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Northern Paiute Texts: Introduction

Tim Thornes
Boise State University

Maziar Toosarvandani
University of California, Santa Cruz

NORTHERN PAIUTE TEXTS: INTRODUCTION[1]

TIM THORNES   MAZIAR TOOSARVANDANI

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY   UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

This volume of Northern Paiute texts is the result of continued collaborative relationships between members of several Northern Paiute (Western Numic; Uto-Aztecan) speech communities and two linguists who have nearly 30 years of combined experience working on the language. The resulting documentary resource provides varied samples of naturally occurring speech—narratives recorded and analyzed by the editors as part of their own fieldwork as well as materials recorded of earlier generations of speakers. In one case, materials from three generations of speakers from the same speech community are provided. By providing access in a single volume to previously inaccessible texts from disparate sources and dialects, the editors give a rare and important contribution to the study of cross-dialectal variation for the indigenous languages of North America.

[KEYWORDS: Northern Paiute, dialects, texts, language documentation, variation]

1. History and background. Northern Paiute is a Numic language of the Western branch (table 1) and represents the northwesternmost extent of the Uto-Aztecan family. Within Numic, it is most closely related to Mono and more distantly to Timbisha, Shoshone, Comanche, Kawaiisu, and Colorado River Numic (Chemehuevi, Southern Paiute, Ute). The language consists of two major dialects and numerous subdialects. Nichols (1974) refers to the southern Northern Paiute dialects as Nevada Northern Paiute (historically also called Paviotso) and the northern varieties (including Bannock) as Oregon Northern Paiute.

TABLE 1
RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE NUMIC LANGUAGES

A. Western
   1. Mono
   2. Northern Paiute
B. Central
   1. Timbisha
   2. Shoshoni
   3. Comanche
C. Southern
   1. Kawaiisu
   2. Colorado River Numic
     a. Chemehuevi
     b. Southern Paiute
     c. Ute

Speaker estimates are somewhat anecdotal but generally fall within the 400–500 range. By more generous calculations, there could be as many as 700 speakers of Northern Paiute (Golla 2011:174), a number that is likely too high. Speakers are unevenly distributed across various reservation communities of the northern Great Basin region of the western United States. The present-day vitality of the language also varies significantly across communities. Speakers of northern varieties sharply outnumber those from southern groups. As far as we know, the most vibrant speech community today is at Fort McDermitt on the Nevada-Oregon border, where at least some teenagers are reported to speak the language. A few family enclaves of speakers of all ages are reported, though not confirmed, on the Duck Valley reservation. With very few exceptions, in most other communities the remaining speakers are elderly, and the language is critically endangered.

2. Dialect geography. From south to north, as figure 1 shows, are the Northern Paiute communities in Bridgeport, Coleville, and Lee Vining (central eastern California), Fallon, Lovelock, McDermitt, Pyramid Lake, Reno-Sparks, Winnemucca, Walker River, and Yerington (western and northern Nevada), Fort Bidwell and Susanville (northeastern California), Beatty, Burns, and Warm Springs (eastern Oregon), as well as Duck Valley and Fort Hall (southern Idaho). Other communities may have existed historically (e.g., Sweetwater, Nevada).

The dialect geography of the Northern Paiute language is, at this point, impossible to reconstruct with confidence. The establishment of the reservation system and its impact on social interaction and attendant speech patterns through a mixture of contact and separation has only rendered such an effort difficult at best. Our intention in bringing together this volume is to showcase variation within a
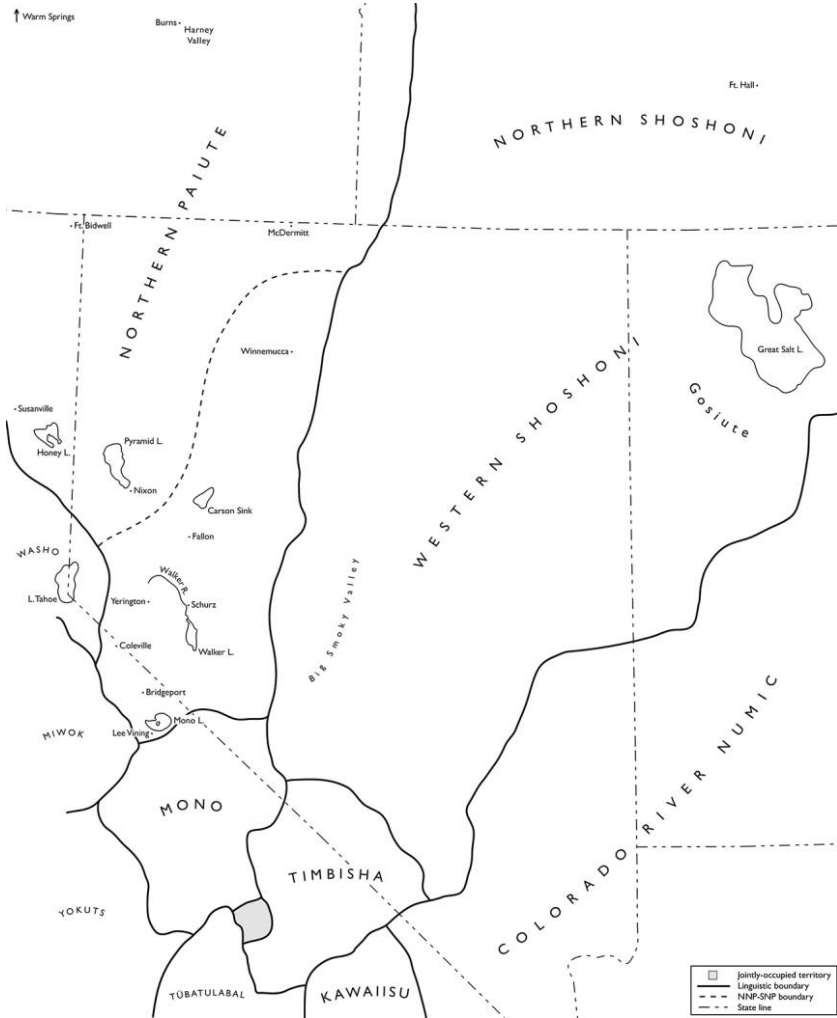
Fɪɢ. 1—Map of Numic languages (Babel et al. 2013:451).

single endangered language with a sample of texts of various genres, from different locales, and through distinct generations of speakers.

Variation is part of language change, and so the availability of such varied material can help us understand microlevel changes in the context of shifting patterns of language use. In our experience, speakers, rather than experiencing variation unconsciously, are in fact quite cognizant of both cross-communolectical differences and differences between generations of speakers. Our hope is that

future research can build upon the foundation we establish here in making use of both modern and legacy material for linguistic study. At the same time, we hope to honor the speakers and their home communities by providing a more complete picture of and appreciation for the richness of the Northern Paiute–Bannock language, especially where it might assist in efforts at cultural revival.

3. History of documentation.   Northern Paiute has overall been reasonably well documented, though some individual varieties remain relatively unknown. Early attestations include a vocabulary gathered by Horatio Hale in eastern Oregon sometime in the mid nineteenth century (Hale 1846:569–629), followed by more extensive vocabulary surveys by John Wesley Powell at locations across Nevada in 1873–1880, published by Fowler and Fowler (1970:210–49). Barrett (1906) and Merriam (Golla 2011: app. A, X–23a) collected additional vocabularies farther south into eastern California. Ethnographies from the early twentieth century also provide limited lexical information from various Northern Paiute communities (Lowie 1924; Steward 1933, 1938; Kelly 1938; Davis 1965).

Beyond these vocabularies, Waterman (1911) documents the phonetic properties of the Susanville (Honey Lake) variety. De Angulo and Freeland (1929) briefly describe phonological and grammatical properties of the nearby Fort Bidwell (Surprise Valley) variety. Gilbert Natches, a native speaker from Pyramid Lake, published a list of verbs, along with a couple of short texts (Natches 1923), one of which appears in this collection ("Cannibal Owl"). W. L. Marsden, a physician from Burns who worked with Northern Paiute speakers from the area for several decades, transcribed a couple hundred pages of texts by Patotzi (Captain Louie Crook). A few of these were published (Marsden 1923), but the vast majority remain in manuscript form only (Marsden n.d.), mostly typewritten drafts. One of these tales also appears here ("How Coyote Lost His Eyes"). The original handwritten notes for the texts have long been lost (Michael J. P. Nichols, personal communication), limiting the value of the typewritten manuscripts since Marsden had not fully settled on a consistent representation in these typescripts.[2] Most were translated by Nichols into English, and these translations, but not the Paiute transcriptions, were published (Heizer and Hester 1972).

Around 1940, Sven Liljeblad, a linguist and folklorist, began his work with Northern Paiute speakers from several communities, forging especially close ties to the Bannock community in Fort Hall, Idaho, the Shoshoni-Paiute of Duck Valley on the Idaho-Nevada border (where he was later given honorary tribal membership), Fort McDermitt on the Oregon-Nevada border, and the Fallon

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[2] Perhaps most glaring is a nearly complete lack in marking the glottal stop [ʔ], which is both phonologically contrastive and grammatically pertinent.

community of west-central Nevada. While an article on phonetics (Liljeblad 1950) and a widely distributed sketch grammar (Liljeblad 1966) were made available in his lifetime, his extensive field notes, recordings, and other materials remained largely unpublished (Liljeblad n.d.). Since his death, Catherine Fowler, an anthropologist who has worked closely with Liljeblad, subsequently published a cross-dialect Northern Paiute dictionary (Liljeblad et al. 2012), which incorporates 40,000 lexical slips from Liljeblad's papers, as well as her own field notes on the Fallon variety (see also her 1990 and 1992 ethnographies about this community). We include four narratives here which he collected in three different varieties. (Fowler and Liljeblad [1986] also collaborated on a brief sketch grammar.)

In the mid twentieth century, Margaret Wheat, a geologist and amateur ethnographer, carried out extensive fieldwork over several decades with the Stillwater Marsh community in Fallon, Nevada, working especially closely with native speaker and cultural resource Wuzzie George, along with her husband Jimmy and close friend Alice Steve. This produced an ethnography (Wheat 1967) and many unpublished recordings of texts and other linguistic materials (Wheat 1950–1952, 1968–1974).

In the late 1960s to early 1970s, Michael Nichols worked with speakers from Burns, and briefly from Fort Hall as well. Recordings are archived (Nichols 1968–1970) and two texts, one from Fort Hall and another from Burns, appear in this volume. His 1974 dissertation, while primarily historical, contains significant description of dialect variation within Northern Paiute. Somewhat earlier, less-extensive fieldwork on the language was carried out by Sydney Lamb. Primarily a scholar of Mono, his unpublished field notes and recordings contain some Northern Paiute materials from southern varieties (Lamb 1953–1955a, b). Arie Poldervaart, a linguist associated with the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), published a sketch grammar and learner-centered dictionary of the Yerington, Nevada, variety (Yerington Paiute Tribe 1987a, b). There is, in addition, a grammatical sketch of the McDermitt, Nevada, variety, also produced by SIL linguists (Snapp et al. 1982), which forms part of a three-volume series of Uto-Aztecan comparative grammatical sketches edited by Ronald W. Langacker.

Most recently, Tim Thornes has carried out fieldwork in Northern Paiute communities throughout Oregon, Idaho, and northern Nevada. His M.A. thesis (1996) focuses on verb structure in the Yahooskin variety of south-central Oregon, and his dissertation (2003) is a comprehensive grammar primarily of the Burns variety. This has been followed by several articles, using data primarily from Burns, on multiverb constructions (Thornes 2009, 2011), relative clauses (Thornes 2012), causation (Thornes 2013), directive speech (Thornes 2017), and evidentiality (Thornes 2018). Thornes has worked with speakers from nearly all of the extant northern varieties of the language both to document and to assist with revitalization efforts, while developing a substantial collection of texts from

current-day speakers as well as from legacy materials. A number of these have been informally published for tribal members from those communities (Thornes and the Burns Paiute Elders Group n.d.).

A field methods class at the University of California, Berkeley in 2005–2006 produced unpublished recordings and field notes for the closely related Bridge-port and Mono Lake varieties, archived there at the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages. It also led to a sociophonetic study (Babel 2009) and a phonetic description (Babel et al. 2013). Maziar Toosarvandani continued his work with this community, producing articles on nominalization (2010, 2011, 2014b), clause chaining (2016a), verbal morphology (2016b), and aspect (2014a, 2017). Toosarvandani also maintains an online audio dictionary and text database, containing materials primarily from the Bridgeport and Mono Lake varieties, and to a lesser extent from Burns and Walker River (http://paiute.ucsc.edu/). Sample texts recorded and analyzed by Toosarvandani from Bridgeport, Mono Lake, and Walker River round out the volume with narratives from these "southern" dialects.

4. Grammar and dialect variation.   The phonological inventory differs from variety to variety. The number of vowels ranges from 10 to 11, and the number of consonants from 23 to 27. All varieties have five short-long pairs of vowels, /i iː ɨ ɨː u uː ɔ ɔː a aː/. The Mono Lake variety also has the so-called Numic "sixth" vowel /e/, which it shares with Mono and some other Numic lan-guages; in other Northern Paiute varieties, this merged with /i/ (Nichols 1974:39–50). The values for the Mono Lake variety are shown in figure 2. (In this introduc-tion, all transcriptions use the International Phonetic Alphabet.)

The contrastive consonants are distinguished by eight places and five man-ners of articulation, as shown in table 2. The plosives are distinguished phonet-ically, not just by voicing but also by differences in duration and aspiration
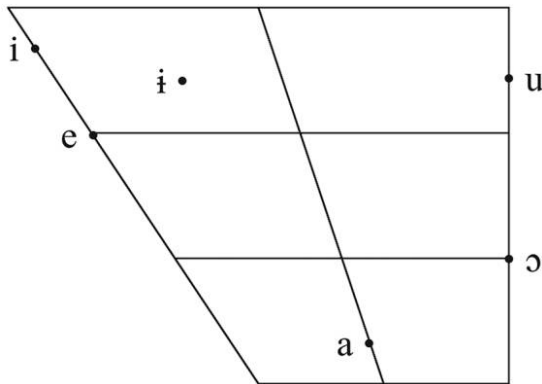

Fɪɢ. 2—Vowels in Mono Lake Northern Paiute (Babel et al. 2012:240).

TABLE 2
CONSONANTS IN NORTHERN PAIUTE

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Alveolo–palatal	Palatal	Velar	Labialized velar	Labial–velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b bb*	t d dd*			k ɡ ɡɡ*	kʷ ɡʷ ɡɡʷ*		ʔ
Affricate		ts dz ddz*		ʧ‡				
Nasal	m mm	n nn			ŋ† ŋŋ†			
Fricative			ɕ ɕɕ					h
Approximant				J			w	

Sources: Thornes 2003:17, Babel et al. 2012:234
*present only in southern varieties,
†absent in Mono Lake variety,
‡present only in some northern varieties.

(Babel et al. 2012: 234–35). All consonants except glottals participate in what is called "consonant gradation." They form up to three classes or "grades," shown in table 3, for the purposes of certain phonological or morphological processes. These classes only contrast in word-medial position (e.g., [tɨˈba-] 'pine nut' and [tɨˈppa] 'mouth'). In word-initial position, obstruents and nasals invariably have the fortis realization and approximants, the lenis realization; there are no non-glottal codas.

Northern Paiute varieties are usually divided into two main dialect areas based on how many grades they possess. In southern varieties, sometimes called Nevada Northern Paiute (or, historically, Paviotso), all three grades are preserved; in northern varieties, sometimes called Oregon Northern Paiute (which includes Bannock), the voiced fortis series has completely merged with the fortis series (e.g., [tɨˈbbi] 'rock' in Mono Lake versus [tɨˈppi] in Burns). This leaves just two consonant grades in the north. Even in southern varieties, there is only a two-way contrast for sibilants, nasals, and the palatal approximant, likely for historical reasons. (Note: Other phonological isoglosses dividing Northern Paiute varieties do not line up with this northern–southern distinction in consonant grades; see Babel et al. 2013.)

Consonant gradation is involved in the system of consonant mutation—traditionally called "final features"—of Northern Paiute and other Numic languages.[3] In noninitial position, for any morpheme beginning with a nonglottal consonant, its form will depend on the identity of the preceding morpheme. In the Burns variety, for instance, the first person singular possessive proclitic /i=/ triggers the lenis realization for the onset consonant of the following noun (1), while the second person singular possessive proclitic /ɨ=/ triggers the fortis realization (2).[4]

[3] See Nichols (1974:13) for perhaps the earliest appearance of the term in print.

[4] Here and elsewhere throughout the volume, we represent "fortis" by doubling the consonant.

TABLE 3
CONSONANT GRADES IN NORTHERN PAIUTE

Lenis	b	d	ʣ	g	gʷ	ɕ	m	n	w	ɟ
Fortis	p	t	ʦ	k	kʷ	ɕɕ	mm	nn	kʷ	kʲ / ʧ‡
Voiced fortis	bb	dd	ddʣ	gg	ggʷ	ɕɕ	mm	nn	ggʷ	dd*

*present only in southern varieties;
‡present only in some northern varieties

(1) [i **β**ia]
    i=**p**ia
    1SG.POSS=mother

    'my mother'

(2) [ɨ **pp**ia]
    ɨ=**p**ia
    2SG.POSS=mother

    'your mother'

(Thornes 2003:78)

As pointed out in Nichols (1974), consonant mutation at morpheme boundaries has become fully lexicalized in many instances, resulting in some of the word-medial contrasts we find in the extant Numic languages.

Stress (marked with an ˈ preceding the stressed syllable) is highly predictable, if typologically unusual, in its placement on the second mora. Prefixation triggers leftward stress shift (4), while the addition of proclitics leaves primary stress unmoved (5).

(3) [tɨˈniʧui]
    /tɨniʧui/
    teach

    'teach'

(4) [naˈttʰɨniʧui]
    /na–tɨničui/
    MID–teach

    'learn'

(5) [ɨttʰɨˈniʧuidɨ]
    /ɨ=tɨničui–dɨ/
    2SG:POSS=teach–NMLZ

    'your teacher'

Northern Paiute has highly concatenative morphology, with allomorphy mainly resulting from consonant mutation and prosodic vowel devoicing. Grammatical relations are marked primarily on dependents through case, though the language

has rich inflectional morphology on verbs. A variety of categories are marked on verbs, primarily through suffixation, though important derivational formatives are expressed as prefixes. Instrumental prefixes that express the means or manner by which an action is carried out (e.g., with the hand or foot, by grasping or swinging an instrument radially, by means of speech or thought, through the use of fire or water, among others) appear quite frequently, sometimes increasing valence by adding an external argument, as a causative does (Thornes 1996, 2011, 2013). Note the following:

(6) uuni–ku   mɨ=**ma**–naana–pittɨ–gaa–si   yaisi   nɨmmi
    that.kind   PL=**IP/HAND**–grow–arrive–away–SEQ   then   we:EXCL

   'in that way, we came to hand-raise them then'

                     (Grant Martin, Catching Sparrow Hawks, line 23)[5]

(7) su=naatsi=ga   u=**ni**–noo–yɨkwi
    NOM=boy=MOD   3SG:ACC=**IP/SPEECH**–carry–HAB

   'But the boy continued to beg her.'

                            (Pete Snapp, Bedwetter Story, line 10)

In (6), the instrumental prefix indicating the general use of the hand is added to the intransitive verb /naana/ 'grow' to form the transitive stem /manaana/ 'raise.' In (7), the verb /noo/ 'carry; haul' is already transitive, and the addition of the prefix adds more detail to the meaning of the derived stem. This lexical contribution to the verb stem to which they attach is only sometimes transparent.

A note on the glossing of instrumental prefixes is in order since their lexical contribution to the resulting stem is sometimes metaphorically interesting, as is the case with lexical affixes in many languages of North America and elsewhere. In this volume, they are glossed using the formula IP/XXXX, where XXXX serves as a placeholder for the most salient and general meaning.

Other voice and valence-altering morphology consists of a passive/middle prefix, an antipassive prefix, and an applicative suffix (Thornes 2013; Toosarvandani 2016b). Basic motion and postural verb stems can appear suffixed to other verbs; these "secondary verbs" sometimes contribute their lexical content to the event description, but they most frequently add aspectual or directional information (Thornes 2009, 2011). Northern Paiute does not mark present or past tense morphologically, though it has two suffixes that can be used to describe future events, a relative future and a prospective; it has a rich system of aspect (Toosarvandani 2016a, 2017).

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[5] "Catching Sparrow Hawks" is included in the Bannock (Fort Hall, Idaho) stories in this issue. The "Bedwetter Story" can be found in the Fort McDermitt Reservation stories.

The language exhibits a dramatic lack of syntactic subordination. The only embedding constructions may be nominalizations, which also serve in function as relative and complement clauses (Thornes 2003, 2012; Toosarvandani 2010, 2011, 2014b), and direct quotations. Temporal and causal relations between sentences are expressed through clause chaining, which has been analyzed as asyndetic coordination (Toosarvandani 2016a). Some lexical items analyzed as (mainly adverbial) coordinators have been identified for northern varieties (Thornes 2003), but these are not found in present-day southern varieties, a fact that might be attributed to language attrition.

Variation across communolects appears at all levels—phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic. Aside from features already noted, the Mono Lake variety has been reported to lack pluractional reduplication on verbs (Houser et al. 2006) and instead employs suffixation. The feature was likely lost, since pluractional reduplication can otherwise be found in all branches of Numic. The motion and postural verbs that can appear as "secondary verbs"—the second member of a verb-verb compound[6]—vary across speech communities, as does the degree to which these verbs preserve their original lexical semantic content (Thornes 2009).

5. Conventions. This volume proceeds roughly from north to south in its coverage of 9 community varieties (communolects) of Northern Paiute. The texts are meant to be as representative as possible, both geographically and temporally. Alongside texts recorded by contemporary researchers, legacy materials through the early twentieth century are also included. Information regarding individual speakers, the linguists who worked with them, and the nature of the recordings is provided in the introduction to each narrative.

The texts are presented in a four-tier format. For legacy materials, the first tier is as faithful as possible to the original source, maintaining the original transcription system of the collector. For contemporary materials recorded by the editors, the first tier is given in the orthographic convention chosen by the community of the speaker, including appropriate punctuation and capitalization. Several distinct systems for writing Northern Paiute have been used over the years, with individual communities favoring different orthographies; detailed descriptions are provided in the introductions to the texts. Any false starts, repetitions, misspeakings, or unintelligible materials are included in the first tier, enclosed in square brackets; hesitation in speaking is notated with an ellipsis. Non-nativized English words are presented in standard orthography and italicized.

In tier two, a nearly phonemic transcription with morpheme boundaries is provided that is uniform across all sources and dialects. This uses a modified

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[6] Secondary verbs appear as part of the verb complex immediately after the stem. The secondary verb construction forms a distinct type of verb+verb compound (Thornes 2011).

Americanist system: consonants and vowels are represented identically to the International Phonetic Alphabet, as in figure 2 and table 2, except that /tʃ/ is written as /č/, /ɕ/ as /z/, and /ɕɕ/ as /s/. This second-tier transcription strays from a purely phonemic representation solely in including the surface forms for mutated consonants, as their values are not predictable. For legacy materials, the second-tier transcription is our own, based on any accompanying audio we were able to track down. If none was available, this transcription reflects our best understanding of the text, based on the collector's original materials.

The third tier provides morpheme-by-morpheme glosses. The abbreviations used in this tier can be found at the end of the volume. Typical affix boundaries are indicated with a dash (–), clitic boundaries with an equals sign (=), and reduplication with a tilde (~).

Finally, the fourth tier conveys a free translation. For legacy materials, this is always true to the original source. For our own recordings, free translations were produced by working with native speakers (not necessarily the speakers of the texts themselves). Any additions of our own in tier four are enclosed in parentheses. This usually involves adding content not literally present in the Northern Paiute text but added for greater readability and to disambiguate the translation.