John P. Harrington's Phonetic Representations of
Obispeño Chumash Palatal Consonants

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John P. Harrington worked with the last speaker of Obispeño Chumash, Mrs. Rosario Cooper of Arroyo Grande, California, first in a brief encounter in the middle of 1912, and then during longer field sessions in 1914, 1915, and 1916. During this same period, he was desperately trying to salvage all the information he could from several speakers of other Chumash languages, notably Fernando Librado, and could not spend as much time with Mrs. Cooper as he probably would have liked. In his work with Mrs. Cooper, he employed his usual method at this time of taking down field information quickly on full-size sheets of foolscap, then slipfiling and cross-referencing it at what one might (if it were not Harrington we were dealing with) call his leisure; i.e. during those times when he was unable to be actively in the field collecting more information.

We have no evidence which comes for certain from Harrington's first brief contact with Mrs. Cooper in 1912. We have thousands of slipfiles (representing hundreds of cross-referenced lexical and grammatical items) from the 1914 and 1915 field trips (the originals were either destroyed or lost). There is also a bundle of several thousand foolscap sheets of forms collected in 1916, but never slipfiled. In this paper I wish to do no more than point out one feature of the orthography of Obispeño which I believe to be unique or nearly so in Harrington's—or anyone’s—inventory of phonetic symbols.

All Chumash languages have palatal consonants: [ʃ] and [χ] (plain, aspirated, glottalized) are common to all dialects. But only Obispeño has in addition a sound which I have decided to write [tʲ] ("palatalized t"). Before coming to Obispeño, Harrington had been working with Ventureño and Cruzeño; in neither would he have encountered "palatalized t". Nor did I expect to encounter such a sound when I began working with Obispeño in the early 1970s.
As I began copying out Mrs. Cooper's words from the 1914-15 slipfiles, I encountered what I thought were variant representations of the palatal affricate [tʃ], and I transliterated them as such. The variants look like this: [tʃ-], [tʃ]. Additionally, in the 1916 notes, for [tʃ-], he sometimes wrote [tʃ] (see above, where I have adopted this practice).

Soon, however, as I proceeded to analyze the forms and to attempt to proto-Chumash reconstructions, I began to encounter problems which made such reconstructions of the stop series virtually impossible. So I went back to the notes (the 1916 ones are particularly helpful here), and it suddenly struck me that Harrington had indeed intended to differentiate between two sounds by writing the top loop of the "long s" at two different heights. Perhaps Harrington developed this orthographically minimal pair to satisfy some aesthetic consideration; two sounds which were barely distinguishable auditorily ought to be visually similar as well. [tʃ] stood (as one would expect) for [tʃ]; [tʃ] stood for [tʃ]. Armed with this insight, I tackled the cognate sets again, and they mostly fell into place.

It turned out, moreover, that Harrington sometimes recorded a variant of the [tʃ] ("t-short long s") with the digraph [ks] or [kʃ]. Further comparative analysis led to the hypothesis that Mrs. Cooper was reporting forms from two dialects of Obispeño, something never before noted in the literature. (This hypothesis has, happily, been given support from the genealogical research of John Johnson and the marriage network research of Chester King; a fuller statement on this is forthcoming.)

Although it is difficult to demonstrate it here without being able to photographically reproduce samples of the slipfiles and original fieldnotes, I would like to say that the amount of rechecking Harrington did of these forms in succeeding years suggests that his ear was not at all accustomed to such fine palatal gradations, not only because of a possible prejudice produced as a result of his previous intensive field experience with other Chumash dialects; but because of the rich dialect variants he was unknowingly recording within Obispeño itself. And there are enough inconsistencies in the recordings from each of the three years to make it apparent that he never became entirely comfortable with the sounds. Unfortunately, Mrs. Cooper died in 1917, and Harrington was not able to continue sorting the palatal consonants out. A brief grammatical sketch of Obispeño (date unknown) in a fair copy in Harrington's hand (presumably done to convince his Smithsonian superiors that he was doing productive and publishable research) shows many inconsistencies.
Much remains yet to be done in the historical phonology of Chumash dialects. Harrington's attempt to represent honestly what he heard has, despite some remaining confusion, led already to the discovery of two dialects where only one had been known previously, and has enabled us to posit that proto-Chumash had two palatal/front velar stops (I call them *k₁ and *k₂). This is testimony to the value of Harrington's nitpicking perfectionism; and also a caveat for the rest of us to beware of assuming that something is inconsequential simply because it is idiosyncratic.²

Notes

1. This paper has been exhaustively rewritten since the Harrington Conference in June 1992. The oral presentation was accompanied by a hefty set of photocopies which could not be reproduced here. The overall intent and conclusions remain unchanged.

2. At the Harrington Conference, Alice Anderton's paper (q.v.) alluded to a similarly confused situation for the representation of palatal and retroflex consonants in Kitanemük. In a note which I received shortly after the Conference, Bill Bright commented that he recalled that in Harrington's Juaneño/Luiseño notes a similarly confused situation obtained. It is easy to assume that because of Harrington's later reputation for accuracy, we can always rely implicitly upon his transcriptions. I think we must temper this judgment with what we actually know of his inconsistencies and difficulties in these early years. In this way, his recordings become even more valuable as unique records of Native languages.
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THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED TO

Professor Margaret Langdon

ON THE OCCASION OF HER RETIREMENT

We are grateful to Dr. John C. Saebo, Dr. Freda Conklin, and Professor Vincent Croll for organizing the Hokan-Penutian Languages Conference. We are grateful to Professor Victor Croll of Humboldt State University for organizing the J. P. Harrington Conference. Likewise, we are grateful to the Museum of Natural History, Santa Barbara, its director, and its staff for making the conferences an enjoyable experience.

As noted on the dedication page, this volume is dedicated to Professor Margaret Langdon of the University of California, San Diego, on the occasion of her retirement. We have heard her speaking about Tumaxa studies for many years. With her encouragement, the Tumaxa Language Archive at UCMS and organized the first three of the Hokan-Penutian Languages Conferences, which were held at the beginning of the Tumaxa Languages Workshops. She has also engaged all-known linguists who specialized in Tumaxa studies. Her work is the foundation of Tumaxa and Tumaxa have benefitted from all. She has been patient, kind, and helpful to us all. We look forward to seeing the publication of the fourth Hokan-Penutian Languages Conference.

To a great friend, scholar, and fellow, we all say, "Thanks, Margaret, and keep moving on like the wind in Tumaxa Studies."

BY THE MEMBERS OF

THE HOKAN-PENUTIAN LANGUAGES CONFERENCE

FOR

HER MANY IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO YUMAN STUDIES

AND FOR

HER ENCOURAGEMENT AND HELP TO ALL OF US.
PREFACE

The 1992 Hokan-Penutian Languages Conference was organized by the Department of Linguistics at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and held at the Museum of Natural History, Santa Barbara, June 27, 1993. The J. P. Harrington Conference was held at the Museum of Natural History, Santa Barbara, June 24-26, 1993. Professor Victor Golla organized the J. P. Harrington Conference.

Presenters from both these groups were invited to submit papers for inclusion in the 1992 Hokan-Penutian volume. Papers from both these groups are included in the volume. The papers appear here in the order that they occurred on the programs. Unfortunately, some papers from these conferences could not be included in this volume. All the papers except the last one were given at one of the conferences. The last paper was to be presented at the Hokan-Penutian Languages Conference, but a family emergency prevented the author from presenting it.

We are grateful to the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Professor Marianne Mithun for organizing the Hokan-Penutian Languages Conference. We are grateful to Professor Victor Golla of Humboldt State University for organizing the J. P. Harrington Conference. Likewise, we are most grateful to the Museum of Natural History, Santa Barbara, its director, and its staff for hosting the conferences and making our stay in Santa Barbara most enjoyable.

As noted on the dedication page, this volume is dedicated to Professor Margaret Langdon of the University of California, San Diego, on the occasion of her retirement. She has been the guiding spirit behind Yuman Studies for some two decades. She established the Yuman Languages Archives at UCSD and organized the first three of the Hokan-Penutian Languages Conferences, which were called at the beginning the Yuman Languages Workshops. She has trained a number of well-known linguists who specialize in Yuman Studies. Her work in historical studies of Yuman and Hokan have benefited us all. She has been adviser, confidant, and helper of us all. We look forward to seeing the publication of the research she is still doing on Yuman.

To a gracious lady, scholar, and friend, we all say: "Thanks, Margaret, and keep on showing us the way in Yuman Studies."

James E. Redden, Editor

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Born Margaret Storms in Flemish-speaking Leuven, Belgium, she lived her first five years there, and then moved with her family to Brussels, where her father worked for the National City Bank of New York. Margaret was probably bilingual in French and Flemish early on, but she remembers coming home after her first day in a French-speaking Brussels kindergarten and announcing, "I'm through speaking that other language!" Having realized that children who spoke Flemish were laughed at, she left the language behind her, and spoke only French as her everyday language until she was an adult. French too was to be traded in later on for her adult language, English.

At age 14, Margaret's young life was shattered by World War II. Margaret's mother was killed by a cerebral hemorrhage, and she left the hospital on the very day the Germans marched into Brussels. Margaret's only sister, who was six years younger, was sent to live with their teacher's sister in the country.