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A Grammar of Bantawa : grammar, paradigm tables, glossary and texts of a Rai language of Eastern Nepal

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Preface

From 2000 to 2006, I lived in Nepal. During those years, I became acquainted with some Bantawa Rai (Nepali *Rāī*) speakers and the language research community of Nepal. Ever since 2000, when I first learnt about the existence of Kiranti people, I have taken an interest in the complex and diverse Kiranti branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family. In early 2003, I came to know some Bantawa Rai speakers personally. When Mitra Rāī took me with him to his homeland in Sindrāñ, I became enthralled with the Bantawa Rai, their beautiful language, their heroic but slightly shrouded history, and their scattered homesteads, clinging to the steep and inaccessible valleys of the Kośī river complex.

In late 2005, I planned to spend another year in Nepal to devote to the study of the complexity of the Bantawa word. The Bantawa word, as will become clear in the course of this book, is potentially very complex. Within the boundaries of a syntactically simple and indivisible unit, the most intricate rules apply. On top of the information that I had collected earlier, I elicited more data and recorded some more stories in order to tackle the first step, i.e. a phonology. Any phonologist will know that in order to write a phonology and understand the interactions between the phonetic form and the ‘higher’ levels of grammar, one must have an idea of almost the entire grammar of a language.

In 2006, however, it became apparent that I would leave Nepal for a longer time. At that moment, I decided to hoard as many data as possible and see what I could make out of those data. The reader is reading the result of that effort.

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To my friends: thanks for being friends.

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