

HAVER, ERICH (1930)

JOURNAL

OF THE

NORTH CHINA BRANCH

OF THE

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

FOR THE YEAR 1930.

VOL. LXI.

**SHANGHAI:
KELLY & WALSH, LIMITED.
1930.**

SEP 20 2006

WHY THE SINOLOGUE SHOULD STUDY MANCHU

By Dr. ERICH HAUER

The aim of this paper is to call attention to an undeservedly neglected branch of Far Eastern sciences, namely the Manchology or science of the Manchu language and its prominent importance for the understanding of Chinese grammatical thought.

The pioneers of Sinology were the Jesuit fathers of Italian, Portuguese, and especially French nationality. Living at the Peking court of the Manchu emperors in the 17th and 18th century, they studied and expounded the strange Chinese language first. In their toilsome task to overcome the many difficulties presented, these ingenious and active missionaries started with the comparatively easy Manchu language as an intermediary and key. Manchu being the language of the court, the learned fathers were even compelled to learn it by imperial command. After the death of Father Verbiest, a brilliant Chinese and Manchu scholar, in 1689, the newly-arrived Fathers Gerbillon and Bouvet were appointed to be teachers of His Majesty in Western sciences, and Emperor K'ang Hi attached them to the *Hupu* or Board of Revenue, where only Manchu was spoken by the officials. Eight months after, we are told, the two fathers were already able to explain Euclid's geometry in Manchu to the inquisitive Son of Heaven. Later under the reign of K'ien Lung the French Father de Mailla moulded his famous *Histoire Général de la Chine* in 12 volumes after the Manchu version, the *T'ung-kien-kang-mu*, and Father Amyot wrote in the preface to his translation of Emperor K'ien Lung's Eulogium of Mukden the following panegyric in favour of the Manchu language: "The knowledge of Manchu would open a free entrance into the Chinese literature of all centuries:

there is no good Chinese book which has not been translated into Manchu. These translations have been made by learned academicians by order and under the auspices of the emperors from Shun Chih up to K'ien Lung who is now upon the throne. They have been revised and corrected by other academicians no less erudite knowing perfectly the Chinese language as well as the Manchu. I myself acknowledge that, if I had only known Chinese, I should not have been able to achieve any success in my undertakings. The Manchu language is after the style of European languages; it has its methods and its rules; briefly speaking, one sees one's way clearly. Moreover, five or six years would suffice for any active man to acquire a good knowledge enabling him to read with profit all books written in Manchu."

Father Amyot's assertion that every good Chinese book had been translated, does not hold good. Setting aside the translations of the Chinese classics the whole Manchu literature consists of only about 180 works, of which the translations of the *Ku-wên-yüan-kien* or "Mirror of Ancient Literature" and the translation of the *T'ung-kien-kang-mu* or "Universal Mirror of History" take the first place. On the other side Father Amyot is, however, quite right in pointing out that the best scholars of the time, both Chinese and Manchus, have been employed by the emperors to compose these standard translations, and there is no doubt that these China-born and China-educated men possessed a deeper knowledge of the two languages than any Western scholar can ever hope to acquire. If in a book a certain passage has been translated in this way and not in another there must have been, of course, valid reasons and the Sinologist is obliged to investigate these reasons. From an entirely objective point of view it may be said that a fundamental principle of sound philological criticism and method requires the consultation of all the existing means of elucidation regarding a given text, in spite of their origin and character. As Prof. Laufer of Chicago has put it, only self-complacent conceit and the arrogance of ignorance may arrive at the dogma that Manchu is a *quantité négligeable*.

Besides, the Manchu translations were not destined to replace or to push aside the original Chinese text, but their aim was purely to facilitate the understanding of the original to the Manchu student. That may be seen from the fact that the classics, for instance, have never

been printed in Manchu only, but always in interlinear versions with Chinese text beside. The Chinese text and the Manchu text ought to be read together.

The Manchu student studied, of course, the Chinese text of the classics and used the parallel running Manchu translation as a handy shift for a quicker and clearer comprehension. This is the reason too, why all these translations are literal paraphrases of the Chinese prototype and nothing else. As Prof. Laufer in his valuable *Sketch of Manchu Literature* has said, there is no need to excite oneself about so-called slavishly faithful rendering and literal interpretation, for the only purpose of the Manchu versions was to serve as text-books for Manchu students whose mother tongue had been the Chinese language. Would not these works be useful to the European Sinologue as well? This question leads us to a short review regarding the Manchu language, namely its history, its characteristics, and its usefulness in sinological work.

I. During the years from 1583 to 1626 a chieftain Nurhaci, after his death called by his temple name T'ai-tsu, united about sixty Jurjen tribes of Fengtien, Kirin and Heilungkiang to a nation named Manju Gurun, i.e., Manchu Nation, the word "Manchu" being an abbreviation of Manjusiri, the name of Nurhaci's remotest forefather. The language spoken by these remnants of the late Jurjen nation (usually incorrectly called Nü-chên or Nü-chih), the rulers of which had founded the Kin dynasty and governed North-China in the 12th century, was now called *Manju gisun* or Manchu language. In 1599 Nurhaci ordered the adaptation of the Mongolian characters to the requirements of the Manchu language, the Mongolian language having served from the Yüan dynasty up to that time as the official language of letters and documents. The written Manchu language was developed and perfected during the Manchu sway at Yenden, Liaoyang, and Mukden, into which city the court and the government were transferred in 1625. After the occupation of Peking by Prince Dorgon's army, the court and government removed there from Mukden in October, 1644. Peking became the place where both the Manchu language and literature flourished most. For the rest of the 17th century the language was still alive and spoken universally. Owing to the numerous intermarriages between banner-men of Manchu, Mongolian, and Chinese extraction, however, the real Manchus or

descendants of the Jurjen were soon amalgamated with the two other nationalities and turned into Chinese speaking Chinamen in course of time. In 1722 the Manchu scholar Daigu confessed in the preface to his Manchu dictionary that he had compiled his work considering the fact that the Manchu were beginning to forget their own language. Towards the end of the 18th century Emperor K'ien Lung deplored openly the decay of the Manchu language, trying in vain to obtain redress. Under Tao Kuang the last conspicuous Manchu publications were printed in the first half of the 19th century. During the following reigns of Hien Fêng, T'ung Chih, and Kuang Sü, the great Taiping rebellion and the disastrous conflicts with foreign powers took place; the Manchu language fell into oblivion more and more and became an artificial idiom in court ceremonies and red-tape work. In the very last years of the Manchu dynasty the Peking government made some efforts to establish schools for the study of the Manchu language, but it was too late: the wash of the revolution swept away the foundations and Manchu became a dead language in Peking and China proper. Only in Manchuria, in the province of Heilungkiang, some vestiges appear to have been left. Some months ago I got from the town of Hailar, on the Trans-Siberian railway, a small newspaper in Manchu, called *Ice Donjin Afaha*, i.e., "New Tidings Sheet," bearing the number 322 and dated the 21st November, 1925, not letter-printed but reproduced in a polygraphed manuscript, in which Chang Tso-lin's government published such news concerning the civil war in China as seemed fit. The fact that Chang Tso-lin thought it worth while to spend work and money on such a paper proves that somewhere in Manchuria even to-day Manchu texts are still read by a population knowing Manchu. Indeed the Russian scholar Shirokogoroff in his book *Social Organization of the Manchus*, published at Shanghai in 1924, states that in the Aigun district about 20-25,000 people speak a Manchu dialect only slightly different from that formerly spoken in Peking. Because these last of the Manchus are rapidly decreasing in number owing to alcoholism and disease, our Russian colleagues should not miss the opportunity to take some gramophone plates before it will be too late. Here is the last chance offered to hand down to posterity a genuine Manchu pronunciation.

II. I now beg you to allow me to say a few words concerning the characteristics of the language. Manchu belongs to the Altaic branch of the Uralo-Altaic languages and is related to the Mongolian and Turkish languages. In strict contradistinction to the monosyllabic and isolating Chinese, Manchu is polysyllabic and modifies the words. Moreover there are some moods and several tenses of the verb, a declension comprising five cases, a plural for some categories of substantives, and a number of other grammatical distinctions totally wanting in Chinese.

Rather short Manchu grammars were written by the Peking Jesuit Fathers Gerbillon and Amyot and published in Paris in 1787. The later grammars are also but small booklets: (1) *Eléments de la Grammaire Mandchoue*, by the German scholar Hans Conon v.d. Gabelentz, Altenburg, 1832; (2) *Linguae Mandshuricae Institutiones* in Latin, by the German Franz Kaulen, Regensburg, 1856; (3) *Grammaire de la Langue Mandchou*, by Lucien Adam, Paris, 1873; and (4) *Manuel de la Langue Mandchoue*, by Charles de Harlez, Paris, 1884. P. G. von Mollendorff's *Manchu Grammar*, published at Shanghai in 1892 and up to this day the only Manchu Grammar in English, is but a poor piece of work and better not mentioned here; even the English translation of the ten exercises has been borrowed from Sir Thomas Wade's *Tzu-êrh-chi*.

The most complete but also most circuitous Manchu grammar was compiled by the Russian scholar Iwan Zacharoff, and published in St. Petersburg in 1879. Whilst his predecessors started from the accustomed rules of traditional Latin grammar, Zacharoff based his own system of analysis upon the theories of Russian grammar. In my opinion his method of explanation is conclusive in the sphere of the verb. The Russian grammar knows two so-called aspects, i.e., the difference between finished doing and unfinished doing. The Russian grammar knows further a peculiar participle and a peculiar gerund, having nothing in common with western participles and gerunds, but representing an adjective declinable form of the verbal action and an undeclinable adverbial participle respectively. By equalisation of three Manchu forms with the Russian participle and of seven others with the Russian gerund, Zacharoff and his disciple, Prof. Wilhelm Grube, late of Berlin University, have discriminated between three kinds of verbal forms in the Manchu language: (1) adnominal

forms, namely forms joining nouns; they are themselves nouns and act in a predicative position as finite verbs; (2) adverbial forms, namely forms joining other verbs, and (3) finite forms. There are three adnominal forms; the participle imperfecti, expressing an unfinished coincident doing; the participle perfecti, expressing a doing already finished in the past; and the participle praeteriti imperfecti or Durativum, expressing an unfinished doing in the past. The seven adverbial forms are: the gerund of unfinished coincidental doing, the gerund of continuous doing, the gerund of finished doing in the past, the conditional or temporal gerund (translated by "if" or "when"), the concessive gerund (translated by "although"), the gerund of duration or termination (translated by "during" or "till"), and the gerund of description and delineation. The four predicative forms, finally, are: an aorist or a tense unlimited with regard to the time, an optative and a threefold imperative, expressing a usual, a soft or an energetic command respectively.

It seems evident that such an abundance of tenses alone is of great value for interpreting Chinese parallel texts. It is, however, not my task here to give a sketch of Manchu grammar. Let us rather see, what advantages the study of Manchu offers to the Sinologue, especially the advanced beginner.

Before doing so I have, however, to refer to some desiderata. The grammars just mentioned are not only antiquated and out of print long ago, but scarcely obtainable at the bookseller's. There is an urgent need of a new grammar on the basis of Zacharoff's work, enlarged by the results arrived at by Herrn v. Zach and others, and augmented by some exercises in Manchu characters, transliteration, and translation. Besides this there is need of a good Manchu-English dictionary. The Manchu-French, Manchu-German and Manchu-Russian dictionaries by Amyot, v.d. Gabelentz and Zacharoff are neither complete nor reliable. In order to remedy this lack I myself have arranged the contents of emperor K'ien Lung's great "Mirror of the Manchu language" in alphabetical order on more than 9,000 slips of paper and am occupied now comparing the definitions given in the "Great Mirror" with the acceptations offered by the other Manchu dictionaries, especially the *Ts'ing-wên-hui-shu* and the *Ts'ing-wên-pu-hui*. In my opinion the grammar of the future as well as the dictionary of the future should

be written in the English language which is universally known by all scholars. Moreover, Manchu books are no longer printed and sold in Peking. So in Europe, the libraries watch over their Manchu works jealously and it is not easy for the average student to get Manchu books. Therefore we are in need of transliterated editions of the Chinese classics in their Manchu garb. v.d. Gabelentz published the transliteration of the Four Books, the *Shuking* and the *Shiking* in 1864. His work should be revised and continued by the Manchu text of the *I-king*, the *Li-ki*, the *Ch'un-ts'iu*, the *Tso-chuan*, the *Kung-yang-chuan*, the *Ku-liang-chuan*, and the *Hiao-king* for the benefit of all students and scholars. As the work which has yet to be done is immense, I take the opportunity to-day of inviting international co-operation and assistance.

III. In conclusion I will now enumerate the advantages gained by the knowledge of Manchu.

(1) Even a limited knowledge of the language will guarantee the correct rendering of Manchu names and Manchu words occurring in Chinese texts. The history of China during the last three centuries from 1644 to 1912 cannot be thoroughly understood and appreciated, even as far as mere Chinese sources are concerned, without a knowledge of Manchu. Just as a successful understanding of the history of the Mongolian Yüan dynasty requires an acquaintance with the Mongolian language, so in the case of the Manchu Daicing dynasty all documents, writings, and books contain Manchu names, Manchu expressions, and allusions regarding specifically Manchu things and institutions, a familiarity with which can only be obtained by the knowledge of the Manchu language. When treating the history of the Manchus, the scientific compiler is expected to restore the horribly mutilated Manchu words from the insufficient Chinese transliteration to the original Manchu reading.

(2) The Manchu versions of names often reveal the true meaning of the names given, e.g., to palaces, gates, temples, reigns of emperors, and so on. So the southern main gate of the Imperial Palace in Peking, the T'ien-an-mên, is not the "Gate of Heavenly Tranquillity," for the Manchu name *Abkai elhe obure duka* means "Gate of Heaven's Peacemaking." The Tê-shêng-mên in Peking is not the "Gate of Victory of Virtue," for the Manchu name *Erdemu i etehe duka* means "Gate of Having Conquered by Virtue." The first Manchu emperor's title

of reign, *Shun Chih*, does not mean "Favourable Sway," for the Manchu version *Ijishin Dasan* means "Obedient Keeping in Order," the two Chinese characters *shun-chih* being an ellipsis for *shun-t'ien chih-kuo*, i.e., obedient to heaven keeping in order the realm. K'ang Hi is not "Lasting Prosperity," for *Elhe Taifin* means "Tranquil Peace." K'ien Lun is not "Enduring Glory," for *Abkai Wehiyehe* means "Heaven's Having Holpen." Kung Sü is not "Brilliant Succession," for *Badarangga Doro* means "Expansive Imperium." Süan T'ung is not "Wide Control," for *Gehungge Yoso* means "Manifest Fundamental Laws." From these few examples it may be seen that the correct translation of such titles and names is quite impossible without the help of the Manchu language.

(3) Every Manchu version of a Chinese text determines the grammatical function of the Chinese words. For instance, a well-known essay of the renowned T'ang scholar Han Yü bears the title "Yüan Tao." Mr. Homer H. Dubs in his valuable book, *Hsüntze, the Moulder of Ancient Confucianism*, has translated these two Chinese words by "The Original Way," a translation which is, of course, possible in itself. From the Manchu version, contained in chapter 35 of the *Ku-wên-yüan-ien* we learn, however, that the word *yüan* has here the function of a verb, for the Manchu translation *doro be fetehe bithe* means "Essay after having investigated the Right Way." Or, *shêng-licia*, the emperor's vehicle, is not to be rendered by "the Sacred Chariot," for in the Manchu equivalent *enduringgei sejen* the first word is a genitive, and therefore the meaning is "the chariot of the Sacred One."

(4) Every Sinologue knows very well the indispensableness of the bulky *P'ie-wên-yün-fu*, Emperor K'ang Hi's voluminous Thesaurus of rhymes, and he knows quite as well the difficulties of understanding the quoted texts. Now an epitome has been published in Manchu under the title *Ts'ing-Han-wên-hai*, which enables us to read a good part of the *P'ie-wên-yün-fu* in a convenient manner.

(5) Manchu is not difficult to learn. Somebody once called it a "tiffin language," that is, a language which could easily be mastered during the short time of a tiffin. This is, of course, but a facetious exaggeration. Compared with Chinese, however, Manchu is certainly very easy and may be learned in a much shorter time. The grammar is simple and clear, with almost no irregularities

at all, and the polysyllabic words impress themselves on one's memory without any trouble. Having acquired a sufficient knowledge of the Manchu language, one is able to read with pleasure Chinese works of fiction in their Manchu attire as the *Kin-p'ing-mei* and the *Liao-chai-chih-i*, the Chinese original text of which is only read with painstaking care and understood after assiduous study. Above all, the knowledge of Manchu enables the student of Sinology to use the Manchu versions of the classics, the *Ku-wên-yüan-kiên*, the *T'ung-kiên-kiang-mu*, and other standard works, in order to verify the meaning of the Chinese text.

The five points just mentioned should, in my opinion, convince everybody that no Sinologue who can spare the time, should miss the opportunity of acquiring a sufficient knowledge of the Manchu language.