

# Preface

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**Ute Dictionary**

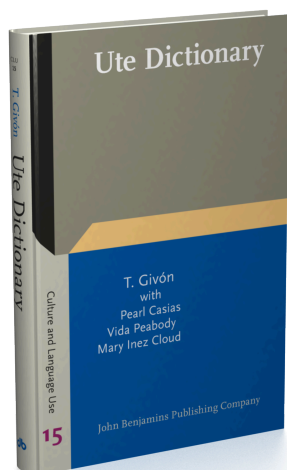
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## Preface

This dictionary is a much revised and expanded edition of our earlier undertaking (Givón 1979), incorporating all the lexical materials developed by the original Ute Language Program for the Southern Ute Indian Tribe (1976–1985), as well as the materials developed earlier by James Goss (Goss 1962, 1972). Added vocabulary items were taken from the oral texts published first as *Ute Traditional Narratives* (Givón ed. 1985) and revised and expanded as *Ute Texts* (Givón ed. 2013). In addition, we scoured the Ute vocabularies, most of them from the Uintah and Uncompagre bands, collected by John Wesley Powell (Fowler and Fowler eds 1971) and pulled out all lexical items not listed in our dictionary, provided they were acceptable to fluent speakers. Regrettably, many of the words in Mr. Powell's admirable pioneering work were impossible to interpret, due to his creative orthography. Lastly, we went through the vocabulary lists in Smith's *Ethnography of the Northern Utes* (Smith 1974), a work originally done in the mid-1930s on the No. Ute Reservation, and extracted all vocabulary items not listed in our dictionary, again provided they were acceptable to fluent speakers. We then took the liberty of adjusting the spelling of the Uintah and White River vocabulary gleaned from the Powell and Smith materials to reflect the pronunciation of the southern Ute dialects.

Ute is a Southern Numic language of the Numic – northern-most – group of the Uto-Aztecan family. The major dialect boundary divides the Ute bands into northern vs. southern dialects, grouping the pre-reservation Ute bands as follows:

### **Northern dialect(s):**

Uintah

White River (Yampa)

So. Paiute

### **Southern dialect(s):**

Uncompagre

('aka-páa-gharuu-rú, pariya-núu-chi-u, tavi-'wa-chi-u,  
moghwa-tavi-'wa-chi-u)

Ute Mountain (wíya-ma-núu-chi-u)

Moghwache (moghwa-chi-u)

Capote (kapúuta)

Chemehueve (California)

One may conjecture that the Northern bands spread northward from the confluence of the Colorado and San Juan rivers, up the Kaibab Plateau to Utah Valley and the Uintah mountains. The Southern bands, in turn, proceeded east along the San Juan river and north up its tributaries into the Colorado Rockies (see map, below). The dialect differences among the Ute bands are relatively minor, in the sense that they pose no barrier to mutual intelligibility and fluent communication.

Ideally, vocabularies from the Northern dialects published by Edward Sapir (1930–1931) should have been included in this dictionary. Unfortunately, Sapir's pre-phonemic writing system, used in his Uintah materials from 1909, made the conversion work less than rewarding. In our revised *Ute Texts* (Givón ed. 2013) we included two of Sapir's Uintah texts and one from So. Paiute, with the spelling adjusted to southern-dialect pronunciation. Sapir's So. Paiute materials are much more transparent. But pulling all lexical items out of them, verifying the pronunciation and meaning and converting them to our southern-dialect spelling would have been a monumental task, one we chose, with considerable regret, not to undertake.

The first and most conspicuous core part of a language is its dictionary, where spoken words, or their corresponding written forms, are paired with their meanings. The other core part is grammar, describing the rules that govern the way words are combined into utterances – clauses, sentences and paragraphs. Unlike English, Ute words have a complex internal structure that is part of the grammar. And Ute grammar is much more elaborate than the grammar of English. In the Ute-English entries of this dictionary, a considerable amount of grammatical information is thus provided, information that is absolutely necessary for understanding the use of words in communication.

In order to explain the grammatical information used in our Ute-English entries, and thus the use of Ute words in communication, we included here three introductory chapters, from our *Ute Reference Grammar* (Givón 2011; a revision of Givón 1980). The three chapters cover:

- the Ute sound system and alphabet
- Ute word classes and word structure
- mechanisms for deriving new Ute words from existing words.

The first chapter is straight forward, providing a user-friendly version of Ute phonetics, phonology and orthography. The second covers some core components of Ute grammar, in particular the classification of verbs according to event participants ('semantic roles'), grammatical roles ('case roles') and the structure of simple verbal clauses. This grammatical information compensates,

to some extent, for our decision not to include illustrative usage examples in most entries. While we admire the grand sweep of dictionaries that include such usage information (e.g., Hopi Dictionary Project 1998), we lack the time and resources to follow their splendid example.

The third chapter underscores one crucial fact about dictionaries in general, and about our Ute dictionary in particular: A dictionary is a living, evolving, historical organism. It is not only a compendium of the current state of words, their pronunciation, meaning(s) and usage, but also an account, however implicit and sketchy, of how the words got to be the way they are now; how new word-senses evolved out of older senses; and how new words have been coined from older words. Put another way, a dictionary is not only a description of the current cultural world-view of the speech community, but also of how this cultural world-view evolved gradually over historical time. While not pushing this historical aspect too hard, it nonetheless inspired the way this dictionary is organized.

Like all living languages, Ute is an organism forever in the midst of ongoing **change**, in pronunciation, in grammar, and—most relevant here—in vocabulary. And ongoing change means current usage **variation**, so that the same word may be pronounced a bit differently by different speakers, or have a slightly different range of meanings. To the extent possible and whenever warranted, we have attempted to document such variation in both sound and meaning. A small part of the change and variation in the Ute lexicon is contact-induced, resulting from cultural borrowing from Spanish or English. Such borrowed items have had remarkably little impact on Ute phonology or grammar. Rather, borrowed items have been readily absorbed into regular native patterns.

Many people contributed over the years to the process of assembling this dictionary. First among them were members of the original Ute Language Committee for the Southern Ute Tribe (1976–1985): Edna Russell Baker, Loraine Cloud Baker, Annie Bettini, Fritz Box, Frances Buck, Mollie Buck Cloud, Julius Cloud, Ralph Nash Cloud, Neil Buck Cloud, Annabelle Eagle, Bertha Burch Groves, Martha Burch Myore, Eva Taylor O’John, Georgia McKinley Pinnecose, Patricia Rael, Sunshine Cloud Smith, Euterpe Taylor, LaVeta Vigil. All were volunteers who invested their time, knowledge and hopes in trying to preserve their language. All but three are not with us anymore. *ʔichay tʰɨvɨɾɨ-vwan ká-miya'ni-wa-tʰɨɨ.*

During the early years of the project, many other Ute speakers contributed words or stories to our project: Renee Cloud Baca, Naomi Red Bajarano, Levy “Dusty” Baker, Eddie Box, Sr., Kenneth Burch, Ernestine Burch, Jack Frost, Lillie Frost, Stanley Frost, Essie Kent, Isobel Kent, Harry Richards, Mellie

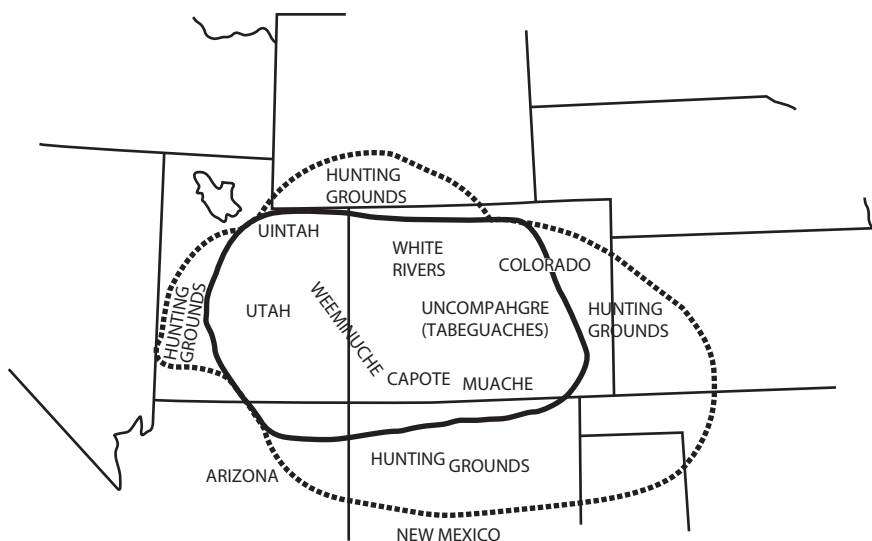
Baker Santistevan, Darlene Frost Vigil, Daisie Watts, Ellen and Max Watts, John Williams. Others helped over the years in more subtle ways: Everett Burch, Hanley Frost, Bradley Hight, Alden Naranjo, Jr., Dorothy Frost Naranjo, Douglas Remington, Bennett Cloud Thompson.

Three tribal elders have spent much of the past two years helping me revise this work, in effect appointing themselves as the Ute Dictionary Committee: Pearl Casías, Mary Inez Cloud and Vida Baker Peabody. They made the task both doable and enjoyable. Whatever faults and glitches that may have found their way into this book remain entirely my own.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Leonard Cloud Burch, longtime Chairman of the Southern Ute Tribal Council, whose vision and wisdom figured prominently in making possible the original Ute Language Program (1976–1985), and who steadfastly supported the work that has culminated, many years later, in this book. *түнүчү тоghoy-aqh, түгүнн-гарн-п.*

T. Givón  
White Cloud Ranch  
Ignacio, Colorado  
March 2015

## GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE UTE-SPEAKING BAND



THE UTE DOMAIN (till 1870's)