

Understanding How Father Morice Wrote Carrier

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The writings of Father Adrien-Gabriel Morice are one of the major sources of information about Carrier history and the language and culture of earlier times, but the Carrier material in his work is difficult to interpret, mostly because it is in a writing system that few people now understand. This document explains how to interpret Father Morice's writing of Carrier.

Father Morice wrote Carrier in two different writing systems. When writing for Carrier people, he almost always wrote in the Carrier syllabics. When writing for other audiences, in his scholarly work and occasional popular work, he wrote Carrier in a Roman-based writing system. The major exception is that at the insistence of his bishop, who no longer wished to use the syllabics of the first two editions, in 1938 he published a third edition of the *Prayerbook* in his Roman system.

Father Morice's Roman system changed in certain respects over time. We will begin by describing the system as used late in his life, in his massive *The Carrier Language: A Grammar and Dictionary* (1932) and in the third edition of the *Prayerbook* (1938), as these contain by far the largest amount of Carrier material and his most accurate transcriptions.

Father Morice's writing system uses letters of the Roman alphabet, several diacritics, and a few non-Roman letters. Although it uses single letters for many sounds, including some spelled with more than one letter in the Carrier Linguistic Committee writing system, some sounds are written with a sequence of as many as four letters. There are quite a few cases in which the same sound is written in more than one way.

The chart on the following page shows the correspondence between Father Morice's system and the Carrier Linguistic Committee system.

There is one thing not shown in this chart. Father Morice sometimes wrote an underscore beneath a vowel letter, for example, a. This was intended to mark low tone. Tone is not generally written in the CLC system and does not play a large role in Carrier so you can simply ignore such underscores.

When using this chart to convert from Father Morice's system to the CLC system, you must always take the longest sequence of letters first. For example, if you encounter *khrw*, you must take it as a unit and convert it to CLC *kw*. You will get the wrong result if, for example, you immediately take

Morice	CLC	Morice	CLC
.	'	k̥	k'
a	a	khrw	kw
ã	a	khw	kw
b	b	kw	gw
c	sh	krw	gw
d	d	krw	kw'
dz	dz	k̥w	kw'
dž	<u>dz</u>	l	l
e	u	ɬ	lh
ê	e	m	m
è	e	n	n
ě	e	ñ	ng
g	g	o	o
h	h	ô	o
hw	wh	õ	o
i	i	ö	o
î	i	p	b
j	j	q	j
kh	k	q̥	ch'
khr	k	r	gh
k	g	rh	kh
kr	g	rw	ghw

Morice	CLC	Morice	CLC
s	s	ts	ts
š	<u>s</u>	tš	ts'
t	d	tš	<u>ts</u>
t̪	t'	tš̄	<u>ts'</u>
tc	ch	u	oo
th	t	û	oo
tl	dl	y	y
tł	tl	z	z
tł̄	tl'	ž	<u>z</u>

the *k* and convert it to CLC *g*, then take the *h* as CLC *h*, then take the *r* and replace it with CLC *gh*, and finally take the *w* as CLC *w*, which will give you the incorrect result *ghghw*.

Morice sometimes uses upper-case forms of these letters. In most cases, the upper-case form is easily recognized, but take note that *L* is the upper-case counterpart of *ł* (CLC *lh*).

Strictly speaking you can follow this chart blindly and convert Father Morice's spelling to the CLC spelling. However, it is useful to understand some of the differences between Father Morice's spelling and the CLC spelling.

The reason that Father Morice wrote the same sound more than one way is that he was trying to write details of the pronunciation that do not distinguish one word from another. In any particular language, some differences in sound are important because they can distinguish one word from another. Other differences are not as important either because they don't matter at all, such as differences between two people's voices, or because they are predictable results of the context that the sound is in. A practical writing system, that is, one intended for fluent speakers of the language, does not need to include such details: it only needs to include enough information to tell one word from another. Because Father Morice intended his Roman-based system for people who did not speak Carrier, he wrote details that a Carrier-speaking person

would not need.

When reading Father Morice's work, you need to be aware that he was writing the Stuart Lake dialect as it was spoken at the end of the 19th century when he learned it. He wrote some words differently from the way we would write them because the language has changed in some ways. Here are some changes to be aware of:

- Original *ghw* is now pronounced the same as *w* by most speakers. For example, he writes *harwes* for “foam”, equivalent to CLC *haghwas*, but most people today pronounce this word *hawus*.
- In many cases, *kh* has become *h*. For example, “they are tall” used to be pronounced *khinyiz* but is now pronounced *hinyiz*. In Father Morice's spelling it is written *rhinyiz* because he actually heard a *kh* sound. The exact rule describing this change is a little complicated: all *kh* sounds became *h* except at the beginning of a stem and in disjunct prefixes (the prefixes farther from the stem of a verb). For example, the *kh* at the beginning of *khuni* “word” is still *kh* because it is at the beginning of a stem.
- Syllables that used to end in *ook* now end in *ukw*. For example, “it is short” used to be *ndoook* but is now *ndukw*.
- Syllables that used to end in *uh* or *ukh* now end in *oh*. For example, “house” used to be pronounced *yukh* but is now pronounced *yoh*.

There are also some differences in spelling that are probably due to the way Father Morice heard the language rather than to any change in the language itself:

- Father Morice sometimes wrote consonants doubled where we usually write them single. For example, he wrote *thallo* for *talo* “salmon”
- Father Morice seems to have heard *who* for what we now write *whu*.
- In some cases when a vowel is followed by a *j*, Father Morice heard *tj* rather than just *j*. For example, for *ujun* “he is singing” he wrote *etqen*, equivalent to CLC *utjun*.

Finally, it is important to be aware that although Father Morice was aware of the glottal stop and provided a way of writing it, in practice he often missed it, especially at the beginning of words.

Father Morice's earlier writing uses the same basic system but with a few differences. One difference is in how the glottalized consonants are written. Instead of the subscript dot, he wrote an apostrophe before the symbol for the

equivalent non-glottalized consonant. For example:

't	instead of	t̪	for	t'
'k	instead of	k̪	for	k'
'ts	instead of	tʂ	for	ts'

When using an apostrophe to mark glottalization, where the plain sound is represented by a sequence of more than one letter, Morice sometimes puts the apostrophe between the two letters rather than preceding both, e.g. 't'l rather than 'tɬ.

The other major difference is that he wrote the vowel *u* as α instead of *e*. In some earlier publications he also wrote *lh* for the *lh* sound just as it is written in the CLC system.

It should be noted that these systems are occasionally mixed in the same publication. For example, in the paper “On the Carrier Onomatology” we find 'Qest̓o for CLC *Ch'ust'o*, where the glottalization of *ch'* is marked by a preceding apostrophe but that of *t'* is marked by a subscript dot, and similarly *T'ɬoka* for *Tl'ok'a*. As these two examples suggest, it appears that the apostrophe tends to be used when the letter is upper case.

It should also be noted that the subscript dot is not infrequently missing, due perhaps to the printer's failure to notice it.

A warning is needed with regard to using materials that quote words from Father Morice's writings. Such citations often leave out diacritics, that is, the subscript dot and the various accents, as the authors either did not understand their importance or could not be bothered. It is not safe to rely on such publications; it is best to check the original source.