

## Dzongkha

### 1.

#### Current status

No romanization systems for Dzongkha have been put forward at the United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names or at sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

On 16 September 1991, a phonological romanization for Dzongkha was introduced as an official standard by the Chairman of the Dzongkha Development Commission, Minister of Finance. Roman Dzongkha, as it was called, was not intended to replace traditional Bhutanese writing, but to accurately and adequately represent the phonology of the living language and to serve as a standard for representing Dzongkha names and words in the international media. The system was further elaborated and published as a handbook *Guide to Roman Dzongkha* in 1994.

Dzongkha uses the Tibetan script ('Ucen). Relationship between the script and the pronunciation is complex and the phonological transcription cannot be reverted to its original script form.

### 5.

#### Other systems of romanization

The **official romanization (1994)** is as follows<sup>1</sup>.

#### Consonant characters

ཀ ka	ཅ ca	ཉ ta	པ pa	ཅྱ tsa	ཞ zh'a (zha)	ལ la ('la)
ཁ kha	ཆ cha	ཐ tha	ཕ pha	ཅྲ tsha	ཟ z'a (za)	ཤ sha
ག g'a (ga)	ཇ j'a (ja)	ད d'a (da)	བ b'a (ba)	ཇྱ dza	འ a	ས sa
ང nga ('nga)	ཙ nya ('nya)	ན na ('na)	མ ma ('ma)	ཨ wa	ཡ ya	ཨ ha
					ར ra	ཨ 'a

Note. Some characters have two romanizations; in that case, as general, the romanization in brackets is to be used if the character is accompanied by a prefixed letter or a superadded consonant. Apostrophe by plosives signifies devoiced or soft pronunciation; by nasals, liquids and vowels it indicates a high register tone with abrupt glottal onset.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Dzongkha* by George van Driem with the collaboration of Karma Tshering of Gaselô. Research School CNWS, School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies. Leiden, The Netherlands 1998.

**Consonant combinations** at the beginning of a syllable (the list is not complete)

ཀ	k, c <sup>1</sup>	ཁ	j' (j), bj' (bj)	ཏ	tr	ད	dr
ཁ	kh, ch <sup>1</sup>	ལ	ny	ཐ	thr	ཨ	hra
ག	g' (g), j' (j) <sup>1</sup>	ཀ	tr	ད	dr' (dr)	དབ	wa
ཕ	c, pc	ཐ	thr	ཏ	tr	ཏྱ	d
ཕ	ch, pch	ཏ	dr' (dr)	ཐ	thr	ཏྱ	lh

<sup>1</sup> palatal variants *j, j', c, ch* are generally used before *a (â), o (ô)* and *u (û)*

Note. Where there are multiple romanizations, the romanization in brackets is to be generally used if the character is accompanied by a prefixed letter or a superadded consonant.

**Vowel characters** (ཀ stands for any consonant character)

ཀ a	ཀི i	ཀུ u	ཀེ e	ཀོ o
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**Other symbols**

' syllable separation character

**Syllable endings** (the list is not complete)

ཨ	a	ཀིགས	î, i, ik	ཨམས	um	ཀིམས	em
ཀ	â, a, ak	ཀིད	î, i	ཨུ	û	ཀིར	ê
ཀགས	â, a, ak	ཀིས	î, i	ཨུལ	ü	ཀིན	en
ཀང	a, ang	ཀིང	i, ing	ཨུའི	ü	ཀོ	o, ô
ཀངས	a, ang	ཀིངས	i, ing	ཨུད	ü	ཀོག	ô, ok
ཀབ	ap	ཀིབ	ip	ཨུས	ü	ཀོགས	ô, ok
ཀབས	ap	ཀིབས	ip	ཀིན	ü	ཀོང	o, ong
ཀམ	am	ཀིམ	im	ཀི	e, i	ཀོངས	o, ong
ཀམས	am	ཀིམས	im	ཀིལ	ê	ཀོབ	op
ཀར	â	ཀིར	î	ཀིའུ	iu	ཀོབས	op
ཀའི	ai, ê	ཀིན	in	ཀིག	ê, ek	ཀོམ	om
ཀལ	ä	ཀུ	u, û	ཀིགས	ê, ek	ཀོམས	om
ཀད	ê, ä	ཀུག	û, u, uk	ཀིད	ê	ཀོར	ô
ཀས	ä, â	ཀུགས	û, u, uk	ཀིས	ê	ཀོལ	ö
ཀན	en	ཀུང	u, ung	ཀིང	e, eng	ཀོད	ö
ཀི	i	ཀུངས	u, ung	ཀིངས	e, eng	ཀོས	ö, ô
ཀིལ	î, i	ཀུབ	up	ཀིབ	ep	ཀོན	ön
ཀིའུ	iu	ཀུབས	up	ཀིབས	ep		
ཀིག	î, i, ik	ཀུམ	um	ཀིམ	em		

Note. The choice of variants depends on pronunciation. There are often exceptions to the equivalents above. The table was compiled on the basis of the rules expressed in the handbook of Dzongkha and with regard to the examples given. In addition there exist more complex syllables with consonants པ (p), མ (m) or ས (w) at the end, e.g. ཨཀཔ ap, ཨིཀཔ ip, ཨོཀཔ op, ཨརཔ âp, ཨིསཔོ ip, ཨིརཔོ êp, ཨརམ am, ཨུའུ u, etc. These are not covered here.