

ROTUMAN LESSON #2

1. A. Noa'ia ko hāntei, ka 'āe **hoa** 'eap se tei?
Greetings. Where are you taking (the) mats to?
(Lit. Greetings, oh woman, but you take mats to where?)
2. B. **La'** se **Mamas** ta.
I'm going to the drying ceremony.
3. A. Ka 'āus **mamasa-n** sei?
Who is the ceremony for?
(Lit. you all are mamasa-ing who?)
4. B. 'Oto **ma'piag** fā mea'-mea' ta.
My younger grandson.
5. A. Ka ia **la'** se hanua?
He went overseas?
6. B. **La'** ma kotā **ho'i-m**.
Yes, and just returned.
(Lit. went and just returned)
7. A. 'E tei?
From where?
8. B. **Ho'i-m** 'e Niu Sirāgi.
From New Zealand.
9. A. Ka ia **la'** ma **rako**?
Did he go for education?
(Lit. he went and educated?)
10. B. **La'** se **rak Tāk** ta.
He went to medical school.
(Lit. went to the doctor school)
11. A. Ma ia **vāh-'ia**?
Has he finished?
12. B. 'I, pō **vāhi-a** 'on Tāku 'e 'Otako.
Yes, he has finished his medical degree from Otago.
13. A. Ma ia la garue 'e **Fit** 'i?
Will he work here in Fiji?
14. B. Gou **he'a-ma**, ka 'igkā', ia la garue kikia 'e Niu Sirāgi.
I wish he would, but no, he will work there in New Zealand.
15. A. Pō **vāhi-a** 'on rako ma tā'ma tē **fita'** ta.
He finished his education and that's all that matters.
(Lit. finished his education and only the important thing)
16. B. Uuuu 'i, Gagaja noa'ia.
Oh, yes, thank God!

Grammar Review

You should review the pronouns from Lesson 1. In Lesson 2 you find one more: 'āus 'you plural'. In future lessons look for the rest of the pronouns to fill out this chart (or ask a native speaker to help you do this).

Person/Number	Singular/One	Dual/Two	Plural/More than Two
First person	gou	'itar	
Second person	'āe		'āus
Third person	ia		iris

Grammar Notes

1. This lesson gives you many examples of the most interesting (and, perhaps, challenging) feature of Rotuman. This is what Churchward calls the 'complete and incomplete' and what others have called the 'long and short' forms of words. All lexical words (basically, those that are nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, but not words that are conjunctions or prepositions) have two forms. The incomplete/short is formed from the complete/long by a number of processes. Here are the examples from the dialogue, with both forms given. They are divided into three groups, A, B, and C. See if you can figure out how the short forms are made from the long forms in each group.

	<u>Long</u>	<u>Short</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
A.	la'o	la'	'to go'
	rako	rak	'to study, education'
	taku	tak	'doctor'
	Fiti	Fit	'Fiji'
	mamasa	mamas	'drying ceremony'
B.	vahi	vah	'to finish'
C.	ho'a	hoa'	'to take'
	'epa	'eap	'mat'
	ma'piga	ma'piag	'grandchild'
	mea'me'a	mea'mea'	'small, young'

Basically, one of three things happens to form the short. When the last two vowels of the long form are the same (as in *mamasa*, *Fiti*), or they are a-o (as in *la'o*, *rako*) or a-u (as in *taku*), then the last vowel is dropped in the short form (*la'*, *tak*). These examples are listed under A above. When the final two vowels are a-i, as in *vahi*, the last vowel drops and the /a/ changes to ā (which sounds something like the vowel sound in 'pet'). This is listed under B. When the last two vowels are o-a (as in *ho'a*) or e-a (as in *'epa*), or i-a (as in *ma'piga*) then the last vowel and consonant switch places (*hoa'*, *'eap*, *ma'piag*). These examples are listed in C.

Notice that the long forms always end in a vowel, while the short forms always end in a consonant. (The glottal stop ' is a consonant in Rotuman).

If this information is new to you, it would be a good idea to memorize the long and short forms of just one example for each vowel combination, since the same thing will happen with all other Rotuman words with the same vowel combinations.

2. As a rule of thumb, the short forms are used much more often than the long forms.

For a noun that is not followed by an adjective or an article, the long form is used to show that it is plural and definite. That is, 'epa means 'the mats'. The long form plus the indefinite article -t is used to express singular indefinite: 'epat 'a mat'. The short form of the noun alone is used for the plural indefinite: 'eap '(some) mats'. Finally, the short form of the noun plus the definite article ta is used to express definite singular: eap ta 'the mat'

In most cases (though not all) when a verb does not have a suffix, the short form is used. See la' and hoa' in the dialogue. Ho'im (8) is an example of a verb with a suffix (-m); the verb is in its long form ho'i.

3. The suffix -n on the verb mamasa-n in 3 is used here to express a future idea, even though the usual future markers la and tāla are not used in sentence 3.

Useful Vocabulary and Expressions

Ia pō vah-'ia 'on _____	'He/she finished his/her _____'
tā'ma tē fita' ta.	'that's all that matters'
gou he'ama	'I wish'
garue	'work, to work'
kotā ho'im	'just returned'
la' ma rako	'went away for education'
tē	'thing, things'
'i	'here'
kikia	'there'

Cultural Note

The *mamasa* is a ceremony performed to welcome first time visitors to Rotuma, as well as those Rotumans who are returning after having been away. It is a 'drying ceremony' because traditionally people arrived on the island by boat, and so were covered with salt spray. Essential to a *mamasa* are the *pāega*, which is the pile of mats that the honoree sits on, the *koua*, which is the food prepared in an underground oven, and a *tēfui*, a garland of flowers which the honoree wears around his/her neck.

Exercises

1. Based on the long-short examples in the Grammar section above, give the corresponding short form of the following long forms.

- hāsu 'gall bladder'
- le'e 'child'
- maho 'to become cold'
- fo'a 'to land, step on'
- rahi 'fire'
- ferē 'to fly'
- pija 'rat'
- para 'to decay'
- hanisi 'to love'

2. Translate the following nouns into English.

- a. ɬək ta
- b. mamas ta
- c. mamasat
- d. mamasa
- e. ma'piga
- f. ma'piag ta
- g. ma'piget (Note: the noun here is *ma'piga*; you'll learn in a later lesson why the final a changes to e.)
- h. gagaja
- i. gagaj ta
- j. gagajat
- k. 'epa
- l. 'eap ta

Answer to Exercises

- 1.
 - a. həs
 - b. le'
 - c. mah
 - d. foa'
 - e. rəh
 - f. fer
 - g. piəj
 - h. par
 - i. hanis

- 2.
 - a. the doctor
 - b. the drying ceremony
 - c. a drying ceremony
 - d. the drying ceremonies
 - e. the grandchildren
 - f. the grandchild
 - g. a grandchild
 - h. the chiefs
 - i. the chief
 - j. a chief
 - k. the mats
 - l. the mat