

Tatiana A. Pang

**The Imperial Patent of the Kangxi Period  
in the Collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts,  
Russian Academy of Sciences<sup>1</sup>**

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*Abstract:* The article presents publication of the earliest imperial patent kept in the Manchu collection of the IOM, RAS. The patent is dated by the 55th year of Kangxi (1716) and was conferred to the member of the imperial family. That fact explains unusual decoration of the scroll — a hand painted frame with dargons. The patent was given to Urcen, a son of the Manchu dignitary Sunu, devoted associate of the emperor Kangxi. Sunu was known as one of the highest Manchu officials who adopted Christianity, and his sons were also baptized. The patent conferred Urcen a title “*general of the third grade, who protects the state*” and the text was written in Manchu and Chinese.

*Key words:* Manchu patent, Kangxi period, Sunu, Urcen, Manchu Christians.

The Manchu collection of the Institute of Oriental manuscripts, RAS, holds sixteen imperial patents given to various officials and their parents. All of them are in a form of a multicolored silk scroll mounted on paper, the Manchu and Chinese texts are written in multicolored ink. Over the dates are bilingual imperial red square seals. The texts are put in a frame with the design of two dragons playing with a pearl.

One of these scrolls, under the call number B105 mss, differs in decoration, since its frame is not printed, but painted in hand. It clearly shows that the owner of the patent was a special person close to the imperial family.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> PANG 2001: 54–55, No. 119.

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The Manchu text is read from left to right, and the Chinese text — from right to left. At the ends of both texts are dates correspondingly: *Elhe taifin-i susai sunjaci aniya. duin biyai ice nadan* 康熙五十五年四月初七日 — The 7th day of the 4th moon, 55th year of Elhe taifin (Kangxi) (May 27, 1716). Over the dates are red seals with the bilingual legend *hese wasimbure boobai* 救命之寶. The scroll is rather long — 472×31 cm, but it contains only one imperial decree.

The text informs that the imperial patent was given to Urcen, a son of the Manchu dignitary Sunu, and bestowed him a title “*general of the third grade, who protects the state*”— *ilaci jergi gurun be dalire janggin* 三等鎮國將軍.



### Transliteration of the Manchu text:

abkai hese forgon be aliha/  
 hûwangdi hese. amba doro de aisilame wehiyere de./ fiyanji daliku-i  
 karmara de akdambi. hanci niyalma be / hûwaliyambume jiramilara de.  
 gargan enen de kesi / isibure be badarambi. Urcen si gûsai beise / Sunu-i  
 da fujin de banjiha jui. han-i booci tucike / hûturi. abkai fisenci badaraka  
 siren. iktaka fengşen / tutafi nemeyen gungnecuke-i algin daci iletulehe.  
 karmara / dalire de akdaha be dahame. jergi ilhi-i wesihun be / isibure  
 giyan. tuttu simbe ilaci jergi gurun be dalire / janggin fungnefi g'aomimg



*buhe. ai. nenehe yabun-i sain / elden be sirafi. inenggi dobori akû ume onggoro. / uksun i amban-i ujen tušan be alifi. tondo kicebe be / ele hûsutule. toktoho kooli be hing seme tuwakiyame / doshon hese be gingguleme ali. gingguleme. ume jurcere. //*

**The Chinese text:**

1. 奉天誥命
2. 奉
3. 天承運



天承運

皇帝制曰贊袞鴻業藉作輔於  
 屏翰敦睦懿親廣推恩於支  
 庶爾吳爾臣乃固山貝子蘓  
 努嫡妃所生之子祥分帝室  
 派衍天潢積慶所貽夙茂溫  
 恭之譽維城攸賴宜頒爵秩  
 之隆是用封爾為三等鎮國  
 將軍錫之誥命於戲荷前烈  
 之休光無忘夙夜膺宗臣之  
 重寄益勵忠勤恪守彝章敬

4. 皇帝制曰贊袞鴻業藉作輔於
5. 屏翰敦睦懿親廣推恩於支
6. 庶爾吳爾臣乃固山貝子蘓
7. 努嫡妃所生之子祥分帝室
8. 派衍天潢積慶所貽夙茂溫
9. 恭之譽維城攸賴宜頒爵秩
10. 之隆是用封爾為三等鎮國
11. 將軍錫之誥命於戲荷前烈
12. 之休光無忘夙夜膺宗臣之



13. 重寄益勵忠勤恪守彝章。
14. 承寵命欽哉勿替
15. 康熙五十五年四月初七日

The texts are almost identical, and the translation of its Manchu version is as follows:

“The decree of the Emperor, entrusted by Heaven.

Our assistance and protection are given to those who help and support Our rule. In order to strengthen relations between relatives, [the emperor]

spreads his grace to the descendants [of the dignitary]. You, Urcen, is a son of a Prince of the Blood of the fourth grade Sunu and his main wife. Happiness which flows from the imperial house, number of offspring of the heavenly dynasty, and accumulated prosperity are kept. To ensure my belief in you, I raise your rank and bestow you the imperial patent that gives you the title of the “*general of the third grade, who protects the state*”. Oh, continue to carry out good deeds, and do not forget about it in day and night! Being the descendant of the Imperial clan, make all your efforts to follow the established principals. Respectably except the decree of favor! Be respectful and never disobey!

The 7th day of the 4th moon, 55th year of Elhe taifin”.

The text mentions two names: a Prince of the Blood of the fourth grade Sunu (1648–1725) and his son Urcen. Their close relation to the imperial family explains an unusual, hand painted decoration of the patent. According to the biographical dictionary of A. Hummel “Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing period” Sunu was a grand-grand-grandson of Nurhaci. His grand-grandfather was the eldest son of Nurhaci. His father was a Prince of the Blood of the fifth grade. Sunu was promoted to a fourth grade for his military victories against Galdan and for accompanying Kangxi to Ningxia in 1697. In 1698–1708 he was a military commander of Fengtian. After Kangxi during court struggle for throne, Sunu took a side of Yintang, thus being against of Yinzheng, who became the emperor Yongzheng (1723–1736). At first Yongzheng favored Sunu and raised him to the third rank, but soon he and his sons were accused in supporting Princes Yintang and Yinshu. His sixth son Leshiheng and his twelfth son Urcen were exiled to Xining together with the Prince Yintang. Sunu was sent to Yuwei in Shangxi province and died in exile in 1725. In 1726, the whole family of Sunu was excluded from the imperial clan, next year both brothers died in Beijing.<sup>3</sup>

The history of the Sunu family is interesting because of its close relations to Kangxi. They all were his associates, and shared his interests and policy. Kangxi’s interest in European science and art allowed his courtiers to acquaint with European Jesuit missionaries. As a result, many Manchu courtiers became interested in Christianity. Sunu was the most famous Manchu Christian, his three sons were baptized in Beijing, the other two — Leshiheng and Urcen — were baptized in exile in 1723 by the Catholic

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<sup>3</sup> HUMMEL 1999, vol. 2: 692–694.

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priest Jean Mourao (1681–1726).<sup>4</sup> The whole Sunu clan was destroyed for taking the side of the Prince Yintang — a legitimate heir to the throne. Being Christians in faith, the Sunu family believed in Christian punishment, and since Yongzhen came to power through the forgery of the Kangxi will, they did not see the emperor as a model of moral qualities. The main reason of the Sunu punishments were their participation in palace intrigues, while their Christian faith was a secondary subject for critics. Only much later, in 1727, Urcen and his brothers were accused in following a foreign faith. It is important to note, that Yongzhen refused to execute Sunu and his sons, explaining that that would give a chance for their followers to announce Sunu as Christian martyrs.

Thus, we know that the owner of our patent Urcen was the twelfth son of Sunu. He died in confinement in Beijing in 1727 at the age of 32 (33 *sui*), it means he was born in 1695. The patent from the Institute of Oriental studies collection was given to him in 1716, when Urcen was 21 years old and when the whole Sunu family was devotionally serving Kangxi.

This unknown patent refers to a happy period of Urcen's life at the Kangxi court, and the emperor encourages Urcen to carry respectfully his duties of the imperial clan offspring. A blank space between Manchu and Chinese texts was left for further imperial decrees, which were usually bestowed and added following previous texts. Since Urcen was exiled and died in imprisonment, he did not receive any other titles, and the space on the scroll was left empty.

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<sup>4</sup> WITEK 1993: 265–279; WITEK 2001: 444–448.