XVIII.—ON DIPHTHONGS IN THE CHINESE LANGUAGE. By the Rev. Joseph Edkins, Missionary at Peking. [Written at Peking, August, 1872.]

On inspecting the syllabary of this language, there is, at first view, a vast extension of simple vowels into diphthongs. This arises from the nature of the Chinese syllable. It is very limited in regard to its initial and its final, and this restriction is counterbalanced by liberty of expansion in the medial part of words.

The old word *gak* 'instruct,' 'learn,' 'instruction,' has become *hio* and *hiau* 'instruction,' *kiau* 'instruct,' *hiau* 'imitate.' When the final *k* was dropped, it became necessary, for equilibrium's sake, to lengthen the vowel: *i* was inserted and *u* added. Further, *g* became *h*. The Hebrew equivalent of this root is *hakam* 'to be wise,' where Fürst points out that the final *m* is not a part of the primary root.

Another example is *kok* 'high,' a word which in remote antiquity was strikingly like the German *hoch* and our *high*, but has now become in the Mandarin language *kau*. Here we see the addition of the vowel *u* in place of the lost final *k*. The Amoy sound is *ko*, that of Shanghai is *kó* (Eng. *a* in *hall*).

Here we meet a principle which occurs in ancient and modern Chinese. When the final consonant is dropped, the medial vowel becomes a diphthong; just as when a bud bursts, the flower assumes larger dimensions.

In modern Chinese *kok* 'horn' has dropped *k*, and become *kiau*. The recency of this change will be understood from the fact that the sound *kok* is still heard in the Shanghai *patois*. The sound *kiau* is modern Pekinese, in which dialect, moreover, there is a curious effect of the intrusion of *i*. It causes the initial *k* to be sounded nearly like *ch*. In this word there has been both the insertion of an *i* and the addition of *u*. The principle of insertion here exemplified is very prevalent in Chinese. A tendency is perceptible to insert *i*, *u*, and *e*. I shall first speak of *i* and *u*.

The vowels *i* and *u*, as in languages generally, assume a

consonantal form when initial, if they precede a vowel. So in Chinese they have a sort of consonantal power when inserted between the initials *k*, *h*, and a vowel. Thus in *kwa* 'a melon,' reduced from *kut* or *kat* (our 'gourd'), the letter *w* is *u* with a consonantal force. In *quantum* we call *ua* a diphthong. Yet it is no more so than the *wa* in *want, war, was.* It is true of Chinese, as it is of English and Latin, that *u* becomes consonantal when it stands between an initial *k* and a vowel.

When, further, we recollect such words as the English *between*, the French *ennui* and *depuis*, and the Amoy *twa*^{9} 'great' (Mandarin *ta*), it becomes clear that, if we embrace in our inquiries a wide horizon of languages and dialects, the same law extends itself to most of the initials. Any one language does not like the great extension of syllables that would result from this law fully carried into operation. For example, the Frenchman prefers to omit the inserted *u* in *qui, que, quand,* rather than enunciate a *w* in that position. But if the initial consonant is *p*, he has no such objection. There is a similar caprice in the Amoy dialect. After *t* the letter *w* is heard full and clear. The same is true of *p* in a less degree. But when *h* or *k* is the initial, the dialect prefers in some cases a true diphthong, as in *kui* 'a ghost.' Here the vowel-sound of *u* is so distinct that the monosyllable actually becomes a dissyllable. In the Tiechiu dialect are found the syllables *kue, hue, kui, hui, kwat, hwat, kwak, hwak, hwap.* The law reveals itself here with sufficient distinctness. When *e* or *i* follows, *u* remains *u*. When *a* follows, *u* becomes *w*. By the Tiechiu speaker, the English *quack* would be pronounced well, except that he would make the *a* broader than we do. But he would pronounce our word *quick* as a dissyllable *qu-ick*, allowing the voice to rest on *u*, as if he were saying *coo*.

There is in Mandarin a large group of syllables where *u* after the initial letter remains a vowel. I may be mistaken in some of the following syllables, but they are nearly correct: *sui, shui, chui, tui, tsui, lui, jui, nui*; *soan, loan, noan, joan, tsoan, yuen.* It may be noticed here that *o* sometimes

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trespasses on the ground of *u*. The remainder of the syllables belonging to these categories are better written with *w*. Such are *kwei*, *kwan*, *hwei*, *hwan*, *chwen*, *shwen*. In these last two syllables the *e* is an imperfect representative of a vowel which would be more correctly written *eu*, pronounced as in the French *jeune*.

In syllables such as *kwang*, *shwang*, there is no diphthong: *w* is here consonantal without doubt.

I proceed to the inserted *y* or *i*. The consonantal value is much more common than the vowel. Thus in *kia* 'house,' 'cottage,' the *i* is in fact *y*. The voice rests on *a*, leaving *i* to be viewed as a part of a compound initial, which may be written *ky* if any one so pleases.

In the following syllables the inserted *i* retains its character as a vowel, and receives upon it the stress of the vowel-sounding breath: *lien*, *mien*, *nien*, *sien*, *yien*, etc. In all these cases *ie* is a true diphthong, even in the last, though written by all authorities *yen*. Since all agree in so writing this syllable, it is better to continue writing it so. I merely point out that there is a diphthong here, and that *y* precedes it.

In other syllables the inserted *i* is really a consonant. Thus in *siuen*, *kiuen*, *hiuen*, *tsiuen*, the inserted *i* is *y*, and the *ue* following is a diphthong. To state the true quality of this diphthong is difficult. Perhaps it is *ü* and *e*, or it may be *ö* (Ger.) and *e*, or *eu* (Fr.) and *e*.

The *e* just referred to comes into several syllables as an inserted vowel after the initial. The diphthong *eu* rhyming with our *cow*, *how*, *now*, is an example to the point. Here the true value of the *e* appears, but not in such a form as to be well represented in English. Some write for it the *a* of *America*. When *eu* occurs after *ki*, *si*, *ti*, etc., as in *kieu* 'save,' we have no true triphthong. The *i* is *y*, and the initial compound.

The vowel *a*, pronounced broadly, as *a* in *father*, lends great distinctness to Chinese syllables, and enters into two common diphthongs. Thus *au*, *ai*, occur in *chai*, *chau*, *kai*, *kau*, *shai*, *shau*, etc. By the old dictionaries we know that *au* is developed from *o*, and *ai* from *a* or *é*.

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To state the result of this inquiry in brief—the Chinese true diphthongs are eight, *ai, au, eu, ei, ie, ui, ue* or *oa*. There are no true triphthongs. The false diphthongs and triphthongs are *iau* (*yau*), *ie* (*ye*), *iue* (*yue*), *ia* (*ya*).

Among these, those which have not been explained are few. In *mie, tie,* we have really *ye* following *m* in one case, and *t* in the other. In *yue* 'the moon,' and *kiue* 'to fix,' we have a diphthong *ue* preceded by *y*.

In the Amoy and Tiechiu dialects there are a few more true diphthongs: *ia* sometimes occurs with a vowel value to *i*, as in *kiang*, consisting of *kia*, followed by a nasal *ng*, 'little boy.' *oi* occurs in *koi* and other syllables.

In English, *cow, sow,* contain the Chinese diphthong *eu*.

The English *fly, sigh, nigh,* as pronounced by some persons, contain the Chinese *ai*, but as pronounced by others they contain the Greek and Chinese *ei*.

The English *oi*, in *toy, boy, alloy,* is not in Mandarin Chinese, but occurs in dialects. The same is true of the *ae* in *clayey*.

The diphthong in *Louis* (*Lewis*) is a very common one in Chinese (*ui*).

The *oa* in the words *boa* and *Boanerges* is the Chinese diphthong heard in *loan* 'confused,' *noan* 'soft.'

The English *oi* in the word *showy* occurs in Chinese dialects, but not in Mandarin.

The English diphthongs I have now enumerated are seven in number. I cannot recall any more. Among them are not found the *au, ue,* and *ie* of the Chinese syllabary.

A word like *beauty* is said in some English grammars to contain a triphthong. In fact, the first syllable is *byu*. I only speak here of true English diphthongs. Perhaps there is no true triphthong in any language.

It is open for consideration whether the origin of the English diphthongs *ai* and *ei*, as heard in *lie, sigh, die, pie, shy,* may not be compensation for the dropping of a final letter. Among these words, *die* has lost final *d*, appearing in the German *tödten*. The rest have all lost *g* or *k*. A principle occurring in Chinese in the formation of

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diphthongs may also occur in English. With regard to diphthongs generally, I propose with diffidence the following laws.

1. When a new vowel is *prefixed* to another vowel, it is through an instinctive effort of language to add new strength and variety to a decaying syllabary. E.g., when *ko* 'high' became *kau* in China, a change we know to have happened within the last 1500 years, the result was that the syllable then called *ko* was kept distinct from other syllables with which it would have been confounded. In this example, I suppose *u* to be *o* and *a* to have been inserted.

2. When a new vowel is *appended* to another vowel, it is not seldom to supply the place of some lost consonant. E.g., *annoy* and the French *annoyer* are the same word, and come from the Latin *noceo*. Here the English *i* and French *y* take the place of an old final *k*. The Chinese *mie* 'to destroy,' pronounced *myé* (*e* as in *there*), is from an older *mit* 'destroy,' the same, I suppose, as the Latin *morior*, where *r* takes the place of *t*, and the Hebrew *moth* 'die.' Though the Chinese *i* is consonantal, that makes no difference to the law.

3. A prefixed vowel, whether inserted or initial, has a tendency to become a consonant, either by changing *u* and *i* into *w* and *y*, or, if the vowel be *a*, *e*, or *o*, by prefixing *w* or *y* to such vowel.

XIX.—NOTES ON THE WOOLWA AND MOSQUITO VOCABULARIES. By Dr. R. S. Charnock, and Dr. C. Carter Blake.

In the third volume of the Memoirs of the Anthropological Society of London, p. 148, appears a paper by Mr. John Collinson, C.E., F.L.A.S., to which are appended vocabularies of the Woolwa and Mosquito languages. I am indebted to my friend Dr. R. S. Charnock, P.L.A.S., for some of the following observations on these vocabularies. As the chance of further information on the Mosquito language is now become exceedingly small, owing to the death of Dr.

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