Yoshitaka Ota  
University College London, Great Britain  

WORKING SESSION 3b  

Fishing and Modernity – Transformation of Traditional Fishing Practice in Palau, Micronesia  

In Palau, various aspects of the local fishing practice have been significantly transformed in the last two decades. The methods and techniques unique to the islands have been reduced in number as the local fishermen increasingly use more Western technology. The traditional custom including the rules for marine land tenure and food taboos are being weakened through the people’s changing life styles and values. This is a result of modernisation in Palau and it also has created a struggle among the local fishermen. It is practical to apply Western technology to catch more fish yet it leads them to undermine their traditional way of fishing - toko'i ra chei. In consequence, the fishermen conduct their fishing by simultaneously redefining their tradition. They do so by embracing physical hardship as if the act compensated them for maintaining their traditionalism. This is most apparent in their practice of underwater spear gun fishing that involves the greatest physical endurance, including the risk of shark attack.

Yoshitaka Ota  
Department of Anthropology  
University College London  
Gower Street  
London WC1 E  
Great Britain  
ucsayot@ucl.ac.uk