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**A Descriptive Grammar of Darma: An Endangered Tibeto-
Burman Language**

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**A Descriptive Grammar of Darma: An Endangered Tibeto-
Burman Language**

by

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Dan Oko, whose endless support and love has kept me inspired and motivated. I would also like to dedicate this work to the Darma people without whom this grammar would not exist.

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A Descriptive Grammar of Darma: An Endangered Tibeto-Burman Language

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This dissertation is a description of Darma, an under-documented Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the eastern corner of the state of Uttarakhand, India. With fewer than 2,600 speakers and no writing system, Darma is considered endangered. This is the most comprehensive description of Darma to date.

Like the other Himalayan languages, the genetic classification of Darma has not been definitively determined. It is widely described as a western Himalayish language that is closely related to Byansi, Chaudangsi and Rangkas (the latter being extinct).

The data presented in this dissertation were obtained through three methodologies: direct elicitation, participant observation, and the discourse-centered approach to data collection advocated by University of Texas linguistic anthropologist Joel Sherzer. The discourse-centered methodology relies on naturally occurring speech, including conversation, stories, songs and public dialogues. The resulting data are contextualized in a cultural framework, which is useful to linguists and anthropologists alike; and the majority of examples presented come from these texts.

The dissertation is presented in five sections with a total of nineteen chapters and a glossary. The first section provides background information on the Darma people, the language, and how this project came about. The second section describes the sound system of Darma, including its typologically unusual class of oral stops. The third section introduces the words that comprise a noun phrase including nouns, personal pronouns, and pronominal demonstrative forms, which are marked on a spatial axis (e.g. proximate, neutral, distal, and non-visible). The fourth section examines the affixes that combine with verb stems to form clauses and sentences. This includes a discussion of the basic SV/AOV constituent order, and the ergative/absolutive alignment system. Here nominalization/relativization, a common feature of Tibeto-Burman languages, is also presented along with the clause chaining strategy commonly found in narrative discourse.

The analysis for this dissertation is informed by a functional-typological perspective, and an effort has been made to capture general patterns found in the grammar. The goals are to provide a description of the grammar of Darma in a format that is accessible to many, and to avoid relying on any overly specific theoretical framework that may become obsolete.

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