

# Manchu A Syllabus

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CLASS LOCATION:

Harvard Hall 102

CLASS TIME:

Tuesday and Thursdays 1:30 – 2:45 PM

INSTRUCTOR:

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OFFICE HOURS:

TBD

Manchu (Manchu: ᡤᡠᡩᡠ ᡤᡠᡵᡠᡩᡠ *manju gisun* [mandzu kizun]) is a Tungusic language, sometimes considered to be part of a larger Altaic family (including the Mongolic and Turkic languages and possibly Korean and Japanese). Manchu was the language spoken by Jurchen tribes living in what is now northeast China (or Manchuria) in the early 17th century, who took the name “Manchu” on the orders of Hong Taiji, the second ruler of the latter Jin Dynasty (renamed the Qing Dynasty in 1636). It developed its present written form, adopted from Mongolian, due to the efforts of scholars working in the courts of Hong Taiji and his father Nurhaci. Though the spoken form of the language is nearly extinct, a closely related language, Sibe, is still in use among the descendants of garrison soldiers sent to Ili (in China’s Xinjiang Autonomous Region) in the middle of the 18th century. Today, the most important use of Manchu is for research in the history of the Qing, which officially used Manchu alongside Chinese as one of its dynastic languages. Though there are perhaps 2 million surviving Manchu archival documents, it was not merely an official language: a wide variety of literary, historical, linguistic, scientific, etc., texts produced outside the court are of great interest and use to historians of the period, including non-fiction accounts of the lives of Qing subjects, as well as both translations and autochthonous novels and poetry. The language also still holds cultural importance to the Manchu people today, a population of over ten million. Grassroots cultural and language revitalization movements have started both within and outside of China, each with their own goals and challenges.

## Overview and Expectations

➤ COURSE OVERVIEW: This course is the first semester of a two-semester sequence designed to provide students with sufficient mastery of the language to read any text independently (with a dictionary). By the end of the first semester, students should be comfortable in the standard Manchu script (we will study the early Manchu script, which lacks most diacritics, during the second term), should have a firm grasp of the basics of Manchu grammar, including pronouns and their cases, verb forms, sentence structure, and postpositions, and should have an active reading vocabulary of between 500 and 1,000 words.

This course is primarily concerned with student’s abilities to read Manchu for the purpose of documentary work, and because of this, fluency in conversational Manchu and knowledge of cultural norms and customs is not expected or mandated. I believe that knowledge of Manchu as a living

language will help learners to have a better grasp and eventual mastery of the written language, and so certain spoken and listening aspects of the language — pronunciation, basic knowledge of cultural and historical background — will be emphasized. If there is enough interest from the students, I am happy to adjust the course to include more discussion of the spoken language and culture.

ㄱ PREREQUISITES: No prior knowledge is required for this course. Some knowledge of Chinese (and literary Chinese in particular) is recommended. Besides, knowledge of Japanese, German, Russian, or Mongolian may make additional resources for Manchu study available, or help with understanding grammatical structures. However, none of these is required.

ㄴ COURSE STRUCTURE: There will be two meetings per week, of 1.5 hours each. There will be a short quiz each Tuesday, focusing on the grammar and vocabulary covered during the preceding week. There will be regular homework assignments, focusing on grammar, with increasingly complex translation exercises (both Manchu-English and English-Manchu) as the semester goes on. There will be two 45 minute in-class midterm exams, an hour-long in-class final exam, and a final take-home translation.

(1) Grading breakdown and assignments:

- a. Participation and Attendance: 20%
- b. Homework: 15%
- c. Quizzes: 15%
- d. Midterm exams: 10% each
- e. Final exam: 15%
- f. Final translation: 15%

Tests: Midterms and the final will be closed book, while the final translation will be open book (you will be able to look at any of our materials and your dictionary).

Homework: homework will be turned in online before class — we will go over the homework at the beginning of class, during which you will correct your homework, and submit the corrected version. Correction should be marked by a different color (on paper, or different color text in .doc or .pdf file). Your grade will be given based on the quality of your first attempt, and your self-correction.

Quizzes: the quiz is designed to motivate you to memorize Manchu letters and grammars. Each quiz will cover the content learned from the previous week. No dictionary is allowed. It will be a short 10 min on paper quiz, which may include transcription and translation of single vocab items or simple sentences.

This is a course open to all; it is intended for scholars and scholars-to-be who wish to use Manchu sources in their research. Homework and quizzes are assigned to help in this process, and otherwise serious students who occasionally fail to complete a homework assignment or do poorly on a quiz are unlikely to see any effect on their final grade. If you find that any assigned work seems like mere busywork, rather than something actually helping you to learn the language, please let me know, and we can talk about how to change the course structure to be more useful to you.

- ㄆ AUDITING: Because Harvard is one of the few universities in the world offering instruction in Manchu, we have always kept the course open to visiting scholars and students from other universities who wish to take advantage of a stay in Cambridge to learn Manchu. As such, any visiting scholar or student at another university who wishes to audit the course is entirely welcome. Harvard students (or students at a university offering cross-registration at Harvard) should generally enroll in the class; demonstrating sufficient demand enables us to continue to offer Manchu regularly. If you are a Harvard student who believes that there are special circumstances that necessitate auditing the class rather than enrolling, please contact the instructor.

Auditors should endeavor to complete all assigned work — it exists to help you learn the language — and are encouraged to take the tests. Preparation for the class is essential to enable you to participate at the same level as other students, and avoid slowing down their learning.

## Policy

- ㄣ ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMODATIONS: I am committed to ensuring that this course is inclusive and accessible to all students. If you encounter barriers that prevent you from participating comfortably in the class, please let me know immediately so that we can determine if there is a way to adjust the design of the course to meet your needs. I am happy to discuss creative solutions, providing they do not compromise the intent of an assessment or activity. If you have university accomodations that are relevant for the class, please let me know as soon as possible and we can meet to discuss your accomodations; if you do not have university accomodations but believe that you require them, please reach out to your Local Disability Coordinator to initiate a request. I welcome any feedback that will help me to improve the accessibility and enjoyment of this class.
- ㄣ ABSENCES AND TARDINESS: Please let me know in advance if you will have to miss all or part of a class — it shouldn't affect your grade (even if you miss a quiz), unless you are regularly not attending, but it will enable me to provide you with any materials distributed in class, and let me know that I shouldn't wait for you to arrive to begin class. I'm also always happy to meet with you outside of class time to go over the material that you missed — I will set up a regular office hour based on the availability of all the students, which you are welcome to attend. If you will need to miss an exam, let me know as soon as possible, and we can schedule another time for you to take it.
- ㄣ LATE HOMEWORK: Homework will at least a week from when it is assigned. This should be enough time to complete the homework before the due date. Homework will typically be discussed the day that it is due, and so I will generally not accept late work. If you know that you will have to turn in homework late, notify me a few days ahead of time and we can discuss possible options, possibly including make-up homework.
- ㄆ HONOR CODE: This class follows the [Harvard Honor Code](#): Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity —that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or

misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one's own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs.

- ㄆ. **USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:** The goals of this class are to give you the ability to work with Manchu documents and to have a grasp of the Manchu language. While tools such as dictionaries are (almost always) a necessary part of doing research on Manchu, the use of artificial intelligence to complete assignments is not conducive to the improvement of your ability to work with Manchu materials or the intuition regarding Manchu language that the class aims to foster. Because of this, the use of AI to complete assignments will be considered cheating. Given the lack of attention to Manchu and other underrepresented languages in current large language models, the possibility of any kind of current AI being able to make passable work for Manchu is incredibly unlikely. If you are able to make a language model that does make passable work, then I promise you that you will be able to make more money in Computer Science than anything in East Asian Languages and Cultures, History, or Linguistics.

## Materials

- ㄊ. **BOOKS:** I have uploaded pdfs for three dictionaries: Norman 1978 (Manchu-English), Hu 1994 (Manchu-Chinese), and Haneda 1972 (Manchu-Japanese). These three dictionaries are the premier dictionaries used in Manchu studies. I've also included the first edition of the Manchu document-reading textbook Li (2010). Any other materials which we will use in this class such as readings will either be uploaded directly as a file or I will provide a link to it online.
- ㄊ. **ONLINE TOOLS AND RESOURCES:** Below I list some useful resources which we will make use of during the semester. I highly recommend you to become familiar with these, as they will be useful for your work.

[Buleku](#) is an online dictionary which sources entries from across multiple paper dictionaries, including the three aforementioned dictionaries.

[滿洲語辭典](#) is a Japanese-Manchu dictionary online, which includes many entries not available in Buleku (at the time of writing this), though the entries are all in Japanese.

[Manchu Studies Group](#) is a great resource for everything Manchu, including materials for learning, resources for finding documents, and for finding what is new in the field of Manchu studies.

[Manc.hu](#) is a great source for texts, including a concordance which searches a database to find particular instances of words or phrases. Do not use this as a resource to find transliterations of texts we will read.



[Manjurist](#) is a blog written by Brian Tawney, a student of Mark Elliott and a scholar in Manchu studies. The blog is a great resource for bits of knowledge about Manchu language and culture.



[Digitalisierte Sammlungen der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin](#) is an online digital catalogue of the material of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, which includes a huge number of materials in Manchu.

[The Harvard-Yenching Library](#) is Harvard's East Asian collection, which includes a collection of older Manchu and Mongolian materials as well as materials from [Japanese occupied Manchukuo](#).

## Notation

Generally, we will use Möllendorff transliteration for Manchu, though we will also discuss other transliteration systems where relevant (for example, Buleku uses a transliteration system where *q* is used to denote Möllendorff *c*). I will also try to include IPA (international phonetic alphabet) transliterations to denote Manchu pronunciation. Learning the IPA is not required but may be helpful in remembering what sounds certain letters and transcriptions correspond to. IPA will be based off of Tawney's (2007) reconstruction of Court Manchu, but there are many other dialects with their own pronunciation which we may talk about, depending on interest (most prominently Sanjiazi and Ili Sibe). Transliterations will be shown in *italics*, while IPA will be shown in /slashed marks/ for phonological form, and [square brackets] for phonetic realization. Where relevant, I will put translations in 'single quotations'. For example:

- (2) a.  'Manchu' is transliterated as *manju*, and is pronounced [mandzu]
- b.  'language' is transliterated as *gisun*, and is pronounced [kizun]

When I include Manchu script inline, it will be written at a 90 degree angle, in order for it to fit nicely within the text, like this:  . This is just a convention for space efficiency; Manchu has historically always written vertically like in the example above.

## References

- Haneda, Toru. 1972. *Manwa Jiten* (Manchu-Japanese dictionary). Tokyo: Kokushokankokai.
- Hu, Zengyi, ed. 1994. *Xin Man Han da ci dian* =: *Iche Manzhu Nikan gisun kamchibuha buleku bithe*. Wulumuqi Shi: Xinjiang ren min chu ban she, di 1 ban edition.
- Li, Gertraude Roth. 2010. *Manchu: a textbook for reading documents*. Honolulu, HI: National Foreign Language Resource Center, 2nd ed edition.
- Norman, Jerry. 1978. *A concise Manchu-English lexicon*. University of Washington.
- Tawney, Brian. 2007. *Reading Jakdan's Poetry: An Exploration of Literary Manchu Phonology*. AM Thesis, Harvard University.

## Schedule

The schedule is subject to change. Every Tuesday, except for the midterms and final exam will include a small quiz on relevant vocab from the previous week. There are two days at the end of the schedule which are undecided, which we may either use to cover material we did not get to, or to go over a topic of your choice.

	Tuesday	Thursday
Wk. 1 (Sept 5, 7)	Syllabus Introductions Monophthong vowels <i>m, l, b, p</i>	Basic vowel harmony <i>k, g, h, t, d, n</i>
Wk. 2 (Sept 12, 14)	Diphthong vowels <i>f, w, s, š, j, c, y, r</i>	<b>DUE: Assignment 1</b> Loans: <i>k', g', h', ts, dz, sy, ž</i>
Wk. 3 (Sept 19, 21)	Basic sentence structure Pronouns	<b>DUE: Assignment 2</b> Cases
Wk. 4 (Sept 26, 28)	Basic verb forms <i>-mbi, -HA, -rA, -me, -fi</i> Vowel harmony in verbs	<b>DUE: Assignment 3</b> Midterm Review
Wk. 5 (Oct 3, 5)	<b>Midterm 1</b>	Negation ( <i>-akū</i> ) Postpositions ( <i>emgi, manggi</i> , etc.) Questions ( <i>V-akū V, -ni, -o, -nio</i> )
Wk. 6 (Oct 10, 12)	Desires, Commands Bare form, <i>-ci, -ki, -kini, -cina</i> Exclamations, Evidentials <i>dere, sere, kai</i>	<b>DUE: Assignment 4</b> Embedding, Quotation
Wk. 7 (Oct 17, 19)	Numbers, Dates, Directions General Review	<b>DUE: Assignment 5</b> Complex tense <i>-HAbi, -HA bihe, -mbihe, -mbihebi</i>
Wk. 8 (Oct 24, 26)	Verbal derivational suffixes <i>-(m)bu, -nji, -nA, -nu, -cA, -ndu</i>	<b>DUE: Assignment 6</b> Concessive <i>-cibe</i> More derivational suffixes <i>-lA, -rA, -šA, -jA, -tA, -nggi</i>
Wk. 9 (Oct 31, Nov 2)	Nominalizations <i>-ngge, -nggA, -si, -tun, -tai</i> Plurals	<b>DUE: Assignment 7</b> Midterm Review
Wk. 10 (Nov 7, 9)	<b>Midterm 2</b>	More converbs <i>-HAi, -mbime, -rAlame</i>
Wk. 11 (Nov 14, 23)	More converbs <i>-tAlA, -tAi, -nggala, -rahū</i>	<b>DUE: Assignment 8</b> Transliterating Chinese
Wk. 12 (Nov 21)	Undecided	—
Wk. 13 (Nov 28, 30)	Undecided (no quiz)	<b>DUE: Assignment 9</b> Review for Final
Wk. 14 (Dec 5)	<b>Final Exam</b>	—