

**REVIEW OF A GRAMMAR OF KULUNG
(LANGUAGES OF THE GREATER HIMALAYAN
REGION 4), BY GERARD J. TOLSMA,
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This grammar describes Kulung, a Rāi language spoken by approximately 15,000 people in some ten villages in the Solu Khumbu district in eastern Nepal. The Kulung language is classified as a Central Kiranti language.

The book starts out with a short introduction to the Kulung language and its speakers, which clearly maps out the area in which the language is spoken and briefly describes a number of dialectal differences observed by the author. The introduction also touches upon traditional Kulung foodstuffs and mentions some important myths and rituals. The chapters that follow present the author's understanding of the Kulung language, divided into discussions on the phonology, nominal categories, verb stem morphology, verbal affixes, compound verbs, subordination, verbal derivation, non-finite verbal constructions, subordinators, mood and grammatical particles.

The Kulung phonological array can be briefly characterised as containing eight vowels and eleven diphthongs, distinguishing vowel length. There are three series of stops: dorso-velar, dental and labial, all having an unaspirated voiceless, aspirated voiceless, and unaspirated voiced variant. Besides this, there are three voiced nasals, four approximants, one trill, a fricative and three affricates.

The section on nominal categories distinguishes nouns, adjectives and personal pronouns. Kulung is described as having thirteen cases: absolutive, ergative, instrumental, genitive, vocative, comitative, ablative, elative, mediative and four different locative cases. Personal

pronouns differ for singular, dual and plural number, with a distinction between inclusive and exclusive in the first person. Possessive pronouns appear as prefixes that may appear before the noun they modify. Adjectives generally precede the noun they modify and many adjectives are formed by the addition of an affix to a verb stem.

Kulung verbal morphology is characterised by complex pronominalisation and paradigmatically conditioned stem alternations. A distinction is made between six intransitive, seven transitive and three reflexive conjugations. The affixes of the intransitive, transitive and reflexive paradigms are the same in all conjugations. A Kulung finite verb consists of a verb stem to which up to three affixes may be added. These affixes may indicate tense, person, number and negation, and distinguish between inclusive vs. exclusive. The compound verbs discussed in the grammar consist of a first verb stem and a second verb stem. The second verb stem adds a semantic notion to the main verb and is referred to as the auxiliary. The author distinguishes between the telic (stressing completion), inceptive, momentaneous, intermediate, continuous, durative, perseverative, benefactive, downward, upward, horizontal, dimittive (denoting direction away from the speaker), itive (stressing completion), notive (indicating knowledge or understanding), abilitive, velocitive (denoting quick performance) and tardive (denoting late performance) auxiliaries.

The chapter on subordination focuses on the general subordinating suffix *-kə*, the usage of which is ubiquitous in the language. Other topics described in the remaining part of the grammar are verbal derivation, gerunds, the imperative, supine and the infinitive, as well as several other frequently used subordinators and grammatical particles.

Apart from the grammatical analysis, which comprises nearly a hundred and fifty pages, the book contains twenty pages of sample texts, almost thirty pages of verbal paradigms, a fifty-page Kulung-English glossary, and several page-filling diagrams which provide a clear overview of Kulung kinship terminology.

The data for this descriptive analysis of the Kulung language were collected by the author during four fieldtrips conducted over a period of four years, from 1992 to 1995, in the village of Cheskā̄m. The linguistic data was collected by conducting interviews with language consultants and supplemented by information which was obtained outside the

interview situation, such as word lists, paradigms, native lore, personal stories and conversations. The research for this book was carried out as part of the Himalayan Languages Project of Leiden University, which advocates a strong focus on describing a language in its own terms, using analytical techniques based on structuralist traditions.

The book is written in an analytical and concise style, with a strong focus on the essential. The author keeps to the point, which makes the book highly readable and for the most part this style is refreshing. Occasionally, the prose is somewhat matter-of-fact, leaving the reader anxious for more detail or precision. Some of the grammatical particles, for example, would merit a more detailed discussion of the expressed meanings. The discussion of Kulung phonology might also benefit from a more generous treatment of some interesting features, such as vowel length.

In general, the extensive fieldwork carried out by the author is clearly reflected in the linguistic description. Throughout the book, the concepts presented by the author are illustrated with examples. In some cases, the author summarises the original context in which the example sentences were used, which is useful as it helps the reader to interpret and understand both the example sentences and the points raised, thus adding an extra dimension to the grammatical description. The author has a good command of the Nepali language and points out the influence of Nepali wherever this seems appropriate. The author was originally trained in comparative Indo-European linguistics, as is reflected in occasional remarks of comparative-historical interest pertaining to aspects of the Kulung and other Kiranti or Tibeto-Burman languages.

This study into the Kulung grammar is based on Tolsma's doctoral dissertation, which was successfully defended in 1999 at Leiden University. The work remained unpublished for seven years, until it was prepared for publication in 2006. This is to be commended, because with this introduction into the reality of the Kulung language, Gerard Tolsma offers us a lucid linguistic monograph that is of lasting scientific interest.

