

# Abstract of 'The Wāmbule Language'

**Jean Robert Opgenort**

*The Wāmbule Language. Grammar, Lexicon, Texts and Cultural Survey of a Kiranti Tribe of Eastern Nepal.* Amsterdam: Jean Robert Opgenort. Doctoral dissertation, 6 June 2002.

Chapter 1 discusses the most important social, geographical, religious and cultural aspects of Wambule Rai community. Wambule society can be divided into: (a) four dialect groups, (b) a large number of exogamous kinship groups, which are based on aggregates of closely related males and unrelated females, who have been brought into the group from other kinship groups, usually of the same community, and (c) three religious groups with their own customs and ceremonies. The first chapter also relates the different life cycle ceremonies.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the sound system. The phonological analysis is based on a classical phonemic approach, in which the qualification of the minimal units of the sound system is given in terms of their distribution and identity. The sound system is characterised by a difference between long and short vowel phonemes in the initial open syllable of polysyllabic words (except negated verbs) and by different kinds of neutralisations in the remaining environments. The consonant system is characterised by a difference between elements that are phonologically contrastive in syllable-initial position and a smaller number of elements that appear in syllable-final position.

Chapter 3 deals with the phonological factors that affect the formal realisation of morphemes. An overview is given of the morphophonological regularities that are found throughout the Wambule language or within a particular grammatical category. This chapter also deals with the phonotactically conditioned alternations that are closely tied up with the presence of the final and post-final verbal segment <t>. The existence of implosive-initial allomorphs of nasal-initial suffixes used after <t> strongly supports the idea that the implosive stops may be partly synchronically analysed as clusters of stop plus nasal consonants.

Chapter 4 deals with nominal morphology. An overview is given of former or non-productive nominal suffixes which are attached to bound roots with an unclear meaning, the number markers, the case markers and the discourse markers 'also, too, even', 'exactly, precisely', 'on the contrary', 'only' and the theme and contrastive markers.

Chapter 5 discusses the grammatical analysis of nominals and adverbials. Adverbials are a heterogeneous group of words that mainly serve to specify constituents other than nouns. Adverbials are commonly used as modifiers of verbs and adjectives and as sentence connectors. The group of nominals comprises personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, indefinite and interrogative words, adjectives and numeral and non-numeral quantifiers.

The grammatical categories that are typically associated with verbs are that of negation, transitivity, aspect and mood. Chapter 6 deals with the expression of the categories of negation and transitivity. Wambule verbs can be classified into three main types on the basis of formal and semantic criteria that involve the inflectional category of transitivity. The notion of transitivity has bearing on the core arguments that are cross-referenced in the finite verb and involves a conceptualisation of the way in which the arguments initiate the verbal action or are affected by it. The post-final segments <t> and /s/ in certain transitive verbs seem to be reflexes of the Tibeto-Burman suffixes \*<-t> and \*<-s>. In present-day Wambule verbal forms, these former suffixes appear to have a causative or transitivising sense.

Chapter 7 deals with the morphosyntax of finite verb forms. With the exception of imperatives, the morphology of finite verbs can be resumed as formal elaborations of the simplex scheme presented

in Chapter 6. The verb forms discussed are the imperfective, the affirmative, the indefinite, the simplex verb, the optative, the volitional and the imperative.

Bare verb roots serve as a basis for suffixation of several morphemes that turn modified verb roots into deverbative constituents termed 'verbal nouns' and 'verbal adjectives'. From the point of view of external morphosyntax, the deverbative forms discussed in Chapter 8 behave like ordinary nouns and adjectives. The forms distinguished are the infinitive and the *nomen actionis*, the supine, the active verbal adjectives, the passive verbal adjective, the verbal adjective of purpose, the attributive verbal adjective, the stative verbal adjective and the nominaliser of loan verbs.

Chapter 9 deals with gerunds and complex clauses. Gerunds are deverbative words that basically qualify the action expressed by the main verb. The basic function of gerunds is as predicator of a subordinate clause which marks the syntactic function of an adverbial with respect to the main clause of the complex sentence. One could therefore propose to qualify gerunds as 'verbal adverbs'.

Chapter 10 deals with the morphosyntax of verbal constructions and complex verbs. Verbal constructions are periphrastic forms that consist of a main verb or deverbative plus an unbound auxiliary verb, which adds a dimension of some kind to the meaning expressed by the main constituent. The resultant combination functions like two independent stems. The verbal categories such as negation and transitivity are marked in the auxiliary. By contrast, a complex verb consists of a main verb root and a bound verb root. The two roots function like a single stem to which inflectional and derivational affixes can be added.