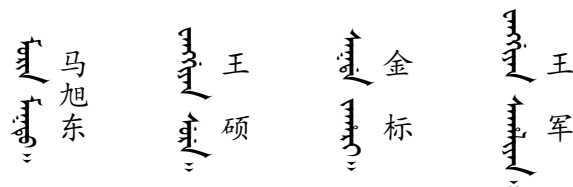# Proposal to Correct the Descriptions of
# Mongolian Letter Manchu Ka and Manchu Vowel Harmony

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In Mongolian and Todo scripts, the velar series of consonant letters have both masculine and feminine forms. For Manchu script, the velar series of consonant letters inherited both writing forms from Mongolian, however, they are not categorized as masculine and feminine forms in Manchu.

The two final forms of Manchu letter *k* sometimes were called masculine and feminine forms in Chinese respectively. In this case, both "masculine" and "feminine" indicated the directions of the tails in the Chinese tradition, which results in exactly the opposite use of the words "masculine" and "feminine" for Manchu and that for Mongolian.

The characteristics of Mongolian and Todo cannot be extrapolated to Manchu before the thorough study of Manchu. The use of the words "masculine" and "feminine" should be avoid in Manchu.

## I.  Request 1

This document requests to remove the words "feminine" and "masculine" from all the descriptions on U+1874 MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA in the code charts and related documents.

Altogether there are twelve places that should be modified.

The first to the fourth places:

1874    ꡴    MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
~ 1874 ꡴ first form (initial)
~ 1874 ꡴ first form (medial)
~ 1874 ꡴ first form (final)
~ 1874 180B ꡴ second form (medial)
~ 1874 180B ꡴ feminine first final form (final)
~ 1874 180C ꡴ feminine first medial form (medial)
~ 1874 180C ꡴ feminine second final form (final)
~ 1874 180D ꡴ feminine second medial form (medial)

*the Unicode Standard 9.0*

The fifth to the eighth places:



The following is the proposed replacement text for the modifications of the above eight places.

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**LEGEND**:

**Strike-out** – the original text
**Yellow Highlight** – proposed replacement text to the strike-out text

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~~1874 180B ꡢ feminine first final form (final)~~

1874 180B ꡢ second form (final)

~~1874 180C ꡢ feminine first medial form (medial)~~

1874 180C ꡢ third form (medial)

~~1874 180C ꡢ feminine second final form (final)~~

1874 180C ꡢ third form (final)

~~1874 180D ꡢ feminine second medial form (medial)~~

1874 180D ꡢ fourth form (medial)

The ninth to the twelfth places:

These places are in the file *StandardizedVariants.txt*.

```
1874 180B; second form; medial # MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
1874 180B; feminine first final form; final # MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
1874 180C; feminine first medial form; medial # MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
1874 180C; feminine second final form; final # MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
1874 180D; feminine second medial form; medial # MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
```

The proposed modifications are the same as those in **Document L2/17-035R**, which is the revised version of L2/17-035 based on our suggestion in the meeting of UTC # 150.

```
1874 180B; second form; medial # MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
1874 180B; feminine first final form; final # MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
1874 180B; second form; medial final # MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
1874 180C; feminine first medial form; medial # MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
1874 180C; feminine second final form; final # MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
1874 180C; third form; medial final # MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
1874 180D; feminine second medial form; medial # MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
1874 180D; fourth form; medial # MONGOLIAN LETTER MANCHU KA
```

## II.  Request 2

This document also requests to correct the mistakes in the descriptions about the velar series of consonant letters of Manchu and Sibe in the Core Specification.

*The Unicode® Standard Version 9.0 – Core Specification*, pp.532-533

*Vowel Harmony.* Mongolian has a system of vowel harmony, whereby the vowels in a word are either all "masculine" and "neuter" vowels (that is, back vowels plus /i/) or all "feminine" and "neuter" vowels (that is, front vowels plus /i/). Words that are written with masculine/neuter vowels are considered to be masculine, and words that are written with feminine/neuter vowels are considered to be feminine. Words with only neuter vowels behave as feminine words (for example, take feminine suffixes). Manchu and Sibe have a similar system of vowel harmony, although it is not so strict. Some words in these two scripts may include both masculine and feminine vowels, and separated suffixes with masculine or feminine vowels may be applied to a stem irrespective of its gender.

Vowel harmony is an important element of the encoding model, as the gender of a word determines the glyph form of the velar series of consonant letters for Mongolian, Todo, Sibe, and Manchu. In each script, the velar letters have both masculine and feminine forms. For Mongolian and Todo, the masculine and feminine forms of these letters have different pronunciations.

When one of the velar consonants precedes a vowel, it takes the masculine form before masculine vowels, and the feminine form before feminine or neuter vowels. In the latter case, a ligature of the consonant and vowel is required.

When one of these consonants precedes another consonant or is the final letter in a word, it may take either a masculine or feminine glyph form, depending on its context. The rendering system should automatically select the correct gender form for these letters based on the gender of the word (in Mongolian and Todo) or the gender of the preceding vowel (in Manchu and Sibe). This is illustrated by *Figure 13-7*, where U+182D MONGOLIAN LETTER

GA takes a masculine glyph form when it occurs finally in the masculine word *jarlig* "order," but takes a feminine glyph form when it occurs finally in the feminine word *chirig* "soldier." In this example, the gender form of the final letter *ga* depends on whether the first vowel in the word is a back (masculine) vowel or a front (feminine or neuter) vowel. Where the gender is ambiguous or a form not derivable from the context is required, the user needs to specify which form is required by means of the appropriate free variation selector.

The section should be modified like this:

***Vowel Harmony.*** Mongolian has a system of vowel harmony, whereby the vowels in a word are either all "masculine" and "neuter" vowels (that is, back vowels plus /i/) or all "feminine" and "neuter" vowels (that is, front vowels plus /i/). Words that are written with masculine/neuter vowels are considered to be masculine, and words that are written with feminine/neuter vowels are considered to be feminine. Words with only neuter vowels behave as feminine words (for example, take feminine suffixes). Manchu and Sibe have a similar system of vowel harmony, although it is not so strict. Some words in these two scripts may include both masculine and feminine vowels, and separated suffixes with masculine or feminine vowels may be applied to a stem irrespective of its gender.

Vowel harmony is an important element of the encoding model, as the gender of a word determines the glyph form of the velar series of consonant letters for Mongolian, and Todo, Sibe, and Manchu. In each script, the velar letters have both masculine and feminine forms. For Mongolian and Todo, and the masculine and feminine forms of these letters have different pronunciations.

When one of the velar consonants precedes a vowel, it takes the masculine form before masculine vowels, and the feminine form before feminine or neuter vowels. In the latter case, a ligature of the consonant and vowel is required.

When one of these consonants precedes another consonant or is the final letter in a word, it may take either a masculine or feminine glyph form, depending on its context. The rendering system should automatically select the correct gender form for these letters based on the gender of the word (in Mongolian and Todo) or the gender of the preceding vowel (in Manchu and Sibe). This is illustrated by *Figure 13-7*, where U+182D MONGOLIAN LETTER GA takes a masculine glyph form when it occurs finally in the masculine word *jarlig* "order," but takes a feminine glyph form when it occurs finally in the feminine word *chirig* "soldier." In this example, the gender form of the final letter *ga* depends on whether the first vowel in the word is a back (masculine) vowel or a front (feminine or neuter) vowel. Where the gender is ambiguous or a form not derivable from the context is required, the user needs to specify which form is required by means of the appropriate free variation selector.

Manchu and Sibe have a similar system of vowel harmony, although it is not so strict. Some words in these two scripts may include both masculine and feminine vowel letters.

For Manchu and Sibe, the velar consonant letters inherited the two writing forms from Mongolian, but the two forms are not categorized as masculine and feminine forms, and the selection of the forms is quite different from Mongolian. When one of the velar consonant letters precedes a vowel letter, it takes the proper form based on the vowel letter. When the Manchu letter *ka* is the final letter in a syllable, the form of *ka* is based on the whole syllable that contains this *ka* irrespective of the preceding vowel letter.

# III. Attestation 1

## III.1 Example 1

In Manchu, the velar series of consonant letters are treated as an integral part of the syllable, and not categorized as masculine and feminine forms. The final forms of the Manchu letter *k* are usually classified according to their appearances.

1) ⟨ᡴ⟩: the form with two dots on the left side of the tail (See **V. More Information**.)
2) ⟨ᠺ⟩: the form with the bow-shaped tail

《清文指要》，卷一 (*Qīngwén Zhǐyào*, vol. 1)
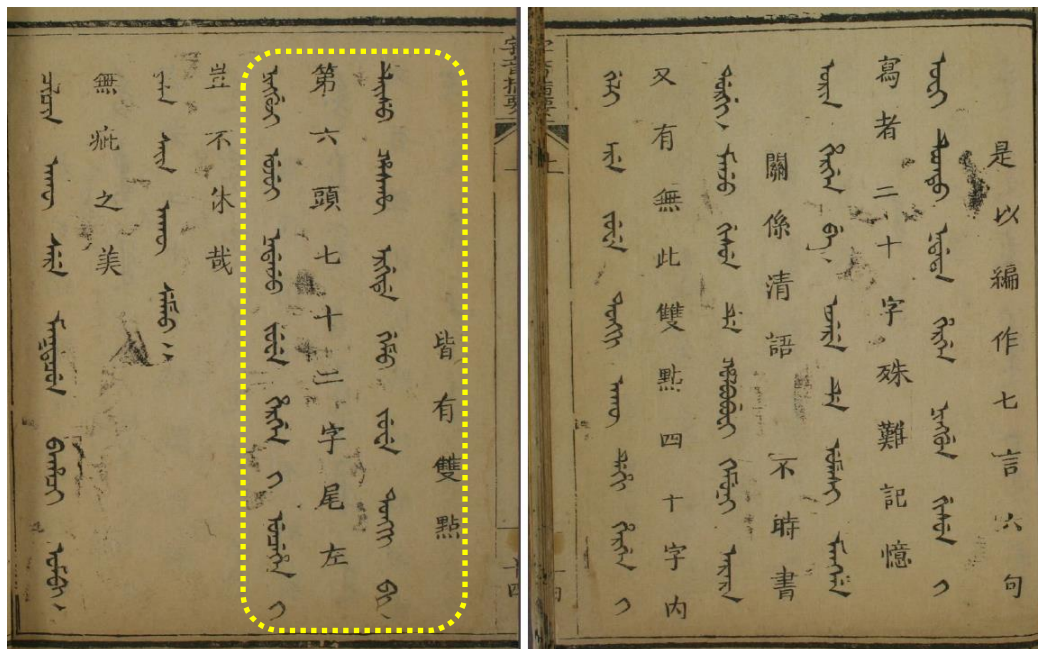


p. 14



p. 15

## III.2 Example 2

The final forms of Manchu letter *k* are sometimes indicated by the typical Manchu vowel letters *a* and *e*. Manchu letters *a* and *e* are sometimes translated as masculine (Chinese: 阳〖陽〗 *yáng*) and feminine (Chinese: 阴〖陰〗 *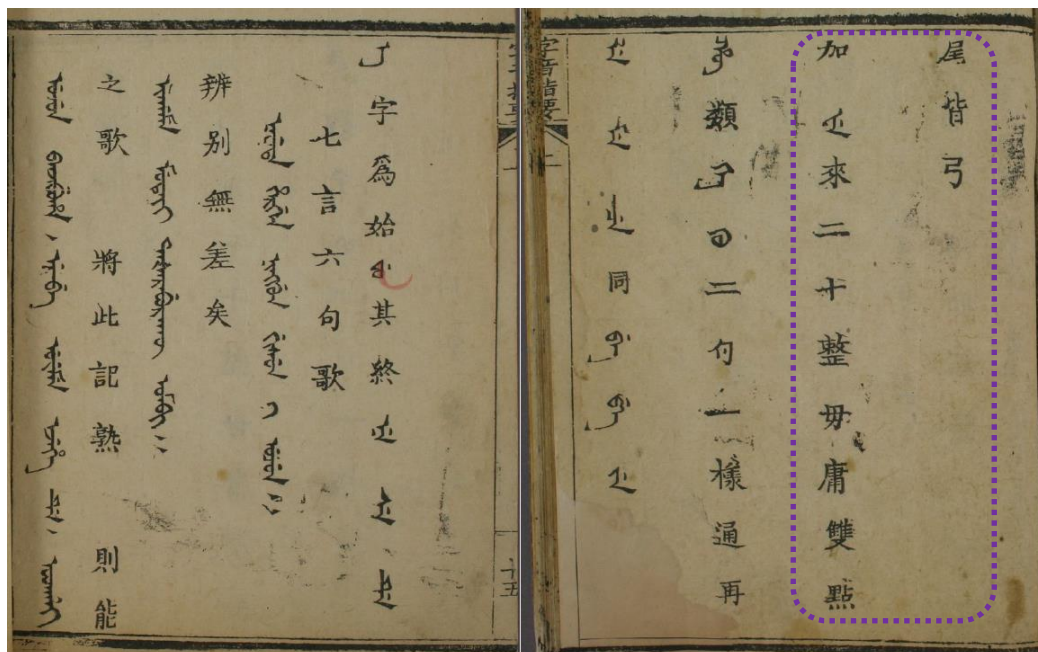yīn*), but *a*-tail (Chinese: 阿尾 *ā-wěi*) and *e*-tail (Chinese: 额尾〖額尾〗/厄尾 *é-wěi/è-wěi*) are not called masculine tail and feminine tail.

1)  ᡬ: *a*-tail with two dots
2)  ᡭ: *e*-tail with a bow

《初学指蒙歌》(*Chūxué Zhǐméng Gē*)
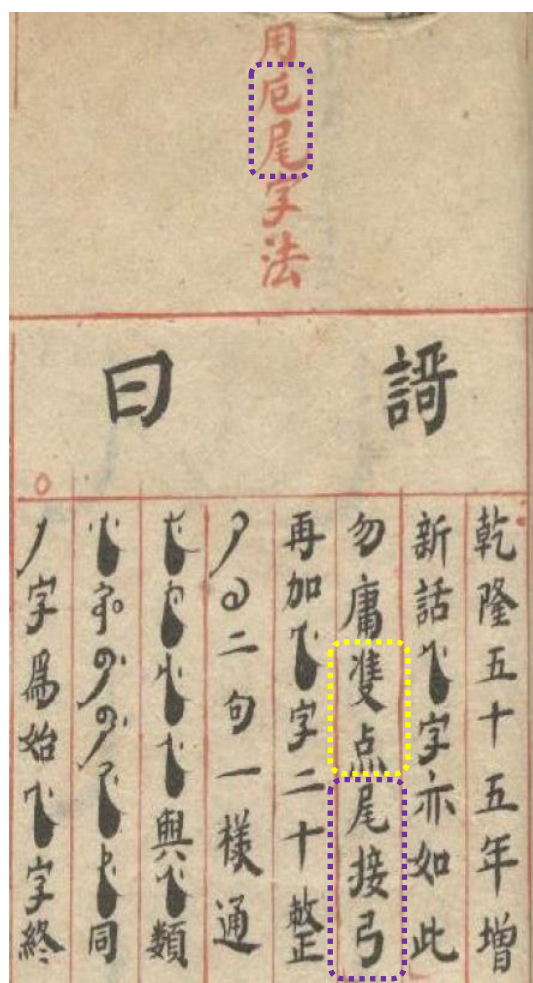
## III.3 Example 3

The two final forms of Manchu letter *k* sometimes were regarded as masculine and feminine forms in Chinese respectively. In this case, both "masculine" and "feminine" indicated the directions of the tails in the traditional principle that left is 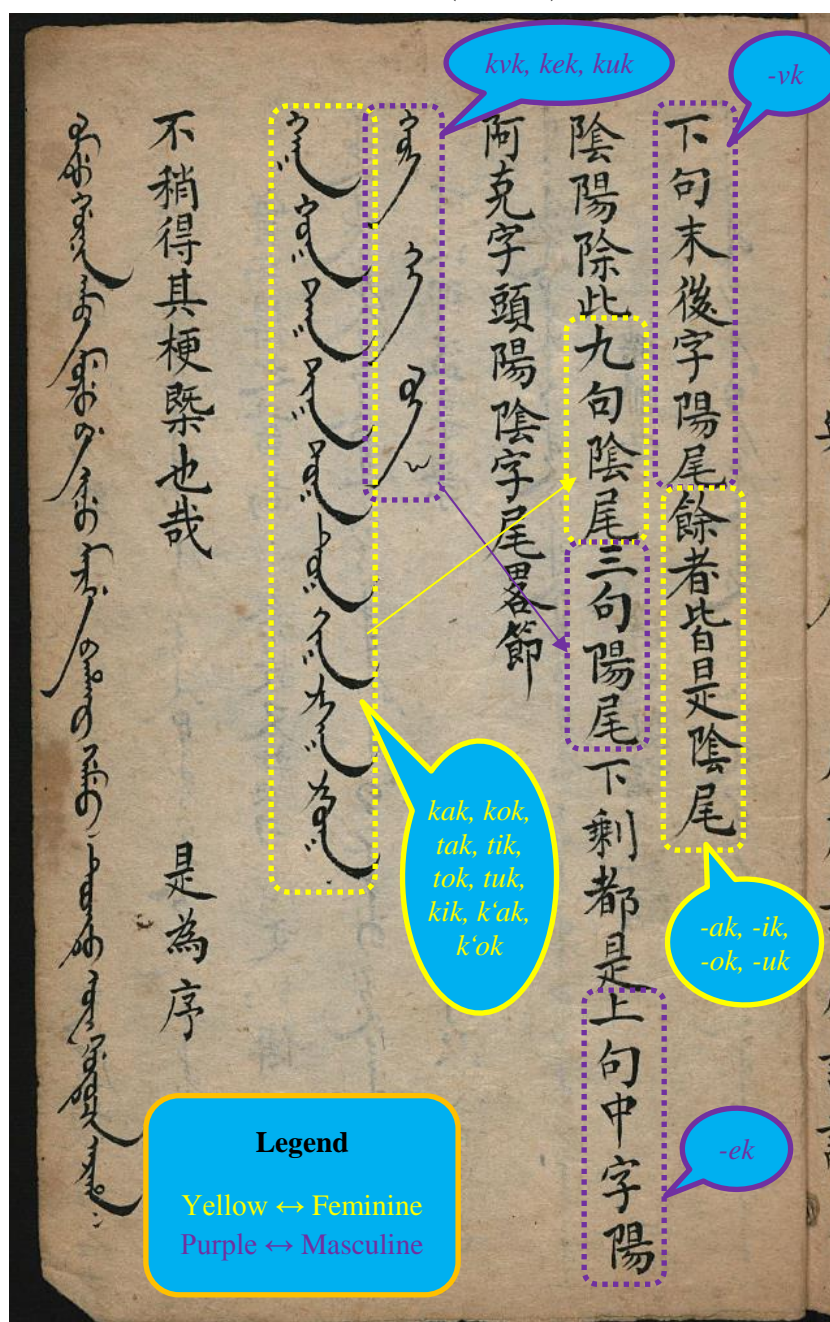*yang* (masculine) and right is *yin* (feminine) (Chinese: 左阳右阴〚左陽右陰〛). This results in exactly the opposite use of the words "masculine" and "feminine" for Manchu and that for Mongolian:

1) ᠊ᡥ: the feminine tail (Chinese: 阴尾〚陰尾〛*yīnwěi*)
   → equivalent to Mongolian masculine final *g* (ᡤ)
2) ᠊ᡥ: the masculine tail (Chinese: 阳尾〚陽尾〛*yángwěi*)
   → equivalent to Mongolian feminine final *g* (ᠭ)

《虛字歌》 (*Xūzì Gē*)

## IV. Attestation 2

In Manchu, if the letter *k* is used as the coda (the final letter of the syllable), the form of *k* is based on the whole syllable that contains this *k*, it is not based on the gender of the word as in Mongolian and Todo, and it is not based on the gender of the preceding vowel as the descriptions in the Core Specification.

It is not applicable to say both "based on the gender of the preceding vowel" and "not based on the gender of the preceding vowel" because the final *k* has nothing to do with the gender of the preceding vowel. See the detailed rules in **III.3 Example 3** and the following table. Moreover, the form of the final *k* is not based on the preceding vowel itself (note that there is no "gender" before "vowel" here). For example, the forms of the final *k* in *dek* and *tek* is different because the vowel letter *e* does not determine the form of the final *k* while the syllable *de(k)* and *te(k)* do.

| *ek* | *dek* | *tek* | *uk* | *luk* | *kuk* | *kik* | *kvk* |
|------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

### IV.1 Example 4

《御制增订清文鉴》(*Yùzhì Zēngdìng Qīngwén Jiàn*): Twelve Character Heads
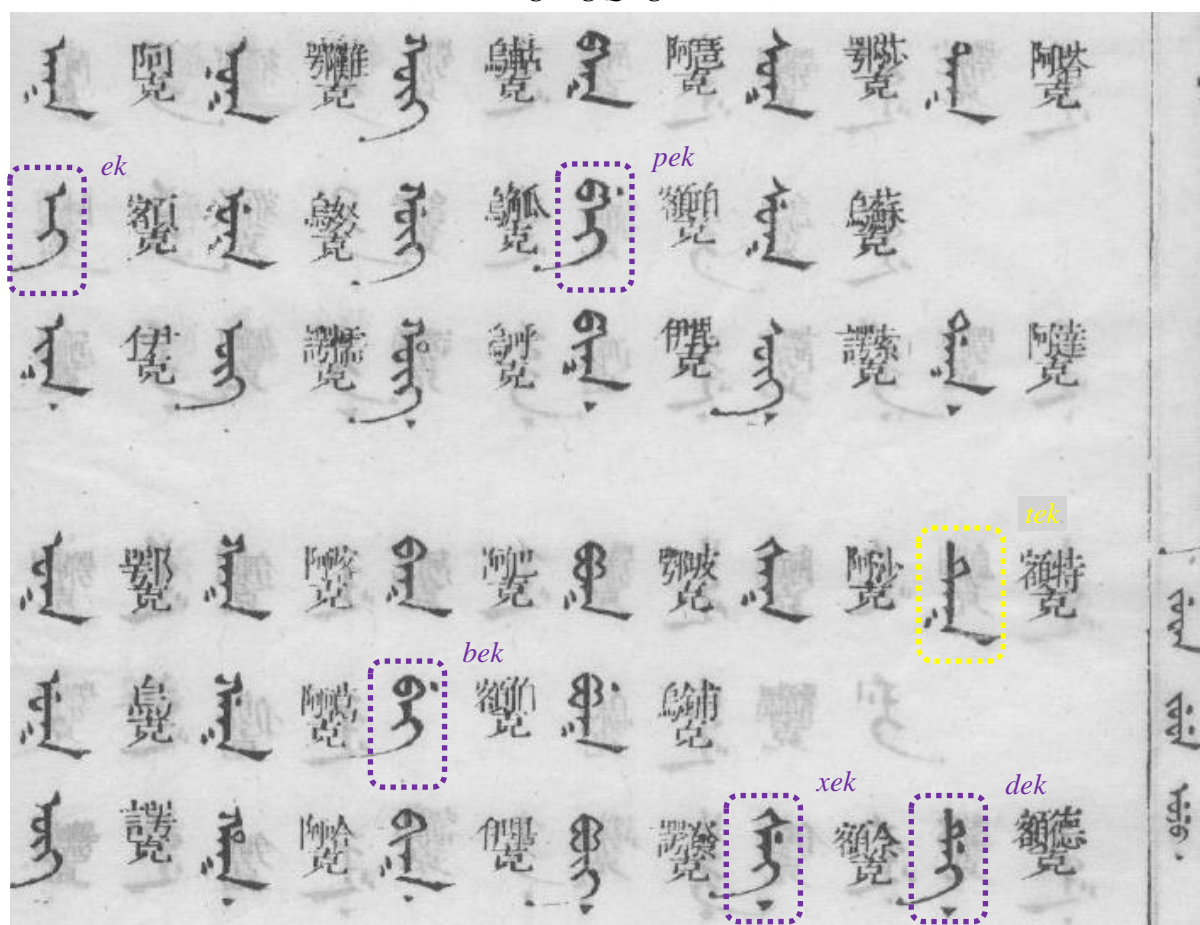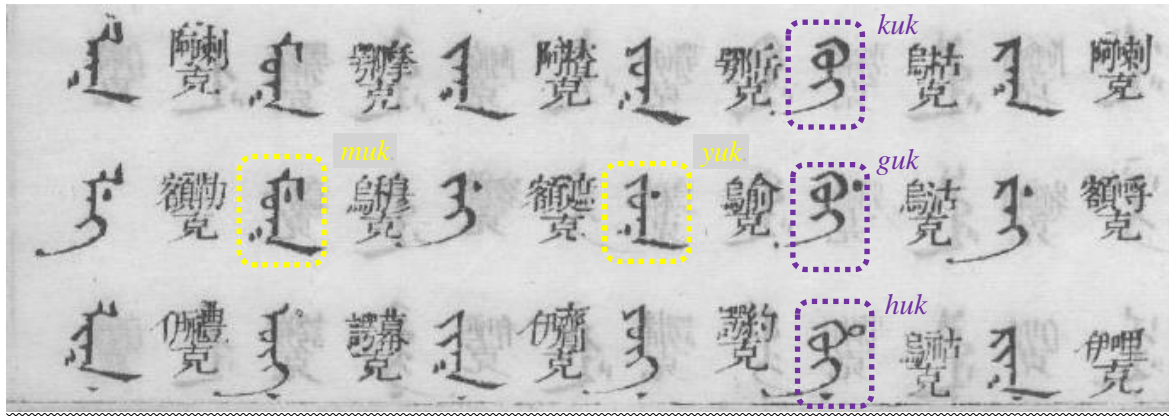
## V. More Information

The third final form (the former "feminine second final form") and the fourth medial form (the former "feminine second medial form") of the Manchu letter *k* are not standard variants. They probably can only be found in *Manchu Buddhist Canon*. Actually, they are commonly regarded as mistakes in writing. The description such as "the form with two dots on the left side of the tail" is not ambiguous.

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