

Endangered Languages Documentation Programme
Documenting Ramari Hatohobei, a Severely Endangered Micronesian Language

Q1. Applicant Details

Dr. Peter Black
Emeritus Professor of Anthropology
George Mason University

President and Director of Friends of Tobi Island (FOTI), a non-profit organization. See <http://www.friendsoftobi.org>

Q2. The host institution which will administer the award

HOPE Hatohobei Organization for People & the Environment
P.O. Box 1017
Koror
PW
96940
680.488.8044

Principal applicant's link to the host if not currently employed or enrolled there.

Dr. Peter W. Black's association with HOPE began with his presence at an early planning meeting when he was asked to be an advisor to the organization.

Dr. Black's work with the Hatohobei (Tobi) community began in 1967 when he served as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer on Tobi Island. Since then, he has continued to work with the Tobian community. He has published extensively on Tobi Island and its people. In collaboration with members of the Tobian community, he has worked to document Ramari Hatohobei and to repatriate Tobian cultural heritage. He and his wife Barbara W. Black created Friends of Tobi Island (FOTI), a non-profit U.S. tax-exempt organization, and its website, <http://www.friendsoftobi.org>.

FOTI collaborates with the people of Tobi to document Ramari Hatohobei, a severely endangered language. It also has undertaken the virtual repatriation of Tobian cultural heritage from archives and museums all over the world as well as supporting other community-based initiatives. The FOTI Advisory Board was formed in 2004 to advise on the direction of FOTI and how best it can meet community needs. See <http://www.friendsoftobi.org/misc/fotiadvisoryboard.htm>

Barbara W. Black, with whom he has worked closely for 20 years on the documentation of Ramari Hatohobei, the repatriation of Tobian cultural heritage, and the development and maintenance of the Friends of Tobi Island website, holds an undergraduate degree in anthropology and worked for many years as a web manager in the U.S. Federal government. She works closely with women of the Tobian community. She has always volunteered her time to the Friends of Tobi Island and will continue to volunteer her time and contribute her expenses on this project. She expects to devote a significant

amount of her time to this project over its course. She is an experienced trainer and has worked closely with Tobian language informants. She is primarily responsible for the IT aspects of this project.

Dr. Black and Barbara W. Black are fully committed to the Hatohobei community and to the success of this project.

Support from your host institution (500 words)

HOPE is committed to the success and long-term viability of the Documenting Ramari Hatohobei project. A non-profit organization chartered in the Republic of Palau formed by members of the Hatohobei community to support, develop, and serve the community, HOPE serves as a bridge between community-based organizations, community-supported projects, and outside sources of support. Its purposes are to promote social welfare, protect and preserve Tobian culture, protect the Tobian environment, and provide support for activities in support of these aims by other Hatohobei community-based organizations and outside organizations.

HOPE serves as a facilitator and advisor to Hatohobei community-based organizations on issues of education, culture, resource management, sustainable economic development, and biodiversity conservation. For example, HOPE provides administrative and financial support for Hatohobei's local community initiatives, including the Helen Reef Resource Management Program, recognized globally as a model of community-based resource management.

This project fits clearly within the parameters of HOPE's purposes. Moreover, members of the Tobian community have consistently expressed their support for documenting Ramari Hatohobei. The primary impetus for this project arose directly from the Tobian community, both locally and abroad, and the project is being driven by the expressed agenda of the community. See, e.g., Tobian Language Use Survey. <http://www.friendsoftobi.org/wordweek/surveynarrative022009.pdf>.

HOPE is committed to supporting this project and providing necessary facilities to ensure its success. HOPE will provide, inter alia, administrative and budgeting support; provision of office space; telephone and internet access; and management of project equipment. HOPE will neither contribute nor receive funding from this project.

HOPE is fully committed to the support of this project and the achievement of its purposes.

Host institution representative name

Wayne Andrew

Host institution representative email address

Host institution signature and date (on hard copy)

Q3. Title of project (20 words)

Documenting Ramari Hatohobei (literally the language of Tobi Island), a severely endangered Micronesian language

Q4. Duration of project

State how many months of funding you are applying for

12 months

Q5. Proposed start date

Date October 1, 2013

Q6. Previous ELDP grants

None

Q7. Is this a re-submission

No

Q8. Other funding applications

None

Q9. Commitment to the project

The intended average number of hours and overall % time per week to be devoted to the project.

Months 1, 6, 12: 40-50 hours per week, 100 % of time

Months 2-5, 7-11: 20-30 hours per week, 50 % of time

Note: In the field, one typically works longer hours and Dr. Black fully expects that to be the case with this project.

Q10: Summary of proposed project (100 words)

This information will be used on our website if you are funded. Include details of the language community, the country and region, and an estimate of number of speakers.

Tobian (Ramari Hatohobei) (ISO 639-3: tox) is the language of Tobi, one of the Southwest Islands of the Republic of Palau, a Micronesian nation in the western Pacific. Severely endangered, Tobian is currently spoken by approximately 150 people. Tobian and the dialects of Sonsorol, Merir, and Pulo Anna, the other three Southwest Islands, are closely related to the languages spoken in the outer islands of Yap and Chuuk. Intensive work will be done with elderly Tobian speakers to document their language through collection of vocabulary, stories, poems, and songs in their relevant socio-cultural context before it is lost.

Q10a ISO-639 code

639-3: tox

Q10b Geographical reference

Latitude 38.898556

Longitude -77.037852

Q10c Language family

Nuclear Micronesian language belonging to the Oceanic subgroup of the Austronesian language family

Q10d Country

Palau

Q10e Location of documentation

Palau: HOPE, Hatohobei State Government, Palau Bureau of Arts & Culture, Belau National Museum.

London: ELAR. Australia: PARADISEC. Hawaii: Kaipuleohone.

Commentary

Provide additional information for Q10a-e if necessary about the specific situation for the language/s you are documenting.

Tobian is severely endangered. Most fluent speakers are middle-aged and elderly; none are monolingual. Most Tobian speakers currently live in Echang, a hamlet of the Palauan port town of Koror. Also living in Echang are people from the other Southwest Islands of Sonsorol, Merir, and Pulo Ana. The languages of these four Southwest Islands are becoming closer and gradually shifting toward a new dialect that could be called Echangese. Sonsorolese is dominant in Echangese. If Tobian is to be documented, it is critically important that intensive work be done with elderly and fluent speakers now, before Echangese becomes the daily language of the Southwest Islanders and Tobian is lost altogether.

Intensive work remains to be done with Tobian speakers to document as much of Tobian vocabulary, usage, and grammar as possible. Stories, poems, prayers, dances, and songs remain to be collected. Much cultural knowledge (e.g., fishing techniques, canoe building, weaving techniques) that is dependent on Tobian language for its survival remains to be gathered and documented.

The urgency of this work—documenting the Tobian language—becomes more apparent every day. Using UNESCO's nine criteria to assess the status of Tobian, it is clear that Tobian is severely endangered and the time left in which to successfully document this language is rapidly slipping away. Most fluent Tobian speakers are elderly. Continued work with them must take place as soon as possible. Adding to this necessity is the continuing drift of Tobian into Echangese.

Equally pressing is the need to leverage the 40-plus years of Dr. Black's work with the Hatohobei community and with HOPE which makes him uniquely qualified to lead this project. As a cultural anthropologist, his ongoing work with the Tobian community to document Ramari Hatohobei stresses its place within its past and present social and cultural context. His knowledge of the community, its

history, and traditional culture, and his reasonably fluent Tobian are all unparalleled assets that should be taken advantage of now.

Successful completion of this work will help to form a strong foundation on which the community can build in meeting the growing challenges of their rapidly changing physical and socio-cultural environment. It should also strengthen positive relationships and facilitate community cohesion.

Q11 Specific outcomes (750 words)

Specific outcomes of the proposed documentation project.

Members of the Tobian community have long expressed a desire for documentation and preservation of Tobian and more specifically, for development of a dictionary and language material for children. A secondary goal is creation of documentation that will be useful in the maintenance and revitalization of this endangered language.

Successfully completed, this project should result in meeting the community's agenda by resulting in the following specific outcomes:

- Solid beginnings of work on a Tobian-English Dictionary (online and print) that is sufficient for daily life and can be used as a resource for all future work with the Tobian language (approximately 2500 entries)
- at least three illustrated children's stories in English and Tobian (online and print) that will be the foundation of a longer-term project to provide teaching materials for children
- a collection of recordings of songs, prayers, poems, and stories
- a team of trained and motivated community members who will continue the work of documenting and revitalizing the Tobian language
- documentation materials and data that are flexible and cumulative and accessible by both scholars and community members
- a total of approximately 30-50 hours of recordings of material to be annotated and deposited in the archive (approximately 7-10 hours fully transcribed and time-aligned and approximately 30-40 hours broadly annotated). To ensure accessibility of this material, it will be broadly annotated immediately upon collection and before transcription.
- a model for further work on Southwest Island languages, specifically Sonsorolese where work has already begun by that community
- a contribution to linguistic knowledge and endangered language documentation—Tobian is at the end of a dialect chain and remains a gap in scholarly knowledge of that dialect chain. See E.M. Quackenbush, *From Sonsorol to Truk: A dialect chain* (University of Michigan, 1968). <http://www.friendsoftobi.org/misc/documentarchive/quackenbush1968.pdf>

Longer term benefits from the successful completion of this project include significant support for all efforts to contribute to the future of the Tobian community. Most Tobians surveyed felt strongly that Tobian identity was closely bound to the continued use of the Tobian language. Development of a Tobian dictionary that can be expanded over time and that forms the basis of a successful effort to revitalize Tobian should have a positive impact in all aspects of the Tobian community. This project will provide a solid base of community experience that can lead to continued work supporting the preservation and vitality of Tobian culture (both tangible and intangible).

Beneficiaries of this work will include all members of the Tobian community. Women, men, children, and elders all will benefit as the cultural heritage of Tobi is supported, language revitalization adds to community cohesion, elders are looked to as possessing valuable cultural knowledge, and children find their identity as Tobians defined and supported.

Members of the Tobian community scattered around the world also will benefit—many of them have expressed a strong desire to retain their Tobian identity and prevent the loss of important cultural knowledge. Scholars working in the field of linguistics will benefit by the preservation of another example of the world’s linguistic diversity. Preservation of all aspects of Tobian cultural heritage will benefit everyone as the world’s cultural and linguistic diversity is sustained.

Successful completion of this project will lead to the development of capacity within the Tobian community so that the community will be able to continue with this and other projects. Community members will be in position to assume the management and maintenance of the Friends of Tobi Island website and other local archives of Tobian material and non-material culture.

Q12 Detailed description of the project (2000 words across 4 headings)

Language context

Existing documentation of Tobian ranges from mid-19th century sentence fragments to early 20th century word lists collected by members of a German ethnographic expedition in 1908-1910 to a detailed grammar and vocabulary of the language of Sonsorol-Tobi prepared by A. Capell in 1948 to the vocabulary, word lists, stories, and audio recordings collected by Dr. Peter W. Black from the late 1960s to date, some of which are published on the Friends of Tobi Island website, as follows:

- Horace Holden
 - Horace Holden's [Vocabulary](#) and [Dialogues](#) . Appendix to A Narrative of the Shipwreck, Captivity and Sufferings of [Horace Holden](#) and Benj. H. Nute. pp. 121-127. Fourth Edition. Boston: Russell, Shattuck, and Co, 1836. NOTE: Horatio Hale attributes this Vocabulary to John Pickering.
 - [2006 Recordings of Holden's dialogues](#)
 - Horatio Hale's [vocabulary](#). A Vocabulary of the Dialect of Tobi, or Lord North's Island. United States Exploring Expedition, During the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, Under the Command of Charles Wilkes, U.S.N., Ethnography and Philology. Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1846. Pp. 107-108.
 - John Pickering's [Memoir](#) on Tobian. Memoir on the Language and Inhabitants of Lord North's Island. From the Memoirs of the American Academy. Cambridge: Metcalf and Company, 1845.
- Thilenius Expedition [word lists](#). Tobian words collected by members of the [Thilenius Expedition](#) in 1908-1910. Anneliese Eilers. Tobi. In Ergebnisse der Sudsee Expedition 1908-1910. II. Ethnographie: B. Mikronesien Band 9. Westkarolinen 2. Halband: Tobi and Ngulu. Georg Thilenius, ed. Volume 9. Hamburg: Friederichsen, De Gruyter & Co. m.b.H., 1936. Pp. 1-200.
- A. Capell's [Grammar and Vocabulary](#). Grammar and Vocabulary of the Language of Sonsorol-Tobi, Reprinted in Oceania Linguistic Monographs, No. 12. Sydney: University of Sydney, 1969. Note: this material was originally prepared in 1948 and published in 1951 as CIMA (Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology) Report No. 30.
- E.M. Quackenbush, From Sonsorol to Truk: A dialect chain (University of Michigan, 1968). <http://www.friendsoftobi.org/misc/documentarchive/quackenbush1968.pdf>
- Peter W. Black and Barbara W. Black, Vocabulary, Poems & Songs, Prayers, Stories, Talk about Talk, and Word Lists. Documented and, in some cases, recorded from 1967 through 2012. See Tobian Language at <http://www.friendsoftobi.org/tobilanguage.htm> and especially Language in Use at <http://www.friendsoftobi.org/wordweek/languageinuse.htm>

Building on a series of research trips over the last several years, in 2009 Dr. Black and Barbara W. Black completed structured interviews with 15 native Tobian speakers using a questionnaire to guide the discussions. This sample consisted of approximately 10 percent of all adult native speakers of Tobian. The interviews covered two main topics: contexts of language use and attitudes toward the Tobian language and its future. A detailed survey compilation and narrative summary is at <http://www.friendsoftobi.org/wordweek/surveynarrative022009.pdf> A critical finding is that many Tobians see the Tobian language as crucial to the maintenance of Tobian identity and assert its loss

would affect them negatively. Respondents overwhelmingly felt that Tobian should be documented and that children should learn it. The survey also revealed a high degree of multilingualism and strong community commitment to the preservation and growth of Tobian.

Community support exists for development of materials for use with elementary school children so that they may learn and use their language. Illustrated stories in Tobian and English would be a good starting point and three stories already collected could be used:

- [Fiongori Hairang ma Hayang](#), The Story of Clans and Chickens
- [Fiangari Harawarawari Waruhunen](#), The Story of Chasing a Ship Back Over the Horizon
- [Fiyongori Horofati](#), The Story of Horofati.

Another aspect of the overall effort to document and preserve Tobian involves Dr. Black and Barbara W. Black's work with the Quackenbush word list. In 1968, E.M. Quackenbush reported his database of almost 600 words from each of 17 dialects (including Tobian) that form the chain of related languages described in his dissertation, [From Sonsorol to Truk: A dialect chain](#) (University of Michigan, 1968). Work done on this project from 2009-2012 was designed to map the changes that have taken place in Tobian over the last 40 years. To date, 300 words from Quackenbush's list have been collected. Words are collected from a speaker of "Old Tobian" and will also be collected from a speaker of contemporary Tobian.

Documentation methods

High priority will be given to development of a Tobian-English dictionary that builds on all existing work (much of which can be seen at the Friends of Tobi Island website). A Master Vocabulary in Tobian and English containing sources, comments, and variants is under development and accessible on that website. Many entries are associated with an audio file—a native Tobian speaker pronounces the word. The Friends of Tobi Island Master Vocabulary contains approximately 1000 entries most of which are associated with an audio file (another 500-600 words await processing). A database (Microsoft Access) is currently maintained for that vocabulary.

Audio recordings on the website include larger speech fragments, sentences, stories, prayers, and songs. This work also includes specialized word lists, such as words for canoe parts, medicine, plants, fish, illness terms, solar and lunar months, and counting terms.

Metadata for data produced to date includes at a minimum date, place, speaker, translation, and in many cases, comments.

For a representative entry from the Tobian-English Master Vocabulary, see **martamuch** at Friends of Tobi Island: Tobian Language: Language in Use: Master Vocabulary: Tobian to English: Letter M. <http://www.friendsoftobi.org/wordweek/vocabulary/vocabularytobianm.htm>

Dr. Black will work with the community to determine the best means for further development of a Tobian dictionary (a lexical database) that will allow for the association of audio files and digital images and that will be accessible in print and online. Lexique Pro is currently being evaluated for this purpose.

The current online Master Vocabulary illustrates how in such a small community and one in which everyone is literate in several languages, orthography differs from person to person. Everyone in the community understands the different choices that people make and who makes which choice. At this point, Dr. Black does not plan to issue an official orthography; rather as on the FOTI website, he will let the informant stipulate the spelling and post other community members' variations.

The phonemic system devised by A. Capell will be used. See A. Capell, [Grammar and Vocabulary of the Language of Sonsorol-Tobi](#), Reprinted in Oceania Linguistic Monographs, No. 12. Sydney: University of Sydney, 1969.

The Voices of Tobi Island is a group of 11 already working to document Tobian. See <http://www.friendsoftobi.org/wordweek/voti/voicesoftobiisland.htm> They and other community members committed to working to document Tobian during this project (Collectors of Tobian) will be trained in best practices for language documentation and in use of audio and video recorders.

Every effort will be made to follow all consensus-developed best practices for data collection, maintenance, formatting, and archiving. A protocol for file names, image and audio file formats, and metadata collection is already in place for existing data. This protocol will be expanded and maintained to ensure that all data collected will be managed and archived so that best practices for digital language documentation are followed. All material archived with ELAR will be associated with file-level metadata in tabular format.

Faculty in the Linguistics Department of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and specifically Dr. Kenneth L. Rehg, will be consulted regularly to ensure that material collected will be accessible to and useful to linguists.

Community contexts

All proposed work on this project will be planned for, developed, and implemented in the context of the Tobian community and their needs and expressed wishes with regard to language documentation. The community has expressed a strong desire for a Tobian-English dictionary. Dr. Black will work closely with the community to determine the areas where existing vocabulary is missing and set priorities for its collection; for example, vocabulary for canoe building might be considered a priority. Using this example, canoe building vocabulary might be collected while a master canoe builder is creating a new canoe and both audio and video recordings can be made. There is strong community consensus that traditional techniques for, e.g., canoe building, fishing, taro cultivation, food preparation, child care, language socialization processes, weaving, and more be documented and filmed.

A central aim of this project is to record and document and hence to preserve the linguistic practices of the Tobian community. Central to this is the preservation of knowledge and information accessible only

through Tobian and the preservation of information about Tobian cultural artifacts and traditional lore.

Dr. Black will work with the community to identify other areas of concern relative to language use and the development of a strategy for responding to those concerns. For example, there should be community discussion about the best ways to make language documentation material available to the community both over the Internet and locally. Material should be available offline and in print or other formats as well as online. All software used to create a dictionary and data suitable for archival purposes must allow sharing among contributors both locally and at a distance. Material produced by this project must be an accessible cultural and educational resource for the entire community.

A primary focus of this project will be to work with the Tobian community to create local expertise for data collection and archiving. Dr. Black will work through HOPE, the FOTI Advisory Board, the Voices of Tobi Island, and other community groups to further this project. Partnerships will be sought with local institutions, including the Palau Bureau of Arts and Culture, Belau National Museum and its Research Library, Hatohobei State Government, and Hatohobei traditional leadership to support these efforts.

Research outcomes

Research outcomes will include:

- creation of local expertise in data collection, archiving, and management;
- community members committed to preservation of the linguistic practices of the Tobian community;
- documentation materials that are accessible locally and online by community members and researchers;
- a model for further work on Southwest Island languages (both locally and remotely), specifically Sonsorolese where work has already begun by members of that community;
- contributions to linguistic knowledge and endangered language documentation—Tobian is at the end of a dialect chain and remains a gap in knowledge of that dialect chain. See E.M. Quackenbush, *From Sonsorol to Truk: A dialect chain* (University of Michigan, 1968).
<http://www.friendsoftobi.org/misc/documentarchive/quackenbush1968.pdf>

All work produced will be accessible to linguists and future generations of Tobians. Annual reviews of archives, database protocols, formats, and storage media will be instituted and incorporated in training and work plans to mitigate the risk of data loss.

Q15 Ethical aspects of the project (750 words)

Outline how you intend to handle ethical issues

As with all Dr. Black's work with the Tobian community, significant care will be paid to maintaining confidentiality where appropriate, acknowledging sources, and attempting to ensure that all information is treated with respect and sensitivity. He will continue to act with care and respect towards persons and information. The Tobian community will continue to be the most important party in all questions related to this project and its outcomes. He will obtain informed consent from informants and share all outcomes with the Tobian community. All material collected is the property of

the Tobian community and is subject to the intellectual property and copyright laws of Palau. Any income resulting from any publication arising out of his work will be directed to the community through HOPE, Hatohobei State, and/or the Friends of Tobi Island. Relationships will be established between the Tobian community and relevant archives so that this material remains available to the community as well as to scholars.

Q14 Project work plan (750 words)

Provide a work plan to show the steps and timeline of the work that you will undertake in the project

Tentative Timeline

Month 1:

The principal applicant Dr. Peter W. Black and Barbara W. Black will meet in Palau with community members to determine priorities for language documentation and develop a strategy and specific plan for moving this work forward. Issues to be determined include: format of dictionary; who will maintain master databases; how project team will communicate; how ongoing work will be reviewed and approved by community members.

Dr. Black and Barbara W. Black will:

- (a) train selected community members (known as Collectors of Tobian) to collect language material and provide them with necessary recorders (both audio and video) and other materials.
- (b) provide each Collector of Tobian with specific areas for collection, e.g., word lists, prayers, songs, and with specific suggestions for which Tobian speaker to go to for each area. Dates for completion of assignments will be agreed on.
- (c) establish means for the collected material to be transferred to a central location. Determine how and where it will be collated, reviewed, and integrated into existing or new databases of Tobian language material.
- (d) work intensively with language informants to gather material in specific areas.
- (e) identify community members who would like to work to illustrate children's stories for publication and assign stories to them.

Months 2 through 5:

Collectors of Tobian will continue to collect language material and forward it for inclusion in databases. Dr. Black and Barbara W. Black will provide support and guidance to them via email and telephone and will work to integrate material forwarded by Collectors of Tobian into existing or new language databases. As possible, Dr. Black and Barbara W. Black will work with available Tobian speakers outside of Palau in the United States.

Month 6:

Dr. Black and Barbara W. Black will return to Palau to meet with community members and Collectors of Tobian to review progress, assign specific areas for collection, and make adjustments to the process as necessary. They will work intensively with language informants to gather material to fill identified gaps and collect new material.

Months 7 through 11:

Collectors of Tobian will continue to collect language material and forward it for inclusion in databases. Dr. Black and Barbara W. Black will provide support and guidance to them via email and telephone and will work to integrate material forwarded by Collectors of Tobian into existing or new language databases. As possible, Dr. Black and Barbara W. Black will work with available Tobian speakers outside of Palau in the United States. Dr. Black and Barbara W. Black will provide support and suggestions for how best to make available online and locally the illustrated children's stories as they are completed.

Month 12:

Dr. Black and Barbara W. Black will return to Palau to meet with Collectors of Tobian and community members to review and finalize work completed to date. Collectors of Tobian, Dr. Black, and Barbara W. Black will meet with members of the community to present the dictionary, teaching materials for children, and other project work; evaluate work completed; and identify areas for future work including planning for a possible future Tobian-Palauan dictionary.