

Research Report February 2009

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While in Palau in February 2009, we worked on issues related to the Tobian language (Ramari Hatohobei), including:

- Completed 15 structured interviews with native Tobian speakers, using a questionnaire to guide the discussions. The sample consisted of approximately 10 percent of all adult native speakers of the language. The interviews covered two main topics: contexts of language use and attitudes toward the language and its future. Among the most interesting findings was the high degree of both multilingualism and commitment to the preservation and growth of Tobian. A detailed survey compilation and narrative summary may be found at <http://tobi.gmu.edu/wordweek/languageinuse.htm>.
- Continued work begun in 2006 collecting Tobian words, sentences, stories, and prayers.
- Approximately 35 hours were given over to recording contemporary versions of words collected by E.M. Quackenbush and reported in his dissertation, [From Sonsorol to Truk: A dialect chain](#) (University of Michigan, 1968). Mr. Isauro Andrew donated his services as a speaker of both contemporary and old Tobian.
- Working with Mr. Isauro Andrew, detailed vocabularies for three topics— conflict, birth, and death— were collected.
- Participated in the events surrounding two major life cycle transitions: the christening of a one-month old baby and the tragic accidental death of a young man. Both these events deepened our understanding of Tobian language and culture.

We also met with the governor of Hatohobei State, the Hatohobei State delegate, local members of the Friends of Tobi Island board of directors, and members of the Friends of Tobi Island Advisory Board to discuss directions for current and future research and other ways in which FOTI might develop and use its resources for the benefit of the people of Tobi.

The mission of the Friends of Tobi Island, a Hawaii non-profit corporation, is to collaborate with the people of Tobi to develop resources, enhance communication, and promote community-building initiatives. A particular emphasis is on documenting Ramari Hatohobei, a threatened language, and development of a program for repatriation of Tobian cultural heritage. Supporting and maintaining the Friends of Tobi Island website and email list is a primary focus.