Summer 2013 / Manchu S-A
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Questions, exclamations and onomatopoeia

1. Questions
Most sentences in Manchu will end with a verb in one of the usual sentence-final forms (-mbi, -ha/-he/-ho, akû/-rakû, bi/-bi), or in the imperative form. It is also possible that a sentence may end as a question, in which case the final word ending will usually be -o or one of the other interrogative particles, -ûn, na/ne/ni. A longer list is found in Roth-Li, pp. 367-68.

*mimbe antaha i doro i tuwambio*
Do you look upon me as a guest?

*mini ere juwe bethe geli inde niyákûrambio*
Are these two legs of mine supposed to bend down to him, too?  (YZMaZPZZ)

*sini beile ejen ci tulgiyen jai sinde tusa arame mutere niyalma ainaha bini*
Apart from your master, who else is there who might be able to help you?  (YZMaZPZZ)

2. Emotive particles
Another way to end a sentence is with an exclamatory particle of some sort. Exclamations in Manchu, as in English, are used to express extreme feeling or emotion on the part of the speaker. We have already encountered the use of kai as an emphatic particle at the end of a sentence:

*ere geli enduringge niyalma. enduringge niyalma be amcame günirengge kai.*  (KXMaZPZZ)
Here again, the thinking of wise men follows that of [other] wise men!

*ejen ama be eiterere holtoro oci. abka. ainaha seme guweburak kai.*
If you should deceive your lord, Heaven will never forgive you, no matter what!  (KXMaZPZZ)

Other sorts of sentence-final particles include those expressing belief or likelihood (dere):

*ejen i beye urunakû ambula suilame joboho dere.*  (KXMaZPZZ)
No doubt His Majesty has suffered greatly.

Or dismissal (dabala):

*emu ajige hafan dabala.*
Nothing more than a minor official.

*hiyoošun akû koimali jalingga ba be juwan ubu de araki damu emu ubu araha tucibuhe dabala.*
Told to write ten times the words, “Unfilial and cunning,” [he] turned it in after writing it no more than one time.  (YZMaZPZZ)

Or fear (ayoo seme), i.e., of something not happening or of a negative outcome:

*tere fonde. aha bi se asigan dulba ofi. ama mafa de weile isinjirakû ayoo seme.*  (KXMaZPZZ)
At that time, your servant, being young and foolish, thinking that the matter would probably not reach father and grandfather.

*hûwangdi geli irgen. banjire babe ufarahangge bi ayoo. hafasai dolo ba na be joboburengge bi ayoo seme.*
The emperor, too, is worried that the people will lack a means of living and that among the officials there will be the bringing of distress to their districts.
3. Onomatopoeia

Like Japanese, Manchu makes very extensive use of onomatopoeia in different expressions (and not just in describing how a dog barks or a horse whinnies). All kinds of sounds are employed to convey a wide range of meanings, some concrete, some abstract. Almost all require a periphrastic construction using *seme* (or some form of *sembi*), and vowel harmony is frequently noticeable. A short list is found in Roth-Li, pp. 355-56. Here are some others:

- **ar seme** shouting loudly
- **bar bar seme** many people talking together
- **batak seme** the sound of sthg metal hitting the ground
- **dur seme** the sound of many people talking or laughing
- **heo seme** to be of passable quality
- **hing seme** to do seriously, devotedly
- **lak seme** just right, on the button
- **ser seme** to be fine, light, minor, trifling (as rain)
- **šur seme** to come down hard (of rain)
- **tob seme** to be just right
- **yak seme** painful, heavy, hard to bear
- **yanggar seme** to sound for a long time
- **yar seme** to flow, to go on and on (of water, speech)
- **yonggor seme** ceaselessly
- **yumbu yumbu seme** to be in swarms
- **yur seme** billowing