



## ĀL TAMĠĀ

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**ĀL TAMĠĀ** “red seal,” Turkish term for the supreme seal of the Mongol Il-Khans of Iran. The term also meant “document with a red seal.” Before the Mongol conquest, e.g., in Saljuq and K̅vārazmšāh administration, there occur the terms *tawqīʿ* (equivalent to *toġrā* “emblem” of the ruler) and *mohr* “seal” (in documents from subordinate officials; H. Horst, *Die Staatsverwaltung der Grosselġūqen und Ĥorazmšāhs [1038-1231]*, Wiesbaden, 1964). After the Il-Khans gave the red seal significance in Iran, it was used by some later dynasties, e.g., the Jalayerids; it was also found in the territory of the Golden Horde, among the Timurids, and, according to Ebn Baṭṭūṭa, in India—i.e., throughout the western half of the Mongol realm (Doerfer, *Elemente II*, pp. 555-60, 563). The red seal undoubtedly derives from the chancellery practice of the Uighur Turks, from whom the Mongols took their script along with other cultural borrowings. The use of red or black seals derives ultimately from Chinese practice (see M. Weiers, “Mongolische Reisebegleitschreiben aus Čayatai,” *Zentralasiatische Studien* 1, 1967, p. 32).

Turkish *āl* “warm red” (shading into orange or coral) contrasts with *qizil* “cold, dull red” (shading into violet). In modern usage *āl* denotes the Turkish flag, blood, and cheek; *qizil* means red gold, fire, scarlet fever, and red clover (I. Laude-Cirtautas, *Der Gebrauch der Farbbezeichnungen im Türkischen*, Wiesbaden, 1961, pp. 50-59). Arabic sources (Maḥmūd Kāšġarī, 5th/11th cent., and Mamluk sources, 8th/14th cent.) confirm this contrast. The *tamġā* “mark of ownership” originally identified the communal property of a kinship group or tribe. It occurred chiefly as a cattle brand but also on such objects as vases; it



was also scratched on stones bearing inscriptions. It contrasted with the *toġrā* (Middle Turkish *tuġraġ*), an individual's symbol (later often represented by a device of reign, valid for the respective ruler). After the Turks acquired a chancellery practice, *tamġā* came to mean "the stamping of a document as the ruler's property," hence "originating from the ruler," hence "seal."

In the Mongol period *āl tamġās* were square or at least four-sided (see Mostaert and Cleaves, "Documents," plates). Ġāzān (694-703/1295-1304) wanted to introduce round seals on the grounds that this shape is the most perfect (Rašīd-al-dīn, *Geschichte Ġāzān-Ĥān's*, ed. K. Jahn, London, 1940, p. 96). This practice eventually was adopted. The oldest round seal, that of the Jalayerid Solṭān Ḥosayn, dates to 780/1378 (Herrmann, "Solṭān Ḥoseyn," p. 153; idem, "Qara Yūsuf," p. 237). Subsequent Timurid seals were round (Herrmann, "Urkunden-Funde," p. 259).

The oldest red seals were inscribed in Mongolian or Chinese. The text conveyed the ruler's supreme power. The seal in Mongolian on Kūyūġ's letter to Pope Innocent IV, dated 1246, reads: "(Relying) on the power of everlasting heaven. An edict of the sea monarch [i.e., ruler of all the lands surrounded by the Great Ocean] of the great Mongolian people. If it comes into the hands of subjugated or rebellious nations, let them honor and fear it" (Mostaert and Cleaves, "Documents," pp. 485-95, pl. VIII; see also P. Pelliot, "Les mongols et la papauté," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 23, 1922-23, pp. 3-30). Three sealings inscribed in Chinese have been found, belonging to (1) Argūn and Abaqa (1267 or 1279, Tehran document II), (2) Ġāzān (1302), (3) Olġāytū (1305) and Abū Sa'īd (720/1320; for these see Mostaert and Cleaves, plates). Thus rulers had different seals but also used earlier seals.

Abū Sa'īd had seals with an Arabic inscription (725/1325); this practice was also followed by Šayġ Oways (759/1358, 773/1372), Sultan Ḥosayn (780/1378), the Timurids, and the Golden Horde. Arabic inscriptions occur already on the seal impressions of the Mongol-period Persian documents from Ardabīl (under study by G. Herrmann).

The *āl tamġā* is not mentioned in the Great Khanate (China and Mongolia); yet it was used and bore Chinese characters (see, e.g., N. Poppe, *The Mongolian Monuments in ḥP'ags-pa Script*, 2nd ed., Wiesbaden, 1957, texts nos. 5 and 6). In the east, the term *nišan* "signature mark, cipher" (a borrowing of Persian *nešan*) seems equivalent to *āl tamġā*. Prince Hindu was awarded a *qas nišan* "jade seal," where an Iranian dignitary would have received a *tamġā* (F. W.



Cleaves, “The Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1362 in Memory of Prince Hindu,” *HJAS* 12, 1949, pp. 1-133). Maḥmūd Kāšġarī refers to the *tamġā* as a “seal of the ruler and others” and, by implication, as a brand used by the twenty-two descendants of the legendary Oġuz Khan; Rašīd-al-dīn employs *tamġā* in the same context (Doerfer, *Elemente* II, pp. 554, 556). Other Persian sources use *tamġā* to mean “seal” or a particular tax.

The evidence for usage in the Ulus Čaġatay is difficult to interpret. *Nišan* is used, apparently with the same sense as *tamġā* in Persian; e.g., Mongolian *al nišantu*, *qara nišantu*, and *altan nišan* correspond to *āl tamġā*, *qara tamġā*, and *altūn tamġā*. Chancellery practice in east and west also was parallel; the phrase *al nišatu bičig* “document with a red *nišan*” is found in letters of appointment or documents bestowing property (cf. below); other documents refer to themselves as merely *nišatu bičig*.

The Golden Horde used the term *āl tamġā*. The *tarkān* decrees (exemptions from taxation; see Doerfer, *Elemente* II, pp. 460-74) contain such phrases as: “a decree with a red seal” (Toktamiš), “a decree with a red seal and golden cipher” (Saadet-Girey), and “a decree with a golden cipher and a red seal” (Ĥājjī Girey). (See, e.g., W. Hinz, “Zwei Steuerbefreiungsurkunden,” *Documenta Islamica Inedita*, Berlin, 1952, pp. 211-20).

The Mongol rulers of the 7th-8th/13th-14th centuries used the red seal, and the term *āl tamġā* is often attested; the earliest mention is apparently by Jovaynī for the year 617/1220, in Genghis Khan’s reign (*ibid.*, II, p. 556). The red seal was kept in a secret compartment. Originally secretaries (*bitikčī*) had access to it besides the ruler, but from the time of Ġāzān on it was apparently reserved for the ruler (*ibid.*, II, pp. 264-67, 556; Lech, *Weltreich*, p. 341). When the vizier or senior amirs such as Čoban used it, they did so in the ruler’s name, at least officially, as is shown by the Ardabīl records (see also Doerfer, *Elemente* II, pp. 556-60). The seal was impressed on documents by the *aččī* “users of the red seal” (see description of the procedure in Lech, *Weltreich*, p. 158, and nn. 150, 151; Mostaert and Cleaves, “Documents,” pp. 479-82). According to Rašīd-al-dīn, Ġāzān ordained two kinds of red seal—the “great jasper seal” and a smaller one for lesser officials (“judges, imams, and shaikhs”). According to Herrmann the Ardabīl records show that Olġāytū had several seals of different sizes.

The seal would be affixed to the join between two sheets, to show they belonged together, and probably also at the bottom of the page on the left or



toward the center (in the Il-khan period Mongol script customarily was written right to left as on Kūyūg's letter). According to Lech, however, the ruler's seal was placed bottom right (*Weltreich*, pp. 344-45; cf. Herrmann, "Erllass des Šeyḥ Oveys," p. 34, n. 139). As a safeguard, the text of the sealed document specified that an *āl tamġā* was used. The Mongolian Tehran fragment and a 720/1320 edict of Abū Sa'īd use the phrase *āl tamġatay jarliġ* "decree with a red seal" (P. Pelliot, "Les documents mongols du Musée de Téhéran," *Āthār-é Īrān* 1, 1936, pp. 37-44; F. W. Cleaves, "The Mongolian Documents in the Musée de Téhéran," *HJAS* 16, 1953, pp. 1-107). Cf. simply *bičġig* "communication" in the travel permit of Abaqa (1267 or 1279) and in letters to foreign rulers from Arġūn (1289), Ġāzān (1302), and Olġāytū (1305).

The Mongol period sources also refer to a green-blue seal (*kōk tamġā*), black seal (*qara tamġā*), and golden seal (*altūn tamġā*). The most important contrast was between the red and the golden. The golden seal was used almost exclusively for financial or fiscal edicts. The red seal was used for documents with broader administrative import, for instance, appointments (e.g., of a provincial governor), but also for personal transactions, perhaps as a special favor. Rašīd-al-dīn, in recounting Ġāzān's reform in the use of the seals (ed. A. K. Arends, Baku, 1957, III, p. 501), names the *yašm* (apparently red carnelian) seals before the *altūn* seals. The red seals, he says, were reserved for the most important affairs of state. When an overlap occurred between functions of the red and the golden seal, the red was used (Herrmann, "Erllass des . . . Šeyḥ Oveys," p. 43). Letters of appointment naming a stipend received the red seal. And Abu'l-Qāsem Kāšānī complained about Rašīd-al-dīn, "with whose red seal and deeds of assignment everybody's possessions are confiscated" (Doerfer, *Elemente* II, p. 558). The red seal's epithet (*mobāarak*) is apparently more elevated than that of the golden (*homāyūn*; Jovaynī, I, p. 211; Rašīd-al-dīn, *Geschichte Ġāzān-Ĥān's*, p. 223).

The Timurids continued much of Mongol tradition, but they used the *āl tamġā* only on solemn occasions (Herrmann, "Urkunden-Funde," p. 259). Probably only the ruler employed it; it is mentioned for the year 839/1436 in connection with Šāhroġ (Doerfer, *Elemente* II, p. 560). Timurid sources chiefly show a transition to the practice which would be used by the Turkmans and the early Safavids: The ruler's documents bore only the *ṭawqī'* seal (L. Fekete, "Einführung in die persische Paläographie," *101 persische Dokumente*, ed. G. Hazai, Budapest, 1977, pp. 64, 74; for the Turkmans and later see p. 196 and H. Busse, *Untersuchungen zum islamischen Kanzleiwesen an Hand türkmenscher*



*und safawidischer Urkunden*, Cairo, 1957, nos. 1-4). A 1017/1609 document of ‘Abbās I bears the term *mohr* for “seal,” which occurs regularly thereafter (*ibid.*, p. 185).

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