Lesson 1 Handout

Week 1: 5 September 2023

Basic Principles

- READING DIRECTION: Manchu is read 'top to bottom, left to right', meaning that letters and words follow in a sequence of top to bottom, with lines processing left to right. This differs from the traditional way of writing Chinese 'top to bottom, right to left', where characters follow in a vertical sequence, but lines process from right to left. This difference in writing is used to advantage in bilingual texts: from an English reader's perspective, a bilingual Manchu-Chinese book may have it's 'first half' in Manchu and it's 'second half' in Chinese, but in actuality the book has two beginnings the Manchu begins from the leftmost page, and the Chinese begins from the rightmost page, both ending in the middle.
- SPACING: Within a Manchu word, letters are strung together along a straight vertical axis, in a cursive script. Words are separated by spaces.
- Letters change form depending on their position in a word, with four possible positions: isolate (vowels only), and word initial, medial, and final. Some letters lack one or more forms because they are restricted to certain positions (in this handout, the letter *p* is word final, and thus lacks a final form).
- LETTER VARIANTS: Some letters may also change form depending on the letters that surround them, or, more rarely, based on formalisms associated with distinguishing homophones (see later: genitive i, dotted final n).
- Punctuation: Punctuation in Manchu is poorly standardized, but there are two basic punctuation marks: -, roughly equivalent to a comma, and -; roughly equivalent to a period.
- TYPEFACES AND HANDWRITING: There is a degree of variation between printed and handwritten styles, and within handwritten styles; I will include a variety of typefaces and writing styles in practice, but will generally use a printed style in examples and handouts.
- TRANSLITERATION: There are multiple romanizations for Manchu, but we will generally use the Möllendorff system. Where relevant I will discuss different systems (for example, in reading transliterations, or in using software which requires a specific)

(Monophthong) Vowels

TRANSCRIPTIONS: Manchu has six vowels, a, e, i, o, u, \bar{u} is often transcribed using the letter v, which otherwise does not appear in the Möllendorff transliteration system.

Pronunciation: Below is a table with pronunciation guides for each of the vowels in their monophthong form (ie. when not surrounded by other vowels or semivowels y or w). We will talk more about how these are pronounced when in diphthongs in the future.

Letter	Möllendorff	Pronunciation Guide		
Z	а	[a] or [v] English a in father, Mandarin [4]		
7	e	[ə] or [ɤ] English a in comma, Mandarin 呃		
ち	i	[i] English ee in flee, Mandarin —		
ちょ	0	[5] English au in caught, no Mandarin equivalen		
बं.	и	[u] English oo in g oo se, Mandarin $\overline{\mathbb{H}}$.		
र्व	\bar{u}	[v] English oo in foot, the vowel in Mandarin &		

Below shows all of the variants we will see of vowels depending on their position. メ VARIANTS: Notice that many variants of e and u appear to be copies of a and o respectively.

		Isolate	Initial	Medial	Final
a	/a~e/	Ł	4	4	♥ J
e	/ə~४/	بى	4	4, 4	からい
i	/i/	あっ	オ		う
О	/ɔ/	ਰ	वं	d	ф а
u	/u/	र्क	वं.	व व	ው,
ū	/υ/	र्व	त्र	Я	g

RIGHT DOTS (TONGKI) ON VOWELS: Note that in many contexts, a and e only differ by the presence a' or absence of a dot (in Manchu: tongki). The same with o and u. Additionally, there appear to be some variants of e and u where there is no dot. We will see later how vowels are distinguished when the dot is not present.

No	right dot		Right dot tongki		
а	4	\leftrightarrow	e	٦,	
o	þ	\leftrightarrow	и	ሳ ›	

In handwritten Manchu, the final rightward stroke of a given word may be HANDWRITING: q. written without being preceded by an indentation to the left.

> Typical final rightward stroke: Handwritten final rightward stroke

Consonants m, l, b, p

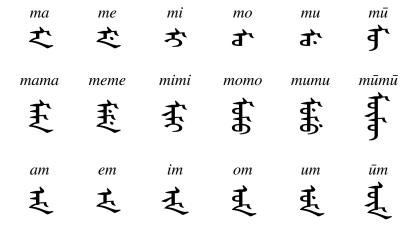
PRONUNCIATION: m, l, b, p are generally pronounced like they are written in English or Mandarin pinyin, with one major difference. The letter l has the sound of an American English r [1] at the end of syllables (before a consonant or before the end of a word). See the 'extras' for a note about subtler pronunciation with Manchu consonants.

Letter	Möllendorff	Pronunciation Guide		
4	m	[m] Like in English or Pinyin		
\ \ (l	[1]	Like in English or Pinyin	before vowels
4		[1]	American English er in letter, Mandarin 儿	elsewhere
ற	b	[b/p]	Like in English or Pinyin	
கு	p	[p/p ^h]	Like in English or Pinyin	

FORMS: Below I show the forms of the consonants. The letter *p* is never found syllable finally, and so is never written word finally, hence no final form.

	Initial	Medial	Final
m	*	41	<
l	₩.	4	4
b	ற	ற	9
p	கு	கு	_

The letters *m* and *l* combine as expected with following and preceding letters.



Note that the final o and u in the monosyllabic word is different than the final o and u in the disyllabic word: in words which consist only of a single open syllable (vowel, or consonant vowel), the o and u do not have a 'tail' like they do at the end of multisyllable words.

The letters *b* and *p* affect following vowels in two ways:

- (1) Effects of b and p on following vowels
 - a. The loops of o, u, \bar{u} is incorporated into the letter like so:

bo bupu būla apū

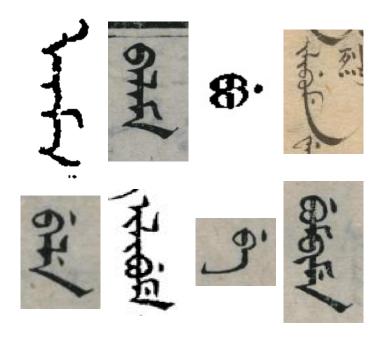
B: \$\frac{1}{2}\$

b. Final a and e after b and p curves to the left, not the right:

baba bebe vs. mama meme

Practice

Please transcribe the following words into the Möllendorff romanization.



Practice writing the following words in Manchu script.

- (2) a. eme 'mother'
 - b. ama 'father'
 - c. pampu 'a thick padded coat'
 - d. molo 'maple'
 - e. balu 'blind'
 - f. ume 'do not'
 - g. pelembi 'to cover the ceiling with a mat awning'
 - h. umpu 'hawthorne'
 - i. limi 'centimeter'
 - j. ula 'river'

- k. amala 'behind, after, later'
- 1. *ele* 'especially, still more'

Extras

Voicing: A smaller difference in pronunciation concerns the voicing of stop consonants (p, b, t, d, k, g): the letters p, t, k are pronounced with aspiration $[p^h, t^h, k^h/q^h]$ except intervocalically, where they are unaspirated [p, t, k/q]. The letters b, d, g are pronounced as voiceless unaspirated stops [p, t, k/q] except intervocalically or after nasals, where they are pronounced [b, d, g/g]. This difference in pronunciation is already a part of many English speakers' phonology, and it incredibly subtle, so the distinction is not as important to highlight as the difference between syllable initial and syllable final l.