Grammar Summaries
For Tibetan

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Elizabeth Napper

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THE TIBETAN ALPHABET, PRONUNCIATION, AND TRANSLITERATION

The four vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>आ</th>
<th>उ</th>
<th>ओ</th>
<th>ए</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i (ee)</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>e (ay)</td>
<td>o</td>
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</table>

The thirty consonants and pronunciation equivalents:
<table>
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<th>ར</th>
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<td>ґa</td>
<td>Kha</td>
<td>Ka</td>
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<td>ja</td>
<td>cha</td>
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<td>ᛖa</td>
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<td>ha</td>
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</table>
The thirty consonants and Wylie transliteration equivalents:

<table>
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<th>ष्</th>
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<th>ष</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ka</td>
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<td>pha</td>
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<td>tsa</td>
<td>tsha</td>
<td>dza</td>
<td>wa</td>
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<tr>
<td>ज्ञ्</td>
<td>ज्ञ</td>
<td>ज्ञ</td>
<td>ज्ञ</td>
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<td>zha</td>
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<td>ha</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_ten suffixes_

| ष् | ष | ष | ष |

_five prefixes_

| ष् | ष | ष |

_three superscribed letters_

| ष् | ष | ष |
four subscribed letters

two secondary suffixes

**PRONUNCIATION SUMMARY**

**PREFIXES**  
- Not themselves pronounced
- Affect the pronunciation of 8 consonants:
  - ฐ' goes from ka to ga; ฒ' from ca to ja; ง' from ta to da; ง' from pa to ba; ง, ง', ง', and ง' all become high in tone

**SUPERSCRIBED**  
- Not themselves pronounced
- Affect the pronunciation of 8 consonants just as do prefixes (exception: ฌ' superscribed to ง', i.e., ง' is pronounced hla)

**SUBSCRIBED**  
- (subscribed to 7 letters, written ง in subscript position)
  - ง, ง', ง' are pronounced as expected: งya, ขña, and คya or งya depending on whether or not there is also a prefix or superscription.
  - ง', ง', ง', ง' are pronounced as is the second row of the alphabet, hence งja, งcha, งca (or งja, if prefixed or superscribed), and งya (or งya, if refixed or superscribed).

- (subscribed to 13 letters, written ง in subscript position); pronunciation for each of the three vertical groups is given under the column

- ง ง' ง
- ง ง' ง
- ง ง' ง

ง is pronounced ma
is pronounced sa or ďa
transliterates Sanskrit and is pronounced shra
is pronounced hra
( subscribed to 6 letters, written in subscript position)
, , , , and are all pronounced ľa
is pronounced ďa
not pronounced, does not affect pronunciation (written as subscript)

are pronounced normally and do not affect the pronunciation of the vowels preceding them
all can affect the vowel that precedes them: a goes to eh; o goes to ŏ; u goes to ũ; i and e do not change (although both soften when followed by nasals)
and are not themselves pronounced as suffixes.
causes a glottal stop; causes a slower fall off

secondary suffixes are not themselves pronounced and do not affect the pronunciation of the syllable.
as a secondary suffix is very common.
 is almost never seen.

**Occurrences of Dots**

1. Between syllables in a word:

   house; qualities

2. After a noun or adjective or a noun or adjective phrase in the nominative case:

   A pot is impermanent.

3. Before or after a case ending:

   goes to India

4. After a clause ending in a terminal verb:

   A pot is impermanent

5. Between two words or phrases in an appositional relationship:
the Buddha Samantabhadra

6. Between a noun and an adjective:

a new house

7. Between nouns in a list:

Thing, impermanent phenomenon, and product are equivalent.

8. Where there is an understood case ending:

Truth Body

9. Before or after a non-case particle or a particleless adverb:

Thing and impermanent phenomenon are equivalent.

10 Indicating an omitted syllable in a contraction or abbreviation:

presentation

**TERMINATORS**

terminators or full stop indicators; affixed after their respective suffixes, with after the secondary suffix .
THE EIGHT CASES

I. Nominative གྲིང་ཐོབ། དབུ་ངོར་ན།
   A. Endings: none
   B. Uses:
      1. OBJECT of verb or verbal:
         བོད་པ་ལྷ་དོན་པ།  Buddha taught the doctrine.
         བོད་པ་ལྷ་དོན་པ།  Buddha, having turned the wheel of doctrine
      2. SUBJECT of the verb "to be" (both existence and linking):
         དབུ་ངོར་ན།  A pot is impermanent.
         དབུ་ངོར་ན།  There are monks in the temple.
      3. PREDICATE NOMINATIVE or PREDICATE ADJECTIVE:
         དབུ་ངོར་ན།  A pot is impermanent.
      4. AGENT of verbs of motion, dependence or living:
         བོད་པ་ལྷ་དོན་པ།  Padmasambhava went to Tibet.
         བོད་པ་ལྷ་དོན་པ།  Effects depend on causes.
         བོད་པ་ལྷ་དོན་པ།  The monks live in a monastery.
      5. TOPICAL nominative (indicates subject matter, often followed by ཆ་):  
         ཁ་སེམས་དཔོན་པ།  With respect to the first, object known by an awareness is the definition of an object.
      6. INTRANSITIVE SUBJECT (agent and object not manifestly different):
         ཁ་སེམས་དཔོན་པ།  The wheel turns.

II. Accusative ཁ་སེམས་དཔོན་པ། དབུ་ངོར་ན།
A. Endings: ་ན་ ་ན་ ་ན་ ་ན་ ་ན་ ་ན་  Basic translation: “to”

B. Uses:
   1. OBJECT of verb or verbal:
      ནོར་གཅོད་  looks at the body

   2. PLACE OF ACTIVITY (in, at):
      དུས་ཚན་རྐྱེན་ཁྲ་དེ་མཁན་ལྟར།  Buddha taught the doctrine in India.

   3. DESTINATION (to):
      དོན་ཁ་མག་དབུ་ྱེ།  Dzong-ka-ba came to Hla-sa.

   4. RECIPIENT (where benefit is not obvious):
      དུས་མཁན་མི་བཞིན་  offers worship to the guru.

C. Non-case uses:
   1. ADVERBIAL modifier (as, -ly):
      དེ་ཐེན་ང་ཐེན་ང་ང་བཞིན།  recognize all sentient beings as one’s mother
      དཔག་མཁན་བཞིན།  went quickly.

   2. CONNECTIVE (and, but, ;): པོ་
      དབུ་མགས་བཞིན་ appearing but not ascertained

      Sometimes པོ་ is used as a connective as in:
      དབུ་མགས་བཞིན་ དབུ་མགས་བཞིན། would be observed, but is not observed

   3. CONDITIONAL (if, when): ོོ་
      དབུ་མགས་བཞིན།  If consciousness is divided, …

   4. INFINITIVE:
      དབུ་མགས་བཞིན།  wish to learn

III.Instrumental དབུ་བཞིན།  དབུ་མགས་བཞིན།
A. Endings: दिः दिः दिः दिः दिः दिः दिः दिः दिः दिः Basic translation: “by”

B. Uses:
1. AGENT (by):
   ज्ञानं ज्ञानं ज्ञानं ज्ञानं ज्ञानं ज्ञानं ज्ञानं ज्ञानं ज्ञानं
   Buddha will teach doctrine.

2. MEANS (by means of, with):
   हेतुं हेतुं हेतुं हेतुं हेतुं हेतुं हेतुं हेतुं हेतुं
   Having achieved the path by means of effort …

3. REASON (because):
   यो यो यो यो यो यो यो यो यो
   Because she has effort, she achieved the path.

C. Non-case uses:
1. ADVERBIAL (-ly):
   हैन्द्रोट्सिनीयससे मेरे| inherently established

2. ABSENCE:
   द्वितीयमायनस्सूसे मेरे| empty of true establishment

3. CONJUNCTION (and, but, ;) (said to be improper but frequently used):
   अतत् अतत् अतत्
   is non-existent, but

4. INCLUSION (within):
   ज्ञानस्सूसे मेरे| included within the [psychophysical] continuum

IV. Dative दृष्टांकितकितवर| दृष्टांकितकितवर

A. Endings: चूँ चूँ चूँ चूँ चूँ चूँ चूँ चूँ चूँ चूँ चूँ चूँ Basic translation: “for”

B. Uses:
1. BENEFIT (for, to):
   लक्षणस्सूसे मेरे| The doctor gave medicine to the sick.

2. PURPOSE (in order to):
   अभिव्यक्तिस्सूसे मेरे|
One must accumulate the causes to obtain the effect.

V. Ablative

A. Endings: Basic translation: “from”

B. Uses:

1. ORIGIN (from):
   
   milk from a cow

Secondary uses:

2. COMPARATIVE (than): almost always (rarely or )
   
   greater than that

   cherishing others more than oneself

3. INCLUSIVE (from): only

   from beginningless time

   from one to one hundred

4. SEPARATIVE (from among):

   From among the three, the first is

5. MEANS:

   attained through effort

6. REASON:

   knowing [it] as fire due to smoke

C. Non-case uses:

1. ADVERBIAL (ly):

   individually

2. PAST PARTICIPLE marker (-ed):

   Having heard, [he] thought.

3. PRESENT PARTICIPLE marker (-ing):

   Thinking, he works.
4. DISJUNCTION (whereas):

Whereas that is bliss,…

VI. Genitive

A. Endings:  

Basic translation: “of”

B. Uses:

1. POSSESSIVE (of, ‘s):
   the teacher’s book

2. ADJECTIVAL (of, which is):
   red cloth

3. APPOSITIONAL (which is):
   texts, the *Samdhinirmocana*, and so forth,…

4. TYPE (between nouns):
   king of doctrine

5. FIELD OF ACTIVITY (of):
   king of Tibet

6. POSTPOSITIONAL (of):
   because of being red

7. DESTINATION (of, to):
   path to enlightenment

8. PLACE (of):
   in front of him

9. TIME:
   today’s work [Note: also type genitive]

10. COMPOSITIONAL (of):
    a book of sūtras

11. METAPHORICAL (of):
    water of compassion

12. SEPARATIVE (of):
    the second of five paths
    the supreme of teachers
13. ORIGIN (of):

the virtue of/from giving

14. PARTICIPIAL (of):

the doctrine which the Buddha taught
the Buddha who teaches the doctrine

15. INTRANSITIVE PARTICIPIAL:

the object which appears

16. PHRASE:

a place where a yogi achieves the doctrine
reason in which the three modes are established from their own side; or reason which is such that the three modes are established from their own side

17. OBJECTIVE (indicates object):

pot’s cause

18. AGENTIVE (of, by, ’s):

pot’s effect
Buddha’s teaching

C. Non-case usage of the genitive particles:

1. CONJUNCTION (and, but):

that is red, but …

VII. Locative

A. Endings: in, at

B. Uses:

1. PLACE OF DEPENDENCE, LIVING, OR EXISTING:

in dependence on effort

2. POSSESSIVE:

I have a book.

3. REFERENCE:

Regarding that, there are three.

4. TIME:

works at seven o’clock.

5. TOPICAL:
First, if forms are divided …

VIII. Vocative

   the particles ḫ and ṁ preceding a noun with no case ending indicate a
   vocative.

B. Uses:
   ḫ ṁ O, god of gods!

**Non-Case Particles**

but, even, also

honorific particle

or what

[what a] indicates the end of the first part of a reason, “for one”

( ) or, and

( ) terminators or full stop indicators

it is said [but it is not so]

[because of what] why

connectives (like “a” or “an”); imperative

and; present and past participle indicators

[thus if] if said or asked

quote indicators with terminator

thus; quote indicators

… (ellipsis)

how
as long as ...

its, -ness, just

continuatives; present & past participle indicators

or, like

and, or, from, with, as, consisting of

that

just that, thatness, suchness, reality

such, like that, thus, in that way

those

then, from that

therefore, consequently

like that, thus, similarly

furthermore, further, moreover

therefore, hence, consequently

this

like this

having, possessing

if, when

separative, : (colon)

prefixes indicating completeness

plural markers

therefore
because, in order to, outside, later
only
negatives that precede word
negatives that follow word
furthermore, moreover
past tense indicator
very, intensifier
and, but, ; (semi-colon)
some
imperative indicator
who
et cetera, and so forth

**TENSE MARKERS**

future
present
Past

**APPLYING CASE AND NON-CASE PARTICLES**

A summary of A-ḥya-yong-dzin Yang-ḥen-ga-way-lo-drö’s Luminous Mirror, The Important Points of How to Apply Letters (yi ge’i thob thang nyer mkho rab gsal me long) on the rules for the affixing of case and non-case particles.
Cases

 accusative case, dative case, locative case, adverbial accusative

 genitive instrumental

 ablative vocative

—after
—after or secondary
—after
—fused to suffixless syllables or after
—anywhere
—used especially for the locative

—after affixed like the
—after
—after or no suffix
—to fill out verse
sometimes also ལེ་ or ལེ་

Non-Case Particles

concluding terms

affixed after like suffixes; གཞི་ is affixed after a secondary ཀ་ (which occurs only after གཞི་, but is not always actually written).

conjunctive [and disjunctive] particles “even”, “also”, “but”

—after ཁ། ཆ། ཐ། ཕ། ཙ། མ།

—after ཁ། ཆ། ཐ། ཕ། ཙ། མ།

continuatives

—after ཁ།

—after ཁ། ཆ། ཐ། ཕ། ཙ།

—after ཁ། ཆ། ཐ། ཕ། ཙ། མ། and no suffix

disjunctive and conjunctive particles: “or”, “and”

affixed after like suffixes
—after secondary suffix  clearfix

—general terms (relative pronouns)

what, who, which—used for persons and non-persons
who—used for persons
what—used for non-persons
how, like—used for examples, etc.

—terms of ownership

—after
—after or no suffix (but this rule is often not followed)

only , not , is a term of ownership, but this rule too is sometimes not followed

—terms of negation

before what is negated
after what is negated

connectives

—after and secondary
or no suffix

(after )
DIVIDING LINES

Uses of *

| —after verse; †, appositives, most meaning units, vocatives
| † —after ‡

‖ —at the end of a verse or after a terminative in prose

\\ —after large sections, chapters
### Tibetan Dictionary Order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>झ, झा, झि, झु, झू, झृ</td>
<td>Bare root letter and root letter with suffixes in this order: झ झा झि झु झू झृ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झा, झि, झु, झू, झृ</td>
<td>Root letter with vowels, in this order: झा झि झु झू झृ then suffixes, as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झा, झि, झु, झू, झृ</td>
<td>Root letter with subscription &amp; neither prefix nor superscription in this order: झा झि झु झू झृ Further alphabetization is by vowel, as above.</td>
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<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झा, झि, झु, झू, झृ, झ, झा, झि, झु, झू, झृ</td>
<td>Root letter with prefix, in this order: झा झि झु झू झृ झ झा झि झु झू झृ Further alphabetization is by vowel, then subscription, as above.</td>
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<td>etc.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>झा, झि, झु, झू, झृ</td>
<td>Root letter with superscription but no prefix, in this order: झा झि झु झू झृ झ झा झि झु झू झृ Further alphabetization is by vowel, then subscription, as above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झा, झि, झु, झू, झृ</td>
<td>Root letter with superscription and prefix. Further alphabetization is by vowel, then subscription, as above.</td>
</tr>
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<td>etc.</td>
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