

distinct vowel, or an imperfect modification only. We wrote the latter when we had reason to believe, from careful observation of the natives, that this materially contributed to facilitate the understanding of the word. Many an open "u" employed in Gilchrist's transcription we also found to coincide with such cases, particularly where the phonetic accent, by resting upon it, marked it more distinctly; the limits, however, will always remain somewhat arbitrary, unless the sign \sim be employed over every vowel not separately written in the native transcription, which again would often interfere with the present mode of pronunciation. A complete omission of the vowels¹ would prove too alien to European writing and would besides interfere too much with the fluency of reading; in many cases it would even leave it undecided where to insert the imperfect vowel, if more than two consonants came together. Imperfect vowels may be followed by more than one consonant, since *position* makes the syllable, though not the vowel, long.

The introduction of a sign for imperfect vocal formation being unusual,² I decided for it very reluctantly; after examining, however, many of the modifications which presented themselves, I considered it might, in many instances, facilitate the understanding of the native word, though the assistance derived from it is far inferior to that experienced from the use of phonetic accents; and if, for practical purposes, any reduction in the number of the signs should become desirable, this sign of imperfect formation (\sim) is the one I propose to drop first.

Diphthongs.

The *diphthongs*, though limited in number in the classical languages, present themselves with many modifications in the more recent tongues, and more particularly in the various dialects of the latter, as they are represented in geographical names.

In a physical point of view, nearly any two vowels brought together may form a diphthong, if not separated by an increase or interruption of the continuous expiration. We often found it no easy matter to distinguish the two vowels of which the diphthong was composed. In such cases we had the diphthong pronounced very

¹ The "i" in Turkish, which is phonetically interposed between "k" and the next vowel, offers a similar example. We wrote it as "i," this nearly coinciding with the pronunciation.

² It is not, however, a novelty. Professor Lepsius gives very interesting remarks about it; he proposed for it, in his Standard alphabet, a small circle below the vowel.