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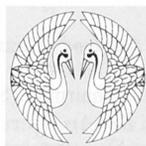
### Front cover:

Embroidery design of a dragon. The Qing imperial credentials of the Emperor Xuantong to the Russian Tsar Nicolas II, accordion binding cover. The collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, 34,5×22,0 cm.

### Back cover:

Embroidery design on a *tao*. Same credentials, 34,5×22,0 cm.

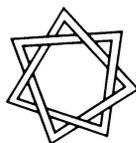
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## THE QING IMPERIAL CREDENTIALS IN THE ST. PETERSBURG COLLECTIONS

Until recently the history of the Qing dynasty in China (1644—1911) has been studied by traditional sinology mostly on the basis of the Chinese language documents. Only by the end of the twentieth century the Manchu studies had raised the interest to the Manchu language materials of the Qing period [1]. It is well known that the Manchu language continued to be one of the official languages of the multinational Chinese state (along with Chinese and Mongolian), and in some cases was the only language of communication of Lifanyuan (the Board of Colonial affairs), mainly on relations with Russia and Mongolia. As a matter of fact, till the very end of the Qing dynasty all imperial official papers sent abroad were issued both in Manchu and Chinese. To show this we are going to introduce several Manchu-Chinese documents that are supposed to be the latest documents of this kind which were sent to Europe in 1908, that is three years before the Manchu dynasty was overthrown. These are imperial credentials that were sent to all countries to announce the ascending the throne of the young emperor Aisin-gioro Pu Yi and the beginning of the new Xuantong reign (22 January 1909 — 17 February 1912). When Pu Yi (b. 7 February 1906) was chosen by the empress-dowager Cixi (1835—1908) as a successor of the late emperor Zai Tian (1871—1908; reigned under the title Guangxu 1875—1909) [2], he was only two years old, or three *sui* according to the Chinese way of age counting. His father, the second prince Chun, served as regent, sharing power with the senior widow, who became Empress Dowager Longyu (1868—1913) after Cixi's death [3]. This short reign lasted only three years; Pu Yi's father and his foster mother had agreed for him to abdicate in favour of the republican government, which took place on 12 February 1912, thus putting an end to the rule of the Qing dynasty.

According to the established tradition, the reign period started on the first day of the coming lunar year, and the documents issued by a new emperor in the previous lunar year were usually registered by the reign period of the previous emperor. Therefore, officially the Xuantong period began on 22 January 1909, and the previous Guangxu period was considered to end on 21 January 1909. In the autobiography of Aisin-gioro Pu Yi, titled "From Emperor to Citizen", we read that he entered the Forbidden City on 13 November 1908, two days before Cixi died, and "on 2 December the 'Great Ceremony of Enthronement' took place" [4], from which day he became an emperor of China,

although all imperial documents were still dated by the Guangxu period till 21 January 1909.

Naturally, the succession to the throne had to be announced to all states and empires that had diplomatic relations with the Qing dynasty. Special envoys were sent everywhere, delivering to foreign courts imperial credentials with the expressions of hopes to maintain further good relations. We may only suppose that these credentials are kept in the archives of different Ministries of Foreign affairs or special closed collections, since the information on these documents is rather scarce in literature. In any case, they are not mentioned in the catalogues of any European or Chinese Manchu collections. The only reference we have is a publication of the envelope of such a credential with the abstracts of the Manchu and Chinese texts in the Taiwanese journal *The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art* and a brief note by Zhuang Jifa: "*Guoshu — Qingting zhi Faguo guoshu*" ("the Qing court credential sent to France") [5]. This makes us assume that the credential itself is kept in the National Palace Museum in Taipei. In 1996, the Peoples Republic of China issued a stamp showing the envelope of the credential to Belgium and the beginning of the Chinese text. But the texts of such documents were never published or studied. In this connection, the Manchu collection at the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies proves to be a unique source. In the process of compiling the "Descriptive Catalogue of Manchu Manuscripts and Blockprints in the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. Issue 2", one of the authors of the present article was lucky to find three such credentials [6]. All the three are the documents that were sent to Russia by the Qing court and were composed on behalf of the young emperor Pu Yi. The documents are in Manchu (from left to right) and Chinese (from right to left), with the date in-between the texts bearing the red imperial seal over it (see *fig. 1*). The red square seal has the bilingual legend *Huangdi zhi bao // Han-i boobai* ("The treasure of the emperor"). The texts (6 lines per page; 20.8×22.0 cm) are written in black ink inside a printed red frame with the design of dragons playing with a pearl. The documents have an accordion binding with two hard covers on both sides (34.5×22.0 cm). The covers are bound in yellow silk with exquisite embroidery showing a dragon among the clouds, done in multicoloured satin-stitch technique (see the front cover of the present issue).

Each credential is kept in a *tao* (see the back cover of the present issue), which is fastened with two ivory buckles. In the centre of the front cover is the frame with the bilingual title *Amba Daicing gurun-i gurun-i bihe* and *Da Qing guo guoshu* ("The Credential of the Great Qing Empire") woven in black thread. Over and around the frame are three embroidered five-fingered dragons in the clouds: one at the top, two others — on both sides of the frame; they are shown playing with a pearl. At the bottom of the cover are embroidered water-waves with a *ru-yi* sceptre of ancient form, which is rising from the midst of the waters. The clouds and the upper part of the waves are in satin-stitch. The bodies of the dragons, the pearls, the lower part of waves, inside and outside the frames, as well as contours of all images, are executed in fastening technique, using white and yellow metal threads, with which a design is made; they are fixed in pairs to the silk base with silk threads (green, red and white). All three credentials from the Institute collection bear the same date — *Badarangga doro-i gūsin duici aniya omšon biyai orin uyun* and *Da*

*Qing Guanxu sanshisi nian shiyi yue ershijiu ri*, that is, 29th day, 11th moon, 34th year of *Badarangga doro // Guanxu* (29 December 1908).

Recently another, the fourth credential, was discovered in the depository of the Hermitage Museum (Oriental Department). It has the same artistic characteristics, but the document is kept in hard card box bound in faded pink silk. The box is fastened with ivory buckles. According to the inventories, the document was acquired by the Hermitage in 1937 from unknown source. In comparison with the Institute credentials, this one is of earlier time; it is dated *Amba Daicing gurun-i Badarangga doro-i gūsin ilaci aniya omšon biyai ice // Da Qing Guanxu sanshisan nian shiyi yue chu yi ri*, that is the 1st day, 11th moon, 33d year of *Badarangga doro // Guanxu* (5 December 1907).

Below we give the Chinese and Manchu texts of the Institute and Hermitage documents with their English translation. Text H 18 is a credential announcing the ascendance of the new Manchu emperor.

## DOCUMENT H 18

## Chinese text

大清國國書

大清國  
大皇帝敬致書於  
大俄國  
大皇帝陛下朕以冲齡  
踐昨寶壽誕膺  
天命祇承夙夜乾惕惟  
恪遵成憲孜孜求  
治親仁善鄰以期  
於與國共臻輯睦  
貴國與中國通好有  
年邇來邦交尤篤  
茲朕當繼統之始  
尤宜修書布告虔  
達摺忱  
大皇帝宣化綏猷令名  
久著自必篤念舊  
好表示同情從此  
疆址延隆四方和  
會兩國臣民亦莫  
不登康樂而享又  
安不禁有厚望焉  
大清光緒三十四年十一月二十九日

## Manchu text

*Amba Daicing gurun-i gurun-i bihe.*

*Amba Daicing gurun-i / amba hūwangdi gingguleme / bihe arafi / amba Oros gurun-i / amba hūwangdi de benebuhe bi se / ajigan soorin de tefi gurun-i boobai be ambarame alime / abkai hesebun be gingguleme alifi. erde / yamji geleme olhome damu toktoho kooli be / gingguleme dahame. sithūme sithūme dasan be / baime gosin de gajime adaki de sain / obume ereni gurun-i emgi uhei hūwalyasun / hūwangga de isibure be ererengge bi // wesihun gurun jai dulimbai gurun sain-i guculehe aniya goidaha ere udu aniya gurun de guculehengge ele haji. te bi jing doro be sirara tuktan erinde giyan-i bihe arafi selgiyeme yabubume gingguleme unenggi yargiyan be hafuci acambi. //*

*amba hūwangdi de wen be selgiyeme bodogon be toktoho sain gebu goidame iletulehe be dahame urunakū fe sain be hing seme gūtime. uhei gūnin be alime gaim. ereci hūhuri fengšen golmin goidame. duin ergi acame isabume. juwe // gurun-i amban irgese inu nelhe sebjen be / bahafi taifin elhe be alirakūngge akū yargiyan-i hing seme erehunjere babi. //*

*Amba Daicing gurun-i Badarangga doro-i gūsin duici aniya omšon biyai orin uyun.*

## Translation

## From Chinese

Having respectfully written this letter, the Great Emperor of the Great Qing Empire orders to send it to the Great Emperor of the Great Russian Empire.

I, the Emperor, [who] ascended the throne in my young age, inherited the dynastic treasures (i.e. symbols of power — *T. P.*) and respectfully took the Mandate of Heaven.

## From Manchu

Having respectfully written this letter, the Great Emperor of the Great Daicing Empire ordered to deliver it to the Great Emperor of the Great Russian Empire.

I ascended the throne in my young age. It is with great respect that I received the state treasures and the Mandate of Heaven, [and from] morning till evening, with fear [inside

From morning till evening, with fear inside [me], I incessantly think of following [all] the established laws in every detail. With all what is in my powers [I] try to rule benevolently and, as [if I were] a relative [of You] to strengthen good neighbouring relations, in a hope to attain peace and harmony between our states.

For long there have been amiable relations [between] Your state and China. Since recently these relations have become [even] closer, and I, the Emperor, hope that this [will last long]. That is the reason why I, the Emperor, issued an order to compile this letter to express my sincere feelings [towards Your state] (lit. "the letter which will read and explain my sincerity" — *T. P.*).

You, the Great Emperor, is a source of good intentions which give rise to changes and realisation of state plans. Your fame and reputation have been known for long. This makes me remember [Your] old good [towards our country] and express my understanding [of this fact].

Let in the future happiness and prosperity reach four corners [of the world]! Let [all] ordinary people and dignitaries of our countries have health and joy! Let everybody enjoy peace and tranquillity! I sincerely place all my hopes on this.

29th day, 11 moon, 34th year of the Guanxu reign of the Great Qing.

me], respectfully follow the established order and constantly think with benevolence of governing [the state] and acting in [the spirit of] a good neighbourliness [towards You]. In this way I hope to establish friendship and harmony between [our] states. [Your] esteemed Empire and the Middle Empire have good friendly relations for already a long period. During the last years friendship between our states became especially warm. Now, at the beginning of my rule, I write this so that the truth and facts should be announced and known everywhere.

You, the Great Emperor, is he who disseminates [the principles] of De and Wen and determine strategies. Since [Your] good reputation is universally known, [I] sincerely think about the old good [relations between our states] and make them [integral] part of [my] thoughts. From now on, let [Your] fortune and prosperity be long and reach the four corners [of the world]! Let people and state officials of both states be healthy and joyful, and let there will be no one without peace and tranquillity! This is really [my] sincere and true hope.

29th day, 11 the moon, 34th year of *Badarangga doro* of the Great Daicing Empire.

## DOCUMENT H 19

## Chinese text

大清國國書

大清國  
大皇帝敬問  
大俄國  
大皇帝好朕維政典以治  
當為大興理財乃經  
國之要務  
先皇帝以  
貴國講求財政考鏡是  
資特遣尚書銜奉天  
巡撫唐紹儀恭賀國  
書前赴  
貴國考察財政茲朕續  
承大統遵守成規允  
宜加備國書命該大  
臣廣往一併呈遞該  
大臣才識明通究心  
財政尚望  
大皇帝推誠優待俾得從  
咨研究取益宏多實  
切厚誼  
大清光緒三十四年十一月二十九日

## Manchu text

Amba Daicing gurun-i gurun-i bithe.

*Amba Daicing gurun-i / amba hūwangdi gingguleme / amba Oros gurun-i / amba hūwangdi de sain be fonjiki. / bi gūnici dasan kooli oci bayan de / isibure be amba hešen obume ulin be / ichiyaci. uthai gurun be dasara oyonggo baita / nenehe hūwangdi / wesihun gurun de ulin-i dasan be / giyangname haiji. kincime baicame akdaci ojoro / jakade. cohotoi aliha amban-i jergi Fung tiyan-i giyarime dasara amban Tang Soo-i be // takūrafi. gingguleme gurun-i baita be benebufi neneme / wesihun gurun de genefi ulin-i dasan be / kincime baicahabi. te bi amba doro be / sirame alihi toktoho kooli be dahame / tuwakiyaha be dahame giyan-i neneme gurun-i / bithe be belhefi. harangga amban be / benebufi sasa alibuha harangga amban erdemu / sarasu getuken hafu. mujilen de ulin-i dasan be sibkime hono / amba hūwangdi unenggi be anafi dabali / tuwara be ereme ereni elhe nuhan-i sibkime fuhašame. tusa be baharange umesi // labdu oho be dahame yargiyari-jiramilara gūnin be baimbi. //*

*Amba Daicing gurun-i Badarangga doro-i gūsin duici aniya omšon biyai orin uyun.*

## Translation

## From Chinese

The Great Emperor of the Great Qing Empire respectfully asks about the health of the Great Emperor of Russian Empire.

## From Manchu

The Great Emperor of the Great Daicing Empire respectfully inquires about the good health of the Great Emperor of the Great Russian Empire.

I, the Emperor, govern the affairs of property following only administrative laws, and solve [questions concerning] property on the basis of "great ropes" (i. e. great principles — *T. P.*), which [I] consider to be the most important thing in governing the state.

Earlier the emperor sent the governor of Fengtian [province], Tang Shaoyi, in the rank of the Board's president, to deliver [You] respectfully the state document. He came to Your state in order to study [Your methods] of governing property affairs. Now I have ascended the throne (lit. "great tradition" — *T. P.*) and respectfully follow the established rules. In addition, I have composed the state letter and ordered this dignitary to deliver it together [with the other documents]. This dignitary is a talented, clever, wise, [and] bright [man] experienced in property affairs.

[I] sincerely hope that the Great Emperor will be open [to Our request] and will take care to comprehend [the essence of] it, and from this he will obtain great profit. [Now I] respectfully express my firm friendship.

29th day, 11 moon, 34th year of the Guanxu reign of the Great Qing.

My opinion is that, what concerns the state rule, it is most important in governing the state to bring about the main principle of obtaining richness and of [duly] administering property.

The previous Emperor asked to explain how property in [Your] respected Empire is governed. To carry out thorough investigations [in this field] the governor of Fung-tian [province], Tang Šoo-i, in the rank of the Board's president, was specially sent to deliver respectfully the [Emperor's] questions. He reached [Your] esteemed state and carefully examined [the question] of governing property.

Now I succeeded the great government, and, in full accordance with the established law, and following [all] observations, [I] prepared the state document similar to that in the past. [I also] send the above-mentioned dignitary with the order to deliver [it] together [with the other documents]. The [above-]mentioned dignitary will examine, as far as his knowledge and clear, comprehensive mind permits him, how property is governed [in Your state]. [You] the Great Emperor, relying on truth and waiting for [the results of] the investigation, which will be done thoroughly and with no hurry, will obtain great benefit. I hope [on this] with really generous mind.

29th day, 11 the moon, 34th year of *Badarangga doro* of the Great Daicing Empire.

## DOCUMENT H 20

## Chinese text

大清國國書

大清國  
大皇帝敬問  
大俄國  
大皇帝好中國與  
貴國通好有年使命往還向  
稱親密茲朕仰承  
天命寅紹尼基特命駐紮  
貴國使臣薩爾圖呈遞國書  
以表朕委任之意該大臣  
忠誠允達學識宏通辦理  
交涉事件悉臻允洽尚望  
大皇帝照常接待俾盡厥職克  
令兩國邦交益敦親睦是  
所厚望  
大清光緒三十四年十一月二十九日

## Manchu text

*Amba Daicing gurun-i gurun-i bithe.*

*Amba Daicing gurun-i / amba hūwangdi gingguleme / amba Oros gurun-i / amba hūwangdi de sain be fonjiki. dulimbai / gurun jai wesihun gurun sain-i guculehe aniya goidaha. takūraha elcin genere jidere de aifini haji / jiramin seci ombi. te bi hargašame / abka hesebun be alfi amba doro be / gingguleme siraha cohortoi / wesihun gurun de tebuneh takūraha amban / Sainu be gurun-i bithe be alibufi // bi afaha tušan-i gūnin be iletulebuhe / harangga amban tondo unenggi akdun sijirhūn / tacin sarasu amba hafu ishunde tabušara / baita hacin be icihiyahangge gemu lak seme / acanara de isibuha. hono / amba hūwangdi de da an-i obume tuwame ereni terei tušan be akūmbure be erehe / bime juwe gurun ishunde guculehengge ele / haji hūwalyasun be jiramilame muterengge. erehe hing seme erehunhengge inu. //*

*Amba Daicing gurun-i Badarangga doro-i gūsin duici aniya omšon biyai orin uyun.*

## Translation

## From Chinese

The Great Emperor of the Great Qing Empire respectfully asks about the health of the Great Emperor of the Russian Empire.

It is already several years that China and [Your] esteemed state are in friendly relations [with each other], which has a result of mutual warmth and closeness.

Having received the Mandate of Heaven and respectfully inherited the throne (lit. "great foundation" — *T. P.*),

## From Manchu

The Great Emperor of the Great Daicing Empire respectfully inquires about a good health of the Great Emperor of the Great Russian Empire.

For many years the Middle Empire had good and friendly relations with [Your] esteemed Empire. For a long time, after we had exchanged [our] envoys, [these relations] could be called warm and amiable.

Now, with [my eyes turned towards the heavens], I have

I, the Emperor, issued a special decree to send to Your state our dignitary, Sa Yintu, to deliver the official letter with the expressions of my official intentions. The [above-]mentioned dignitary is a devoted and sincere man. He is clever and wise. [He] possesses an extensive knowledge and great experience in solving difficult questions. I am in a hope that You, the Emperor, will receive [Our envoy] in due way, and let him fulfil his duties in order the relations between our countries become closer and more friendly. I place all my hopes on this.

29th day, 11 moon, 34th year of the Guanxu reign of the Great Qing.

received the Mandate of Heaven and respectfully inherited the state governing. I specially ordered the dignitary Sainu, the envoy sent to Your esteemed Empire, to deliver the state document [to You] and to bring to Your notice [Our] thoughts about the duties which have been bestowed upon me. The [above-]mentioned dignitary is an honest, reliable, capable and wise [man], who will resolve [our] mutual misunderstandings in order to reach agreements in right time.

[I] still [hope] that, [true to our] old accordance, the Great Emperor will assist [this dignitary] with doing his best to fulfil his duty. Let mutual friendly relations between the two Empires become even warmer and more harmonious! This is what I truly hope for.

29th day, 11 the moon, 34th year of *Badarangga doro* of the Great Daicing Empire.

## HERMITAGE DOCUMENT LT 1749

## Chinese text

大清國  
大皇帝敬聞  
大俄國  
大皇帝好朕眷念友邦夙敦睦誼  
前者特簡胡推德為駐紮  
貴國欽差大臣接任以來極承  
推誠相信俾盡厥職現屆期滿  
召令回國特諭呈遞國書用  
昭鄭重邦交之意并祝  
福履綏和  
國運昌盛  
大清光緒三十三年十一月初一日

## Manchu text

*Amba Daicing gurun-i / amba hūwangdi gingguleme / Amba Oros gurun-i / amba hūwangdi de sain be fonjiki. bi guculere / gurun be jiramilambihe. ongolo cohotoi // Hū Wei De be sonjofo / wesihun gurun de tebunefi hesei takūraha / amban tucibufo. tušan be alire ci / ebsi. umesi / uneggi be anafi ishunde akdlulame. terei / tušan be akūmbuha. ne aniya jalufi // elbifi gurun de maribufo. cohotoi imbe / gurun-i bihe be alibufo. guculere gurun be / ujen obure gūnin be iletulehe bime. geli / hūteri fenksen acame alire / gurun-i forgon yendeme mukkendere be jalbarireo.*

*Amba Daicing gurun-i Badarangga doro-i gūsin ilaci aniya omšon biyai ice.//*

## Translation

## From Chinese

The Great Emperor of the Great Qing Empire respectfully asks about the health of the Great Emperor of the Russian Empire.

I, the Emperor, incessantly care about [Your] friendly state and from morning [till evening] send [my] benevolence and friendliness [to You]. Earlier the envoy Hu Weide was sent to Your country. From the very moment the [above-]mentioned dignitary was appointed by us [to carry out this mission] and started his service, he considered his duty to establish sincerity and mutual confidence [between our countries].

Now, when the period of his mission is over, [I] order him to return home. He was ordered, in particular, to deliver the official letter with the exposition of [Our] thoughts as well as [the statement] of the importance of the relations [between our countries].

[I] also pray for happiness, peace and prosperity of [Your] state.

1st day, 11th moon, 33d year of the Guanxu period of the Great Qing.

## From Manchu

The Great Emperor of the Great Daicing Empire respectfully inquires about good health of the Great Emperor of the Great Russian Empire.

I sincerely think about the friendly state with which harmony and friendship have been strengthening from the very beginning. Earlier Hu Wei De was chosen by [Our] order and appointed on mission to Your esteemed country. Till now he carried out his duty with great honesty, doing his best in strengthening mutual [relations]. I order him to return to [his] homeland when this year expires. I order him, in particular, to deliver the state document [to You], where I expose my important thoughts to the friendly state. Moreover, I pray that the period of [Your] state will be flourishing and raising, and full of fortune and prosperity.

1st day, 11th moon, 33d year of *Badarangga doro* of the Great Daicing Empire.

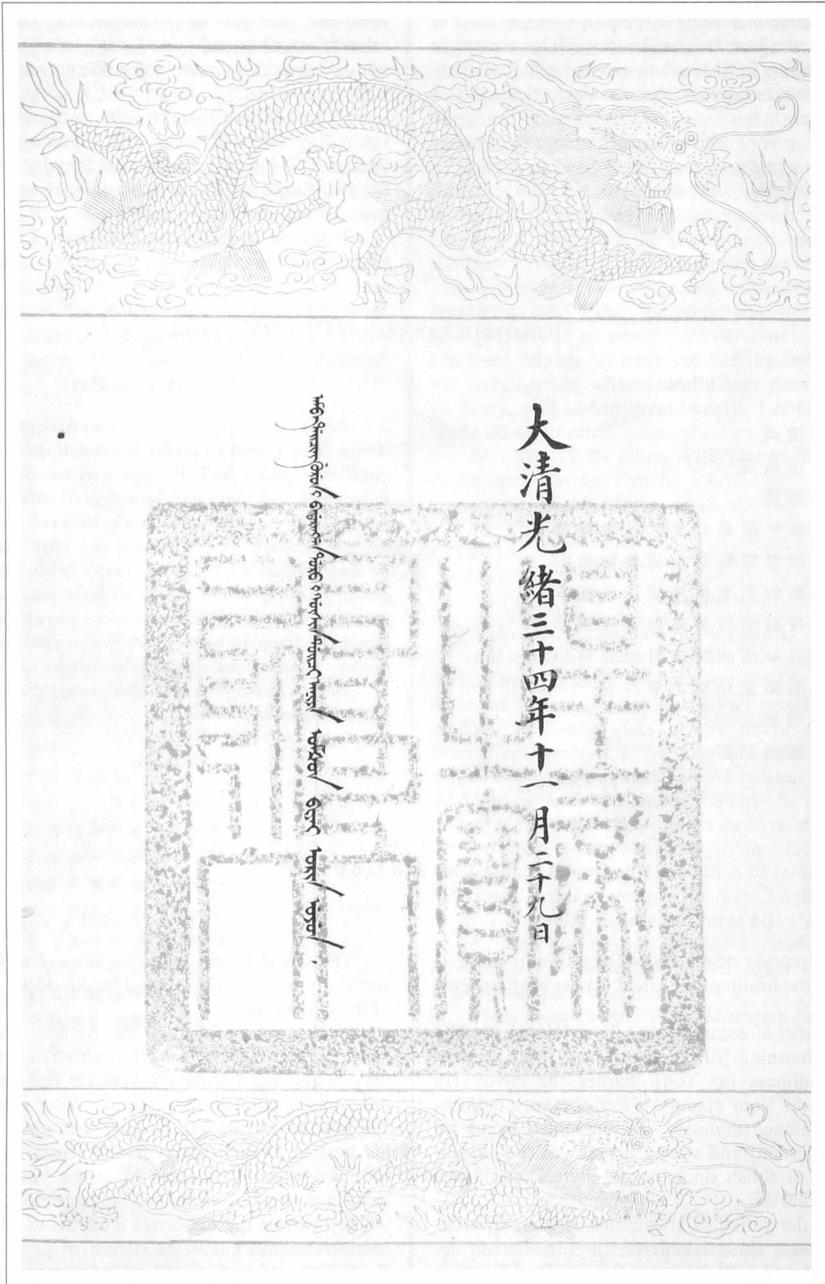


Fig. 1

\* \* \*

It is noticeable that the Manchu and Chinese versions of the four documents slightly differ, so that some places in the Manchu texts can be understood only with the aid of their Chinese parallels. This especially concerns political formulas, typical of the Chinese documents. For example, in document H 19 the Manchu term *amba doro* (“the great rite, doctrine”) is a word-to-word translation of the Chinese *da gang* 大綱 (“the general principles”, lit. “big robes”), which means “the imperial throne”, and is rightly used in

Manchu with the word *alimbi* (“to ascend”). Further, the Manchu dictionaries do not give the expression *ulin-i dasan* (where *ulin* means “wealth, property” and *dasan* — “rule, government”). Here, also, it is a word-to-word translation of the Chinese *licai* 理財 (“to direct finance”). But such observations resulted from the documents' reading need special investigation in a separate article, while the authors' task was only to introduce these unique documents into scholarly circulation.

### Notes

1. G. Sary, “Man'chzhurovedenie nakanune tret'ego tysyacheletii” (“Manchu studies on the eve of the third millennium”), *Nasledie mongoloveda O. M. Kovalevskogo i sovremennost'* (Kazan, 2002), pp. 74—9.
2. A. W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, reprint edn. (Taipei, 1991), i, p. 733.
3. E. S. Rawski, *The Last Emperors. A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions* (Berkeley—Los Angeles—London, 1998), p. 136.
4. *From Emperor to Citizen. Autobiography of Aisin-gioro Pu Yi*, trans. by W. J. F. Jenner (Beijing, 1979), p. 32.
5. Zhuang Jifa, “Guoshu — Qingting zhi Faguo guoshu”, *The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art / Gugong wenwu yuekan* (Taipei), No. 200, November 1999, p. 21.
6. T. A. Pang, *Descriptive Catalogue of Manchu Manuscripts and Blockprints in the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies Russian Academy of Sciences*, issue 2 (Wiesbaden, 2001), Nos. 104—6. — *Aetas Manchurica*, 9.

### Illustrations

#### *Front cover:*

Embroidery design of a dragon. The Qing imperial credentials of the Emperor Xuantong to the Russian Tsar Nicolas II, accordion binding cover. The collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, 34.5×22.0 cm.

#### *Back cover:*

Embroidery design on a *tao*. Same credentials, 34.5×22.0 cm.

#### *Inside the text:*

**Fig. 1.** Manchu-Chinese date “29th day, 11th moon, 34th year of *Badarangga doro // Guanxu*” (= 29 December 1908) and the red imperial seal in credentials H 18, H 19, H 20.