramatise it. If not, then I ask them questions about it. Sometimes I get a few children to tell it in a story form in Rotuman. The rest can add on to it or say it's not true, like what the person telling it said.

My class is divided into three groups: (A) best ones, (B) fair ones, (C) duller ones. Leaders are the best ones out of each group. If one of the leaders misbehaves or does not do his or her work properly, he or she is replaced by the next one. Those in the upper groups are expected to do better than the lower ones. If not, then they'll go down, which will be a

disgrace to them. The ones in the lower groups try to get in the upper groups.

5. **Rewards:** In written work, the best ones are shown to the class. In hand work, the best ones are kept. In other things, a few words of praise are given or hand clapping, e.g., for those who are improving.

6. **Punishment:** The stick is given to those who swear, steal, lie, or fight. Those who did not have pencils, books or things needed for handwork more than two days will kneel on the floor, and also those who play during group or class work. Badly written work will be written again. If it's still the same, then those who have done well will pull their ears. Careless or lazy writers are required to rewrite their work. If it is badly done again, then the stick is given to their hands, that is, if work can be better than what has been done.

7. **Aims:**
(a) To make children realise that they are lucky to have what their parents missed, and it's up to them to try to do better, while they have the chance to do so.
(b) To teach them the need to be able to cope with everyday life problems, e.g., buying things from the shops, telling the time, etc.
(c) Through stories of important or good people, to encourage them to want to do something useful in their future life.
(d) To prepare them for upper class work.

As a teacher I would like all my children to be good and useful people to their people, community or wherever they go. The reasons why I chose teaching are:
(a) I love children
(b) I want to be useful to my people and country, by bringing up or helping children to become good citizens in their communities.

1. **Teacher:** Mosio M. Penjueli

2. **Class taught:** Class 4

3. **Number of children in class:** 14 boys, 16 girls

4. **Methods:** Split into 6 groups of 5 children. They compete with each other in all subjects. A test is given to select the best six as leaders. The weaker ones are in group 5 & 6 which I put very close to me, as they need my help more than the others.

5. **Rewards:** I use words of praising to reward them for good work.

6. **Punishment:** I often punish them for bad, dirty, etc. work by using words that I believe will make them feel ashamed of what they have done.

7. **Aims:** To gain children's minds to learn & know whatever I teach them in all subjects. I expect them to become true respectful etc. in their future. I chose to be a teacher to help the children to grow up to know ways etc. to increase their knowledge, and to help my people known as the community anytime possible.

1. **Teacher:** Anamarie K. Aisea

2. **Class taught:** Class 5

3. **Number of children in class:** 16 boys, 18 girls

4. **Methods:** The children are divided into 4 groups, dividing the girls and boys as equally as possible. This group method is used for Reading, Art and Revision work. The bright children are grouped together and the dull ones in one group for the teacher to pay attention to them especially. For most of the other subjects the class is taken as a whole. Revision of the previous work is taken before the new work, and revisional questions at the end. For Teaching Aids I collect as many visual aids as I possibly can and for the unobtainable ones I use quick sketches. The real objects, of course, if they can be obtained. In Natural Science, most of our work is done outside demonstrating the practical side of the topics and then the written work or visa-versa.

5. **Rewards:**
a. A word of praise
b. A clap from the class
c. Work put up on the wall
d. A chart on the wall recording the marks

e. Climbing a ladder. The best one on top, etc.

6. **Punishment:**
a. For bad work—do the work again correctly and get the stick on their bottoms.
b. Failing duty—The period of doing that particular duty is lengthened.
c. Bad behaviour—corporal punishment.
d. Disrespectful—a scolding and if serious the stick on their bottoms.

7. **Aims:** To be able to teach the children in a way for them to understand and to be able to prove to be citizens in the community in which they live. I became a teacher to be able to help my fellow countrymen and to share with them what little knowledge I have. Secondly, my love of children.

1. **Teacher:** Ieli Irava
(Note: Ieli was Headmaster of Motusa School at the time)

2. **Class taught:** Composite class—Classes 5 & 6

3. **Number of children in class:** Class 5: 15 boys, 13 girls; Class 6: 13 boys, 13 girls

4. **Methods:** The method of teaching a big composite class varies a great deal in the various subjects. There is a certain amount of grouping, especially in Arithmetic, English, Reading (ability groups), etc. In Social Studies, Health, Natural Science, etc. grouping is done only when doing project work or for competitive work in questioning and answers.

It is the official policy of the school is to let the students learn for themselves, rather than merely imparting information to them. On the other hand, this is sometimes quite impracticable because of the language problem. Therefore, the general procedure is to instruct the children firstly and then to encourage them to do work on their own. Individual recitation is used to ascertain the degree of learning and the class is also divided into groups for the purpose of stimulating competition. One person from one group will ask a question to a person in the other group, alternating back and forth between answering and asking questions; questions must be answered by individuals in rotation. The group with the most points at the end of the session wins the competition. Each group has a leader, but

leaders are rotated so that every child has a chance to be a leader at some time.

In addition to these groupings, the class is also divided into three groups on the basis of ability. The best group is given more difficult assignments to do (e.g., in an arithmetic quiz, the first group may be given 10 problems, the second 7 and the third 5). There is no official recognition of the ranking of these groups, but the students are well aware of the hierarchy and are proud to be in the advanced group, although the advanced students do not show their pride openly to the less advanced students.

5. **Rewards:** Rewards for good work is not given as something material. Rewarding of this sort will only encourage the children to expect something material. Any failure to comply with this kind of rewarding will only result in disappointment. A little praise and demonstrating of outstanding work gets far better results and encouragement, for the other children to try to achieve the same results.

6. **Punishment:** Punishment is given for (a) any form of bad behaviour and (b) for carelessness in school work. The form of punishment usually administered for bad work depends on the nature of the offense—laziness, untidiness, carelessness, etc. For such, scolding, repetition of the work, detaining of defaulter during recess, etc., is the more usual punishment and is given by the class teacher.

There is a regulation prohibiting the use of corporal punishment by teachers, and that this should be done only by permission of the headmaster, but in fact I authorize my teachers to use corporal punishment when they find it necessary. In extreme instances the case is referred to me and I administer the punishment. Scolding is used as a basic technique of control as well.

Examinations are given during the years (2 or 3 exams) and students are given grades and reports are sent to the parents. At the end of the year each teacher makes out a report on his children and the reports are evaluated by me, along with consideration of each child's performance on the examinations, and the child's age. I decide on the basis of these items whether or not they are to be passed on to the next grade. Age is a very important consideration in advancing the slower students and I tend to push them along if they are too old for the class they have been in, even if their performance doesn't otherwise warrant such advance.

7. **Aims:** As a teacher I aim at these achievements:

(1) To raise the standard of education in Rotuma, and by doing so to raise the people's standard of living—that is, to improve their health standards and make them more able to live in the modern world.
(2) To improve the moral and physical well-being of the people through the children.
(3) To try and develop any promising individuals in the various academic subjects and form the early basic requirements for higher education.
(4) To achieve the above is to prepare the children to be able to face the world better when they leave school and take up their responsibilities in their community. The reason why I chose to become a teacher is to try and achieve the above aims and, to me, teaching the children is the way in which I can do it best. I wouldn't be helping them if I just took a job in Fiji.

1. **Teacher:** Faga K. Solomon

2. **Class taught:** Class 6

3. **Number of children in class:** 15 boys, 11 girls

4. **Methods:** These are the methods I use when I teach the following subjects:
(a) Health:
    (1) By formal lessons.
    (2) Talks by children on Health topics
    (3) Personal examples
    (4) Incidental remarks as opportunity offers
(b) Music:
    (1) Singing
    (2) Formal training
    (3) Musical appreciation
(c) Natural Science
    (1) By formal lessons (Experiments, Discussions)
    (2) By group work (Observation, Reports, etc.)
    (3) By projects and assignments
    (4) By incidental teaching
    (5) Morning talks

(d) Social Studies
- (1) By direct formal lessons, followed by notes written by children or teacher
- (2) Talks by children
- (3) In groups
- (4) By wall charts

(e) Arithmetic
- (1) Class is broken up into ability groups: A & B

(f) English
- (1) Oral works precedes all written work.
- (2) By the integration of formal English with all other aspects of the language, developing ideas which present themselves in reading or spelling period, e.g., noting the relationship of singular and plural.
- (3) By relating the formal work with everyday speech, and correcting mistakes as they arise in oral and written work.
- (4) Teaching grammar rules apart from oral and written work.
- (5) Children are given unlimited expression in spoken English. Verb drills, using all parts of verbs in sentences, sentence building and blackboard patterns.

5. **Rewards:** Good children are rewarded in the following way:
- (1) Either thanked by the teacher or one of the pupils.
- (2) Promoted to a higher group from where he or she was.
- (3) Chosen to be a leader of a group.

6. **Punishments:** Punishments are sometimes inflicted for:
- (1) Dishonesty
- (2) Disrespectfulness
- (3) Theft
- (4) Laziness
- (5) Disobedience

7. **Aims:** As a teacher who whole-heartedly loves my work, I earnestly hope to do my work to the best of my ability to be successful in every field and aspects of my teaching career.

1. **Teacher:** Elizabeth Inia

2. **Class taught:** Class 7A

3. **Number of children in class:** 16 boys, 19 girls

4. **Methods:**
a. First important thing for me to remember before I teach any subject is to ask myself why I teach it. Unless I know the general aim, the children may obtain very little real value from my work.
b. If I have a clear aim in my mind then I can try my best to achieve my aim in trying to help the children.
c. In setting out a lesson I put in Step 1 what I expect to do first, Step 2 what I expect to do next and so on.
d. In lessons such as History, Geography, N[atural] Science, and Hygiene, I usually arrange my work in at least three steps, that is:

> Step 1. Few questions at the beginning of the lesson to prepare the children's minds for the new subject. It is impossible for them to learn anything completely new. They learn by linking a new idea to an old one.
>
> Step 2. After refreshing in the children's minds some familiar ideas on which they connect the new ones, then the new ideas are presented to them. In this step, I find out that if I tell them everything, they are likely to forget what I say on the following week, and that is of very little value in developing the powers of the children. Telling method is good for lower classes, but in my class the Finding Out method is the best. Of course I must tell them something which is too hard for them to find out, if my questions fail to lead them to the facts. In this Presentation Step, Questions help them to reason out some facts. Demonstration is important. Teaching Aids help to make my teaching more effective. I have only a few pictures cut from some magazines; brown paper maps which I made myself because our school can't afford to buy maps for each class; no globe either, drawings and sketches on the blackboard are very helpful indeed.
>
> Step 3. Lastly the children do something with the ideas presented to them. "No impression without expression." The children answer

oral revision questions. They may draw something for the lesson or retell the story; they may draw maps or diagrams, etc.

e. In Reading Lesson, the modern method is to group the class according to attainment. The teacher trains leaders of the groups and sees that they know what they are supposed to do. He then moves from one group to the other, concentrating mostly on the weakest group. Sometimes he gives a model reading lesson in the beginning before the class goes to their different groups.
f. In my class, I teach them to help in sharing the responsibilities of keeping our class running smoothly. Monitors are chosen for cleaning blackboards, looking after windows, flower plots, etc.
g. My children are very keen in team organizations or "houses."

Some general principles to follow:
Base your teaching on the child and follow nature.
Teach through the senses.
Proceed from the concrete to the abstract.
Proceed from the known to the unknown.
Proceed from the simple to the complex.
Teach inductively.
Let the children observe, reason and memorise if worth memorising.
Don't tell them what they can readily find out for themselves.
Let the children learn by doing.
Make all your lessons interesting and attractive.

5 & 6. **Rewards and Punishment:** In order to ensure orderly behaviour in my class and to give them self-control and living in happy relations with each other here in the school-room as well as in their villages when they grow up, I must maintain good discipline.

1. **Teacher:** Avaiki Konousi

2. **Class taught:** Class 7B

3. **Number of children in class:** 23 boys, 14 girls

4. **Methods:** This class is divided up into five different groups of mixed sexes according to their abilities and knowledge. There are seven to a

group. The leaders in each group are selected every fortnight which gives everyone a chance in the training to be good organizers for the future as some of them are likely to leave this class at the age of 14 and it will give him or her every possibility of organizing his or her fellow mates in their various fields which they will likely possess in their community. These groups compete with each other in every subject taught. In teaching certain subjects like Arithmetic, English, Health, History, etc., I have a fixed method of introducing each of them. Before I present any of the above, I always remember that I should arouse the interest of my pupils in order to achieve the aims of my lesson. This is taught in many ways which I would like to point out.

In all my presentations, particularly a new topic, I always apply the teaching techniques that I gained from a couple of years training with slight alterations, i.e., I always introduce my lessons along these few points:

a. Teach from the simple to the difficult. This is the only way which I have known and gained from experience that it can arouse the interests of the pupils and maintain them right through the lessons. From being simple at first, I notice that they are anxious to learn and as the lesson progresses and links up to difficulty, they apply their initiative power and imagination frequently.
b. Teach from known to unknown.
c. Teach from concrete to abstract. In the course of my lesson, I try my very best to ask questions on the facts mentioned so that the pupils will remember them. I also find out that by framing my questions and asking them in the right time enables them to discover the facts for themselves and avoid myself from doing the talk instead and always in mind not to lecture to them so long to cause boredom. There are other methods besides these mentioned ones.

5. **Rewards:** In rewarding my children for good work, I often do it in these different ways:
a. Praise: As children a word of praise to them is very highly valued. They like being praised by others and by praising them inside the classroom, they give their finest effort to please the teachers and also sometimes they are able to win the favour of the teachers concerned and it encourages them to ask questions whatever the case may be.
b. Display: Pupils like to show to the public that they create things, so any good thing that is done by them I often display inside the classroom so that everyone will attempt their best to have one on the wall. A "roll of

honour" on the wall showing their marks on any lesson tested also gives them great competition daily at a very high standard.
c. Changing Seats: I have special seats in my class known to them as "Excellent seats" which only the excellent pupils occupy. Everyone tries their best to occupy one of these seats. These types of rewards raise the standard to a high level of success although I am using them to motivate the weaker group.

6. **Punishment:** Regarding this professional regulation concerning punishment, no teacher is permitted to give physical punishment to the pupils except the Headteacher. But the teachers always quote, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." Rotuman children are different from Europeans; Rotuman children cannot learn without the aid of the rod. Once we stop using the rod, our children will turn out to become lazy and will never learn. By our giving punishment, children avoid misbehaviour and endeavour to learn. Although I punish my pupils at times, I always see that I don't give corporal punishment so as to inflict injuries. All minor misbehaviours I punish with my pointer as they never show me any sign of misbehaviour or laziness. All serious offenses such as stealing, fighting, etc., I always forward to the Headmaster for consideration. Sometimes I growl at them instead of punishment. When I am about to give punishment, I always think for a while whether it is fair for me to give punishment or not.

7. **Aims:** Teaching from my point of view is a profession, and membership in a profession carries with it obligations as well as privileges. Although there are many Rotumans who possess very high posts, if you think back to their beginnings, I say the first entrance to their present employment is through their teachers. So being a teacher I am very proud, because teachers are the very people who are going to mould life in the future for the present generation to improve on the past. Actually there are many teachers in the colony of different races, but they only have experience with their own people. Therefore, a Rotuman teacher will do better than teachers of other races in educating our children. My most important aim in teaching is to help my countrymen so that one day they can overtake other races in the field of education. So in the future I will be very proud indeed to see the fruits of my teaching ripening all over the island.

1. **Teacher:** Father Beattie [From an interview]

2. **Classes taught:** Forms III and IV

3. **Number of children in class:** 7 boys

4. **Methods:** Mainly by personal instruction, with individual assignments given. A minimal amount of group work is also given.

5. **Rewards:** Tests are given at the end of each term and term reports are sent to the parents of the boys, with an inclusion of a class average. On individual assignments grades are used and also the informal use of verbal rewards and criticisms is made.

6. **Punishment:** Regarding disobedient behaviour, the Bishop has ordered that no European teachers are to use the stick. Instead I use verbal admonishments and if they don't refrain, they are told to "roll up their mats." Since I have been at Upu I have told two boys to leave because of disobedient behaviour. If I were allowed to use the stick I would do so. The Bishop's orders were, however, that if a child needs to be hit, you must have a native do it. This I have never done.

7. **Aims:** My primary aim is to turn out good men—to give them a chance to better themselves. The examinations [Fiji juniors] force me into a competitive situation, since the school is judged on the outside by the test performances of its students, not the results of its moral training. In my opinion that is not a primary goal. The important thing is to try to get them to have a love of the good and the true. Hang if they pass exams or not, if a fellow comes out of here and can think for himself and isn't swayed by others, if he has a love of the good and the true, I don't care if he goes out and plants tapioca.

The Bishop's goal is to develop a local clergy, but I don't think of that as a primary goal; it's more of a long-range goal. It's kind of a difficult thing. You can't put ideas into kids' heads … besides, here they are too young.

Perhaps I don't instil strong motivation into my children because I am not competitive myself. I also think it's useless for people to be educated to a point where they can no longer live happily in their own culture and there is no place for them in the society.

1. **Teacher:** Aisea Aitu

2. **Class taught:** Form III

3. **Number of children in class:** 9 girls, 6 boys. Average age in July 1960 is 15 years

4. **Methods:**
(i) The class is taught as one group of 15 pupils. Each child is allowed a considerable measure of freedom as regards to his or her rate of progress.
(ii) Marks for each test in each subject are kept and this gives the teacher a fair idea of each pupil's ability.
(iii) Because of the extreme shortage of reading matter such as newspapers, magazines, etc., and the fact the radio set has not found its way to the average Rotuman home, many subjects such as social studies have to be taught using the direct method of really teaching or telling them what has to be taught. At times one or two children may have heard about the subject but otherwise the teacher has to do his or her best to convey a mental picture either by descriptions or diagrams or both. The teacher is very fortunate if what he or she is teaching has its picture available. I am thinking particularly of geography when one has to teach, say, the various types of forests, e.g., Boreal, Jungle, Tropical and Monsoon forests. Pictures of these will obviously be the best that we in Rotuma can hope for, for without these, descriptions and diagrams and characteristics will, at best, only convey to the children a distorted picture of, say, what a monsoon forest really is.

For general truths in maths, especially in geometry, I usually introduce these by posing a problem or problems and asking pupils to find their own methods of solving them. This is an occasion in which the bright pupils will generally submit a reasonable solution though some of these may be wrong. After these "researches," I would then teach them the accepted truths or theorem or formula sometimes using some of the children's own findings and observations. This is followed by mechanical problems and pure problems which might also involve truths already taught.

In teaching English, my greatest difficulty—in fact the greatest difficulty in a non-English-speaking country—is to encourage the children to think in English as they speak it. This is a real problem as the need to speak English in Rotuma is almost negligible. Children can do very well without English in the home and, consequently, they have to make a conscious effort to think in English while they are speaking it. To

counteract this, I ask the children to write the following for me to mark: 1 composition, 1 letter, 1 geography composition, 1 comprehension test. These four constitute what I call a MUST in English in the week's work. Incidental and other work consist of talks given by pupils, reading of poetry and prose, debates and grammar work and exercises.

As far as formal grammar is concerned, the Department of Education lays down no definite ruling as to how the subject should be taught except that the teaching of this subject should be planned in such a way that it does not become a meaningless and unnecessary task. The idea behind this is that no formal grammar should be taught until the NEED arises. In Rotuma, however, I believe that the pupils will need to have a firm grasp of the rudimentary mechanics of English because they do not live in an environment full of rich and correctly spoken English. "Learn to speak by speaking" is quite all right if one speaks and hears correct English and speaks it frequently enough, but as this is impossible in Rotuma, Rotuman pupils should not depend entirely on this method to enhance their knowledge of English. In this connexion, I can say that perhaps I teach a bit more grammar than is required by the department but I feel that I am justified in doing so because my experience both as a pupil and a teacher in Rotuma led me to believe that the "learn to speak by speaking" method is inadequate in Rotuma and that a good background of English grammar is necessary to implement the teaching of English.

In my correction of pupils' work in English, I simply use a system whereby a symbol is put in the margin where a mistake occurs on the same line. The wrong word or words are crossed out. The pupil is expected to correct and rewrite the corrected version of phrase or sentence and show it again to me. This procedure applies to all written work in English, whether it be English composition or a geography essay.

5. **Rewards:** With me, these are rare. Perhaps the only form of rewards that I frequently use is that written at the end of an exercise which I mark in their books. The following are used: "Good" or "Very Good Work—keep it up." This last one is of course rarely given. Other semi-reward, half-threat phrases & clauses that I used are "This is not your best"; "Writing poor—look out!" and many others. Perhaps the greatest reward that my pupils can hope for is to have one's work read to the class. I believe there have been only two such readings so far this year.

6. **Punishment**: I punish pupils for the following reasons:
(1) Bullying, (2) fighting, (3) using obscene language, (4) disrespectful behaviour, (5) stealing, (6) late to work, (7) failing to bring knife for work,

(8) not standing to attention while the flag is being lowered, (9) talking during parade, (10) failure to pick up rubbish in the morning, (11) breaking a school rule, (12) telling lies, (13) failing a duty, e.g., sweeping, (14) copying other children's work, (15) not doing homework, (16) inattention in class or parade, (17) carelessness in written work, e.g., a child may repeatedly make a mistake in spelling a word which has been corrected many times before.

The following two participants taught practical subjects. Iliese Atalifo taught woodworking classes for boys and Jiuria Samuel taught sewing and cooking for girls.

1. **Teacher:** Iliese Atalifo

2. **Classes taught:** Classes 6 to 8 in the primary section and Form III to IV in the secondary section

3. **Number of children in classes:** 133 boys in the following woodwork classes:

	Class 6	Class 7B	Class 7A	Class 8	Form III	Form IV	Total
Malhaha	14	16	16	14	6	13	79
Motusa	12						12
Paptea	11						11
Sumi	13		9	3			22
Upu					2	4	6
Total	50	16	25	17	8	17	133

4. **Methods:**
(a) Grouping methods: The groups are formed according to each different type of work or project they are doing. For example, the boys in a class might be doing three different types of work, which means this class will be grouped into three.
(b) Teaching methods: The methods used to every group fall under the following subheadings:

1. Preparation: At this stage I explain what is to be done. Tell each use or show what new process previously unknown to the children that must be used. Note: Preparation must be short and interesting, and should really prepare the children for what is to follow. It is not a lecture; it should not be a waste of time with too much talk. Its main aim is to link new things to be taught with what the pupils have already learnt (from known to unknown)

2. Demonstration: The teacher who is demonstrating should clearly explain each step in the work he is doing.

3. Summing Up: After the demonstration, the teacher should go over the main points again by questioning & answering so that each pupil has a clear idea of what he is going to do and how to do it.

4. Application: This must be done by the pupils who must now apply what they have seen and been told. At this stage the teacher must encourage pupils to ask questions.

Important Rules: Never do the work for your pupil, make him do it himself. If he is doing the wrong method or wrong work, stop him and get a new piece of scrap wood in which to demonstrate to him what he should do, then make him do the process before going back to the exercise in hand.

5. **Rewards:** I do give a few words of praise and a passing mark in his Record Card.

6. **Punishment:** For bad behaviours, fighting amongst themselves, disrespectful acts, punishments are usually warnings and sticks. For poor work, the punishment is to repeat the work.

7. **Aims:** My only hope as a teacher is to enable my children to become good citizens in future. I chose to become a teacher for the following reasons:

1. I love the teaching part.
2. To be a helpful figure not only in schools but to outsiders as well.
3. To know a bit of everything as a teacher should.
4. This is one way in which I can earn my bread and butter.

1. **Teacher:** Jiurie M. Samuela

2. **Classes taught:** I am teaching girls of different schools starting from Class 6 to Form IV. Each class has a turn for sewing or cooking just for 1-1/2 hours in a week.

3. **Number of children in classes:** Here are the number of girls in each class from each school:

School	Class	Number of Students
Motusa	**Class 6**	13 girls
Paptea	**Class 6**	12 girls
Sumi	**Class 6**	12 girls
Malhaha	**Class 6**	11 girls
Malhaha	**Class 7b**	12 girls
Malhaha	**Class 7a**	19 girls
Sumi	**Class 7**	5 girls
Sumi	**Class 8**	5 girls
Malhaha	**Class 9**	22 girls
Malhaha	**Form III**	9 girls
Malhaha	**Form IV**	9 girls

4. **Methods:** Let's take sewing as an example to describe my methods of teaching technical work.

Blackboard preparation has been written beforehand and the class comes in at 9:00 o'clock for their 1-1/2 hour period. Names are called and revision work taken for about 5 minutes. Then I read out the notes on the blackboard & an 1/2 hour theory given before children start doing practical work. As each process is shown in practical work the theory in connection with it is given.

After the half-hour period, children take out their sewing and work in groups according to the number of machines they have to use, e.g., if a class has twelve girls they are divided into three different groups; if more than twelve, then into four or more groups, so that four or six girls could use one machine.

As some of the girls have already been able to use the machines properly, they are distributed among the groups as a captains of each team

and set as a goal that all members of the team be able to use the machine. To avoid wasting time while waiting for machines the girls do some hand-sewing to carry on with, as well as machine garments. Children who have no sewing are provided with a sewing job for the school, mending sports jerseys, curtains, etc., or helping their friends who are far behind with their sewing.

The class as a whole is called to the demonstration table to introduce or demonstrate something new, e.g., cutting out a garment. I do the cutting on actual material, then the children practice on paper before the real project. Those who learn quickly are likely to finish early and may become group leaders for the next project, supposing that the work is a big one. The children are allowed to keep their own sewing and to do some sewing between our sewing lesson and the next lesson, provided that a satisfactory standard and correct method are being used.

The group leaders report any trouble or bad equipment and I go around assisting girls who are in need. The children stop work at ten or eight minutes before time for their cleaning up.

5. **Rewards:** Words of praise are given to those who work well and keep their work tidy.

6. **Punishment:** Minor punishments are given for bad behaviour, fighting among themselves, disrespectful acts, etc. Punishments like carrying so many baskets of soil, digging, scrubbing, etc. Corporal punishment is given but not very often.

7. **Aims:** As a teacher I expect my pupils to be good ladies, i.e., housewives helping in their own villages, looking after their homes in a hygienic way. Being a teacher is my only choice to help my country.

Chapter 15
Adolescence, Courtship, and Paths to Marriage

During the first half of the twentieth century, a few Rotumans continued their education in Fiji and abroad after completing schooling in Rotuma (most frequently to become teachers or nurses), and some others migrated to Fiji where they took employment or became sailors on merchant ships. But the majority of youngsters stayed at home and learned to perform adult tasks. Boys became adept in horticulture and fishing, in building houses and making canoes, and in preparing food for native feasts. Girls learned to weave mats, to care for a household, to fish, and to prepare everyday meals.

In the life stories collected in 1960 from Rotuman men and women of all ages, a common refrain was leaving school to help their parents and contribute to the support of their families. Here are some examples:

> *Man in his 50s:* We grew older and I was forced to stay at home [from school] and help my father work. I began to work very hard and my mother seemed to become happier, compared to the time when I was small. I found out that we were poor because of our father's laziness. When my younger brother left school and helped us work our family began to live more happily, like others did.
>
> *Man in his 40s:* I left school and began to help my father and elder brother in their plantations. They liked me because I worked very well and helped them a lot.
>
> *Man in his 30s:* I … had to leave school [when] I was in Class 6. I still wanted to study but there wasn't anybody to pay my school fees. Life was becoming harder for me because I knew I had to work and look after my mother and grandfather. I had to cut copra to earn money for us and sometimes became so tired that I went to

> sleep without supper. By the time I was 17 I got used to our native kind of work.
>
> *Man in his 30s:* When I was 14 years old I told my father that I didn't want to go to school and asked him if I could stay home. I told him that I wasn't really learning anything in school and that he was just wasting his money by sending me, and that it would be better if I could stay home and help him with his plantations. Dad agreed that I could stop going to school if I wanted, so I stayed home and helped him.
>
> *Man in his 20s:* Sometimes, when my father was sick, I had to stay home from school and get food for the family. Finally I left school so that I could help my father work on his plantations. I knew that if he would work too hard by himself he might get sick and die, and there would be no one to look after my small sisters as well as their father did.
>
> *Woman in her 50s:* I came out from school when I was 14 years old and I stayed with my brothers and sisters at home. Most of the time I spent at home helping my mother.
>
> *Woman in her 40s:* When I grew older I became wiser and my mother could trust me to do her work and to help her however I could.
>
> *Woman in her 30s:* I felt bad to see my mother working so hard so I stopped going to school in order to stay home and help her.
>
> *Woman in her 30s:* I came out from school when I was 14 years old…. I stayed home and helped my mother, and she taught me how to fish and how to make mats.
>
> *Woman in her 20s:* [After] I left school, … I stayed home to help my mother and to help my father in his plantations and look after the animals…. I knew that once my parents died I couldn't have them again, and as the years passed away, the weaker they became.

In addition to the work they performed for their families, groups of boys and girls formed the nucleus of communal labour in every village. On

ceremonial occasions when a village or district hosted visitors, the young men prepared most of the food, while the young women did most of the serving and cleaning up. And although not mentioned in the life histories, groups of boys and girls also participated in a variety of sporting activities, the boys in cricket, rugby, soccer, and such traditional sports as wrestling *(hula)* and spear throwing *(tika),* and the girls in netball and field hockey.

Courtship

The primary focus of the reminiscences about adolescence for both men and women was courtship and the quest for a suitable spouse.[1] The boys in a village would form a group and in the evenings would roam to other villages in the hope of meeting agreeable females. Much of the socialization of boys and girls by the parental generation was aimed at inculcating the kinds of qualities that would make them desirable mates. For boys this meant, first and foremost, becoming a good provider. For girls it meant that, in addition to learning to perform all the chores associated with the role of housewife, she should develop a manner of decorum marked by modesty with a touch of shyness, consideration for others including in-laws, and a sense of humour. However, there was a tension between parents and their adolescent offspring insofar as arranged marriages were the cultural ideal and were negotiated between families, while boys and girls were prone to form alliances based on emotional attachments. This often resulted in a conflict of interest that showed up over and over again in the life histories, with parents frequently disapproving of the initial marital choices of their children, with varying outcomes.

The degree with which Rotumans focused on courtship as a matter of concern during the time period we are concerned with is testified to by

the number of sayings bearing on the courting process collected by Elizabeth Inia and published in *Fäeag 'es Fūaga.* I have selected the few below that I think best reflect cultural attitudes regarding courtship at the time.

Recognition of the preoccupation of young men and women with courtship is revealed in the saying *'Af'af se 'es vai* (An illness that cannot be cured), which refers to a "lovesick" individual. More specific to males is *Ha' rau* (Smoking leaves), which was said of men who went visiting at night, searching for places to court women. Smoking was once a new thing on Rotuma, with the allure of the foreign. Young men smoked cigarettes to show off and attract girls, especially during *manea' hune'ele* (beach games). The phrase became a metonym for young men intent on courtship.

Expectations regarding gender roles in courtship were reflected in two sayings: *Sus 'en fa* (Milk of men) reflected the double standard for unmarried men and women. Milk is a metaphor for indulgence, including sexual indulgence. Young men were expected to go around looking for a suitable mate and trying out different relationships, while girls were expected to remain chaste. Another saying, *Hanua 'uhlei* (A village of sweet yams), referred to a tendency for intermarriage between boys and girls from the same village. As Mrs. Inia noted, "It is difficult to dig up the edible root of the *'uhlei* because the vine of the plant is full of thorns. These thorns are likened to young men who keep possible suitors from elsewhere away from the girls (sweet yams) of their village." Although it was considered preferable to marry someone from another village, some youths were so zealous in guarding the virtue of the women of their village that they prevented others from courting them.

The clandestine nature of courtship relations was captured in the saying *'Otou pan heta* (My pen pal), which was said of a friend of the

opposite sex, a lover. The saying refers to the custom of passing notes, usually through a trusted friend, to someone one was interested in romantically. This was a way of surreptitiously initiating a relationship so that others, particularly parents, did not find out about it which could expose the lovers to shameful ridicule and censure.

Several sayings embody criticism of unmarried men and women who were fickle and had difficulty in forming stable relationships. The expression *Moa te Sumi* (The cock at Sumi) refers to the weather vane in the form of a rooster atop the Catholic church in Juju. Whichever way the wind blows, the cock turns in that direction. People who frequently change their minds are like that rooster. Likewise, the commentary *'Oaf öföf* (Unstable love) is a criticism of someone who forms a relationship for a little while, then drops it; the saying was especially used in reference to a man who could not stay with one woman.

Then there were the words of advice to young men and women engaged in courtship that were in the form of sayings. For instance, *Faksar 'e mal la'la'o, sirien se hanua 'oroi* (Enticed by moving pictures [illusions], he passes on to the afterworld) was a warning against temptations that promise more than they deliver. It was especially a warning to boys who were tempted to pursue girls whose affections could not be trusted. In a similar vein, *Fan'ia hual ta* (To shoot the moon) was a warning to a boy who wanted to marry a rich, pretty, or otherwise unattainable girl. His hopes were thought to be set too high. That one should avoid being enticed by good looks alone is the premise of the saying *'Eagke 'a laloag mafa ['a lag mafa]* (It is not that [you are going] to eat [her] eyes). The implication is that one should look for a capable person who can reliably look after you and your family. You should not be satisfied by good looks alone. Most important, perhaps, was the admonition *'Ofa; la re; ma a'sahsahag* (Love, but

not beyond the stripes). This was said to someone who was so much in love that they did not know how to control themselves. It was a way of cautioning an unmarried young man who was so much in love he spent all his time and resources on a girl before they were married. His parents would advise him to "put on the brakes" and not "cross over the stripes [stop lines]" in case she would end up rejecting him. The saying alludes to traffic markers on paved roads in Fiji and abroad (there being no paved roads or traffic markers on Rotuma). Finally, the saying *Mus Rotuam heta nono ma 'e mua heta* (Whispering in Rotuman is always the best) warns against marrying someone from another country, a foreigner. According to Mrs. Inia:

> This saying is less a rejection of inter-ethnic marriage than a way of drawing attention to the importance of conjugal communication. The implication is that, for a woman especially, bedtime provides the best opportunity for talking over problems as well as whispering endearments. It is also the time that women are considered to be in the strongest negotiating position vis-a-vis their husbands. A wife can make the most of the opportunity only if she and her husband speak the same language.

Forms of Marriage

In its ideal form, arranged marriages (*sok fäeag)* were characterized by formal negotiations between the boy's and girl's families.[2] Typically, the young man, or a member of his family that desired the match, initiated negotiations by sending a representative to the girl's family to speak on his behalf. A suitor often sent his father, or an uncle, but to add weight to a proposal a man of rank—a sub-chief, or even a district chief—might be implored to make the overture. According to custom, a girl's parents could make a decision without consulting her, and marriages could be arranged between parties who did not know each other. If the offer was accepted,

the two families would engage in a series of gift exchanges, culminating in an elaborate wedding ceremony. Although a marriage arranged by *sok fäeag* often necessitated a large and expensive wedding, it had the advantage of universal sanction within the Rotuman community and a cooperative alliance between the families involved. Less formal, but nevertheless respectable marriages, could be arranged with the acceptance of the union by both the boy's and girl's families, even though the couple were known to be intimate beforehand. Here are some examples from the life histories:

> *Man in his 60s:* I became an adolescent and mixed with other boys. We began to wander every night to villages near our district. I met an adolescent girl whom I seemed to love most but when my parents knew about it they gave me a good scolding because they didn't like the girl, so I had to stay away from her. Then I met another one, but my parents didn't like her just the same. Words that came from these two young girls' relations made them very angry. I loved these two girls because when we met each other and I knew I was the one who spoke to them first. I thought that we could make up a good family, but my parents didn't like them so I had to find a way to stay away from them.
>
> One evening my parents told me that they had found a young woman and already spoke to her parents about her becoming my wife. They told me her name and I was so glad to hear about her because she was one of the girls who hated me to come near her whenever the young boys and girls mixed together. I loved her, of course, but never got a chance to get near her. We made our engagement and after a few months we got married. Everything was easy because of our parents.

> *Man in his 50s:* At the end of 1926, after getting my teaching certificate, I came back to Rotuma and got married. I had seen my wife in 1923 on a visit to Rotuma after I finished primary school. But my father arranged the whole thing while I was in Fiji. He just told me to come to Rotuma and get married and take my wife back to Fiji with me. I didn't mind, so I consented. What actually

happened is that while in Fiji I met a Rotuman nurse and wanted to marry her. She said if our parents agreed, she would agree, so I sent a letter to my father, but he told me no, that he would choose a wife for me, and he did.

Woman in her 60s: One day my parents told me that I was to get married to a young man who had come to them and asked them if he could marry with me. I didn't want to dispute my father's wishes because I was a bit frightened of him, so I gave my agreement. I wondered how my parents could do it—have me get married to a man whom I had never known before. I didn't have any idea what kind of character he had. But I went through with it and we got married and he came to live with my parents.

Woman in her 40s: I made friends with a neighbouring girl about my age and we had good times. We knew each other very well and we always had the same mind when we wished to do something. It was then that I began to make friends with boys, but I was afraid that my grandparents might become very angry with me. One day I told my auntie and grandmother that I had a boyfriend and they didn't like it and told me not to make any more boyfriends, so I didn't. I stayed away from my friends for a few days and did not even go out in the evenings. Then one day my grandmother told me that I was going to get married. She knew that that man would take good care of me. I wondered what sort of a man my grandparents would give me to. All the days before I got married I thought of leaving my grandparents and running away to find a new home for myself, but my conscience told me to wait; maybe it was the right thing my people were doing to me. It was really right! We got married even though I didn't know the man before and I was a bit frightened of him, but he was very kind to me.

Woman in her 30s: I made friends with my neighbours and we stayed together sometimes when we wished to go for picnics on Sundays and during holidays. We were together for a few months when one day my auntie told me that one boy had come to tell her that he wanted me to marry him. I was a bit annoyed, but she comforted me and said that she knew that that boy was nice and that he might love me. I agreed at last but I didn't really know him.

Complications and Tensions with In-Laws

Parental opposition to unions formed by their offspring was commonplace and often resulted in breaking up relationships that had been formed:

> *Man in his 50s:* When I was twelve, I fell in love with a girl and talked with her. I wanted to marry her, but my father didn't like it. My father thought I was too young to marry, so he sent me to Fiji.
>
> *Man in his 20s:* Soon after I came back I started to go out in the evenings with my friends. We went to the shows and dances together and always had a good time. Then one day I met a girl whom I liked and I wanted to make her my girlfriend. I started to go to see her almost every night. Then one day she told me that she was afraid to continue this way because the people might find out and tell her mother and father, and if that would happen and I wouldn't marry her, she would be very ashamed, and maybe she wouldn't be able to find another husband because of it. Because I had been holding her close to me in my arms nearly every night I felt like I would like to marry her. Besides, when I heard she was afraid I felt bad, because she was my girlfriend and I didn't want anything to hurt her. A couple of days after that I went to her again and she told me that I better make up my mind if I wanted to marry her or not, so I went right to her mother and father and told them that I really loved their daughter and that I wanted to marry her. After I talked to them they said they would agree to it and let me marry their daughter. I came home that night with my heart full of happiness and love. I told my parents about it but they didn't like it and didn't want me to marry this girl. When the girl's mother found out that my parents didn't want me to marry her, she told me that she'd never let me marry her daughter.

One reason for parental opposition to a marriage was when the boy and girl were from different religions. At the time, there were only two religious denominations on the island, Methodist and Catholic; relations between them had soured as a result of a war in the late nineteenth century and had not yet been reconciled.[3]

> *Man in his 60s:* At about age 14 my father left all his plantations to me. He stayed home and did as he wished, and I looked after our plantations. I went out every evening with my friends in the neighbourhood. We went from village to village seeking our own pleasure. I met a young woman who lived in another district and we started to see each other, but her parents and relatives objected because of our different religions.

Nevertheless, parents, or parental surrogates, sometimes accepted unions that had been formed without their knowledge rather than alienate their offspring, as per the following accounts:

> *Woman in her 60s:* When I grew up and became an adolescent, I made friends with my neighbours, and whenever they wanted to go somewhere we always went together. That time all the adolescent girls were under the care of the chief's sister. We had formed a club and practiced our native dances, and we went dancing around the island, competing with other clubs. My parents always told me to stay quiet when I joined the others to go any place. I met many people when we went dancing in different places and became familiar with the different ways of people, but both the old people and young people were as nice and polite as could be. They always gave us a warm welcome whenever we came to their places to dance.
>
> It happened that I met an adolescent boy with whom I fell in love. He spoke to me, but I didn't want to take a chance, and I just told him that my parents were at home. He seemed to have the same feeling for me as I did for him, so his father came to my parents one night and they spoke about us. My parents were surprised because I never told them about that boy. They asked me about it and I just gave them my agreement and they sent words of contentment to the boy's parents, and after a few months we got married.
>
> *Woman in her 50s:* On holidays I used to go out with my girl friends and look for fun. Sometimes we went out and met boys. We would talk to them and joke, just like we really knew them well. One day I met a boy and every time that I used to go out with my friends I used to talk and joke with him. I watched the way he acted and

began to like him very much. Deep in my heart I was in love with him, but I didn't know whether he loved me or not, so I joked with him and always hid my love.

One night I went with my brothers to a dance and I met him. That night he was drunk, and when I danced with him he told me all about his love for me, so I told him that I loved him, too. I told him that I started to love him from the first day we met, and that if he really loved me he would come and tell my parents so we could get married. He came and talked to my parents and we got married soon afterwards. I was 16 years old at the time.

Woman in her 40s: My parents told me to leave school when I was 15 years of age…. I stayed home to help my mother…. I began to make friends with other adolescent girls in the village and played games at night with adolescent boys who would come from other villages. After a few months I met a boy who seemed to love me in return and I told my parents that they would like him if he spoke to them. He did come one day with his father, and not long afterwards our dreams came true; we got married and stayed in my home.

Defiance of parental opposition to marriages was not unusual, however, as the following stories indicate:

Man in his 60s: With some of the boys from the neighbourhood I used to go out in the evening and roam around the village. We went to the shows and dances and enjoyed ourselves. After that we would come home to sleep. It happened one day that I met a nice-looking woman whom I wanted to marry if my parents would agree to it. I knew that this woman had been married before, and that her husband had died. I tried different ways, but I couldn't have a chance to speak to this woman, and then I told my parents about it, but because we were of different religions, my parents told me to look forward to the future and I might meet a young woman who was of the same religion as myself. But I felt that I had to marry this woman. She might be kinder to me than a younger one. I waited, but my parents wouldn't change their mind, so I left them and went to this woman's home.

> *Man in his 60s:* My friends and I used to take evening strolls to other villages, looking for fun with the adolescent boys and girls of other places. It happened one time that I met a girl and we fell in love with each other, so I came home and told my parents. But because we were of different religions my parents did not want me to marry this girl. I was very stubborn and wanted my wish to come true, so I forced my parents to give their agreement. They did and we got married.

> *Man in his 50s:* When I was about 15, I left school and stayed home to look after our family…. Being an adolescent boy, I began to make friends with other boys in the village and followed them everywhere they went every evening. A few years later I began to make girlfriends like the older boys. In the beginning I felt very shy to face my girlfriend when we happened to meet each other, but later I was said to be the worst boy ever towards the adolescent girls. I fell in love with many girls I met, but since my parents refused to accept them I had to leave them. At last I met a young woman whom I really loved, and before telling my parents I brought her home. We were married without my parents' consent, but I didn't face them or else we might have had a big quarrel.

One strategy for defying parental objections was for the boy to go to the girl's home with the intention of staying, termed *fu'u.* This was sometimes accomplished, with the girl's consent, by sleeping with her overnight and instead of leaving in the morning, remaining in her bed. This was considered equivalent to an announcement of his intention to marry the girl:

> *Man in his 30s:* After being in the army for nearly two years I decided to return to Rotuma in time for the Christmas holidays. I came back home and saw my mother and father again, and we all spent a very happy Christmas together. Every night I used to go with my friends to the beach games, and one night I met a girl. I looked at her and loved her right away. I liked the way she talked and the way she acted, so every night during that Christmas holiday I went to be with her. One night she asked me whether I

> really loved her or not, and I answered by telling her I loved her with all my heart and soul. After having been with her every night during the playtime *(mane'a),* my mind was made up and I didn't care about anything else, only her. I thought of her every day and when I left her, I counted the hours and minutes until I would meet her again the next night. On the last night of the holiday season I listened to the way she talked to me and I knew that she really loved me. One night I went to her and we talked the whole night, and I slept there and the next day I stayed at her home, *fu'u.* Soon after that we were married.

Another scenario was for young women to defy parental objections by leaving home and going to stay with her boyfriend's family. Such behaviour on a girl's part is labelled *taupiri* in Rotuman and was regarded as a rather shameful way for a girl to form a conjugal union. It was a last resort for girls in love who were unable to persuade their parents to accept their choice:

> *Man in his 30s:* I In Suva I met a lovely girl whom I loved and many times I tried to speak to her, but I didn't know how to talk to young girls. I finally got a chance one day and spoke to her. We began to know each other and at the end we were like a married couple. I really loved this girl and told her to wait so I could return home and tell my parents. I came home on the next boat and told my family about this and they all refused to accept it…. How sorry I was to leave this girl behind; I should have brought her with me. I gradually forgot her because we could see each other no more. Then I met another girl but my parents still didn't want me to get married and refused to accept her as well. I still kept seeing her using false pretences, but later rumours went around and the girl found out that my parents had refused her, so she left for Fiji. I felt so sorry for her because I knew we loved each other and planned for our future together, and yet we had to part because of my parents….
>
> Three years passed…. I met a third girl. I loved her and wondered if my parents would reject her as well. I knew that she loved me so we planned our future, but we guessed that my parents

> wouldn't like her because she was of a different religion. Anyway, I took her home and we got married in a few weeks' time.
>
> *Woman in her 30s:* The neighbouring adolescent girls … came over and we spent the evenings together in my home, but sometimes we would go out for a stroll.
>
> One day I met a boy whom I seemed to love. We began to see each other and spoke about the future. This boy knew how to play music and this made me like him even more. I thought he was the only man in the world. I told my parents about him and that we wished to get married as soon as we possibly could, but my parents told me that I was still too young. My brothers and sisters had all gotten married and only myself was left and they wanted me to stay with them. That boy and I kept on seeing each other so one day I went with him to his home. My parents were very angry with me but I didn't care. This boy promised to take good care of me so I was willing to leave my parents.

For young women who had been abroad in Fiji and returned to Rotuma, complications often arose that affected their attachments to both boyfriends and parents, as the following accounts illustrate:

> *Woman in her 20s:* I thought it would be a good idea to take a holiday because I had been studying very hard [in Fiji] and felt it would be good to have a rest before beginning to study again. So I left the secondary school and returned to Rotuma…. But I still liked school and intended to return after the holiday.
>
> When I got home my parents were very glad to see me and were very kind to me. The other people in Juju treated me well, too. I really spent a good Christmas holiday that year and had plenty of fun. Nearly every night I went *fara* with the boys and girls. It was the first Christmas holiday I had ever spent in which I had such good fun. My mother and father let me go with the boys and girls every night. They didn't mind because they trusted me. They said I had learned everything in school and should know how to protect myself from the sins of the world.
>
> Unluckily, I didn't know how the Rotuman boys trick the girls, because I had been at school and didn't have any boyfriends. So I didn't know the ways of the Rotuman boys. One night during that

Christmas holiday I met a boy and he talked to me. He told me that he loved me from the first time he saw me. I believed him because from the first time we had met he always acted good to me and talked sweet. On that night he told me all about his feeling for me. I thought about the kindness he had shown to me and made up my mind to love him. I thought that he was telling the truth—that he really wanted to keep me—so I trusted him, but when he knew I was going to have a baby he left me.

When my parents and close relatives knew that I was going to have a baby they got very angry with me. At that time I didn't know what to do and cried myself to sleep nearly every night. I said that it was my father's fault, because he was the one who wanted me to come to Rotuma in the first place. My father really got angry with me and sent me to my mother's brother's house.

Woman, age unknown: I worked in the C. W. M. Hospital…. when I met a young man who was studying to be a doctor. We loved each other so dearly that we became engaged.

Thinking of myself, who really hated boys when I was in school, and then engaged to be married later on! At the end of that year I was told to leave for Rotuma to work for my people. I love it, of course, but hated to leave my fiancé, and felt very lonely and sad when the boat was sailing away from the wharf, where I could see the young man who stole my heart waving his hands to me.

When I reached Rotuma, I felt very glad to see my dear parents waiting for me with my brothers and sisters. I was kindly welcomed by all of my relations and my fiancé's relations too.

I began to work in the hospital in Ahau and spent the weekends at home. After a year, two nurses were told to stay at their house to help the others in the villages because there was only one doctor on the island and he really needed more doctors or nurses. I was the second nurse, so I came home to look after two districts. After two years at home doing my favourite nursing, I learned that my fiancé had gone to New Zealand to complete his course. I became very impatient after three long years of waiting without hearing any more definite words from him.

By then I met another young man whom I seemed to love whenever he spoke to me. I told my parents about it and they refused to accept it, so I pretended to obey them. When we had made all our plans to settle down, we made known our wedding

day. My parents were really very angry with me but I wanted my dreams to come true.

Notes to Chapter 15

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[1] For more comprehensive analyses of Rotuman adolescence and courtship, see "Pre-marital Sex and Social Control Among the Rotumans," by Alan Howard and Irwin Howard, *American Anthropologist* 66 (2): 266–283 (1964); the first half of chapter 5, "Youth to Old Age: Rotuman Style," in *Learning to Be Rotuman,* by Alan Howard (New York: Columbia University Teachers College Press, 1970), and "Youth in Rotuma, Then and Now," by Alan Howard, in *Adolescence in Pacific Island Societies,* edited by Gilbert Herdt and Stephen Leavitt (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998).

[2] For detailed discussions of Rotuman marriage patterns and the ceremonies that pertain to them, see "Rotuman Marriage," by Tiu Malo, in *Rotuma: Hanua Pumue (Precious Land),* by Ansemlo Fatiaki and others (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1991); and *Kato'aga: Rotuman Ceremonies,* by Elizabeth K. Inia (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 2001).

[3] For an account of the hostilities, see "Martyrs, Progress and Political Ambition: Reexamining Rotuma's 'Religious Wars,'" by Alan Howard and Eric Kjellgren, *Journal of Pacific History* 29:131–152 (1994).

Chapter 16
Marriage

Despite cultural constraints on public displays of affection, relationships between husbands and wives on Rotuma were generally close, both emotionally and practically. The gendered division of labour, described in chapter 18, required that both a mature male and mature female were needed for a household to function properly as a domestic unit. Normally these were husband and wife. Because women's work was valued as much as men's, and women could inherit land in their own right, wives had relatively high status, though publicly men were generally regarded as heads of their household. If a couple lived on the wife's land, her status was correspondingly enhanced.

Rotuman sayings regarding relations between husbands and wives acknowledge the sometimes-dominant role women played in relation to their husbands. For example, the notion that "women are unbreakable ropes" *(Haina lu vasu)* refers to the influence that wives could exercise over their husband's will. As Elizabeth Inia put it in *Fäeag 'es Fūaga,* "Generally in Rotuma, whatever the wife wants, the husband will do, even if he is the chief."

Also indicative of a wife's power is a saying, based on a comment by the legendary warrior Muato'a, that the only place he felt fear was at the sleeping end of his house, where he had to face his wife. Although Muato'a had successfully fought in wars, he said he could not win when opposed by his wife. This saying was a common response by men to teasing about their wives' dominating them. It implies that although a man can be courageous when confronting other men, he does not want to

offend his wife for fear that she will deny him sexually or otherwise cause him unhappiness.

The phrase *A'u'ua se niu roa* (To rest on a tall coconut tree) is a sympathetic comment about a man, who, after working in his garden all day, returned home only to be assigned arduous chores by his wife (like washing clothes or fishing), especially during the evening hours when other men were resting. Climbing a tall coconut tree is a metaphor for difficult work in the village, contrasted here with men's main work, gardening in the bush (interior lands).

The self-confidence that some women felt in their dealings with their husbands could be expressed in the assertion *Kĩ heta te' 'e goua* (The key is here with me). The implication is that a woman could cause trouble for her husband if he decided to leave her because she would have to agree to a divorce.

However, another saying, *Ia jül pau* (One is very afraid) suggests that in some marriages it was the husband who dominated, such that his wife was afraid to contradict him or answer him back.

More generally, when spouses did not get along, it was said that *Sok ta kia* (The joint creaks)—a metaphor for the friction that takes place when a couple experience a lack of harmony.

Although the above sayings acknowledge that marital relationships can become dysfunctional, other sayings suggest that cooperation between husbands and wives was the norm. When spouses cooperated and accommodated one another—when *'Iet tauen se 'on hara* (The axe head fits the handle) and *Moa ta pulou ka 'uaf ta pulou* (The rooster is fat and the hen is fat)—marriage can be a state of bliss.

It was a common expectation for husbands and wives to take their spouse's side in disputes with others, even with their own relatives—a

practice recognized in the observation that a married couple shared the same pillow *(Kuruag ʻesea he)*. The saying is based on the assumption that husbands and wives were likely to have the same opinions regarding most matters.

Before presenting accounts of marital experiences from the life histories, it might be helpful to place them in perspective by exploring general patterns related to marriage in the period of our concern. Here are some statistical patterns that can serve as background indicators to the culture of marriage:

Age at Marriage

The data regarding age at marriage is quite consistent, both among those who shared their life stories and among the general population, there being no significant variation over time. For men the average age at first marriage is in the range of 22–23, for women 18–19.[1]

Proximity of Spouses

With the exception of Pepjei, the smallest district in Rotuma, the majority of marriages took place between men and women from the same district, with the highest percentage in the district of Ituʻtiʻu (74.8% for men, 79.4% for women). And with one exception (women from Ituʻmuta), less than 20% of spouses came from more than one district away (see Table 1 on next page).

Table 1
Proximity of Spouses' Homes, by District 1881–1960

Men	Within District	Adjacent District	Other District	Total
Itu'muta	80 61.1%	32 24.4%	19 14.5%	131 100%
Itu'ti'u	459 74.8%	98 16%	57 9.3%	614 101%
Juju	114 62.6%	44 24.2%	24 13.2%	182 100%
Pepjei	50 48.5%	44 42.7%	9 8.7%	103 99.9%
Noatau	208 71.5%	32 11%	51 17.5%	291 100%
Oinafa	180 64.5%	53 19%	44 16.5%	277 100%
Malhaha	110 65.1%	36 21.3%	23 13.6%	169 100%
Women	**Within District**	**Adjacent District**	**Other District**	**Total**
Itu'muta	80 51.9%	38 24.7%	35 23.4%	153 100%
Itu'ti'u	459 79.4%	67 11.6%	52 9%	578 100%
Juju	114 56.4%	71 35.1%	17 8.4%	202 99.9%
Pepjei	50 46.7%	40 37.4%	17 15.9%	107 100%
Noatau	208 71%	41 14%	44 15%	293 100%
Oinafa	180 70.6%	37 14.5%	38 14.9%	255 100%
Malhaha	110 63.2%	45 25.9%	19 10.9%	174 100%

Residence Patterns Following Marriage

The preferred pattern, especially following an arranged marriage, was for the groom to move to the bride's home, at least until after the birth of their first child. Marriages preceded by *fu'u* involved the boy going to stay in the girl's home, while those preceded by *taupiri* involved the girl going to stay with the boy's family.

However, a number of practical considerations could influence the couple's choices, both immediately following their wedding and subsequently, as the years passed, including the relative need of the two families for additional labour and support, the availability of land to each family, the composition of each household, etc. The information provided by those who told their life stories suggests that unarranged marriages were quite common, with several individuals reporting *taupiri* or *fu'u* arrangements prior to marriage, and a number of others relating acceptance of de facto unions by parents who had not been involved in the selection of their children's mates. More generally, residence following marriage showed a near-even distribution, with 21 couples going to live with the wife's family, 24 with the husband's. In 3 instances, the couple initially stayed with the wife's family before moving to the husband's side, and in 2 cases they moved from the husband's to the wife's side. [2]

Marriage Statistics

Three types of statistics are generally used to compare marriage and divorce data between populations: crude marriage rate, crude divorce rate, and divorce-to-marriage ratio. The *crude marriage rate* consists of the annual number of marriages per 1,000 population. It gives a general overview of marriage within a population, but in its sample it does not take into account people who cannot marry, such as young children who are clearly not of marriageable age. The *crude divorce rate* consists of the annual number of divorces per 1,000 population, while the *divorce-to-marriage ratio* is the number of divorces compared to the number of marriages in a given year (the ratio of the crude divorce rate to the crude marriage rate). The data for Rotuma from 1881 to 1959 are contained in Table 2 (next page).[3]

Table 2
Marriage and Divorce Statistics, by Decade

Time Period	Marriages	Average Marriages per year	Divorces	Average Divorces per year	Estimated Average Population	Crude Marriage Rate	Crude Divorce Rate	% Divorce : Marriage Ratio
1895–1903	311	34.6	No data	No data	2300	15.0	n/a	n/a
1904–1909	202	33.7	25	4.2	2300	14.7	1.8	12.5
1910–1919	350	35.0	41	4.1	1940	18.0	2.1	11.7
1920–1929	246	24.6	46	4.6	2160	11.4	2.1	18.7
1930–1939	247	24.7	32	3.2	2540	9.7	1.3	13.0
1940–1949	278	27.8	27	2.7	2700	10.3	1.0	9.7
1950–1959	217	21.7	28	2.8	3000	7.2	0.9	12.9
Totals	**1851**	**28.9**	**199**	**3.6**	**2420**	**12.3**	**1.5**	**12.5**

It is noteworthy that the crude marriage rate in Rotuma fell from a high of 18.0 in the decade between 1910 and 1919 to a low of 7.2 in the decade from 1950 to 1959. This can be explained as a result of the dramatic increase of outmigration by individuals of marriageable age following World War II, as well as a decrease in the death rate of children, leading them to become a greater portion of the population.

To put things in perspective somewhat, we can compare the Rotuma data with statistics from Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, although data from these three other countries are from a much later time period:

Average crude marriage rates:
Rotuma (1895–1959) = 11.1
Australia (2015) = 4.8
New Zealand (2008) = 4.8
United States (2014) = 6.9

Average crude divorce rates:

Rotuma (1904–1959)	= 1.4
Australia (2015)	= 2.0
New Zealand (2008)	= 2.0
United States (2014)	= 3.2

Divorce : Marriage ratio

Rotuma (1904–1959)	= 12.9
Australia (2015)	= 42
New Zealand (2008)	= 42
United States (2014)	= 46

These data, along with marital histories I collected from nearly all the adults living on Rotuma in 1960, suggest that, in general, marriages on Rotuma were quite stable throughout the period of our concern, with only 12 percent of first marriages terminated by separation or divorce (see Table 3, next page). Although the grounds for divorce in court were predominantly adultery (68.5 percent), this is likely a result of the fact that only three grounds for divorce were recognized by the court: adultery, cruelty, and desertion, with cruelty accounting for all 6 percent of cases (all women), and desertion for the remaining 25.5 percent (see Table 4, on p. 317). From my reading of the court records, it appears that most incidents of adultery took place after the couple were separated.

Table 3
Outcomes of First Marriages as of 1960, by Decade

Time Period	Sex	Marital Outcome Together	Marital Outcome Spouse Died	Marital Outcome Separated	Marital Outcome Divorced	Total
1900–1909	Men	3 (42.9%)	4 (57.1%)	0	0	7
	Women	2 (22.2%)	6 (66.7%)	0	1 (11.1%)	9
1910–1919	Men	9 (40.9%)	9 (40.9%)	0	4 (18.2%)	22
	Women	9 (24.3%)	24 (64.9%)	1 (2.7%)	3 (8.1%)	37
1920–1929	Men	35 (54.7%)	22 (34.4%)	2 (3.1%)	5 (7.8%)	64
	Women	32 (50.8%)	26 (41.3%)	2 (3.2%)	3 (4.8%)	63
1930–1939	Men	56 (69.1%)	15 (18.5%)	3 (3.7%)	7 (8.6%)	81
	Women	65 (69.2%)	18 (19.2%)	6 (6.4%)	5 (5.3%)	94
1940–1949	Men	104 (78.8%)	10 (7.6%)	6 4.6%)	12 (9.1%)	132
	Women	119 (85.6%)	5 (3.6%)	6 (4.3%)	9 (6.5%)	139
1950–1959	Men	100 (84.8%)	2 (1.7%)	13 (11.0%)	3 (2.5%)	118
	Women	112 (85.5%)	2 (1.5%)	15 (11.5%)	2 (1.5%)	131
Totals 1900–1959	All	646 (72.0%)	143 (15.9%)	54 (6.0%)	54 (6.0%)	897

Adjustments to Marriage

The transition from being single and relatively carefree to being a spouse and responsible adult could be difficult, involving new commitments, relationships with in-laws, and unfamiliar responsibilities. Many of the life story tellers commented on the burdens involved:

Man in his 50s: Married life was good for the first year, but after that I found out that married life is very hard. When I was young I could do anything I liked, but now it's different because I had to listen to anything she wanted to say.

Man in his 50s: Life really changed. When I was single I went everywhere without asking somebody, but then I had to ask my wife's permission before I went out from our house. How I regretted getting married so young.

Man in his 30s: When I was 21 years old I got married, and at the beginning I didn't like it as much as when I was single, because I was used to going out in the night instead of staying home. After I got married I always had to stay home with my wife. That was something new for me and I didn't like it.

Woman in her 60s: I didn't like being married as much as when I was with my brothers and my father. After I had my first child sometimes my husband didn't act so good to me, and I would cry and think of the time when I was living with my father and brothers. It wasn't until after I had four children that I finally forgot all about my father and brothers; then I only thought about my children.

Woman in her 30s: Just after we got married I thought that we would be staying in the same mood throughout life. We were in great happiness. Both of us stayed home, not roaming like before. When I was single I went to any place I wished to; all I had to do was let my mother know. But now I find that life is growing harder and whatever I want to do I have to let my husband know, and I have to do as he wishes.

Woman, unknown age: At the beginning I was a bit shy and I was afraid that my husband might change his mind, and then my parents would be very angry at me. We still went to dances and shows, but I knew that I was living in a different state of life than before I was married. Every day I would think of the time when I was single. I had never made my parents or anyone else angry with me, and I

> wondered how my husband and I were going to be. Sometimes I was a bit scared because I did not want us to have a row for useless matters.

In addition to homesickness when a person moved to his or her spouse's home, relations with in-laws could sometimes become a serious enough problem to terminate a marriage, as the following cases illustrate:

> *Man in his 60s:* We went to live in her home, and I found it hard to take care of such a big family. I wanted to be at my wife's side all the time, and not have to work so hard. I spent most of my free time with my wife, but her relations seemed to hate me. Soon my wife had a baby daughter, but by that time I had had enough of her relatives, so I left my wife, without quarrelling, and went back home. People laughed at me and said that I ran away from my wife because I was too lazy, but I didn't care about what the people said—I just couldn't face my wife's relations any more, so I didn't go back to her.
>
> *Man in his 60s:* My uncle was very angry with me but what could he do—I was already in the girl's home. I went one day to tell him I was sorry and he told me everything about that girl's family, but I loved the girl and couldn't leave her. He told me that one day I would change my mind and would run away from my wife. I never suspected his words to be true but they did come true. We stayed together for two years and had only one daughter when I had a row with my wife's parents and I went back home to my uncle.
>
> *Man in his 30s:* We were married for only three years and then we separated because after we were married we lived together with her parents, and her mother's way was not good. She always treated me like a child and would always tell me what to do. I couldn't stand it any more so I finally left my wife with her mother and father.
>
> *Man in his 30s:* I loved both my mother and my wife. At first my wife was very kind to my mother and helped her but

> everybody should know what it's like to take care of an old woman. A few months passed and my wife began grumbling to me about my mother but I took no notice. I told her that my mother was old and when she was wild with her to just go away and not face her. We stayed together for four years, but she didn't take care of my mother properly and when I thought of how kindly my mother brought us up I made up my mind to send my wife back home.

Yet the narratives also included examples of good relations with in-laws:

> *Man in his 30s:* I began to settle down and started to work in the plantations for the first time because I knew I was going to have to provide for a family of my own. Working in the plantations was harder than I expected, but I managed to do it. My wife was very kind to me and my parents and also to my grandmother. She knew that my mother was unable to walk properly and Granny was weak so she took all the family work for herself.
>
> *Man in his 30s:* How different my life was from the time before I got married. Whenever I wished to go someplace I had to let my wife know first. She was so nice and kind to my mother, and so my mother seemed to love her more than I did.
>
> *Woman in her 40s:* We got married even though I didn't know the man before and I was a bit frightened of him, but he was very kind to me. Two weeks after our wedding we went to his home. He wanted us to live there. Soon after my brothers and sisters came and stayed with us. He took good care of us. He loved us and we stayed in his home as if we were living with our own parents. Now we have only two children living with us. We are still taking care of my brothers and sisters along with our children. I enjoyed having a family of my own, with nobody to speak to us except myself. Now my family is still the same and not even once has my husband grumbled about my brothers and sisters; he is the same every day and treats them so kindly, and our children are living happily with us.

> *Woman in her 40s:* The boy was very kind, and when I brought him home he was kind to my mother. He worked very hard, so my mother stopped going to the bush like a man.

Religion was another issue that could influence the course of a marriage, although accommodations were often made in the interests of saving it.

> *Man in his 30s:* The marriage was rather a broken one—we were more often separated than living together. My assumption is that the girl's mother was strongly urging her daughter to go back to the Catholic church. I think she was more or less convinced that would be the right thing to do, and she tried to win me over to her side. I was not prepared to make a change nor were my parents and my close relations. She started going to her mother and staying there for long periods, which, I suppose, gave me too much opportunity to flirt around with Methodist girls from my side. Now and again she would return but things never got any better. And on the last occasion when she went home, in 1954, we separated for good.
>
> *Man in his 60s:* We got married in her religion but later I went back to my old church. We had two sons and one belonged to my church while the other has the same religion as his mother. My parents didn't like this kind of family—having two religions with the sons divided, but as long as my wife agreed to it that was enough.
>
> *Man in his 30s:* A few years later [after separating from first wife] I got married again, and I found out that married life in Rotuma is not so bad if both our parents will be kind to us, or if we do not live together with them after we were married. When I got married in 1948 I became a Methodist to be of the same religion as my wife. Changing my religion was not hard for me because I really loved my wife and besides I like the Methodists.

The ban on divorce in the Catholic religion came into play to influence the life course of one woman in her 30s:

> After a week had passed, and everybody had gone home leaving only our family, I realized how different married life was from when I was single. I found married life harder than unmarried life. I loved my husband very much and always did everything good for him. But after about five months something happened. One night about three o'clock in the morning my husband surprised me. He woke me up and asked me what I was going to do—go with him to his home or stay here? I was so startled that I couldn't answer his question, so he asked me again. He said that he had taken all of his things back to his house, except his knife, which he was holding in his hand. I was frightened and told him that I would stay at home, so on that night we separated. From that night on I stopped loving him. Then, after five years, he came back to my parents one time and apologized to them for his mistakes and for the bad things he did to me and asked them to forgive him. He said he wanted to return to me at our home. I told him that if he promised not to do what he did before he could stay, but after one month, he got angry with me on one Sunday morning and went back to his house. Since then we have never been together, and I have never made anyone else my boyfriend.
>
> After a year, I met a boy and he tried to make love to me. He was two years older than me but had never been married before. I loved him, but we were both Catholic, and I knew it would be very bad for me to make him my lover, because we both knew that a person cannot marry twice in Church if they have a husband or wife who's still living. He went away to Fiji soon after that, but after about three years he came back to talk to me. I had told him to try and find another girl to marry, but he said that it was very hard for him to marry someone else knowing that I still didn't have a husband. I told him to stop thinking of that, because we were both Catholic and knew the laws of the Church.

Despite such pitfalls, the great majority of marriages lasted, as indicated in Table 4, which was compiled from an analysis of marital histories ascertained from virtually all the adults resident on Rotuma during 1960. The data cover the outcomes of marriages dating back to 1900 through 1959, and they show that, throughout that period, 72 percent of first marriages were still intact, 15.9 percent had been terminated by the death of a spouse, and only 12 percent had ended by separation or divorce.

Table 4
Grounds for Divorce, by Plaintiff

Time Period	Plaintiff	Number	Adultery	Cruelty	Desertion
1904–1909	Husband	9 (36.0%)	8 (80.0%)		2 (20%)
	Wife	16 (54.)%)	12 (70.6%)	2 (11.8%)	3 (17.6%)
1910–1919	Husband	24 (58.5%)	17 (65.4%)		9 (34.6%)
	Wife	17 (41.5%)	9 (50.0%)	4 (22.2%)	5 (27.8%)
1920–1929	Husband	29 (63.0%)	29 (96.7%)		1 (3.3%)
	Wife	17 (37.0%)	15 (68.2%)	4 (18.2%)	3 (13.6%)
1930–1939	Husband	17 (53.1%)	11 (64.7%)		6 (35.3%)
	Wife	15 (46.9%)	10 (58.8%)		7 (41.2%)
1940–1949	Husband	12 (44.4%)	8 (66.7%)		4 (33.3%)
	Wife	15 (55.6%)	8 (53.3%)	2 (13%)	5 (33.3%)
1950–1959	Husband	14 (50%)	10 (71.4%)		4 (28.6%)
	Wife	14 (50%)	10 (71.4%)	1 (7.2%)	3 (21.4%)
Totals 1904–1959	**Husband**	**106 (53.0%)**	**84 (76.4%)**		**26 (23.6%)**
	Wife	**94 (47.0%)**	**64 (60.4%)**	**13 (12.3%)**	**29 (27.4%)**
	Hu + Wi	**200 (100%)**	**148 (68.5%)**	**13 (6.0%)**	**55 (25.5%)**

Many men and women of all ages expressed great satisfaction with married life, as in the following examples:

> *Man in his 60s:* [My wife] was a kind woman, and after I had stayed for a week at her family's home I told her that I would like her to come with me to my parents, so she could look after my parents and me. She agreed and we went to my house, and my parents were very happy. They were so glad to see us they could hardly express their delight. My wife took good care of them, since they were old and couldn't do their work properly like they could when they were strong.
>
> *Man in his 40s:* I got married while I was in school, to a half-European woman. I soon found married life the happiest time of my life. Every day when I came home she would prepare food for me. She was a kind woman and would save money—almost five shillings out of the six I made in a day's work at Morris Hedstrom's.
>
> *Man in his 30s:* I liked married life from the beginning. Living with the one I loved made me very happy. It also made me happy to have children and I like living with my family.
>
> *Man in his 30s:* I got married and found out that married life was the best because I had somebody to look after my needs.
>
> *Man in his 30s:* On my wedding day I wasn't really myself. I was almost oblivious to what was going on. It wasn't until about a week later that I really realised what had happened. So far I like married life very much. Sometimes I think about going out with the boys, but my wife's family has been good to me, and that kind of compensates for my loss. Now I talk in the plural—I speak of we, and ours, instead of I and mine.
>
> *Woman in her 60s:* He was a kind man; he loved me and always did what I asked of him without a word. I guess that

my father wanted me to marry this man because he was a hard worker and he helped my father a great deal. My mother and I didn't even have to do any fishing because my husband helped my father and they went fishing for us. What a good and kind husband I got!

Woman in her 50s: We got married in a few months and began a family of our own. I didn't know how to work properly and yet I was lucky because I married a kind man. He helped me sometimes and always spoke kind words when we were together. We stayed together only four years and had one daughter, but unluckily my husband died. How could I imagine the one who loved me being put into his hidden home [his grave]; and our daughter was only about two years old.

Woman in her 50s: We got married and really loved each other very much. I was very happy because I was living with the one I loved best. Being married was better than being single. My husband was a very kind man and always did his best for me and our children, and I always did my best to take care of him, especially preparing the food to eat.

Woman in her 40s: We got married and we went to live in my husband's home. We stayed happily together. My husband was so nice. He brought me nice food and everything I wanted before I could ask him to bring it. We stayed together for only five years when he died.

Woman in her 30s: We got married and it made me feel funny and strange in the beginning. I was, so to say, ashamed of my husband and most of the time I spent with my parents in their home. I was just getting used to being in this state of a married life when I went to stay with my husband. He was a nice man and loved my aunt and uncle as I did. We stayed together for a while with them before coming to his home, where we are staying now. We had more than ten children. My husband was so kind to me that we stayed together for many years without quarrelling. He

> did his best to give me everything I would ask for and what our children need.
>
> *Woman in her 30s:* After I was married I realized how very different married life was from single life. For me, married life was much better than my life before I was married. My husband did everything that I wanted better than anyone when I was living with my grandmother. I love my husband and he makes me very happy all the time.
>
> *Woman in her 30s:* I got married in 1950, and I found out that for me married life was better than being single. My husband was very kind to me. He is even more kind to me than my mother or father. Sometimes they couldn't get me what I wanted, but my husband always gets me whatever I want.
>
> *Woman, unknown age:* We got married and lived in my home. People always gossiped about us because my husband had been a cheeky boy, but since he knew that he was now in a different stage of life he changed his manners and became a very good man towards me and my parents. He was kind, and whatever I asked of him he provided.

Even marriages that had gotten off to a rocky start generally worked out over time, as per the following examples:

> *Man in his 60s:* During the first week after our wedding this girl still hated me and her parents had to speak to her. I tried my very best to speak to her too, and to show my kindness and later on we stayed nicely together as if there wasn't anything that happened before. She began to do our work nicely and lead our family as she wished to.
>
> *Man in his 60s:* My dreams came true and we did get married, but my relatives did not come to see my wife on that day. The words that my sisters said to my wife were not nice or kind to her, but I told her not to pay attention to them. I told her just to listen to me, for I would be the one

who would take care of her. My dear wife had a rough time with my people in the beginning, but she took no notice of them. We had our first child, but still my sisters hated my wife. My relatives were also very angry with me, just because they didn't like the woman with whom I got married. They all went to their homes and stayed there, leaving me and my wife to look after my parents. My wife was so nice and kind to my parents that after a few years they fully accepted her and we made a happy family.

Man in his 50s: I found marriage all right, maybe because my parents chose the right one. My wife seemed to be unhappy at the beginning, because it was the first time she left her people. I felt responsible for her and did everything I could to make her happy. Whatever she wanted I tried my best to get it for her. After about a year she got fully adjusted.

Man in his 30s: I enjoyed married life and it helped me a lot with my work. I didn't roam around so much and got enough sleep so I was able to work properly. By the way, before leaving Rotuma I went again to *faksoro* my mother-in-law and this time she told me all her reasons why she had objected [to my marrying her daughter], but she accepted my *faksoro* and we became very good friends after that.

Man in his 20s: I got married in 1955 when I was 19 years of age. Our first baby was born in 1956, and another baby was born this year. Our first child was a boy and second baby a girl. I had a lot of trouble before I got permission from my father to marry this girl. My father wouldn't give his permission for me to marry her because we are very close relations. She is a third cousin to me, but all the same I just couldn't help it. I love her and we love each other, and that is the main thing. Finally the old people gave in and so we married and are still living together now. We are having a very happy life together and I don't think I will forget her as long as I live.

Secondary Marriages

After losing a spouse, whether by death, separation, or divorce, it was common for individuals to remarry or to engage with a new partner without legally marrying. Among the life story tellers, all six of those who had gotten divorced from their first wife, and six of eleven whose first spouse died, remarried. As with first marriages, some worked out more satisfactorily then others.

> *Man in his 60s:* [After my first wife died,] I got married again and how different I found the people that time. People seemed to hate my new wife. This woman was also hated by my own children and then I noticed that she was not so nice as my first wife; there was really a great difference. Now we are staying for many years without a child, but since she's my wife I love her.
>
> *Man in his 50s:* I didn't get married again until I was nearly 40 years old. By that time I had finally become a man and worked every day. This time I was a good husband and did whatever my wife wanted.
>
> *Man in his 40s:* When my wife died I thought of her every day because I had to take care of the children. It was very hard for me to do without a woman to look after my children, so I got married again. This marriage was different from the one with my first wife. This wife is not as kind as the last one. The way she treats the children by my first wife is different than the way she treats her own. I do really love my wife, but sometimes I feel bad about the way she treats my children, so I decided to send my children to their mother's side. Now I live alone with my wife and our own children, and it seems just the same now as in the beginning when I got married to my first wife.
>
> *Man in his 30s:* [After I sent my first wife back home,] I wondered if I would be able to find another wife who would be as kind as my mother. I went out in the evenings and met another girl whom I married afterwards. We loved

each other and lived happily from the beginning after our wedding up to now. We haven't got any children and yet I wish my mother were alive so she might see the difference between my first wife and the second wife. She's really nice to me and even to the children of our neighbours. Everybody says that I was very lucky that I have a very kind wife but it's really true.

Woman in her 30s: I felt very strange at the beginning of our marriage and I felt very embarrassed with my husband, but he acted as though he were a real man and a husband to me. We stayed together and I began to know what kind of character he really had, and I felt that I didn't want this kind of man for a husband. We stayed together many years without children so I finally left him and went back to my mother ... after about two years I got married to another man whom I thought to be kinder than my first husband. I went to live in his home. At first he was nice and kind to me, but later on he didn't allow me to go to any other house in the village. He didn't like to see me laughing with anyone, and whenever he was angry at someone else he would come home and take it out on me. I had our first child—a baby girl—but still my husband acted the same to me. I was frightened at that time that he might kill me if I would try to run away from him, and because of his jealousy I just sat at home like a mouse caught in a trap. I couldn't say a single word whenever he was angry. Instead of being happy I was sadder than a slave. We have stayed together for many years now and have had about ten children, but my husband has not really changed much. Many times I thought of leaving him, but I didn't know who would take care of my children if I did. I wish he could change his manners and be like my stepfather who brought me up.

My mother's second husband died and she came to live with me and brought her daughter with her. But we were all the same to my husband—we had to do everything according to his wishes. Never mind if I was ready to give birth to a child, he would make me go with him to work in his plantations or cut copra. What a life! I never saw another woman who has worked as hard as I have done. I

> have stuck it out because I wanted to avoid quarrelling, because we already had many children and I felt sorry for them. But I know he won't change his character.

Notes to Chapter 16

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[1] I consulted several sources to determine ages of individuals. The most reliable were birth, marriage, and death records maintained by Rotuma's resident commissioners and district officers dating back to 1881, following cession to Great Britain. I copied and eventually digitized all the records from 1903, when the recording of two names rather than one made it easier to distinguish people from one another. For those individuals included in these records, calculating age at marriage was simply a matter of subtracting birthdate from marriage date. A second source of data was the self-reported ages of bride and groom at the time the marriage was recorded. Comparisons with calculated ages showed that the self-reporting was quite unreliable, with discrepancies sometimes ranging several years. Nevertheless, for individuals not included in the birth records, this was the best indicator of age available.

[2] Residence information was acquired from an island-wide census conducted by Rotuman research assistants that included residential histories, as well as from sequential birth histories.

[3] The data for Table 2 were obtained from marriage records and from recordings of divorce proceedings by the magistrate's court at the government station on Rotuma.

Chapter 17
Parenting

The focus of this chapter is on attitudes, emotional commitments, and strategies of child rearing among Rotuman parents in 1960. My analysis is based on comments made by a selection of individuals in their life stories and on interviews with fifty mothers concerning their practices with regard to feeding, toilet training, and disciplining their children. The mother interviews sought information about the sharing of children with relatives and namesakes *(sigoa),* and the mothers' hopes for their children's futures; they also included a question regarding what they told their children about death. Background data about children's births (and deaths) were obtained from the colonial records up to 1960.

As was evident in the recollections of those telling their life stories, a great many had experienced their own childhood as a period of being indulged by loving parents, whether or not their families were well off. The theme of struggling to provide everything possible for their children is also reflected in the remarks of parents, often accompanied by assertions of loving sentiments and expressions of pride.

Mothers and fathers of all ages gave direct expressions of love and affection, as in the following examples:

> *Woman in her 60s who had eight children but one daughter died in infancy:*
> My husband and I stayed for many years and we had seven children: five sons and twin daughters. How lucky we were to have these children, making a large family. My husband worked very hard to support us with everything we needed, and he treated our children so kindly that it made me think of my parents who were always kind to me until they died.

Woman in her 40s whose two daughters died in infancy; she also had two sons, one of whom died at the age of 7:
How could you imagine the sadness that overtook me when my daughters died, one after the other. I wanted a daughter because I love girls, so because we had no more children, I took my cousin's daughter and then a son and adopted them as my own. How I love kids to be with me at home.

Woman in her 30s who had eight children, all alive in 1960:
I love my husband and he makes me very happy all the time. Now we have eight children and they, too, make me happy. I love my children even more than I love my husband.

Woman in her 30s who had a son and a daughter, both alive in 1960:
Now everyone can see that I am very happy living among my neighbours with my children—a family of our own, with my eldest son working and supplying all our needs.

Man in his 50s who had five sons and five daughters, one of whom died at the age of 4:
After my children grew up, I felt very sorry to see them stay away from home, and I wish they were here with me.

Man in his 30s who had three daughters and one son, all alive in 1960:
After we had our first two children, I got used to staying home and by that time I liked married life. I wouldn't like to live like I did when I was single again. I love my children and I don't like to leave them. I want to be with them all the time.

Parents' comments often emphasized the struggle required to provide for children, who were especially precious given high rates of infant and child mortality:

Man in his 60s who had nine children, three of whom died; three sons and three daughters were alive in 1960:
We had several children and I felt a bit worried about them, because children are not easy to bring up. I worked very hard to earn money to supply them with their wants.

Woman in her 60s who had five children with her first husband but three had died by the age of 3; two sons survived. She had two daughters with her second husband but one died at age 25:
I had two daughters and we have done our best so that they wouldn't cry for anything. They were our only daughters and my husband worked very hard and brought fruits and food—anything they would ask him for. We sent them to school…. Sometimes I helped my husband cut copra, because this was the only means to get money, and whatever my daughters wanted in the store we always had to get for them. I brought them up and taught them everything my parents had taught me when I was small.

Woman, age unknown, who had eight sons, one of whom died in infancy:
We have had many children and I realize that my parents must have had a really hard life with the seven of us. I had to do all the work for my children and not one of them could help either me or their father. I am doing my best to give them everything they need. I always give them my advice so that they would be smart in school and study hard because I know that this is the easier way to a better life. Unless one gets a good job he or she has to cut copra and plant to earn his living, and I do hope all my children will take the right path and lead a good life.

Woman in her 30s who had seven sons and three daughters; one of the boys died in childhood:
My husband and I have about ten children and we are doing our best to afford them with their needs. I can remember that my parents had a hard time doing the same thing for us when we were young.

Woman in her 30s with a son born prior to marriage and three daughters with her husband, all alive in 1960:
Now we have four children and I realize that I am leading a harder life than I had ever dreamt of. I have to work hard now to keep my children clean and healthy. I try to treat them nicely, the way my parents treated me. Sometimes I feel sorry for them because I know that I will not get everything they need like my parents did for me when I was small. Now I just pray that my children will grow up to love each other and to lead a good life.

Many parents, including some of those quoted above, expressed concern for their children's accomplishments, whether or not they were doing well:

> *Man in his 70s who had twelve children, five of whom died; three sons and four daughters were alive in 1960:*
> We had many children. I worked very hard and tried all possible ways to earn a living and send them to school. My oldest son studied hard and is now working in the agricultural department. Another is an assistant medical practitioner, and my four daughters are all married.
>
> *Man in his 60s who had seven sons, one of whom died:*
> I did my best for my sons and sent them to Fiji for further education, but only the two youngest came out with good results. When they left school they received higher wages in their employment. Five of my sons have married, one has died, and the youngest of them is still roaming. I did my very best when they were young so that they would grow up kind-hearted and be nice to everybody—young or old—whomever they would meet.
>
> *Man in his 50s who had four daughters and eight sons, one of whom died in infancy:*
> We have done our very best to earn money for our living and sent them to school, and yet the oldest children came out without any success. They seemed to follow in my footsteps. What a pity to think of the money I had spent on them and not one had succeeded in school. The boys came home and helped me working in the plantations while the girls helped their mother take care of home and the younger children. I am sending my children over to Fiji so that they can get good jobs and earn enough to help support us.
>
> *Man in his 50s who had three sons and three daughters, all alive in 1960:*
> Now I have six children. The oldest daughter got married two years ago to a European minister in Australia and the next oldest girl is a school teacher in Motusa. My eldest son is at the Suva Grammar School; he's taking a special course, since he passed his University entrance (New Zealand) last year. My third oldest girl is at Adi Cakabau secondary school; she passed her senior Cambridge, but she's sitting for her university entrance this year. The two youngest children are here in the Malhaha school, both in Class 7.

> *Man in his 30s who had five sons and three daughters, all alive in 1960:*
> I feel like I have a big responsibility in my children and worry about how I will be able to pay for their secondary school education…. Before I retire I'd like to build a house for myself and my children. My biggest concern is that my children get a good education and a good job.

There were also a few admissions of favouritism towards one or more children, such as these:

> *Man in his 60s who had six sons (four of whom died between the ages of 7 and 19) and four daughters (two of whom died in infancy):*
> I loved all my children, but I think my twin sons were the closest to me. One of them died when he was about six years old, and the other just died at the beginning of this year.

> *Man in his 60s who, with his first wife, had a daughter and a son (who died); with his second wife he had five sons and a daughter, all alive in 1960:*
> My [second] wife and I … have had six children—five boys and one girl. We have done our best to give them everything they needed. I love all of them but I think both of us, my wife and I, love our daughter more than our five sons. That is because in our custom boys grow up and are able to take care of themselves, but when girls grow up they are unable to supply themselves with what they need because we have to cut copra to earn money for our living. Since she was our only daughter we have always done our best to give her whatever she would ask for.

The next section provides an analysis of the practices reported by the mothers in their interviews, along with some additional background.

Analysis of Mother Interviews

The interviews with mothers provide valuable information about several aspects of parenting, including the sharing of children with relatives and namesakes *(sigoa),* breastfeeding and weaning, toilet training, discipline, maternal aspirations for their children, and what mothers told their children concerning death. The women ranged in age from 24 to 57 and had between 2 and 9 children in their households (Table 1). What follows is a statistical analysis of their situations and responses in each of the areas of child-rearing.

Table 1
Children at Home and Away by Age of Mother

Age Range	Number of Mothers	Average Number of Children at Home	Number of Households with Children Under Age 20 Living Elsewhere
20s	7	3.7	1
30s	24	5.5	12
40s	16	4.6	8
50s	3	4.0	0

Residential Patterns

All but two mothers reported incidents of their children staying with another family for a certain amount of time (ranging for a week of so to several years). I consider the information incomplete regarding children visiting for a period of time with families elsewhere because I believe most women were providing examples of such visits rather than a complete inventory. But the data nevertheless suggest patterns of sharing children with other families, which was very much a part of Rotuman culture

during this period. The sharing of children was an expression of mutual commitment and a way of strengthening ties between families.

Table 2 (below) shows the distribution of children living with or staying for periods of time with families elsewhere. The pattern of sharing only slightly favoured the mother's relatives (29 to 23), with the differential accounted for mainly by a greater number in the grandparent generation on the mother's side. The data also suggest the importance of *sigoa* as hosts of children. The Christmas school holiday *(mane'a)* was a frequently cited as a time for children to be away from home, staying with relatives or namesakes.

Table 2
Adults other than Parents Hosting Children under Age 20

Mother's relatives, mother's generation (MoBr, MoSi, MoCousin):	16
Mother's relatives, mother's parents' generation (MoMo, MoFa, MoAunt, MoUncle):	13
Father's relatives, father's generation (FaBr, FaSi, FaCousin):	15
Father's relatives, father's parent's generation (FaMo, FaFa, FaAunt, FaUncle):	8
Sibling (Si, StepBr):	2
Sigoa (Namesake):	11
Boarding School, College:	3

Breastfeeding and Weaning

All but three of the mothers interviewed had breastfed their infants. The three who did not do so reported that they were advised by the doctor not to. Another three mothers breastfed some but not all of their children, especially those born later. Asked when they began to give their children solid food, the great majority (38; 76%) reported between 3 and 5 months, with the remaining 12 reporting between 6 and 10 months. The main solid food mentioned was tapioca *(tapiko)* with milk, although pawpaw,

sago, and soft coconut were also mentioned. Age of weaning was reported as 1 year by 31 of the 47 (66%) mothers who breastfed. Of the remainder, 15 mothers (32%) reported weaning between 8 and 11 months, and one weaned at 13 months. That weaning at 1 year was the norm is not surprising since a child's first birthday is marked by a ceremony that celebrates the transition to childhood. In earlier years, it was customary for grandparents to take the child to stay with them following that ceremony, which also facilitated the process of weaning.

Toilet Training

Almost all the mothers reported using a small pot to begin toilet training at first but sending the children outside, or specifically to the beach, to defecate once they were able to walk (the common procedure was for the children to go on the beach below the water line so the faeces would be washed away at high tide). A few mothers mentioned digging a hole and burying the faeces or picking it up with a coconut shell to throw it into the sea. The majority (30; 60%) reported that their children completed toilet training (able to use adult facilities that included inland latrines and toilets built on piers over the ocean) by the age of 4, and an additional 15 (30%) reported that their children completed the process by age 5. Asked how they reacted when a child soiled him or herself, half of the mothers responded that they either scolded the child or administered some form of punishment before cleaning up the mess. The other half simply reported cleaning up without any mention of punitive measures.

Responses to Misbehaviour

The most frequently mentioned forms of misbehaviour were disobedience (40; 80%), followed closely by saying "bad words" (38; 76%). Of lesser

concern were acting cheeky (12; 24%), touching things that belonged to others (11; 22%), and going or staying away without permission (9; 18%). The main forms of punishment for such behaviours mentioned by the mothers were hitting the child (41; 82%), making the child kneel for a period of time (29; 58%), and scolding the child (20; 40%). Also mentioned was isolating the child (7; 14%), requiring the child to do chores of some kind (4; 8%), depriving the child of a meal or of certain kinds of food like meat or fish (4; 8%), and pinching (3; 6%).

Two Rotuman sayings advise parents not to threaten children frivolously or to punish them too often. The saying *'A 'a'ak ma la 'a* ([If you] repeat a threat [that ghosts will come to eat your children], it will happen) implies the need to be cautious about threatening children with ghosts, because speech has power. The saying *'Ül rua'ia sin* (Thick skin) is based on the notion that frequent spanking results in thickening the skin so that the child no longer feels pain when hit.

In response to a separate question regarding children's disrespectful behaviour either to one's parents or to others, the mothers reported much less punitive reactions, emphasizing the teaching of correct behaviour (24; 48%), particularly in the presence of visitors or when visiting other households (15; 30%). The association of being respectful and being loved was also mentioned by a few of the mothers (5; 10%). The most frequent form of punishment mentioned for disrespectful behaviour was scolding (22; 44%), while only a few reported hitting (8; 16%) or making the child kneel (3; 6%).

The Rotuman saying *Tük'akia 'ou muri* (Bump your bottom) was used to command a child to sit down and stop roaming around. As explained in Elizabeth Inia's book *Fäeag 'es Fūaga*, the saying—or its harsher form *Tük'akia 'ou poto'i* (Sit your buttocks down)—was used to scold

children who did not stay home, requiring their parents to go out looking for them for meals, and so on. It was also said to a child who was showing off and acting unruly in front of visitors. In Rotuman custom it is impolite for children to move about in front of visitors. They should sit down and be quiet.

To get an idea of how the mothers responded to their children fighting, two separate questions were asked: one concerning one's children fighting among themselves, and another about their fighting with other children. The most common response to one's children fighting among themselves was scolding (21; 42%) followed by hitting (17; 34%), although six of the mothers specified that hitting was only administered to the one who was blamed. Separation or isolation of the children who were fighting with one another was favoured by ten of the mothers (20%), while three respondents claimed that they did not interfere. Seven (14%) mothers reported that they admonished their children to love one another and not fight.

When children caught fighting with children from other households, the reactions were highly patterned, with 42 (84%) of the mothers reporting that they called their children home and 28 (56%) said they forbid them to play any more with the children with whom they were fighting. Seven (14%) of the mothers expressed explicit concern that the fighting among children could result in strained relations with other families, although this was implicit in almost all the responses. Five (10%) of the respondents said they told their children to love other children and be friendly with them instead of fighting.

The matter of punishing children by hitting them requires some discussion. Hitting a child for misbehaving can vary from a mild symbolic tap on the legs or buttocks to a severe beating causing real pain and

possibly causing physical injury. It can be administered in uncontrolled anger or coolly as part of a learning experience. There is also the matter of frequency—how often physical punishment is administered to children. I can confidently say that in the year I spent in Rotuma during 1960 (and many times since 1989), I never saw a child struck in anger or with the apparent intent to cause pain; in fact, I can't remember seeing a child struck at all. I only recall numerous instances of children being coddled and indulged. But that doesn't mean much, not only because memory cannot be trusted but because punishments would likely have been administered within households and not in public. Still, when I checked with some of my older Rotuman friends, if they recalled being hit by their parents for misdeeds it was generally with a mild tap on the legs with a native broom *(taufäre,* which is made from the mid-ribs of coconut leaflets, *parafa)* or the edge of a fan *(siva)* to any part of the body. As described to me, such incidents were more a matter of giving emphasis to a scolding than to cause pain. In her comments regarding the Rotuman saying *Jau sasasa* (To beat *sasasa fekei)*, Elizabeth Inia wrote that the reference is to the sound of the *paraf* when spanking a child; it sounds like the beating of breadfruit for making *sasasa,* a kind of Rotuman pudding made from cooked, skinned breadfruit, put inside a *fakmaru* (fanpalm) leaf and beaten with a stick, after which it is cut in slices and put in a banana leaf with coconut cream mixed with salt water. Mrs. Inia reported that the saying is "a metaphoric reference to a child's being disciplined. Coconut leaf midribs *(parafa)* are light, but broad, and make a clapping sound when striking the skin. They make lots of noise but do not hurt much. Mothers often use *parafa* to threaten children when they are naughty."

To the extent that more severe punishments occurred, they seem to have been more likely administered by fathers than by mothers.

However, the recollections of the Rotumans who were interviewed suggest that such incidents were relatively rare. The reflections of one man in his 20s seem to be rather characteristic:

> My relationship with my parents was just a normal one of respect and affection. I might resent it sometimes if they would punish me for something, but nothing very intense. I would fight with my brothers and sisters sometimes—just the usual sorts of thing. My father gave me most of the discipline. To a certain extent he was strict. He would tell me something once and would never repeat it. The second time he would give me a hiding or make me skip a meal. My mother was more or less the reverse. She was the one who gave me all the comfort; if I made a mistake she wouldn't belt me straight away. She more or less talked to me and tried to teach me.

Hopes for Their Children's Future

In response to a question regarding the their ambitions for their children, the majority expressed hopes for a good education, independence, and a good job. Nearly half also mentioned being well behaved. Table 3 (on the next page) shows the distribution of responses.

Table 3
Rotuman Mothers' Ambitions for Children

Ambitions	Number of Mothers	Percent of Mothers
Get a Good Education	34	68%
Have Independence	32	64%
Get a Good Job	27	54%
Be Well Behaved	24	48%
Be Happy	8	16%
Have Good Luck	7	14%
Live Well	7	14%
Work Hard	7	14%
Be Loved	4	8%
Be Healthy	2	4%
Remember What Taught	2	4%
Be Looked After by God	1	2%

Telling Children about Death

The final item in the questionnaire concerned what the mothers told their children regarding death. (I put this item in the questionnaire because I was interested in cultural patterns of grieving and dealing with death.)[1] Only 31 of the mothers responded to this question, with nearly half (15; 48%) reporting they told their children that the dead person had gone to Heaven and/or was with God. Nine (29%) told their offspring that the dead person went to the moon (or to visit the man in the moon); six (19%) told them that the dead person went to 'Oroi, the traditional realm of the dead under the sea; and one person said that the deceased went to

"another world for a holiday." What is especially interesting is that, regardless of destination, sixteen (52%) of the mothers reported telling their children that the dead person would be back soon. The implication, if I understand it correctly, is that death does not permanently remove a person from the arena of social relations, which is a conclusion Jan and I reached in our analysis of Rotuman graves.[2]

Notes to Chapter 17

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[1] For an analysis of the contrast between Rotuman and Western attitudes toward death, see "Cultural Values and Attitudes Towards Death," by Alan Howard and Robert A. Scott, *Journal of Existentialism* 6:161–174 (1965).
[2] See "The Culture of Graves on Rotuma," by Jan Rensel and Alan Howard, *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 125:93–114 (2016).

Chapter 18
Work

Rotumans have earned respect as hard workers, as well as a reputation for diligence and responsibility. They were valued as sailors by European sea captains precisely for these traits. For example, in June 1834, Captain John Eagleston of the *Emerald* wrote in the ship's log that Rotumans "make good ship men" and "for a trading vessel are preferable to any of the other natives I am acquainted with, they being more true & faithful & more to be depended on."[1]

On Rotuma, work mainly revolved around the production and preparation of food and pandanus mats. Men's work primarily involved preparing and tending gardens of taro, yams, bananas, and other crops; in addition, they cut and dried coconut meat for exportation as copra. Women's work traditionally centred on the making of mats and keeping the home and its surroundings well groomed. Both men and women fished, husbanded domestic animals, prepared food and cooked. Equal in importance to work within the domestic sphere was communal effort—work on behalf of the church and community. This generally involved efforts similar to those within the household, because feasting was a central part of most communal activities. During the period we are concerned with, an individual's worth was judged primarily on the basis of his or her reputation as a worker and producer.

A number of sayings contained in Elizabeth Inia's 1998 collection *(Fäeag 'es Fūaga)* refer to the importance of hard work for a person's reputation. Perhaps the sayings that best sum up Rotuman attitudes are the biblically derived *Kop la pumahan* (You have to sweat) and *Taria ma mah*

'on 'ono (One receives one's just deserts). Both convey the message that success is a result of the work one puts into a project, and that only hard workers deserve success. Other sayings urge individuals to work hard to achieve their goals and praise those who are known as hard-working. Thus a particularly hard-working man is known as a "hardwood post" indicating his reliability, or as having a "hairy heart," suggesting that there is more to him than just a hairy chest. In contrast a shirker may be likened to a cock who fights intermittently, implying unreliability.

The value of working together to achieve success is the point of the saying, *Moa ta pulou ka 'uaf ta pulou* (The rooster is fat and so is the hen). This refers not only to husbands and wives who prosper as a result of their joint efforts but also to successful events that are the product of contributions by many. Work is even prescribed as an alternative to anger in the saying *Fek 'on Nohu* (Nohu's anger), which suggests that when people work hard, and work together, social harmony will prevail, while the phrase *'Otom pumahana ji* (Our sweat runs down) reminds the beneficiaries of communal work of their corresponding responsibilities.[2]

The personal recollections of the life story tellers in this chapter are organized in sections according to where they worked (on plantations or for wages on Rotuma, and abroad) and specific occupations (teachers, nurses, and religious callings).

Working on Plantations at Home in Rotuma

As noted in chapter 15, the great majority of men and women during this period remained in Rotuma following their time in school. Young women were expected to learn and practice the basic chores of womanhood, including weaving mats, preparing and cooking food, looking after younger children, and cleaning the family compound. Young men, in

contrast, were granted a great deal of freedom to roam about (usually in groups) and to get involved in various kinds of mischief. However, despite freedom allotted them, young men were not entirely free from societal responsibility. They formed the nucleus of communal labour in every village, but even this obligation was not regarded as an imposition since most events requiring their labour involved feasting and fun as well as work. The opportunity to work together with one's friends was looked upon with relish rather than dismay. The young men also did some farming and fishing, but since they were not under an obligation to provide for their families if adult males were present in the household, there was little pressure on them to produce regular supplies. Usually they planted gardens that they farmed together on ground requisitioned from one of the larger land-holders in their locality.

In some families, however, the labour contributions of young men were needed to maintain the family's food supply, so from the time they left school they committed themselves to working on family plantations, generally under the tutelage of their father or elder brothers. The accounts below reflect the pride that young men took in learning to be good farmers and being able to take on the role of providers for their families.

> *Man in his 60s:* I came home and helped my father and brother work on their plantations. I tried my very best to help them and show them that I could be a good farmer, so that one day my father could stay at home and I would be able to support our family with food.

> *Man in his 60s:* After [leaving school] I began to help my father in his plantations. After coming back I would often talk with my friends about the work, and the things I had been doing. My friends began to praise me and that caused me to work more eagerly. I wanted others to praise me so I worked hard. Many

> times I took my friends up to my father's plantations and showed off my work.
>
> *Man in his 60s:* After [leaving school] I never went to school again, but stayed home and helped my father with his plantations. I spent day after day in the bush helping him and trying my very best, so that one day I would be able to work as well as my father did then.
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> *Man in his 60s:* I grew up and I began to help my father in his plantations. Then I began to notice that my father was a hard-working man. He perspired day after day to supply the family with food and cut copra to earn money for Mother and the children."
>
> *Man in his 40s:* Although I was only 15 years old, I brought food into our *kohea* [native kitchen] like an old man. I cut copra and worked in every possible way to earn money for my mother and sister. I gave them everything they would need before they would ask me."
>
> *Man in his 40s:* Many times I went with my stepfather to his plantations and he showed me how to plant and told me to work hard and learn well how to work in a plantation, so that one day I might be able to keep a plantation by myself without anybody to lead me. I worked with him and helped him as best I could.

Employment on Rotuma

Employment opportunities were quite limited on Rotuma in 1960, with almost all the available jobs accounted for by three employers: the two firms, Burns Philp and Morris Hedstrom; the Rotuma Cooperative Association (RCA); and the colonial government. As I recorded in my field notes from that year, 16 Rotumans were working for Morris Hedstrom or Burns Philp, not only as copra handlers but as clerks, storekeepers, carpenters and other skilled laborers; 28 others 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 manual laborers. Three other people worked for private individuals

and one, a minister, was employed by the Methodist Church. The Catholic Church employed two priests, at least one brother, and a complement of nuns, some of whom taught while others supported the priests in various capacities.

In addition, a number of Rotumans who were skilled *(majao)* in the traditional arts, such as massage *(sarao)* or canoe making, were able to generate some income of a non-monetary kind (for example, food, mats, or kava). One man, born in the 1920s, followed in his grandmother's footsteps by doing *sarao* for a time, before going to work for the RCA:

> When I was about 15, my grandmother gave me her oil so that I could help her do massage *(sarao)*. I later became a masseur and was using "magic" *(rē ʻại)* and many people came to me to be massaged. I also was called to go to people's homes to do the same work. When I was doing this work I was called *tafmakia*, which means (*taf* = light, *ma* = and, *kia* = sun's rays). Light and strength always comes up with the sun, so whatever I did, whether good or bad, people were frightened to talk about it. At that time I never helped my father in his plantations or elsewhere; I just went roaming around on my bicycle from house to house doing the same work (massaging) every day…. Now I am older and wiser…. I am now a driver for one of the R.C.A. lorries, hoping that my work will be of value for everyone in the family.

Some who were employed by the firms or the cooperatives found the work to their liking and stayed for long careers; others left and went on to other roles or occupations:

> *Man in his 20s:* I was getting ready to go back to Suva early in 1953 but unfortunately I didn't because the manager of Morris Hedstrom Ltd Rotuma had seen my father about me working in the office. He said that his clerk has passed away that week and that he needed a young fellow to help him in the office. I had to go to work to please the old man, but it was against my will. My ambition was that when I complete my secondary education I

would go in for doctor or barrister. Anyhow, I started work for MH Ltd on January 19th, 1953. It was not long after that they sent a clerk from HQ in Suva to Rotuma, and when this fellow came I left MH's and went back to Suva. That was in May 1953.

I got back to Suva and was admitted to the Marist Brothers High School and continued my secondary education. By the end of the year I was supposed to sit for the Junior Cambridge (Overseas) but I came back to Rotuma again for Christmas and this time my old man wouldn't let me go back to school again and saw the manager again about me working. I started again in December of that same year and am still working for MH Ltd today.

During my time here, there have been a lot of changes. There have been three managers, and all the office hands have all got the boot except me.

Man in his 50s: I was chosen to be the overseer in the plantations for the Juju Cooperative Society. After two years I got tired of the people and left my work and chose someone else to take my place.

Man in his 30s: After I was made the overseer [at Burns Philp] I found it hard at first, but I discovered that if you are a kind person and know your job well, it isn't too difficult. I stayed at B.P.'s until 1953 when I … moved to my wife's home to become the *faufisi* [second ranking chief] of the district and also a *fa 'es hoaga* [head of a section of a district]. Later on I was made the chairman of the local co-op…. I had to think all the time about the welfare of the people. But I found it hard only in the beginning, and when I got used to it, it wasn't too bad because I knew what to do and my only problem was telling the people to do it.

Employment Abroad

From very early on, following European intrusion, Rotuman men took the opportunity to sail aboard European vessels as crewmen. Some never returned to Rotuma, others did. The stories ex-sailors told about their adventures fired the imaginations of many of the young men on the island, some of whom sought shipboard employment. For example:

> *Man in his 50s:* My father … sent me to Fiji. I sailed on a sailboat and learned that being a sailor is the most happy thing a man can do. I was chief engineer, and got £12 a month."
>
> *Man in his 30s:* I asked my father to send me to Fiji and he did, when I was about 19 years old. After I was in Fiji for a while, I got a job as a sailor on an overseas boat. I sailed to some big places, like Australia and America. There I saw the most wonderful things I had ever seen in my whole life. On my first visit to one of those countries I couldn't believe it. It was so wonderful that I thought I might be coming to enter heaven. The moving of the lights and the colours were fantastic. The first trip I was afraid, but when I got used to it I liked it very much. I saw plenty of beautiful and exciting things and for a while I couldn't think of anything else. I think that when I was sailing it was the happiest time of my life. When you're a sailor you can see plenty of new and exciting things. I also saw the most beautiful girls that I had ever seen. Some of them were so beautiful that when I saw their faces I couldn't believe they were real people.

Other opportunities for employment were available in Fiji, to which, following World War II, Rotumans emigrated in increasing numbers. Various possibilities included the Fiji army, the various firms, and jobs requiring skilled labour, as the following accounts illustrate:

> *Man in his 30s:* When I was about 19 years old I went to Fiji and joined the army. I liked being in the army very much; it was more fun than the time that I was in Rotuma. In the army I was always with my friends and sometimes we all got drunk together and sang songs, and other times we got drunk and we all would go to a dance together.
>
> *Man in his 20s:* I got a job in customs…. I started out as a license clerk at 16 pounds a month, and another fellow had a job as senior clerk for 80 pounds a month. He proved to be incompetent, and the comptroller of customs asked me if I could try the job, since I had more or less proved myself. So we switched jobs. I thought that I would receive his salary, but after six months I was still getting

only 16 pounds a month and the fellow who took my job was still getting 80…. So I quit that job.

I went over to Burns Philp and told them everything, and they told me they would start me at the same pay as the government, 16 pounds a month, but if I proved myself they would give me a raise. I started in November, and in December I got my raise and was transferred to Rotuma. I came to Rotuma in January, 1957.

Man in his 50s: It was a great pleasure for me to arrive in Fiji—the land that I had hoped to see since I was a small boy. I managed to get a job as a carpenter. One time, when we went to the other side of the island to work, I met a girl and fell in love with her, so I left my work and stayed back in the girl's village and married her…. These people didn't want me to work, so they made me feel much lazier than I should have been…. Now I'm old and weak and can't work properly, but there isn't anybody to look after me, so I have to do my best and do all my work everyday.

Man in his 30s: The headmaster sent me to Morris Hedstrom Ltd. to take a job in the shipping office. I stayed there for about a month, but almost every afternoon I would go to the police training depot and play ping-pong and cricket with the Rotuman fellows there. I became interested in the police department and decided to join. For one thing I was only getting 8/6 per week at MH, and since I didn't have anyone to take care of me I couldn't get along very well on that, so I joined the police as a recruit on the 6th of February, 1942.

I trained as a recruit for three months and took the police examination and did so well they made me a second class constable. I was assigned to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Suva. I stayed with the CID for about two years and found it very interesting. I worked in the office most of the time, but went out sometimes. One thing, I think that working with fingerprints ruined my eyes, and I've had to wear glasses ever since.

After two years I was assigned to the Immigration and Licensing Department. I stayed there for about ten years up until 1954. I found the work hard, but interesting. One thing I didn't like: besides our regular weekly hours we were on night call and sometimes on weekends….

I resigned from the Immigration Department because of false promises and bad working conditions. I applied to the Colonial

> Secretary for a transfer and in July 1954 I went to the Income Tax Department. I stayed there for two years, until June 1956, when I was transferred to administration, to which I had applied. I asked to be sent to Rotuma and was assigned to Rotuma as the clerk of the district. I felt I had served Fiji long enough and wanted to serve my own people for a change. Last year the job of sub-accountant was also transferred to the clerk, whereas before it had been done by the District Officer. I feel that the work I have to do now is far too much work for one man.

And in one case, at least, serendipity resulted in a young man being recruited by an American soldier during the Second World War:

> *Man in his 30s:* I met an American sergeant one day, in 1941 or 1942…. For the next eight years or so, I worked for this sergeant, whose job was to check American mechanical equipment throughout the Pacific. We went to the Gilberts, Carolines, Marshalls, Samoa, and Hawai'i, and even as far as San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Vancouver. At the end of this time I was a technical sergeant myself.
>
> Then one day my boss told me that he was going to the Carolines to be discharged, and at this same time there was a demand for a person who could take care of some outboard motors and other mechanical equipment and who could speak a little bit of Gilbertese, to conduct a scientific expedition to the Gilbert group. My boss suggested that I go with them and then rejoin him in the Marshalls and we would go "home" to America together.
>
> I spent several months with the expedition in the Gilberts, and when they were preparing to leave, I told the expedition leader that I was staying on. He tried to persuade me to go, realising that there was a woman involved, but I refused. So they left without me.

Specific Occupations

Students who successfully completed secondary schooling in Fiji sometimes had opportunities to go on for professional degrees. Three of the more popular choices were teaching, nursing, and the clergy. Those whose life

stories are included in this book, of course, are among the ones who eventually obtained positions back on the island.

Teachers

> *Man in his 30s:* I passed the [Qualifying Examination] at the end of 1946. After I passed the exam I went right to Suva, before school closed down, and got a job. I didn't know I had passed and was awaiting the result. I got a job sorting mail in the post office. I worked there for two weeks and quit because I didn't like it, so I got a job as an office boy in a legal firm. I didn't like that job much, either. I would have stayed there, but three weeks after I had joined that firm I learned that I had passed the exam, and I decided to go into the Nasinu Training College and become a teacher.
>
> I always wanted to become a teacher. The first impression that I wanted to be a teacher was one day when I about 8 or 9 years old and I saw Ratu Edward Cakabou. He was a visiting teacher then. I was more or less attracted by the man's personal appearance, and I thought that if I were to become a teacher I might one day get a job like his, which was very highly regarded. He was highly respected, largely because of his royal blood. I was unaware of that, though, and thought the great homage paid to him was because of his position, and that anyone who got to such a position would be treated likewise. Secondly, because through my long years in school I had come across many kinds of teachers and I felt that I could join the competition and be a good one….
>
> At the end of the two-year course I made up my mind to come to Rotuma first thing, and at the end of 1947 I was appointed to the Malhaha school. I stayed at the Malhaha school, teaching Class 6 most of the time, until 1953 when I was temporarily transferred to the Motusa school. Towards the end of 1953 I returned to the Malhaha school—the new one which had just been built. I taught Class 6 until the end of 1954, when I took over Class 7. At the end of 1955 I was awarded the Rotuma Development Fund Scholarship to take teacher's training in New Zealand. After completing … two years in New Zealand, I returned to Fiji. That was in 1957. In 1958 I taught Form III in a school for Fijian boys in Lodoni, Fiji. In 1959 I returned to Rotuma and have taught at the Malhaha school—Form IV, since then.

Man in his 30s: After getting my teacher's certificate, I was appointed to Queen Victoria School as an assistant master. That was a good opportunity for me because I worked with people who were experts in their various fields. I learned quite a bit there from the masters themselves. I taught three years there and after that I went to a training college in New Zealand; it was a two-year course….

I had about five months of student teaching, not all at one stretch. I taught European children, and sometimes the children would tell me that their mother wanted me to come for tea, but they usually lived too far. European children are not shy. Even if you're new to a class, if you ask them to tell stories there will be many hands up. In my opinion it was harder. First of all, they're so active. You have to keep moving all the time. Rotuman children are not so very active. They're very passive.

I left New Zealand in 1957 and went to Suva, where I was appointed to Rotuma. I arrived in Rotuma towards the end of February 1958. That was when they first started the secondary department at the Malhaha school. I was appointed to teach Form III.

Man in his 20s: [It] was the year they had the big hurricane in Suva so I didn't get a boat back to Fiji until April. The vacation in Rotuma cost me plenty. I didn't get back to school until the first term was almost over and I was quite a bit behind. The principal told me to stay for the two-week vacation, but that didn't help much. I'd say that that holiday in Rotuma caused me to fail my last exam—the University Entrance. At the end of the year I was a bit too old to go back to school so I went to work at the Government buildings. I got a job as a clerk in the Registrar General's office. I stayed with this job for one year, and during that year the inspector of schools asked me if I would like to try teaching. My job as a clerk was easy-going, but there wasn't much advantage to it. I wanted to do something that would be useful for the people in Rotuma. The inspector of schools asked me if I would like take a bursary (scholarship) to New Zealand to study education and come back to become a teacher. I looked upon that as one of the best chances I would ever get. I liked the idea of becoming a teacher. In fact I had applied for Nasinu Training College before, but I backed out of it because my sister was already going there. Being older than her, I felt that maybe I wouldn't get on well with her; I felt that I might

lose my feeling of priority over her if we came back on an equal basis.

I went to New Zealand early in 1954…. I stayed in New Zealand until the middle of 1956. I got out of college at the end of 1955, but spent the last six months roaming around New Zealand, taking different jobs. My first job was on a sheep farm. I worked for a building contractor, on a wharf, in the freezing works, and as a delivery boy. I enjoyed that period very much. I saw a lot of people and a lot of places. I spent most of my other holidays visiting with people who had invited me to their homes….

I came back to Suva and the education inspector had a good go at me for spending a six-month holiday without permission. They told me they paid my fare back only because I had a good record at the college, otherwise they wouldn't have. They told me that I would start teaching at the same salary I earned as a clerk, and I told them I wouldn't teach on that salary, so they ended up by offering me about one-and-a half times my old salary and I accepted. I started off at the Brother's School in Suva. It's a Catholic school attended by all denominations. I started off with a class of seventy-five. That's a hell of a big class for the first time of teaching. I found it pretty hard, partly because it was my first time and partly because there was such a mixture of people—Indians, Fijians, half-castes, Samoans, Rotumans—everything. I taught in both English and Fijian. Then, at the end of 1956 I was assigned to be headmaster of the Motusa school, where I now am.

Nurses

Woman in her 20s: When I reached the end of my third year of training, I sat for my last exam and was one of the six who made it through. I was so glad that I took a trip to Rotuma to tell my parents about my happiness and returned to Fiji on the same boat. After that I worked in the hospital, but my intentions were to work for my native land and my people, and then one day my dreams came true. I was called to go and work for my people in Rotuma. Gee! How my heart beat with joy when I was on my way to my native land. This is very hard work, of course, but since I love it, I look upon everything as easy….

Now I am working in the hospital in my native land and I enjoy working for my people. I try to treat them all the same, and I often relieve the doctor with cases that I know how to handle. I learned how to drive and whenever the doctor is too busy to go

around the island visiting the sick I take the ambulance and see the sick people instead of him.

Woman, age unknown: After four years of hard studies I became a staff nurse and yet still worked with my friends in the hospital. I was thinking of going home to work for my own people and one day my dreams came true. I left Suva for my homeland and came to the hospital in Ahau. There were about six of us taking care of the sick in the hospital and visiting the sick in their homes around the island….

After two years in the hospital I was sent to look after two districts. I lived in my own home and visited homes in the two districts and gave the people whatever they needed and treated their sores….

I always go with my husband whenever there is a call during the night. He helps me sometimes in my work…. I am doing my best to help them and attend to the sick when I am called for…. It's nice to think that I am working for my own people at home.

Clergy

Methodist minister in his 50s: After my four years in Davuilevu, in 1931, I was sent to Rotuma to teach at the Motusa school. Rotuma didn't seem like it had changed much. The only thing that seemed hard was the school. I was in charge of 140 children, ranging from Class 1 to Class 5. After two years, I was sent to the Paptea school. I stayed in the Paptea school for two years, and then in 1935 I decided to go back to Davuilevu as a theological student to study for the ministry….

After studying for two years in Davuilevu, I was sent by the Church to Australia to do deputation work—encourage people in Australia to donate to the overseas mission….

I stayed in Australia almost nine months. During that time I travelled a lot and sometimes stayed in two different homes in one week. Most of the time I spent visiting peoples' homes. I also visited schools and churches and preached on Sundays. After nine months in a strange country, I was happy to come back to Fiji again. When I returned they sent me to Rotuma and I was put in charge of the Noa'tau circuit. I liked being a minister. I felt like I was helping the people. I spent two years as a minister in Noa'tau, and then I answered a church advertisement for a native minister to work among the half-castes in Northern Australia. The Church accepted

and I was appointed there in 1940. I spent five years in Northern Australia and a year in Sydney. I only spent one year with the half-castes; after that they evacuated the half-castes and our women and children south, because of the war. My wife and children were sent to Sydney and I transferred to native work—working with the Aborigines. It was very hard—the language was difficult. It wasn't so much religious work that I did among them; it was mostly agricultural work. Every morning we took them to the field, planting sweet potatoes.

I finally got back to Fiji in early 1947, and the Church appointed me as superintendent of the Rotuma circuit. I stayed as superintendent until last year, 1959. I retired because the church wanted me to go to Fiji, but my wife was not in good enough health to go about and I thought it would be better to retire from the work rather than take her away from Rotuma. Now I am a supernumerary minister and I'm assisting as a teacher in the Malhaha school. I am not a registered teacher now, but because of the shortage of teachers, the D.O. and school committee appointed me to help out. It's been a long while, and the method of teaching has changed, so it's a bit difficult, but I like it.

Catholic priest in his 30s: If you asked me now, if you had it to do over again, would you become a priest, I'd have to think about it. It doesn't mean I regret it, but I'd have to think. The life and obligations are not easy. You're not your own boss. I was anxious though to come back to Rotuma and work among my own people.

After I was ordained I spent three months in pastoral work in New Zealand. After that I was appointed for six weeks in North Auckland as an assistant priest and after that I was sent back to Fiji. First I was appointed as assistant priest at Levuka, for about two-and-a-half months and then I was sent to Rotuma. I felt great about being sent to Rotuma. I have no desire to be posted anyplace else but here….

As a priest you can't be perfectly happy, but when you come back from talking to people as a priest, you feel good because you've done something worthwhile. One shouldn't be surprised if he isn't perfectly happy, because God doesn't intend you to be perfectly happy in this life.

Catholic brother in his 20s: After I finished with the noviciate I was sent to the New Hebrides to be a mechanic. The American brother

at Port Villa taught me to be a mechanic. I stayed there for three years. I enjoyed this time very much. I liked the work, it was very interesting. I learned to fix cars and all kinds of mechanical things. When I left there I was 25 years old and trained as a mechanic.

After that I had a six months' holiday and I went back to Fiji, and then I came back to Rotuma. I almost couldn't speak the language; I had to learn it all over again. That was last year, and now I'm staying here at Sumi. I like it very much. There's plenty of work. I think I'd like to stay here.

Notes on Chapter 18

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[1] The extract concerning Rotuma from the log of the ship *Emerald* for June 1834 by its captain, John Eagleston, is available in Pacific Manuscript Bureau frame 151 and also online via the Rotuma Website at http://www.rotuma.net/os/Eagleston.htm [accessed 27 May 2020].

[2] For more on attitudes toward work as expressed in Rotuman sayings, see also "Rotuman Culture as Reflected in Its Sayings," by Alan Howard and Jan Rensel, in *Fäeag 'es Fūaga*, pages 220–223.

Chapter 19
Leadership

Leadership in Rotuma in 1960 was divided into two forms: traditional chieftainship roles (*gagaj ʻes itu ʻu* [district chiefs] and *fa ʻes ho ʻaga* [subchiefs within districts]) and Western institutional roles (teachers, bureaucrats, priests and ministers, medical personnel, businessmen, etc.). The experiences of leaders in these positions tended to be quite different.

Chieftainship

Chiefs are central to social life on Rotuma. They are customarily chosen from among the bilineal descendants of ancestors who held a title *(as togi)*. At all kinds of ceremonies, chiefs *(gagaja)* have special rights and responsibilities. They are honoured and eat from tables *(ʻumefe)* that symbolize their status. In return they are expected to give speeches on behalf of their constituents and to be generous when presentations of food and valuables are required.

Each of Rotuma's seven district has a head chief *(gagaj ʻes itu ʻu)* and a number of subchiefs *(fa ʻes ho ʻaga)* who are in charge of clusters of households that served as work groups at communal events.

While expected to show some degree of forceful leadership, Rotuman chiefs are constrained by an ethic of reciprocity in which the people provide labour and material support, while chiefs ensure their people's welfare through displays of generosity. Rotuman myths clearly portray chiefs who were too demanding—who took more than they gave—as the conceptual equivalent of cannibals.[1] The behaviour of Rotumans toward their chiefs over time is consistent with this mythical

charter, continually demonstrating both passive and active resistance to chiefly excess.

But quite apart from the men who occupy them, chiefly titles represent the heart and soul of Rotuman culture. When Rotumans talk about past glories, about the supernaturally charged powers of their legendary ancestors, they almost invariably refer to former chiefs. By representing these titled ancestors in name, modern chiefs encode the dignity of tradition in the roles they play, whether or not their actions conform to expectations. Without chiefs, ceremonies of all kinds—births, marriages, welcomings, village and district fetes, etc.—would lose their significance, for it is the presence of chiefs that lends dignity and historical depth to such occasions.

Many Rotuman sayings, including several in Elizabeth Inia's 1998 collection *Fäeag 'es Fuaga*, reflect the high regard that Rotumans have for the institution of chieftainship, regardless of their attitudes toward particular title-holders. Thus a newly installed chief is referred to as a *sau pene'isi* (sweet-smelling flower), the same phrase used as a metaphor for one's sweetheart. In this instance, it is a metonym for a new chief because, on the day of his installation, he wears a flower behind his right ear. (A metonym is a figure of speech in which a part stands for the whole.) During that day he is the special "flower" of the *kainaga* (family group) that installs him. To pick a coconut from a coconut tree is a metonym for an installation ceremony; this saying refers to the piles of coconut husks that accumulate under coconut trees The newly installed district chief is said to cover them up with fresh green leaves, a symbolic allusion to the expectation that he will solve the standing problems in the district, such as land disputes.

The chief's wife also plays a very important role in community activities, especially related to the other women. She can elevate—or undermine— her husband's status by her actions and attitudes. When an otherwise well-regarded chief has a wife who creates problems in a village or district, Rotumans may say, "The canoe is good but the outrigger is bad" (311). If friction arises for any reason between the new chief and his people, as with a couple, the saying "the joint creaks" may be invoked.

Once installed, chiefs are addressed honorifically as "you red ones" in reference to the red sashes once worn by the *sau* and *mua,* the two highest-ranking officers in the traditional hierarchy. If a chief fails to live up to expectations or fails to act authoritatively, people remark that "his sash is not red," implying that he lacks mana (potency).

Chiefs are honoured in various ways, at least two of which are encoded in Rotuman sayings. One is the custom of *tukuag 'omoe,* wherein the men from each district take an annual gift of baskets of cooked food to their district chief. The chief blesses the food when he receives it, helping to ensure fruitfulness for the coming year. The other custom is for the men of a district to give the chief a massive ceremonial gift of taro corms, in quantities of 1,000 or multiples thereof, "to swing on his food hook." This is a way of symbolizing the prosperity of land and ensuring future blessings. Chiefs are also honoured with a special language of respect, one phrase of which—*'O ma 'o kalog* (Yes, sir)—is used to warn children to mind their manners when interacting too casually with a chief. In general, people are advised not to become too familiar with chiefs, lest they act disrespectfully toward them.

That chiefs are not always easy to please is signalled by the saying "to hunt banded rail with the chief," the message being that there is no way to win; if you catch a banded rail *(ve'a)* the chief will be jealous, but if

you don't catch it he will be angry. Unlike Fijian chiefs (who are raised from birth to fill that role), Rotumans are already adults when they are selected by their kin group to serve. Chieftainship can therefore be burdensome and a source of ambivalent feelings, as revealed in the reflections of title-holders who shared their life stories in 1960:

> *Subchief in his 50s:* I became a *fa 'es ho'aga* [head of a section of a district], but I don't like it, because I know now that a leader must be a kind man, so that the people will like him. It would be easier for a rich man, so he could buy the things his people needs. Sometimes, like during a feast when I am served the best foods and treated with such concern, I remember my mother and father and the way they used to treat me. It was the same kind of thing. When I think of that I feel pained inside.
>
> *Subchief in his 30s:* It happened one day that I was chosen by our relations to take the subchief's title. I knew I was too young and not wise enough to lead many people, but I had to take it. Many a time my elders were wild with me but I didn't care because they had chosen me to look after them. I was brave and very insolent to them and they seemed to hate me later.
>
> A few years passed when a great suffering came upon me. One of my five children died a sudden death. He seemed to be poisoned by something. How sad I was to think of it, but it dawned on me that maybe it was a punishment given me for how I had treated the older people in our village. I changed myself then and became a new person towards my people and now my wife and I are loved by our neighbours and are leading a happier life among the others in the village.
>
> *Subchief in his 30s:* I don't want to be a *fa 'es ho'aga,* but I do it because I love my mother. This *ho'aga* came from her side and by taking it I'll always be able to remember her, even after she has died.
>
> *Newly elected district chief in his 30s:* Now I'm chief of a district and it's the first time in my life I feel really bad. Being a chief is hard and I'm very unhappy. The night that I found out I was the new chief,

> four days from then I could still not remember and think about what I was doing—just like I had no brain.
>
> One day I went to the bush to weed my garden and left my knife stuck in a tree. I didn't feel like working so I just prepared my food and when I finished I couldn't remember where my knife was.
>
> Now I've been chief for three weeks and still have trouble thinking and I worry too much. It's better to live like I did before than to be chief. If you're a good chief the people will all like you, but if you are a bad chief they will hate you. I'm worried about whether I'll be a good chief or not; a worried life is no good.

Amidst their other reflections, some chiefs explicitly acknowledged the essential role played by their wives (or their sisters) and the importance of good relations between them and the people:

> *Former district chief in his 60s:* I was … chosen to take over a whole district and the people all gave their agreement and I ruled over them. Older people were like children sometimes; they were so naughty that I had to speak to them like children. I made them do my work, like cutting copra or anything I would like them to do for me….
>
> My wife did her very best and the women in the district all loved her and whatever she would call for, they were ready to help. But for my part, whenever I called my men to do my work, only a few came out of more than a hundred who belonged to my district. My people built me a house and cut copra for me and yet they were not satisfied with what I had done for them. One day I got a letter from the government that I had to leave my position to another man. I felt so sorry because whenever I wanted hard work done for me they would come and finish it in a short while, but now I would have to do the work on my own. I can remember that many people were very glad when I was told to leave off ruling them.
>
> *District chief in his 60s:* To my surprise, I was elected chief, but how should I lead my people? I felt so strange and nervous to sit in front of so many people, old and young and children. How was I to speak to them? I knew that being the chief I was their servant at the same time. I took my place and my wife, being a nice woman,

> seemingly was liked by everybody. At the beginning my father was helping me how I should act to make the people like me.
>
> Unluckily, my dear father died two years after my election, leaving me alone to lead my people. My poor wife was then taken seriously ill and died…. For a whole year I was leading the people alone with my sister taking my wife's place.
>
> I then got married again … and how different I found the people that time. People seemed to hate my new wife and began to disobey my words … although many times people told me she is not the chief, but she is my wife and she may have something to say, too. I noticed that people really hated me because of my wife. Many of them grumble and say that they should have someone new in my place because I wasn't doing the right thing sometimes, but none of them had the courage to let it be known in a district meeting. Sometimes I knew I was doing wrong because my wife liked to be that way, but we two were on the same side. My wife sometimes made my people hate me but I didn't care about them, I cared about my wife who would take care of me.
>
> I'm still a chief in our district and looking after my people, many of whom like me while many hate me because I am getting old and now not well fitted for this kind of work.

Similarly, a chief's wife in her 30s felt the burden of the roles they had to play:

> When my husband became chief I felt very bad—right up until now. I'm afraid, because I know I have to be kind to the people all the time and have to lead the women in the right way. I always worry about what I should do to lead the people in the right way and make them happy. This is the first time in my life that I've always had to worry about what I'm going to do and whether my husband and I will be able to do the right things. I feel anxious because we are poor people and it will be very hard for my husband and I to get the things that the people will need to make them happy. If the people like you they will do what you say, but if they are angry at you they won't want to do what you want them to. This is the first time in my life that I am really worried and live unhappily, because my husband has become a chief and we are poor people. It's better for a rich man to be chief.

Some men held both chiefly and nontraditional leadership positions, for instance as overseers or chairmen with the local cooperative society or one of the commercial firms that were then operating on the island. They reflected on the similarities and differences between these roles:

> *Subchief in his 50s:* One of my relations who had a chiefly title died in another district and I was called to take the title. I left my home and went with my wife and all our children and moved to that district to take the *as togi* [chiefly title]. I was leading a *ho'aga* there. At first people loved us and they seemed to help us in everything we told them to do, but later my wife seemed to be harsh with them and the people hated us, up until now.
>
> I was chosen to be the overseer in the plantations for the district cooperative society. After two years I got tired of the people and left my work and chose someone else to take my place….
>
> Now I am the chairman of the cooperative society. It is so hard to speak to the older people, but because I was chosen I am trying my very best so that the people of the society would not hate me like those people from *ho'aga* who still hate my wife. Eventually I will leave this place, the people, and the chiefly title and go to Fiji using my own name, because I have already seen that being a leader here I'm a servant of the people. I think it is much better to stay without an *as togi* than to be a servant. Older people are very hard to lead.

> *Subchief in his 30s:* I lived with my second wife in a house that was given to me by B.P.'s [Burns Philp], because I had the job of overseer. After I was made the overseer I found it hard at first, but I discovered that if you are a kind person and know your job well, it isn't too difficult. I stayed at B.P.'s until 1953 when I stopped working for B.P.'s and moved to my wife's home to become the *faufisi* [second-ranking chief] of the district and also a *fa 'es hoaga*. Later on I was made the chairman of the local co-op. Being a leader for all these things was different than when I was free because I had to think all the time about the welfare of the people. But I found it hard only in the beginning, and when I got used to it, it wasn't too bad because I knew what to do and my only problem was telling the people to do it. Now I am living together with my wife and will do whatever the district chief says.

Nontraditional Forms of Leadership

Nontraditional forms of leadership involve a different set of skills and qualifications, mostly acquired through education and particular work experiences. Whereas chiefs require, at least in theory, an appropriate pedigree to qualify for a leadership position, nontraditional leaders do not. Anyone who has acquired the necessary credentials through personal effort can qualify for leadership within their fields of expertise. Furthermore, especially with regard to issues involving knowledge of modern society such as commerce, government, or medicine, their voices may be given special weight, even outside of their special areas. Below are extracts from life stories and interviews about leadership from four categories of nontraditional leaders: those involved in governance within the Rotuma Council, religious leaders, a business leader, and educators.

Government Positions of Authority (Rotuma Council)

In 1960, the Rotuma Council consisted of the head chiefs *(gagaj ʻesituʻu)* of Rotuma's seven districts; an elected representative from each district; the District Officer, who acted as chairman; and the assistant medical officer. District representatives *(mata)* were elected by secret ballot at two-year intervals. The Council met quarterly and discussed all matters pertaining to the administration of the island and it was responsible for making regulations that had the force of law.

> *District representative in his 30s:* I was first elected to the Council of Chiefs last year. That was when the first representatives were elected. I thought I might do good in the Council so I had a friend nominate me, so he wrote a letter of nomination, and found a man to second it, and they sent the letter to the District Officer. Mine was the only genuine nomination. There were a couple of others,

but the people had signed the others' names—Rotuman style—and as a consequence I was automatically elected.

When I first attended a Council meeting I was rather awed by it and thought it might prove to be beyond me. Later on I found I was able to hold my own. I was one of the few educated people on the Council, and I found the outlook of the majority quite narrow. One thing I found in the Council is you have to take things very easy. Radical changes, even though they may be good ones, won't be followed by the people. Take the Land Commission, for example.

The idea was to register and survey the lands. That's where the old ideas and the modern ideas clashed. The modern idea was to register people in only one or two *kainaga,* but the old idea was having your rights intact in all your *kainaga.* The people couldn't see that registration in one or two *kainaga* did not necessarily interfere with your rights in the other *kainaga.* If the people had a bit more education they would have been able to read the bill without it being interpreted. Even many of the Council members couldn't read the bill and it had to be translated into Rotuman. If the Council members couldn't understand the bill, how could the poor people in the villages understand it?

District representative in his 20s: In 1958 I was elected to the Rotuma Council of Chiefs as a district representative. My impression of Council meetings was that the District Officer had the say most of the time. The chiefs more or less followed whatever the D.O. suggested. That is probably because when there were European D.O.s the chiefs were in awe of them, and this attitude has continued towards the Rotuman D.O.s. At the beginning, the say of the representatives was very limited. Wilson Inia, for instance, was dismissed because of a difference with the D.O. I think the initial idea was for the Council representatives to be advisors, but that has gradually changed. Now I would say that the representatives have about equal rights as the chiefs. Now the representatives do most of the talking. We can usually persuade the chiefs to come around to our point of view. Some of the chiefs are quite conservative. One of the chiefs always looks at things from the religious point of view; one of the Council representatives is that way, too. On the whole, I think the Council functions pretty well. Sometimes the chiefs are a little slow to express themselves,

> but as a body I think it represents the opinion of the people pretty well….
>
> Being a Council representative you have a duty to the people. Sometimes it's very disappointing being a representative. Take the Land Commission. That was approved by the Council. We went back to the villages and explained it and the people agreed, and everything was set. Then afterwards they changed their minds. One thing that disrupted things was the outside influence from Fiji, and also some of the people on the island. Some people were only thinking of their own interests.

Religious Leaders

In 1960, all Rotumans on the island identified as either Methodist or Catholic. The Methodist Church was led by a Rotuman head minister who supervised other ministers on the island as well as lay preachers. The Catholic Church was divided into two parishes, Sumi and Upu, each headed by a European Marist priest. In addition at that time, one Rotuman was serving as a Catholic priest on the island and one Rotuman was a Catholic brother. Here are the thoughts that two of those religious leaders shared about their roles and how they fit into Rotuman society:

> *Methodist minister in his 50s:* A good minister should be a friend to all. He should be a man who knows his Bible well. If he knows his Bible well, he'll know what to do with it. Some people don't care about their people—they're only interested in their service, but not in helping the people—like if they are having difficulties, such as sickness.
>
> *Catholic priest in his 30s:* As a priest you can't be perfectly happy, but when you come back from talking to people as a priest, you feel good because you've done something worthwhile. One shouldn't be surprised if he isn't perfectly happy, because God doesn't intend you to be perfectly happy in this life.
>
> In Rotuma we have two denominations, and in order to be successful you should treat them both equally. If the Wesleyans see

> that the priest is kind to them, they may feel more sympathetic to the Catholic church.
>
> I also think the priest should be respectful to the chiefs. I think the French fathers were wrong in the way they treated the chiefs. After all, the people look up to the chiefs and if you want to get their cooperation, it's better if the chiefs are favourably disposed towards you. Otherwise they just try to stay away.
>
> I think a man goes on learning until he dies. I've done some things seriously wrong—about Rotuman custom—since I've returned to Rotuma. Like one time when I was riding on my bicycle past a *mamasa* [welcoming ceremony]. I went right past without slowing down. I felt very bad about that. It's respectful to at least slow down, if not get off your bicycle and walk until you are past. That shows that you feel something about what's happening, not like it doesn't mean anything to you. The worst thing was that they stopped me near the end of the road and asked me to join them and eat; I really felt ashamed. In New Zealand they might say that is silly, but in Rotuma it's the accepted thing and I think it's proper to follow the custom. I wouldn't do anything like that again. I think that some of the Rotumans who get educated ignore the proper customs of etiquette and I think the old Rotuman customs should be kept.
>
> A good priest should mix with the people, not stay aloof. The people are a bit scared of priests, they like the priest to make the first move.

Business Leaders

In 1960 there were two firms on the island, Morris Hedstrom and Burns Philp, each headed by a businessman from Fiji. A Rotuman man in his 20s was an assistant manager at Morris Hedstrom; he saw several attributes as important to succeeding in that role:

> The first thing is you must be honest, because you're handling cash. You must always try to be good-natured and humble, because you don't know how touchy people are, and if you're cheeky and throw your weight around people won't want to come into your store. You must be competent to do your office work.

Educators

Headmasters of the schools were responsible for implementing curricula prescribed by the colonial government in Fiji and were expected to have leadership abilities vis-à-vis their faculty and staff. Other instructors, particularly those responsible for teaching the more advanced classes, were often looked to for advice both within the school system and in their home districts. They all had years of experience in Fiji or other countries while undergoing teacher preparation if not also working in other schools, and they reflected on what it meant to return to Rotuma to live and teach:

> *Teacher in his 30s:* I'm quite happy as a teacher. But I feel that to become a teacher in Rotuma places additional burdens on a person. In Rotuma, people expect too much from a teacher with regard to his personal life. People expect you to be a moral leader as well, and if you don't work up to their expectations, they have a disregard for you. At the moment I don't take too much notice of what they say, on the assumption that I have a private life to lead. But I think the longer I stay in Rotuma, the more I'll be influenced by Rotuman attitudes towards life and will tend to fall back towards Rotuman ways.
>
> I hope to be able to leave Rotuma in order to advance in my profession. In Rotuma there's not much chance for advancement. My opinion is that the time to return to Rotuma is after you've reached your peak in your profession. I want to remain a teacher as long as I can. I want to reach the highest possible place I can get to.
>
> I feel that a good teacher should have the chance to pass on his knowledge—his secrets—to other teachers. This remains hard when one is simply a teacher in a school. I would like to be a visiting teacher—a teacher who visits schools to inspect and advise on teaching methods.
>
> I think a good teacher is one who can easily entice his children to learn and understand through his methods of imparting knowledge, depending on the methods he uses … inventing methods, for instance, and who can readily help his children to grow mentally and emotionally….

> As a teacher I feel that a large part of our job is to encourage the children under our care to become independent thinking people who do not readily have to conform to any influences, except after careful thinking and consideration. This may help them to cope with their changing environment.

> *Teacher in his 20s:* At the end of 1956 [after living and teaching abroad], I was assigned to be headmaster of the Motusa school, where I now am. At first the Rotuman children seemed very strange to me. The Rotuman children don't act as European children do. Their interests are different. For one thing, their experiences are very narrow, and their sense of leadership is not as keen. I've tried two ways of inducing leadership. The first two years I tried to induce individual students to take responsibility for the class at times when I was gone. It didn't work out very well. The individuals who were chosen didn't know how to control the class, and the other children didn't want to follow what the leader would say. Since the end of last year I've tried a new experiment—appointing class leaders for a term. It works quite well with some, but not so well with others. At first favouritism was a bit of a problem, but I threatened to punish the leaders if they showed favouritism. I tried to point out to them that when you are a leader you must regard everyone as an equal, regardless of who are your friends. Now I think it's working quite well.

Views of Leadership

For people who were in leadership positions, I included a question in the life story questionnaire regarding what it takes to be a good leader in Rotuma. Here is a selection of the responses, some of which hold up as a model Wilson Inia, who by that time had served in several leadership roles with the Rotuma Council, the Rotuma Cooperative Association, and Rotuma High School.[2]

> *Subchief in his 50s:* A leader should be a kind man, a rich man, and he should have good schooling.

Subchief in his 30s: A good leader must be a kind man to the people and he should know how to do the work that is required of him.

Subchief in his 30s: I think a leader should be a good man, like Wilson Inia and also rich. If a leader is a [poor] man like me, he will have to worry every day.

Subchief in his 30s: A leader should be a skilful person who can lead his people to follow the right way. He also should be rich, and he should not be a sulky person.

New district chief in his 30s: A good leader should be a man like Master Inia—somebody with plenty of education; or a rich person, so he can help the people in his district. Just like [a chief in another district]. The people all like him because he always gives money for things that they need.

Clerk to the District Officer in his 30s: I think [a good leader] ought to be a fellow who knows how to get along in the modern world. The good chiefs in the old days just aren't capable any more because things are changing too fast. I think it's better for a fellow with some education to become chief rather than just someone from the right *mosega* [chiefly family]. If he is from a chiefly family that would be very nice.

Teacher and district representative in his 30s: You must be fair, first of all, in whatever you do. Once you are shown to be unfair, then your prestige goes way down. The people are very critical of unfairness. Also, I think one should take things easy, by which I mean that there is no need to rush decisions. For example, even when a chief has the right to make a decision, it is wiser for him to ask the opinions of his subchiefs, or even the people, before coming to a decision. If possible, a leader should have reached a certain standard of education, even if it's not Western education. If a chief was thoroughly grounded in Rotuman customs that wouldn't be so bad because he'd know something, but if he knows neither Rotuman customs nor has had a Western education, then God help the people. In Rotuma particularly, a leader must be a Christian, or a church-goer. The people will have more respect if he goes to church even if he doesn't believe in God. Another quality, I think, every leader should have a goal. That's a Rotuman

custom. For example, in the old days a chief might ask himself, "What can I do so the people will remember me?" and he might make some thing like a *kiu* [ten thousand; reference is to a ceremony in which a chief is presented with thousands of root crops as an expression of homage]. Now a chief, like the present chief of our district, can have goals like improving the living conditions in the district. We have established a district fund from which we've built concrete tanks for each family, and now the fund has been switched over to build houses. I think that a leader in Rotuma must make an effort to see the other man's point of view, especially since the rules of debate don't exist. By that I mean he shouldn't judge people by his own standards.

He should refrain from passing unfounded judgements. A chief should also be firm. Once a decision is made, he should stick to it and not be easily persuaded. In that way the people will continue to respect him. I also think it's a good thing in Rotuma for a leader to know what other leaders are doing in their villages, and to have an open mind about these things. On the other hand, there is no need to simply imitate for the sake of competing if there is no good reason to do so. This is done too much in Rotuma—for example the *kiu.* A leader should make a conscious effort to keep his standard of living as high as he can, so that if the occasion ever arises, you can be able to help the people you lead.

Teacher and district representative in his 20s: A leader in Rotuma should be very firm. [One district has problems] because the chief is easily persuaded to change his mind. If you're not firm in Rotuma the people will overrule you. For another thing, you must be fair. For example, some chiefs show favouritism towards friends and relations with regard to weddings, with regard to the custom of *la'a* [organised gift giving], for instance. He should be respectable—be a good example to the people. He should be a good worker in the bush, for instance, and keep his house in good condition. He should be considerate of others in handling their things and property.

Perceptions of Change

Leaders were also asked about the greatest Western influences on Rotuma during their lifetimes. Acknowledging that Rotumans were following

European ways and using European material goods, several of them reflected on what they saw as plusses and minuses of these influences:

> *Methodist minister in his 50s:* There are some good things and some bad things. Conditions of living are much better. We're learning from the Europeans a better way of living. Also education and the church. The bad things they brought over here include strong drinks (liquor).
>
> *Clerk to the District Officer in his 30s:* Medically the influence of European society has been good. Education has improved. I really can't see anything bad. I think Rotuma's biggest problem is leadership. The leaders just aren't trained for dealing with the problems of the modern world. That's why I think we should choose chiefs with education.
>
> *Catholic priest in his 30s:* To me [the people have] lost their natural kindness. I notice this especially in the business people. Before they were a very simple people but when they get mixed up with business they get restless, it doesn't seem as though they're as happy as they were before. The people are not docile, they're not willing to learn. Maybe it's because they've been to Fiji. I notice that particularly with those fellows who have been on the boat. They're the worst of the Rotumans. They're no good in the bush, for instance. European influence has been good in some ways. Take Master Inia, for example; he's a perfect gentleman.
>
> *Teacher in his 30s:* The coming of the Europeans has gradually made a marked difference between the old and the young generations. The older generations are holding fast to customs and culture, very reluctant to depart from them. And the younger generation's lives are sped up by modern influences. They are eager to disregard the old and adopt the new. In my opinion there is sort of a conflict between the two. Then comes the question, who is going to win? As an answer to that I feel that the younger generation is always aware of the older customs and will never strongly oppose the beliefs and attitudes of the older generation. The people who belong to the younger generation gradually give way to the older folks. The only way a person can really stay progressive is to leave Rotuma. That is something that shouldn't happen. These old

people should give in to the younger one in some ways. An example is the religious attitudes of the old folks. They cling to this notion that you shouldn't play sports on Sunday, or that you shouldn't go to dances. They tend to look down on us if we do these things. If they asked us, we would have something to say, and what we have to say would have been largely influenced by modern society.

District chief in his 30s: The Europeans came to Rotuma and they brought their food and it made the people sick; some of the food like candies are too sweet, and some of the foods are too soft. It makes the teeth all fall out. In the old days the people all had good teeth and they were very strong. The European foods have made the people very weak. Also the people have left the Rotuman ways and are following the European ways. The young boys haven't learned to be a *mafua* [ceremonial announcer], or to call a *fakpeche* [ceremonial chant]. Before the people didn't know how to steal from a business, but now they've learned ways to steal.

Teacher and district representative in his 30s: One big influence has been the increased desire for material things like bread and rice, for instance. I think the chief reason is that these things are easier to prepare. Another reason is that most of the Rotumans have been to Fiji and have become accustomed to these things. Money has made it easier for people to store money. Before, *apei* [fine mats] were used, but they disintegrate. And of course *apei* can't be used to buy manufactured goods.

The great desire now is to have a good education so that they can get a good job, and of course money is the ultimate aim. In the old days the chiefs tended to accumulate wealth (mats and food) because he got a share in everything. Respect was tied up with wealth, and a wealthy chief would be more respected than a poor one. Even a wealthy person would have more influence than a poor chief. That would be because the people could expect to get more from him. This orientation is the motive for gaining wealth.

There are two ways of gaining prestige. One is to marry into a chiefly family, and the other is to accumulate wealth. The chiefly families used to keep apart in order to preserve their chiefly rights, although there are several families that still have that attitude, especially the mothers. Then there are, of course, the schools and

the church, but the biggest influence is money. Then there are the dances, sports and things like that.

Teacher and district representative in his 20s: I think to a certain extent the European influence has done Rotuma a lot of good socially, as far as sports is concerned, for example. One thing that has been spoiled is the relationship between *kainaga* [kin]. Nowadays people think mainly in terms of wealth. If a man is rich, he will have plenty of friends and *kainaga.*

MH assistant manager in his 20s: [European influence] has done a lot of good and a lot of bad. To an educated person you could see some progress—education, for example. Some of the old people probably resent it. They feel that when a child gets educated he tries to throw his weight around and ignore old customs. The standard of living is better. One bad part is the films. Youngsters are exposed to gangster films. They come to think that a man should be respected only because of his strength. They overlook the intellectual part. They think to act a gentleman is to be a sissy.

Catholic brother in his 20s: Rotuma has become more civilised. The way they build their houses, and the clothing, I suppose the manners, too. More friendly I suppose.

Desirable Changes

Finally, leaders were asked what changes they would like to see in future:

Subchief in his 50s: If it was up to me, Rotumans would not follow the rules of the Europeans, but would go back to the Rotuman customs instead, and act like our parents used to act in the old days. There were so many rules and we didn't have to worry about so many things. It would be better if we could follow the Rotuman way.

Methodist minister in his 50s: What I would like to do is teach them to live happily and to use their own belongings properly. Instead of spending their money on things that are useless, they would spend their money on things like getting a good education for their children and building decent homes, instead of wasting their money and time—things like *kato'aga,* etc. For example, they run

short of water, but they don't know enough to spend money on building proper tanks.

Catholic brother in his 20s: To build [Rotuma] up … fix up the roads … tanks for water, things like that.

Clerk to the District Officer in his 30s: I would like to do something that would please each individual—improve the standard of living, for example. That covers a lot.

Catholic priest in his 30s: That the people can live a good material life. The trouble with Rotuma is the water supply, we need better housing. This thing they're doing now—inspections—that's very important. I would like to see Rotumans going for doctors, we need doctors. This is a personal opinion. I think it's good to see the businesses being run by Rotumans, like the co-ops. I mean if they can do it.

Subchief in his 30s: If it was up to me, we would leave the Rotuman way and follow the European ideas. If we did that we would be happy and rich, because the way things are now if you get money you have to spend it on things that are of no use, like *kato'aga*, weddings and things like that. If we followed the European way we would only spend money for our own families.

District chief in his 30s: If it was up to me, there are only two ways—to follow the Rotuman ways or the European ways. I would want the people to follow the European ways. If we follow the European ways, we wouldn't make things like *hapagsū* [ceremony for someone recovering from a bad experience], weddings, and things like that where everyone comes whether they're invited or not. The Rotuman way costs too much money—sometimes they kill seven cows at a wedding. Also, at a Rotuman wedding the bride and groom have to give back all the *apei* [fine mats] and mats. At a European wedding, they keep all their presents. That's the right way I think.

Teacher and district representative in his 30s: I think the best thing for Rotuma would be to raise the general standard of education—not just for a few people. I wouldn't have a few very well educated ones with the mass of them down below. I'd rather have the mass of

them to a minimum level of, say, Form III or Form IV. Then an economic goal. I think the best thing for Rotuma would be to find another commercial crop.

Teacher and district representative in his 20s: For one thing, I'd try to improve education and sanitation, especially getting rid of the flies and mosquitoes. I'd put better roads through the bush. Another thing I'd like to do is to introduce more money crops to the Rotumans—coffee and cocoa would grow quite well in Rotuma. It's only a financial problem to get started. Also improving the banana trade. And also I would like to improve the water supply.

MH assistant manager in his 20s: I'd try to give them as much as I know is good. Whether they take it or not is up to them. That's one reason I've started a sports club, to teach the boys sportsmanship. I believe this: You can do what you like to a country, build houses and all, but you can't really change it without changing the people.

Notes on Chapter 19

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[1] See "Cannibal Chiefs and the Charter for Rebellion in Rotuman Myth," by Alan Howard, *Pacific Studies* 10:1–27 (1986).

[2] For more about Inia's leadership, see *Hef Ran Ta (The Morning Star): A Biography of Wilson Inia*, by Alan Howard (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1994).

Chapter 20
Experiences Abroad

When I conducted a survey of all households on Rotuma in 1960, 76 percent of adults had been off-island only once or not at all. However, Rotumans had begun travelling abroad as soon as opportunities presented themselves following European intrusion in the 1800s, first by signing on as crewmen aboard European ships, later by seeking employment and educational opportunities in Fiji and beyond. While some Rotumans emigrated without prospects of returning, the accounts in this chapter are by Rotumans who had been abroad but had, by 1960, come back to Rotuma in one capacity or another. Their experiences abroad were often coloured by the expectations of their relatives at home, as illustrated in the following sayings, with Elizabeth Inia's commentaries, from her 1998 collection, *Fäeag 'es Fūaga:*

> *A'häe'ak 'os ül niu maoana* (Remember that our coconut fronds cannot be seen).
> A way of telling children going abroad not to expect any help from home. Their island will be far away; once they leave they are on their own. The saying is meant to encourage them to work hard to succeed while abroad.
>
> *'Is ufag tutu* (We came from different beaches).
> Said to or of people who go abroad to try their best, for they have come from different places. If they do well it speaks well for their place; if they do badly it spoils [the name of their place].
>
> This saying is based on a sense of shared place; *ufaga* refers to sandy areas near the sea that front people's houses. If you go abroad and do well, I would comment that we are both Rotumans; if you go abroad and fail, then I would say you are from a different district or village. In the first instance I emphasise our relatedness, in the second instance I deny or downplay it. Can be said to

encourage any Rotuman who is going abroad for study or employment to work hard in order to succeed.

La ho'im ke ia riagriag he (He will return as a stinkbug). Jokingly said to Rotumans who go abroad and stay for a long time, meaning they will die abroad and their spirits will come back to Rotuma as stinkbugs. Said to encourage people to return home to Rotuma before they die.

Fiji

As members of the Fiji polity since cession in 1881, Rotumans have been able to move freely about the archipelago and have taken advantage of this possibility. The 1956 Fiji census showed that 1,429 Rotumans, or 32 percent of all Rotumans in the colony, were residing in other parts of Fiji. Not only did Fiji offer a chance for people to further their education and find employment not available on Rotuma, but it also catered to the desire of so many young Rotumans to "see the bright lights" of the cities and to experience an urban lifestyle. As the accounts below illustrate, reactions to the experience were mixed. Again, one should keep in mind that these were people who chose to return to Rotuma; accounts by emigrants who chose to stay in Fiji might be more positive.

Man in his 50s: It was a great pleasure for me to arrive in Fiji—the land that I had hoped to see since I was a small boy. I managed to get a job as a carpenter. One time, when we went to the other side of the island to work, I met a girl and fell in love with her, so I left my work and stayed back in the girl's village and married her. The people (Fijians) all treated me as if I were their chief. I never had to work, but the girl's parents always kept a basin full of kava for me to drink and they encouraged me to talk about my home island. I told them some of the legends of Rotuma and how we lived, and they admired our customs, which were so different from theirs. The longer I stayed there the more I realized how really different their customs were. These people didn't want me to work, so they

made me feel much lazier than I should have been. My wife and I stayed together for many years and we had six children. I did have some difficulty earning money, though, so that I could provide my wife and children with all their needs.

Man in his 30s: One day I heard about people going to Fiji and I asked my father to send me there. He did, and after a few months I found myself walking up and down the Suva path. My father gave me enough money so that I would not have to work because he knew that people like me wouldn't be able to get a good job in town.

Man in his 30s: My elder brother came back from Fiji and I took my chance and left Rotuma for Fiji. I spent a few months away from home but didn't find any pleasure during the few months I spent in town.

Man in his 30s: When I was about 19 years old, I took a trip to Fiji and left my family in Rotuma. I got quickly discouraged though, and any time that I wasn't doing something to keep myself busy, I would think of my brothers and sisters and the way we had lived together. Thinking of them made me want to come back to Rotuma. After I was in Fiji for six months, I gave up and decided to come back home.

Man in his 30s: When I got to Fiji I was sorry that I had gone. I felt terribly homesick. I thought I was better off in Rotuma; the food was more plentiful and the clothes were better; the Fijians went around without a shirt. In Fiji you had to be independent—wash your own clothes. We had practically no *ʻiʻini* [meat, fish, eggs], and mostly just *vạti* [leafy greens], but it was a mysterious thing to me that I became fat. I was very thankful to my parents—every time they sent a letter they sent me cash, ten shillings or so. One peculiar thing—in the ten years that I was away while my mother was alive, she never sent me a single letter, but my father told me that every letter he sent she would read first….

After seven years I had to move to Namosau, in Mba. I spent two and a half years there. Life was even tougher there. They didn't grow any food there, so we had to buy everything; for *ʻiʻini* we had to go to the river and search for *kai,* a kind of shellfish. Still at that time nothing was settled.

Man in his 20s: One day I was told that I was going on a trip to Fiji and there I would stay with my two oldest brothers. My heart beat with joy and I wished the boat would come earlier than expected. The day came and I bid farewell to my parents. When I came to Fiji my eyes were opened wide when I saw the place was so different from my home. Day after day for two whole months I was to be seen in town. Unluckily, I got news that my dear dad was seriously ill, so I returned home on the first available boat.

Man in his 60s: I was ordered to go to Makogai [a leper colony in Fiji] because of one of my toes. I had something like an abscess on one of my toes and the doctor advised me to go. I was on Makogai for about two years, and I can't express how glad I was to return home again.

Woman in her 30s: When I was 14 years old my grandmother took me to Fiji and I lived with my mother's sister and her husband. In the beginning I liked Fiji, because everything was new to me, but when I got used to it I didn't like it any more. Anytime we wanted something we had to get money for it. Also, I lived with my aunt, but I wasn't really happy because she wasn't my real mother, and I couldn't act with her the way I could have with my own mother. I had to show respect to her and not do anything without her permission. I found out that living in Fiji is very different than living in Rotuma, and I liked Rotuma better. In Fiji I needed money for anything that I wanted, but in Rotuma if you didn't have the money to get something you could go *fara* [begging] and the owner will give it to you without money.

New Zealand

All of the accounts below are from Rotumans who went to New Zealand for tertiary education. Their comments mainly have to do with their reactions to cultural differences that they found fascinating and sometimes disconcerting.

Man in his 30s: When I went to New Zealand I was worse off than when I went to Fiji. For one thing I found that the white people are

more unsociable than the coloured people. That was mostly in the school itself, especially in the beginning. Some of the older people, the married ones, were very good to me and brought me to their homes.

Man in his 30s: I left for New Zealand in 1956. It took me almost six months to adapt myself—particularly to the social life there. The college I went to was co-educational and residential. Social life there was very high—very advanced in comparison to what I had experienced in Rotuma. Here, there are a lot of restrictions between boys and girls, but there, there was almost complete freedom. I liked it from the beginning, but several things kept me out of the scene. One was that I was conscious all the time that I had been sent by the Rotuman people and I felt obliged to accomplish something and bring it back to them. My main aim was to succeed in my studies. The other thing that kept me out of the social life for the first six months was the attitude of the Europeans in Fiji and Rotuma for the natives. I felt inferior and was very reluctant to take an active part in the social life. But this inferior feeling gradually wore off and I began to make friends and got to know most of the students. I found that there was in fact very little feeling of colour superiority among the European students and the faculty. After the first six months I was very well adapted—too well adapted in fact.

I think that one of the things that made me popular there was the part I played in college sports. They're not quite like the Americans, but they're quite keen in sports. I played rugby as one of the first fifteen (first team varsity); participated in track and field—I threw the shotput, javelin and discus; I played soccer on the first eleven, and finally became a representative player for the South Auckland County provincial team. I began to take a very lively part in most of the social functions there. I went to nearly all the social dances and joined several college groups. At first I was very reluctant to partake in dating, but l was more or less encouraged by the friendly response of the girls. To be honest, when I started dating I was still conscious of the fact that I was different. I was always sure that a boyfriend of mine and his date were along. Soon I got used to dating on my own and my self-consciousness died out. In fact I got really used to dating, and perhaps I overdid it. I felt that it was an honour and a privilege to go around with European girls, since it was something that was not

practiced here in Fiji. But even then I felt that it was just a temporary sort of thing. I was never convinced that any of these girls would ever be willing to lead an island life, so I felt that there was no sense proceeding with a romantic affair where one finds it hard to turn back. For me it was just like playing a game. There were times when girls got infatuated, and mistook it for love. Maybe it's because they were young—only around 19 or 20. I made sure to tell them the facts about island life and made it clear to them that it was hopeless—that they could never be happy in an island life. I considered staying in New Zealand to get an advanced teacher's certificate, but I never considered staying there permanently.

Man in his 30s: I studied in a general training program and one year of the university course directed by the University of Auckland. New Zealand was absolutely new. It was as big a jump from Suva as Suva was from Rotuma. The first year was quite different for me. The Europeans in Suva don't mix freely with the coloured people. In New Zealand, the people don't seem to realise you're black or brown. There's no colour bar. It might be there, but I didn't suffer from it. The people were friendly. One thing that impressed me was the general high standard of living compared with Rotuma and Suva. The methods of teaching also impressed me. There was more freedom for the students. For example, if you strike a student in New Zealand you can be prosecuted for assault. In Fiji and Rotuma, the teachers strike the students quite often, even though there are rules against it. Also the abundance of material things, like books and general school equipment, like sports equipment.

Man in his 20s: I went to New Zealand early in 1954. At first I found it a bit strange. The first thing I noticed was the amount of cars. After being there for a week I started Ardmore Teacher's college, about eighteen miles from Auckland. I found it easy to adjust to the life there. I didn't feel strange at all, being with Europeans. There were many Maoris, Cook Islanders, and Samoans there. Besides, I had many European friends in Suva and had lived on and off with a New Zealand couple—he was a teacher. I spent three holidays with them. The only thing that really seemed strange to me was the size of the place. I didn't find the schoolwork itself very hard. Most of it was just educational

courses. I had some difficulty with physical education theory because some of the terms were new, and I hadn't any experience with some of the activities that were included.

I wasn't used to the social activities at the start. I wasn't used to the idea of courting. At first I was rather embarrassed to ask a girl to go to the pictures, but I was lucky because on the boat to New Zealand I met two part-Maori women who had a niece in the college, and they wrote me a letter of introduction to her. I got to know her and she introduced me to a lot of other girls. There were about 800 girls and about 200 boys, so the girls would try to get the boys to date them. So about four or five months after I started, I began to date. I dated throughout the two years, but I never had any intention of having any serious affairs. For one thing it was against regulations for me to get married in New Zealand, and secondly I didn't want to get a wife I couldn't support. Someone who was used to living in New Zealand would be apt to demand more than I could give her in life here in Rotuma.

I stayed in New Zealand until the middle of 1956. I got out of college at the end of 1955 but spent the last six months roaming around New Zealand, taking different jobs. My first job was on a sheep farm. I worked for a building contractor, on a wharf, in the freezing works, and as a delivery boy. I enjoyed that period very much. I saw a lot of people and a lot of places. I spent most of my other holidays visiting with people who had invited me to their homes. One time I hitch-hiked around 390 miles with my friend.

By the way, I was not supposed to work in New Zealand. It was the first thing they told me when I got off the boat. But they were lenient with me because I had been using my real name instead of a false one. Also, the people in Fiji didn't know where I was, and the agency in New Zealand had been instructed to send me straight to Suva as soon as they got into contact with me. I went back to Auckland in April and saw the agency and they made my reservations back to Suva. The first plane I could catch was in July.

Man in his 20s: I applied for the priesthood and was accepted. I was sent to New Zealand to Holy Cross College to study philosophy. I found New Zealand very cold. I was a bit apprehensive about going to New Zealand because there was a definite colour bar in Fiji, and I didn't know how I would fit in in a country of all white people. I remember how shocked I was the first time I saw a Maori overseer over white men. I found that the people in New Zealand

were different all together. There was no discrimination whatsoever. If the rest of the world was like New Zealand, then the things that people like Leslie Cheshire and people like that write about colour bar is not true. Also, the whole way of life was different. In Fiji life is geared to the natives, but in New Zealand the people have a broader outlook on life.

Australia

At the time, Australia was a main centre for both the Methodist and Catholic religions in the Pacific. The Australian churches played a significant role in training clergy and, for Methodist ministers, provided a venue for deputation work, as the following two accounts illustrate.

Catholic brother in his 20s: I stayed in Sydney for four years. I found Sydney very cold. I found life very different, especially the food. I found the boys in the noviciate very friendly. There were five nationalities represented: Tongans, Fijians, Samoans, Solomon Islanders and Australians. There were also two of us Rotumans there. I didn't feel very lonesome because we had made friends with the Fijian fellows before we left. In Australia they spoke English.

After I finished with the noviciate I was sent to the New Hebrides to be a mechanic. The American brother at Port Villa taught me to be a mechanic. I stayed there for three years. I enjoyed this time very much. I liked the work, it was very interesting. I learned to fix cars and all kinds of mechanical things. When I left there I was 25 years old and trained as a mechanic.

Methodist minister in his 50s: I was sent by the Church to Australia to do deputation work—encourage people in Australia to donate to the overseas mission. I left my wife and two children at Davuilevu…. Australia was very strange to me—the language and the coolness. I was still very weak in English. I stayed in Australia almost nine months. During that time I travelled a lot and sometimes stayed in two different homes in one week. Most of the time I spent visiting peoples' homes. I also visited schools and churches and preached on Sundays. After nine months in a strange country, I was happy to come back to Fiji again….

> I answered a church advertisement for a native minister to work among the half-castes in Northern Australia. The Church accepted and I was appointed there in 1940. I spent five years in Northern Australia and a year in Sydney. I only spent one year with the half-castes; after that they evacuated the half-castes and our women and children south, because of the war. My wife and children were sent to Sydney and I transferred to native work—working with the Aborigines. It was very hard—the language was difficult. It wasn't so much religious work that I did among them; it was mostly agricultural work. Every morning we took them to the field, planting sweet potatoes.

Solomon Islands

Some Rotumans went to other islands to do mission work, and their families sometimes accompanied them. As one woman in her 20s recalled, this posed challenges:

> My husband [who was a catechist] and I went to Fiji and then to the Solomon Islands. There I found life harder than I ever knew; I met people of different races whose customs and languages were so different from ours. My husband was far from home and instead of being kind to me he was worse than my father. Life seemed so dark to me, and the thought of home was always ringing around in my brain. How my heart yearned for home. Whenever he was tired or angry with the natives, he mostly came and took it out on me.
>
> We stayed for many years on this island and we had three children, so when we came back to Fiji we and our children could speak the language. My heart beat for joy when I heard that we were to come back to Rotuma; home sweet home.

Sailing

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, once European ships started calling at the island in the early 1800s, Rotumans developed a seafaring tradition as crew members aboard those ships. Rotuman men eagerly signed aboard visiting vessels, soon acquiring a reputation for reliability

and competence that made them favourites of European ship captains. As a result, a significant portion of Rotuman men gained extensive experience at sea and also in the pearl-diving industry. In a letter published in the *Methodist Missionary Notices* in 1870, Reverend William Fletcher wrote that around 700 men were known to have left the island recently, and in a report about Rotuma published in 1885–1886, William Allardyce wrote, "Nearly all the men on the island have at one time or another been to sea."[1] Seafaring remained an attractive option for both employment and adventure,[2] fuelled by tales shared by sailors who eventually returned, such as this 1960 account from a man in his 30s:

> After I was in Fiji for a while, I got a job as a sailor on an overseas boat. I sailed to some big places, like Australia and America. There I saw the most wonderful things I had ever seen in my whole life. On my first visit to one of those countries I couldn't believe it. It was so wonderful that I thought I might be coming to enter heaven. The moving of the lights and the colours were fantastic. The first trip I was afraid, but when I got used to it I liked it very much. I saw plenty of beautiful and exciting things and for a while I couldn't think of anything else. I think that when I was sailing it was the happiest time of my life. When you're a sailor you can see plenty of new and exciting things. I also saw the most beautiful girls that I had ever seen. Some of them were so beautiful that when I saw their faces I couldn't believe they were real people.

Notes on Chapter 20

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[1] For Rev. Fletcher's letter, see the *Wesleyan Missionary Notices* 3 (13) (Sidney: Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Conference, 1870). Allardyce's article "Rotooma and the Rotoomans" appeared in the *Proceedings of the Queensland Branch of the Geographical Society of Australasia* 1:130–144 (Brisbane: Watson, Ferguson & Co., 1886).

[2] For more on this topic, see "Rotuman Seafaring in Historical Perspective," by Alan Howard, in *Seafaring in the Contemporary Pacific Islands,* edited by Richard Feinberg (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995).

Chapter 21
Illness, Old Age, and Death

From a social standpoint, proper relationships in Rotuma were expected to balance over time, with each person giving as much as they took. Exchanges could involve labour, food, political support, money, or other valuables in various combinations, but to be considered a fully competent person one had to give as much as one received. Giving less than one received diminished a person's status proportionately vis-à-vis those who gave more. To elevate or maintain one's status in the community therefore required either access to resources or the capacity to work, or both.

The social circumstances of a person with a diminished ability to contribute to a household or community depended on how the impairment affected his or her ability produce food, weave mats, earn money, and so on. A temporary illness was likely to have little effect on one's social standing, but long-term illnesses and impairments associated with old age could result in a lessening of a person's status within their communities and families, along with a resultant loss of self-esteem. The ways in which individuals responded to such circumstances is the focus of this chapter, as well as ways of coping with death.

Health Issues

A dramatic increase in health problems for the Rotuman population began with European intrusion in the early part of the nineteenth century. Europeans introduced diseases such as influenza, measles, and whooping cough to which Rotumans had low immunity because of their previous isolation. Influenza epidemics were documented in 1891 (120 recorded

deaths), 1896 (8 deaths), and 1928 (43 deaths); a measles epidemic in 1911 was particularly virulent and resulted in 401 deaths; and whooping cough epidemics occurred in 1907 (37 deaths), 1914 (19 deaths), 1925 (34 deaths), 1934 (46 deaths), and 1952 (39 deaths). In addition, such afflictions as yaws, scrofulous sores, eye disease, and elephantiasis were prevalent. Health conditions on the island began to get better in the 1930s when the district commissioner introduced public health measures aimed at improving sanitary conditions along with the appointment of public health nurses to work in the villages, but it was not until after World War II, when antibiotic drugs were introduced, that morbidity and mortality dropped dramatically. Thus, whereas the crude death rate between 1890 and 1930 was consistently above 40 per thousand, during the 1930s it dropped to around 25 per thousand and progressively fell to a low of 8.6 per thousand in the late 1950s. Infant mortality was particularly high in the early part of the twentieth century, averaging around 282 per thousand in the 1920s. The rate dropped to 145 per thousand in the 1930s, and then to 103 per thousand in the 1940s as a result of improved public health measures, but it remained a concern through the 1950s.[1]

Responses to Illness

In my study of Rotuman healing practices conducted during 1960,[2] I reported that the most general concept for illness, *ʻafʻafa,* referred to a condition of weakness, although several other terms were used for describing specific symptoms. When an illness persisted and did not respond to treatment, the assumption was that the person was close to death. This is reflected in the saying *ʻÄp ta ʻel pau la uf* (The string is about to break).

The following recollections of experiences with illness, both one's own and one's family members', provide insight into the concerns that serious illnesses provoked. Especially in evidence is a concern for how illness can be a threat to the ability to fulfil social obligations.

> *Man in his 30s:* About that time my mother became seriously ill with a sore on her knee and was taken to the hospital in Suva and had her foot cut off. I felt sorry for her because I knew she wouldn't be able to do her work properly. Now she is walking with the help of two walking sticks and I know she feels the difference between now and before her foot was cut off.
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> *Woman in her 60s:* One day, a few years ago, I was taken seriously ill and was taken to the hospital. I did worry about myself, but I was mostly concerned about my children, especially my youngest son who hadn't gotten married yet.
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> *Woman in her 40s:* My husband was once taken seriously ill and really I didn't know what to do. I thought of my dear children and wondered if he died who was going to take care of us, but luckily he recovered again and is looking after us.
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> *Woman in her 30s:* Once I got seriously ill and was taken to the hospital and I was worried about my children. They don't know yet how to do their clothes and clean themselves. If I die my children will be left behind and I don't know whether they'll be living a happy life or not…. I am glad that I am up again and have a chance to look after my children again.

Illness as a source of acute anxiety is clearly expressed by a nurse (age unknown) whose sister became dangerously ill.

> At the beginning of last year, something happened that made me so worried I thought it would never be cleared. My younger sister became seriously ill and was taken to the hospital in Ahau and yet we, the nurses and the doctor, couldn't cure her illness, so she was taken to the hospital in Fiji. I wasn't allowed to go with her, and

> another nurse went instead of me. I stayed home, sending telegrams asking the matron in C. W. M. Hospital about my sister's illness. When I got news that she was improving, it lifted a heavy load off my shoulders. I felt normal again and began to do my work as usual. Now my sister is home with her husband and she is as strong and healthy as one can ever see.

Illness could also be seen as a form of immanent justice, and as punishment for past misdeeds, as illustrated in the following commentary from a man in his 30s:

> Unluckily, starting in 1954 until today, I have suffered from filariasis and filarial fever. Having a family to take care of makes it even harder for me. But I think now that the reason I'm sick is because of the way I used to act when I was a young boy—always destroying things. I think I'm being punished by God for all the bad things I did when I was younger.

Failure to achieve important life goals as a result of illness figures in the account of man in his 20s who had aspired to the priesthood.

> At the end of my second year [of seminary], I had a nervous breakdown and had to leave college for six months. I blame myself. I had always come in first since Standard 6 and I wanted to keep up here. I also felt that a priest had to meet all kinds of problems—genuine problems and people from other religions who would try to trap you. I felt I had to have everything completely in hand, and I guess I drove myself too hard.
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> I got to the point where I couldn't sleep at night and would lie awake night after night, thinking of unsolved problems. After many weeks like that I would get very touchy, and it got to the point at times when too much noise would make me scream. Half of the time I didn't know why I had acted that way. I'd have a row and not know why I acted that way. The professors noticed this and had me see a doctor, and the doctor recommended a six-month rest. It was during that time that I first started to doubt whether or not I wanted to become a priest. I had been awarded a seat in the

> College of Propaganda in Rome but was left behind because of my breakdown. I was supposed to go after the next year, but I thought of how much pressure I was under in New Zealand and knew it would be worse in Rome. I completed the third year at Holy Cross, but having the nervous breakdown knocked off all my self-confidence. The Catholic Church would have had to pay for my education in Rome, and I was afraid I would be a failure. It was pride, I guess. Now that I think of it I guess it wasn't a very good reason to quit. If my parents had been paying for it I might have tried. I asked the Bishop if I might complete my priest's training in New Zealand and then go to Rome afterwards, but he refused, and if you don't take the Bishop's word, they don't permit you to go into the priesthood.

Old Age

The Rotuman saying *As ta ifoana* (The sun is going down) implied that one was no longer youthful and that one's body was growing weak. This might have been said in relation to an older person who was having difficulty performing common chores and contributing to household economies. A more critical saying, *Mafua kai'uge* (Old conch shell), suggested that someone had advanced in age but was still not mature. As Elizabeth Inia explained in *Fäeag 'es Fūaga* (1998), this was said of someone who was old but unable to do things properly: a woman who was married and had children but was unable to plait mats or make baskets, a man who did not know how to make canoes or coconut graters, and so on. A conch shell has to be blown to make it sound; though old, such people had to be told what to do and were considered unable to think for themselves. Another saying, *Mafua 'ā fikou* (Old ones eat hermit crabs), has a similar meaning regarding the old person who does not know how to do certain things competently according to Rotuman custom. Hermit crabs are used as bait when fishing, but if someone fails to catch any fish, he might eat the crab instead. (The saying can also be used as an excuse by someone to avoid a

task that would cause embarrassment if not done properly. It was also a way of expressing humility and saying, "Do not expect too much of me.")

On a more positive note, an elder who dances with consummate skill after a period of retirement can be applauded and praised with the saying *'Uhag ta rạhrạh mase 'on isu* (The end of the log has been covered with ash). The saying refers to the heavy logs that frame a *koua* (earth oven); they burn until they appear to be reduced to ash, but the embers beneath the ash burn for some time afterwards and can be used to ignite another fire. Similarly, the saying implies that there's still life in the old man or woman.

Below are some of the commentaries by persons of advanced age regarding their life circumstances at the time of their interview. They reflect an uppermost concern for how their advancing limitations have led to dependence on adult children or other kin.

> *Man in his 60s:* Now my wife and I are getting old. Only my daughters are helping me now, working in the plantations, cutting copra, and looking after the cows and pigs. Most days I have to stay in the house with only one of my daughters helping me. I feel sorry … and I wish I could be strong again like before so that I could look after all of us…. A few years ago I got seriously ill…. When I got well again I was as deaf as one could imagine … and I couldn't go anywhere without someone with me. Now I can hear again and it feels like I was dead and came back to life…. I'm now old, but healthy and strong enough to work in my plantations and afford my family, with the help of my dear daughter, with whatever they need.

> *Man in his 60s:* Now my wife and I are old and there is only one of my daughters and her children taking care of us. Most of the days I have to stay in bed, and only my grandsons are supplying us with food. I can see that they are doing their best, but it is so pitiful for me to watch them working so hard to supply our whole family with

our needs…. Now I am very weak and in ill health, so that only my grandsons are left to supply our family with what we need.

Man in his 60s: I was often sick with headaches and the doctor told me it was my teeth that caused it, so he told me to take out all my teeth, which I did a few months ago, and I went to Fiji and had two sets of false teeth made and came back on the last boat. Now I'm very old, with all white hair covering my head. I'm staying with my wife in her home and doing my best to care for her and her daughter. The son is out of school and is a big helper to me. He is doing what he can and I am pleasing myself, just doing what I wish to do every day.

Man in his 60s: Now I am getting old—I'm more than 60 now—and my two youngest sons and my daughter are taking care of us. I can still work on the plantations and help them in light work, but not like before when I was strong and healthy.

Man in his 60s: Now my wife is weak and has to walk with the help of a stick, while unluckily I have become blind, and now both of us have to stay in the house waiting for our son and his wife to give us food and water, and anything that we need. I feel pity on my son, being that I'm not very old and am a blind man, and cannot give him any help. What a thing to happen! It would be better for me to die than to stay like this without any hope of seeing the glittering of the stars or the rays of the sun anymore.

Man in his 60s: Now I am old and whenever I feel sick I always think of my [late] wife, because we haven't got a daughter, and in spite of her weakness in her later years, she always did her best to stay with me and she would sometimes massage the sore parts of my body. Now I'm staying home with my two sons and their wives. I'm unable to help them in any kind of work because I'm very old and feel sick very often, and because of that I stay in the house like an old woman.

Woman in her 60s: By now my youngest daughter had a husband and I am living with them and my grandchildren (eldest daughter's children). My son-in-law is a very kind man. He works very hard every day since my husband and I are very old and feeble and we are counted to be like children. But he takes good care of us—like

> we were his own parents. He does everything we want him to do for us. The only thing I can do now is to look after the children when they are asleep, but I am unable to do any hard work, just sleep and eat like other children do.
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> *Woman in her 60s:* Now I am living with my sister's son. I am an old woman over 60 years of age—the fire-maker of our family. I cook day after day, but my nephew and his wife and children are always roaming around. If any of my other relations bring me something, they just come and take it away from me. I am really badly treated by my family but I just pray and ask for the strength to face all the bad things which I may meet with. Some of my other relations wanted me to came and live with them, but I just thanked them, for an old woman like myself should never go from home to any other places. No matter how ill-treated I am, I will stay with my nephew until I die. It's a good thing I never got married or had any children, because these people might not have taken care of us. I do think they just keep me to do their work and be in the house when they wish to go somewhere and stay overnight. I may always be seen in our sleeping-house or in the cooking-house.

Experiencing Death

As in all societies, the deaths of family members and close associates was responded to in Rotuma with expressions of grief that ranged from various forms of self-mutilation and long periods of mourning to more muted periods of sadness.[3]

While self-mutilation was no longer practiced in 1960, expressions of grief at funerals, especially in the presence of the deceased, often involved wailing, tears, and related demonstrations of emotional distress. In relating their experiences in coping with grief, people spoke in terms such as "sadness" *(raofạki),* feeling "sick" *(reag 'af'af)* or "sorry" *(hanis'ia),* "losing interest in life" (*tokan 'e pa maur),* and "losing their mind" *(jaurara'ia).* Here are some examples:

Woman in her 40s: Unluckily, there was an epidemic of dysentery over this island and we all got it except one of my unmarried brothers, and in a couple of days my father died. I was so sick that I wasn't able to go and see my father's funeral. My mother, too, was very sick and she didn't even know who had taken my father to the cemetery. When I recovered I thought of my father and began to cry, thinking of his kindness to all of us, his children. He never used harsh words with us. Whenever he was angry with one of us he just told us not to do that again. We really miss him.

Woman in her 40s: Unluckily, my mother died a year after our marriage, and everyone could imagine the sadness that overtook me during the day of her funeral and a few days afterwards. I really felt sorry for her death, because I knew she loved me a great deal and never used harsh words with me.

Woman, age unknown: On the day my husband died, I thought I would go mad. I knew he really loved me because when we first got married I thought we might be like others—some people who get married and have rows after four or five months—but this didn't happen to us. He was nice to me from the beginning until the time he died.

Man in his 60s: My mother became very ill one day with pneumonia and died after a week. To tell the truth I couldn't resist crying aloud as if I were a woman. I had been trying my very best to work so that one day we might make a family of our own. I felt as if I wouldn't feel like working again. How sad to think of her, and to picture the unhappy days when she was carrying me in her arms; and to think of her bringing me up without someone to help her; and the way she used to tell me to stay out of bad company and to try to grow up to be a kind person to my neighbours. Even if I were to fulfil all her wishes she wouldn't be there to see it.

Man in his 50s: One of my brothers died and for a whole year I kept thinking about him and feeling very sad. It was a year before I could forget about him.

Man in his 30s: I can remember the day I learned my mother had died. I was a sacristan, preparing the altar for the Mass, when Father Foley called me out and told me the sad news that my

> mother had passed away. Everything looked bad to me…. It made it much worse to be away from home … it's worse than if you're among your own people. I lost interest in everything. I just did what others did, but with no life. For the first week I didn't sleep well, didn't eat well. I thought of how much my mother would have liked to see me as a priest, but now she had died. Even now I feel bad when I see someone with their mother. I really think that the best person in the world is your mother. Your brothers and sisters may be loyal to you, but your mother's your own flesh. All the good I had in mind to do for her materially, I couldn't do.
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> *Man in his 30s:* After I had been sailing for a few years I got a note from my mother. I started to read it and in the first line I read that my father had died. I dropped the note and started to cry, and couldn't finish the letter. I thought about the time I was with my father and knew that I would really miss him. On that day I couldn't do anything—just look at the sky and cry and think of him, knowing I would never see him again.
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> *Woman in her 60s:* Soon after I got married my father died, when I was about 30 years old. For four months after my father died I thought I was going to die too. I was always thinking of him, and no matter what my husband did to make me happy I still felt sad. It wasn't until about two years after that that I started to forget it.
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> *Woman in her 60s:* I was a young girl when my mother died and I felt very sad because I knew that my father was older and very soon I would be alone. There was no other woman to be seen at home to be like my mother. How dear I was to her and how she always taught me to do this and that. For weeks and months tears always came down whenever I stayed idle and thought of her, or whenever my father and I spoke and came upon her name. What a pity to see me, a lame person, taking care of my old father. Only a year passed and my dear father died and left me lonely and forlorn. How anybody could imagine the sadness which came upon me.

The death of children understandingly resulted in strong emotional grieving:

> *Woman in her 40s:* How could you imagine the sadness that overtook me when my daughters died, one after the other. I wanted a daughter because I love girls, so because we had no more children, I took my cousin's daughter and then a son and adopted them as my own. How I love kids to be with me at home.

> *Man in his 60s:* Then a great sorrow came into my life. Two of my sons were killed in the bomb explosion at Juju. No one can imagine the sadness that I felt, losing two sons at one time. I nearly lost my mind because of the great loss that befell me.

> *Woman in her 60s:* My elder daughter left school and got married to a young boy in the village. They had only three children when my daughter died. You can imagine how sad I was. I fainted many times and I felt like I could lose my mind whenever my thoughts would turn to my daughter.

In addition to emotional expressions of grief, another prominent theme involved people's reflecting on what the deceased had done to provide for their wants and needs, or how they would be missing the opportunity to take care of the person who had died. This notion of providing support is, it will be recalled, the essence of *hanisi.* It implies emotional attachment without giving it the primary, sometimes exclusive, connotation that the word "love" has in English.

> *Woman in her 30s:* My brother died when I was 13 years old and I felt very sad for a long time—for about a year. I knew that only he would do everything I wanted, so when he died I knew I'd never get the things I want easily.

> *Man in his 30s:* Then my father died when I was about 13 years old. After my father died we started to live very poorly. I thought about my father for five years, because he was a kind man to us and gave us whatever we wanted. I felt bad because if I wanted something I could not get it and I was too young to work for it. That's why I thought about him for so long.

Man in his 50s: For nearly a whole year after my father and mother died I felt bad whenever I would think of them. Sometimes, if I would think of them too much, I would cry. The times I thought of them most was when I wanted something and couldn't get it. Then I would think of the time I was young and they were alive, and how they would always get me what I wanted.

Man in his 50s: A couple of years after that my dear mother died, leaving my father and us without a woman to take care of us. How sad I was to think of her. I wished she were alive so that we could take care of all her needs, and make up for the miserable life she had when we were young. I had seen her so often with a sad face, but she couldn't tell us why. But now she was dead, and who could we get to look after our things, since we were all men.

Man in his 60s: My uncle [adoptive father] died during a sudden sickness. I felt so sorry because I wished him to live longer so that I could have the chance to return to him his kindness to me.

Man in his 60s: My mother died a few years after our wedding. My wife and I really loved her. She was a kind woman to everybody and I found out that she had lived a rough life with my father. My father is still living, and I wish my mother were still alive, too, so that I could look after them as best I can.

For some, the death of a senior family member resulted in an increased burden concerning family responsibilities.

Man in his 30s: After my father died I felt very bad. We were very poor and it seemed like such a big burden for me to look after my mother and brothers properly. Nearly every night I would lie awake thinking of the next day and try to plan ahead. I would think of the time when my father was still living and sometimes I felt so discouraged that I thought I was going to die.

Woman in her 60s: Unfortunately, my father got seriously ill one day and died shortly afterwards. I felt so sad that I cried for many days. My husband felt the same way, too. My mother … became very old and after a few years she, too, died. I felt strange after she was

> gone because I didn't have a parent left to show me what was the right thing to do when it came to Rotuman customs. Who could I ask questions to when I did not know what should be done when something was called for?
>
> *Woman in her 30s:* When I reached the age of 14, my auntie became very ill and I was forced to leave school so that I could stay home to look after her. After a few months in bed she died, leaving my uncle and myself. You could not imagine how sorry I was, for I knew that now I would have to look after my uncle and myself. There was nobody to be trusted except myself. Now there wasn't anybody to do whatever I wished for or to help me with the domestic work. I had to do all the daily work myself before the thoughts of my auntie had hardly faded away. At that time I hardly knew how to cook or get a meal ready for my uncle and myself. But after a few years I was able to manage our home and my uncle trusted me as much as if my aunt were still alive.
>
> *Man in his 60s:* My wife unluckily died, leaving all our children for me to care for. I felt so strange and very sad about her death because there wasn't anyone wiser to look after my children except my oldest daughter who had to leave school and stay home to do the work, like cleaning the yard and washing the clothes. I always thought of my wife when I saw my daughter taking her place at home.

And, as with illness, the death of a person could be considered an instance of immanent justice, as exemplified by the following:

> *Man in his 30s:* A few years passed when a great suffering came upon me. One of my five children died a sudden death. He seemed to be poisoned by something. How sad I was to think of it, but it dawned on me that maybe it was a punishment given me for how I had treated the older people in our village.

Notes on Chapter 21

[1] For more details, see the chapter "Population and Health" in *Island Legacy: A History of the Rotuman People,* by Alan Howard and Jan Rensel (Victoria BC: Trafford Publishing, 2007).

[2] See "The Power to Heal in Colonial Rotuma," by Alan Howard, *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 88 (3): 243–275 (1979).

[3] For descriptions and analyses of Rotuman attitudes and practices regarding death, see "Cultural Values and Attitudes Towards Death," by Alan Howard and Robert A. Scott, *Journal of Existentialism* 6:161–174 (1965) and "The Culture of Graves on Rotuma," by Alan Howard and Jan Rensel, *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 125:93–114 (2016).

Afterword

One of the more striking themes in the life stories documented in *Rotuman Life Experiences 1890–1960* is the degree to which relationships are based on material support by those in authority, both within the family in the form of parents and parental surrogates vis-à-vis their children and in the broader community in the form of chiefs vis-à-vis their subjects. Expectations are that, in the long run, such support will be reciprocated. Thus, balancing out reflections on the generosity of their parents who have gratified their wants and needs as children are expressions of wanting to care for those parents in their declining years. And chiefs as redistributive agents of goods they receive at ceremonies are rewarded with the labour of their constituents for community events and periodic gifts.

To add a personal observation from years of field work on Rotuma regarding reciprocity: Unlike the practice common in Western urban society of reciprocating as soon as possible, in Rotuma it is considered appropriate to allow some time to transpire before reciprocating so that an imbalance persists in the form of an obligation. Over time, giving and receiving tend to balance out, but obligations constitute the glue of relationships.

Importance of Work as a Social Value

Related to the concern for a balanced reciprocity is the importance attributed to work, both as a means of fulfilling obligations to kinsmen and the community and as a way of advancing one's own career. In many of the life stories, various individuals are acknowledged as working hard to support the family, and the story tellers often expressed the ambition to be able to work hard on behalf of their households or, in some cases, their

communities. On the flip side is the anxiety expressed concerning illness and old age, which may curtail the ability of individuals to work hard and force them to become dependent on the labour of others. Another striking theme is the persistence that people displayed in coping with or overcoming great difficulties throughout their lives.

Role of Schooling in Life Trajectories

The role of schooling in shaping the trajectory of peoples lives is clearly evident in the life stories. The gradual development of Rotuma's school systems was a major factor insofar as people born in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had little or no schooling available to them, other than what the missionaries could provide.

Not until the late 1920s did the Government of Fiji assume responsibility for educating children, and only in 1936 was school made compulsory. Among the younger cohort of life story tellers (those in their 20s and 30s in 1960), reactions to formal education were split between those who enjoyed the experience and worked hard to succeed, and those who disliked school and couldn't wait to drop out. Many of the former went on to further education and entered the professions or assumed managerial positions, while most of the latter remained at home in the traditional mode, with males taking on responsibilities for providing food for their families as farmers and fishermen, and females filling domestic roles within their households.

Among the older cohorts, those in their 40s and above, the main opportunity for men to escape traditional roles was to sign aboard ships and become sailors for a period of time, while women were essentially deprived of alternate possibilities to domestic life on the island, or for those who migrated, in Fiji.

Gender Roles

It is evident from this sample of life accounts that during this period in Rotuman history men had more opportunities open to them than women did. During adolescence, girls were much more confined than boys, and while young men were able to take advantage of opportunities to travel as sailors and to find work in Fiji, women mostly remained in domestic roles within households. Among the younger cohorts, women who were able to continue their education in Fiji mostly became teachers, nurses, or, if they were Catholic, nuns, while men had a broader range of options. On the island, only men became chiefs.

Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to conclude that women were regarded as socially inferior to men. As women were the producers of *apei* (fine mats), the main form of traditional wealth, their work on Rotuma was highly valued, and as the life stories of both men and women make clear, women exercised considerable influence within family groupings as well as the broader community, especially as the wives of chiefs. It also seems clear from the life stories that men were as concerned with pleasing their wives and female relatives as women were with pleasing their husbands and male relatives. Rotuma was definitely not a patriarchal society at the time.

Sensitivity to Gossip and Shaming

Throughout the accounts there are references to actual or potentially embarrassing situations that caused anxiety and were either avoided completely or kept secret. This was particularly the case during adolescence, when teasing and gossip were rampant regarding suspected romances. While teasing is very much a part of Rotuman culture and for the most part is taken in good humour, it can be painful in some

circumstances, especially when it implies a shortcoming or criticism of the someone's behaviour. Teasing and gossip can therefore be seen as a means of social control and as a way of promoting conformity to cultural norms.

Marriage and In-law Relations

The preferred form of marriage throughout this period was for it to be arranged by the parental generation, with or without the explicit consent of the prospective bride and groom. The life stories include instances in which such marriages worked out just fine and other instances that failed. There is also considerable evidence of friction with in-laws that took a toll on the success of some marriages. In part this may have been the result of a strong sense of obligation to one's parents as well as to one's spouse.

Concluding Thoughts

It has been sixty years since my initial research in Rotuma, which, as pointed out in the foreword, changed my life in many ways for the better. I did not return to the island until 1987, this time with my wife Jan, who began her own dissertation research the following year. We have visited Rotuma many times since, not only for research purposes but also to visit with the many friends whose lives have become intertwined with ours. We have also spent a good deal of time with Rotumans abroad in Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, England, Norway, Canada, and the United States. We have also engaged in almost a daily manner with Rotumans around the world. Rotumans now occupy the very core of our social network along with our immediate non-Rotuman relatives. More than mere friendship is involved. Because in Rotuman culture blood is not the exclusive basis for kinship, we have become *kainag pau* to many. Our immediate family now includes two *sigoa* (namesakes)—Harieta Janet Vilsoni and Hatamara

Titifanue Shaw—as well as Yvonne Aitu Sunia-Mafileo and her brother, Walter Aitu, both of whom we have informally adopted with the approval of their father, Aisea Aitu, who was a very close friend. The children of Yvonne and Walter and their respective spouses are our *mapiga.* There are also quite a few other Rotumans whom we regard not just as friends but as family (and they know who they are!).

In sum, Jan's and my lives have been profoundly affected by our experience within the global Rotuman community. In the years since our 1987 trip to Rotuma and subsequent visits to Rotuman communities abroad, we have been able to follow the life pathways of many Rotumans and part-Rotumans of younger generations, and we are greatly impressed with their accomplishments and the degree to which they continue to draw on their Rotuman heritage. The fact that we feel so much pride in the kinds of people they have become is testimony to the degree that our own sense of identity has become Rotuman in nature.