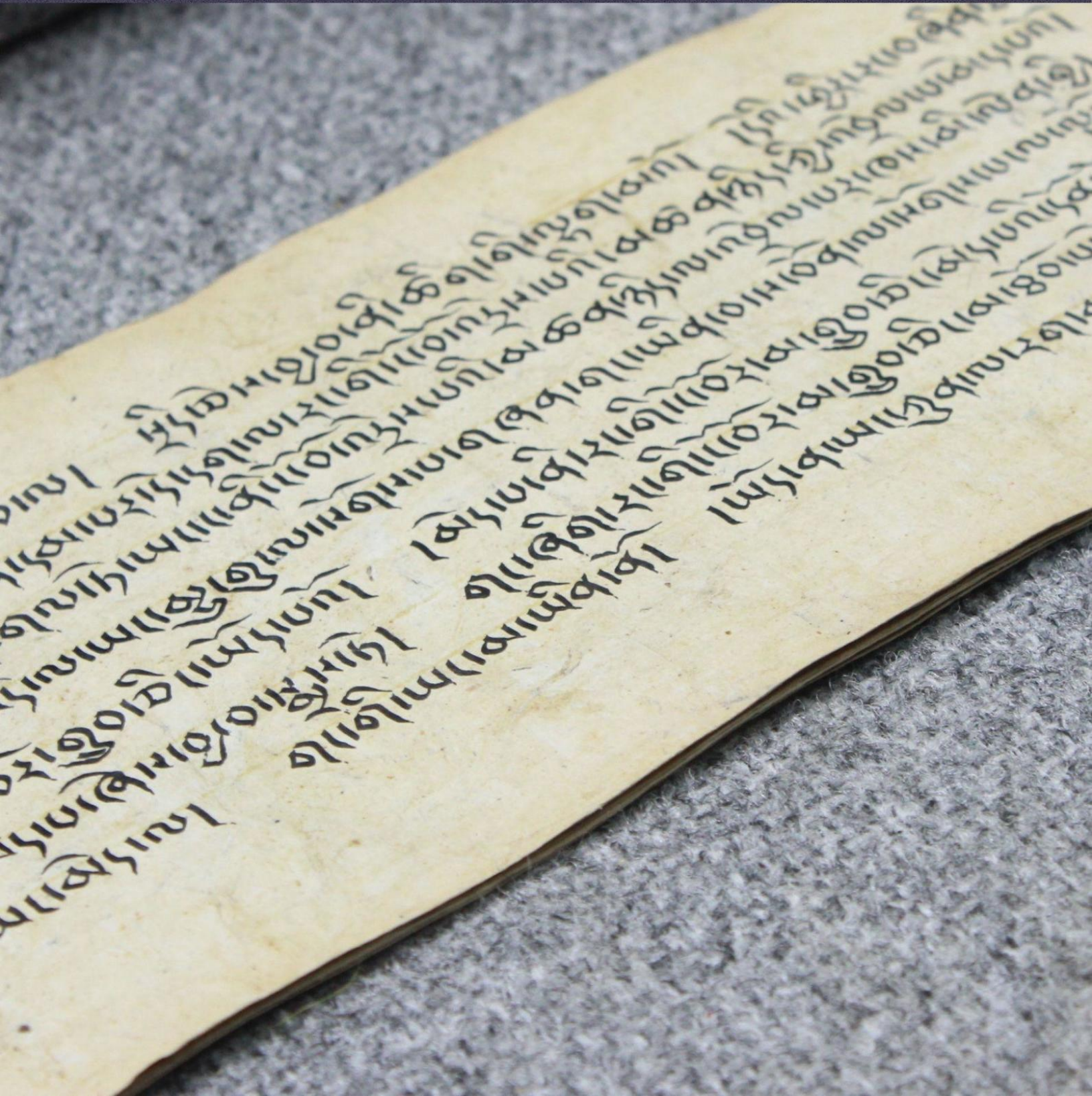


# H. A. Jäschke

## Tibetan Grammar





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[Tibetan Grammar](#)

[Part I.](#)

[Part II.](#)

[Chapter I.](#)

[Chapter II.](#)

[Chapter III.](#)

[Chapter IV.](#)

[Chapter V.](#)

[Chapter VI.](#)

[Chapter VII.](#)

[Chapter VIII.](#)

[Chapter IX.](#)

[Chapter X.](#)

[Chapter XI.](#)

[Part III.](#)

[Appendix.](#)

[Copyright](#)

# **Tibetan Grammar**

**H. A. Jäschke**

# Part I.

Phonology.

**1. The Alphabet.** The Tibetan Alphabet was adapted from the *Lañc'a* ( ལཱའྲ་ ) form of the Indian letters by *T'on-mi-sam-bho-ta* ( ཏོན་མི་བཟོ་བྱེད་ ) minister of king *Sron-tsan-gam-po* ( སྲོན་མཚན་མགྱེད་ ) about the year 632 (s. Köpp. II, 56). The Indian letters out of which the single Tibetan characters were formed are given in the following table in their Nāgari shape.

	surd.	aspir.	sonant.	nasal.
gutturals.	ཀ ཀ	ཀྲ ཀྲ	ག ག	ཀླ ཀླ
palatals.	ཇ ཇ	ཇྲ ཇྲ	ཉ ཉ	ཇླ ཇླ
dentals.	ཏ ཏ	ཏྲ ཏྲ	ཐ ཐ	ཏླ ཏླ
labials.	པ པ	པྲ པྲ	བ བ	པླ པླ
palatal sibilants.	ཅ ཅ	ཅྲ ཅྲ	ཇ ཇ	
	མ མ	མྲ མྲ	ཙ ཙ	མླ མླ
semivowels	ཡ ཡ	ལ ལ	ལ ལ	
	ཤ ཤ	ས ས	ཧ ཧ	ཨ ཨ

[2]

It is seen from this table that several signs have been added to express sounds that are unknown in Sanscrit. The sibilants ळ ळ ळ evidently were differentiated from the palatals. But as in transcribing Sanscrit words the Tibetans substitute their sibilants for the palatals of the original (as ळ ळ for ळ ळ ), we must suppose that the sibilisation of those consonants, common at present among the Hindus on the Southern slopes of the Himālaya (who say *tsār* for ळ ळ , four etc.), was in general use with those Indians from whom the Tib. Alphabet was taken (cf. also the Afghan  $\text{خ}$  and  $\text{ح}$  likewise sprung from  $\text{च}$  and  $\text{ज}$  ). ळ is differentiated from ळ , which itself often is pronounced *v* , as shewn in the sequel; in transcribing Sanscrit, ळ and ळ both are given, generally, by ळ only. ळ seems to be formed out of ळ to which it is related in sound. ळ evidently is only the inverted ळ . ळ corresponds with Sanscrit ळ . ळ is newly invented; for its functions see the following §§.—The letters which are peculiar to Sanscrit are expressed, in transcribing, in the following manner. *a* ) The linguals, simply by inverting the signs of the dentals: thus, ळ ळ , ळ ळ , ळ ळ , ळ ळ . *b* ) The sonant aspirates, by putting ळ under the sonants: thus, ळ ळ ळ , ळ ळ ळ , ळ ळ ळ , ळ ळ ळ , ळ ळ ळ

1

[3]

**2. Remarks.** 1. Regarding the pronunciation of the single letters, as given above, it is to be born in mind, that surds ळ ळ ळ are uttered without the least admixture of an aspiration, viz. as *k* , *t* , *p* are pronounced in the words *skate* , *stale* , *spear* ; the aspirates ळ ळ ळ forcibly, rather harder than the same in *Kate* , *tale* , *peer* ; the sonants ळ ळ ळ ळ ळ like *g* , *d* , *b* in *gate* , *dale* , *beer* . 2. The same difference of hardness is to be observed in ळ ळ ळ or *ç* , *ç'*

, *j* ( *ç* occurs in *church* ; *ç* , the same without aspiration; *j* in *judge* ) and in *ts* , *t's* , *ds* . 3. *ç* is the soft modification of *ç* or the *s* in *leisure* (French *j* in *jamais* , but more palatal). 4. *ç* is the English *ng* in *sing* , but occurs in Tibetan often at the commencement of a syllable. 5. *ñ* is the Hindi *ñ* , or the initial sound in the word *new* , which would be spelled *ñu* . 6. In the dialects of Eastern or Chinese-Tibet, however, the soft consonants *ç* , *ç* , *ç* , *ç* , when occurring as initials, are pronounced with an aspiration, similar to the Hindi *ç* , *ç* , *ç* , *ç* , or indeed so that they often scarcely differ from the common English *k* , *t* , *p* , *ch* ; also *ç* and *ç* are more difficult to distinguish from *ç* and *ç* than in the Western provinces (Exceptions s. §§ 7. 8 ).

**3. Vowels.** 1. Since every consonant sign implies, like its Sanscrit prototype, a following *a* , unless some other vowel sign is attached to it, no particular sign is wanted to denote this vowel, except in some cases specified in the [4] following §§. The special vowel signs are *ç* , *ç* , *ç* , *ç* , pronounced respectively as *e* , *i* , *o* , *u* are in German, Italian and most other European languages, viz. *ç* like *ay* in *say* , or *e* in *ten* ; *ç* like *i* in *machine* , *tin* ; *ç* like *o* in *so* , *on* ; *ç* like *u* in *rule* , *pull* . It ought to be specially remarked that all vowels, including *e* and *o* (unlike the Sanscrit vowels from which they have taken their signs) are short, since no long vowels at all occur in the Tibetan language, except under particular circumstances, mentioned below (s. § 9. 5

, 6 ). 2. When vowels are initial, *ç* is used as their base, as is *l* in Urdu, e.g. *ama* , 'mother'. 3. *ç* is originally different from *ç* , as the latter denotes the opening of the previously closed throat for pronouncing a vowel with that slight explosive sound which the Arabs mean by *همزة* ( *أ* ),

as the *a* in the words: the *lily*, an endogen, which would be in Tibetan characters ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ ; ལྷོ་ on the contrary is the mere vowel *without* that audible opening of the throat (as Arabic *l* without *ɛ* ), as in *Lilian* , ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ . In Eastern Tibet this difference is strictly observed; and if the vowel is *o* or *u* the intentional exertion for avoiding the sound of ལྷོ་ makes it resemble *wo* and *wu* : ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ ‘ the milk’, almost like *wo-ma* , ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ ‘ the owl’ = *wug-pa* . In western Tibet this has been obliterated, and ལྷོ་ is there spoken just like ལྷོ་ .

**4. Syllables.** The Tibetan language is monosyllabic, that is to say all its words consist of one syllable only, which indeed may be variously composed, though the [5] component parts cannot, in every case, be recognised in their individuality. The mark for the end of such a syllable is a dot, called ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *t'seg* , put at the right side of the upper part of the closing letter, such as ལྷོ་ the syllable *ka* . This *t'seg* must invariably be put at the end of *each* written syllable, except before a *śad* (§

10

), in which case only ལྷོ་ *na* retains its *t'seg* . If therefore such a dot is found after two or more consonants, this will indicate that all of them, some way or other, form *one* syllable with only *one* vowel in it: ལྷོ་ *ka-ra* , ལྷོ་ *kar* (cf. §§ 5. 8 ).

**5. Final consonants.** 1. Only the following ten: ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ (and the four with affixed ལྷོ་ , v. 5) occur at the end of a syllable. 2. It must be observed, that ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ as finals are never pronounced like the English *g* , *d* , *b* in *leg* , *bad* , *cab* , but are transformed differently in the different provinces. In Ladak they sound like *k* , *t* , *p* e.g. ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ = *sock* , ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ = *got* , ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ = *top* . 3. In all Central Tibet, moreover, final ལྷོ་ and ལྷོ་ , sometimes even ལྷོ་ , modify the sound of a preceding vowel: *a* to *ä* (similar to the English *a* in *hare* , *man* ), *o* into *o̥* (French *eu* in *jeu* ), *u* into *u̥* (French *u* in *mur* ). In most of the other provinces ལྷོ་ and ལྷོ་ are uttered so indistinctly as to be scarcely audible,

so that སོ་ལོ་ , གོ་ལོ་ become *sǒ'* , *gǒ'* . In Tsang even final ལོ་ is scarcely perceptible, and final ལོ་ , particularly after *o* , is almost dissolved into a vowel sound = a: སོ་ལོ་ *so-wa* , [6] ཀོང་ཇོ་ *kon-choa* .

2

4. Final ལོ་ is sounded as *s* only in Northern Ladak; elsewhere it changes into *i* or disappears entirely, prolonging, or even modifying at the same time the preceding vowel. Thus the following words: བའ་ལོ་ 'barley', ལོ་ལོ་ 'know', ལོ་ལོ་ 'figure', ལོ་ལོ་ 'religion', ལོ་ལོ་ 'body', are pronounced in Northern Ladak: *nās* , *šēs* , *ris* , *ç'os* , *lūs* ; in Lahoul: *nai* , *shei* , *rī* , *ç'ō* , *lū* ; in Lhasa, and consequently by everyone who wishes to speak elegantly: *nā* , *šē* , *rī* , *ç'ō* , *lū* . 5. In some words final ལོ་ occurs as a second closing letter (affix), after ལོ་ ལོ་ ལོ་ ལོ་ , as in ལོ་ལོ་ 'forest', ལོ་ལོ་ 'glacier-ice', ལོ་ལོ་ 'means', ལོ་ལོ་ 'indigo'; these are pronounced in N. Ladak: *nacks* , *gañs* , *t'aps* , *rams* , elsewhere *nack* (in Ü: *nā* ) , *gañ* (ET *ghang* ) , *t'ap* , *ram* . 6. ལོ་ before ལོ་ and ལོ་ is especially in ET very often pronounced *m* , e.g. ལོ་ལོ་ *ñām-pa* , ལོ་ལོ་ *ñöm-pa* , ལོ་ལོ་ *ñem-pa* .

**6. Diphthongs.** 1. They occur in Tibetan writing only where one of the vowels *i* , *o* , *u* have to be added to a word ending with an other vowel (s. §§

[15.1](#)

;

[33.1](#)

; 45. 2 ). These additional vowels are then always written ལོ་ལོ་ , ལོ་ལོ་ , ལོ་ལོ་ , never ལོ་ལོ་ etc. (cf. §

3. 3

); and the combinations *ai* , *oi* , *ui* (as in ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ , ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ , ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ ) are pronounced very much like *ā* , *ō* , *ū* , so that the syllables ལོ་ལོ་ , ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ , ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ , ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ , [7] ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ can only in some vulgar dialects be distinguished from those mentioned in § 5. 4. 2. The others *ao* , *eo* , *io* , *oo* , *uo* , *au* ,



*eu* , *iu* ( རྒྱུ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ , རྒྱུ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ , རྒྱུ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ , རྒྱུ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ , རྒྱུ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ , རྒྱུ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ , རྒྱུ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ ) are pronounced in rapid succession, but each vowel is distinctly audible. In prosody they are generally regarded as one syllable, but if the verse should require it they may be counted as two.

**7. Compound consonants.** 1. They are expressed in writing by putting one below the other, in which case several change their original figure.

Subscribed consonants. 2. The letter *y* subjoined to another is represented by the figure རྒྱུ་ , and occurs in connection with the three gutturals and labials, and with *m* , thus རྒྱུ་ རྒྱུ་ རྒྱུ་ རྒྱུ་ རྒྱུ་ རྒྱུ་ . The former three have preserved, in most cases, their original pronunciation *kya* , *k'ya* , *gya* (the latter in ET: *ghya* s. §

2. 6

). In the Mongol pronunciation of Tibetan words, however, they have been corrupted into *ç* , *ç'* , *ç* respectively, a well known instance of which is the common pronunciation *Kanjur* i.o. *kangyur* , or eleg. *ka-gyur* ( རྒྱུ་ལྷོ་ ). རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ are almost everywhere spoken without any difference from རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ (except in the Western dialect before *e* and *i* , where the *y* is dropped and རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ alone are pronounced). རྒྱུ་ is spoken *ny* = རྒྱུ་ . 3. *r* occurs at the foot of the gutturals, dentals, labials, of རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ , and རྒྱུ་ , in the shape of རྒྱུ་ . In some parts of the country, as in Purig, these combinations [8] are pronounced literally, like *kra* , *khra* etc., but by far the most general custom is to sound them like the Indian cerebrals, viz. རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ indiscriminately = རྒྱུ་ *t* ; རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ = རྒྱུ་ *th* ; རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ , རྒྱུ་ = རྒྱུ་ *d* (in CT: *dh* ); only in the case of རྒྱུ་ the literal pronunciation *br* is not uncommon. In རྒྱུ་ and རྒྱུ་ both letters are distinctly heard; རྒྱུ་ sounds like *shr* in *shrub* , and so does རྒྱུ་ generally. In Ü this *r* is dropped nearly in all cases: thus, རྒྱུ་ *p'a* , རྒྱུ་ *sa* etc. 4. Six letters are often found with an རྒྱུ་ beneath: རྒྱུ་ རྒྱུ་ རྒྱུ་ རྒྱུ་ རྒྱུ་ རྒྱུ་ ; in these the རྒྱུ་ alone is pronounced, except in རྒྱུ་ , which sounds *da* . 5. The figure རྒྱུ་ , sometimes found at the foot of