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A Mongolo-Tibetan Seal

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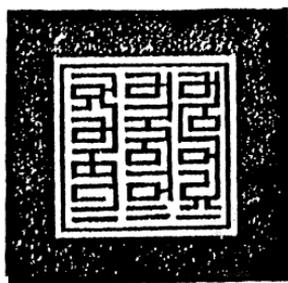
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MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS

A MONGOLO-TIBETAN SEAL

Capt. Forbes-Tweedie, of the 2nd North Stafford Regiment, was recently so kind as to place temporarily at my disposal the seal of which the inscription is reproduced below:—



He acquired it in Darjeeling in 1926 with the history attached to it that it had originally belonged to the Depung Monastery.

The seal itself stands exactly three inches high; the base, on which the inscription is carved, is of metal $1\frac{5}{16}$ inch square and $\frac{5}{16}$ inch thick. The inscription is $\frac{7}{8}$ inch square. The metal portion is joined flush on to the wooden handle, which is square where it joins the base, then tapers slightly to a waist surrounded by a collar, square in section and semi-circular in profile, from which emerges a bulbous knob, trefoil-shaped in profile in one axis and roughly oval in the other, carved in low relief on the trefoil-shaped faces. A hole is pierced through the collar in the same axis as the trefoil shape and a piece of very grubby silk is tied through it.

The wooden handle is painted a dark crimson overlaid with gold scroll-work. The base is apparently of iron. The inscription is carved so skilfully that it might well be the work of a European die-sinker but there is apparently no reason to suppose it to be of other than local manufacture. Taking it as a whole there seems no reason to suppose that it

is of great antiquity, but there is no positive evidence on the subject.

The inscription is in the usual Tibetan square seal-character which is a collateral descendant with Phags-pa Mongol of the early Tibetan alphabet. This alphabet was published by the Rev. Dr. A. H. Francke in his "Note on the Dalai Lama's Seal and the Tibeto-Mongolian Character" (*JRAS.*, 1910, p. 1205) and various seals in this alphabet were published by E. H. Walsh in his two articles "Examples of Tibetan Seals" and "Examples of Tibetan Seals: Supplementary Note" (*JRAS.*, 1915, pp. 1 and 465).

There seems no doubt that the inscription is to be read as follows :—

ལྷོ་མེ་མ
 མ་རྩ་ཁྱ
 ལྷོ་ག་ན
 ལྷོ་པོ་

nomchhi merg(e)n mkhan.po.

The only possibility of doubt is the first character in the second line. In Mr. Walsh's examples the sign for *e* is a horizontal line with a small downward-pointing cusp in the centre while subscript *-r* is a straight horizontal line; Dr. Francke's authorities seems to indicate that the two characters should be reversed, and certainly *e* for the straight horizontal line seems correct here.

The interest in the inscription, and, indeed, as far as I know, its uniqueness, lies in the fact that while the first two words are indubitably Mongol the third is equally indubitably Tibetan, the whole inscription meaning "The religious, wise Abbot". The seal therefore appears to be the official privy seal of the abbot of some monastery presumably in Mongolia, and therefore not the Depung Monastery.

One linguistic point is of interest. It is to be observed that, as in the Phags-pa inscriptions, the Mongol *č* is represented

by the aspirated *chh* and not the simple *ch*. This agrees with the observations of Ramstedt in Mongolian phonetics. The fact that *chh* and not *tsh* is used to represent this sound may perhaps be regarded as evidence of antiquity, since the latter pronunciation is now normal, but the spelling may be traditional.

G. L. M. CLAUSON.

A NOTE ON THE MIZMĀR AND NĀY

Difficulties occasionally arise in recognizing the various musical instruments of the "wood-wind" group among the Arabs of the Middle Ages as well as to-day. For instance, the Arabic word *mizmār*, and the Persian word *nāy*, stand for any instrument of the "wood-wind" family, i.e. either term can refer to a reed-pipe (cylindrical or conical bore)¹ or a flute (lip or beak variety). These words also have a specific as well as a generic meaning since both *mizmār* and *nāy* are names given specially to the reed-pipe by the Arabs and Persians respectively. We know this on good authority.

Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) says in the *Shifā'* that the *mizmār* is an instrument "which you blow into from its end which you swallow",² in contradistinction from the instrument "which you blow into from a hole like the *yarā'* which is known as the *surnāy*".³ On the other hand, his pupil, Al-Ḥusain ibn Zaila (d. 1048), uses the same definition but substitutes the term *nāy* for *mizmār*.⁴ This bears out the description in the *Mafātīḥ al-'ulūm* (ca. 976-7), which says that "the *nāy* is the *mizmār*" and that "the *surnāy* is the *ṣaffāra* and likewise the *yarā'*".⁵ Further, we have a passage dealing with

¹ Reed-pipe = a reed-blown instrument.

² The single vibrating reed of the Arabs has to be taken completely into the mouth.

³ Bodleian MS., Pocock, 100. The passage is corrupt in both the India Office (Loth, 477) and R.A.S. copies.

⁴ Brit. Mus. MS., Or. 2361, fol. 236.

⁵ *Mafātīḥ al-'ulūm*, 236. In the thirteenth century *Vocabulista in Arabico*, 216, 302, the last-named instrument is written *yarā'*.