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This paper presents a decipherment of six seals stamped on the verso side of a Persian decree issued by the Ilkhanid *amīr* Čoban in 726 AH/1326 CE. It can be assumed that those seals, stamped for validation of the decree, belong to the Ilkhanid leading vassals. Identifying holders of the seals would assist historical research of the Ilkhanid chancellery system.

Keywords: Uigur script, seals, countersign, chancellery system, Ilkhanid

I. Introduction

'Imād al-Dīn Šayḫ al-Ḥukamā'ī recently published an article to introduce a Persian document housed in the National Library and Archives of the Islamic Republic of Iran. His article displayed that the document was an official decree issued in 726 AH/1326 CE by Čoban (d. 1327), who was the leading *amīr* during the reign of Abū Sa'īd (r. 1316–1335). Šayḫ al-Ḥukamā'ī conducted sufficient research on the two vermilion seals and a black one stamped on the recto side of the decree (Šayḫ al-Ḥukamā'ī 1383 AHS).[1] One vermilion seal has a legend in the 'Phags-pa script as *yi guị goṅ yin* < Chin. *yi-guo-gong yin* 翊國公印 "Seal of *Yi-guo-gong* 翊國公," and it should have been bestowed on Čoban in 1324, when the Yuan dynasty conferred the noble title *Yi-guo-gong* "the Duke to Assist the State" on him (Yokkaichi 2012, 321–322).[2]

Moreover, we find six black seals stamped on the verso side of the decree, as shown in **Fig. 1.** Three of them (Seals A, B, and C) apparently comprise the legends in the Uigur script, while the legends of the others (Seals D, E, and F) too can be deciphered as in the Uigur script.[3] Šayḫ al-Ḥukamā'ī pointed out the historical significance of the seals and countersigns on the verso side of the decree, though he postponed the final conclusion in that respect, for the legends of the seals had not been fully deciphered.

We can assume that such seals or countersigns on the verso side of the Ilkhanid decrees should be placed by the leading *amīr*s or vassals, who were close to the Ilkhanid ruler and responsible for the validation of the decree (Cleaves 1951, 508–516; Watabe 2002,

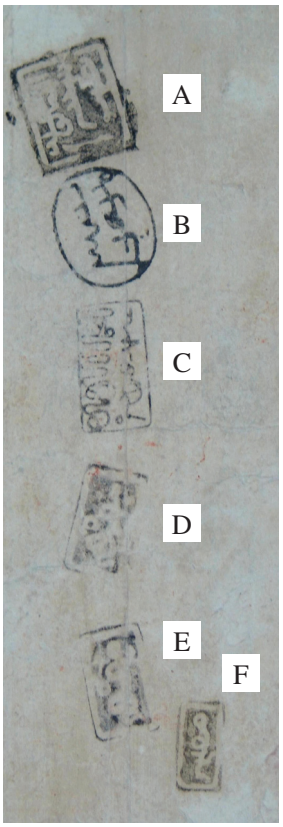


Fig. 1

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[1] For its English version, see 'I. Šayḫ al-Ḥukamā'ī, "Study on a Decree of Amīr Čoban of 726 AH/1326 CE," published in this volume.

17; cf. ĞT/Rawšan II, 1467–1468; ĞT/Thackston III, 725–726). Accordingly, identification of the holders of such seals should be a clue to the historical reconstruction of the administrative practice of the Ilkhanid chancellery system. From such a viewpoint, this paper presents a preliminary decipherment of those Uigur seals as the basis for further historical argument.[4]

II. Seal A [Incised: 3 lines]

1/ الله *[BW]L'[T]* 2/ *QY-'-YN* 3/ *'W(Y)S[Y](K)*



Fig. 2: Retouched Image of Seal A

The first word of line 1 seems to be *allāh* in the Arabic script, in the same direction with the Uigur legends. The following word in the Uigur script shows only *-L-* clearly, which is preceded by seemingly *(.)W-* and followed by *-'(.)*. The first stroke of line 2 should be either *Q-* or *S-*. The next one seems to be *-M-*, but it is possible to read it as the final *-Y*. The following may be *-YYN* at a glance, though I would read its first stroke as an independent aleph ('), to restore the whole of this line an onomastic element *QY-' = Qy-a (~ Qaya ~ Qay-a ~ Qiy-a)* followed by *-in* (gen.).

Here we should consider another Ardabīl document, the Persian decree of 721/1321 issued by Čoban (PUM, 90–96, Urkunde VIII). It comprises the square vermilion seal identical to the one on the recto of our decree (Šayḫ al-Ḥukamā'ī 1383 AHS, 113–114; Yokkaichi 2012, 354), and its verso side shows the countersigns in the Uigur script by the contemporary Ilkhanid *amīr*s such as *Bolad Qay-a, Nasiradin* and so on (Doerfer 1975, 211–213, 252; PUM, 92, 95–96 and Abb. 40, though their reading as *Bolad-Qiya* should be modified). Among them, *Nasiradin* may be identical with *N'SRDYN = Nasrdin (~ Nasiradin)* of Seal C of our document (see below). Accordingly, I would like to restore our Uigur legend, in Mongolian, as *[BW]L'[T] QY-'-YN = Bolad-Qya-in* "of Bolad-Q(a)ya," and identify *Bolad-Q(a)ya* here with the *amīr* countersigning in the decree of Čoban of 721/1321. For detailed information on Bolad-Qya, see Doerfer 1975, 211; PUM, 95.

As for *'W(Y)S[Y]K = üsig* in line 3, we may restore it otherwise as *'W(Y)S[W]K = üsüg*. In any case, it is apparently a loanword from Uig. *üsüg ~ üšik ~ üžük* (earlier *'WZYK = užik* < Sogd. *wjk'k*) "letter, character, alphabet" (Gabain 1974, 379; Ligeti 1966, 376), and should be the variant of M. *üǰig* used for "countersign" in the Ilkhanid documents (Cleaves 1951, 508–516; Mostaert and Cleaves 1952, 478–482).[5]

Thus we can reconstruct the whole legend as *allāh [Bo]la[d] Qy-a-in üs[i]g* "God! [This is] the countersign of Bolad-Q(a)ya," as shown in the retouched image (see **Fig. 2**).

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[2] Also see Y. Yokkaichi, "Four Seals in 'Phags-pa and Arabic Scripts on Amīr Čoban's Decree of 726 AH/1326 CE," published in this volume.

[3] Cf. Šayḫ al-Ḥukamā'ī 1383 AHS, 115, *taṣwīr* 4, where Seal F was not presented. In this paper I display them vertically, considering that the Uigur script was basically read and written vertically in the Mongol period.

[4] Here I regard the legends in the Uigur script as basically in Mongolian, and display them according to the system of Ligeti 1972. In my edition, *[ABČ]* stands for the restoration of letters totally illegible, and *(ABČ)* for a suggested reading for visible but illegible letters.

[5] Also noteworthy is the recent proposal by Miya (2014, 34), to replace M. *üǰig* into *öčig* "a report to the Emperor."

III. Seal B [Raised: 3 lines]

1/ *'YS'N* 2/ *TMWR*

There is no doubt in reading this legend as a personal name *Isen-T(e)mür* < M. *Esen-Temür* ~ T. *Äsän-Tämür*. In the Turco-Mongolian texts in the Uigur script, the onomastic element *Esen* ~ T. *Äsän* is usually written as *'S'N* (or sporadically *''S'N* = *ạsen* ~ T. *'äsän*), while here it is written clearly as *'YS'N* = *isen* (~ T. *isän* ~ *esän*). It would be explicable with its Arabic transcription *AYSAN* = *īsān*; we need further materials to consider the attestation here as reflecting the Old Turkic narrow vowel /e/ (between /i/ and /ä/) to be rendered with *-Y-*.

The personal name *Esen-Temür* is frequently attested in the sources. From the chronological viewpoint, however, we may identify the one in this seal with the same-named chiliarch (P. *hazāra*) of the Barγud tribe, who was recorded as "alive" by Rašīd al-Dīn in his *Ǧāmi' al-Tawārīḫ* to be accomplished in 1307 CE (ǦT/Thackston I, 57–58).

IV. Seal C [Raised: 2 lines]

1/ (A r a b i c) 2/ *N'SR'DYN*

The round stroke of the middle *-D-* seems to be *-P-* at a glance, but it was written slightly rightward, to maintain distance from the Arabic inscription of line 1.

N'SR'DYN = *Nasradin* should be a transcription for the Muslim name *Nāṣir al-Dīn*. As mentioned above, he was most likely identical with the *amīr* to put his countersign in the decree of Čoban of 721/1321 (PUM, Urkunde VIII). However, it cannot be completely excluded to read his name otherwise as *Naṣr al-Dīn* and to identify him as any of the other contemporary Ilkhanid *amīr*s (cf. Doerfer 1975, 211–212).

V. Seal D [Incised]

QW(S)D(MW)[ ]

The latter half of the word can be reconstructed as *-DMW[R]* = *-ḏ(e)mü[r]* ~ *-temür* "iron" to follow another onomastic element and compose a personal name. The initial stroke may well be *QW-*, so that I would like to restore as *QW(S)D(MW)[R]* = *Qu(š)ḏe(mü)[r]* ~ *Quštemür* (< T. *Quš-Tämür*) "bird-iron," as displayed in the retouched image (**Fig. 3**).



Fig. 3: Retouched Image of Seal D

Here again we should consider the decree of Čoban of 721/1321 (MMI s.25869 (r.449) = PUM, Urkunde VIII), which also shows the name *QWSDMWR* = *Qušḏemür* ~ *Quštemür* in the countersigns on the verso side: Even though *-DMWR* = *-ḏemür* is not so clear, we can

consider the middle *-DMW-* as written in a single stroke (see **Fig. 4**; cf. PUM, Abb. 40).[6] We may safely identify him with *Quštemür* in Seal D.

However, I would leave the speciaists of the Iranian history to further identify him with any *amīr* as mentioned in the Persian sources.

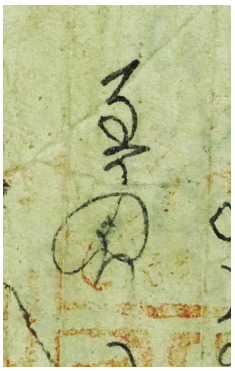


Fig. 4: Quštemür's Countersign (MMI s.25869 (r.449))

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VI. Seal E [Incised]

BW[ ]D(MWR)

As the latter half of the word seems quite similar to that of Seal D, it should be reconstructed as *-D(MWR) = te(mür)*. The initial half clearly begins with *BW-*. Thus, I tentatively restore the whole as *BW[Q'] D(MWR) = Bu[qa]te(mür) ~ Buqa-Temür* "Ox-iron," a Mongolian personal name frequently attested.

VII. Seal F [Incised]

(…)LQ

While the latter part is well deciphered as *-LQ*, the anterior half is unclear: The stroke preceding *-L-* can be either of *-T-*, *-WY-* or *-TY-*.

We can tentatively expect *(''T)LQ = Atlγ* or *''TYLQ (< ''TLYQ) = Atliγ*, derived from T. *Atlγ ~ Atlïγ* "with name; famous." However, other readings cannot be totally excluded. The initial stroke may be *Q-* or *T-*. They might suggest either of two common Turkic personal names, *QWTLWQ = Qutluγ* or *TWQLWQ = Tuγluγ*, though we cannot find the stroke for *-W-* between *-L-* and *-Q*.

VIII. Conclusion

In the seals on the verso side of Čoban's decree of 726/1326, we could recognize names of the *amīr*s, Bolad-Qaya, Nāṣir al-Dīn, and Quštemür, who also left their countersigns in another decree of Čoban of 721/1321 (= PUM, Urkunde VIII). As well as their countersigns on the decree of 721/1321, their seals provided validity for the decree of Čoban of 726/1326 here.

However, they stamped their seals here, while they countersigned in the decree of 721/1321. The significance of the differing validation of administrative documents should be further analyzed, to fully elucidate the Ilkhanid administrative system.

Besides, we may also refer to several Mongol decrees with many seals stamped on the verso side: E.g., a Persian decree of 733/1332 (PUM, Urkunde XI) and three Mongolian decrees of the Chaghatai Khanate (BT XVI, Nrn. 70, 71, and 76). We may add two Uigur-Turkic decrees of the Timurids (Melioranskij 1905; Deny 1957). The comparative research of the validation process of the official decrees and documents across the Mongol dynasties would deserve investigations.

[6] We should correct the tentative reading as *S'MS'DYN = Šamsadin* (< P. *Šams al-Dīn*) by Doerfer 1975, 211–212, which is adopted by PUM, 92, 95–96.

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