Introduction

This work is a collection of Newe hupia ‘Shoshoni poetry songs’, which celebrate the traditional Shoshoni hunting and gathering lifeway and world view. For centuries the ancestors of the Shoshoni lived in the Great Basin and surrounding areas of what is now the western United States, moving seasonally from place to place harvesting various roots, berries, grains, pinenuts, herbs, and game animals. The poetry songs are rich in describing this way of life, which is intimately connected to the natural world. Today, Shoshoni people still sing these songs celebrating the traditional lifeway.

From the Shoshoni perspective, nearly everything in life and nature is sacred and worthy of being put to song. Thus, many songs are about specific details of nature such as animals, plants, and geographical and meteorological phenomena. They are also about traditional human activities such as hunting game and gathering and preparing foods, as well as spiritual practices and themes. On the one hand, the poetry songs are a traditional art form for the enjoyment of all who sing and hear them. On the other hand, they are used to help people learn about the specific details of nature, which are extremely important for people living in a hunting and gathering lifeway.

The themes of Shoshoni poetry songs are often not what either songs or poetry might be about in the modern Western tradition. The beauty of the lyrics of the songs lies in their simplicity and their power to capture details of nature and human existence that some of us may overlook or not pay much attention to. The poetry songs offer us a fresh look at the world, making the familiar vivid and alive. They give us insight and invoke clear imagery of the ordinary yet wondrous world we live in, expressing the experience of seeing the world as it is.

The poetry songs invoke imagery rather than describe it. In fact, elaborate description is avoided, and the songs use as few words as possible. Thus, the poetry songs are minimalist, simply illuminating the wonders of everyday life and celebrating its sacredness. The imagery is what is important, and so what is invoked is to some degree individual. Different singers of the same song and different people listening to it may have different interpretations. Each person has his or her own experience in the world, and so different interpretations of a given song are possible. What is important is taking
delight in the wonders of nature and the world, to see it clearly as it is. The songs help one pay attention to the world and delight in it. In this regard the poetry songs are much like Japanese haiku poetry but without restrictions on numbers of lines and syllables within the line.

However, Shoshoni poetry songs are different from Old World poetry in that they are always sung, never simply recited, and always sung in the context of other activities such as dancing, playing handgame (= stickgame), healing ceremonies, and other rituals. The poetry songs are sung to provide a background invoking energy and power for the other activities, so the same song may be sung over and over again during a particular dance or ceremony before another song is sung. And in some songs the same line is repeated several times for rhythmic effect. The repetition is important in order to emphasize the imagery and power the song invokes for the hearers, whether they are dancers in a dance, players gambling in handgame, or healers and patients in healing ceremonies. The songs serve an important function by invoking puha ‘supernatural power’ in whatever context they are being sung. In this way, the poetry songs play an important role in the lives of the Shoshoni people.

The Newe (~ Neme) ‘Shoshoni (people)’ have a rich oral tradition which includes historical narratives and mythological stories as well as songs (see Canonge 1958; Crum 1980, 1985, 1993; Crum and Dayley 1997; Lowie 1909, 1924; Miller 1972; Smith 1993). Traditionally, older singers would teach younger people who wanted to learn the songs, and so the songs were passed down orally from generation to generation as something of especial value. Occasionally, a singer would create his or her own new song. Different singers may sing slightly different versions of the same song, and sometimes the same singer may sing slightly different versions. But as each generation of people who know the songs dies off, fewer and fewer young people have an opportunity to learn them. So, it is with a sense of urgency that we have collected and recorded them.

All of the poetry songs in this work are sung by Beverly and Earl Crum, both native speakers of Western Shoshoni and traditional singers. They live on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation straddling the border between Idaho and Nevada, have been married for fifty-five years, and have three grown children. Earl was born on a hillside near Battle Mountain, Nevada, in 1923 and learned many of the songs from older relatives and friends while growing up. Earl also learned some of the songs by hearing them at dances and other social gatherings and in healing ceremonies and other rituals. In addition, Earl’s mother, the late Mabel Rodrigues, tape-recorded many Newe hupia that she had learned in her lifetime and gave them to Earl before she passed away to add to his collection. In recent years, Earl and other Shoshonis who enjoy...
singing the poetry songs get together to share each of their personal repertoires of the songs. Earl has lived and worked most of his life on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation. He also has lived and worked off the reservation in various periods of his life. As a young boy he went to Stewart Indian School in Nevada. Later he served as a marine in the Pacific in World War II.

Beverly Crum was born on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation in 1926. Throughout her life, she has lived both on and off the reservation. During the years on the reservation, she learned the songs from relatives and friends and at various dances and other social gatherings. Much later in life she lived in Salt Lake City pursuing an M.A. degree at the University of Utah, where she wrote her master’s thesis on Shoshoni poetry songs.

For many years, both Earl and Beverly have had a keen interest in the Shoshoni language and have recorded, transcribed, and translated various oral traditions in the language, including myths and stories, histories, and poetry songs, as well as the everyday speech of elderly Shoshoni speakers. They have also spent many years teaching how to read, write, and speak Shoshoni on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation to many tribal members as well as to some non-Indians who work and live there. Their hope has always been that Newe will continue as a viable language.
This collection of *hupia* or poetry songs represents only a small fraction of the Shoshoni poetry songs known in the past and still sung today. The poetry songs presented here are a gift and legacy from the Shoshoni people to the world. They are also a means of preserving a small but important part of the Shoshoni language for future generations, for the Shoshoni people, and also for all who appreciate music, poetry, culture, and language. The songs are wonderful pieces of music, often with rhythms and melodies that differ from the classical European tradition. They can only be fully appreciated as pieces of sung verse, not simply printed on a page. For this reason, we have included a CD of the songs being sung in Shoshoni so readers can appreciate them as music even if they don’t understand the Shoshoni words.

**Song and Dance Types**

The Shoshoni tradition offers several different kinds of *hupia* or poetry songs. The first three songs presented here are *natayaa hupia*, which are sung in the ritual called *natayaa* performed especially before the round dance. In this ritual, an elder or several elders lead a procession of people singing the songs. The people march counterclockwise to the dance ground, which has a pinenut tree or an aspen planted in its center. Then they offer prayers to the ‘Maker of People’, *Newi Manemenaipehkante*, for a good harvest in the current year and for harvests to come in the future. The people then purify themselves, *nampuisitai*, by washing themselves and putting red ochre or white clay on their bodies. Afterwards, the round dance begins.

The ceremonies during the harvesting of pinenuts are typical of combining dance with poetry songs and music. Recalling the rituals that went along with the pinenut harvesting festival, one elderly Shoshoni woman narrated the following:

Our old people used to work very hard during the warm months before the cold winter months set in. That’s the way it was with gathering pinenuts. Some years the pinenuts were plentiful; other years there were hardly any. The times when the pinenuts were plentiful, we would choose a *tepattaike-wahnii* ‘pinenut chief’. He would tell us to purify ourselves before we went to gather the pinenuts. So with prayerful thoughts we would wash our bodies. Then we would put on *pisappi* ‘red ochre’ or *aipi* ‘white chalky clay’. We did this so the pinenuts would not be wormy, and so we would have strong healthy bodies. Only then would we go and gather the pinenuts. When we finished, our pinenut chief would ask us to get ourselves ready for the dances. Right away, the old women would grind up some of their pinenuts into flour and make pinenut pudding with it. Then, we would begin our dance with a special one called *natayaa*. This dance had its own
special songs [namely, Totsantsi ‘Cleansing’, the first song in this collection]. They would sing these songs as the old women took spoonfuls of pinenut pudding and walked circling the dance place. In this way we celebrated the harvesting of pinenuts.

After the ritual natayaa dance, the people would join together for social dances. The dance performed most often during festive occasions was the round dance. In the round dance, men, women, and children dance in a circle, intertwining their arms and holding hands while moving in short measured steps to one side. As one elderly woman laughingly remarked:

Tammen nanah kwi’naa wa’ihku yotikkinna.
we (incl) just bird like fly (pl) along

‘We just fly along like birds.’

Taking part in the round dance is fun and energizing, and everybody enjoys it.

Songs sung during dances in general are called nekka hupia ‘dance songs’, and those sung at round dances are called nua hupia ‘movement songs’. Most of the songs we present in this work are round dance songs. Traditionally, people begin dancing in round dances in the evening and dance all night until daybreak. Throughout the night various songs are sung by different singers. During the day other activities go on, such as handgame, races, and other activities for everyone, young and old. The celebration goes on for several days and nights, and on the last day people dance until noon and then begin to go home.

Another kind of dance performed during the round dance is called ta aipuntu nuan nekkanna ‘this direction round dance’. This dance is different from the regular round dance in that the music is faster, the dancers hold hands and move in a peppy jog. When the singer says “aipuntu” the dancers stop and start moving in the opposite direction. The change in direction is signaled by songs called aipuntu hupia which are transitional songs that singers sing when people have been dancing for two or more hours, to change the direction (clockwise or counterclockwise) in which people are dancing. The aipuntu songs give the dancers a break to relieve tired legs and hips. Aipuntu literally means ‘this way’ or ‘this direction’. An aipuntu song is sung and then the word aipuntu is repeated several times, which is the signal to turn and change directions, and then the song may be sung again several times.

Another Shoshoni dance is called ta wehe’neki nekkanna ‘the rasping dance’, named in reference to the noise made by a rasping instrument which beats the rhythm for the dance. Nowadays this dance is commonly called the bear dance in English. In this dance, participants dance with a
partner, moving back and forth in a linear fashion. Songs sung during the bear dance are called *wehe’neki hupia*, literally meaning ‘rasping song’.

Other traditional songs are *puha hupia*, literally ‘power songs’. These songs are also called *nanisuntehai hupia* ‘prayer songs’ or *nattahsu’u hupia* ‘medicine songs’ and are used in various kinds of ceremonies and healing services to invoke *puha* or supernatural power.

Handgame songs are also traditional songs sung to invoke luck while playing handgame (or stickgame), a very old traditional gambling game among many North American groups. However, handgame songs are not represented in this selection.

Finally, there are more contemporary songs that Shoshonis sing at pow-wows, which are modern nontraditional intertribal gatherings with dancing, singing, and drumming, as well as competitions for all of these. Pow-wow songs include flag songs like one presented at the end of this volume. It should be noted, however, that a few flag songs are traditional, and they might better be called banner songs since they are about banners identifying different groups of people. Other modern pow-wow songs not included here are honoring songs and songs sung during what are called the war dance in English, but called *tan tase’yekinna* ‘moving the feet’ in Shoshoni. These are
not traditional to the Western Shoshoni but rather had their origins in Native American Plains culture, then spread to many North American Indian groups in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These songs differ from traditional ones in rhythm, cadence, and lyrics.

Other more contemporary songs are peyote songs sung in Native American Church services. The Native American Church movement began among the Kiowa and Comanche in Oklahoma in the 1890s and spread to most other North American Indian tribes at the end of the nineteenth century and during the first part of the twentieth century. The church was formally incorporated in 1918. Members of the Native American Church consider peyote a very sacred medicine and take it as sacrament in church ritual. Peyote songs are considered nattahsu’u hupia ‘medicine songs’ much like traditional medicine songs. One peyote song is included near the end of this book.

The Shoshoni Language

Since the hupia or poetry songs presented here are sung in Shoshoni, a few words about the language are in order. Here, we simply present a short sketch of the language in general and also mention special characteristics of the language used in poetry songs.
Before Europeans began colonizing western North America, Shoshoni was spoken by several thousand people in the valleys and mountains of the Great Basin area, the Snake River Plain, and the northern Rocky Mountains. Shoshoni territory included a large triangle-shaped area stretching out from a point in southeastern California through central Nevada and into southern Idaho and northern Utah and on into southwestern Wyoming. There are still several thousand Shoshoni people living on Indian reservations and in towns and cities scattered throughout the same area today. However, the number of people who still speak the language fluently has been dwindling fairly rapidly in the last few decades, so there are only a few hundred people who use the language on a day-to-day basis as their first language, although a few thousand still know it to one degree or another.

Shoshoni belongs to a large family of genetically related languages called Uto-Aztecan, which includes some thirty languages whose speakers aboriginally inhabited a vast territory stretching from the Salmon River in central Idaho, southward through the Great Basin and Southwest, into much of northern and central Mexico, and with colonies of speakers in Central America in parts of present-day Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Aztec (or Nahuatl, called Pipil in Central America) is the southernmost member of the family, and Shoshoni is the northernmost member. Other languages scattered in between are listed below. The language family gets its name from combining Ute and Aztec. Shoshoni belongs to a subbranch or subfamily of Uto-Aztecan called Numic (much like English belongs to the Germanic subbranch of the Indo-European language family). The word Numic in English is borrowed from cognate words in all the Numic languages meaning ‘Indian, person’ and the name of the language in each of the Numic languages. For example, in Shoshoni neme (~ newe) means ‘Shoshoni, Indian, person’ and also ‘the Shoshoni language’; and similarly in Panamint Shoshoni, nümü means ‘Tümpisa Shoshoni, Indian, person’ and also ‘the Tümpisa Shoshoni language’.

**Uto-Aztecan Language Family**

**Northern Division**

**Numic**

- **Central Numic**
  - Shoshoni, Panamint (= Tümpisa Shoshoni), Comanche
- **Western Numic**
  - Mono, Northern Paiute (= Paviotso and Bannock)
- **Southern Numic**
  - Kawaiisu, Chemehuevi-Southern Paiute-Ute
In terms of grammar, Shoshoni is quite different from English. Its words, especially verbs, tend to be quite complex with several morphemes or meaningful elements strung together agglutinatively. For example, note the complex internal structure of the verbs below, which are taken from the poetry songs:

**manemenaipehkanten** ‘created people’

```plaintext
< ma-  'by hand' instrumental prefix
  neme  'person'
  -nai 'make, create’ incorporating verb
  -ppehkanten remote past compound suffix
<  -ppeh  past participle suffix
  -kan  stative suffix
  -ten  habitual suffix
```

**namapataatsikiyukwainna** ‘be glazing oneself all over’

```plaintext
< na- reflexive prefix
  ma- 'by hand' instrumental prefix
  pataatsiki ‘glaze, shine’ verb
  -yu  progressive suffix
  -kwain ‘all over’ directional suffix
  -nna  general tense/aspect suffix
```
namattsiwenenemmi ‘stand by itself pointed alive’
< na- reflexive prefix
    ma- ‘by hand’ instrumental prefix
    tsi”- ‘pointed object’ instrumental prefix
    wene” ‘stand’ verb
    -nemmi ‘living’ auxiliary verb

As the examples above illustrate, verbs often have prefixes indicating grammatical voice and the type of instrument with which the action is done. They also often have one or more suffixes indicating directional and adverbial notions as well as tense and aspect. And some verbs (like -nai ‘make, create’ and -pa’in ‘have’) incorporate (direct) object nouns into the verb stem (e.g., manemenaipehkanten above).

With respect to sentence structure and word order, Shoshoni is much more like Japanese, Turkish, and Basque than English because the basic word order in Shoshoni is Subject + Object + Verb (sov). For example:

s o v
Ne hunanna puinnu. ‘I saw a badger.’
I badger-o saw
Andy punkunii pamakannu. ‘Andy watered the horses.’
Andy horses-o watered
En nemmi manemenaipehkante. ‘You created us.’
you us (excl) by hand-people-make-remote past

Not only direct objects but also indirect objects go before verbs, as the sentences below illustrate.

s i o do o v
Puhakante hepatsoo’a nattahsu’unna uttunnu.
doctor old lady-o medicine-o gave
‘The doctor gave the old lady some medicine.’

s do i o v
Ne pii sikka ne mapaiankannu.
my mother this-o me made
‘My mother made this for me.’

Shoshoni and other languages like it with basic sov word order (about 40 percent of the world’s 5,000 languages) usually have a number of syntactic characteristics in common which are often mirror image of their English counterparts. Thus, instead of prepositions Shoshoni has postpositions which go after nouns or noun phrases (rather than before nouns or noun phrases as prepositions do in English). For example:
And auxiliary or helping verbs follow main verbs instead of preceding them, as the sentences below illustrate.

Ne ekise awe koitsoih-tekitori. I soon dish-o wash-start-will 'I'll start to wash the dishes pretty soon.'

Bill tammi tenitto'inkaporanitori. Bill us (incl) sing for-will 'Bill will sing for us.'

Also, subordinate clauses usually precede the main verb as well. For example:

Pei ta kahninainkanuhka sote hepitsoo tsaan nisuanna. her someone house-made for-when that old lady good express 'The old lady expressed happiness when a house was built for her.'

Soten tainna kai pei ta wookkanteaku sukkuh mannai milanu. that man not him someone work-ask to-when there from went 'That man went away from there when he wasn't given a job.'

Even though the basic word order in Shoshoni is sov, other orders are possible. This freedom of word order is possible because nouns and pronouns, as well as adjectives modifying nouns, are inflected for grammatical case (as they are in Latin, Russian, German, and Japanese, and many other languages). In other words, from the endings on nouns and pronouns, one can always tell whether they are subjects or objects no matter what order they occur in. Therefore, word order is not as crucial in Shoshoni as it is in English. In Shoshoni nouns and pronouns are inflected for subjective, objective, and possessive cases. Compare the nouns below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nouns</th>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>newe</td>
<td>newi</td>
<td>newen</td>
<td>‘person, Indian, Shoshoni (language)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nouns and pronouns are also inflected for singular, dual, and plural numbers, each with their own subjective, objective, and possessive forms. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sg</td>
<td>wa’ippe</td>
<td>wa’ippe’a</td>
<td>wa’ippe’an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘woman’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dl</td>
<td>wa’ippeneh</td>
<td>wa’ippenihi</td>
<td>wa’ippenehen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘two women’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl</td>
<td>wa’ippeneen</td>
<td>wa’ippenii</td>
<td>wa’ippeneen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘women’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Some nouns have irregular or unpredictable forms in the dual or plural. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sg</td>
<td>tei</td>
<td>tei’a</td>
<td>tei’an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘friend’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dl</td>
<td>tetteyanneweh</td>
<td>tetteyannihi</td>
<td>tetteyannehen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘two friends’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl</td>
<td>tetteyanneen</td>
<td>tetteyannii</td>
<td>tetteyanneen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘friends’</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal pronouns are inflected for subjective, objective, and possessive cases; singular, dual, and plural numbers; and for first, second, and third persons. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>ne</td>
<td>nei ~ ne</td>
<td>nean ~ ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>en</td>
<td>emmi ~ en</td>
<td>en ~ emmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>ma ~ u</td>
<td>man ~ un</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st incl</td>
<td>taweh</td>
<td>tai</td>
<td>tahan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st excl</td>
<td>neweh</td>
<td>neh</td>
<td>nehen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>meweh</td>
<td>mehi</td>
<td>mehen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st incl</td>
<td>tammen</td>
<td>tammi ~ tai</td>
<td>tammen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st excl</td>
<td>nemmen</td>
<td>nemmi</td>
<td>nemmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>memmen</td>
<td>memmi ~ mei</td>
<td>memmen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, in the dual and plural numbers and in the singular subjective case, there are no third person personal pronouns per se. Rather, demonstratives are used instead. Shoshoni demonstratives are composed of a demonstrative-locative base indicating relative distance from the speaker or
place thought of, followed by a stem ending. Most of the demonstrative-locative bases come in two forms, one with initial s- followed by a vowel, and one with a vowel alone without s-. The bases without s- are used to introduce new or indefinite information into the discourse, or to indicate that a given discourse participant is not the topic. The forms beginning in s- are used to signal given or definite information and continuing topics. There is also another base, ma-, which indicates given and definite information like the forms beginning with s-, and it always indicates nearness. Thus, demonstratives in ma- cover the range of the si- and sai- forms. Since the forms in s- and ma- are used to track topics in discourse, they are referred to as the proximates; the forms without s- or ma- are never used to track continuing topics in discourse so they are called obviatives. For example:

### Demonstrative-Locative Bases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obviative</th>
<th>Proximate</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i-</td>
<td>si-</td>
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<tr>
<td>ai-</td>
<td>sai-</td>
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<tr>
<td>o-</td>
<td>so-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-</td>
<td>sa-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-</td>
<td>su-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma-</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The demonstratives are presented below. Note that there are no forms in ma- in the singular subjective case (i.e., mate is not used and is ungrammatical).

### Demonstratives

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Objective</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(s)iten</td>
<td>(s)ikka</td>
<td>(s)ikkkan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(s)aiten</td>
<td>(s)aikka</td>
<td>(s)aikkkan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(s)oten</td>
<td>(s)okka</td>
<td>(s)okkan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(s)aten</td>
<td>(s)akka</td>
<td>(s)akkan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(s)uten</td>
<td>(s)ukka ~ (s)ukki</td>
<td>(s)ukkan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>makka ~ makki</td>
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<td>dl</td>
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<tr>
<td>(s)iteweh</td>
<td>(s)itehi</td>
<td>(s)itehen</td>
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<td>(s)aitehi</td>
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<td>(s)potehen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>matehi</td>
<td>matehen</td>
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<td>(s)itien</td>
<td>(s)iti</td>
<td>(s)iteen</td>
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<td>(s)aiteen</td>
</tr>
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<td>(s)otien</td>
<td>(s)otii</td>
<td>(s)oteen</td>
</tr>
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<td>(s)ateen</td>
<td>(s)atii</td>
<td>(s)ateen</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The demonstratives are used as third person pronouns, where in English we would have to use he, him, his; she, her(s); it, its; as well as they, them, and their; but in Shoshoni there are no gender distinctions, much like the plural in English. The demonstratives are also used before nouns like demonstratives in English, except that Shoshoni demonstratives must agree with the nouns they modify in case and number. The demonstratives are also used much like English articles, since Shoshoni has no definite and indefinite articles. The demonstratives beginning with s- are always definite, but the demonstratives without s- may be interpreted as definite or indefinite depending on the context, though they are never used with the immediate discourse topic. It should also be noted that in Shoshoni, nouns do not require demonstratives or some other determiner, so that nouns may often occur alone without any kind of determiner (such as articles, demonstratives, or possessives). In these cases, nouns have to be determined in context.

One other characteristic feature of Shoshoni syntax different from English is that in running discourse, subjects of sentences are often omitted if they are understood in context. This is especially the case if the subject is the ongoing topic of the discourse. In Shoshoni poetry songs, the subject is often presumed as the topic even though it hasn’t been mentioned at all, so the subject is often omitted altogether because it is understood in the context of the song.

THE SHOSHONI ALPHABET AND SOUND SYSTEM

We write Shoshoni with the following letters, all of which are from the Roman alphabet except for the last:

A  AI  E  HI  K  KW  M  N  O  P  S  T  TS  U  W  Y  ’

The Roman alphabet is used to write many languages in the world including English, German, Spanish, Italian, Navajo, Turkish, Vietnamese, Mayan languages, and many others. In each language, the letters often represent different sounds. For example, the letter p in Shoshoni represents a sound different from the p in English, which is also different from the p in Spanish. What this means is that the letters in Shoshoni have their own values and Shoshoni words are pronounced in their own way, not like in English or in any other language.

The one letter that isn’t part of the Roman alphabet is ’, which represents a consonant called the glottal stop. English doesn’t write the glottal stop at all. But many languages such as Arabic and Hebrew do, and when these languages are written with Roman letters they use ’ for the glottal...
stop. It occurs only in the middle of Shoshoni words and is like the gap where the hyphen is in English oh-oh. E.g.:

- wa’ippe ‘woman’
- so’o ‘cheek’
- ka’i ‘forehead’
- mo’o ‘hand’

The six vowels in Shoshoni, a, i, u, o, ai and e, can be short or long. If they are long, they are written double and are pronounced holding the vowel about twice as long as the corresponding short vowel. Thus, short a is pronounced like the a in English father (e.g., ata ‘uncle’), and the long aa is pronounced the same way but held twice as long (e.g., ohaa ‘baby’). The short i is pronounced as the vowel sound in English eat or peep (e.g., itsappe ‘coyote’), and long ii is pronounced the same way but held twice as long (e.g., siippeh ‘urine’). The short u is pronounced as the vowel sound in English rule or suit (e.g., punku ‘horse’), and the long uu is pronounced the same way but held twice as long (e.g., huuppi(n) ‘stick’). The short o is pronounced somewhat like the vowel sound in English horse but articulated with the tongue slightly lower and with the mouth more open (e.g., tommo ‘winter’, so’o ‘cheek’), and the long oo is pronounced the same way but held twice as long (e.g., tooppeh ‘cloud’, oo(n) ‘leg’).

The Shoshoni vowel written with e is rare in English, only occurring in a few words, for example, the vowel in just, in one pronunciation of “he just left.” It is pronounced like the u except without any lip rounding (e.g., teheya ‘deer’). Long ee is pronounced the same way but held twice as long (e.g., kweettsi ‘wife’, peeppi(n) ‘blood’).

The vowel written ai usually can be pronounced in two ways, either like the vowel sound in English ate or bait, or like English I or the vowel sound in bite. Some people may say ai one way one time and the other way another time, and some people may say a particular word with ai only one way while others may say it in the other way. And in different dialects of Shoshoni a given word with ai may usually be pronounced one way or the other. A few words are only spoken with the vowel as in English ate, in which case we write it with an underlined ai, and a few words seem to be pronounced only with the vowel as in English I, but most words with ai may be pronounced either way depending on the individual speaker or dialect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Like English ate</th>
<th>Like English I</th>
<th>Like English ate or I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>painkwí ‘fish’</td>
<td>haintseh ‘friend’</td>
<td>aiti ‘gun’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hajwi ‘dove’</td>
<td>haih ‘crow’</td>
<td>taipo ‘Caucasian’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aíte(n) ‘this’</td>
<td>akai ‘salmon’</td>
<td>aípi(n) ‘chalky clay’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the vowel ai is long, it is written aai as in the following words:

- maaijíkuh ‘OK; now’
- naaijíwí ‘play handgame’
Some Shoshoni words have vowel clusters. When vowels come together like this, each is pronounced the same as when alone. E.g.:

- mea ‘moon’
- tokoa ‘snake’
- tei ‘friend’
- hupia ‘poetry song’
- tua ‘child’
- puih ‘eye’

Many consonants (i.e., k, kw, m, n, p, t, and ts) in Shoshoni can be single or double (although h, s, w, y, and ’ are never double). When consonants are single, they can occur at the beginning or in the middle of words. When they are double, they only occur in the middle. Single consonants at the beginning of words are pronounced as in English except that k, kw, p, and t don’t have any aspiration or puff of air after them as the corresponding English consonants usually do at the beginning of words.

However, in the middle of words single k, kw, p, t, and ts are normally voiced, pronounced with the vocal chords vibrating. So, in the middle of the following words, k sounds like English g, kw like English gw, p like English b, t like English d, and ts like English dz.

- nankahi ‘listen’
- painkwi ‘fish’
- nampai ‘foot’
- kentu ‘yesterday’
- wantsi ‘buck antelope’

In the middle of the words above, the consonants are preceded by nasals. When k, kw, p, t, and ts are between two vowels, they are not only voiced but also softened, having a fricative or spirant quality, meaning the air is not stopped completely in their pronunciation (much like some consonants in Spanish). So, k and kw sound like Spanish g and gu between vowels, p sounds a little like English v but more like Spanish b between vowels, t more like a single Spanish r between vowels, and ts like English z. In the words below, the consonants between vowels are pronounced in this softened manner.

- sokopi ‘earth’
- okwaite ‘stream’
- tepa” ‘pinenut’
- satee ‘dog’
- tatsa ‘summer’

Double consonants kk, kkw, mm, nn, pp, tt, and tts only occur in the middle of words and are pronounced much like their English counterparts but held slightly longer as double consonants are in Italian. Single m, n, w, and y are pronounced like their English correspondents at the beginning of words and in the middle, although for some speakers m between vowels is also softened and so it is pronounced with the lips slightly open, more like a nasalized w.

The consonants s, t, ts, and tts change their pronunciation when following short i or long ii. Thus, after i or ii, s sounds like English sh, t like th
in English the, *ts* like English *j*, and *tts* like English *ch*. In the words below *s*, *t*, *ts*, and *tts* have these special pronunciations after the *i*.

| *pisippeh* | 'rotten' |
| *pits* | 'breast' |
| *pite* | 'arrive' |
| *kuittseh* | 'throat' |

Shoshoni words may end in four distinctive ways, either in (1) a final vowel, (2) a final *-n*, (3) a final *-h*, or (4) a final *-"*. Each of these word endings have differing effects. When words end in a final vowel, the initial consonants *k*, *kw*, *p*, *t*, and *ts* of following words are softened, exactly as described above when they occur between vowels in the middle of words. So, for example, when the noun-incorporating verb *pa'i* 'have' is added to words ending in a vowel (e.g., *kahni* 'house', *punku* 'horse', *mukua* 'soul', and *mo'oo* 'hand'), the *p* is softened, sounding like Spanish *b* between vowels. E.g.:

- *kahni pa'i* 'have a house'
- *mukuapa'i* 'have a soul'
- *punkupa'i* 'have a horse'
- *mo'opa'i* 'have a hand'

Also, when the word *kuppa* 'inside, in' follows another word ending in a vowel, its *k* is softened, sounding like Spanish *g* between vowels. E.g.:

- *kahni kuppa* 'inside the house'
- *wittua kuppa* 'in the bucket/drum'
- *tempai kuppa* 'in the mouth'
- *hupa kuppa* 'in the broth'

Similarly, when the word *tukka*(n) 'under, below' follows a word ending in a vowel, its *t* is softened. After *i* it sounds like *th* in English the and after other vowels like a single Spanish *r* between vowels. E.g.:

- *kahni tukka* 'under the house'
- *wittua tukka* 'under a bucket/drum'
- *tempai tukka* 'under the mouth'
- *punku tukka* 'under the horse'
- *mo'oo tukka* 'under your hand'

Words ending in final *-n* lose the *-n* completely when spoken in isolation or at the end of a phrase or sentence, and also before the consonants *h*, *s*, *w*, and *y*. The final *-n* disappears in these situations altogether. For example, the word *e(n)* 'you, your' has a final *-n*, which disappears altogether in the examples below.

| *e* | 'you, your' |
| *e wika* | 'your blanket' |
| *e hupia* | 'your song' |
| *e yantu(n)* | 'your winnowing tray' |
| *e sappeh* | 'your stomach' |

The final *-n* appears if the word is in the middle of a phrase and if the next word begins with *k*, *kw*, *n*, *t*, or *ts*. E.g.:

- *en kahni* 'your house'
- *en nampeh* 'your shoe'
- *en kwehe* 'your wife'
- *en tsuhni* 'your bone'
- *en tami* 'your younger brother'
A later use of the *yantu* ‘winnowing basket’ was for winnowing wheat, that is, separating the chaff from the kernels. In the early twentieth century, elderly women went from grain field to grain field on the reservation gathering leftover wheat kernels for their own use. Photograph from the Earl Crum collection.

However, the final -n becomes an m when the next word begins with m or p. E.g.:

em mo’o ‘your hand’  em papi ‘your older brother’

Also, compare the pronunciation of the word *yantu(n)* ‘winnowing basket’, ending in final -n. When said in isolation or at the end of a phrase or sentence, it is *yantu*, without the final -n. But the -n appears in *yantun kuppa* ‘in the winnowing basket’ and *yantun tukka* ‘under the winnowing basket’, and it becomes -m in *yantumpa’i* ‘have a winnowing basket’.

When a word ends with final -h, the vowel before it is normally voiceless or whispered. In the following words the vowel before the -h is always whispered.

| isampeh     | ‘liar’       | maaikkuh | ‘OK; now’     |
| e’attsih    | ‘sore’       | ta’wah   | ‘flour’       |
| tipoh       | ‘table’      | kwippeh  | ‘smoke’       |

Final -h also influences the pronunciation of following k, kw, p, and t. Normally, the *hk, hkw, hp*, and *ht* combinations merge forming single voiceless fricatives. For example, when a p follows h, the two sounds merge to make a sound that is somewhat like the English f, phonetically a [ø].
example, when the noun-incorporating verb *pa’i* ‘have’ follows the words *ahtahpeh*, *e’attsih*, and *tipoh*, all ending in final -h, the *hp* combination is pronounced as [φ]. E.g.:

- *ahtahpehpa’i* ‘have a jaw’
- *e’attsihpa’i* ‘have a sore’
- *tipohpa’i* ‘have a table’

Similarly, *h+k* and *h+kw* become phonetically [x] and [xw], respectively. The [x] is the same as the sound spelled ch in German as in nacht ‘night’. Also, *h+t* becomes [θ], the same as th in English thin, if the vowel preceding the *h* is *i*; otherwise, *h+t* is pronounced like a voiceless [R]. E.g.:

- *haih kuppa* ‘in a raven’
- *e’attsih kuppa* ‘in a sore’
- *tipoh kuppa* ‘under a raven’
- *tipoh tupka* ‘under a table’

Some Shoshoni words end in final -". This -" is not a normal consonant having a pronunciation of its own, but rather it has the effect of causing the first consonant of a following word to be doubled if it is *k, kw, m, n, p, t,* or *ts*. Thus, when *pa’i* ‘have’ is added to the words *kuna”* ‘firewood’, *kwee”* ‘wife’, *tua”* ‘son’, and *tepa”* ‘pinenuts’, the *p* of *pa’i* is doubled.

- *kunappa’i* ‘have firewood’
- *kweeppa’i* ‘have a wife’
- *tuappa’i* ‘have a son’
- *tepappa’i* ‘have pinenuts’

Similarly, the *k* of *kuppa* and the *t* of *tukka* are doubled after these words. E.g.:

- *kunakkuppa* ‘inside firewood’
- *kweekkuppa* ‘inside of a wife’
- *tuakkuppa* ‘in a son’
- *tepakkuppa* ‘inside pinenuts’
- *kunattukka* ‘under firewood’
- *kweettukka* ‘under a wife’
- *tuattukka* ‘under a son’
- *tepattukka* ‘under a pinenut tree’

**Special Poetry Song Language**

The language in poetry songs may differ substantially from ordinary speech in a number of ways. Grammatically the songs are usually attenuated in that case suffixes on nouns and adjectives are often not marked, verbs usually have no or very few tense, aspect, and adverbial suffixes, and determiners like demonstratives are almost never used. And normal word orders may change. Thus, normal subject-object-verb order may become subject-verb-object order, or even more commonly the subject is not mentioned at all but is either understood or left for listeners to interpret for themselves. In some cases, normal noun phrase–plus-postposition order may become preposition-plus–noun phrase order, and sometimes the postposition is omitted altogether.
The diminutive-affectionate suffix -ttsi often used on nouns and adjectives is usually changed to -ntsi in poetry songs. It commonly indicates special emphasis denoting endearment, high esteem, reverence, affection, and warm feelings, as well as the notion of smallness. In both poetry songs and ordinary speech, Shoshonis often add the suffix to nouns to express their warm feelings for things in nature like yehn(e)ttsi ‘porcupine’, yaha(ttsi) ‘ground hog’, and kw’inaa(ttsi) ‘bird’, and for domestic animals like satee(ttsi) ‘dog’ and punku(ttsi) ‘horse’.

Poetry songs are also distinguished by the use of many obscure or obsolete words that are not used in ordinary speech and which many people do not know or understand, although some of the unique poetry song words may be understood in the context of the songs. However, sometimes even the singer doesn’t know their meaning.

Other words like hainna, hainneh, haainna, hainah, hainai, nai, yanna, ho, and noowaineh are song words without meaning used to fill in and complement the rhythm and cadence, although some are also used somewhat like mantras to bless or make sacred the situation in which they are sung. And finally, sometimes haiya wainna and also less commonly yaaya wainna are used by singers at the end of songs to bless them, making them sacred.

In addition, many ordinary words used in poetry songs undergo various degrees of change in pronunciation. The most typical changes are described and illustrated below. One common change is that nasals pop into ordinary words, especially replacing the first consonant of an identical consonant cluster. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>song word</th>
<th>ordinary word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>waimpentsi</td>
<td>wa’ippe(ttsi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuantsi</td>
<td>tuattsii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huumpi</td>
<td>huupp(n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waanka(n)</td>
<td>waakka(n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huintaantsi</td>
<td>huittsaa(ttsi)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Often geminate or double consonants between vowels become single, and therefore voiced. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>song word</th>
<th>ordinary word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>potoo(n)</td>
<td>potto(n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waaka(n)</td>
<td>waakka(n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tepana</td>
<td>teppanna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ss between vowels often become ts, phonetically [z]. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>song word</th>
<th>ordinary word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>watsempi(n)</td>
<td>waseppi(n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>totsa”</td>
<td>tosa”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Glottal stops almost always disappear. For example:
waimpentsi < wa’ippe(ttsi) ‘woman’
patui < pato’ih ‘wade’
toi < to’ih ‘emerge, go out, come up’
pomia < pomii’ah ‘migrate’

Short vowels become long, even extra long, in syllables where the note is held. For example:

yoti(i) < yoti” ‘fly, arise (pl)’
opii < opi ‘there about’
potto(n) < potto(n) ‘grinding stone’

Vowel clusters are often broken with semivowels intervening. For example:

wiya < wia ‘mountain pass’
mukuwa < mukua ‘soul’

All of these changes in pronunciation are used to make the song words more melodious and rhythmical.

In the pages that follow, the poetry songs are first presented in the original Shoshoni, then a figurative English translation is given, followed by the Shoshoni again but this time with an interlinear literal word-by-word translation. We give both figurative and literal translations to accomplish two sometimes contradictory goals. The figurative translation is given in an attempt to capture a sense of the poetic beauty of the Shoshoni lyrics, while the interlinear word-by-word translation is given so the reader can see exactly what the Shoshoni words say literally, even if they may not make (aesthetic) sense in English. After each of the poetry songs and their translations, we then make short comments about particular aspects of the songs.

After all the poetry songs are presented, there follows a Shoshoni to English glossary containing several thousand Shoshoni words with their English translations, as well as grammatical information such as parts of speech, paradigmatic forms, and irregularities. Then, an English to Shoshoni glossary is given.

If readers wish to know more about the Shoshoni language, they should consult Crapo 1976, Crum and Dayley 1993, and Miller 1996. They might also consult informative works on two closely related languages: Panamint (Dayley 1989a, 1989b) and Comanche (Charney 1993; Robinson and Armagost 1990). The most important works on Shoshoni culture and ethnology are Harris 1940, Steward 1938, and Thomas, Pendleton, and Cappannari 1986. Vennum’s article (1986) on Great Basin music is a good introduction to the kinds of music found among aboriginal Great Basin
Problems in Translating the Poetry Songs

Translating from one language to another is never easy. It is impossible to capture all the meaning(s) in a given linguistic expression in one language in translating to another. Any linguistic expression always has several layers of meaning expressed simultaneously depending on a whole range of factors such as: (1) the literal meanings of each word in a sentence and then the literal interpretation of the whole sentence; (2) how the words and sentence are interpreted given the context of the immediately preceding discourse in the given social situation in which the discourse occurs; (3) the cultural setting, lifeway, and world view of the people using the language; and (4) the things alluded to metaphorically, humorously, satirically, and ironically given the entire cultural, social, linguistic, and discourse context. Not only is there a problem in expressing all the meaning in translation, but there is also the problem of capturing the aesthetics or beauty of a linguistic expression in one language in translating to another. This problem is magnified immensely when translating from a language used in a cultural context vastly different from the one in which the target language is normally spoken.

As noted earlier, the traditional Shoshoni lifeway was one of a hunting and gathering society in which the people lived intimately tied to nature, very different from modern Western society with its elaborate social institutions and technology which actually distance people a great deal from the natural world. Shoshoni poetry songs are most often about nature and the people’s warm and intimate feelings about the plants, animals, and the geographical terrain in which the Shoshoni lived. So, often a certain amount of meaning contained in the poetry songs is lost in the English translation, since people speaking English as their native language usually no longer live so closely tied to nature nor feel the intimacy with it that a people with a hunting and gathering lifeway do.

For example, the Shoshoni words in song 52, *Tamme Yampa Sateettsi*, offer a lighthearted picture for native listeners, but the words in the English translation, ‘Our Wild Carrot Pet’, sound flat. In Shoshoni, the word *sateettsi* can mean either ‘little dog’ or ‘pet’, but in the context of this bear dance song, the word is normally interpreted by native speakers as a bear that hung around in the wild carrot fields when the people were harvesting *yampa*, ‘wild carrots’, an important staple food source in the Shoshoni diet. In fact, *yampa* was a favorite food for the Shoshoni and a number of poetry songs make reference to it. In times past, the Shoshoni camped in places where the wild
carrots grew, and their campsites were surrounded by various curious animals. *Tamme Yampa Sateetsi* was probably one such animal. Nowadays, most modern Americans have probably never even heard of wild carrots.

Translating the Shoshoni of the poetry songs can be particularly difficult for other reasons as well: (1) often obscure and obsolete words are open to interpretation; (2) the imagery is open to interpretation; and (3) there are levels of meaning invoked on the literal level as well as on the spiritual level. In fact, some poetry songs can have different interpretations even by native speakers. For example, song 27 presented here, entitled *Oyon Tempi* ‘Every Rock’, has two completely different interpretations. The two different interpretations are possible because the song contains words that are not used in ordinary language but are similar to different everyday words with completely different meanings. As is the case with speakers of all languages, every speaker carries a mental dictionary in their heads, but when they hear words of their own language that they don’t know, they automatically attempt to decode them in the best way they can, given the context. However, this process doesn’t always result in the same outcome.

So, the English translations presented here may not capture all of the possible interpretations of the poetry songs, or their aesthetic beauty as experienced by native speakers hearing them in Shoshoni. The important thing is for one to allow the poetry songs to invoke a sense of the wonder and sacredness of the world we live in.

**Note**

1. Judith Vander, in her book *Songprints* (1988) on five Eastern Shoshoni women singers from the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming, lists fourteen different genres of Shoshoni songs. They include all of the ones we have noted except bear dance songs, which either do not occur with the Eastern Shoshoni or she simply didn’t record any. Also, she lists *natayaa* songs as ghost dance songs, but *natayaa hupia* are very traditional songs long predating the ghost dance revival movement in the nineteenth century. Vander also lists sun dance songs, called *takowene hupia* ‘standing thirsty songs’ in Shoshoni, but not practiced in the Western Shoshoni area, and crow hop songs, an intertribal genre sung in some pow-wows under the influence of Plains Indian culture. She also notes other Shoshoni genres such as hymns sung in Christian congregations, country and western songs, and “forty-nine” (love) songs. These are all nontraditional songs sung in English. Vander also lists lullabies and children’s songs as genres of the Eastern Shoshoni. The Western Shoshoni do not have children’s songs as a separate genre, and lullabies are individual songs made up by mothers on the spot singing to their own children, so they are not culture-wide songs among the Western Shoshoni but rather individual creations. Vander also has a book entirely devoted to Shoshoni ghost dance songs (1997).


