A Manchu grammar, with analysed texts

Mollendorff Paul Georg
A MANCHU GRAMMAR,

WITH

ANALYSED TEXTS,

BY

P. G. VON MÖLLENDORFF,

Chinese Customs Service.

SHANGHAI:
Printed at the American Presbyterian Mission Press.
1892.
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INTRODUCTION

There is as yet no grammar of the Manchu language in English. Wylie's translation of the Tsing Wan Ki Mung (清文啟蒙), Shanghai, 1855, a kind of Manchu hand-book for the use of Chinese, though useful and full of interest, is by no means a grammar.

The general interest taken in every language will, of course, be also extended to Manchu; still a few words seem necessary to show the particular usefulness of its study.

There exist in all about 250 works in Manchu, nearly all of which are translations from the Chinese. They consist of translations from the Classics, some historical and metaphysical works, literary essays, collections of famous writers, novels, poetry, laws and regulations, Imperial edicts, dictionaries, phrase books, etc. Most of these translations are excellent, but they are all literal. Executed under the eyes of intelligent princes, they form a reliable expression of the meaning of the Chinese text and have therefore a right to acceptance equal to that enjoyed by commentaries of good writers. Manchu being infinitely easier to learn than Chinese, these translations are a great help towards obtaining a clear insight into Chinese syntax, and scholars like Stanislas Julien, who owed the remarkable precision in his renderings to his knowledge of Manchu, have repeatedly pointed this out. In a letter addressed to Dr. Legge he alludes to the study of Manchu as being of great assistance in translating the Classics. Dr. Legge, however, in the preface to his translation of the Shukung, pronounced himself against it. The reasons advanced by this great scholar are not very cogent, and, in fact, not knowing the language, he was hardly competent to judge. But, even if he were right, others may be in a different position. Dr. Legge was perhaps more fortunate or more gifted than most people and had a thorough mastery of Chinese at the time when St. Julien wrote to him. Those who find Chinese more difficult will be inclined to consider the Manchu translations a great help.

This grammar being intended for the practical purpose of guiding the student in learning to read Manchu works, not of translating into Manchu, everything foreign to the aim is left out, especially all information which properly belongs to the sphere of the dictionary.

Shanghai, February, 1862.

P. G. von Möllendorff.
### THE ALPHABET.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>When alone.</th>
<th>In the beginning of a word.</th>
<th>In the middle of a word.</th>
<th>At the end of a word.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

when followed by n in the beginning of a word, a space is left to distinguish it from a: ![](image)

| i     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| o     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| u     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| n     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |

k

| g     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| h     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| b     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| p     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| s     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| t     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| d     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| l     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| m     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| c     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| j     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| y     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| r     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| f     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |
| w     | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) | ![](image) |

For transcribing Chinese syllables:

- k' ꜝ, g' ꜞ, h' ꜟ, ts' ꜜ, ts ꜝ, dz Ꜣ, ꜑, ꜝ, sy ꜝ, c' ꜝ, jy ꜝ, ng ꜝ.
I. PHONOLOGY.

1. Alphabet.

Manchu writing consists of 34 elements, viz., 6 vowels, 18 essentially Manchu consonants and 10 marks specially intended for the rendering of Chinese syllables (vide Table).

The 6 vowels are a, e (ã), i, o, u, ū (not ō as generally represented).  
The 18 consonants are k, g, h, n, b, p, s, š, t, d, l, m, c, j, y, r, f, w.

The 10 marks are k', g', h', ts', ts, dz, ž, sy, čy, jy.  
k, g, h, t, d have two forms, one when followed by a, o, ū, the other when followed by e, i, u.

O in the middle or at the end of words may be doubled and then stands for oo or ao.

If u or ū is followed by a or e, w is placed between them: juwe (two) pronounced juwe.  
If a vowel is followed by i, the latter is doubled, except at the end of a word.

No word commences with r, nor with two or more consonants.

T after a vowel and before a consonant, or at the end of a word, is written like on.

To distinguish f from w the rule is: at the beginning of a word w occurs only when followed by a or e.  
F before a and e has an additional stroke at the right.

Manchu is written from top to bottom.*

Pronunciation.

Many of the Manchu words are now pronounced with some Chinese peculiarities of pronunciation, so k before i and e=cf, g before i and e=ch, h and s before i=hs, etc.  
H before a, o, u, ū, is the guttural Scotch or German ch.

n is the ordinary sonorous liquid; only as initial, when followed by iya, iye, iyo, io, it is pronounced like ny: e.g. niyalma man=nyalma; niyengryeri spring=nyingnyiri; niolhon smooth=nyolhon (Radloff, Phonetik, p. 162).

š=sh; c=ch in Chinese; j=j in judge; y when initial=y in yonder.

a, i, o, u, ū as in German.

e=ä, ő; e.g. ejen master, Tungusic ājân; inenggi day, Tung. īnângi; elgembi to lead, Tung. ālyojâm; edun wind, Tung. ādyen.

i=i, y (=-Russian u); hali meadow=Tung. kowyr.

y with an e before and after, is not pronounced: beye body=bee (bēy).  
Nor is it heard between i and a, or i and e.

ž=j in jardín.

The accent lies always on the last syllable, the same as in Mongolian.

2. Harmony of Vowels.

Manchu writing distinguishes 6 vowels; there are, however, in reality eight, which all occur in stem syllables: a, å, o, ŏ, y, i, u, ū.  
As regards long and short vowels ū only has two separate signs.

---

1 The name of the Emperor (shun is given in Manchu as ūn.
2 The y in these 3 Chinese syllables represents the vowel transcribed by Wade with ū as in tsū and sū, and with ih as in chih and shih.
3 This alphabet was adopted by the Uighurs from a Syriac or Mandaic source, thence adapted to the Mongolian language and in 1599 slightly altered to suit the pronunciation of Manchu. Unfortunately 3 vowels were left unrepre- 
sented: ē, ū, y.  
By comparing the Tungusic dialects these vowels can be partly restored.
These 8 vowels are divided* into the following groups:—

4 guttural  a o y u
4 palatal  a ö i ü
4 dental  a ä y i
4 labial  o u ö ü
2 dento-guttural  a y
2 labio-guttural  o n
2 dento-palatal  ä i
2 labio-palatal  ö ü
4 wide vowels  a o ä ö according to the degree of widening or narrow vowels y u i ü rowing the inner organs of speech.

The harmony of vowels consists in a certain attraction of vowels physiologically related to each other; in accordance with it a vowel can only be followed by a corresponding one. All the Altaic languages show this peculiarity, the Turkish dialects the most, the Tungusic and Manchus the least. Within stems, this harmony of vowels is of interest only to the philologist, but as most of the affixes in Manchus offer the choice between 2 or even 3 vowels (e.g. ha, ho, he; la, le; hon, lün, lün), a few rules are necessary to show which vowels should be used.

1. Stems terminating in a, e or o, take the same vowel in the affix: sula-ha left behind; mute-re being able to; tokto-ho fixed. Exceptions are given under “Verbs.”

For affixes in on, un, ün (hon, hun, hün): stems in which a, o or e occurs twice, or those having i and a, take sometimes ü: yada-hün poor; soyon-hün folded.

2. Stems of one syllable, terminating in i or u, take mostly e: bi-he was; ku-he rotten.
With one of the affixes on, un, ün: his-hün bashful.

3. Stems of several syllables terminating in i or u, with a, υ, ü, or oo preceding, take mostly a: mari-ha returned; jabu-ha answered; tumu-han somewhat frequent; guni-ha thought; kooti-ngga customary. An exception appears to be: asha-re will refuse. Of affixes in on, un, ün: tal-hün doubtful; miisi-hün or hon wrong.

4. Stems of several syllables terminating in i or u, with e preceding, take e: julesi-hen a little forward; tebu-ngge laying down; of affixes in on, un, ün: wesi-hun upper; etu-hun strong.

5. Stems having u repeated, take mostly e, but sometimes a: uku-he accompanied; ulu-hen a little wrong; but usu-han a little uncommon.

6. Stems terminating in u with i preceding, take mostly a: hišu-han a little smooth; but also e: kiru-re will be in heat.

7. Stems in u and ü, take mostly a: muku-ha breathed in.

8. Stems with two i, take mostly a: ili-ha stood; but also e: iji-re will weave. The exceptions for the verbal affixes ha, ra, will be given in extenso under “Verbs.”

If two or more affixes are used, the vowel of the first determines the vowels of the others. The difference between wide and narrow vowels is also used to express the difference of gender, e.g.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a male principle (陽 yang)</th>
<th>e female principle (陰 yin)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ama father.</td>
<td>eme mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amha father-in-law.</td>
<td>emhe mother-in-law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haka man.</td>
<td>hehe woman, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>