

Lesson 3 Handout

Week 2: 12 September 2023

Diphthong Vowels




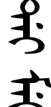






In Manchu, you will often see two vowels next to each other. The most common combinations are ones where the second vowel is an *i* or an *o*.

ㄣ VOWEL PLUS *i*: When *i* follows a vowel it typically represents a glide like the English/pinyin letter *y* (IPA: [j]). So *bai* is pronounced like Mandarin 白 or English ‘bye’, *bei* is pronounced like Mandarin 贝 or English ‘bay’, and so on. There are two exceptions to this:






- (1) a. Words where the vowel-*i* sequence is followed by a coda (other than the ending *mbi*) — in these cases, the two vowels are pronounced as different syllables: *sai* is pronounced as one syllable [saj], while *sain* is pronounced as two syllables [sa(j)in].
- b. The sequence *ui* is ambiguous between a [uj] and [wi] sequence.
- c. The sequence *ii* represents [i], but is used only in loan words.

Medially, an *i* written after a vowel is written as two long strokes (or, in rarer typefaces, as a tooth and a long stroke); word finally it appears as a typical word final *i*.

The sequences *ai*, *ei*, *oi*, *ui*, *ūi* are all commonly seen in native Manchu words, and *ii* can be seen used in loanwords.

<i>baibi</i>	<i>hobai</i>	<i>beile</i>	<i>dai mei</i>	<i>koloi</i>
				
with no purpose	printed calico	ruler	tortoise shell	furrow
<i>sain</i>	<i>bii</i>	<i>duin</i>	<i>hūi kui</i>	<i>ai</i>
				
good	throne	four	hui kui rank (會魁)	what

ㄣ VOWEL PLUS *o*: When *o* follows a vowel it typically represents a glide like the English/pinyin letter *w* (IPA: [w]). This means that the sequence *oo* is pronounced [ɔw], like English ‘ow’, or Mandarin 奥. The sequence *eo* is pronounced like English ‘oh’, or Mandarin 欧. Primarily, *o* appears after *o* or *e*, but in principle can occur after any vowel (especially in inflected verbs and sentence final particles, where the suffix *-o* denotes polar question meaning).

<i>leolen</i>	<i>moo</i>	<i>deo</i>	<i>kooli</i>	<i>nio</i>
				
conversation	wood	younger brother	norm, custom	question particle



☞ **THE TRIPHTHONG *ioi*:** Manchu uses *ioi* to represent the Mandarin sound [y], written as pinyin *yu*, as in 雨 or 玉.






ioi han

 Jade Emperor

Letters *f*, *w*






Manchu *w* only occurs before *a* and *e*. When the letter *f* precedes any vowel other than *a* or *e*, it is written identically to *w*. It looks unique prior to *a* and *e*, with an extra stroke. The sound of *f* is voiced in between vowels in Manchu, to make a [v] sound.

Möllendorff	Pronunciation Guide	Before <i>a</i> , <i>e</i>	Otherwise
<i>w</i>	[w] Like English of Mandarin pinyin <i>w</i>		
<i>f</i>	[v] Like English <i>v</i> [f] Like English or Mandarin pinyin <i>f</i>	between vowels otherwise	

<i>fe</i>	<i>fi</i>	<i>walda</i>	<i>gūwa</i>	<i>anafu</i>
				
old	pen	base, vile, disgusting	other	border garrison

Letter *ng*







ng is a special combination of *n* and the ‘soft’ *k*. Its form does not vary depending on the vowel quality of following or preceding sounds. Be careful — when the *ng* is followed by a *n* or uvular *k*, *g*, *h*, the first ‘tooth’ of those letters is incorporated into the *ng*.

<i>angga</i>	<i>engge</i>	<i>denglu</i>	<i>monggo</i>	<i>hūtung</i>
				
mouth	bird's beak	lantern	Mongol(ia)	alley, lane

ng is pronounced as [ŋ] (transcribed typically in English or Mandarin pinyin *ng*), or [ŋ] if it precedes a uvular consonant. If *ng* is followed by a *g*, the second *g* is pronounced like *ng*, meaning that *ngg* clusters sound more like the [ŋ] in English *singer* than the [ŋg] in English *finger*.

Letters *s*, *š*






The letters *s*, *š* change their pronunciation based on context. There are two changes: they voice between vowels (like we've seen with *f* and *h*), but also *s* sounds like a pinyin *x* before the letter *i*. The letter *š* looks identical to *s* with the addition of a stroke to the left of the character; this specific stroke is called a *šaka*.

Möllendorff	Pronunciation Guide			Init.	Med.	Fin.
s	[ʒ]	Like English <i>s</i> in vision	between vowels, before <i>i</i>			
	[ç]	Pinyin <i>x</i>	otherwise before <i>i</i>			
	[z]	English <i>z</i>	otherwise between vowels			
	[s]	English/pinyin <i>s</i>	otherwise			
š	[ʒ]	Like English <i>ge</i> in garage	between vowels			
	[ʃ]	Pinyin <i>sh</i>	otherwise			

Because *s* is pronounced like pinyin *x* before the letter *i*, the sequence *si* would be pronounced like Mandarin *xi* 西.

When *š* is followed by the letter *i*, the vowel *i* changes its quality to become more central, like [ɨ] — the result is that the sequence *ši* sounds identical to the Mandarin *shi* 十.

The letter *š* often also transliterated as *x* for ease. A note of warning: transliterating *š* as *sh* will create ambiguities: *sh* is a normal sequence in Manchu, pronounced like a *s* followed by a *h*, as in *tasha* ‘tiger’.







<i>singgembi</i>	<i>ši ging</i>	<i>faššan</i>	<i>tasha</i>	<i>sasukū</i>
				
to soak	the Shijing	effort	tiger	mahjong tiles

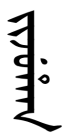
Letters *c*, *j*, *y*, *r*

The last set of letters used for native words in the Manchu alphabet are *c*, *j*, *y*, *r*, all relatively simple letters, though in quick handwriting they may be confused for one another — many scribes will not distinguish between a medial *j* and a medial *i*, or may also write *y* and *j* similarly.

The letters *c* and *j* have two different predictable pronunciations: before *i*, they sound like pinyin *q* and *j* respectively, and anywhere else, they are pronounced like pinyin *ch* and *zh* respectively.

Out of these four, only *r* is found word finally; *r* almost never occurs word initially. Manchu *r* is pronounced with a roll, like Spanish *rr*. It is important to distinguish this from an American English *r*, which sounds like Manchu syllable final *l* (compare *elden* to *erdeni*).

Möllendorff	Pronunciation Guide			Initial	Medial	Final
<i>c</i>	[tɕ/tɕʰ] [tʂ/tʂʰ]	Pinyin <i>q</i> Pinyin <i>ch</i>	before <i>i</i> otherwise			
<i>j</i>	[dʒ/tɕ] [dz/tʂ]	Pinyin <i>j</i> Pinyin <i>zh</i>	before <i>i</i> otherwise			
<i>y</i>	[j]	English/pinyin <i>y</i>				
<i>r</i>	[r]	Rolled <i>r</i>				

jijuhan

trigram or
hexagram

icihiyambi

to manage

buyecuke

cute

arsalangga

lion-like

fiyeren

fissure
(in the earth)

kafur

decisive
(ideo.)

The Abkai transliteration system uses *q* in place of Möllendorff *c*. This is more in line with general ‘non-Chinese pinyin transcription systems’. Buleku uses *q* as the romanized letter for Möllendorff *c*, but unlike *v* for *ū* and *x* for *š*, *q* is not generally accepted as a substitute for *c* in Möllendorff.

Practice

Please transcribe the following words into the Möllendorff romanization.

