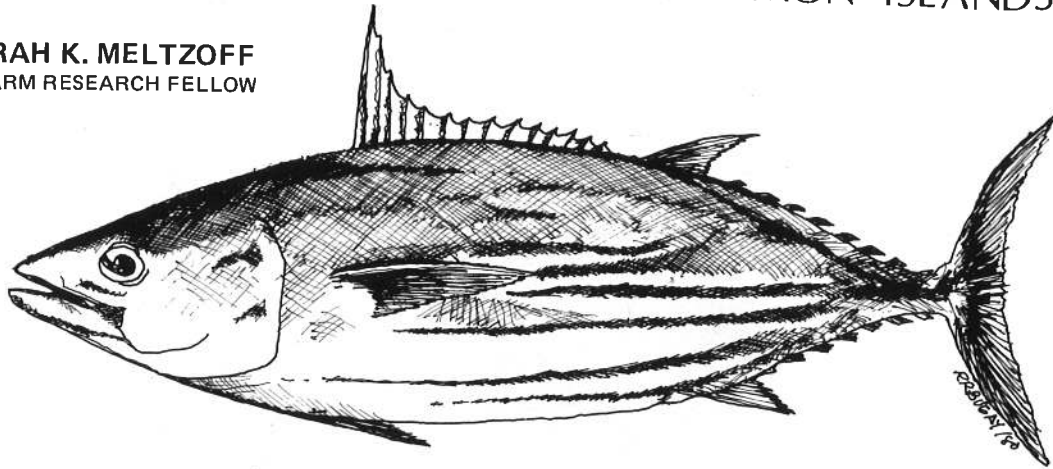


ANTHROPOLOGIST CONDUCTS STUDY OF SKIPJACK TUNA FISHERIES IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

SARAH K. MELTZOFF
ICLARM RESEARCH FELLOW



THE SOUTH PACIFIC Bureau for Economic Cooperation (SPEC) recognizes skipjack tuna as the major resource for Pan-Pacific development. SPEC member States want foreign exchange to be generated by skipjack industrialization; they need foreign aid and investment for this industrialization process. Although States in the region have different access to migrating skipjack and the mandatory live baitfish for pole and line fishing, they share grounds for regional cooperation in:

- Marine biology
- Maritime anthropology
- Resource management
- Negotiation of fisheries aid, licensing and joint venture agreements
- Surveillance of 200-mi EEZ's

Regional cooperation could utilize comparative case studies to see alternatives and learn from current foreign aid, trade and investment in skipjack. As a maritime anthropologist, Sarah K. Meltzoff has been working since November 1978 on the Solomon Islands' case of South Pacific skipjack industrialization, with funding support from ICLARM and the Rockefeller Foundation.

In the Solomons, tuna development is at the core of government planning and the national economy, providing 1/5 of the GNP for 1978-1979.

Moreover, Honiara, the capital of the Solomons, has become the headquarters for the new Forum Fisheries Agency. The Japanese government is giving aid to South Pacific fisheries projects, as economic cooperation to further trade and development. Although from a Japanese perspective, Japanese aid to the South Pacific is commensurate with population levels, it is less than 1% of that provided to Southeast Asia. The Japanese have been the most ardent global skipjack fishermen. In the late 1960s, they sought joint ventures in the West Pacific, to secure tuna access within the expected extension of territorial waters. By coincidence, the British were seeking ways to generate foreign exchange, in their effort to decolonize the Solomons. Japanese companies set up three skipjack joint ventures in New Guinea. In 1971, Taiyo, the largest fishing company in the world, signed a trial agreement with the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. In 1973, they launched the joint venture Solomons Taiyo Ltd. (STL) and based it in Tulagi. In October, 1977, the SI Government received an Asian Development Bank (ADB) loan of \$3.7 million, to form the National Fisheries Development (NFD) organization. NFD is to capitalize a national fleet of pole and line catcher boats, working in conjunction with STL, which at least initially is to offload, purchase, store, process and market

all SI tuna. STL owns 25% of NFD. Taiyo, as of 1979, owns 51% of STL. The top two Taiyo men in STL are also on the NFD board of directors.

To understand NFD-STL symbiosis and cooperation, one must know why the SI government set up NFD to capitalize its own fleet. Manpower training is a major objective, but national pride cannot be underrated. NFD aims for innovative and, qualitatively, more productive labor, with the accumulation of capital ploughed back into further capital development.

The SI government plans to decrease and eventually eliminate costly vessels leased from Okinawa, which currently constitute 60% of NFD operating costs. All fishing is to be done by STL and NFD, with only a nucleus of Okinawan crews manning a 30-catcher boat fleet. By 1981, the catchers will be 1/3 NFD, 1/3 STL, and 1/3 Okinawan chartered.

The marriage of Solomon Islanders and Japanese in tuna industrialization, requires cooperation and mutual trust, despite differences in goals, management, and labor organization. This must be based on an understanding, which can come from case studies such as Ms Meltzoff is carrying out, of history and everchanging socioeconomic climates. The field work phase of Meltzoff's project is expected to be complete by mid-1980, at which time she will return to Columbia University to complete her dissertation.