

# ROMANIZATION OF DZONGKHA

## BGN/PCGN 2010 AGREEMENT

This romanization system for Dzongkha was developed by the Dzongkha Development Commission. Bhutan's Ministry of Home Affairs approved this system in 1997 and mandated that the Bhutanese government use standardized spellings of geographical names and official guidelines for romanization. The tabulation shown below is derived from the version available on the UNGEGN Working Group on Romanization Systems website<sup>1</sup>. A number of fonts to display Dzongkha are available. The Bhutanese government provides several Unicode compliant fonts.<sup>2</sup>

Dzongkha	Roman	Dzongkha	Roman	Dzongkha	Roman
1. ཀ	ka	11. ད	da	21. ར	zha
2. ཁ	kha	12. ན	na	22. ལ	za
3. ག	ga	13. པ	pa	23. འ	z
4. ཅ	nga	14. ས	pha	24. ཡ	ya <sup>(c)</sup>
5. ཇ	cha	15. བ	ba, wa <sup>(a)</sup>	25. ར	ra <sup>(d)</sup>
6. ཈	chha	16. མ	ma	26. ལ	la
7. ཉ	ja	17. ཙ	tsha	27. ཤ	sha
8. ཏ	nya	18. ཚ	tsha	28. ས	sa
9. ཐ	ta	19. ཛ	dza	29. ཧ	ha
10. ད	tha	20. ཝ	wa <sup>(b)</sup>	30. ཨ	a

a) The character བ is romanized as either *ba* or *wa* depending on dialect. See special note number 1.

b) The subscript variant of the character ཝ (*wa*): ཝ is not romanized: ཀ ཁ, ད ཇ, མ ཙ.

c) The subscript variant of the character ཡ is ཡ (ya), e.g. ཡ. See syllable initial consonant combination table for romanized forms.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dzongkha.gov.bt/IT/DzongkhaTools4Unicode.en.html> Please note that BGN and PCGN do not endorse any font or font manufacturer and only provide informational resources and reference material for the users of its romanization guides.

d) The superscript variant of character ར (ra) is not romanized: ཀླ ka, རྩ da, རྩ dza. The subscript variant of this character is རྩ: see syllable initial consonant combination table for romanized forms.

**Vowels** (where ཨ stands for any consonant character):

<b>Dzongkha</b>	ཨ	ཨི	ཨུ	ཨེ	ཨོ
<b>Roman</b>	a <sup>(a)</sup>	i	u <sup>(b)</sup>	e	o <sup>(c)</sup>

a) Romanized e or ay if followed by a suffix རྩ་ན་འ་ས་

b) Romanized ue or u if followed by a suffix རྩ་ན་འ་ས་

c) Romanized oe or o if followed by a suffix རྩ་ན་འ་ས་

**Syllable-initial Consonant Combinations** (This list is not complete. Only those consonant clusters with non-standard romanizations are given. Also see “General guidelines before transliterating”.):

	Dzongkha	Roman		Dzongkha	Roman		Dzongkha	Roman		Dzongkha	Roman
1.	ཇ	cha, ka <sup>A</sup>	7.	ར	ya	13.	ཐ	thra	19.	ས	sa
2.	ཇ	chha, kha <sup>A</sup>	8.	ཇ	nya	14.	ཏ	dra	20.	ཏ	hra
3.	ཇ	ja, gya <sup>A</sup>	9.	ཏ	tra	15.	ཏ	tra	21.	འ	wa <sup>B</sup>
4.	ཏ	cha, pcha	10.	ཐ	thra	16.	ཐ	thra	22.	ཐ	da
5.	ཏ	chha, pchha	11.	ཏ	dra	17.	ཏ	dra	23.	ཏ	lha
6.	ཏ	ja, bja	12.	ཏ	tra	18.	ཏ	shra			

- A) Palatal variants *ch, chh, j* are generally used before *a, o,* and *u*.
- B) Not romanized if followed by any other vowel than *a*.

### Syllable Endings (suffixes):

	Dzongkha	Roman		Dzongkha	Roman
1.	ག	g, k or not romanized	6.	མ	m
2.	ང	ng, or not romanized	7.	འ	not romanized
3.	ར	not romanized	8.	ར	r, or not romanized
4.	ལ	n, or not romanized	9.	ལ	l, or not romanized
5.	བ	b, p	10.	ས	not romanized

### General guidelines before transliterating:

- 1) Dzongkha words are divided into syllables by a special symbol called *tsheg* ( ' ) as in the word ཐིམ་ཕུ *thim-phu: Thimphu*. Geographical names greater than three syllables are divided after the second syllable: e.g. བཀྲ་ཤིས་གྱང་ཙེ (four syllables) tra-shi-yang-tse: Trashi Yangtse.
- 2) A syllable may be composed of several elements, including prefixed, superscript, subscript and suffixed consonant characters often stacked upon one another, e.g. ལྷི་ལྷི་ལྷི་ལྷི་ལྷི་ (superscript) upon *k* upon *ya* (subscript) generating *skya*.
- 3) Prefixed consonants are not romanized, e.g. འདུང་ནག་ཀྱི་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *Dungna* [འ (prefix) འུ (root with vowel marking) ལྷོ (suffix) ' (syllable break) ལྷོ (root) ལྷོ (suffix)] and གཤམ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *Gasa* [མ (prefix) ལྷོ (root) ལྷོ (suffix) ' (syllable break) ལྷོ (root)].
- 4) Superscript consonants are not romanized with the exception of ལྷི་ལྷི་ལྷི་ལྷི་ལྷི་ *lha*, e.g. བསལ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *Sakteng* [བ (prefix) ལྷོ (root) ལྷོ (suffix) ལྷོ (secondary suffix) ' (syllable break) ལྷོ (root with superscript and vowel marking) ལྷོ (suffix)]; ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *Tangsibji* [ལྷོ (root with superscript) ལྷོ (suffix) ' (syllable break)

མི (root with vowel marking) ། (syllable break) མྱི (root with subscript, superscript, and vowel marking) ས (suffix)], but ལྷུན་ཚེ་ *Lhuentse* [ལྷ (root with subscript and vowel marking) ན (suffix) ། (syllable break) ཚེ (root with vowel marking)].

5) Suffixed consonants are romanized or not romanized based on local pronunciation, e.g. ལྷུང་ཁག་ *Drungkhag* [ལྷ (root with subscript and vowel marking) ར (suffix) ། (syllable break) ཁ (root) ག (suffix)], རབ་ལྷུག་ *Wangchhuk* [ར (prefix) བ (root) ར (suffix) ། (syllable break) ལྷ (root with subscript and vowel marking) ག (suffix)], ལྷུག་ *Ta* [ལྷ (root with superscript) ག (suffix)].

6) Secondary suffixed consonants are not romanized; however, there are exceptions, e.g. བར་མཚོ་མས་ *Bartsham* [བ (root) ར (suffix) ། (syllable break) མ (prefix) ཚོ (root) མ (suffix) མས (secondary suffix)], རྣང་ས་མུ་ *Dangchhu* [རྣ (root with subscript) ར (suffix) མ (secondary suffix) ། (syllable break) མུ (root with vowel marking)]. གཞལ་མ་སྐང་ *Zhemgang* [ག (prefix) ཞ (root) ལ (suffix) མ (secondary suffix) ། (syllable break) སྐ (root with superscript) ར (suffix)] is an exception in which the suffix is not romanized but the secondary suffix is romanized.

## Special Notes:

- 1) Pronunciation of Dzongkha names may vary according to local usage and there are several exceptions to the present romanization guidelines.
- 2) Additional characters that are found mainly in words of Indic provenance are romanized as follows:  
འ tra, ཐ thra, ཌ dra, ཎ na, ཎྲ kha, ཎྲ chha.