

# Tibetan Transcription and Pronunciation Guide

Intro to Tibetan Literature - SALC 25200

Erin H. Epperson

ཐོག་མཚན།	<u>Wylie</u>	<u>THL Simplified Phoenetic</u>	Approximate English pronunciation <sup>1</sup>
ཀ་	ka	k	like <i>k</i> in <i>poker</i> or <i>skull</i>
ཁ་	kha	kh	like <i>c</i> in <i>cull</i> or <i>curb</i>
ག་	ga	g	like <i>g</i> in <i>gasp</i>
ང་	nga	ng	like <i>ng</i> in <i>sing</i>
ཅ་	ca	<b>ch</b>	like <i>ch</i> in <i>chair</i> (but with less aspiration!)
ཆ་	cha	<b>ch</b>	like <i>ch</i> in <i>chair</i>
ཇ་	ja	j	like <i>j</i> in <i>journey</i>
ཉ་	nya	ny	<i>ny</i>
ཏ་	ta	<b>t</b>	like <i>t</i> in <i>stop</i>
ཐ་	tha	<b>t</b>	like <i>t</i> in <i>top</i>
ད་	da	d	like <i>d</i> in <i>debt</i>
ན་	na	n	like <i>n</i> in <i>nut</i>
པ་	pa	<b>p</b>	like <i>p</i> in <i>spit</i>
ཕ་	pha	<b>p</b>	like <i>p</i> in <i>pit</i>
བ་	ba	b	like <i>b</i> in <i>bit</i>
མ་	ma	m	like <i>m</i> in <i>me</i>
ཚ་	tsa	<b>ts</b>	like <i>ts</i> in <i>patsy</i>
ཛ་	tsha	<b>ts</b>	like <i>ts</i> , but aspirated
ཎ་	dza	dz	like <i>z</i> in <i>Mozart</i> or like <i>dz</i> in <i>adze</i>
མ་	wa	w	like <i>w</i> in <i>we</i>
ཞ་	zha	zh	like <i>sh</i> in <i>show</i> (low tone)
ཟ་	za	z	like <i>s</i> in <i>sit</i> (low tone)
ང་	'a	<b>a</b>	like <i>u</i> in <i>hut</i> (low tone)
ཡ་	ya	y	like <i>y</i> in <i>year/young</i>
ར་	ra	r	world initial similar to rolled <i>r</i> ; word-final like <i>r</i> in <i>better</i>
ལ་	la	l	like <i>l</i> of <i>lap</i> or <i>low</i>
ཤ་	sha	sh	like <i>sh</i> in <i>show</i> (high tone)
ས་	sa	s	like <i>s</i> in <i>sit</i> (high tone)
ཧ་	ha	h	like <i>h</i> in <i>hello</i>
ཨ་	a	a	like <i>u</i> in <i>hut</i> (high tone)

<sup>1</sup> Pronunciation in this table does not account for either tone (low/high) or the cadence of the Tibetan language and is based in the Central Lhasa Dialect of Modern Tibetan. Approximate English pronunciations (when not created by the author) are taken from the pronunciation guide in Nicholas Tournadre and Sangdha Dorje, *Manual of Standard Tibetan* (Ithica: Snow Lion, 2003):32-37.

	Wylie/Simplified	Approximate English pronunciation
ཨི	i	like <i>ee</i> in <i>see</i>
ཨུ	u	like <i>oo</i> in <i>cool</i> ; u in <i>rune</i>
ཨེ	e	like <i>ay</i> in <i>hay</i>
ཨོ	o	like <i>o</i> in <i>so</i>

### THL Simplified Phonetic exceptions for vowels:<sup>2</sup>

#### 1. o/u + d,n,l or s → , ö/ ü.

When the vowels o and u are followed by the suffixes d, n, l, and s, they acquire an umlaut and become, respectively:

ö - like the German name Götteror ; “eu” in the French word feu

ü – like German word Rücke or the “u” of the French word rue

Ex.

bka' brgyud → Kagyü

bsod nams → Sönam

yul → yül

bon po → Bönpo

#### 2. a + d,n,l, or s → e

**Word-Final e (or e sound) → é (like ay in hay)**

Ex.

sde dge > Degé

dge rgan > gegen

ral pa can > Relpachen

tshe ring > Tsering

byes > Jé

bstan 'dzin > Tendzin

'jam dpal dbyangs > Jampelyang

### \*Online Resources\*:

For assistance with converting, try out THL's [Online Tibetan Phonetics Converter](#)

<sup>2</sup> See "[THL Simplified Phonetic Transcription of Standard Tibetan](#)" by David Germano and Nicolas Tournadre.