Cultural Notions of Contemporary Mobility

The bulk of investigations into the causes of migration in Micronesia often take an approach that emphasises economic considerations. Based mostly on Western conceptions and epistemology, this view typically asserts that the principal migration stream is from rural to urban and is often times one way and permanent. Similarly, macroeconomic approaches frequently overemphasise the attractions of the metropolis and its influences. Through an analysis of the household, the life-history approach, and configurations of social space and mobility, I will argue that the interpretation of movement should encompass a broader analytical perspective that actively engages with the rural scene.

This research focuses on the experiences of the Satowan people in the origin end on Satowan islet (Satowan Atoll) and in the rural end on Weno, the urban centre of Chuuk State, as well as Guam, and Hawai’i. I will illustrate that movement on Satowan is intimately associated with clan, lineage, and locality. Different types of territorial mobility that are inherent to the social and cultural life for the people of Satowan and the ways in which they incorporate mobility within larger frames of cultural understandings of proper and improper behaviour will be presented.