gradients. With the exception of the Sokpa, a Mongol dialect, and of the Gyarung, a pre-Chinese dialect, the languages spoken in Tibet belong to the large linguistic family commonly called Tibeto- Burman, a division of the Kuen-lun group, which is a part of the Turano-Scythian stock.

The language is more consonantal than vocalic, though much softened in the central dialect. The consonants, 30 in number, which are deemed to possess an inherent sound a, are the follow­ing :—ka, k'a, ga, nga, ća, ča, dja, nya, ta, t'a, da, na, pa, p'a, ba, ma, tsa, ts'a, dza, wa, zha, za, 'h, ya, ra, la, sha, sa, ha, 'a ; the so- called Sanskrit cerebrals are represented by the letters ta, fa, da, na, sha turned the other way. Ya, when combined as second con­sonant with k-, p-, m-, is written under the first letter. Ra, when combined as second letter with k-, t-, ρ-, is written under the first, and when combined with another consonant as first letter over the second. The vowels are a, i, u, e, o, which are not distinguished as long or short in writing, though they are so in the vernaculars in the case of words altered by phonetic detrition. Agglomerations of consonants are not objectionable ; and they are often met with as initials, giving the appearance of telescoped words—an appearance which historical etymology often confirms. Many of these initial consonants are silent in the softened dialects of the central provinces, or have been resolved into a simpler one of another character. The language is much ruled by laws of euphony, which have been strictly formulated by grammarians. Among the initials, five, viz., g, d, b, m, 'h, are regarded as prefixes, and are called so for all purposes, though they belong sometimes to the stem. As a rule none of these letters can be placed before any of the same organic class. Post-positions, pa or ba and ma, are required by the noun (sub­stantive or adjective) that is to be singled out ; po or bo (masc.) and mo (fem. ) are used for distinction of gender or for emphasis. The cases of nouns are indicated by suffixes, which vary their initials according to the final of the nouns. The plural is denoted when required by adding one of several words of plurality. When several words are connected in a sentence they seldom require more than one case element, and that comes last There are personal, demonstrative, interrogative, and reflexive pronouns, as well as an indefinite article, which is also the numeral for “one.” The personal pronouns are replaced by various terms of respect when speaking to or before superiors, and there are many words besides which are only employed in ceremonial language. The verb, which is properly a participle, has no element of person, and denotes the conditions of tense and mood by an external and internal inflexion, or the addition of auxiliary verbs and suffixes when the stem is not susceptible of inflexion. The conditions which approximate most closely to our present, perfect, future, and imperative are marked either by aspiration of the initial or by one of the five prefix con­sonants according to the rules of euphony, and the whole looks like a former system thrown into confusion and disorder by phonetic decay. As to the internal vowel, a or e in the present tends to become o in the imperative, the e changing to a in the past and future ; i and u are less liable to change. A final s is also occasion­ally added. Only a limited number of verbs are capable of four changes ; some cannot assume more than three, some two, and many only one. This deficiency is made up by the addition of auxiliaries or suffixes. There are no numeral auxiliaries or segrega­tives used in counting, as in many languages of eastern Asia, though words expressive of a collective or integral are often used after the tens, sometimes after a smaller number. In scientific and astrological works, the numerals, as in Sanskrit, are expressed by symbolical words. In the order of the sentence the substantive precedes the adjective and the verb stands last ; the object and the adverb precede the verb, and the genitive precedes the noun on which it depends. An active or causal verb requires before it the instrumental instead of the nominative case, which goes only before a neuter or intransitive verb. The chief differences between the classical language of the Tibetan translators of the 9th century and the vernacular, as well as the language of native words, existed in vocabulary, phraseology, and grammatical structure and arose from the influence of the translated texts.

The Tibetan language, in its written and spoken forms, has a great interest for philologists, on account of its bearing on the history of the so-called monosyllabic languages of eastern Asia. Is the Tibetan a monosyllabic language passing to agglutination ? or the reverse ? The latter is the fact, as we shall see further on. The whole question has turned upon the elucidation of the pheno­menon of the silent letters, generally prefixed, which differentiate the spelling of many words from their pronunciation, in the central dialect or current speech of Lhása. As long as the sounds of this dialect only were known, the problem could not be fully grasped. Rémusat rather dubiously suggested, while Schmidt and Schiefner maintained, that the silent letters were a device of grammarians to distinguish in writing words which were not distinguished in speech. But this convenient opinion was not sufficient for a general explana­tion, being supported by only a few cases. Among these are—(œ) the addition of silent letters to foreign words in analogy with older terms of the language (e.g., the Persian tadjik was tran­scribed staggzig or “tiger-leopard,” because the foreign term left untouched would have been meaningless for Tibetan readers) ; {b) the addition for the sake of uniformity of prefixed letters to words etymologically deprived of them ; (c) the probable addition of letters by the Buddhist teachers from India to Tibetan words in order to make them more similar to Sanskrit expressions (for instance, rje- for “king,” written in imitation of raja, though the original word was je or she, as is shown by cognate languages). On the other hand, while phonetically the above explanation was not inconsistent with such cases as rka, dkah, bkah, bska, and nga, rnga, ngag, sngags, lnga, ngad, and brtse, brdzun, dbyar, &c., where the italicized letters are pronounced in full and the others are left aside, it failed to ex­plain other cases, such as dgra, mgron, spyod, spyan, sbrang, sbrul, bkra, k’ri, krad, Prims, k'rus, &c., pronounced da, don, cod or šwod, čen, dang, deu, ta, fi, tad or teh, fiin, tu, &c., and many others, where the spoken forms are obviously the alteration by wear and tear of sounds originally similar to the written forms. Csoma de Körös, who was acquainted with the somewhat archaic sounds of Ladak, was able to point to only a few letters as silent. But Major Cunningham, in his book on the same country (1854), held that the Tibetan writing, when first applied to the language, was the faithful transcription of speech, and he gave as a proof that the name of the province of U, written DbUs, was the Debasæ of Ptolemy. Foucaux, in his Grammaire (1858), quoted a fragment from a native work on grammar several centuries old, in which the pronunciation of the supposed silent letters is carefully described. Since then the problem has been disentangled ; and now minor points only remain to be cleared up. Jaeschke devoted special at­tention to the dialectical sounds, and showed in several papers and by the comparative table prefixed to his dictionary that in the western and eastern dialects these sounds correspond more or less closely to the written forms. Thus the valuable testimony of these dialects may be added to the evidence furnished by foreign tran­scriptions of Tibetan words, loan words in conterminous languages, and words of common descent in kindred tongues. And the whole shows plainly that the written forms of words which are not of later remodelling are really the representatives of the pronunciation of the language as it was spoken at the time of the transcription. The concurrence of the evidence indicated above enables us to form the following outline of the evolution of Tibetan. In the 7th century there was no difference between the spoken and the written language. Soon afterwards, when the language was extended to the western valleys, the prefixed and most of the important con­sonants vanished from the spoken words. The ya-tag and ra-tag or y and r subscript, and the s after vowels and consonants, were still in force. The next change took place in the central pro­vinces ; the ra-tags were altered into cerebral dentals, and the ya- tags became i. Later on the superscribed letters and finals d and s disappeared, except in the east and west. It was at this stage that the language spread in Lahul and Spiti, where the superscribed letters were silent, the d and g finals were hardly heard, and as, os, us, were ai, oi, ui. The words introduced from Tibet into the border languages at that time differ greatly from those introduced at an earlier period. The other changes are more recent and re­stricted to the provinces of U and Tsang. The vowel sounds ai, oi, ui, have become ē, ō, ū; and a, o, u before the finals d and n are now ä, ö, ü. The mediæ have become aspirate tenues with a low intonation, which also marks the words having a simple initial consonant ; while the former aspirates and the complex initials simplified in speech are uttered with a high tone, or, as the Tibetans say, “with a woman’s voice,” shrill and rapidly. An inhabitant of Lhasa, for example, finds the distinction between sh and zh, or be­tween s and z, not in the consonant, but in the tone, pronouncing sh and s with a high note and zh and z with a low one. The in­troduction of the important compensation of tones to balance phonetic losses had begun several centuries before, as appears from a Tibetan MS. (No. 462b St Petersburg) partly published by Jaeschke (Monatsber. Akad. Berl., 1867). A few instances will serve to illus­trate what has been said. In the bilingual inscriptions, Tibetan and Chinese, set up at Lhasa in 822, and published by Bushell in 1880, we remark that the silent letters were pronounced : Tib. spudgyal, now pugyal, is rendered suh-pot-ye in Chinese symbols ; khri, now fi, is kieh-li ; hbrong is puh-lung ; snyan is sheh-njoh and su-njoh ; srong is su-lun, su-lung, and si-lung. These tran­scriptions show by their variety that they were made from the spoken and not from the written forms, and, considering the limited capacities of Chinese orthoepy, were the nearest attempt at rendering the Tibetan sounds. Spra or spreu (a monkey), now altered into deu at Lhása, teu in Lahul, Spiti, and Tsang, is still more recognizable in the Gyarung shepri, and in the following degenerated forms—shreu in Ladak, streu-go in Khams and in cognate languages, soba in Limbu, saheu in Lepcha, simai in Tablung Naga, sibeh in Abor Miri, shibe in Sibsagar Miri, sarrha in Kol, sara in Kuri, &c. Grog-ma (ant), now altered into the spoken t'oma, is still kyoma in Bhutan, and, without the suffix, korok in Gyarung, k'oro- in Sokpa, Vorok, k'alek in Kiranti, &c. Grang-po (cold), spoken t'ammo, is still grang-mo in Takpa, k'yam in Bur-