ELEMENTARY HANDBOOK
OF THE
SHAN LANGUAGE,

BY
REV. J. N. CUSHING, D. D.

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PREFACE.

The present edition of the Hand Book has been carefully revised and considerably enlarged. The object of this book is to aid the beginner in the acquisition of a knowledge of the Shan language in its colloquial form. Part I. exemplifies the grammatical principles which govern the language. Part II. embraces a variety of sentences pertaining to practical life. Part III. contains some Shan stories in an easy colloquial style. Only one specimen of the book language (Lesson XVII.) has been introduced, because the style of the book language is metrical and is so involved and different from anything in ordinary use as to be of no assistance to the beginner.

No Shan and English vocabulary has been appended to this book as the Shan and English Dictionary will meet this need. An English and Shan Vocabulary, containing the most common and important words in use, has been added.

J. N. CUSHING.

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INTRODUCTION.

The Burmese Shan branch of the Tai family of languages, which is treated of in this book, is spoken from Karenni northward beyond Theinni and from the mountains east of the great Burman plain to the Cambula river. In this area there are some dialectic differences, but they are of slight importance. The standard of usage followed is the language of Monë and the adjacent principalities. It should be added, that in the distant principality of Kaingtung, a modified form of the Lacs alphabet is quite as extensively used as the alphabet employed in this book which is the only one used by the Western Shan.

The grammatical structure of the Shan is exceedingly simple. Like the other languages of Farther India, it is tonal. No one can speak it accurately without mastering the tones. This would be a matter of comparative ease, were the tones properly indicated by tonal signs as in the Sgau Karen, which has one of the most perfect systems of phonetic representation in the world. There is however a remarkable paucity of orthographic forms. Not only are tones not indicated by any signs, but the vowels in many syllabic combinations may have two, and in some combinations, even three different quantities. In this fact lies the chief difficulty of acquiring the language. The tone of every word, and in many words, the quantity of the vowel
must be learned by practice. The student cannot be too careful in the beginning to learn correctly the proper pronunciation of each new word.

There are five tones which have been described in the Grammar § 32.

Of these tones there are three series, viz. closed (c. s.), mediate (m. s.), and open (o. s.). The first and last series only are noticed by native scholars. By reference to the following tables it will be seen that some vowels can have only one quantity. I have always classed these under the closed series. Thus in ہ, kā, price, the vowel a can have only one quantity.

Other vowels allow of two series of tones only. Thus ہ, kān, to protrude, and ہ, kān, man, have precisely the same spelling and tone in Shan, but ہ belongs to the closed series of tones and ہ to the open series. Sometimes in writing, the Shans place the sign (ә) by the side of the vowel sign beneath the consonant to indicate the closed series, but it is an infrequent practice and has never been introduced into the font of type.

Closed syllables with the vowel ә allow of three series of tones. Thus in ہ, kān, to eat, ہ, kān, to roll up, ہ, kān, to suspend, the i belongs to the closed series, i to the mediate series, and e to the open series. The quantity of the vowel in the mediate series may be ә or short i according to the final consonant. With ә and ә, it is ә, but in all other cases it is i. In ہ, therefore, we have ہ, kān, to roll over and over, ہ, kān, to pretend inability to do.

It will therefore be seen that when the meaning of a word is learned, great care in acquiring the proper tone and vowel of the word is indispensable.

The following tables show the powers of the consonants and vowels.

**Consonants.**

o k, ә kh, ә ng, ә n, ә s, ә s, ә he, ә ny, ә t, ә ht,
ә n, ә p, ә hp, ә m, ә y, ә r, ә l, ә w,
ә h, ә a.

**Vowels.**

Power when standing alone.

ә a short, as a in quota.

Power followed by a consonant.

ә a, a rather obtuse sound.

ә e, a broad sound, as in lard.

ә ә long, as a in father.

ә i short.

Tor. ә, as ee in leek.

м, ә, i short, as i in lip; or e, as in lay.

ә e, short, as e in met.

ә ә long, as i in polite.

ә u short, as oo in good.

ә ә, as oo in loot.

ә s, as o in hope.

Exceptions: When followed by ә, the ә.
s. vowel sound is modified to u or wi, and the o. s. vowel sound to ne or we, as cep o. s. ke-wi and cep o. s. ke-we. The semi-vowel tone, which appears in this combination is indicated by a hyphen, as cep, t-we, to look.

ú long, as oo in too.

co, o. s. e, as ay, in may.

or e in the French feve.

co, o. s. ai, as ai in aisle.

or e in the English eh!

co, o. s. a'ı, the same sound with a broader pronunciation.

aw short, as o in often.

aw long, as aw in awful.

The three vowel sounds of ce in a closed syllable, the second vowel sound of ce in a closed syllable, and the two vowel sounds of ce, when combined with a consonant, often have a semi-vowel tone associated with them, which is nearly equal to short ı with ce and ce, and to short o with ce. Thus ce, 4c, wife, is pronounced m-e instead of me. In ce, me, 30, mother,

the semi-vowel tone is hardly distinguishable. The presence or absence of this semi-vowel tone in combinations where it is found, must be learned by careful observation.

Diphthongs.

c. s. au, as ow in how.

o. s. a'u, the same sound with a broader pronunciation.

c. s. i'u.

m. s. i'o, as io in punctilio.

o. s. i'-au.

o long, as o in mote.

c. s. ü, as in the German, Glück.

o. s. ö, as in the German, Löwe.

oi, as oi in choice.

Triphthong.

au, nearly like u in lull.

Compound Consonants.

ä-ya.

ä-ra.

ä-wa; when followed by a final consonant, aw, as aw in lawn.

ä-wä.

ä-wa; when followed by a final consonant, o. s. ä-wa, o. s. äwä.

ä-wä.

ä-wai.
Combination with ə.

ο  ka əc.  əο  c. s. kak.  əΕ  c. s. kang.
οι  o. s. kā.  o. s. kāk.  o. s. kāng.
β  ki əc.  βο  c. s. kik.  βε  c. s. king.
βι  c. s. ki.  ι. s. kik.  ι. s. kīng.
κ  ku əc.  κο  c. s. kūk.  κε  c. s. keng.
κι  c. s. kū.  κο  c. s. kūk.  κε  c. s. kūng.
λ  c. s. ke or k-e.  o. s. kık.  o. s. kīng.
μ  o. s. kē or k-ē.  λο  c. s. kawk.  λε  c. s. kawng.
ν  c. s. kai.  νο  c. s. kūk.  νε  c. s. kūng.
νι  o. s. ka'i.  o. s. kık.  o. s. kīng.
νου kaw, əc.
νου c. s. ka'w.

οσ  o. s. kat.  οσ  c. s. kan.
οσυ  o. s. kāt.  o. s. kīn.
οσϕ  c. s. kin.
οσ  c. s. kē or k-ē.  o. s. kēt or k-ēt  o. s. kēn.
οσϕ  c. s. k-wi  o. s. kūt.  οσϕ  c. s. kūng.
κω  o. s. k-wē.  ησ  c. s. kawt.  φο  c. s. kawng.
κω  c. s. kū.  κω  c. s. kūt.  κω  c. s. kūng.
κω  o. s. kōt.  o. s. kōn.

Abbreviations.

ο  c. s. kap.  ο  5c.  c. s. kam.
ησ  c. s. kāp.  ησ  5c.  c. s. kām.
μσ  c. s. kip.  μσ  5c.  c. s. kīm.
οσ  m. s. kip.  ωσ  5c.  m. s. kīm.
οσ  c. s. kep.  οσ  5c.  o. s. kem.
νσ  c. s. kūp.  νσ  5c.  c. s. kūm.
κσ  o. s. kōp.  κσ  5c.  o. s. kīm.
ησ  c. s. kawp.  ησ  5c.  c. s. kawm.
κσ  o. s. kōp.  κσ  5c.  o. s. kōm.

οσ  c. s. kau.  ιο  c. s. koi.
οσ  o. s. kāu.  ιο  o. s. ko'i.
οσ  c. s. ki-ū.  ιο  c. s. kaū.
μσ  m. s. ki-ō.  μσ  c. s. kīā.
μσ  o. s. ki-an.  μσ  c. s. kīō.
οσ  c. s. kö.  ιο  c. s. krā.
οσ  c. s. kū.  ιο  5c. kwa.
οσ  c. s. kö.  ιο  c. s. kwā.
υσ  c. s. k-wāi.  υσ  o. s. k-wā'i.
νσ  5c.  c. s. kyawng.

ο, β, κ and νω are really the fifth tone of οι, β, κ, and νω, and are marked 5c, for the sake of uniformity. Several forms can take only one series of tones like οι, βσ, etc., and they are always marked c.s.
Lesson I.

Subject and Object of the Verb.

-Thin kün, 4o, a man.  formas, 5c, water.
-Thin khau, 3c, boiled rice.  formas, 5c, this.
-Thin khō, 4c, goods, clothing.  formas, pin, 1m, to be, to exist.
-Thin kha'i, 1o, to sell.  forma, 5c, a pony.
-Thin ngün, 4c, silver, money.  formas, mi, 4c, to be, to have.
-Thin sip, 4n, to be sore.  formas, mai, 3c, to be hot.
-Thin hsū, 5c, to buy.  formas, li, 1c, to be good.
-Thin tawng 5c, the belly, bowels.  formas, lai, 3c, to get, obtain.
-Thin nān, 5c, that.  formas, hū, 4c, a direct interrogative affix.

1. The following paradigm will give the simplest tense forms of the verb:

Present.

I see. formas, We see.
Thou seest. formas, You see.
He sees. formas, They see.