

Wörterbücher Dictionaries Dictionnaires

Ein internationales Handbuch zur Lexikographie
An International Encyclopedia of Lexicography
Encyclopédie internationale de lexicographie

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251. Tibetan Lexicography

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1. Introduction

The Tibetan alphabet was created during the 7th century based on a northern form of the Indian Gupta alphabet. It consists of 30 consonants and 4 vowels, the vowel "a" being unwritten—implicit if none of the other written vowels appear. The language is read from left to right and includes a number of different scripts (e.g. cursive, block printed, headless).

2. Early Dictionaries

The earliest Tibetan dictionary is contained in the *Bstan 'gyur* (Tengyur), the great Buddhist commentary on the Kangyur which was written about the time of *Khri ral pa can* (Tri Repajen), i.e. the early 9th century. This has two chapters known as *sgro sbyong bam po gnyis pa* (Drojong bambo nyiba). The first is concerned with translating Sanskrit into Tibetan. The second, known as *chos kyi rnam grangs* (chöki namdrang) is a Sanskrit to Tibetan dictionary of religious terms.

Since that work, scores of indigenous Tibetan dictionaries have been compiled. These can be categorized into six broad classes:

- (a) Those that are specialized by topic, e.g., for religious or medical terms.
- (b) Those limited to the vocabulary used in a single text. These were compiled to facilitate comprehension of that particular text, and are usually called *brda bkrol* (*dadrö*) or *brda 'grol* (*dadrö*). Some examples of the texts

for which such *brda bkrol* exist are: (a) *sa skya legs bshad* (Sakya legshe), (b) *lam rim chen mo* (Lamrim chemmo), (c) *chu shing bstan bcos* (chushing denjö), (d) *be bum rngon po* (bebum ngönbo), (e) *'dul ba'i gling 'bum* (dülwe lingbum), (f) *'jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i phar phyin dang dbu ma'i brda bkrol* (Jamyang Shepe parchin dang ume dadrö).

(c) General dictionaries that contain explanations and definitions. The most famous classical examples of these are: (a) *dag yig ngag sgron* (Tayi ngagdrön) compiled by Dpal sgang lo tsa ba (Began lotsawa) at the time of the 3rd Dalai Lama (1543—88). (b) *dag yig sgron gsal* (Tayi drönsel) compiled by Bra sti dge bshes rin chen don grub (Drati geshe rinchen döndrup) at the time of the 7th Dalai Lama (1708—57). (c) *dag yig za ma tog* (Tayi samatog) compiled by Zhwa lu chos skyong bzang po (Shalu chögyong sangbo) at the time of the 2nd Dalai Lama (1475—1542).

(d) Dictionaries specialized to aid in spelling, i.e., they do not include any definition of terms. They are usually called *dag yig* (tayi), but this term is also used for a real dictionary containing definitions.

(e) Dictionaries for reading or translating from other languages, i.e., Mongolian, Chinese, Sanskrit, and Manchu. One of the most famous of these is the Chinese-Manchu-Tibetan dictionary *dag yig mkhas pa'i byung gnas* (Tayi kebe chungne) compiled by Lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rje (Janggya röbe dorje) during the reign of the Ch'ien lung Emperor (1736—96). Another is the 4 volume Chinese-Manchu-Mongolian-Tibetan dictionary known as *gsung rab kyi tshig mdzod* (Sungrab gi tshingdzö). A third famous one is the Tibetan to Sanskrit dictionary called *kaa li'i*

phreng bsgrigs. It was compiled by Zhwa lu mchod dpon yon tan 'byung gnas during the reign of the 7th Dalai Lama (1708—57).

These bilingual dictionaries were often restricted to a particular lexical genre, for example, medicine, as in the Chinese-Tibetan dictionary of medical terms known as *sman ming rgya bod shan sbyar*. It was compiled by Sog po lo tsaä ba mgon po skyobs during the reign of the 8th Dalai Lama (1758—1804).

(f) Dictionaries of ancient terms. One of the most famous of these is the *brda gsar rnying gi rnam gzhag le shi'i gur khang* written by Phyongs ston rin chen bkra shis in 1476.

The early Tibetan dictionaries and spelling aids had no organized system of internal alphabetization and were written with the intent that the user would memorize the entire volume rather than use it as a reference book. In other words, lexical entries were not listed in alphabetical order. This is not surprising given the emphasis on memorization in the monastic education system, but it is also in part due to the complex nature of syllables in the Tibetan language.

The structure of Tibetan syllables makes alphabetization complicated because the initial letter (the first one written) is often not the root letter. For example, the root letter of the three syllables *gi*, *rgyal* and *bsgrubs* is "g" and all three would be alphabetized under "g" in the contemporary system of lexical alphabetization. This complexity results from prefixed, affixed, subjoined and final letters being attached in various combinations to a root letter. These various combinations affect pronunciation making it widely divergent from spelling. For example, whereas *gi* is pronounced (gi), *rgyal* is pronounced (gye), and *bsgrubs* is pronounced (drup). This, in turn, explains the need for specialized spelling texts.

Bsgrubs illustrates all of the possible letter slots in syllables (Fig. 251.1 and 251.2).

Traditional Tibetan lexical alphabetization is illustrated by one of the most famous indigenous dictionaries, the 16th century *Dag yig ngag sgron gyi rtsa ba* (Tayi ngagdrön gi

dzawa) compiled by Dpal khang lo tsaä ba (Began lotsawa). It contained separate sections for each of the thirty letters in the Tibetan alphabet, but did not contain any form of internal alphabetization based on prefixed, affixed, subjoined and final letters beyond that. In other words, *gi*, *rgyal* and *bsgrubs* were grouped under "g", but all the words beginning in "rg" were not listed together nor were those starting with "bsg".

By the 18th century, alphabetization had become more sophisticated and lexical items were grouped within each of the thirty "root" letters based on the system of prefixes and affixes, e.g. all the "kh" words before all the "khy" words before all the "khr" words. However, there was still no ordering within these subsections, i.e., within all the words starting with "khy".

3. Modern Dictionaries

The Western tradition of Tibetan dictionaries began in 1834 with the publication of a Tibetan-English dictionary compiled by the Hungarian Alexander Csoma de Körös. This appears to be the first time the modern system of alphabetization was utilized. This pioneering work was followed by H. A. Jaschke's excellent Tibetan-English dictionary in 1881, and soon after that in 1902, by S.C. Das' Tibetan-English Dictionary, and in 1905 by Bell's English-Tibetan colloquial dictionary.

The first modern dictionary compiled in Tibet was Geshe Chödrak's *brda dag ming tshig gsal ba bzhugs so*. It was completed in 1946 and carved into wood blocks in 1949. It is the first indigenous dictionary to use a modern system of alphabetization. It was printed in Western book format with Chinese glosses in 1957.

Over the past 25 years, a number of substantial new dictionaries have appeared in Tibet, China and the West. All of these follow the modern format of dictionaries and include both detailed alphabetization and definitions. Some of the most important of these

1. block printed ("big head"): འགྲུབ་སྒྲུབ་
2. cursive: འགྲུབ་སྒྲུབ་
3. headless: འགྲུབ་སྒྲུབ་

Fig. 251. 1: The word *bsgrubs* in different scripts

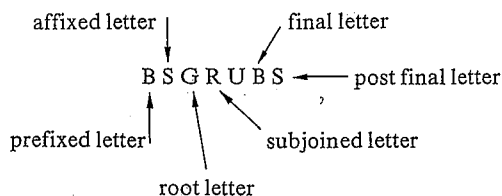


Fig. 251.2: Letter slots analysis of *bsgrubs*

are: Melvyn C. Goldstein's *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Modern Tibetan* and *English-Tibetan Dictionary of Modern Tibetan*, Eberhardt Richter's *Tibetan-German Dictionary*, N. Roerich's *Tibetan-Russian-English Dictionary*, B. V. Semichov's (et al.) *Tibetan-Russian Dictionary*, Yu Dao-chu's *Tibetan Chinese Dictionary of Colloquial Lhasa Tibetan*, and the new three volume Tibetan-Tibetan-Chinese dictionary recently published in 1985 in China (Zhang, 1985).

China's post-Cultural Revolution reform policies have led to a resurgence of interest in Tibetan language in Tibet (now the Tibet Autonomous Region) and surrounding areas with large ethnic Tibetan populations such as the Qinghai and Sichuan Provinces. Many traditional dictionaries and other Tibetan language books have been republished, and a variety of Tibetan language magazines have appeared.

Some variance in terms has developed between the Tibetan refugees living outside of China and Tibetans in Tibet with the former adopting a number of English and Hindi terms where the latter have adopted Chinese terms. For example, whereas the Tibetans in exile use "rediyó" for radio, the Tibetans in Tibet generally use the Chinese term "hruyinji". By and large, though, these are relatively minor and neither of these Tibetan language communities has any difficulty communicating with the other in speech or writing, nor is it likely that this will become a problem in the future.

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252. Burmese Lexicography

1. Pali-Burmese Dictionaries
2. Burmese-Burmese Dictionaries
3. Dictionaries of Burmese and Modern Foreign Languages
4. Features of Burmese that Affect Lexicography
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1. Pali-Burmese Dictionaries

The Burmese embraced Theravāda Buddhism in the 11th century, and have a strong tradition of scholarship in Pali, the classical language in which the sacred texts are writ-

ten. The Burmese word for dictionary, *abhidhān*, is itself derived from the name of a Pali dictionary of synonyms, the *Abhidhānappadīpikā* (Moggallāna 12th cent.). (S. art. 247.) Despite — or perhaps because of — the abundance of editions, commentaries and translations of Pali texts that Burmese scholars produced over the centuries, alphabetically ordered Pali-Burmese dictionaries were late to appear. One of the earliest was written in the mid 19th century (Mra-toñ 1927), and the most recent is a comprehensive work in 9 large volumes (Mran-mā Sāsanā 1975).