

## SSP Phonetic Transcription System Internal Document

### Consonants

Some consonants differ from their Wylie transliteration, while some remain unchanged:

- ཀ - *ka* remains **ka**
- ཁ - *kha*, ཕ - *pha*, and ཇ - *tha* remain the same
- ག - *ga* remains **ga** when voiced (after prefixes or with superscripts or when at the beginning of a 2nd syllable); it becomes **ka** only when at the beginning of a first syllable without prefixes or superscripts
- ཅ - *ca* and ཆ - *cha* become **cha**
- ད - *da* remains **da** when voiced (after prefixes or with superscripts or when at the beginning of a 2nd syllable); it becomes **ta** only when at the beginning of a first syllable without prefixes or superscripts
- བ - *ba* remains **ba** when voiced (after prefixes except for ད - *da* or with superscripts or when at the beginning of a second syllable, but not when alone functioning as a nominalizer); it becomes **pa** only when at the beginning of a first syllable without prefixes or superscripts. It becomes **wa** when following a prefix *da* (for example དབང་ *wang*) or when alone as a second syllable functioning as a nominalizer - (for example འགྲོ་བ་ *drowa*).
- ཇ - *ja* remains **ja** when voiced (after prefixes or with superscripts or when at the beginning of a 2nd syllable); it becomes **cha** only when at the beginning of a first syllable without prefixes or superscripts (examples: Dūdjom, chitar)
- ཏ - *tsha* and ཐ - *tsa* become **tsa**
- ཏྲ - *dza* remains **dza**
- འ - *zha* remain **zha** when voiced (after prefixes or with superscripts or when at the beginning of a 2nd syllable); it becomes **sha** only when at the beginning of a first syllable without prefixes or superscripts
- ཟ - *za* remains **za** when voiced (after prefixes or when at the beginning of a 2nd syllable); it becomes **sa** only when at the beginning of a first syllable without prefixes or superscripts

### Final consonants

- A final ག - *ga* remains **g**: *dge lugs* is Gelug.
- A final བ - *ba* remains **b**: thus *sgrubs* is *drub*.

- Final ཏ - *da* is retained (only at the end of a word) to indicate that the preceding vowel is pronounced (as in *Jigmed*), in some instances followed by a subtle dental stop (as in *chöd*); final ཏ - *da* after an *a* is rendered **ed**
- Final ས - *sa* consonants are dropped: *skyes pas* is *kyepe*, *las* is *le*.
- Final འ - *na* preceded by an *o* always calls for an **ö**, but does not always call for an **ü** when preceded by a *u* (examples: *kun*, *kuntuzangpo*, *lhundrub*, *Gendün*, *dün*)

## Vowels

Vowels followed by ཏ - *da*, འ - *na*, or ས - *sa* (but not ལ - *la*) change as follows:

- *u* - འ འ becomes **ü** (except as noted above for *n* suffix); for example, *rgyud* is *gyüd*
- *o* - འ becomes **ö**; for example, *bon* becomes *Bön*
- *a* - འ becomes **e** when followed by a *d*, *n*, or *s*. But when an inherent *a* is followed by an *l*, it remains unmodified like the **o** and **u**. For example, *rgyal mtshan* becomes *gyaltsen* and *dpal ldan* becomes *Palden*.
- *i* - འ འ and *e* - འ འ vowels never change, except that the final *d* is retained as explained above
- *a chung* ('*a* - འ) is omitted from transliteration at the end of syllables, except when carrying the *gigu*, in which case it is represented by an *i*; for example, *srid pa'i 'khor lo* becomes *sipai khorlo*
- *a chung* ('*a*) or ཏ - *da* prefix before འ - *ba* becomes **w** when combined with the vowel *a* or *o* (*wang*, *wösal*, *wözer*, *wog lung*, *wenpa*), but not when combined with the vowel *u* (*uma*, *Ü*, *Umapa*)
- འ *wa sur* is omitted from transliteration

## Consonant clusters

- Unvoiced gutturals and labials with འ - *ratag* (*kra*, *khra*, *pra*, *phra*) become **tra**; for example, འ - *khri* and འ - *phri*, become **tri** (except for the name *Tashi*, *Tashigar*, *tashi deleg*)
- Voiced gutturals and labials with *ratag* (འ - *gra*, འ - *bra*, འ - *dra*) are **tra** when at the beginning of a first syllable without prefixes or superscripts; they become **dra** as second syllables and when prefixed or superscribed. For example, *sgrol ma* becomes *Drolma*, but *dran pa* becomes *trenpa*
- འ - *sra* is rendered **sa**
- འ - *kya*, འ - *khya*, འ - *gya* remain **kya**, **khya**, **gya**.

- རྩ - *pya*, རྩ - *phya* become **cha**; རྩ - *ba* becomes **cha** when at the beginning of a first syllable without prefixes or superscripts (**ja** in other cases, except with *da* prefix (དལ), in which case it becomes **ya**); see vowels for treatment of *ba* after *da*)
- རྩ - *mya* becomes **nya**
- རྩ - *zla* becomes **da**
- རྩ - *wazur* does not modify phonetic spelling in and of itself
- Superscribed letters are not transcribed, with the exception of *l* in the syllable རྩ - *lha*, which remains **lha**

## Syllables

Tibetan words are grouped into syllable pairs, avoiding hyphens. A third syllable can be added to the pair if it is the nominalizing particle *ma / mo* or *pa / po*; for example, Tsongkhapa, Namgyalma, Naljorma.

When nouns are followed by a genitive, the genitive is joined to the noun (for example, *chos kyi* becomes *chökyi*). Compound nouns are joined (*bla tshé* is *latse*).

## Nasalization

In compounds with in two syllabic compounds, **when the the first syllable ends with a vowel and the second syllable has a pre-nasalization (prescribed རྩ- ' and རྩ- *ma*), insert a nasal **n** or **m** before other voiced stops. Thus *mkha' 'gro* becomes *khandro*, *bde mchog* Demchog, and *rgya mtsho gyamtso*, while *bdud 'dul* is phoneticized *Düdul* and *rig 'dzin* is *rigdzin*.**

Note that *gakyil* changes to *gankhyil*

Nasalization only within words; no doubles (Namkhai), exceptions may apply.

## Doubled consonants including *nga*

When the above rules give rise to -nng- or -ngg-, the doubled nn or gg is better rendered single. Thus Senge instead of Sengge, Sangye instead of Sanggye

spyang snga ba: Chen Ngawa (not ideal, but rare)

ting nge 'dzin: *tingedzin*

## Modern names

A contemporary Tibetan name should be rendered in the way the person himself or herself has chosen to do so, e.g., Tenzin Gyatso, Lopön Tenzin Namdak.

## **Sanskrit words**

Sanskrit terms and mantras that appear in Tibetan texts should be rendered as they appear in Sanskrit, e.g., *ācārya*, *svāhā*, *vajra*, *padma* rather than “atsarya,” “soha,” “benza,” or “pema.” However, in the context of Tibetan names we use Pema. Refer to the Shang Shung Style Sheet for further details on treatment of Sanskrit terms.

## **Exceptions**

Jonang, Bön, Böd, Böpa, bardo, Shang Shung, *achung* (the word), tashi, chorten, Gyantse (spelled *rgyal rtse*), Mennagde, Mennag, *rigdzin*, *gyatso*, **Chenrezig, Paro, bep, Dündul, Derge, Drajyor** (due to popular usage),

## **Notable Changes**

Chowo rather than Jowo, Rimed rather than Rimé, Putön rather than Butön