

Chamorro Language Revitalization in the CNMI and Guam

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Chamorro, which is spoken in the Mariana Islands, has the largest number of speakers of any indigenous language of Micronesia, but has also been called one of Micronesia's most endangered languages. Over the last hundred years, as the Mariana Islands came under the administrative control of the United States—first Guam in 1898, and then the Northern Mariana Islands in 1947—the language has gradually lost ground to English. This marginalization is accelerating. Between 2000 and 2010, according to data from the U.S. census, the Chamorro population in the Mariana Islands fell from 72,127 to 37,799, and the number of speakers of Chamorro fell from 44,907 to 22,519. Language decline is most pronounced among younger generations: even in the Northern Mariana Islands, most children below the age of 18 now use only English at home.

In response, a number of indigenous efforts have been mounted to maintain and preserve the Chamorro language. These initiatives have arisen separately in Guam and in the Northern Mariana Islands, which are separate political entities: Guam is an unincorporated U.S. territory, while the remaining Mariana Islands form the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (henceforth the CNMI). Some initiatives, but not all, have had the support of government and the public schools. What unites them is the overarching desire to document as much of the language as possible and keep it alive for future generations of speakers. This Chapter surveys these initiatives and attempts to place them in historical and socio-political perspective.¹ Although we

have tried to cover Guam as well as the CNMI, our discussion focuses more on the CNMI, since we are more familiar with the situation there.

Background

Foreign domination of the Mariana Islands began in the mid-seventeenth century, some two hundred years before the colonization of other islands of Micronesia. The Spanish colonial period, which lasted until 1898, had a profound effect on indigenous Chamorro culture. Traditional organizational structures, religious beliefs, kinship systems, music, dress, practices such as fishing, canoe-building, and storytelling, and even personal names were replaced by Spanish colonial counterparts. The Chamorro language was one of the few aspects of material culture to survive. It survived, in part, by incorporating large numbers of words borrowed from Spanish (Borja, Borja, and Chung 2006, 113–120; Rodríguez-Ponga 2009).

Early language documentation of Chamorro went hand in hand with foreign domination of the Mariana Islands and its people. The first grammars and dictionaries of Chamorro were written by priests or colonial administrators who aimed to create tools that would enable Chamorros to learn the colonial language.

The first grammar of Chamorro was written by Father Diego Luis de Sanvitores, the Jesuit priest who established the first Spanish colony in the Mariana Islands in 1668. Sanvitores wrote his grammar, *Lingua Mariana*, on the voyage from Mexico to Guam, based on information from a Tagalog who had lived for many years in the Mariana Islands. The grammar was written in Latin, partly to enable Chamorros to learn the catechism directly in Latin rather than through the medium of Spanish (Winkler 2015,

263–264). Much later in the Spanish colonial period, in 1865, a ‘Chamorro grammar’ and a Spanish-Chamorro dictionary were written by Father Aniceto Ibáñez del Carmen, an Augustinian Recollect from Spain who was vicar principal and curate of the Hagåtña parish and a fluent speaker of Chamorro. Although Ibáñez del Carmen’s works provide much information about Chamorro, they were intended to serve as pedagogical materials for Chamorro students learning Spanish, so the language whose structure they describe is not Chamorro but Spanish (Stolz 2011, 184; Zimmermann 2011, 168).

In 1898, after the Spanish-American War, Spain ceded Guam to the U.S. and then sold the Northern Mariana Islands to Germany. The new colonial administrations worked quickly to publish their own descriptions of the Chamorro language. On the American side, Edwin William Safford, who was deputy to the first naval governor of Guam, wrote an excellent Chamorro grammar which appeared as a series of journal articles in 1903–05 and was then reprinted as a book. Edward von Preissig, a U.S. Navy paymaster, wrote a dictionary and grammar of Chamorro that was published by the U.S. Government Printing Office in 1918. On the German side, Georg Fritz, the first district administrator of the Northern Mariana Islands, published a Chamorro grammar in 1903 and a Chamorro dictionary in 1904. These works had various scholarly and pedagogical aims. Safford expressed the hope that his grammar “may be of service to students of comparative philology” (Safford 1903, 289). On the other hand, von Preissig began the English-Chamorro section of his dictionary by saying, “The author realizes that the greatest usefulness of his work will not be in...aiding Americans in the acquisition of...the Chamorro tongue, but rather in the actual help toward a more thorough appreciation of the English language by the Chamorro children” (von Preissig 1918, 2). Von Preissig’s

dictionary evidently did not succeed in this. In 1922, in reaction to the fact that Chamorro was still the dominant language in Guam, the naval governor instituted a ‘no Chamorro’ rule in the schools and ordered all copies of the dictionary to be collected and burned. After World War I, when the Northern Mariana Islands came under Japanese mandate, a similar ‘no Chamorro’ rule was imposed by the Japanese administration. Later, in the 1970s, students in one private school in the Northern Marianas were penalized for speaking Chamorro with a fine of a nickel; however, the public school taught the Chamorro alphabet. Today, Chamorro is required in the public schools but not in the private schools.

The first major work on Chamorro to be completed outside the colonial power structure was *Die Chamoro Sprache* (1940), which is still the most detailed Chamorro grammar to date. Its author, H. Costenoble, is identified by Stolz et al. 2011 as Hermann Costenoble (1893–1942), one of nine children in the first family of German homesteaders to settle in the Northern Mariana Islands. The Costenoble family arrived in Saipan in 1903 and relocated to Guam a year later. Hermann, who learned to speak Chamorro as a child on Guam, completed the first draft of his grammar between 1915 and 1919, after he had left the Mariana Islands but when he “still remembered the language vividly” (Stolz et al. 2011, 233). Arguably, his grammar is the first description of Chamorro to be written by a native speaker of the language.

The thirty-five years between 1940 and 1975 brought profound changes to the political, educational, and language situation of the Mariana Islands. After World War II, Guam emerged from the control of the U.S. Navy to become an unincorporated U.S. territory with a civilian government. The Northern Mariana Islands passed from Japanese

control to U.N. trusteeship, and ultimately began negotiations with the U.S. that would lead to commonwealth status. In 1968, the U.S. Congress passed the Bilingual Education Act, which recognized linguistic minority rights in the schools and provided funding for bilingual education programs. Finally, although the Chamorro language was still robust in the Northern Mariana Islands, it had become vulnerable in Guam, where most Chamorro parents were speaking English at home to their children. These developments had an impact on the documentation of Chamorro. Increasingly, the goal of documentation efforts was to teach the structure of Chamorro to Chamorro students in the schools and thereby contribute to the language's maintenance and preservation. Central to these efforts was the work of the late Donald M. Topping and his Chamorro collaborators, the late Dr. Bernadita C. Dungca (from Guam) and the late Pedro M. Ogo (from Rota).

Originally from West Virginia, Topping taught at the Territorial College of Guam from 1956 to 1962. After completing the Ph.D. with a dissertation on *Chamorro structure and teaching of English*, he joined the Linguistics faculty at the University of Hawaii. As Language Coordinator for the UH Peace Corps Training Center from 1963 to 1966, he collaborated with Ogo to develop Peace Corps language lessons for Chamorro; these lessons were published in book form as *Spoken Chamorro* (1969). As Principal Investigator for the Pacific Languages Development Project, which was funded from 1970 to 1974 by the Trust Territory of the Pacific and the University of Hawaii, Topping supervised the development of grammars, bilingual dictionaries, and standard orthographies for all the major languages of Micronesia. He himself collaborated with Ogo and later with Dungca to produce a grammar and dictionary of Chamorro. These

works, which are linguistically more sophisticated than previous descriptions, were also the first to recognize Chamorros as equal partners in the documentation of their language. The *Chamorro Reference Grammar* (1973) was co-authored by Topping and Dunga; the *Chamorro-English Dictionary* (1975) was co-authored by Topping, Ogo, and Dunga. At roughly the same time, in Guam, Dr. Katherine B. Aguon published *Let's Chat in Chamorro* (1971), a short introduction to conversational Chamorro. And in 1978, a group of teachers and consultants in the Guam Department of Education began their own effort to draft a Chamorro dictionary. Although their work was abandoned in 1982, it formed the basis for a grass-roots dictionary completed and published much later.

Two larger trends emerge from this brief historical summary. First, in the twentieth century the ultimate goal of language documentation efforts shifted away from assimilation to the ruling culture and toward preservation of the indigenous culture. Second, native speakers of Chamorro became more centrally involved in these efforts and received greater recognition for them.

Cultural Identity and Language Decline

Despite the fact that Guam and the CNMI are now self-governing, the themes of cultural change and language decline have continued into the twenty-first century. There are some differences. Change toward the dominant American culture is not enforced by law, but rather achieved through the subtle, pervasive pressures of mass marketing, television, and the internet; many of the cultural practices that are now disappearing were first introduced during the Spanish colonial period. Nonetheless, the changes have been significant. Catholicism, which has long been a dominant force in almost every aspect of

Chamorro life, has become less important to some younger Chamorros. Traditional values, such as respect (*rispetu*) and family (*familia*), are arguably eroding. The traditional women's dress, the *mestisa*, which had been introduced from the Philippines in the nineteenth century and was worn on special occasions in the first half of the twentieth century, is now rarely seen. Linguistic change is also at work: shifts in authority and organizational structures in communities come with new words, mostly borrowed from English. Kinship terms borrowed from Spanish, such as *nietu* 'grandson' and *nieta* 'granddaughter', are giving way to newer terms borrowed from English, such as *gran* 'grandchild'. The Spanish number system which replaced the indigenous number system during the Spanish colonial period is now being replaced with the English number system. During the Spanish administration, indigenous given names were replaced with Spanish names of saints, and indigenous surnames largely disappeared, although some—such as Hocog, Manglona, Taisakan, Taitingfong—still exist, especially in Guam and Rota. Today, most young Chamorros do not have Spanish given names, such as Carmen, Dolores, Ramon—and their associated Chamorro nicknames, Ammi', Ling, Bo—but rather names of American celebrities, cartoon characters, and others seen on television, such as Beyonce, Brianna, Alvin. Interestingly, names given to the different generations of Chamorros tend to reflect the dominant cultural influences in the Marianas. Most recently there has been a resurgence, albeit small, of Chamorro names such as Atdão, Pulan, and Tãsi being given to children as their first names.

The Chamorro language itself continues to lose ground to English. Although Chamorro has been an official language in Guam since 1972 and in the CNMI since 1985, in reality the language of public settings and official documents is English. Most

public discussion in government, schools, churches, and other organizations is in English; informal talk among younger people is in English, with the addition of occasional slang words in Chamorro and the common greeting *håfa dai*. There are English-language newspapers, but no Chamorro-language newspapers, although editorials and opinion pieces in Chamorro are published from time to time. Fluency in Chamorro is not required or encouraged for jobs in government and commerce. The number of Chamorros in the Mariana Islands continues to fall, due to immigration from elsewhere and outmigration of Chamorros to the continental U.S. Most importantly, Chamorro parents are speaking English rather than Chamorro in the home. For some young people, Chamorro words and phrases—such as *fottin gå'ga'*, which can be translated very roughly ‘animal force’—have become important symbols of Chamorro cultural identity, but most of these young people do not speak the language fluently or at all.

These are some of the tragic changes that are affecting the language and culture of Chamorros today. One can only imagine what may have been going through the minds of the Chamorros who understand the subtle decline of the language and its consequences for Chamorro self-identity. In his M.A. thesis (2014), Kenneth G. Kuper correlates the decline of the Chamorro language in Guam with the emerging movement to revive and strengthen Chamorro identity and culture. He also identifies language subjugation as a powerful, effective means of control that has continued since the Spanish period. To date, no one we know of has conducted comprehensive research on the multiple impacts of Chamorro language decline or resurgence on Chamorros’ sense of identity.

Indigenous Efforts in Guam

Given that the Chamorro language first came into sustained contact with English on Guam, it is unsurprising that it first began to decline on Guam—perhaps as early as 1940, and certainly in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Guam is also where indigenous efforts to document and maintain the language first took hold.

The educator and legislator Dr. Katherine B. Aguon was an early leader in these efforts. Beginning in 1971, she published a number of books on conversational Chamorro, many of which combine language instruction with information about food, music, dress, and other aspects of Chamorro culture. Perhaps her most extensive work to date is *Chamorro: A Complete Course of Study* (2007), which offers a year-long sequence of Chamorro language lessons.

Under Aguon’s leadership, a team of Chamorros in Guam undertook to revive the grass-roots dictionary project that had been initiated in 1978 and then set aside in 1982. The work to restore and complete the original materials led to the publication in 2009 of *The Official Chamorro-English Dictionary / Ufisiât Na Diksionârión Chamorro-Engles* (henceforth, the *Ufisiât*), with Aguon as the lead editor and Teresita C. Flores and Lourdes T. Leon Guerrero as assistant editors.

In broad outline, the *Ufisiât* bears some resemblance to the *Chamorro-English dictionary* (henceforth, the *CED*), which was co-authored by Topping, Ogo, and Dungca thirty-four years earlier. Both dictionaries contain over 9,000 Chamorro entries with English definitions and other information, including parts of speech and Chamorro sentences illustrating usage. Both dictionaries employ some version of the standardized Chamorro orthography developed originally in 1971 by the Marianas Orthography Committee and lightly revised in Guam in 1983. That spelling system is still the official

Chamorro orthography in Guam, but has been replaced by a different orthography in the CNMI (see below).

In other respects, the *CED* and the *Ufisiât* are very different works. The *CED* was compiled by a trio consisting of trained linguists (Topping and Dungca) and speakers of two different dialects of Chamorro (Dungca and Ogo), supported by a significant academic infrastructure. So it is not surprising that the *CED* has the completeness and systematicity often associated with academic dictionaries. The bulk of the *CED* consists of Chamorro entries with English definitions, but a reverse English-Chamorro finder list is also provided. Entries were compiled from a range of sources, including earlier dictionaries of Chamorro (Topping, Ogo, and Dungca 1975, xiii). The entries include words used throughout the Mariana Islands as well as words specific to the dialects of Guam, Rota, or Saipan. Names of flora and fauna are given extensive coverage, and their definitions include both common names and scientific names. Chamorro nicknames are also covered systematically. Although the *CED* employs an idiosyncratic system of parts of speech, the classification of words according to this system is highly consistent.

The *Ufisiât*, which was published by Guam's Department of Chamorro Affairs, is a grass-roots dictionary compiled by community members whose goal was to preserve the language they spoke for future generations. The focus is on the Chamorro spoken in Guam, so some words are identified as archaic even though they are in common use in the CNMI (see e.g. the *Ufisiât*'s entries for *apigige* 'a kind of pudding', *âsson* 'lie down', *dokdok* 'a wild seeded breadfruit', *esalao* 'call, shout'). The traditional system of parts of speech is employed, but words and phrases are occasionally classified in surprising ways; e.g. the phrase *pot fabot* 'please' is classified as a verb. A concerted

effort is made to identify word origins. This is more successful for borrowings than for indigenous words, some of which are labeled ‘origin unknown’ even when they are descended from one of the linguistic ancestors of Chamorro (e.g. *funas* ‘erase’, which is descended from Proto-Malayo-Polynesian **punas*; see Blust and Trussel 2015).

The *Ufisiât* is not the only documentation initiative to emerge in Guam in recent years. There has also been a surge in electronic resources. Several websites developed in Guam, or by Guamanians in the continental U.S., provide electronic dictionaries and other resources for language learning. The *Chamorro Online Dictionary* is a web-based dictionary which can be viewed online or downloaded in .pdf format; its sources include the *CED* and von Preissig’s dictionary. *Learning Chamorro* is a far more ambitious website that offers a dictionary with over 9,000 entries, a suite of language lessons, audio dialogues with word-by-word analysis, sections on grammar, and examples of Chamorro written materials. Many of the dictionary entries are credited to the *CED*; the suite of language lessons is based mostly on Topping and Ogo’s *Spoken Chamorro*. In the world of mobile phone applications, two different Chamorro dictionaries are available as Android apps on Google Play. All these resources have apparently been developed independently from one another, a fact that speaks both to the intense local interest in preserving the language and to the decentralized character of grass-roots initiatives.

This is an impressive range of materials. One reasonable next step would be to begin to coordinate and synthesize them. Dr. Faye Untalan has begun this process in the area of language instruction. With funding from the Administration for Native Americans, she is working to develop a standardized college-level curriculum for beginning language instruction in Chamorro for use in Hawaii, Guam, and the CNMI.

Another major initiative is the Hurao Academy, a Chamorro immersion program that was started by Ann Marie Arceo in 2005. Funded by the Administration for Native Americans, the Hurao Academy offered after-school and summer programs as well as adult evening programs, and development of materials to support the program. Other groups in Guam, mostly in the performing arts, are involved in the perpetuation of Chamorro culture and language.

At the policy level, the Guam Department of Education has mandated and expanded the study of Chamorro language and culture (see Public Law 31-45).

Indigenous Efforts in the CNMI

Indigenous efforts to document and maintain Chamorro began later in the CNMI. Among the many events that served to raise awareness of the decline of the Chamorro language were the Chamorro Conferences held in Guam in 2006, in Rota in 2007, and in Saipan in 2008. These conferences brought together educators, government officials, activists, and others from throughout the Mariana Islands to discuss indigenous issues that crossed political boundaries. Language use and language preservation were major topics of discussion. Indeed, at the 2008 Chamorro Conference, a concerted effort was made to hold as many public discussions as possible in Chamorro rather than in English.

At roughly the same time, the CNMI saw a surge in the publication of books written in Chamorro, above and beyond the relatively brief religious tracts, educational materials, and children's books which had previously constituted the language's written literature. On the religious side, Bishop Tomas A. Camacho, assisted by a number of other fluent Chamorro speakers, completed and published a Chamorro translation of the

New Testament in 2007. On the secular side, the brothers Joaquin F. Borja and Manuel F. Borja wrote a monolingual book of Chamorro poems, stories, and essays, *Estreyas Mariãnas*, which was published with funding from the Administration for Native Americans in 2006. The Chamorro stories, poems, and essays written by the legendary author and poet Tun Juan A. Sanchez were published by the NMI Council for the Humanities in 2009. That same year, with funding from the Administration for Native Americans to the Traditional Medicine and Culture Association, Manuel F. Borja and Jose S. Roppul published a massive trilingual encyclopedia of native medicine in the CNMI, with oral histories of traditional healers and information about medicinal plants in Carolinian, Chamorro, and English. Finally, Chamorro translations were published of a number of works originally written in English, including children's books from the Motherread program, an analysis of the Covenant, a book of World War II memories, and a book on cultural sites in the CNMI. Taken together, these works give a glimpse of what can be accomplished if the Chamorro language is maintained and preserved.

In 2008, the two of us—a Chamorro educator (Rechebei) and a trained linguist (Chung)—received funding from the National Science Foundation for a project to upgrade the documentation of the Chamorro language. A key part of the project was the revision of the *CED*. We had planned to work with a small group of fluent speakers of Chamorro to create entries for words not already in the *CED*, remove redundant entries, provide more traditional parts of speech, and increase the number and complexity of the Chamorro sentences illustrating usage. But the work took an unexpected turn: many more community members than we had anticipated wanted to be actively involved in the revision. We introduced more infrastructure so that everyone who wanted to participate

could be included. After the death in 2009 of Dr. Rita H. Inos, the original head of the revision, three editors were identified: Manuel F. Borja, Elizabeth D. Rechebei (both from Saipan), and Tita A. Hocog (from Rota). Six working groups were formed to revise and augment the *CED* entries: four on Saipan, one on Tinian, and one on Rota.

Additional thematic groups investigated the vocabulary associated with different cultural practices, such as fishing, traditional medicine, and weddings. Elders served as consultants. In the end, some thirty Chamorros were active members of the working groups, and more than seventy others participated in one way or another in the first stage of the revision process (see Chung and Rechebei 2014). The project turned into a community-wide effort, with data collected at every opportunity, including family gatherings, funerals, at shopping centers, restaurants and even via telephone calls. One editor has a wide network of Chamorro speakers in Guam and Rota readily available via cell phone.

Work on the dictionary led to spelling reform. At our initial planning meetings, it became clear that almost all participants were dissatisfied with the official Chamorro orthography, which they found hard to use. This was the orthography that had originally been developed in 1971, lightly revised in Guam in 1983, and used in most written materials published since, including the *CED* and the *Ufisiât*.

Two core principles of orthography design can be summed up as slogans. According to “one sound, one symbol”, each distinctive sound of the language should be spelled the same way in all words in which it appears. According to “one word, one spelling” each word should be spelled the same way in all its forms. Only some languages have sound systems that allow both of these principles to be satisfied. English,

for instance, has a sound system that brings the two principles into conflict, and so does Chamorro. English orthography famously satisfies “one word, one spelling” but permits multiple spellings for the same distinctive sound. The 1971 Chamorro orthography is similar; in that orthography, the vowel /u/ is spelled *u* in *åsu* ‘smoke’ but *o* in *hasso* ‘think, remember’ and *påtgon* ‘child’.

To address their dissatisfaction, working group members joined forces with the CNMI’s Chamorro/Carolinian Language Policy Commission and the NMI Council for the Humanities to hold an orthography workshop in Saipan in 2009. The participants quickly arrived at a proposal for a new orthography with a different design. This new orthography satisfies “one sound, one symbol” but allows a word to be spelled differently in its different forms. The vowel /u/, for instance, is now spelled *u* in *åsu* ‘smoke’, *hassu* ‘think’, and *påtgun* ‘child’. But although ‘child’ is spelled *påtgun*, ‘my child’ is spelled *patgon-hu*, because the second vowel in this form of the word is not /u/ but rather /o/.

The new orthography became the CNMI’s official Chamorro orthography in 2010, and is being used in the dictionary revision. Fluent speakers, language learners, and teachers report that this orthography is far easier to use—a clear positive. On the other hand, the fact that the 1971 orthography is still the official orthography in Guam will make it harder to develop a uniform set of Chamorro language materials that can be used throughout the Mariana Islands.

Multiple orthographies also create a roadblock for dictionary users, who must know exactly how to spell a word in the dictionary’s orthography in order to locate the entry for it. In 2011, we began working with graduate students at the University of California, Santa Cruz, on an online version of the revised dictionary that could get

around this roadblock. Boris Harizanov developed a search engine and parser that takes the user's online input and searches for potentially matching entries in the revised dictionary. His suite of programs neutralizes the differences between the two official orthographies, can locate the root in an inflected or derived word, and does not require an exact match in order to display a potentially relevant entry. The result is that users of the online version can locate a Chamorro word successfully without knowing exactly how to spell it. A different version of Harizanov's search engine and parser has since been developed by Karl DeVries. Both versions have the potential to make the revised dictionary accessible to a wide audience in the Mariana Islands and elsewhere.

The revised dictionary, which contains more than 10,000 entries, has been in the editing phase since 2012, and will take several more years to complete.

Loss of Elders and Their Memories of the Language

During the early stages of work on the dictionary revision, workgroup members from Saipan, Tinian, and Rota realized the urgent need to reach out to Chamorro elders for information about words unfamiliar to the groups. A number of elders were interviewed who had forgotten some words, struggled to recall them, or were unsure of their meanings. These experiences brought an immense sense of loss not only to the working groups but also to the elders themselves. Those who could still recall the meanings of words were overjoyed that their knowledge would be included in the revised dictionary; they asked, for obvious reasons, that the revision be completed as soon as possible. Those who could not recall the words but knew that they exist shed tears of sadness. Since 2008, when the revision began, some participants—both elders and working group members—

have passed on. The passing of each Chamorro speaker is a great loss, because of their knowledge and experiences of the language and culture—information which in many cases has not been documented. However, as many Chamorros understand today, the revival and strengthening of the Chamorro language is both a real challenge and very possible.

Other Efforts to Promote the Use of the Chamorro Language

The Chamorro language and culture are being kept alive not only in the Mariana Islands but also in the continental U.S., where many Chamorros now reside. This is particularly evident in San Diego and other communities in California, and in the states of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, where Chamorro populations can be found. Annual events promoting Chamorro culture through songs, dances, arts and crafts, and food are special opportunities for Chamorros to gather and celebrate their ethnicity and at the same time share with the wider community. Chamorro language competitions among students from Guam and the CNMI are also regular events, beginning with local preparatory competitions and leading up to the Marianas-wide event held in Guam. The internet provides another outlet for Chamorro language and culture, with online dictionaries, language lessons, blogs in Chamorro or about Chamorro culture, and photos and videos of Chamorro events. Still other online materials include comedies, narratives, and mini-movies that are a mixture of English and Chamorro presentations. Cultural groups in the Marianas, including school clubs, regularly perform during important events and entertain dignitaries and tourists. In the CNMI, October is Cultural Heritage month, and Chamorro culture is showcased in its many forms. Both older and younger generations

participate in these events. The federally funded Aging Center, Sagan Manåmku', is a valuable resource as well. Students, scholars and others who are interested in the history of Chamorros and their language frequently visit the Center to conduct interviews and simply to enjoy the company of elders.

Both Guam and the CNMI have government agencies that promote Chamorro culture and language. In the CNMI, these include the Chamorro/Carolinian Language Policy Commission, the Office of Indigenous Affairs, and the Historic Preservation Office. Over and above this, another creative avenue for the teaching of Chamorro language and culture is through community projects. Federal grants from the Administration for Native Americans have supported a number of projects over the years. In Guam, these include the Huraio Academy and the Authentic Chamorro Dance and Traditions Project. In the CNMI, they include the Children of Our Homeland Project at the Public Library, the Traditional Medicine and Culture Project, and an elementary school project on generational knowledge transmission. More recently, the CNMI's Public School System received federal funding to support and enhance the teaching of Chamorro and Carolinian language and culture.

In the CNMI, formal language instruction in Chamorro is conducted in the elementary grades, mostly in the public schools. Chamorro language is a required subject in the elementary grades. A bill currently under consideration in the CNMI Legislature would require mandatory Chamorro language classes for high school graduation. The Motherread/Fatheread Program sponsored by the NMI Council for the Humanities has added Chamorro language instruction to its curriculum for all, including non-Chamorros. The Humanities Council has been at the forefront in promoting Chamorro language and

culture through conferences, workshops, and sponsorship of the dictionary revision effort. The Public School System has developed a process for certifying Chamorro language instructors and continues to develop materials and relevant resources. However, there is still a dire need for more materials in Chamorro. One critical resource is the anticipated revised Chamorro-English dictionary, which will be supported by a forthcoming grammar by Sandra Chung.

Many other activities to promote Chamorro language and culture can be found on the internet. The internet and social media are among the most effective methods for disseminating information, especially for younger generations, who are mostly not proficient in the language but now have ready access to electronic resources and can use this to project more creative ways of using the language. At the same time, issues of accuracy and misinterpretation may arise. These may not be so serious as to outweigh the benefits of mass dissemination of information about Chamorro.

There is a lack of qualified individuals who can teach Chamorro, both in the CNMI and in Guam, where Chamorro is required in the schools. The language documentation materials that we have just surveyed are important not only for students but also for the professional development of Chamorro teachers.

Recommendations for the Future

One of the most important outcomes of the ongoing efforts to preserve and promote the Chamorro language will be to leverage them so that they all support one another. While resources are extremely limited, pockets of communities have been quite active recently in developing creative ways of supporting the language. The most critical need at this point

is to engage the most fluent speakers, who are the oldest Chamorros, and to involve the younger generation in the process. In traditional Chamorro society, elders were the center of attention, esteemed for their knowledge, wisdom, accomplishments, and social status. Today, they are frequently left alone and silent at family or community events. The CNMI's federally funded Aging Center (Sagan Manåmku') serves different language and cultural groups and therefore, the language used is English. Young people are more effectively engaged by social media than by conversations in Chamorro. Entertainment is mostly from outside the culture and in English. Possibly the only time that young people explore the Chamorro language is when they are doing school assignments.

A center where Chamorro elders can share their knowledge and be consulted is one way to nurture and engage the most fluent speakers of the language. Community activities that could reach out to younger speakers could be developed. Written materials, videos, and lectures could be presented. Art and performances, such as performances of traditional songs (Chamorrta), are other avenues that could entertain and, at the same time, teach the culture and the language. Food has always been an important aspect of Chamorro culture. The history of food preparation, the role of different community members in food preparation, and all the cultural practices involved could be of great interest not only to Chamorros but others.

Policies to require the teaching and use of the Chamorro language could also be supported. In the CNMI, the Public School System does have programs for this, but they could be improved. Private schools do not teach Chamorro. The CNMI legislature is currently considering a law to require Chamorro language classes for high school graduation. Interestingly, the Public School System has expressed concerns and is not in

full support. One issue is the multiethnic, multicultural character of the Mariana Islands, where Chamorro students and Chamorro teachers are rapidly becoming a minority. Another issue concerns the training and certification of Chamorro language teachers, which is still at an early stage.

Conclusion

What we have surveyed here in terms of resources and efforts to preserve the Chamorro language, incomplete though it may be, speaks to the importance of consolidating individual community initiatives and providing them with a larger infrastructure.

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¹ For reasons of space, the discussion in the text is limited to documentary works addressed to a wide audience, and does not include academic works written primarily for linguists.