



## ALTŪN TAMĠĀ

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**ALTŪN TAMĠĀ** “gold mark of ownership” (Tk.), a seal that was used throughout their empire by the Mongol rulers of Iran (including the Chupanids and Jalayerids), especially for financial or property decisions and in documents relating to financial transactions by the state. The term itself does not occur universally (see *Āl Tamġā*), though in the kingdom of Čaġatay an *altan nišan* is mentioned (see L. Ligeti, *Monuments préclassiques I: XIII<sup>e</sup> et XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Budapest, 1972, p. 229, with bibliog.). However, its use was limited to the Mongol period.

According to Rašīd-al-dīn (see G. Doerfer, *Türkische und mongolische Elemente in Neupersischen*, 4 vols., Wiesbaden, 1963-75, II, pp. 556-57) there were three categories of gold seals: Large gold seals for moderately important matters (*ĵehat-e motawasseġāt-e omūr*); special seals for military affairs, bearing the images of a bow, a club, and a sword (it is uncertain whether these seals were used as the gold seal per se); finally, small gold seals (*altūn tamġā-ye kūĉak*) used to stamp the checks (*barawāt*) of the treasuries, commercial letters, etc. On one occasion only Rašīd-al-dīn mentions the *altūn tamġā-ye kāšša* which sealed an imperial document entrusted to a special courier (see Doerfer, *Elemente I*, p. 552). For the rest, the gold seal is always referred to in a fiscal context (for a detailed catalogue, see G. Herrmann and Doerfer, “Ein persisch-mongolischer Erlass des Ġalāyeriden,” pp. 41-42). According to Herrmann (“Ein Erlass von Qara Yūsof,” p. 238), green seals (*yašīl belge*) were also used for this purpose. On the front cover these documents bore the archive entry of leading treasury and chancellery officials. According to K. Lech (*Das*



*Mongolische Weltreich. Al-'Umarī's Darstellung der mongolischen Reiche in seinem Werke Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*, Wiesbaden, 1968, p. 158) “decrees (*yarāliġ*) and ordinances (*aḥkāṃ*) relating to fiscal matters, the so-called *alṭān* [sic, but since the Arabic text has *alṭan*, read rather *alṭon*] *tamġā*” were issued at the suggestion and behest of the vizier (who of course acted in the name of the ruler, as the extant records testify). While therefore in its administrative function the *altün tamġā* was similar to the *āl tamġā*, the latter in fact carried greater weight. The epithet applied to the *altün tamġā* was *homāyūn* (Herrmann and Doerfer, “Ein persisch-mongolischer Erlass aus dem Jahr 725/1325,” p. 319). The language of the surviving *altün tamġās*, which are admittedly late examples, is Arabic; we do not know whether they were couched in Mongol prior to Abū Sa'īd (r. 717-36/1317-35). The *altün tamġās* were attached to the document where the total amount of tax due was shown (to prevent forgeries). As a safeguard the seal was explicitly mentioned in the body of the Persian text of bilingual documents, though not in the Mongolian text.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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The *altün tamġā* is frequently mentioned in Persian sources such as Rašīd-al-dīn; the *altün bēlgā* in Waṣṣāf seems to have an identical or at least similar significance (see Doerfer, *Elemente* II, pp. 112, 554-65).

Mongol-Persian documents bearing the *altün tamġā* are listed in G. Herrmann and G. Doerfer, “Ein persisch-mongolischer Erlass aus dem Jahr 725/1325,” *ZDMG* 125, 1975, pp. 317-46.

See also idem, “Ein persisch-mongolischer Erlass des Ġalāyeriden Šeyḥ Oveys,” *Central Asiatic Journal* 19, 1975, pp. 1-84.

G. Herrmann, *Persische Urkunden der Mongolenzeit* (in preparation; this work discusses the records from Ardabīl and also gives an historical account of the use of seals).

Idem, “Urkunden-Funde in Āzerbāyġān,” *AMI* 4, 1971, pp. 249-62.



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Idem, "Ein Erlass von Qara Yūsof zugunsten des Ordens von Ardabīl," *AMI* 9, 1976, pp. 225-42.

W. Hinz, "Das Rechnungswesen orientalischer Reichsfinanzämter im Mittelalter," *Der Islam* 29, 1949, pp. 1-29.

Idem, "Steuerinschriften aus dem mittelalterlichen Vorderen Orient," *Belleten* 13, 1949, pp. 745-69.