

A GRAMMAR
OF THE
KACHIN LANGUAGE,

BY

la
REV. O. HANSON.
"

34736



RANGOON.
AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSION PRESS,
F. D. PHINNEY, SUPT.

1896

D. T. FRONT

3

PL

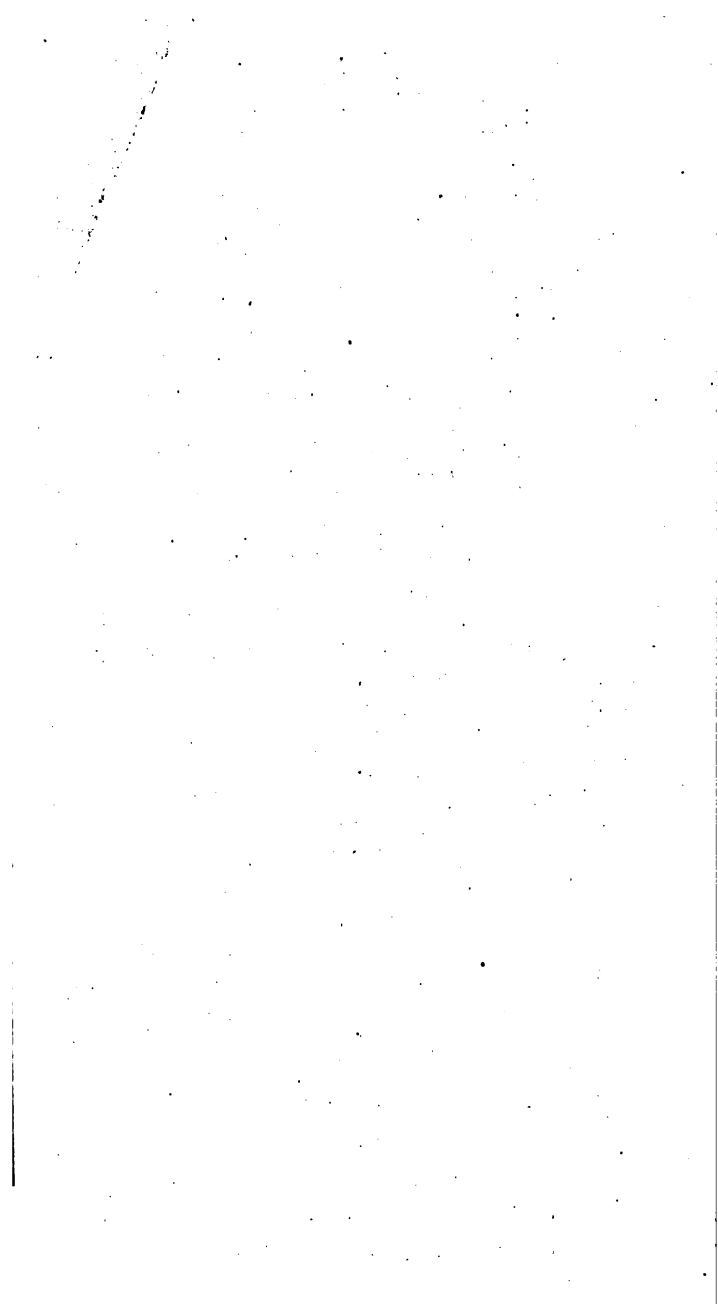
4001

.K3

H25

1896a

672887-140



PL4001
.K3H3
copy/2

9559G
1548

6
Copy.....

PREFACE.

This attempt to explain the laws of the Kachiu language does not pretend to be exhaustive in all its details. Neither do we wish to be dogmatical upon any of the numerous points, where further investigation no doubt will throw new light. All the help at present available has been utilized, but owing to the great uncertainty that ever where confronts us, any one attempting a work like this must to a great extent rely solely upon his own judgment.

The system of writing employed is that adopted by the Government of India, to which has been added a few explanatory notes. No alphabet adapted to the needs of an alien tongue will ever do full justice to the same, and it has grown into and become one with the language itself.

In spelling and pronunciation we have mostly relied upon the opinions of such Kachins as have been able for some time to use the system employed. Some of the Kachin sounds are extremely difficult for a European ear to get correctly. Where a number of educated Kachins agree upon a given point, their judgment can as a rule be relied upon and followed.

The Southern Kachin, or Chiungpaw, as spoken in the Bhamo district has been taken as our basis. Still we have everywhere attempted to call attention to the differences both in pronunciation and idiomatic usages, found in different localities. All we hope is that this work may prove a guide to further study of this difficult but interesting dialect.

O. H.

Bhamo, May, 1896.



KACHIN GRAMMAR.

INTRODUCTION.

1. The Kachin, or more properly the Jinghpaw or Chinghpaw, language, comprises one of the branches of the great Mongolian family. In its nature and genius it is strictly monosyllabic, but many indications are at hand to show that it has entered upon its agglutinative stage. Its Grammar agrees in the main with the rest of the dialects belonging to the same stock, and its vocabulary presents a strong relationship with Burmese, Shan and Chinese. Other dialects kindred to Kachin are also spoken in Upper Burma, of which the most important are Märu and Atsi, the one known as Lashi being but a modification of the latter. The origin of these dialects would be an interesting subject in itself, but must as yet be regarded as undetermined.

2. The vocabulary in Kachin is not as meagre as has often been asserted. It must contain about 12,000 words, which is sufficient to express more than ordinary thought, and to describe almost any phenomenon in everyday life. Its grammar is remarkably full and even exact, and not without serious difficulties to a western mind. To think and speak as a Kachin is no easy matter, and the main trouble in understanding even ordinary Kachin must be sought in the fact that the full force of their numerous particles and other grammatical peculiarities have not been sufficiently mastered.

3. The Kachins, never having been a literary people, being broken up into a great number of

tribes, clans and families, cannot be expected to agree with each other in all particulars regarding pronunciation or vocabulary. More or less important differences may be noticed in almost every village, or at least among every family and tribe. To treat of all these differences and peculiarities would be an endless and useless task. It will be necessary, however, to point out the general variations, characterizing and distinguishing the representative branches of the whole Kachin race.

4. For the sake of convenience, we will divide the whole Kachin race in upper Burma into three great divisions, which we will call, the Southern Chingpaws, the Cowries, and the Northern Chingpaws, without attempting any definite demarcation for either, and in a general outline notice the chief differences in their otherwise common language.

(1) *S. Chingpaw.*

Cowrie.

(a) Difference of vocabulary :

Dai, to be sharp ;	Jung.
Hkali, fever ;	Ara.
Müdi, to be moist ;	Ke.
Lüsi, to be lean ;	Mükhru.
Upreng, a quail ;	Gälik.
Anhté, we ;	I or i hteng.
Nanhté, you ;	Ni or ni hteng.
A, sign of the genitive ;	Ya or yé.
Ai, a general connective ;	Dé.

(b) Use of different performatives :

Bungli, work ;	Mangli.
Gintawng, the morning star ;	Kantawng.
Shingtai, a worm ;	Dungtai.
Nhtu, a sword ;	Ninghtu.
Nbung, wind ;	Mübung.

REM. The use of *ning* in Cowrie where the *S. Ching.* has *n*, is very common. The *n* should be considered an abbreviation of *ning*. Thus the Cowrie

would say *ninghtoi*, where the S. Ching. use *nhtoi*.

(c) Different use of aspirates and latials :

Hkyen, to cut jungle ;	Shen.
Hka, a river ;	Kha.
Mähkawn, a maiden ;	Mükhawn.
Hpun, wood ;	Pfun.
Hpan, to create ;	Pfan.
Pyaw, to feel happy ;	Praw.

REM. The use of the aspirates, just illustrated, which runs all through the Cowrie dialect, must be considered one of its chief characteristics.

(d) Different use of final letters and syllables :

Ma, a child ;	Mang.
Müsha, a person ;	Müshang.
Käbawng, to thirst ;	Käbum.
Mäjaw, because ;	Mäjoi.
Na, from ;	Nai.
Mälut, tobacco,	Mälawt.

(e) Use of Chinese words introduced into Cowrie :

Hking, a saddle ;	Shian.
Järit, food for a journey ;	Shizau.

(2) The differences between the S. and N. Chinghpaws are to a certain extent the same as those between the S. Chinghpaws and the Cowries. The Kachins north of Myitkyina, on both sides of the Irrawaddy, all have a tendency to use the final *ng* where the S. Chinghpaws would end in a vowel. The use of the pronouns also more often agree with the Cowrie, than with the S. Chinghpaw. Besides these, the following peculiarities may be noticed :

S. Chinghpaw.

N. Chinghpaw.

(a) Use of different words :

Tam, to seek ;	Bram.
Shüman, to bless ;	Kühtan.
Noihkrat, rubber ;	Günoi.
Shat mai, curry ;	Si.

Hpa, what ?

Hkai.

Gäde, how many ?

Gälaw.

REM. This list might be somewhat enlarged, but it should not be thought that these and similar words are unknown in different localities. No S. Chinghpaw would have any difficulty in understanding one from the North, even though his own idiomatic usage may be different.

(b) Different pronunciations of the same word;

Chyë, to know ; Chyoi or Chyeng.

(c) Different usage of the same word :

Ngawn, to rejoice, considered indecent by many of the N. Chinghpaws.

Num, a woman, considered disrespectful in some localities N. and also in certain cases by the S. Chinghpaws.

5. Words introduced from kindred dialects will naturally vary in different localities. Thus the word for taxes is generally *kanse* or *hkansi* in and around Bhamo. In the Mogaung district *hpunda* was often heard, and *kaptawk* seems to be confined to Myitkyina and surroundings. The words used to designate Government officials, for example, may be : *du ni* ; *agyi ni* ; *atsu ya ni* ; *hkun ni* or *jau ni*, all except the first being borrowed from the Burmese or Shan.

6. The same word, even in the same locality, may have different pronunciations. Thus *kakup*, a hat, may also be pronounced *lakup* ; *pungkum*, a chair, *lakum* ; *ulung*, a kind of root from which a yellow dye is extracted, *shalung* ; *shinglung* or *yanlung*. The general tendency is to interchange *l* and *m*, *j* and *sh*. Thus *lahkam* or *mahkam*, a trap ; *jahpawt* or *shahpawt*, a morning. Such peculiarities as, *mali mungli* or *bungli*, work ; *mala*, *minla* or *nunla*, a spirit, deserve attention, but do not appear to be very numerous.

7. In view of the great diversity and differences in pronunciation, it will not be insisted upon that the way an individual word is spelled in this work must correspond to its pronunciation by each and all of the Kachin tribes. The same must be said in regard to idiomatic usages. A very common idiom in one district may be very little used in another. Besides, the Kachins themselves distinguish between the "children's language" (*ma ga*); the language in everyday use (*maioi ga*); and the "language of the elders" (*salang ga*), and each may be said to have some distinct feature of its own. At present our only attempt is to present the general broad outlines of the language.

8. Some attention must here be paid to the religious, or the *nat*, language of the Kachins. The definite meaning of all the terms used in connection with the *nat* worship is not known to the average Kachin. All have a general idea as to their import, but only the "elders" (*salang ni*), the Nat-priests, (*dumsa ni*), the professional storytellers (*jai wa ni*), and the nat prophets (*myihtoi ni*), are able to give the full meaning of the words and phrases they employ. It is a great mistake to think that the long and tiresome rhapsodies, to which a visitor to a Kachin village may have an opportunity to listen, are all a meaningless jargon. Every word and sentence has some meaning. No doubt a large part of this vocabulary echoes reminiscences from an earlier date, and is antiquated so far as its daily use is concerned, but a still larger part is still in use, especially among "the elders" in conversation among themselves, or in general consultations. No one can have a comprehensive knowledge of Kachin without a fair understanding of this important and interesting part of the language.

9. The figurative and consequently, what we for want of a better term, may call the poetical

structure of the *nat* language is very marked. In connection with this the following points may be noticed :

(a) Employment of unusual terms. Thus, water, *ntsin*, is here called *dingru*; liquor, *jaru*, is called *hjang*; an egg, *udi*, is called *hkaklum*.

(b) Figurative names for common objects. Thus, water, *ntsin*, may be called *san hpungsan*, *li hpungnan* or *lam galu*; *jaru*, liquor, may be called *latnu salat*; *udi*, eggs, *bam bam*; *wa*, a hog, *mahkaw hkingyi*.

REM. Often different names are employed by the *dunsa*, *jai wa* and *myihtoi*. Thus *mahkaw hkingyi*, a hog, would by many be called *myihtoi ga*, "prophetical language", while a phrase such as *ji nna hpri nhpra*, "before the beginning" would be called *jai wa ga*, "the story letter's language."

(c) The *parallelismus membrorum*, or the attempt to unfold the same thought in two successive parallel members of the same division:

Shūlung māhtan yin nga ga ;
Shūla māhtan hpyin sa wa ga ;
Akawng ginugai ya du ga ;
Mārawn gindai ya pru ga ;

"Let us pass the Shūlung tree ;
Let us go by the Shūla tree ;
We will arrive at the low hill ;
Let us go forth to the high hill."

Hkauka ningshan mānau n rat,
Si myan uri hta gau n hkrat.

"Dancing on the sword's edge he is not
hurt,

Walking on a cotton thread, he does not
fall."

(d) In connection with the *parallelismus membrorum*, which is the most characteristic of the religious language, may also be noticed the use of couplets.

Wawri hpe māngawp; wawren hpe mākawp;
Lāmun lam wunli lan; lātsa lam wungau hpan.

Here *wawri*, a cold, has as its couplet *wawren*; *mākawp*, to protect, *māngawp*; *lāmun* and *lātsa*, a hundred; *wunli* and *wungau*, blessing, and *lan* and *hpan*, to create, are all couplets. A structure like the following is also very common :

Ja li la ni hpe, ngai gun ring ring,
Ja tsen ma ni hpe, ngai hpai ding ding.

"I take perfect care of golden youth,
I guard the golden maidenhood."

(e) A certain attempt to metre and also rhyme :

Tsingdu : "ngai nau nem,
Tsingman : ngai nau gyem,
Htaw Mātsaw ga n dap,
Ntsang ga n hkap."

10. It should not be supposed that every *nat* priest repeats the same formula *verbatim et literatim*, as his predecessors or associates in the profession. The general outline is the same everywhere; but the form of the vocabulary is left to a large extent to the choice of the *dumsa* himself. Thus here as everywhere else, it would be difficult to say exactly what is the standard to follow, and must for the present at least be left to the individual judgment of each one interested in the strange beliefs and traditions of an equally strange people.

ABBREVIATIONS.

The following are some of the abbreviations used :—

<i>a.</i>	-- Adjective.
<i>adv.</i>	-- Adverb or adverbial.
<i>coup.</i>	-- Couplet.
<i>comp.</i>	-- Compare.

<i>ex.</i>	--	Example.
<i>gram.</i>	--	Grammar.
<i>inter.</i>	--	Interrogative.
<i>n.</i>	--	Noun.
<i>N. L.</i>	--	Nat or religious language.
<i>num.</i>	--	Numeral.
<i>par.</i>	--	Particles.
<i>per.</i>	--	Person.
<i>plur.</i>	--	Plural.
<i>pron.</i>	--	Pronoun or pronominal.
<i>Rem.</i>	--	Remark.
<i>sing.</i>	--	Singular.

PART I.

ORTHOGRAPHY.

THE ALPHABET.

§ 1. The Kachin Alphabet contains fourteen vowels, and thirty-one consonants, or in all forty-five elementary sounds.

§ 2. Powers of the Kachin vowels.

Vowels.	Powers.	Examples.
a	Sound of a, as in father.	La, to take.
ä	Represents a varying vowel sound, always somewhat suppressed.	Gälaw, to do; Mä-gwi, an elephant.
e	Short sound of e, as in ten, met.	Rem. to tend.
ë	Long sound of a, as in ale.	Bë bë, in vain.
è	Sound of ay, as in prayer	
i	(a) Sound of i, as in machine, when standing alone, or at the end of a word or syllable. (A few exceptions are here found.) (b) As initial or in the middle of a syllable, it takes the short sound of i, as in tin.	Hpa gälaw na i ? what shall I do? Myi, the eye.
		Ti-nang; Hkri-tung.
		Ing, to overflow; ning, thus.
o	Nearly the long sound of o, as in old.	Wora, that, (Comp. § 35, 2, a.)
ö	Sound of ö, as the German möglich, or almost that of u in murky.	
u	(a) Sound of oo, as in moon, when initial, by itself or at the end of a word or syllable.	Uri, a pheasant; u, bird; lu, to have.

	(b) When in the middle of a syllable it takes the sound of oo as in wool.	Numsha, a women; mung, also.
ü	U, as in tub, plum.	
ai	Long sound of i, as in aisle.	Mai, good.
au	Sound of ow, as in cow.	Kau, to throw away.
aw	Sound of aw, as in law.	Baw, the head.
oi	Sound of oi, as in oil.	Roi, to deride.

REM. (a) The letters ö and ü have been introduced in order to facilitate the writing of kindred dialects. It should be noticed, however, that sounds are found in Märu, Läshi and Atsi not provided for in this system.

(b) The usage of è as distinct from ê is somewhat doubtful. The real existence of o, except as an interjection may also be questioned. The example given may also be pronounced *wa'wa*.

(c) The Kachin tones often determine, if a vowel is to be pronounced long or short, in fact each vowel, may have as many variations as there are tones.

§ 3. Powers of Kachin consonants.

Cons.	Powers.	Examples.
b	As in English.	Ba, to be tired.
ch	As ch in child.	
chy	No equivalent in English. (Comp. Bur. <i>ca</i> .)	Chya, to paint.
d	As in English.	Du, a chief.
g	Hard sound of g, as in go.	Ga, the earth.
gy	A combination of hard g and y.	Gyit, to tie.
h	As in English.	
j	As in English.	Jum, salt.

k	As initial almost like gk; when final like k in English.	Ka, to write; htak, to guess.
ky	Combination of the k and y sounds.	Kyem, to put a-side.
hk	Aspirated k.	Hka, a river.
kk	A harsh guttural sound, stronger than the German ch in mädchen, used mostly by the Cowries instead of hk.	Kha, a river.
hky	A sound somewhat softer than ch, but varying to a great degree in different localities.	Mäkhawn, a maiden. Hkyet, a valley.
l	As in English.	Lam, a road.
m	Sound of m as in English.	Ma, a child.
n	(a) Sound of n as in English. (b) When standing alone, or immediately preceding another consonant, only its pure consonantal sound is heard.	Nam, a jungle. N gälaw, not to do; nta, a house; n-gam, a precipice.
ng	As initial without an equivalent in English, as final like ng in bring.	Ngai, I; leng, a cart.
ny	No equivalent in English.	Nyet, to deny.
p	Almost a bp sound.	Pat, to obstruct.
hp	Aspirated p.	Hpai, to carry.
pf	A blending of p and f; mostly used by the Cowries instead of hp.	Pfun, wood.
r	As in English.	Ri, rattan.
s	" "	Sa, to go.
sh	" "	Sha, to eat.
t	Almost a dt sound.	Tai, to become.
ts	A blending of t and s.	Tsun, to speak.
ht	Aspirated t.	Htu, to dig.

v	As in English.	
w	" "	Wa, to return.
y	" "	Ya, now.
z	" "	Zup, to congregate.

REM. (a) The tendency among the Kachins is slightly to aspirate nearly all of their dentals, gutturals, labials and sibilants (Comp. § 4). Thus *b, d, g, s*, etc., are often, strictly speaking, not pronounced exactly as they are in English. These peculiarities vary, however, in different localities.

(b) The *ch* sound is different from the *hky* is questionable. The pure *h* is never found as an initial. The sound of *v* which by some is pronounced as *vf*, is by some Cowries, in certain words only, used where *y* would be used by the Chinghpaws.

(c) Before the labials *b, p, hp* and *m*, the performative *n* (Comp. Introduction 4, (b) *Rem.*) partakes of the *m* sound. Thus *nba*, is often pronounced *nba*.

(d) When *n* precedes *g* and *y* a hyphen is inserted between these letters when they are meant to be sounded separately. Thus: *n-ga; n-gam; n-gang; n-yawt*. The same is true when two vowels combined as a diphthong are pronounced separately, *na-um* and not *naum*.

§ 4. CLASSIFICATION OF THE CONSONANTS.

The consonants may be divided into seven classes viz :—

Dentals :	d, j, ch, t, ht, ts.
Gutturals :	k, hk g, ng, kh.
Labials :	b, p, hp, m, w, v, pf.
Linguals :	l, n, r.
Palatals :	gy, ky, hky, ny, y, chy.
Sibilants :	s, sh, z.
Aspirate :	h.

§ 5. THE TONES IN KACHIN.

(a) The tones of the Kachin language, although not of so great importance as in Chinese or Shan, must however be carefully mastered and practised, as accuracy in speaking depends to a great extent on the power to enunciate them correctly.

(b) The tones often give to a vowel naturally long, a shorter sound than it otherwise would take, and *vice versa*.

(c) Five tones are easily distinguished in Kachin, and may, for lack of better tonal marks, be indicated by the numerals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

(1) The first tone is the natural pitch of the voice, with a slight rising inflection at the end. It may be called the *natural* tone.

(2) The second is a bass tone; it may be called the *grave* tone.

(3) The third is a slightly higher tone than the second, being pronounced with an even prolonged sound; it may be called the *rising* tone.

(4) The fourth tone is very short and abrupt; it may be called the *abrupt* tone.

(5) The fifth tone is somewhat higher than the third and is uttered with more emphasis; it may be called the *emphatic* tone.

The following words may be used to illustrate the power of the tones:

Wa 1, a hut in a paddy field; *wa* 2, to return; to pay back; *wa* 3, a male human being, a father (Comp. § 27), a tooth, the thread of a screw; *wa* 4, to weave a mat, a hog; *wa* 5, to bite, an intensive verb. par., bamboo, when used in composition (Comp. § 30.)

Nga 2, to be; *nga* 3, to speak, cattle; *nga* 4, to bend or incline the head, to be aslant; *nga* 5, fish.