

## Lesson 7: Verbs I

### Verb Forms

1. –mbi (the imperfective finite form)
  - a. This is the most frequent dictionary form (as it is in Norman). All other verbal forms attach to the stem (the part of the verb preceding –mbi).
  - b. It is a finite verb form, meaning that it can only be used as the main predicate of a sentence or of a principal clause of a complex sentence.
  - c. It is imperfective, meaning that it expresses action not yet completed – either general statements of fact, or action in the present or future.
  - d. Uses:
    - i. To indicate regular/frequent action or abstract actions. (e.g. *nikan niyalma nikan gisun be gisurembi* – Chinese people speak Chinese or *bi eme be hairamb* – I love my mother)
    - ii. To indicate a concrete action occurring at the time one is speaking (e.g. *si aibide genembi* – where are you going?)
    - iii. To indicate the future tense (e.g. *bi cimari alin de genembi* – I will go to the mountain tomorrow).
2. –ha/-he/-ho, -ka/-ke/-ko (the perfective participle)
  - a. Verbs take different endings in this form depending on vowel harmony
    - i. If all the vowels in the stem are a, e, or o, use the corresponding vowel in the ending. (*genembi = genehe, arambi = araha, ombi = oho*)
    - ii. If the only vowels in a stem are some combination of u, i, and e, use the he/ke ending (though there are exceptions, which will be marked in dictionaries). (*gisurembi = gisurehe, tucimbi = tucike, mutembi = mutehe, jimbi = jihe*, but *kirimbi = kiriha*)
    - iii. If the vowels u and/or i appear in a stem that also includes a, o, or ū, use the ha/ka ending (*donjimbi = donjiha, jabumbi = jabuha, hūlamb* = hūlaha)
  - b. Most verbs use the ha/he/ho ending, but some use ka/ke/ko – many dictionaries, including Norman, will include a notation if a verb uses ka/ke/ko (or even more rarely ngka/ngke/ngko) (for instance, there are two verbs *jembi*, one meaning to eat, with the perfective participle *jeke*, one meaning to tolerate/to put up with, with the perfective participle *jengke*).
  - c. Uses:
    - i. As a simple past tense (e.g. *bi bithe be araha* – I wrote the book)
    - ii. In noun modifying form, expressing completed action (e.g. *bi ini araha bithe be hūlamb* – I am reading the book that he wrote)
    - iii. In nominalized form as a participle expressing completed action (e.g. *bi ini gisurehe be donjiha* – I heard what he said)
    - iv. The use explained in iii is frequently followed by a case particle (as it is in the example), just like ordinary nouns. When in the

dative case, it suggest that the action marked by the dative case occurred prior to the action that follows. In this case, the action described by the verb need not have occurred in the past, only prior to the action that follows (e.g. *i bithe be araha de, bi bithe be hūlambi* – When he has written the book, I will read it).

3. –ra/-re/-ro (the imperfective participle)
  - a. Verbs take different endings in this form depending on vowel harmony
    - i. As above, if all vowels in the verbal stem are a, e, or o, the ending uses the same vowel (e.g. *genembi = genere, arambi = arara, jobombi = joboro*)
    - ii. Otherwise, the last vowel in the stem usually determines the ending. If it is an a, use –ra, if it is e, i, u, or ū, use –re (it will never be o unless all vowels in the stem are o) (e.g. *donjimbi = donjire, arabumbi = arabure, hūlambi = hūlara*).
  - b. Some verbs have irregular forms, which are usually noted in dictionaries – the most important to remember are *ombi = ojoro* and *bimbi = bisire* (other irregular forms associated with verbs used in this lesson are *jembi = jetere* and *jimbi = jidere*).
  - c. Uses:
    - i. Like –mbi, –ra/-re/-ro can be used to express simple present or future action. (e.g. *bi sinde niru be bure* – I am giving you the arrow/I will give you the arrow). Note, however, that it is much more common to see –mbi used in such situations.
    - ii. In noun modifying form expressing incomplete action (e.g. *ini gisurere gisun manju gisun bi* – The language that he speaks/is speaking is the Manchu language).
    - iii. In nominalized form as a participle expressing incomplete action (e.g. *ce atanggi jidere be sarkū* – I don't know when they are coming)
    - iv. The use explained in iii is frequently followed by a case particle (as it is in the example), just like ordinary nouns. When in the dative case, it suggest that the action marked by the dative case occurred simultaneously with the action that followed. In this case, the action described by the verb need not occur in the present or future, only simultaneous to the action that follows (e.g. *i bithe be hūlara de bi buda be jeke* – I ate a meal while he was reading).
    - v. Prohibition/negative command (with *ume*). (e.g. *bira de ume dosire* – don't enter the river!)
    - vi. With *unde*, meaning not yet (*bi ere bithe be hūlara unde* – I have not yet read this book).

4. –me (imperfective converb)
- Converbs, including –me, cannot end a sentence; they are necessarily subordinated to another verb (for instance, one ending in –mbi, –ra/-re/-ro, or –ha/-he/-ho/)
  - me expresses action that occurs simultaneously to the main verb (*bi buda be jeterede, yali be jeme nure be omimbi* – When I eat a meal, I eat meat and drink wine).
  - Frequently verbs ending in –me thus take on an adverbial function, and some –me forms even have developed a meaning somewhat independent of the main verb (*sirenembi*, to be connected = *sireneme*, continually).
  - me expresses the manner of an action (*bi bithe be halame araha* – I rewrote the book; *halambi* means to correct or to change. *bi manjurame gisurehe* – I spoke in a Manchu manner; that is, I spoke in Manchu).
  - me is frequently used in conjunction with verbs like *mutembi* (to be able to) and *tuwambi* (to try) (*bi nikan gisun be gisureme mutembi* – I can speak Chinese. *bi bithe be arame tuwara* – I will try to write a book).
  - Multiple verbs in the –me form can, and frequently are, strung together (*bi manjurame gisureme mutembi* – I can speak in a Manchu manner).
  - Verbs of speech in the –me form are frequently used either to introduce and mark the end of quoted text (*mini ama minde hendume jio sehe* or *mini ama minde jio seme henduhe* or even *mini ama minde hendume jio seme henduhe* all mean “my father said to me: come!”)
5. –fi (perfective converb)
- A few verbs use –pi or –mpi in place of –fi (these are relatively rare and will be noted in dictionaries. For instance, the version of *jembi* meaning “to tolerate” has the perfective converbial form *jempi*; the version meaning “to eat” has the standard form *jefi*).
  - fi is used to express sequential action; a verb ending in –fi expresses an action completed prior to the following action (*jahūdai bira ci tucifi mederi de dosiha* – the ship came out of the river and entered the ocean).
  - As with –me, some –fi forms have taken on somewhat independent meanings. For instance *ofi*, meaning “because”, comes from the verb *ombi*, “to become.” (*i nikan niyalma ofi nikan gisun be gisureme mutembi* – because he is a Chinese person, he can speak the Chinese language).
  - HOW TO UNDERSTAND -ME VS. -FI:** Though both -me and -fi are converbs, and thus must be subordinate to another verb, the way in which they subordinate is quite different. Verbs ending -fi are much more independent than verbs ending -me. A verb ending in -fi represents an independent action; it is grammatically subordinate to another verb, but the meaning of the verb ending -fi and the verb to which it is subordinate are not linked. In contrast, a verb ending -me will usually modify the meaning of another verb. Compare: *bi gisureme jeke* (I ate while speaking) to *bi gisurefi jeke* (I spoke and ate). In both cases, *gisure-* is grammatically

subordinate to the main verb *jeke*. That is, because *jeke* is perfective, both *gisureme* and *gisurefi* also represent completed actions. However, where *gisurefi jeke* suggests that speaking and eating were two separate actions (probably, though not necessarily sequential), *gisureme jeke* is a single action of eating and talking simultaneously (perhaps talking with one's mouth full). Or compare: *bi manjurame jasigan arambi* (I will write a letter in Manchu) to *bi manjurafi jasigan arambi* (I will speak Manchu and write a letter); in the first, the writing of the letter is done through the use of Manchu (*manjurame*) while in the second, speaking Manchu and writing a letter are two separate actions. But note that as in the previous comparison, the imperfective sense of the final verb *arambi* extends to both converbs, making them express future action.

The frequent use of the converbs *-me* and *-fi* is both one of the most ubiquitous and one of the most difficult features of Manchu; you will benefit from thinking explicitly about the difference between them whenever you encounter them even from this early stage in your study of the language.

6. Verbal stem (imperative)
  - a. Many verbs, including common ones, have irregular imperative forms – this is especially likely if the verbal stem is a single syllable (*ombi* = *oso*, *jimbi* = *jio*, *jembi* = *jefu*).
  - b. The imperative expresses a direct command and is unlikely to be used except by social superiors speaking to social inferiors (you will probably see it most frequently in imperial edicts; one very common rescript on memorials is *gisurehe songkoi obu* – do as recommended – or, more literally, “cause it to become in accord with what was said”)

Example Sentences

10. خان = khaan « خانہ دار »  
خانہ دار = khaan « خانہ دار »
9. خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو ، خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو  
خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو
8. خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو  
خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو = to reach
7. خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو  
خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو
6. خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو
5. خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو = to wait
4. خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو
3. خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو
2. خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو
1. خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو خانہ دار نے خانہ دار کو