Chinese Pronunciation & Accents (integrations, 2024^2)

In *quick speech*, the tonemes are realized with taxotones more compressed than is normally the case and syllables are more or less shortened. This happens in protunes, even in tunes. See {1}.

Again, in quick speech ⟨»⟩, the 3rd toneme /˩/, even in tunes, is generally realized as a kind of 'half-3rd ton(em)e', with no problem, as it is still different from any other ton(em)es.

The 4th toneme /\/, followed by any other tonemes, has a shortened shape. We show the compressed shapes of all the four plain tonemes. We also show how the 2nd and 1st tonemes are modified in quick speech (including the modifications of the zero toneme /˳/. The 'zero' toneme, obviously occurring in unstressed syllables, often has a more or less *devoiced* nucleus in addition to a paraphonic reduction of the vocogram.

Currently, not necessarily in quick speech, in sequences of 1st /¯/ tonemes, the last one (or, alternatively, that after the first occurrence of it) is slightly lower.

Furthermore, in conclusive sentences, a 1st toneme /¯/ is lowered. The closer to the end it occurs, not only in a tune (as shown), the more it is lowered.

In Peking, the 'zero' toneme /˳/ is often used in place of any other toneme, in less prominent syllables. On the contrary, in Taiwan, the 'zero' toneme /˳/ is often replaced by some 'full' toneme.

In non-neutral accents, tonemes are often exchanged at random or substituted by local ones or others alike (with problems for effective communication).

Chinese *r-* /#ɻ/ has little to do with the typical western *sonant* consonants, like *r-* [ɾ, r; ʁ, ɤ, ʀ; ɹ ɻ], or *n-*, *l-* [n; l]. Typically, for Chinese people, *wrong* is like *long*! Its normal articulation is [ɻ] (voiced postalveolar *approximant*); but, in quick speech, it is [ɻ́] (voiced postalveolar *semi*-approximant), when speaking 'among smart insiders'.

In emphatic speech, we hear [ʐ̆] (voiced *slit* constrictive, *offIPA* '[ɻ̝]'); but, when speaking to 'silly western outsiders', we often hear [ʐ́] (voiced postalveolar *grooved* semi-constrictive) or even [ʐ] (voiced postalveolar *grooved* constrictive, derived from *sh-* /ʂ/), not only for 'normal' emphasis, when the speaker is trying to be heard clearly. See {2}.

In *non-neutral accents*, when other Chinese speakers use Mandarin, the following peculiarities are frequently found. See {3}.

/y/ in central-southern accents is [ʝɪ̣, ɹɪ̣, ɥɪ̣, ɪ̣, ʉ, ɵ].

/ɯ/ in northern accents is (also) [ɯ, ɪ, ə], with /Çɯ/ [-ɯ̹, -ɨ̹], but, in southern accents, in /Çɯ/ it becomes mostly ↓[-ɯ, -ɯ, -ɪ].

In central-southern accents, we often have: /ɤ/ [ɤ(ɤ)], /xɤ/ [ɦɵ, ɦɵ]; /ɤʊ/ [ɵɷ], /wo/ [(ɷ)ɒ, (ɷ)ɒɤ, oɤ] (quite often they are also exchanged, at random, with the possibility that all of them may coincide with just one of the four).

/Vʐ/ [Vʐ̞], in central-southern accents, are simply ↓[VV], while in /ɤ(n/ŋ)ʐ/ we find ↓[ɤ, ɯ, ə].

/w/, in northern accents (and occasionally in southern ones) becomes: [ɷ, ʍ, ʋ, ʋ̂, ʊ̂, ʉ, v, v̬] and even [∅] (zero phone).

/#ʐ/ [ʐ], in central-southern accents, is [z, ɹ, l]; /#ʐ/, in north-eastern (and possibly in southern) accents, may become ↓[ɟ, ɹ, ɻ, ɟ].

/#l/ [l], in central-southern accents, though not systematically, becomes [n, ɴ] (the second one is semi-nasal), while /#n/ becomes [l, ɭ] (the second one is semi-lateral).

/#f, #ɦ/ [f] [ˈɬ, ˌɹ, ˳ɦ], in central-southern accents, though not systematically, are often exchanged; for /Cɦ/ [ˈÇɦ, ˌÇh, ˳Ç(ɦ)], broad non-neutral speakers often use weaker or no 'aspiration' [ˈCh, ˌCɦ, ˳C].

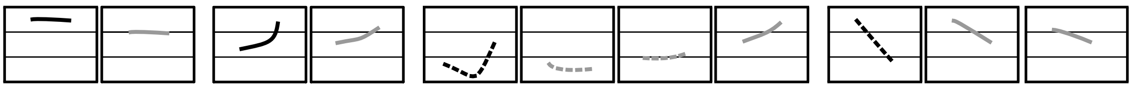
/n#, ɴ#/ [n, ɴ], in central-southern accents, though not systematically, are often exchanged, and even changed into semi-nasal [ɴ, ɴ].

In western, central, and southern accents, stopstrictive and constrictive *C* /Ç/ become dental, [ʦ, s].

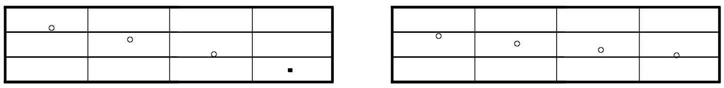
/Ç/ [ʈʂ, ʂ] and [Ç] [ʨ, ɕ], in north-eastern and central-southern accents, are merged into *C* oscillating between [ʈʂ, ʧ, ʧ; ʂ, ʃ, ʃ]. /Ç/ [ʈʂ, ʂ], in southern accents, can become [ʦ, s], although rarely.

Due to *hypercorrection*, native speakers with only dental stopstrictive and constrictive *C*, [ʦ, s], at random use either [ʈʂ, ʂ] or [ʨ, ɕ], trying to 'improve' their pronunciation, but with an opposite result.

{1¹}

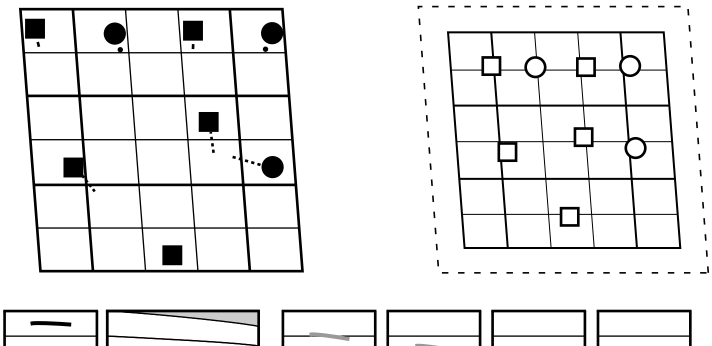


1 [¯V] 1 »[¯V] 2 [˩V] 2 »[ˊV] 3 [˩V̦V̦] 3′ [_V̦] 3′ »[_V̦] 3″ [ˊV] 4 [\V̦] 4′ [ˋV] 4′ »[ˋV]

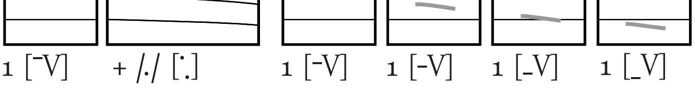


0 [˙V] [˙V] [.V] [.V̦] 0 »[˙V̥] »[˙V̥] »[.V̥] »[.V̥]

{1²}

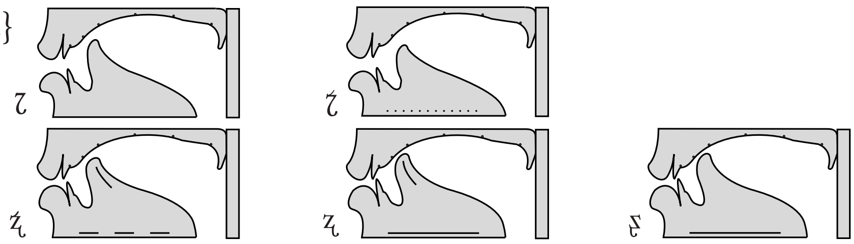


{1³}



1 [¯V] + /./ [˙.] 1 [¯V] 1 [¯V] 1 [_V] 1 [_V]

{2}


ʅ
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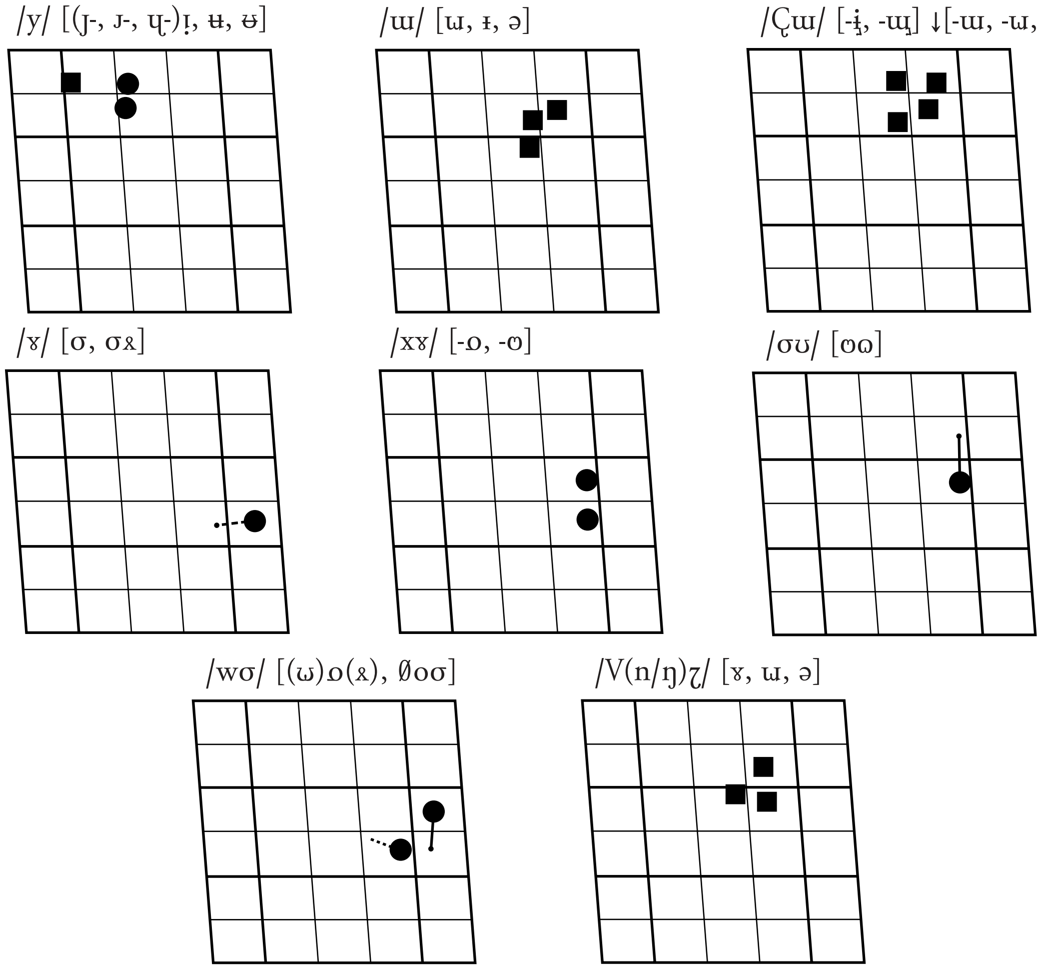
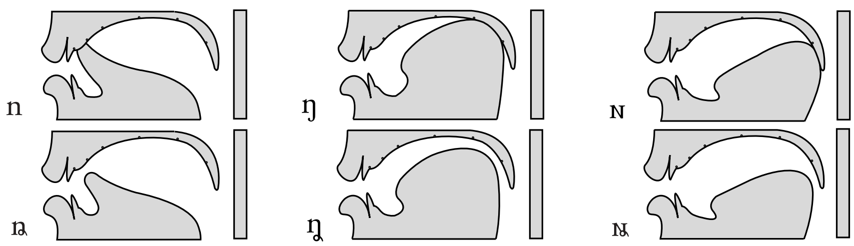
{3¹}


/y/ [(ʝ-, ɹ-, ɥ-)ɪ̣, ʉ, ɵ]
/ɯ/ [ɯ, ɨ, ə]
/Çɯ/ [-ɨ̰, -ɯ̰] ↓[-ɯ, -ɯ, -ɨ]
/ɤ/ [σ, σɤ]
/xɤ/ [-ɒ, -ʊ]
/σʊ/ [ʊɷ]
/wσ/ [(ɷ)ɒ(ɤ), ∅oσ]
/V(n/ŋ)ʅ/ [ɤ, ɯ, ə]

{3²}


n
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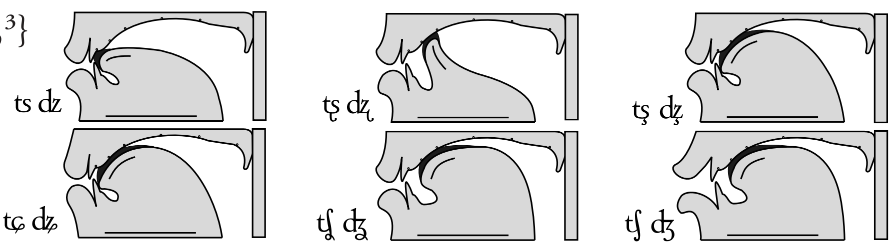
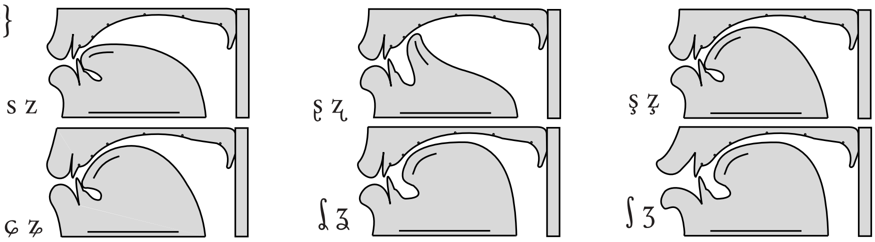
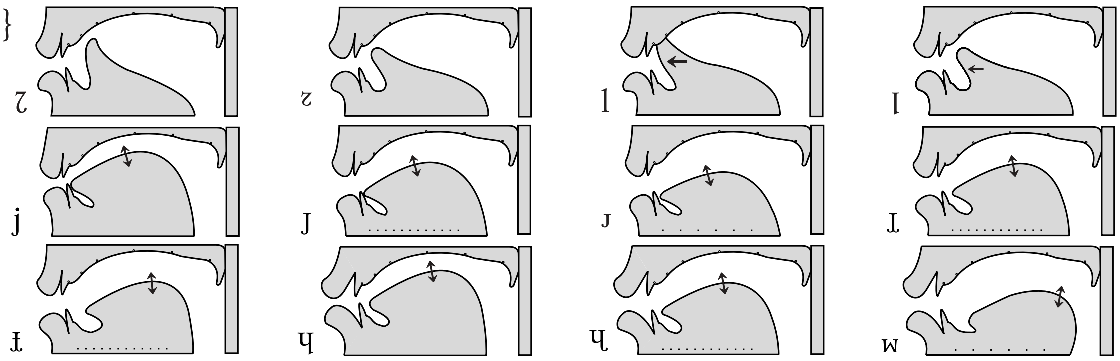
{3³}


ts dz
tʂ dʐ
tʂ dʐ
tɕ dʑ
tʃ dʒ
tʃ dʒ

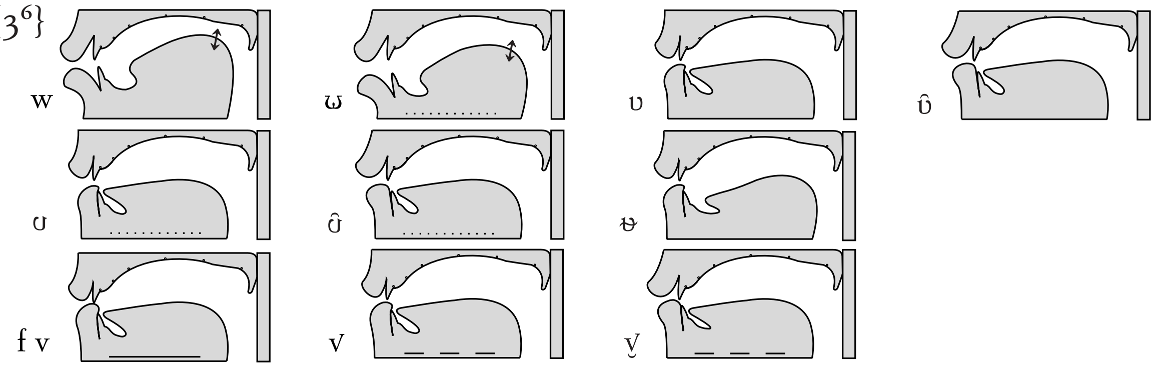
{3[4]}



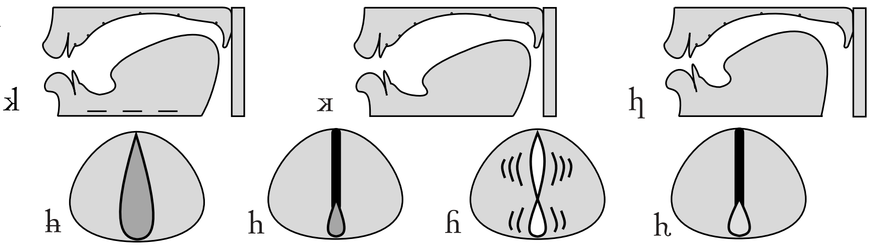
{3[5]}



{3[6]}



{3[7]}



It is sadly embarrassing to talk about less concrete phonologies, such as the most widespread ones for Chinese, which negatively, and inevitably, also influenced the development of *pinyin*. In fact, what might someone (of sound mind) think about a vowel phoneme like /i/ with three (vocalic) taxophones that become consonantal, by wicked magic? All this as 'made in China'.

Thus, for instance, considering /mi, si, ʂi/, *ie* [mi, sɯ, ʂɰ̢], we would not certainly expect to find something like '[mi, sɟ̵, ʂɟ̢]' (where '[ɟ̵]' should twistedly represent an intense 'dental' approximant). Substantially, we should be expected to believe that some vowels become quite different consonants: a most peculiar fact, indeed!

The first *Linguaphone Chinese Course* (1921), quite correctly, showed [ɯ] in a vowel quadrilateral, that we present in an improved form (although keeping six 'original' collocations on the external margins, which is clearly unrealistic). For that time, with the *IPA* practically at its beginning (1888), it was understandable to find [sɹ], for lack of a sufficient number of symbols.

This situation has not improved to this day, in addition to not distinguishing vocoids with rounded or unrounded (and semi-rounded) lips on vocalic quadrilaterals.

In spite of that, it is incredible that, even today, we happen to find books that palm us off with such unscientific things. Indeed, it is common practice for most of those books (and articles) to keep on believing in such fairy tales. They repeat them with no verifications, and without trying to understand how they are actually pronounced.

By the way, we must not avoid showing an impossible quadrilateral (after that of Linguaphone) derived from that appeared in a booklet by Zhong (1980), and possibly before, with absurd collocations.

We show it, slightly improved, also keeping '[ɟ̵, ɟ̢]', but inevitably without [ɯ] (and with collocations 'perfectly' clung on to highly improbable –actually impossible– places, and still with undifferentiated lip marks). See {4}.

Taking some figures from our *Chinese Pronunciation & Accents*, we present the orogram of [ɯ], just before that of [ɰ̢], to show how they are similar. In fact, the only difference consists in the lateral contraction for [ɰ̢], including the inevitable slight raising of the apex of the tongue. See {5}.

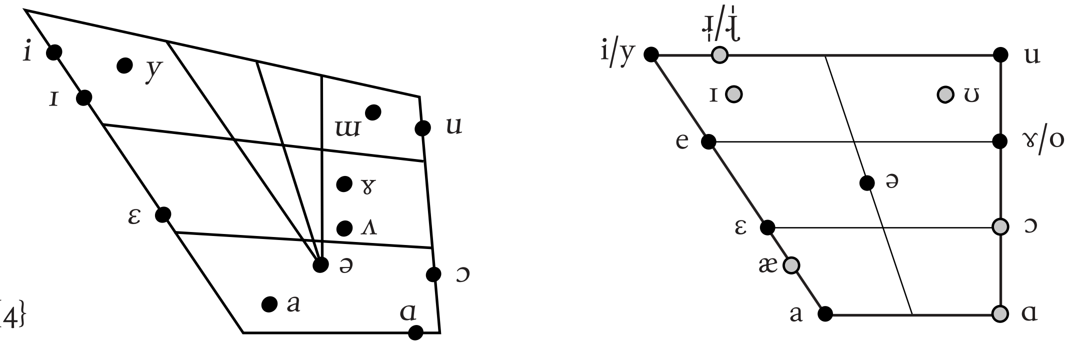
Such an articulation may make superficial phoneticians think that [ɰ̢] is a contoid, more similar to *canIPA* [ɹ] for American English, certainly less similar to *canIPA* [ɻ] for British English, although auditorily similar, but slightly different.

It is unbelievable that even native-tongue phoneticians keep on believing and 'sermonizing' the contrary, strangely enough. However, [ɰ̢] is a real vocoid (as [ɯ]).

The first *three* vocograms show all the taxophones of the Chinese vowels, to have a complete vision of their structure. See {6}.

In /Çɯ/, we find [Çɰ̢], instead, in /Vʐ/ [Vɣ̢], for *érhuà*, in place of a hypothetic [ɰ̢], we have a number of vocalic taxophones for /ʐ/, shown in *six* vocograms. See {7}.

In a simplified version of these /Vʐ/ sequences, it may be sufficient to use what is shown in other *three* vocograms. See {8}.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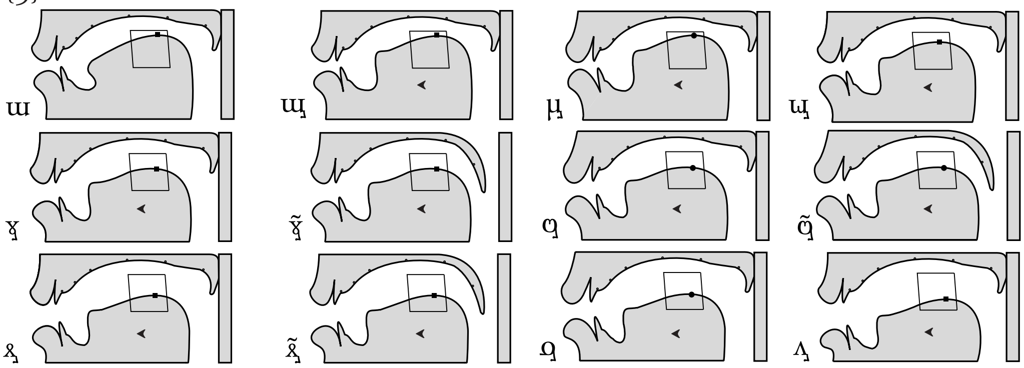
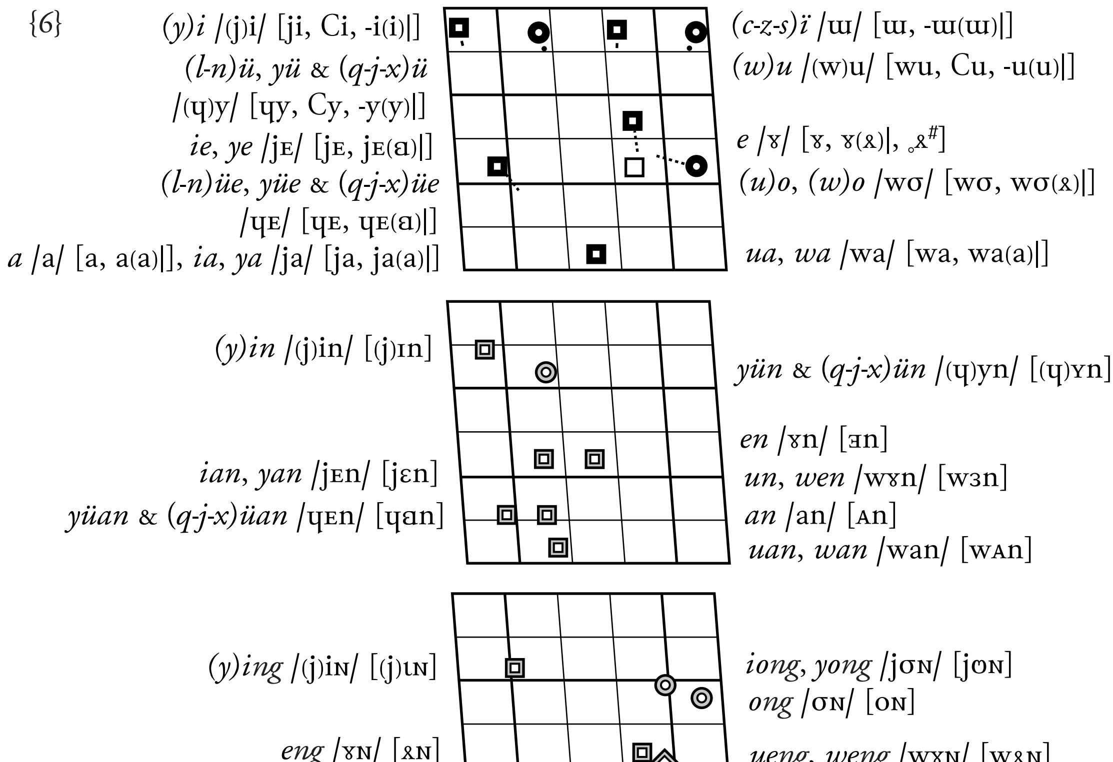
{4}

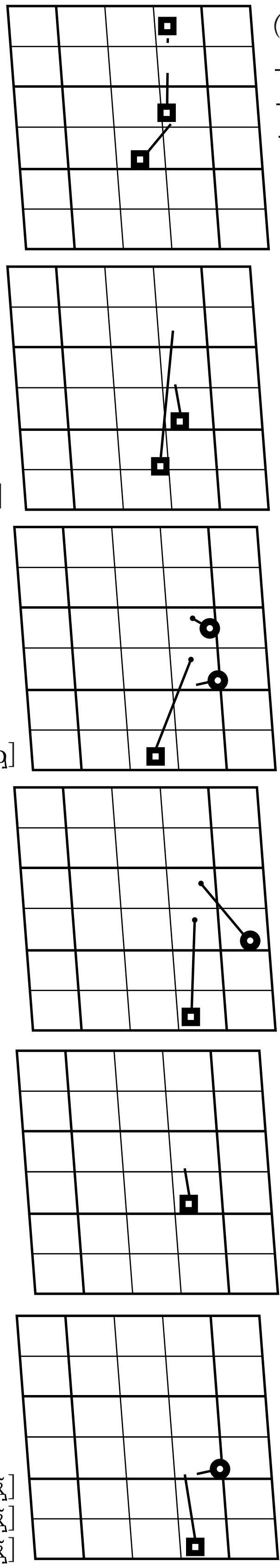
{5}


ɯ

{6}


(y)i /(j)i/ [ji, Ci, -i(i)|]
(l-n)ü, yü & (q-j-x)ü
/(ɥ)y/ [ɥy, Cy, -y(y)|]
ie, ye /jE/ [jE, jE(ɐ)|]
(l-n)üe, yüe & (q-j-x)üe
/ɥE/ [ɥE, ɥE(ɐ)|]
a /a/ [a, a(a)|], ia, ya /ja/ [ja, ja(a)|]
(c-z-s)ï /ɯ/ [ɯ, -ɯ(ɯ)|]
(w)u /(w)u/ [wu, Cu, -u(u)|]
e /ɤ/ [ɤ, ɤ(ɤ̞)|, ɤ̞#]
(u)o, (w)o /wʊ/ [wʊ, wʊ(ɤ̞)|]
ua, wa /wa/ [wa, wa(a)|]
(y)in /(j)in/ [(j)ɪn]
ian, yan /jEn/ [jɛn]
yüan & (q-j-x)üan /ɥEn/ [ɥɑn]
yün & (q-j-x)ün /(ɥ)yn/ [(ɥ)ʏn]
en /ɤn/ [ɜn]
un, wen /wɤn/ [wɜn]
an /an/ [ʌn]
uan, wan /wan/ [wʌn]
(y)ing /(j)iɴ/ [(j)ɩɴ]
eng /ɤɴ/ [ɤ̞ɴ]
ang /aɴ/ [aɴ], iang, yang /jaɴ/ [jaɴ]
iong, yong /jʊɴ/ [jʊɴ]
ong /ʊɴ/ [oɴ]
ueng, weng /wɤɴ/ [wɤ̞ɴ]
uang, wang /waɴ/ [wɑɴ]

{7}



(ch-zh-sh-r)ï /Çɯ/ [Çɰ, Çɰɰ|; ↕Çζ̇]

-ir, -inr /jɤζ/ [jɤɰ]

-ür, -ünr /ɥɤζ/ [ɥɤɰ]

-ur, -uir, -uer, -unr /wɤζ/ [wɤɰ]

-ier /jɛζ/ [jɜɤ̢]

-üer /ɥɛζ/ [ɥɜɤ̢]

-ar, -air, -anr /aζ/ [ɐɰ]

-iar, -ianr /jaζ/ [jɐɰ]

-üanr /ɥaζ/ [ɥɐɰ]

-uar, -uair, -uanr /waζ/ [wɐɰ]

-er, -eir, -enr, -ïr /ɤζ/ [ɤ̢ɤ̢]

-iour /jʊuζ/ [jʊʊ̢]

-uor /wʊζ/ [woɤ̢]

-(*m-p-b-f*)*or* [Ç̯oɤ̢]

-iaor /jaʊζ/ [jaʊ̢]

-our /ʊuζ/ [ʊʊ̢]

-aor /aʊζ/ [ɑʊ̢]

-engr /ɤɴζ/ [ɤ̢̃ɤ̢̃]

-ingr /jɤɴζ/ [jɤ̢̃ɤ̢̃]

-uengr /wɤɴζ/ [wɤ̢̃ɤ̢̃]

-iongr /ɥʊɴζ/ [ɥõɤ̢̃]

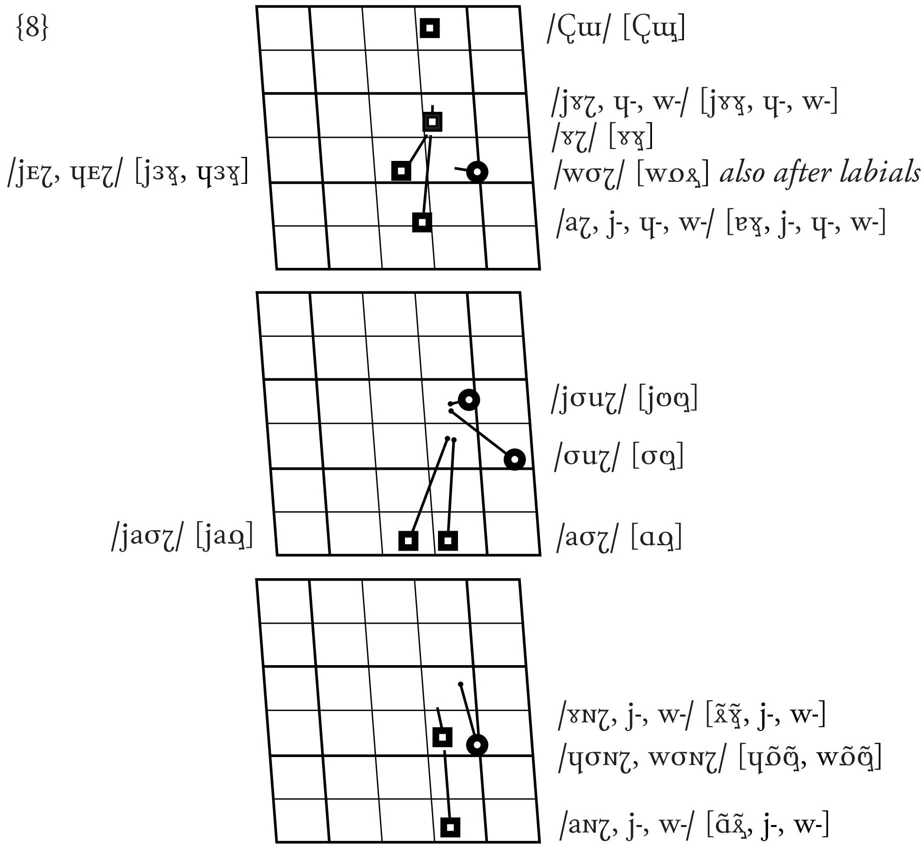
-ongr /wʊɴζ/ [wõɤ̢̃]

-angr /aɴζ/ [ɑ̃ɤ̢̃]

-iangr /jaɴζ/ [jɑ̃ɤ̢̃]

-uangr /waɴζ/ [wɑ̃ɤ̢̃]

{8}



Here is a specially needed final consideration about books on pronunciation. To actually describe and *show* the pronunciation of any language, serious books have to provide many accurate figures for vowels, consonants, intonation (and tones, if any). Otherwise, it would be better… to go take up knitting!

But, of course, the (too many) books that contain approximate or wrong figures are even worse and dangerous, because they are seriously misleading.