

Tables of Reference to Tibetan Dictionaries

BY

E. H. C. WALSH

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THE great difficulty of the Tibetan language is the spelling. This may appear strange in a monosyllabic language, but is due to there being five Prefixes (སྔོན་རྒྱུག་ *sngön-jug*), ག་ *ga*, ད་ *da*, བ་ *ba*, མ་ *ma*, ར་ *ha*, and four Head-Letters (མགོ་ཡིག་ *Go Yig*), ར་ *ra*, ལ་ *la*, ས་ *sa*, which also precede the principal letter, and one subscribed letter, ལྷ་ *wa*, which follows it, which are none of them sounded; and also that certain combinations of letters are pronounced differently to their spelling, namely the principal letters པ་ *pa* and བ་ *ba* followed by ཡ་ *ya* are pronounced as *cha*; most of the principal letters when followed by ར་ *ra* are pronounced as *ta* or *da*; and ཟ་ *za* followed by ལ་ *la* is pronounced as *da*.

The only case in which the Prefixes and Head-Letters are pronounced is by liaison when they occur in the second component word of a composite word of which the first component word ends in a vowel, e.g. བརྩ་བཞི་ *bchu-bzhi* ("fourteen") is pronounced *chubshi*, and བཞི་བརྩ་ ("forty") is pronounced as *shibchu*; and རྩ་རྗེ་ *rdo-rje* ("thunderbolt") is pronounced as *dorje*.

Consequently words of the same sound may be spelt in a variety of different ways. To take a few examples from Gould and Richardson's book *Tibetan Syllables*, which is reviewed on another page of this *Journal*, the phonetic syllable *Nga* is spelt in six different ways, *Ke* in ten, *Nye* in eleven, and *She* in thirteen. The Tibetans are, necessarily, very particular about the correct spelling, since any mistake would entirely change the meaning of a word. Lama Ugyen Gyatsho, in 1902, told me of a case which he had heard of some years before, in which the Jong-pon of an outlying Jong wrote to Lhasa for some incense (དྲི་ *dri*) which he required for the temple of the Jong. His secretary spelt the word གྲི་ *gri* "a sword", also pronounced *dri*. The Lhasa authorities were, naturally, curious to know what the swords were required for, and sent to investigate, when the mistake was discovered and the secretary was taken to Lhasa and his right thumb was cut off to teach him to be more careful in his spelling. Lama Ugyan Gyatsho did not

remember the name of the Jong, but vouched for the correctness of the story.

The Tibetans spell not only letter by letter, but also giving the phonetic sound after each combination of letters. Every Tibetan letter, unless one of the vowels *i*, *u*, *e*, *o* is attached, includes the sound of *a* (*ah*). The five Prefixed Letters are pronounced in spelling in their diminutive form: thus ཀ་ *ga-hu*, ད་ *da-hu*, བ་ *ba-hu*, མ་ *ma-hu*, ར་ *ha-hu*. The five vowels are ཨ་ *a*, ཨ་ *i* (named རྒྱ་ཀྱ་ *pr. ki-ku*); འ་ *u* (named རྒྱ་མམ་ལྷ་ *pr. shap-kyu*), ར་ *e* (named རྩེང་བུ་ *drang-bu*), and ལ་ *o* (named *na-ro*). The Subjoined Letters are called བདམས་ *btags*, pronounced *ta*, namely “fastened on”. Thus a Tibetan spells the word བཞེས་ *bgyes* “elder” as follows: “*ba-hu, ga-ra-ta, dra; dra-deng-po, dre; dre-sa, drē*” (to show that the final *s* lengthens the vowel *e*). Similarly སྤྱན་ *spyän* “eye” is spelt “*sa-pa-ta, pa; pa-ya-ta, cha; cha-na, chen*”; and བརྒྱུད་ *brgyud* “progeny” “*bahu, ra-ga-ta, ga; ga-ya-ta, gya; gya-shap-kyu, gyu; gyu-da, gyüid*.”

Gould and Richardson give a “Key-Number” to the words in their *Tibetan Word Book* and in *Tibetan Syllables* (p. x) give the following Rule for Reference to the Tibetan Dictionaries.

“A rule of thumb for quick reference to Sarat Chandra Das’s *Dictionary* is to divide the key-number by three and turn on another 80 pages for key numbers round about 2,700, but proportionately less as the key numbers recede from 2,700. For reference to Jäschke’s *Dictionary* (reprint, 1934) divide the key number by six and turn back about 35 pages.”

Apart from the fact that this system involves an arithmetical calculation in the case of each reference, the result is, naturally, only approximate, owing to the difference in the number of words beginning with the different letters.

More than forty years ago I compiled, for my own use, a Table of Reference to each of the Dictionaries, and have found them invaluable. The table gives the number of the page on which the first entry of each combination of letters occurs. And if tabs giving the number of the page be attached to the Dictionary at each 50 pages (or oftener if desired), the word can be turned up with little trouble.

TABLE OF REFERENCE TO SARAT CHANDRA DAS'S TIBETAN DICTIONARY

	VOWELS					SUBJOINED			PREFIXES					SUPERSCRIBED		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	Page	᱀ I	᱁ U	᱂ E	᱃ O	᱄ ^x Y	᱅ ^x R	᱆ ^x L	᱇ [*] G	᱈ [*] D	᱉ [*] B	᱊ [*] M	᱋ H	᱌ ^x R	ᱍ ^x L	ᱎ ^x S
᱁ ka	1	15	16	30	32	37	40	43	—	49	59	—	—	72	80	81
᱂ kha	123	144	144	149	151	155	166	—	—	—	—	178	186	—	—	—
᱃ ga	203	218	219	223	224	233	237	253	—	262	278	282	288	301	—	319
᱄ nga	345	352	352	353	355	—	—	—	—	358	—	361	—	367	370	371
᱅ cha	378	381	382	383	384	—	—	—	385	—	390	—	—	—	396	—
᱆ ohha	402	412	413	423	426	—	—	—	—	—	—	433	440	—	—	—
᱇ ja	447	448	449	449	450	—	—	—	—	—	—	450	452	463	469	—
᱈ nya	472	478	483	484	489	—	—	—	490	—	—	495	—	497	—	499
᱉ ta	512	514	517	518	518	—	519	—	520	—	528	—	—	530	540	546
᱊ tha	563	575	577	584	588	—	—	—	—	—	—	596	605	—	—	—
᱋ da	610	624	625	635	639	—	646	—	658	—	664	672	677	699	708	713
᱌ na	725	740	741	742	743	—	—	—	747	—	—	754	—	755	—	765
ᱍ pa	775	782	783	785	785	—	786	—	—	787	—	—	—	—	795	795
ᱎ pha	815	822	822	826	827	830	842	—	—	—	—	—	845	—	—	—
ᱏ ba	858	869	870	875	877	880	894	899	—	906	—	—	916	935	935	935
᱐ ma	945	955	966	969	974	978	—	—	—	980	—	—	—	984	—	988
᱑ tsa	995	998	999	999	999	—	—	—	1000	—	1003	—	—	1006	—	1016
᱒ tsha	1017	1025	1027	1029	1032	—	—	—	—	—	—	1036	1042	—	—	—
᱓ dsa	1047	1048	1048	1049	1049	—	—	—	—	—	—	1049	1051	1056	—	—
᱔ wa	1061	1062	1062	1063	1063	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
᱕ zha	1064	1069	1072	1074	1076	—	—	—	1077	—	1084	—	—	—	—	—
᱖ za	1088	1094	1095	1096	1097	—	—	1099	1102	—	1109	—	—	—	—	—
᱗ ḥa	1114	—	1115	—	1116	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
᱘ ya	1123	1132	1138	1142	1143	—	—	—	1149	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
᱙ ra	1159	1172	1185	1189	1192	—	—	1195	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
ᱚ la	1200	1212	1214	1218	1220	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
ᱛ sha	1226	1233	1239	1241	1245	—	—	—	1247	—	1252	—	—	—	—	—
ᱜ sa	1255	1267	1270	1273	1280	—	1286	1298	1302	—	1316	—	—	—	—	—
ᱝ ḥa	1325	1328	1328	1329	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1331	—
ᱞ a	1341	1349	1349	1351	1352	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Column 1 of the table gives the single initial letters in their order; columns 2 to 5 give the same letters combined with each of the vowels; columns 6 to 8 the same letters when combined with the subjoined letters (Y, R, L); columns 9 to 13 the single letters when they are preceded by each of the prefixes; and columns 14 to 16 when they are combined with the Head-Letters (R, L, S).

One other letter, ལ་ *wa*, is subjoined to the single letter, as ལ (named ལ་ཟུར་ *wa-zur*, “*wa* at the side”). It is not shown separately in the table, as it occurs in very few words, and will be found at the end of the entries of the Single Letter of column 1 immediately before the first vowel that occurs. Another letter, ཨ་ *ha*, is written below, in the case of Sanskrit words transliterated in Tibetan, to represent the inherent *a* of the Sanskrit letters, but is not separately pronounced.

Jäschke's *Dictionary* has been reprinted in 1934, but each page of the reprint is identical with the original dictionary of 1881, so the table applies equally to both.

Jäschke's *Dictionary* contains 673 pages, Sarat Chandra Das's *Dictionary* contains 1,353 pages. I have noted the differences between these two Dictionaries elsewhere.¹ For the present purpose it will be sufficient to note that the extra matter in Sarat Chandra Das's *Dictionary* consists of:—

(1) A large number of new literary words and authorities, and examples of their use compiled by Sarat Chandra Das.

(2) A collection of Sanskrit equivalents to the literary words, made by Dr. A. Schiefner. These are marked by an asterisk.

(3) Sanskrit Synonyms added by Pandit Satis Chandra Acharya Vidyabhusana.

(4) A large number of fresh authorities for previously existing literary words and examples of their use.

(5) A number of current words collected by Sarat Chandra Das, with examples of their use.

(6) A certain number of additional words added by the revisers. It is a pity that these and the preceding were not marked by some distinguishing sign.

(7) Philosophical explanations of Buddhistic religious terms.

(8) Information of what may be termed an encyclopædic character.

¹ “The Tibetan Language and Recent Dictionaries,” by E. H. C. Walsh, *J.A.S.B.*, vol. lxxii, Part 1, No. 2, 1903.