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Two Manchu-Chinese *Gaoming* 誥命 Diplomas from the Collection of Nikolay Petrovich Likhachev

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Abstract: Nikolay P. Likhachev (1862–1936) was an outstanding specialist in diplomacy, sphragistics, numismatics, paleography and codicology of ancient and medieval manuscripts. His collection of various documents was exhibited in the Museum of Paleography that he founded in 1925. The Museum was closed in 1930, and manuscripts in Oriental languages were sent to the forerunner of the present IOM, RAS. Among the documents in Arabic, Syrian, Coptic, Hebrew, Ethiopian, Persian, Armenian, Georgian, Chinese, Mongolian, Tibetan, Japanese and other languages there were two Manchu-Chinese diplomas. The diplomas were acquired by N.P. Likhachev from different people. The first one is dated by 1682, and bestows the civil official Yatu the 4th rank title *zhongxian dafu*, and his wife from the Tunggo clan a corresponding title. The second diploma is dated by 1881. According to its Chinese text, the patent of nobility is given to the official Wei Zhu and his wife from the Liu clan. The Manchu text of this diploma does not make sense, since it is a combination of disconnected phrases. It could be assumed that it was put into the diploma as a formal, decorative part of an official document which was supposed to be in two languages. The second diploma was issued almost at the end of the Qing empire, when the Manchu language was sometimes used as a formal attribute to the official court documents for the Chinese subjects. This statement is supported by other late Manchu-Chinese diplomas from the collection of the IOM, RAS. The article publishes two Manchu-Chinese diplomas from the collection of N.P. Likhachev with transcription and translation of the texts.

Key words: Qing dynasty, Kangxi, Guangxu, *gaoming*, N.P. Likhachev, Manchu-Chinese diploma, Institute of Oriental manuscripts, RAS

Nikolay Petrovich Likhachev (1862–1936) was an outstanding specialist and collector of manuscripts. His works are known to everyone who deals with diplomacy, sphragistics, numismatics, paleography, codicology of ancient and medieval manuscripts. His professional knowledge allowed to

collect an outstanding set of materials which showed the development of script and documents during five thousand years. The aim of his scholarly activity was to organize a public museum where one could find samples of scripts and writings, as well as different forms of documents, and which could be used as a research basis for Russian scholars of various specializations. During 30 years he has collected 80 thousand written monuments, and in 1925 N.P. Likhachev opened the Museum of Paleography in Leningrad in his own house. Unfortunately, the museum existed only till 1930 when N.P. Likhachev was arrested and then sent to exile. The Museum of Paleography was reorganized into the Museum of Book, Document and Script and transferred from his house to the building of the Library of the Academy of Sciences.¹ In 1938 the museum was closed and the collection of N.P. Likhachev was distributed between various scientific centers: the Institute of History, RAS, the State Hermitage Museum, the Library of the Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS, and the State Art Museum of the Tatar Republic in Kazan.

In 1938 the IOM, RAS (at that time — the Institute of Oriental Studies, USSR Academy of Sciences) acquired the materials from N.P. Likhachev's collection. According to the "List of manuscripts and documents transferred to the Institute of Oriental Studies USSR AS from the Institute of Book, Document and Script", 28 boxes contained printed books, lithographs, manuscripts, blockprints, seals, texts on palm leaves. The texts were in Arabic, Syrian, Coptic, Hebrew, Ethiopian, Persian, Armenian, Georgian, Chinese, Mongolian, Tibetan, Japanese and other languages.² Later, the manuscripts from the collection of N.P. Likhachev were added to the collections of the corresponding Oriental funds.³

In 2012, the State Hermitage Museum organized a large-scale exhibition "Only Letters Sound..." dedicated to the 150th anniversary of N.P. Likhachev, having collected the manuscripts once acquired by the collector and currently stored in various museums and academic institutions. Among the Oriental texts presented was a diploma in Manchu and Chinese, issued to the official Yatu in 1682. This diploma was first introduced by Irina F. Popova in the exhibition catalogue⁴ with a brief description of the scroll and its

¹ MESHCHERSKAYA & PIOTROVSKAYA 2012: 55.

² The number of the boxes in the list is 28, but after No 20 there is a mistake in numeration (IOM, RAS, Archive of Orientalists, f. 152, op. 1a, N 604, ff. 76–78).

³ MESHCHERSKAYA & PIOTROVSKAYA 2012: 59.

⁴ POPOVA 2012: 486–487.

content, and a Russian translation of the whole diploma was published later by T.A. Pang in 2021.⁵ Based on archival materials, I.F. Popova writes that this imperial diploma was bought for N.P. Likhachev by *chargé d'affaires* of the Russian diplomatic mission in Beijing, Mikhail Sergeevich Shchekin, approximately, in 1910–1911.⁶ The fact that this document once belonged to the collection of N.P. Likhachev is proved by an old inventory number on the reverse side of the scroll on the right: “VI SM23. From the collection of N.P. Likhachev”. Now it is included in the Chinese collection of manuscripts and blockprints under the shelf-number H 178 Nova.

The diploma is a scroll 322.5 cm long and 31.1 cm wide, the text is written on colored silk, fixed on a thick paper base. A colored silk cover is attached to the right edge of the scroll: drawings of lotus flowers and bats, symbols of purity and longevity, are woven on red silk, but the reverse (inside) silk (usually of yellow color) is missing. The left side of the scroll is fixed to a wooden stick, at the ends of which there once were jade or bone tips that are now lost. At the beginning of each text (for Chinese on the right side, for Manchu — on the left), between two dragons (descending and ascending) is a woven name of the diploma: in Chinese *fengtian gaoming* 奉天誥命, in Manchu *abkai hese g'aoming* “Imperial Decree”. The silk scroll itself consists of stripes of various colors, and as the scroll unfolds from right to left, the following stripes appear: brownish-gray with a Chinese name (60 cm), red (45.5 cm), yellow (46 cm), white (45.5 cm), light brown with a Manchu name (60 cm), white with clouds embossed on it (16 cm). On the edge of the cover, there is a vertical half-erased ink inscription in two languages. The first Manchu word and two Chinese characters have been lost, but they are restored from the text of the diploma itself: Manchu. [baitalabure] *hafan Yatu-i sargan Tunggo hala*, Ch. [拜他]喇布勒哈番牙圖妻通倭氏 “wife of *baitalabure hafan Yatu* from the Tunggo clan” and a postscript in Manchu: *hešeri hala* “Hesheri clan”. The Chinese text is located on the right side of the scroll and is read first as the scroll is unrolled. The text consists of 18 vertical lines from right to left. The Manchu text is located on the left side of the scroll and is written in 17 vertical lines from left to right. The Manchu text is written along vertical lines, made beforehand, that were pressed on silk by a sharp instrument. At the end of the Manchu text, the date bears a red square seal with a clear bilingual

⁵ PANG 2021: 25–311.

⁶ POPOVA 2012:483, 486.

legend: in Chinese *zhigao zhi bao* 制誥之寶, in Manchu *hese wasimbuhe boobai* “Seal for Decrees”. Usually, a seal is put both on Manchu and Chinese dates, but in this diploma, it is missing on the Chinese date. The date in both languages corresponds to February 1, 1682. Both Manchu and Chinese texts are written in clear script.

The Chinese text of the scroll

奉天承 / 運

皇帝制曰國家推恩而錫類臣子懋德以圖功 / 懿典攸存忱恂宜勗爾拜他喇布勒哈番牙 / 圖持心克謹蒞事惟勤俾典厥司特加任用 / 奉公罔懈盡職靡愆盛典既逢宜加新命茲 / 以覃恩特授爾階中憲大夫錫之誥命於戲 / 式弘車服之庸用勵顯揚之志尚欽榮命益 / 矢嘉猷 /

初任六品阿 / 敦大二任今職 /

制曰靖共爾位良臣既効其勤黽勉同心淑女 / 宜從其貴爾拜他喇布勒哈番牙圖妻通倭 / 氏克嫻內則能貞順以宜家載考國常 應褒 / 嘉以錫寵茲以覃恩封爾為恭人於戲敬為 / 德聚實加儆戒以相成柔和女箴愈著匡襄 / 以永賚 /

康熙二十年十二月二十四日

The Chinese text with punctuation

奉天承運皇帝制曰：國家推恩而錫類，臣子懋德以圖功，懿典攸存，忱恂宜勗。爾，拜他喇布勒哈番牙圖，持心克謹，蒞事惟勤。俾典厥司，特加任用。奉公罔懈，盡職靡愆。盛典既逢，宜加新命。茲以覃恩，特授爾階中憲大夫，錫之誥命。於戲！式弘車服之庸，用勵顯揚之志。尚欽榮命，益矢嘉猷。

初任六品阿敦大，二任今職。

制曰：靖共爾位，良臣既効其勤；黽勉同心，淑女宜從其貴。爾，拜他喇布勒哈番牙圖妻通倭氏，克嫻內則，能貞順以宜家；載考國常，應褒嘉以錫寵。茲以覃恩，封爾為恭人。於戲！敬為德聚，實加儆戒以相成；柔和女箴，愈著匡襄以永賚。

康熙二十年十二月二十四日



Pl. 1 The Chinese text of the diploma. H 178 Nova, IOM RAS

Translation from Chinese

Receiving the destiny of Heaven, the instruction by the Emperor:

The country gives out kindness by spreading graciousness; the officials perform meritorious deeds with diligent contributions. Fine institutions will be preserved, integrities should be encouraged. You, *baitalabule hafan*⁷ Yatu, have a devoted heart and diligently treat the affairs, and you fully deserve a promotion. Pursue public affairs without slackness and perform the duty without faults. On the occasion of grand ceremony, a new appointment ought to be added. Here, by a deep favor, I specially bestow you the grade of *zhongxian dafu*⁸ and present you an Imperial diploma. Oh! By increasing the honor of carriages and costumes, I encourage your distinguished ambition. Respecting the glorious appointment, you could demonstrate more fine strategies.

Initially you were appointed *adonda*⁹ of the sixth grade, then appointed to the present position.

The imperial instruction reads: Consider holding your post, a fine officer has already contributed his diligence; endeavor in one mind, the fair lady ought to get encouragement with him. You, Lady from the Tong'ο clan, the wife of *baitalabule hafan*, Yatu, being familiar with the regulations of a wife, are living harmoniously in chastity and compliance; thus, according to the country's rules, you ought to be honored by giving a favor. Now, by a deep favor, I bestow you the title of *gongren*.¹⁰ Oh! Respect being accumulated by moralities ought to be supplemented by admonishments; gentle female observations should constantly help and support.

24th day of the 12th moon, the 20th year of Kangxi (February 1, 1682)

Transliteration of the Manchu text

Abkai hesei forgon be aliha /

Hûwangdi hese. gurun boo. kesi be selgiyeme neigen isibumbi. amban oho niyalma. erdemu be wesihuleme gung be / kicembi. sain kooli bisire be dahame. unenggi gûnin-i sithûci acambi. baitalabure hafan Yatu sini / mujilen ginggun bime. baita de kicebe seme tušan de afabufi baitalaha.

⁷ *baitalabule hafan* 拜他喇布勒哈番 is a Manchu *baitalabure hafan* (dignitary hereditary title of the 4th grade).

⁸ *zhongxian dafu* 中憲大夫 a title of the official of the 4th grade

⁹ *adonda* 阿敦大 is a Manchu *adun da* (caretaker of state herds)

¹⁰ *gongren* 恭人 «respectable wife», an honorary title of an official of the 4th grade

afabuha babe heolendehakû. / tušan be akûmbume endebuhakû. amba kooli be ucaraha be dahame. doshon hese be isibure / giyan. te kesi selgiyehe doroi simbe tušan de faššaha amban fungnefi. g'aoming buhe. Ai. / sejen eteku-i temgetulere be badarambufi. iletulere algibure gûnin be huwekiyebuhe. ele wesihun / hese be gingguleme. sain bodogon be nememe kice. //

sucungga tušan ningguci adun-i da. / bihe. jai tušan de ere hafan. //

Hûwangdi hese. beye-i tušan be gingulere be dahame. sain amban kiceme faššambi. uhei mujilen-i kicehe be dahame. mergen hehe sasa wesihun ojoro giyan. baitalabure hafan Yatu-i sargan Tonggo (sic.)¹¹ hala / dorgi durun be urefi. akdun ijishun-i boo be hûwaliyambume mutehe. gurun-i kooli be kimcici. / saišara temgetulere doshon be isibuci acambi. te kesi selgiyehe doroi simbe gingguji hehe fungnehe. / ai. ginggun erdemu-i isahangge ofi yargian-i jombume targabuha be dahame. ishunde akdafi mutebuhe. / nesuken hehe durun de acanafi. tuwacihiyaha aisilahangge iletulehe be dahame. enteheme kesi isibuha. //

Elhe taifin-i orici aniya. jorgon biyai orin duin de

Translation from Manchu

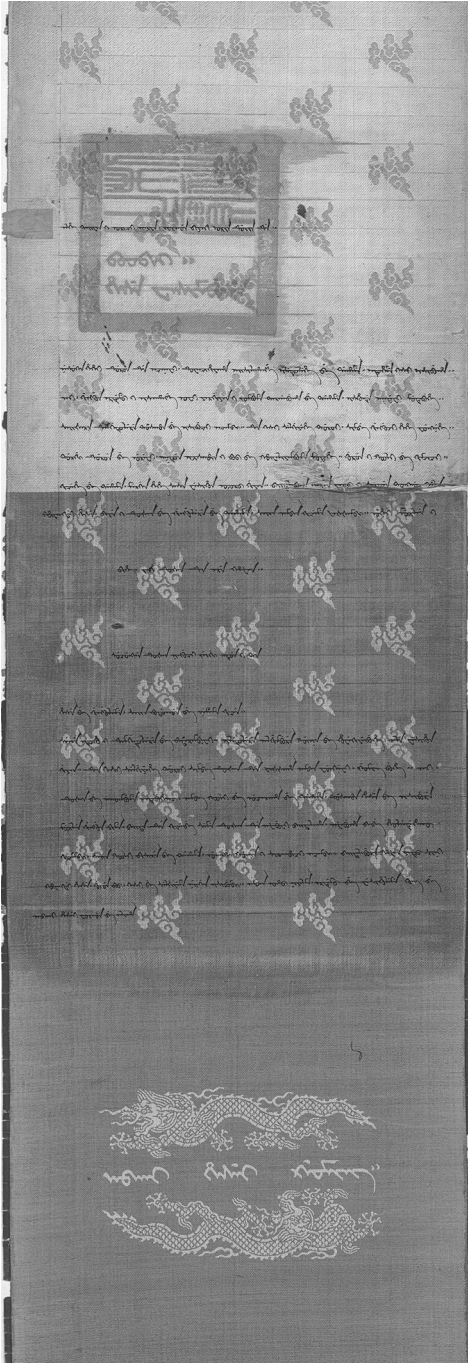
By the will of Heaven and the dictates of fate [we], the Emperor, command.

The imperial decree reads: the reigning house spreads mercy everywhere. The one who holds an official position highly honors virtue and diligently fulfills [his] duty. Since the existing good laws are consistent with the diligent implementation of sincere intentions, then you, *baitalabure hafan* Yatu, have a devoted heart, [you] are honest in business and when you perform duties, you do things diligently and accurately. In order to follow the great law, it is fair to issue a special decree. Now, by the law extending the sovereign's mercy, you are granted the diploma of the official *faššaha amban*,¹² Oh! Display insignia on clothing and crew to publicize [our] desire to glorify a celebrity. Rendering every respect to the supreme decree, zealously carry out good thoughts.

At first, [you] had the position of an official of the *adun da* of the 6th rank, now [you get] this position (i.e. he is promoted by two ranks — *T.P.*).

¹¹ In the Manchu text the name is written as *Tonggo*, while on the label on the cover of the diploma the name is given as *Tunggo*, and it corresponds to the Chinese transcription of this name *tongwo* 通倭.

¹² *faššaha amban* — “a zealous, diligent dignitary”, a title of the official of the 4th grade.



Pl. 2. The Manchu text of the diploma. H 178 Nova, IOM RAS

The imperial decree reads:

Showing respect for his position, a good official serves diligently. In order for zeal to be unanimous, it would be fair to promote a wise wife to the rank. [You] are from the Tonggo clan, the wife of *baitalabure hafan* Yatu, trained in court rules, can maintain harmony, reliability and loyalty in the house. After carefully studying the state laws, you are worthy of signs of encouragement and favor. Now, according to the gracious decree issued, you are granted the title of *gongzhi hehe*.¹³ Oh! To multiply devotion and virtue, follow the instructions, supporting each other. [You] are a model of a meek and affectionate wife, and to glorify [you], I grant eternal mercy.

24th day of the 12th moon, the 20th year of the reign of Elhe taifin (February 1, 1682)

This diploma is one of the earliest in the collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS. It should be noted that in the Chinese text, the Manchu titles are transcribed with Chinese characters: 拜他喇布勒哈番 — Manchu: *baitalabure hafan*, 阿敦大 — Manchu: *adun da* (caretaker of state herds). At the same time, the titles borrowed by the Manchus from the Chinese titlature are given in the Chinese original: 恭人 — Manchu: *gongzhi hehe*, or translated into Manchu: 中憲大夫 — Manchu: *faššaha amban*.

The second Manchu-Chinese diploma from the collection of N.P. Likhachev was bought from a book-seller either in Moscow, or in St. Petersburg in the beginning of the 20th c.¹⁴ This diploma like the previous one is mentioned in the “List of manuscripts and documents transferred to the Institute of Oriental Studies USSR AS from the Institute of Book, Document and Script” (Archive of Orientalists, f. 152, op. 1a, N 604, f. 76) under inventory number VI SM 22. Now it is kept in the IOM, RAS under the shelf-number H 179 Nova.

The diploma is a scroll 392.5 cm long and 32 cm wide, the text is written on colored silk, fixed on a thick paper base. The scroll is unfolded from left to right, and its right end is fixed to a wooden stick, at the ends of which there are yellow bone tips. The Manchu text is in the beginning of the scroll on the left side, the Chinese text is located on the right side of the scroll. At the beginning of each text (for Chinese — on the right, for Manchu — on the left), between two dragons (descending and ascending) the name of the

¹³ *gongzhi hehe* is a Chinese *gongren* 恭人 «respectable wife», an honorary title of an official of the 4th grade. Later in Manchu this title was rendered as *unenggi hehe*.

¹⁴ POPOVA 2012: 483.

diploma is woven: in Chinese *fengtian gaoming* 奉天誥命, in Manchu *abkai hese ulhibure fungnehen*¹⁵ “Imperial patent of nobility”. The silk scroll itself consists of stripes of various colors, and as the scroll unfolds from left to right, the following stripes appear: lilac with Manchu name (68 cm), white (64.5 cm), yellow (67 cm), red (67 cm), black (67 cm) with Chinese name. White silk stripes (11 cm) on both sides of the scroll are attached to a red silk cover with woven design of clouds and bats (on the left side) and a wooden stick with yellow bone tips (on the right side). On the edge of the cover is a blue paper stripe with a cancelled name of the owner of the diploma. But on the back side of the cover there is an inscription with the name written in black ink in Chinese: *Wei Zhu* 衛焮, as in the Chinese text of the diploma. The Chinese text is written in 25 vertical lines from right to left. The Manchu text is located on the left side of the scroll and is written in 23 vertical lines from left to right. At the end of the Manchu text, the date bears a red square seal with an unclear bilingual legend. The date of the Chinese text is 14th day of the 5th moon, the 7th year of Guangxu (June 10, 1881), the date of the Manchu text is not clear.

Transcription of the Chinese text

奉天誥命

奉 / 天承運 / 皇帝制曰治佐旬宣聿奏保 / 釐之績職司法紀用嘉幹 / 濟之材爾直隸候補道加 / 三級衛杰駁歷著聲劇繁 / 就理握虎節以舉 / 帷車隨 / 甘雨綰麟符而叱馭路指 / 福星式逢慶典之頒用錫 / 寵章之 / 責茲以覃恩授爾 / 為通奉大夫錫之誥命於 / 戲克荷金湯之寄載宣鎖 / 鑰之猷拜比新綸勉乃茂績 /

制曰奉職恪公懋著勞臣之 / 績同心黽勉載嘉德配之 / 賢壺範攸昭 / 國恩斯沛爾 / 直隸候補道加三級衛杰 / 之妻劉氏毓自名家嬪於 / 望族 / 采藻蘋於碧澗允襄 / 修祀之誠詠絃絨於素絲 / 克勵自公之操茲以覃 / 恩 / 封爾為夫人於戲被寵光 / 於象服懿問交流錫榮獎 / 於鸞章惠風 / 益暢祇承欽 / 命彌勵闔儀

直隸候補道加叁級 /

光緒柒年伍月拾肆日 /

衛杰本身妻室 /

¹⁵ *ulhibure fungnehen* — a letter of appointment for an official position of the fifth rank and above.

Transcription with punctuation

奉天承運，皇帝制曰：

治佐旬宣，聿奏保釐之績；職司法紀，用嘉幹濟之材。爾直隸候補道加三級衛杰，駁歷著聲，劇繁就理。握虎節以舉帷，車隨甘雨；縮麟符而叱馭，路指福星。式逢慶典之頒，用錫寵章之賁。茲以覃恩，授爾為通奉大夫，錫之誥命。於戲！克荷金湯之寄，載宣鎖鑰之猷。拜比新綸，勉乃茂績。

制曰：奉職恪公，懋著勞臣之績；同心黽勉，載嘉德配之賢。壺範攸昭，國恩斯沛。爾直隸候補道加三級衛杰之妻劉氏，毓自名家，嬪於望族。采藻蘋於碧澗，允襄修祀之誠；詠絃緘於素絲，克勵自公之操。茲以覃恩，封爾為夫人。於戲！被寵光於象服，懿問交流；錫榮獎於鸞章，惠風益暢。祇承欽命，彌勵闔儀。

光緒柒年伍月拾肆日，直隸候補道加叁級衛杰本身、妻室。

Translation from Chinese

Receiving the destiny of the Heaven, the Imperial instruction reads:

When assisting the government by declaring the policies everywhere, the achievements of maintaining stability should be reported; when obeying the institutions and regulations, the capable and efficient person should be awarded. You, Wei Zhu (杰 is a variant of 炏), the alternate director of the Zhili¹⁶ Road with three grades added, became known in your official career and methodical in great affairs. Sitting in a carriage and holding a tiger tag,¹⁷ the carriage is followed by sweet rain;¹⁸ driving a carriage with coiling up a *qilin* tag,¹⁹ the road goes directly to the star of happiness. On the occasion of the celebration, [our] duty is to award with grace and commendation. Here, by a deep favor, I bestow you the title of *tongfeng dafu*²⁰ and present you the Imperial appointment. Oh! Your capability can be entrusted with a metal city wall and boiling moat,²¹ so I intend to take you as the lock and key.²² Respectfully receive the new title, which encourages you to make greater achievements.

¹⁶ zhili 直隸 now Hebei province.

¹⁷ hujie 虎節 — a tag with a tiger design, a symbol of the governor.

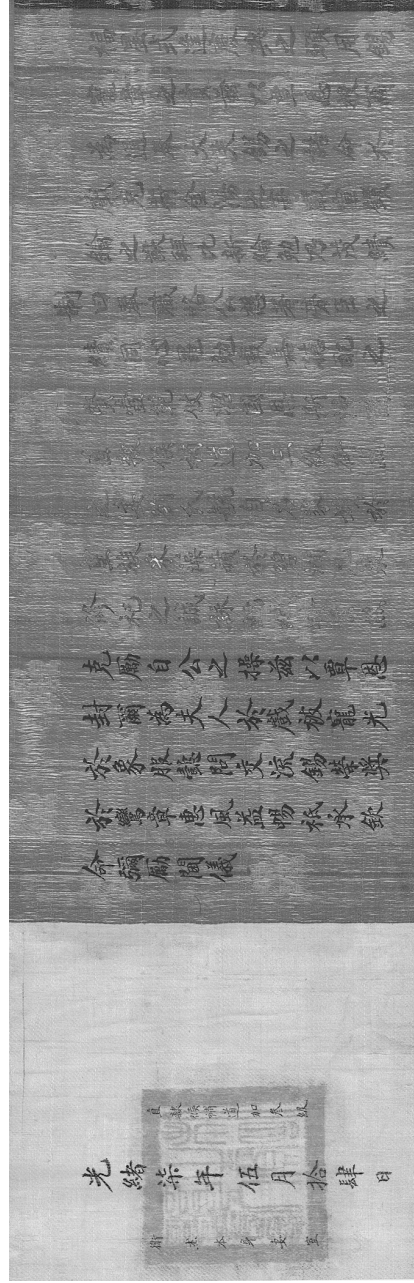
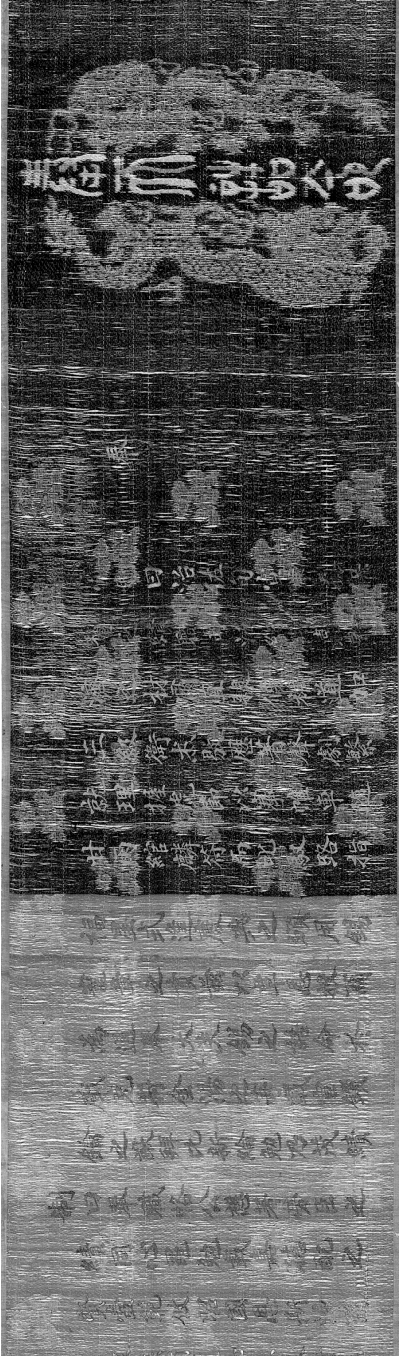
¹⁸ ganyu 甘雨 — blessed, rich rain, meaning “benefiting the masses”.

¹⁹ lin fu 麟符 — a tag with a *qilin* design, a symbol of the ruler.

²⁰ *tongfeng dafu* 通奉大夫 — a high minister of the 2nd grade.

²¹ jin tang 金湯 — an abbreviation form of 金城湯池 (a metal city wall and boiling moat), meaning “impregnable fortress”.

²² suo yue 鎖鑰 a lock and a key, a metaphor of a key pass protecting the capital.



Pl. 3-4. The Chinese text of the diploma H 179 Nova, IOM RAS

The imperial decree reads

Following the official duties, the achievements of the hardworking minister are splendid; working tirelessly together, the virtue of the chaste couple should be admired. The model within family is especially prominent, and the grace of the country becomes plentiful. You, Liu, the wife of the alternate director of the Zhili Road with three grades added, were born in a reputable family and married into an eminent clan. Picking up *zao* and *pin*²³ in a jasper-like stream, your loyalty in preparing sacrifices is shown; making stitches and seams on plain silk²⁴, your ethics in public affairs is encouraging. Here, by a deep favor, I bestow you the title of *furen*. Oh! Formal dressing is covered by gracious brightness, your conversations are fine; your identification flags are present for awarding honor, a warm tender wind²⁵ becomes more unhindered. Obey the Imperial instruction reverently, and further strengthen your family regulation.

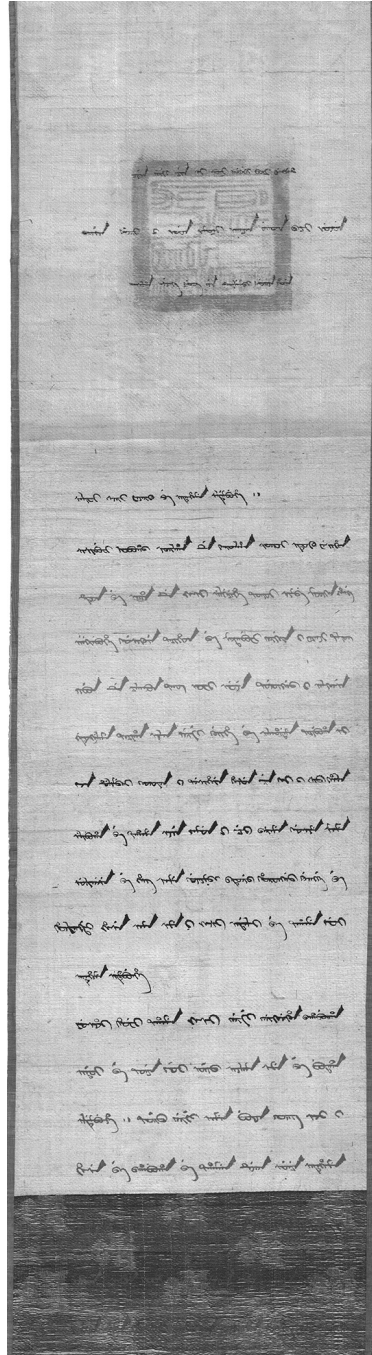
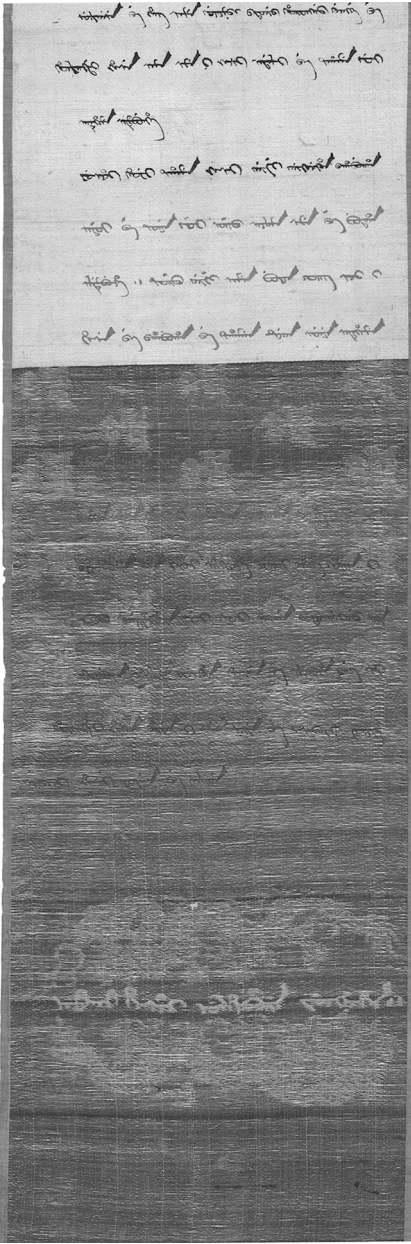
On the 14th day of the 5th moon, the 7th year of Guangxu (June 10, 1881) [given] personally to the alternate director of the Zhili Road with three grades Wei Zhu and his wife.

The Manchu text of this diploma is written on the left side of the scroll after the title *Abkai hese ulhibure fungnehen* “a patent of nobility [issued] by imperial order” woven between two dragons. The Manchu text is written in silver (5 lines), green (6 lines), blue 6 lines), red (4 lines) and black (2 lines) ink. Though the words are written in a relatively clear handwriting, the text is not readable: there are a lot of orthographical mistakes with missing diacritical marks, some combinations of the words could be read, but they do not make sense. There is an impression that the scribe did not know the language and simply copied phrases from other Manchu texts. The second Manchu part of the diploma, which usually refers to the female member of the family, contains some information. This part is addressed to the mother of a certain *baturu* whose name is not clear. She is from the clan *Šio hala* and is praised for a good upbringing of her son. This text is also full of orthographic mistakes and is a mixture of formal phrases. As a whole, the Manchu text of the diploma does not coincide with the Chinese text.

²³ *zao pin* 藻蘋 *zao* and *pin*, two kinds of water vegetables used for offering sacrifices.

²⁴ *yong tuoyu yu susi* 詠紵緘於素絲 “making stitches and seams on plain silk”, a metaphor of paying attention to details.

²⁵ *hui Feng* 惠風 a warm, tender wind, a metaphor for a grace of the ruler.



Pl. 5-6. The Manchu text of the diploma H 179 Nova, IOM, RAS

Formally the diploma is written according to the tradition of the official patents of nobility: texts in two state languages of the Qing dynasty written on silk in multicolored ink. We may assume that the original patent of nobility was given to Wei Zhu and his wife from the Liu clan, and his merits and awards are listed in the Chinese text.

The diploma was issued on June 10, 1881, during the decline of the Qing empire, when the Manchu language was sometimes used as a formal attribute to the official court documents for the Chinese subjects. This statement can be supported by two other diplomas from the collection of the IOM, RAS, also compiled at the end of the dynasty — in 1904. There are three diplomas granted to the same family: the merits of Gong Wencai (shelf-number B 94mss) were spread to his parents (B 106 mss) and grandparents (B 107 mss). In the last two diplomas the Manchu text does not coincide with the Chinese text, and the names of other subjects and their deeds are mentioned.²⁶ These documents illustrate a formal attitude to the Manchu language which is also seen in the document dated by 1881.

The two diplomas of nobility from the collection of N.P. Likhachev are interesting samples of similar documents compiled in different times. The first diploma is one of the earliest in the collection of the IOM, RAS and dates back to the time of Kangxi (1682),²⁷ the second one was issued two hundred years later and dates to the Guangxu reign (1881). The early diplomas are usually done on good silk, the letters and characters are written in clear handwriting and the texts are relatively simple. At the end of the dynasty, the Chinese text of the diplomas became more elaborate with many metaphors from classical sources which were often not translated into Manchu. The Chinese text was the main text of these diplomas, while the Manchu text was seen as a necessary part of a state document, which actually was not even read and was written as a formal or even decorative part of the diploma.

²⁶ PANG 2020a: 10–17.

²⁷ The earliest diploma in the collection of the IOM, RAS is dated by 1651. See: PANG 2020b: 24–32.

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