

BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT: "Ute Texts" compiled and edited by T. Givón
(Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 2013)

Ute story-telling tradition is the people's literary and cultural heritage. Unlike many other oral traditions, Ute spoken narratives allow for considerable artistic freedom and cross-personal variation in both contents and style. Stories were not memorized verbatim, and traditional story-tellers took creative liberty in elaborating and re-inventing the 'same' tale. The core cultural contents of each story are nonetheless preserved across tellers.

Ute oral literature reflects the life experience of a small-scale hunting-and-gathering **Society of Intimates**, and its tight connection to the local natural environment, the terrain, flora and fauna that supported the hunter-gatherer life. The bulk of the characters taking part in these stories are **animates** rather than humans. But their affairs, doings, trials and tribulation clearly reflect the life experience of humans. This is underscored in many of the stories by the near-formulaic reminder: "It was long ago", when all the living beings and the feathered ones were still humans". This is the hunter-and-gatherer's sense of profound unity of all sentient beings, a unity that is well manifest in the grammar of the Ute language.

Ute stories were most likely told at night around the fire, in front of or inside the lodge, to a mixed audience of children and adults, of whom the latter had surely heard the tale many time before. The stories aimed to both instruct and entertain, and their underlying themes are rueful, stoic, oft-cynical reflections on human behavior and the vagaries of harsh mountain and desert existence. While not Homeric epics, Ute oral narratives are, unmistakably, the foundational literary tradition of The People.

The stories in the book were transcribed from recorded tapes, but otherwise are given very much the way they were told, with little editorial tampering except transcription (line 1), English translation (line 3), and inter-lineal structural analysis (line 2). The repetitions, pauses, hedges, self-corrections and occasional grammatical slips that characterize all spoken language are all here, lovingly preserved. To the extent possible, then, we have tried to maintain the style of the spoken language. The Ute sound-system and writing are explained in our previously published **Ute Reference Grammar** (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 2011). That entire book also constitute an explanation of the abbreviated grammatical terminology used in the intermediate glosses (line 2) of the texts.

The bulk of the texts were recorded on the So. Ute Reservation in the 1970s and 1980s. For comparison, the book also contains the re-analyzed versions of two stories collected by Sapir in the Uintahs in 1909, and the So. Paiute Creation Story collected by him in Kaibab in 1910.