Interrogatives: *ai* and its derived forms

The use of the particles *-o* and *-ni* to mark questions by adding them to predicates has already been covered. In addition to these forms, there is a large set of interrogative words based on the following simple root words:

- *we*: who
- *ai*: what
- *aibi*: where
- *aiba*: where

Case particles may be used with all of these, giving, for instance:

- *wei*: whose (gen.)
- *aibe*: who (acc.)
- *wede*: to whom (dat.)
- *aibide*: at which place, where (loc.)
- *aibaci*: from which place (abl.)

Thus:

- **bi inu aibe aliyambi**
  "What else shall I regret?"
- **si aibide bihe**
  "Where were you?"
- **ini ama aibaci jihebi**
  "Where did his father come from?"
- **han i morin be bi wede bumbi**
  "To whom shall I give the khan's horse?"

Other common interrogatives include

- *ya*: what, who, which
- *adarame*: how, why

*ya* works mainly as an attributive rather than a stand-alone word. Thus:

- **sini ere unggilli bithede. ai gisun arahe. ya biy Signed unggilli.**
  "In this letter you sent, what language did you write it in? In which month did you send it?"

- **ereci amasi ya niyalma nungneci**
  "After this, whatever person you harm . . ."

Note also

- **yaya**: all kinds of, all manner of, various sorts of

*adarame*

- **damu mini jergi dubei aha. adarame. ejen i nesaken hese wasimbufi. fonjire be alime mutembi.**
  "Your majesty having sent a mild edict, how should a lowly slave as myself be able to bear your queries [after my health]?" (KXMaZPZZ)

By far the largest class of interrogative words involves compounds with *ai*, some of which express a range of idioms.

- **ai**
  - *ai ocibe*: no matter what
  - *ai seme*: why?
  - *ai gelhun akū*: how (would I) dare?
  - *ai hendure*: not to mention
  - *aici (jergi)*: what kind of
  - *ai uttu*: how thus
  - *ai ai*: all kinds of
ainambi how (is it)
ainen ojoro  What can be done?
ainen aina kini  If that's how it is, that's how it is.
ainaha  What happened? What's wrong?
ainha seme  no matter what (lit., “however it may be”)
ainhai  how could it be
ainara  what sort of
ainu  how (is it), why

There is also aika, “what”
aika baita  what thing
but remember that aika also (and more commonly) means “if”:
aikabade  if, in the case that
ai kanambi  if it is so

si ai turgunde doigonde wesimburakū “Why have you not written [a memorial] for so long?” (KXMaZPZZ)

aha bi ai jergi niyalma “What kind of person am I, your servant?” (KXMaZPZZ)

aha bi umesi emu dubei jergi buya niyalma. ai hüturi fengšen bifi. enduringge jalan de banjinjifi. “Your servant is a most insignificant and unworthy person. By what kind of good fortune did I come to be born in a golden age?” (KXMaZPZZ)

hese wasimbuhangge. ere hergen. ai nyalma arahangge be donjibume wesimbu. Edict: Tell [me] who it was who wrote these characters.” (KXMaZPZZ)

aması julesi baitak יאבוסי aianambi “What are you doing, going back and forth getting nothing done?” (YZMaZPZZ)

si aina donjibume wesimbu hākū “Why did you not report this?” (YZMaZPZZ)

damu ce ai uttu dusihiyen “But how could they be this stupid?” (YZMaZPZZ)

ere sinde ai dalji baita. uttu largin wesimbu fi ainambi. ulhicun akū “What does this affair have to do with you? What's the idea of sending such a wordy memorial? Clueless.” (YZMaZPZZ)

Si An i tacin ambula sain uthai julgei fe Manju i an kemuni bisire gese. ere tacin be Si An i bade ainaha seme halaci ojorakū. “The customs of [the garrison at] Xi'an are quite fine; it's like the old Manchu ways of yore are still around. No matter what, these practices at Xi'an must not be changed.” (KXMaZPZZ)

ainhai ere maji ge mengun be tebufi encu bade bai talamb. “How could it be that he put away this small amount of money in order to use it on something else?” (expressing doubt, implying, “It's not possible”) (QLMaZPZZ)

aha mini ser seme saha babe. ai gelhun akū yargiyan be jafame ejen de tucibume wesimburakū “How would I dare not bring to His Majesty’s attention the truth of the little bit that I know?” (QLMaZPZZ)

Arigūn beye jiyanggiyūn ofi honu uttu wesimbuhe bade fejergi ursed geli ai hendure. “If Arigūn, himself a garrison general, can yet write such a memorial, what can be said of people below him?”