



FARMĀN

FARMĀN (OPers. *framānā*, Mid. Pers. *framān*; Arabized pl. *farāmīn*), decree, command, order, judgement. In historical as well as contemporary administrative and political usage the term often denotes a royal or governmental decree, that is a public and legislative document promulgated in the name of the ruler or another person (e.g., prince, princess, governor) holding partial elements of sovereignty. In the Persophone chanceries of Islamic times and also, following their example, many Turcophone (Ottoman, Chaghatay) chanceries, the word *farmān* was invariably the standard nomenclature for such documents. At the same time, chanceries in various countries had taxonomic terms (*nešān*, *raqam*, *ḥokm*, *yarlīg*, *parvāna*, *parvānča*, etc.) for specific types of *farmāns*, depending on and changing with the conventions of the particular dynasty in power. The term *farmān* (official decree) is different from the term *sanad* (plural *asnād*), which has the general meaning of “private,” “judicial,” or “administrative” document. Only in a few cases, as in the Indian Mughal administration, was the word *sanad* used as a technical term for a special category of *farmāns*. The entirety of sovereign, administrative, judicial, semi-private, and private documents are often designated with the collective term *farāmīn o asnād*.

Research on the textual, graphic, and administrative arrangement of Persian *farmāns* is the object of an auxiliary discipline of history called “diplomats” (Pers. *asnād-šenāsī*), i.e., the study of theories and concepts of documents, under whose premises and postulates this article will discuss the genre *farmān* in terms of its typology and historical development.



CHARACTERISTICS AND TYPOLOGY OF FARMĀNS.

The formulary. The term “formulary” denotes the structural arrangement of a document’s texts. European chanceries of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period developed a binding custom (the formularium) for the functional arrangement as well as the terminological definition of the different segments of a document text (invocatio, etc.; see below). For the purpose of analysis and as a method for the description of documents, diplomatics has adopted this same terminology for its studies. In the chanceries of pre-modern Muslim states, the structural arrangement of documents was not followed with the same sense of consistency and obligatory convention. The question whether the functional, structural, and formal elements of medieval and early modern European decrees can also be used to describe farmāns issued by chanceries of Islamic states is thus not settled.

Heribert Busse has delineated a hypothetical formulary of Persian farmāns as follows: “The beginning opens with the invocatio, the invocation of God, followed by the intitulatio, i.e., the name and the title of the promulgator. In the arenga, the obligations of the ruler to his subjects and the religious commandments are expounded with general phrases . . . The arenga is followed by the narratio, which explains the circumstances or the previous history of the document’s promulgation. This is followed by the dispositio, the intention of the ruler, which is the actual legal mandate. Finally follow the regulations for the recipient, concluded with an adhortatio, whose content stipulates the responsibilities for all those called upon to execute the dispositio. In the sanctio punishment is announced for infractions, subsequent to which often follows the corroboratio, that is the declaration of the means of authentication. The final segment of the document is made up by the eschatocol, the declaration of the date (datatio), and sometimes the declaration of the place of issue” (Busse, 1961, p. 211).

Corresponding to European practice, the invocation (*tamhīd*, *da’wat*; see Fekete, 1977, p. 26; Reyhmann and Zajackowski, pp. 140-48), the intitulation (*sar-nāma*), and in many cases also the arenga are tied together for the so called protocol, while the date (*tārīk*) and location (*maqām*) form the eschatocol. Protocol and eschatocol are independent from the document’s content, while the portions between these two segments are related to its content, and in the terminology of diplomatical research are usually called context or text. This article will use the term “context” as a technical term for

this material. “Text” shall simply refer here in a general sense to the entire document, that is the context, protocol, and eschatocol together. Finally there are means of authentication such as seals (*mohr*), initials, signatures and the like.

The applicability of this terminological classification derived from European models to farmāns is questionable in some respects. At least as early as the Timurids, the mention of the addressee and the beneficiaries were integrated into the arenga. In the case of farmāns issued by the numerous Persian chanceries, the part of a document defined as arenga cannot be assessed separately from the content. Rather the arenga contains integrated elements of the narratio, which means it may not be considered as part of the protocol, but of the context. There is also the question of whether the invocatio is indeed an invocation, the calling of God, rather than a form of the basmala (see [BESMELLĀH](#)). In the case of the latter, this would mean that the da‘wat (or tamhīd) of the complete text of a farmān was issued “in the name of God.” The debate over this issue has not been conclusive. In some documents the tamhīd was supplemented by the preceding basmala, and often by a succeeding devotional formula (like *al-molk le’llāh* or *al-ḥokm le’llāh*). Under the Safavids the devotional formula was extended by the invocations: *yā Moḥammad*, *yā ‘Alī* (Fekete, 1977, *passim*).

Stylistic attributes of the farmāns. While the external appearance of the Persian farmāns, the whole layout of the documents and the design of the intitulations in particular, differed from chancery to chancery, the disposition of the context and its literary style was much more uniform. The respective terminology varied from one administrative system to another, but certain expressions appeared in all chanceries with more or less frequency. Throughout the centuries and the different regions of Persophone chanceries, the classic Persian style of correspondence (q.v.) was always heeded with only minor deviations. In most farmāns the addressees and the incumbents (beneficiaries) of the documents were mentioned explicitly. This mention followed a strict pattern which in its classic form developed in Safavid chanceries. Firstly the respective person as the carrier of one or two professional or social qualities was introduced, namely through expressions with compound nouns (*tarkībāt-e esmī*), the first descriptive element of which was linked to a second such as *panāh* or *dastgāh*: for instance, *welāyat-panāh wa ḥokūmat-dastgāh* was employed for a governor. To this followed a syntactic Arabic expression, which combined the same attributes with an



“accusative of ḥāl,” like “kamālan le’l-welāya wa’l-ḥokūma,” after which finally followed the actual mention of the name. As a result, the qualifying attributes adjoined to the Persian phrase had to be indicated with a word of Arabic derivation; otherwise they could not be recapitulated in the Arabic expression. The person was mentioned by name only once. After that, he was alluded to in indirect form such as “ān welāyat-panāh-e maḍkūr” etc. Usually the mention of the addressee was followed by the opening of the narratio, introduced with “ . . . bedānand ke” or “dar in waqt . . .” or similar phrases. The transition to the dispositio was advanced by expressions like “arzānī daštīm ke” or “moqarrar farmūdīm ke.” The end of the dispositio admonishes the addressee to take the ruling of the farmān seriously (dar ‘ohda šenāsand or qadağan dānand etc.). Finally followed the dating, preceded by the formula “taḥrīran fī.” The dating in early farmāns also followed a locatio (such as be-maqām-e Ūjān in a document by Tīmūr (Fekete, 1977, p. 74 no. 3, dated 804/1401), but this is rarely found in documents after the 15th century.

The dating (tārīk). The word fī (in) was occasionally replaced by the naming of the day or directly by the month of the lunar hejrī calendar, with the respective Arabic epithet. To this followed the word sanna (year) and the year which was written in words until the 16th century, after which it was predominantly written in digits. In Persian farmāns related to financial administration, a fiscal-solar year based on indigenous, non-canonical modes of calculation often supplemented the lunar date. In pre-Mongol Persia, this chronology followed the Yazdegerdī and the Jalālī era. Subsequently, the date was given for the solar year according to the Turco-Mongolian dodecadian animal cycle or rhythm of the zodiac (e.g., sīčqān yīl, “the year of the mouse,” or lūyī yīl, “the year of the dragon”). The month was then indicated by its number, not by name (e.g., az ebtedā’-e do māha-ye pičīn yīl, “at the beginning of the second month of the year of the monkey,” see Busse, 1959, document 16, p. 200). The lunar date and the cyclical year together facilitated a precise dating. In farmāns of some of the Indian chanceries a similar system was used; in addition to the lunar hejrī date, years and seasons were given in the traditional Hindu chronology with the purpose of supplementing the solar date with the official lunar date (see Bahura and Singh). The use of the solar hejrī year is found from the 19th century onwards. In these documents, too, the solar months are named after the system of the zodiac, as is still the case in Afghanistan today. The modern Persian names of months were adopted in 1925 (see [CALENDARS](#)).

Writing materials and writing. Farmāns were chiefly written on paper, whose quality changed with technological alterations over the centuries. Classical kinds of paper were Baġdādī and above all Kānbāleġī, whose technical derivatives were used until early in the 19th century. The document paper was satined with a stone or more often a shell (şadaḡ). The finished document was rolled (ṭūmār), then folded, pressed together, and stored in this condition. In all chanceries a special ductus was employed for farmāns. For simpler farmāns, a generic chancery ductus inherited from pre-Mongol tradition and can be indicated as a trival (i.e., calligraphy non-canonized) kind of “dīvānī” was employed, which in later times remained reserved for documents of sales, endowments, and bequests. Ta’līq (see [CALLIGRAPHY](#)) was the most common script for farmāns until the late 15th century, and it stayed in vogue in Persia through later times for certain categories of farmāns. In Transoxania it continued to be widely used until the 17th century, while under the Safavids it was increasingly replaced by nasta’līq after the 16th century, often taking the shape of a nasta’līq-e šekasta āmīz. Indian Mughal farmāns were produced in a generally very fastidious nasta’līq. Otherwise it may be assumed that Indian chanceries consistently followed the Persian models with regard to the use of particular writing styles. In the context numbers were only rarely written in regular ciphers. Monetary amounts in particular (e.g., revenues, incomes, salaries) were written in full words and more often were transcribed in sīāq in order to preclude falsification.

The ṭoġrā. In contrast to Persian farmāns dating between the 14th and the 20th century and the decrees of the European Middle Ages, the farmāns of pre-Mongol times did not bear seals or stamps as means of authentication. According to Šehāb-al-Dīn Aḡmad Qalqašandī, the farmāns of the Saljuq rulers were issued with a so called ṭoġrā, a rigidly stylized and ritually formulated graphic text with the elongated part of the characters drawn extremely upward, promulgating the ruler’s name. This assumption is confirmed by the farmān of the Ildigozid Moḡammad b. ‘Oṭmān b. Uzbek of 630/1233, which was issued with a simple ṭoġrā carrying nonetheless all the characteristics of the ṭoġrās known through the earlier enšā’ literature (Hermann, 1994). The ṭoġrā mentioned the full name of the ruler and thus functioned almost as intitulation. At the same time it was the stylized signature of the ruler, which was meticulously drawn upon the behest of the promulgator by a special secretary (ṭoġrājī, ṭoġrākaš, ṭoġrānevīs) into the blank space reserved for it only after the whole farmān has been rewritten in the fair copy. This confirms that the ṭoġrā functioned as intitulation as well as means of authentication. Ottoman farmāns



continued the tradition as late as the early 20th century, where the particular characteristic form of the Ottoman *ṭoġrā* was eventually transformed into a heraldic symbol. A functionally analogous *ṭoġrā* emblem, but with a completely different formal design, was used by the Mamluk sultans in Cairo and was still in use by the Egyptian governors under Ottoman jurisdiction over Egypt in the 16th century. As late as the 15th century, the ‘Abbasid-Saljuq type of *ṭoġrā* was still being used by the Persian chancery of the Bahmanid rulers of Deccan. It followed the traditional, pre-Mongol *ṭoġrā* forms which were still used by the Mamluks. Only a large “B” was written on the long characters of the writing (Husain Khan, p. 1, doc. no. 3, dated 883/1478).

Seals. The use of the seal as means of authentication for a *farmān* in Persia was a Chinese custom introduced by the Mongols. The Chinese seals had a square shape and contained the name of the ruler and a maxim for his fortune. The seal not only had the function of a means of authentication but also that of the signature and thus made the use of the *ṭoġrā* dispensable.

In Mongol chanceries these square-shaped seals, called *tamġā*, were engraved with Chinese signs up to the 14th century. The term *tamġā*, originally a brand mark of the Turkish breeders of live stock of Inner Asia, was also used for other affairs, such as trade taxes against *šarī’a* laws or for a special form of the intitulation under the Aq Qoyunlu; but in relation to seals, *tamġā* always denotes exclusively the square seal in the tradition of the Mongol model. These seals were crafted at the court of the Great Khan in *Kānbāleġ* (Beijing) and brought to *Tabrīz*, the residence of the *il-khan*, with great ceremony (Busse, 1961, p. 220; Spuler, *Mongolen*2, p. 245). In Persia the impress of the seals used to be red, and thus they were called “Red Seal” (*āl tamġā*; q.v.). After the break between the *il-khans* and the *Yüan* during the rule of the *Abū Sa’īd* (q.v.), the *āl tamġā* was no longer carved in China but directly at the court in *Tabrīz*. The legend was then given in Arabic or Persian and contained devout Islamic epigrams (Qā’em-maqāmī, 1969, pp. 9-15). Under *Timūr* the square seal was redesigned to a round one, a process which seemed to have been influenced by the model of the minted images on coins. After *Timūr*, the round privy seals and coins followed this pattern and were used in Persia and India until the 18th century and in Central Asia until the 19th century (Rabino, plates 48-50; Mukhtarov, *passim*). The square seal (*tamġā*) was still in use under the *Jalayerids* (Plate I) until it was replaced by a round seal (*mohr*).

The large round seal corresponded to the formula *farmān-e homāyūn šod*; the large round seal with the roof-shaped head piece (*kolāh*; see example in (Plate

III) was linked to the formula *farmān-e homāyūn šaraf-e nafāḍ yāft*; and the small, usually square-shaped, ring seal coincided with the formula *ḥokm-e jahān-moṭāʿ šod*. A unique Safavid seal was the *mohr-e mosawwada-ye dīvān-e aʿlā*. It was the most similar in form to minted coins and was used for *farmāns* containing regulations of financial issues promulgated by the assembly of the *dīvān*. On their seals, most of the Safavid rulers called themselves *banda-ye šāh-e welāyat*, while Shah Solaymān (1077-1105/1666-94) retained the epithet *banda-ye šāh-e dīn* on his seals. Governors or princes used round or square ring seals, which were also placed on the bottom of the document text. Qajar chanceries developed highly sophisticated customs, in which the seal of the ruler was placed on the top; those of the crown prince or the important princes on the left or right of the upper part of the document text; and the seals of other governors could be placed right or left, on the top or bottom of the margin (Busse, 1961, pp. 232-35).

In Transoxania, where intitulations were always written with *sözümiz* or *sözüm*, the seal could also be placed at different positions. In India, the Mughals created a new variety of the red square (*āl ṭamḡā*), which had nothing in common with its Sino-Mongol prototype except the color and shape. Mughal governors and Indian principalities used coin-like round seals which were clearly inspired by the Safavid model. The seals of the Hindu Rajput rulers of the 18th century emulated this model, bearing the Hindu name of the respective ruler in the frame of Persian *nastaʿlīq* engravings (Bahura and Singh, *passim*). Some British dominated Indian principalities in the 19th century used round seals in the style of rubber stamps with Persian and English inscriptions.

The imprint of the royal seal, following Chinese custom, was placed at the end of the document's text after it had been rewritten into the final copy. Seals were also stamped along the lines where the adjoining paper stripes of documents, which sometimes measured a number of feet, were pasted together. The sealing of the bonded paper sections (*sarband*) was supposed to forestall possible forgeries. The position of the seal at the end of the document text remained unchanged for some time, but from the 16th century onwards the privy seals were placed at the head of the *farmāns*. A clear correlation between the shape of the privy seal and the form of introduction (the Safavid *ṭōḡrās*) developed in the Safavid state chancery.

Dorsal comments. Documents in the 'Abbasid-Saljuq style, and also Ottoman and Mamluk documents in their own tradition, were not accustomed to the

use by a chancery of a farmān's reverse side. The dissimilar custom in Persian chanceries has its roots in the East Asian influences at the time of Mongol rule. Internal remarks of the chanceries were written on the back of a farmān, sealed and initialled by the responsible official. A system of copious dorsal comments developed under the Safavids, by which the entire administrative course in the chancery and the registration of the dispositions was reproduced on the back of the farmāns. This practice reached its climax in Qajar administration. The then vague definition of competencies was reflected in excessive administrative procedures within the respective chanceries, which were reproduced on the back side of the farmāns in minute detail, following the placement rules of chancery and registration remark. There are numerous Qajar farmāns which have more than thirty such comments on the reverse (see Busse, 1961, p. 242; Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, fig. opposite p. 217). Research on this subject is still inadequate, not last because publications of farmān texts largely focus on the content as the relevant part and disregard their formal aspects. For this reason facsimile editions only exceptionally print the reverse side of documents.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Overview. Until recently, the earliest extant examples of authentic farmāns dated from the Il-khanid period at the beginning of the 14th century. Older farmāns were known only through quotations found in the so-called enšā' (q.v.) books, which are manuals of government administration. In December 1971, however, Alexander Morton made public for the first time the existence of a pre-Mongol farmān (Tehran Journal), shortly after the discovery of a repository of Persian and Arabic documents in the shrine of Shaikh Ṣafī-al-Dīn in Ardabīl. This farmān, dated 630/1233, is from the chancery of the Idiguzid Atābeg of Azarbaijan, Moḥammad b. Oṭmān b. Uzbek. With this document, published by Gottfried Herrmann (1994), we have insight into an authentic example for the pre-Mongol, 'Abbasid-Saljuq category of Persian farmāns, which hitherto could only be analyzed on the basis of hypothetical suppositions. On the basis of the documents now available, farmāns may be categorized in terms of the following periods:

1. The pre-Mongol farmāns, following the model of 'Abbasid and Saljuq chanceries.
2. Farmāns from Mongol chanceries: (a) Il-khanid farmāns; (b) post-Il-khanid farmāns (especially for Jalayerid times); (c) for the purpose of comparison,

farmāns of Mongol with non-Persian chanceries of the Khans of the Golden Horde (q.v.), the Khans of the Crimea (in both of which Turkish was the administrative language), and of the chanceries of the Great Khans (where farmāns were issued in Mongolian as well as in Persian) also considered.

3. Farmāns of the Timurid model: (a) farmāns of Amīr Tīmūr; (b) farmāns of the Timurid rulers of Transoxania and Herat; (c) farmāns from the chanceries of the Qara Qoyunlu and the Aq Qoyunlu; (d) farmāns of the early Safavid times (Shah Esmā'īl I, Shah Tahmāsb I before 1534-40, in a few occasions also to the time of his death, as well as later farmāns which were promulgated in the name of Shah Šafī as well as Shah 'Abbās II); (e) farmāns issued in Persian or Turkish (Chaghatay) by the chanceries of the Uzbek Khanates (Kīva, Bokhara, and Kōqand) until the end of the 19th century.

4. Safavid farmāns from the late 1530s to the early 1730s.

5. Farmāns of the Afsharid-Qajar type: (a) farmāns of Nāder Shah and his successors; (b) documents from the chanceries of the Afghan kings since 1745; (c) farmāns from the chanceries of Karīm Khan Zand and his successors; (d) farmāns from the chanceries of the Qajar rulers until World War I.

6. Farmāns promulgated in the name of the two Pahlavi shahs.

7. Persian farmāns from Indian chanceries: (a) farmāns from the chanceries of the Deccan Sultanates which carried on the style of the pre-Mongol type of farmāns; (b) farmāns from the chanceries of the Deccan Sultanates, which followed a later tradition and at least in parts follow Safavid models; (c) farmāns from the chanceries of the Mughal rulers; (d) Late or post-Mughal farmāns, i.e., from the chanceries of the Rajput rulers or the Neẓāms of Hyderabad.

This chronological and geographical arrangement of Persian royal farmāns reflects primarily their formal development as expressed particularly in the arrangement of the external characteristics of a farmān, including its graphic design (i.e., the formulary). The outward hallmarks of farmāns, that is their graphic and paleographic as well as linguistic characteristics, were sometimes restyled by the chanceries, in most cases in conjunction with the change of dynasties. Occasionally changes of form were undertaken in conjunction with reforms within the chancery of the ruling dynasty.

East Asian influences under the Mongols. The rule of the Il-khanids

(654-736/1256-1336) inaugurated a definite change in the style of farmāns. The Il-khans still employed secretaries (*monšī*, *kāteb*) who had been trained under the 'Abbasid (Saljuq, *K̄vārazmšāhī*) conventions, but they reorganized their chanceries according to East Asian models. In the 13th century the farmāns of the Mongol chanceries continued to be designed altogether in emulation of the Chinese pattern. The *ṭoḡrā* was replaced by a genuine intitutatio following a pattern like: “Abū Saʿīd Kān yarlīgī,” or if the promulgation was not directly issued by the ruler but by an authorized official: “Abū Saʿīd Kān yarlīgīdīn” (Hermann, 1971, *passim*; Fragner, 1992, p. 90). The intitutatio of Il-khanid farmāns was always in Chaghatay but written in Arabic script. The first two lines following the intitutatio, unlike decrees of the 'Abbasid type, were indented about one third of a line from right to left. Three lines were indented on documents written in Mongolian (Busse, 1959, pp. 372-74; Cleaves, 1951; *idem*, 1953; Fragner, 1992; Pelliot, pp. 37-44).

The calligraphic emphasis of particularly conspicuous words in the elevatio, too, goes back to Mongol or East Asian customs. In Mongol documents words like *tangrī* (sky) or *yarlīg* (Mong.-Turk. for *farmān*) were written in specially colored ink (gold or red) on the extreme right margin of the line, which was interrupted at the place where the word was to be inserted and resumed on a new line. This custom was continued by Persian farmāns in later centuries. At least up to the 18th century, prominent words, names, or titles were written on the upper right margin outside the text, while in the line where the respective word was to be read, a small part was kept blank. Eulogies for deceased Shahs (such as *šāh bābā-am*, *jadd-e bozorgvār-am*, *šāh-e jannat-makān*, etc.) or for holy personalities or shrines (e.g., *āstāna-ye moqaddasa-ye Maʿšūma-ye moṭahhara*) used to be highlighted in this way (Busse, 1961, pp. 44-46).

As noted above, the use of seals as means of authentication was another direct adoption of a Chinese tradition introduced by the Mongols.

Chancery reforms under Tīmūr (771-807/1370-1405). Under Tīmūr and his successors a different Mongol layout of farmāns was introduced. The seal (*mohr*) was round and bore three heraldic circles as a special emblem of the Timurids (they are also found on Timurid coins) (Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, pp. 272, 354-55; Qazvīnī). In the Mongol tradition the seal was used as new means of authentication following the cessation of the complete text as well as to safeguard the adjoining edge of the sarband. The intitutatio was formulated differently and under Tīmūr was phrased Tīmūr Gūrakān sōzūmiz, as it was for his successors who, however, added the word *bahādor* (hero). The maxim

sözümüz (our word) is the eastern Turkish version of the frequently used Mongolian expression ügä manu (a word of ours) in Mongolian intitulations of Great Khan documents. In the chanceries of the Timurids of Transoxania and Khorasan as well as the Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu rulers in western Persia, it was common to use this Turkish maxim in all farmāns issued by the ruler, while the intitulations of princes, queens and princesses, and governors were marked with sözüm (my word).

The Timurid-Turkman intitulation of the 15th century (partly also found later) is based on the royal farmāns and usually structured with the following pattern: konya and the name of the ruler, bahādor, sözümüz. Neither the Timurids nor the Turkmans (Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu) used the title Khan, which up to the 15th century was exclusively reserved for the Chingizids. A farmān of the year 892/1478 by the Aq Qoyunlu Ya'qūb with the formula Abu'l-Moẓaffar Ya'qūb bahādor sözümüz served as prototype (Papazian, doc. no. 6). The word sözümüz was spelled as maxim in Timurid documents SWZW MYZ, while Turkman documents carried the orthographic form of SYWZWM YZ, which obviously attempted to represent the phonetic particularity of the Turkish “ö.” This peculiarity also appeared in Safavid farmāns as long as they followed the Timurid-Turkman tradition (i.e., up to the 1530s and for some special purposes also later on; e.g., some documents issued in the name of Shah Şafī and Shah ‘Abbās II). Another characteristic of the intitulations of the Aq Qoyunlu rulers was the devotional formula (i.e., al-ḥokm le'llāh). It emulated the design of the livestock brand mark of the federation's leading tribe, the Bayandor, having the shape of a square, whose lower side was elongated toward the left and ended in a small hook (e.g., Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, p. 190; [Plate IIa](#) and [Plate IIb](#)).

The intitulations of Uzbek farmāns. The rule of the Aq Qoyunlu in the west and the Timurids in the east came to a close by the end of the 16th century. The chanceries of the two succeeding dynasties, the Safavids in Persia and the Chingizid Khans of the Uzbeks in Transoxania and northeast Khorasan continued the model of the Timurid-Turkman intitulatio with some modifications. The intitulatio with sözümüz of most of the Uzbek farmāns used the konya “Abu'l-Ġāzī.” As conscious Chingizids, the ruling Khans added furthermore the title Khan to bahādor in the intitulatio, which contributed to their distinction from the Timurids. Under the Shaybanids not only the Khan's but also all princes of the ruling dynasty used the formula sözümüz, which reveals the fact that the Shaybanids saw their empire as dominium of the

ruling family, that is the Khan stood toward the princes merely as *primus inter pares* and in no way was their supreme overlord. This aside, the Uzbek rulers endeavored to distinguish their decrees as little as possible from those of the Timurids (Fragner, 1992, p. 102). The formulary of Safavid farmāns. The development of the design of the farmāns produced in Safavid chanceries, the most thoroughly researched type of farmāns, took a different course of development. In Shah Esmāʿīl's chancery, the intitulation with the *sözümiz* was retained, but the seal was moved from the lower right corner to the empty space which had been kept blank due to the Mongol custom of indenting the first two or three lines (Plate III). The fact that the pear shaped privy seal (*mohr*) from the time of Shah Esmāʿīl I onwards included also the names of the twelve Imams, which for the sake of proper reverence should not be placed at the bottom of a document, is presumably responsible for this change in place. By using both the intitulation proper and the shifted seal, the function of the intitulation at the top of the document was essentially duplicated, as witnessed by most of the farmāns issued in the name of Shah Esmāʿīl I.

Under Shah Tahmāsb I (930-84/1524-76), an extensive chancery reform was undertaken by the end of the 1530s, which resulted initially in the creation of two new types of farmāns (Plate IVa; Plate IVb; Plate IVc). In both cases the seal was placed at a different position in the intitulation, thus assuming an entirely new function (i.e., the function of the intitulation as long as the seal was placed at the top) in addition of being the means of authentication. The customary indentation of the first two or three lines was reduced to one line. Depending on the type of the document, once the text of the farmān was written, the highest ranking secretary (*monšī-al-mamālek*) inserted with ink of a different color one of the two formulas “farmān-e homāyūn šod,” or “farmān-e homāyūn šaraf-e nafāḍ yāft. The use of the round seal correlated to one or the other round seal designed with concentric circles (*mohr-e homāyūn*) or a similarly constructed seal with a roof shaped head-piece (*mohr-e šaraf-e nafāḍ*; see Taḍkerat al-molūk, tr. Minorsky, text, fols. 41a-43b, tr. pp. 62 f.; Busse, 1959, pp. 47-58; idem, 1961, pp. 217-25; Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, pp. 227-38, 347-412). It is revealing that Safavid chanceries called these seals *toḡrā* in the introductory formulas, which shows that their imprint was an act of the document's final authentication. In addition to using the seal as intitulation and means of authentication, an introductory formula was occasionally added as instrument of authentication. After the fair copy was finally written out, the formula “taḥrīran fī...” was inserted at the beginning of the datatio, where a blank space had been left for that purpose. This

procedure probably functioned as a third mechanism of authentication for Safavid farmāns (Busse, 1959, p. 46).

In addition to these two types of Safavid farmāns, a third kind of farmān, characterized by a seal at the head of the text and an introductory formula (toḡrā), was created under Shah ‘Abbās I (996-1038/1588-1629). The decree of this type bore the introductory formula, ḥokm-e jahān-moṭā’ šod, usually written in black ink. These documents were chiefly concerned with affairs not belonging to the responsibility of the administration of the dīvān headed by the monšī-al-mamālek, but to the administration of crown properties (sarkār-e kāṣṣa-ye šarīfa) under the direction of the wāqe’anevīs (also called wazīr-e čap; Taḍkerat al-molūk, tr. Minorsky, pp. 52 f.; Busse, 1959, p. 60). This wāqe’anevīs was liable for inserting the ḥokm-e jahān-moṭā’ šod. A new seal associated with this introductory formula, which most of the times was square (it was heart-shaped under Solaymān, 1077-1105/1668-94) and sometimes with a roof, the so called mohr-e angoštar-e mehr-āṭār (or āftāb-āṭār). All three Safavid introduction formulas had a distinct calligraphic design and the word šod always appeared in the shape of a particularly elongated flag like stripe (Busse, 1961, pp. 226, 230; Qā’em-maqāmī, 1971, pp. 347 ff.).

Recent studies have suggested that structural innovations in Safavid chanceries were undertaken as early as the reign of Shah Esmā’īl I (Fragner, 1980, p. 9). In the very first years of Safavid rule, two novel types of farmāns were created, which were addressed respectively to two dignitaries which the Safavid monarchs took from the earlier organization of the Ṣafawīya Sufi order, namely the wakīl-e nafs-e nāfis-e homāyūn, the viceregent, and the kalīfat al-kolafā, the order’s chief of propaganda among the tribal partisans of the Safavid leader (pīr). Esmā’īl and his successors continued to hold this leadership position in addition to their rulership. In their function as head of the order they always accepted reverence for their position as Shah but also as moršed-e kāmel, especially from the tribes of the qezelbāš. The kalīfat al-kolafā was responsible for the dissemination of the moršed-e kāmel’s prestige, a function continued also after Esmā’īl’s accession to the throne (Taḍkerat al-molūk, tr. Minorsky, pp. 55, 125-26; Savory, pp. 235-37). Farmāns addressed to a wakīl were composed with the introductory formula farmān-e homāyūn šaraf-e nafāḍ yāft and bore a seal placed on the head of the farmān. With regard to its content in the government chancery this type of farmān was later defined differently. A series of administrative measures have been associated with this category around 947/1540 and parallel to it eventually developed the

farmān type with the introductory formula farmān-e homāyūn šod and later also ḥokm-e jahān-moṭāʾ šod. Those early decrees with “farmān-e homāyūn šaraf-e nafāḍ yāft” (always with the introductory formula in black ink) to the wakīl must not be mistaken for those bearing the same introductory formula (in red ink and the round seal with a roof shaped head-piece), which are dated after 1540 (Busse, 1959, p. 211, document no. 19; idem, 1961, p. 231).

The farmān of the kalifat al-ḳolafā type displayed a rather different design (Plate V). It was written with an extremely wide right margin on which was drawn the ruler’s highly stylized genealogical table. This genealogy (šajara) extended from the Prophet to Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓem and Shaikh Ṣafī and his descendants as head of the order and to Esmāʿīl, the issuing shah. The first šajara was promulgated in the name of Shah Ṭahmāsb I (Mīr-Jaʿfarī and Hāšemī Ardakānī). Šajaras of Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn and Shah Ṭahmāsb II have also become known (Mūsawī, document no. 20). These documents show that the Sufi-Safavid office of the kalifat al-ḳolafā still existed in the last decades of the 18th century and was practiced among the tribes beyond Safavid suzerainty in the Ottoman empire or in the Caucasus.

In addition to royal farmāns there were also farmāns issued by governors and the ṣadr, another high functionary of the Safavid state. Safavid documents promulgated by governors bore the introductory formula “amr-e ʿālī šod” or “ḥokm-e ʿālī šod.” In contrast to the royal farmān, they bore the seal always in the lower left corner. This fact required a special intitulation by the governors, which was drawn according to a predetermined pattern of a near square containing a konya as well as the formula sōzūm. This standardized line of writing bore the designation ṭoḡrā. The ṭoḡrā and the introductory formula served as double authentication for documents issued by governors (Busse, 1961, p. 231). The ṣadr was a high official in charge of the entire religious life of the empire, especially the regulation of the financial affairs of religious institutions (Savory, pp. 233-34; Modaressī Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1974, passim). The central role of the ṣadr’s position in the Safavid state was expressed by the fact that he promulgated special documents, called meṭāl, which carried the ṣadr’s unmistakable unique ṭoḡrā (Plate VI). In its external style it was similar to the intitulation of the governors, with the difference that the letter yā of al-Ḥosaynī (or al-Ḥasanī, al-Mūsawī) was elongated in a wide span towards the left like a flag (Busse, 1961, p. 229).

Heribert Busse demonstrated that the layout of the introductory formula sometimes expressed the legal position of a regent (1961, p. 323). Both Nāder

Shah Afšār before his coronation as king (1148-60/1736/47) and Karīm Khan Zand (1163-93/1750-79) throughout his reign held the title wakīl-al-dawla, as viceregent of the Safavids. Farmāns issued by them in this position, bore the seal in the lower left corner, but began with the introductory formula “farmān-e ‘ālī šod,” a hybrid form of the governors’ “amr-e/ḥokm-e ‘ālī šod” and the farmān of the royal introductory formulas “farmān-e homāyūn šod” and “farmān-e homāyūn šaraf-e nafāḍ yāft.” Immediately following his accession to the throne Nāder Shah instituted the introductory formula farmān-e homāyūn šod, and had his seal placed on the upper center of the document (Busse, 1961, p. 323; [Plate VII](#)).

The farmān type “intitulatio” with “sözümüz” was revived in the 17th century especially under the Safavid Shah Şafī and Shah ‘Abbās II, although modified with the combination of a rectangle fashioned with a chess-like pattern by twelve checks in each of which the name of one of the twelve Imams was written>(e.g., see Qā’em-maqāmī, 1971, p. 199, fig. 33; [Plate VIII](#)). The administrative function of this type of “nostalgic” farmāns has not yet been examined.

Two further types of royal chancery writings may be mentioned here. The first type might be questioned as to whether it can be subsumed under the category of farmāns at all, and the second may not fit the type of royal farmān in the strict sense. The first type are letters of Safavid times, particularly those addressed to European potentates, endorsed by a seal whose design resembled or was identical with the mohr-e šaraf-e nafāḍ. The text of the letter, however, avoided all semblance of a decree, contrary to the practice of the Ottoman sultans, who addressed all their royal colleagues in the style of decrees. The letterhead consisted of the second and third part of the fully formulated address of the receiver, to the conclusion of which were added the mention of the addressee’s name in the form of an elevatio. This elevated name could also be read as the actual letterhead. The tone of this kind of royal letters resembled that of farmāns, but lacked important elements of farmāns, such as dispositio, never formulated in the form of an order, as well as corroboratio and sanctiones. Whether in fact these writings fall in the category of decrees is open to question (Fragner, 1976). The second ambiguous class of documents is the so-called “dīvān decree,” a farmān which does not contain an introductory formula, but is sealed with a round dīvān seal on the upper center. This round dīvān seal, the so-called mohr-e mosawwada-ye dīvān-e ‘ālī, contains the name of the ruler. If this is regarded as a privy seal,

the dīvān decree would be another type of the royal farmān. Busse (1961, p. 231) assumes that those decrees were primarily promulgated in the name of the king by the secretaries (laškarnevīs) of ‘Abbās I’s newly created troops, who were directly responsible to the ruler.

Eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The system of introductory formulas persisted in the chanceries of the Afšār and Qajar rulers as well as among the kings of Afghanistan after 1745. The phrase farmān-e homāyūn šod was written in a completely new shape. By adopting several oval bows, the introductory formula adopted a contour which is vaguely reminiscent of the Ottoman *toğrā*. The graphic effect was facilitated by religious formulas like “a’ūd be’llāh ta’ālā” or “howa Allāh ta’ālā, ša’noho’l-‘azīz” (Busse, 1961, pp. 231 ff; Qā’em-maqāmī, 1971, p. 308, fig. 80).

Qajar chancery scribes in the 19th and early 20th centuries preserved this loop-like form of the introductory formula but changed its content (Plate IX). Instead of the formula farmān-e homāyūn šod, the phrase “ḥokm-e homāyūn šod” was combined with “al-molk le’llāh ta’ālā.” At times “ḥokm-e vālā šod” was combined with “al-molk le’llāh” and used in royal farmāns. This “ḥokm-e vālā šod” was otherwise used as introductory formula for decrees of princely governors. Governors who were not members of the royal dynasty continued to use the Safavid “ḥokm-e ‘ālī šod” in their farmāns (Busse, 1961, pp. 232-34).

Other contemporary dynasties employing Persophone chanceries sought to distinguish themselves from their respective rivals even in the physical appearance of their documents. This was particularly true for royal farmāns. Thus, the Uzbek rulers of Bokhara and Kīva, and later also in Kōqand, continued, at least in part, the traditions of the Timurid intitutatio even down to the beginning of the 20th century. In the category of governors’ farmāns, the need for differentiation from the practice of Safavid antagonists was not so important. The central library of Kazan holds a Transoxanian governor’s decree, which, following traditional Safavid and post-Safavid customs, was introduced with the “ḥokm-e ‘ālī šod” and was documented in the internal technolectic chancery jargon with the simple category “ḥokm šod.”

Persian farmāns from Indian chanceries. Early farmāns have survived from the chanceries of the Islamic states of the Deccan, which were invariably written in Persian. Farmāns addressed to a local or village administrator were issued bilingually, with the Persian text recapitulated in the respective local idiom (in Devanagari script). With regard to their composition (enšā’), the

Indian texts were executed less professionally by far than the Persian counterpart, and in many cases their content remained shorter. It is not clear whether the Indian version posed the original draft for the more polished and binding Persian text or it was a later and summarizing translation of the Persian text. In either way, in cases of bilingual farmāns, the Persian text ought to be considered the binding version.

The rulers of the Bahmanid dynasty of the 15th century still issued farmāns in the pre-Mongol style, that is in the traditions of the ‘Abbasid and Saljuq chanceries, which is particularly evident in the beautiful, old fashioned *ṭogrā*-styled intitulations. In their succeeding text, two lines were always written close to each other with a wider space between each two lines. The calligraphic style employed was still a very traditional *ta’līq*, which in other chanceries of the time had been gradually replaced by *nasta’līq* (see [CALLIGRAPHY](#)). For chancery notes, as was the case in other Persophone chanceries, an unspecific, cursive hand was used, which some experts inappropriately call *šekasta*. *Šekasta*, however, is an elaborate calligraphic style, which did not gain wide popularity before the 17th century and was used only in Persophone regions. Writings not in the category of this specific style should therefore not be called *šekasta*, for their different tradition can be traced back to early Arabic writing.

A special form of royal self-representation is found in the farmāns of the ‘Ādelšāhī rulers. A farmān of the year 1052/1643 bears an imprint of the right hand of the ruler in the upper right part of the document, the privy seal being in the lower right corner (Husain Khan, ‘Ādelšāhī farmāns, no. 3). Otherwise, in the principalities of the Deccan, the principle of the privy seal at the head of the farmān seems to have taken predominance, following in a few cases the direct model of the Safavids. This is especially true for the farmāns of the Qoṭbšāhī rulers at Golkonda, but also for early Mughal farmāns, as a decree of Ṣāḥīr-al-Dīn Moḥammad Bābor of the year 1526 demonstrates (Muhiuddin, 1971, opposite p. 76, fig. 1). Later, and even in post-Mughal times, farmāns followed the same principles. Documents from the chancery of the non-Muslim Rajput ruler Jai Singh (ca. 1700) were designed in the same fashion with the characteristic arrow-like symbol. These particulars of older bilingual farmāns are also true for the bilingual edicts issued in his chancery.

The formal layout of the farmāns of Mughal chanceries was especially pronounced. By the middle of the 16th century the intitutatio assumed a *ṭogrā*-like shape, created especially for the Mughals, which had links to pre-Mongol

traditions but bore an independent design. Viewed from a distance, this *ṭoḡrā*, structured with lines, appear similar to a chess board and so evokes the variations of the intitulations with *sözümis* which were reintroduced by the Safavids under *Şafī* and 'Abbās II and also bore a chessboard like quadrilateral. In place of the names of the twelve Imams as inscribed in Safavid intitulations, the Mughal *ṭoḡrā* was inscribed with a genealogical table of the Mughal ruler going back to *Tīmūr*. The same is true for the square seal, of about the same size as the *ṭoḡrā*, printed with red ink next to it. Except for the outline of its contour, it had no semblance to the square seals of the Mongols. Nonetheless, it was created in unmistakable emulation of the earlier Mongol Khans' emblem of sovereignty. In Mughal chanceries this seal was called *āl tamḡā* as it used to be called by the Saljuqs. Farmāns of this design continued to be promulgated for an extended time, even when the Mughal rulers were holding their position only nominally (e.g., a farmān, dated 1842-43, by the Mughal *Bdahādor Shah II*, in *Soudavar*, p. 360).

THE STUDY OF FARMĀNS

Collections of farmāns. Original documents should be used for the purpose of diplomatical research and analysis. Unfortunately, dynastic changes resulted in the loss of central and provincial repositories, which is why systematic collections of farmāns have been preserved only from the Qajar period. Closest to the original documents are occasional historic duplicates (*sawād*). Contexts of many farmāns, including early ones from the chanceries of the Saljuq and *Ḳvārazmšāh* rulers, are preserved through chancery manuals, the so-called *enšā'* literature. The copious publications of farmān texts by 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Navā'ī are largely based on *enšā'* collections. Apart from the collection of the former *Ketāb-kāna-ye salṭanatī* in Tehran, farmāns in Persia are to be mostly found in private collections. Recently two public collections for farmāns and other documents were established in Tehran by the National Document Organization (*Sāzmān-e asnād-e mellī*) and the Institute of Cultural Studies and Research (*Mo'assasa-ye paṣūheš wa moṭāla'āt-e farhangī*). The latter is a part of the *Bonyād-e mostaḏ'afān*, where farmāns and historical documents, especially from the Qajars period, are systematically collected.

State of the art. The challenge of Vasiliī Bartol'd (see [BARTHOLD](#)) to begin approaching Persian historical research no longer simply on the basis of the analysis of narrative sources, but by utilizing the standards of historical research which are valid for research in Medieval studies, was taken up by Vladimir Minorsky. This meant the introduction of diplomatics in the field of

Persian historical research, to which Minorsky's translation of the *Tadkerat al-molūk*, a Safavid administrative manual, provided the most important stimulus. However, it was long assumed that only a very few documents were preserved from the time before 1800. An effective and developed discipline of research comparable to that of Ottoman diplomatics did not exist for Persian documents. It was the work of Soviet scholars, especially of A. D. Papazian, M. Khubua, V. S. Puturidze, M. A. Todua, and I. K. Shams, which effected a breakthrough in the 1950s with numerous publications of mostly Turkman and Safavid documents from the archives of Erevan and Tbilisi. With the founding of the journal *Barrasīhā-ye tārīkī*, Jahāngīr Qā'em-maqāmī fostered new and very dynamic activities in the area of the publication of historical documents in Persia. Since then Persian scholars have published numerous collections of documents.

Ongoing publication activities are parallel to the very limited activities in the actual field of diplomatics in the strict sense, that is research which does not focus on the content of documents but is concerned with their formal aspects, categorization, and problems of administrative proceedings in chanceries. Little has been done in this area in Persia (Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971). Scholars of the former Soviet Union, too, have mostly published texts of documents and contributed less to the discipline of diplomatics than might have been expected. The same deficiency may be attributed to research done in English. Minorsky's work was continued, among others, by Anne K. S. Lambton, B. G. Martin, and Roger Savory who, except for Martin, had only a limited concern for questions of diplomatics. In France, Jean Aubin was the first to engage in research in the field of Persian diplomatics. Apart from extended text publications, a small but valuable number of diplomatical studies of chancery practices under the Mughals were produced in the Indian subcontinent, among which publications by Mohiuddin and Riazul Islam should be emphasized. The attempt to transfer the principles of Ottoman chancery conventions to Persian practices by Layos Fekete was particularly interesting although it proved faulty, for in his venture of deducing phenomena of Persian diplomatics from Ottoman conditions Fekete repeatedly made drastic misjudgments. In Germany Walther Hinz and Hans Roemer took up the recommendations of Minorsky in the 1950s and provided initiatives for the founding of a systematic discipline of Persian diplomatics. Heribert Busse has pursued those initiatives and wrote the principal publications in the field, which are still relevant today. To him we owe an especially thorough knowledge of Safavid diplomatics. Our knowledge of the Qajar diplomatics,



however, is still very scanty despite the considerable volume of available documents.

More than fifteen years after the pioneering work of Herbert Busse, Jahāngīr Qā'em-maqāmī's handbook, *Moqaddama-ī bar šenākt-e asnād-e tārikī*, appeared in Tehran. A bibliographical overview of original Persian farmāns published up to 1979 can be found in Bert G. Fragner (1980), where 868 published royal decrees in which Persian was the administrative language are identified for the time before the accession of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shāhin 1264/1848; documents of Indian chanceries are not included, but those of Transoxania and Afghanistan are. The number of extant Safavid documents are far greater than those from chanceries of earlier times. It may be assumed that the Safavid chanceries produced more documents than all their previous counterparts. The Afšār and Zand periods are documented extremely sparsely. The bulk of the known farmāns date, however, from the 19th century since entire archives were repeatedly destroyed through a violent change of dynasties, generally in order to restart at point zero. The frequency of Qajar documents is self-explanatory. Every publication of a document dating earlier than the 15th century still represents a small sensation.

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Plate I. Example of the square tamgā in a farmān of Sultan Aḥmad Jalāyer (ca. 784/1382). After Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, fig. 59.

Plate IIa. Aq Qoyunlu farmāns: Gold tamgā in farmān of Rostam Bahādor Beyg Aq Qoyunlu. After Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, fig. 32.

Plate IIb. Aq Qoyunlu farmāns: Intitulation of Uzun H 2;asan. After Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, fig. 28.

Plate III. Farmān of Shah Esmā'il I with the seal (and kolāh) moved from the bottom to the top of the text, immediately beneath the intitulation. After Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, fig. 29.

Plate IVa. Farmāns showing reforms under Shah Ṭahmāsb: The farmān-e homāyūn šod formula in red ink. After Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, fig. 38.

Plate IVb. Farmāns showing reforms under Shah Ṭahmāsb: Document with “roof shaped” seal After Fekete, Plate 147 (document n. 65).

Plate IVc. Farmāns showing reforms under Shah Ṭahmāsb: Document with round seal. After Fekete, Plate 159 (document n. 70).

Plate V. Safavid farmān of the kalīfat al-kolaf 5; type with šajara. After Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, fig. 13. (b) Detail of the šajara genealogy in the above document (turned upright). After Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, fig. 37.

Plate VI. Farmān (metāl) of Rafī'-al-Dīn Mohammad Ḥosaynī, šadr of Shah 'Abbās I. After Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, fig. 38.

Plate VII. Seals and togrā of Nāder Shah. After Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, fig. 39.

Plate VIII. Farmān of Shah 'Abbās II showing the revived use of the sözümler intitulation but combined with the names of the Twelve Imams. After Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, fig. 30.

Plate IX. Farmān of the Qajar period. After Qā'em-maqāmī, 1971, Fig. 46.