

The Mongol Legacy of Persian *Farmāns*

1. Introduction

Uzun Hasan's (r. 1453-78) successive defeats of two renowned rulers, the Qaraqoyunlu ruler of Tabriz, Jahānshāh (r. 1438-67), and the Teymurid ruler of Herāt, Abu-Sa'id (r. 1451-69), drove him into the realm of the great conquerors of the Iranian plateau who had each generated their own brand of legitimacy. If Uzun Hasan wished to gain a lasting recognition, his victories had to be translated into a new formulation of dynastic legitimacy as well. In the post-Mongol era, Turco-Mongol rulers had traditionally elevated a puppet Changizid ruler to the throne and/or married a Changizid princess in order to gain legitimacy.¹ By the time Uzun Hasan rose to power there were simply no Changizids to be found. Inevitably, any new theory of legitimacy had to be based on Islamic tenets, mixed with Turcoman beliefs, and garbed in a Persianate robe.² The problem of bringing such a heterogeneous group of beliefs into harmony, however, was not a new one; it had been previously encountered when the Mongols first espoused Islam. The formulae devised then, influenced those concocted later on.

¹ The marrying of Changizid princesses entitled warlords such as Teymur to become *gurkāns* (i.e. son-in-laws to the House of Changiz).

² After the defeat of Jahānshāh, and following earlier Islamic practices, a robe of investiture was requested from the Mamluk court of Soltān Qāyitbāy of Egypt, where an `Abbāsīd caliph had resided since the fall of Baghdad in 1258. Uzun Hasan's second victory necessitated a new legitimizing theory; WOODS 1999, p.

Through the analysis of the headings used in a recently discovered edict of Uzun Hasan, I shall try to demonstrate in this paper, the close relationship between Mongol *farmāns* and those of the following ruling dynasties of Iran, especially the Āq-qoyunlus.

2. The edict

This majestic *farmān* of Uzun Hasan is an edict related to a charitable institution that because of a missing end part, bears no date, nor does it reveal for which shrine or religious institution it was issued. The incomplete text is written in gold and blue *ta`liq* script, and comes after an elaborate set of headings. It is the latter that is of interest to this study.³ It comprises six different sections:

- Section 1 displays a verse from the Qorān and is prefaced with a statement to that effect: “Quoth God; May he be praised and exalted.” The preface is written in a small *rayhān* script in blue ink. The Qorānic verse is written in a majestic *thuluth* in gold with black outlining (fig. 1):

أطيعوا الله و اطيعوا الرّسول و اولي الامر منكم

IV.59: Obey God and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you

- Section 2 quotes two other verses from the Qorān, prefaced with the statement: “Quoth God; May he be blessed and exalted,” in a similar *rayhān* script as above. The verses are written in (a) majestic *thuluth* in gold with black outlining at the bottom, (b) blue *mohaqqaq* in the middle, and (c) decorative *kufic* at the top in blue (fig. 2):

³ This edict is in a private collection from which I could only obtain a color photocopy. For lack of seeing the original, I am unable to give accurate information about dimensions and other characteristics. The analysis of the main text written in Arabic is beyond the scope of this study.

(a) انّ الذين يعملون الصّالحات انّ لهم اجرا

(b) حسناً

(c) ممّا كثير فيه ابدأ

XVIII.2-3: Those who do good deeds, they shall have a goodly reward, Staying in it for ever.

- Section 3 displays a verse from the Qorān and is prefaced with a statement to that effect: “Quoth God; May he be praised and exalted.” The preface is written in a small *rayhān* script in blue ink. The verses are written in a majestic *thuluth* in gold with black outlining, one half straight and the other upside down (fig. 3)

التّعظيم لامر الله

↓ و الشفقة على خلق الله

Hadith: Respect shall be for God’s orders, and compassion shall be for God’s creatures.

- Section 4 is positioned as a subheading of the previous section, since it appears in symmetry with its preface as another inconspicuous blue line of script. In reality, it is an independent line and displays a traditional adage used in edicts (fig. 3):

Power is for God, The Most Exalted (to exercise) القدرة لله تعالى

- Section 5 is written in a majestic gold and blue *mohaqqaq* in an elaborate script with intertwined letters (fig. 4):

بالقوة الاحدية و العناية الصّمدية و المعجزات المحمّدية و الدّولة البايندية

By the power of The Unique, and the solicitude of The Eternal, and the Mohammedan Miracles, and the fortunes (*dowlat*) of the Bāyandor Clan.

- Section 6 comprises the standard *toghrā* of Uzun Hasan that combines the sign of the Bāyandor clan—the paramount Āq-Qoyunlu clan named after Uzun Hasan’s supposed ancestor, Bāyondor Khān—with the saying (fig. 5):

Orders are for God (to issue them) الحکم لله

followed by:

Abol-nasr Hasan Bahādor has said (*syuzumiz*) ابوالنصر حسن بهادر سیوزومیز

3. Analysis

3.1. Section 1

Islamic legitimacy was primarily based on the Qorān. Two verses therein provided the possibility for mortals to claim acting as god’s deputy (*khalifa*) on earth:

II.30: And when your Lord said to the angels, I am going to place in the earth a *khalifa*

XXXVIII.26: O David! surely We have appointed you as a *khalifa* on earth

The appropriation of the title *khalifa* by Turco-Mongol rulers, however, would have been problematic since, as the title of past Caliphs, it implied religious leadership, and Ghazzālī had argued that it behooved only those with a Qorayshi lineage (*nasab-e qoraysh*) to be in such position.⁴ Turco-Mongols could obviously not claim descent from an Arab

⁴ LAOUSTE 1970, 247. Nevertheless, these verses are sometimes boldly inserted into Torkaman *farmāns* (MODARRESI 1352, p. 31), and some other times cautiously (NAVĀ’I 1341, p. 320). In his panegyrics however, Jalāl-od-din Davāni goes so far as calling Uzun Hasan: “The Shadow of God, and the Caliph of God, and the Deputy of the Prophet”; WOODS 1999, p. 105. In an odd way, the multiplicity of divine

tribe. They did not have to. For verse *IV.59* that appears at the top of this edict, was more useful and more versatile. Indeed, it placed “those in authority” at par with God and his Prophet in terms of the obedience that was due to them. In essence, every ruler or kinglet could claim to be “in authority”; hence, had to be obeyed.

The Āq-Qoyunlu panegyrists however, added a new twist to the interpretation of *IV.59*. Since the numerical value of its last word (منكم) in the *abjad* computation, added up to that of “Hasan Beg” (i.e. Uzun Hasan), they argued that his authority had effectively been foretold by the Qorān.⁵ The prominent top line of this edict thus reflects the very legitimization efforts of Uzun Hasan’s panegyrist to promote him as the new emperor of the Islamic lands.

3.2. Sections 2 & 3

In a manual for scribes entitled *Manāzer-ol-enshā’*, its author describes how *farmān* headings must be appropriately chosen, and gives the example that if the text is about helping somebody it should start with the invocation هو المعين (He is a helper); or if it is about grants it should be prefaced with هو الكريم (He is generous).⁶ Similarly, *hadith* or Qorānic quotations of an edict must reflect, and reinforce, its purpose and subject matter. Thus, the headings in sections 2 and 3, which speak about charitable acts, must indicate that the

attributes weakens the eulogy since they can become contradictory: it is demeaning for God to have a deputy who is also a deputy of his own messenger!

⁵ WOODS 1999, p. 103. In addition, through similar cabalistic exercises, they were also able to claim that Uzun Hasan’s victory over Jahānshāh Qara-qoyunlu was foretold in the Qorān; *ibid*, p. 102.p. 215.

⁶ GĀVĀN 1381,

purpose of the edict was to relegate authority, or confirm an existing one, over a charitable and/or religious institution.

The text of a similar *farmān* by Uzun Hasan, reportedly two meters long and 33cm wide, written in gold, and comprising headings similar to our section 1, 3, and 6, has been published by Modarresi.⁷ It confirms the trusteeship (*towliat*) of two Razavi *sayyeds* over the endowments of the Fātema Shrine of Qom, and the adjacent *masjed* of Imam Hasan al-`Askari. It came in the wake of two other *farmāns*, one issued by Teymur (r. 1370-1405) and the other by Jahānshāh Qara-qoyunlu, both confirming the trusteeship of the ancestors of the Razavi *sayyeds*, who all descended from the eighth Imam of the shi'ites, `Ali al-Reza, the brother of said Fātema.⁸ Since the *farmān* of Uzun Hasan for the Razavi *sayyeds* is dated 12 Sha`bān 874AH/ 14 February 1470, which coincides with the year of his first visit to Qom, and considering the strong similarity between this *farmān* and the one under study, we may perhaps assume that the latter was issued for the same purpose (and for members of the same family of *sayyeds*) on the occasion of one his two subsequent visits to Qom, in the winters of 1471-72 and 1473-74. The third visit came in the aftermath of the crushing defeat that the Ottomans inflicted upon him in Bāshkent (August 1473). Defeat had to be overshadowed by propaganda and pomp. And most probably, similar to Esmā`il I's defeat at Chaldorān (1514) that led to the production of the most lavishly illustrated *Shāhnāme*h (the one that was subsequently called the *Tahmāsb Shāhnāme*h), the elaborate decoration of this *farmān*, and its magnificent *invocatio*s, were formulated in reaction to the Bāshkent defeat.

⁷ MODARRESI, 1352, pp. 62-6.

⁸ MODARRESI, 1352, pp. 38-43

3.3. Section 4

The tradition of the adage in section 4 goes back to the Saljuq era, to which period must be attributed the earliest extant *farmān* specimen of the Iranian lands. It is an edict from the Ildogozid Mohammad b. Othmān b. Ozbak, dated 630AH/1233 and first published by Herrmann in 1994 (fig. 8).⁹ Herrmann though failed to understand the meaning of a bold graffiti incorporated near the top of the *farmān*, which should read as our section 4:

القدرة لله تعالى

The writing of this adage continued in Teymurid times, and was even expanded in an edict issued by Teymur to include two other similar sayings:¹⁰

(1) الحكم لله تعالى ، (2) القدرة لله تعالى ، (3) الملك لله تعالى

(1) and (2) of course appear in our present edict, and (3) which means “kingdom belongs to God, The Most Exalted,” is very much in the same vein. Even though they all imply that the ruler is acting through powers invested to him by god, in form, they are shrouded in a veil of humility that presents the ruler as a simple agent of God, and not as an authoritarian despot.

3.4. Section 5

Contrary to the humble form of the previous heading, section 5 is authoritative and empowers the edict with forces of various origins. The first two invoke powers emanating from god, and the third from the Prophet Mohammad although the role of “Mohammedan Miracles” as a source of power is not very clear; one suspects its inclusion in this heading

⁹ HERRMANN, 1994. p. 299.

¹⁰ HĀFEZ-E ABRU 1328, p. 12. The edict was addressed to Teymur’s son, `Omar Bahādor.

was to create a connecting bridge to the fourth one. The latter is by far the most interesting one, since it recognizes for the Bāyondor clan, powers equivalent to those emanating from God and the Prophet Mohammad. To better understand this, we shall backtrack its formulation to Mongol times and argue that it was rooted in a Turco-Mongol tribal belief.

The closest parallel to the section 5 formula is encountered in the above-mentioned *farmān* of Jahānshāh concerning the trusteeship of the Qom shrine, which, incidentally, reinforces the assumption of its connectivity with our edict. It reads:

بالقدرة الكاملة الاحدية و القوة الشاملة الاحمدية

By the most complete godly powers and the all-encompassing Mohammedan strength

It has no tribal ingredients and appears to be a more Islamicized version of the *invocatio* that Rashid-od-din had formulated for the *farmāns* of the Il-Khān Ghāzān (r. 1295-1304):

بقوت الله تعالي وميامن الملت المحمديه

By the power of God, The Most Exalted, and the good fortunes of the Mohammedan nation (*mellat-ol Mohammadiyya*)¹¹

Although clad in an Islamic garb, this *invocatio* is recognizing a power attached to the Mohammedan nation as a group of people, and almost independent from God's will. It is a tribal concept that appears even more forcefully in a Uyghur edict of the Il-Khān Abu-Sa'id

¹¹ RASHID-OD-DIN 1957, III:430.

(r. 1317-1335). This edict remains as a fragment in the Tehran Museum and contains only three lines:¹²

[1] mongke tngri-yin kŭchŭndŭr

[2] Muqamad baiyambar-un omat-dur¹³

[3] yeke suu jali-yin ibegendŭr

By the Might of Everlasting Sky (Tengri)

By (the power of) the nation of the Apostle Mohammad

By the protection (?) of the Great Shining Fortune.¹⁴

Abu-Sa`id had visibly transformed what was known as the *ommat-e mosalmān* (the Moslem community) into a clan/tribe grouping led by a victorious leader, the apostle (*baiyambar*, Pers. *payghāambar*) Mohammad, in the same way that the Mongol nation had been forged by the successful campaigns of Changiz Khān.

¹² This fragment was first published in PELLIOT 1936 (pp. 27-33) and subsequently in CLEAVES 1953 (pp. 37-44).

¹³ The underlined word was first read by Pelliot as *imān-dur*, then suggested an Arabic word *امة* instead of *imān*; Pelliot 1936, pp. 27-33. Others read it as *hemmat* or *ne`mat* and Cleaves came up with threading *imadtur* (in the support of); CLEAVES 1953, pp. 26 and 40-42. None of these make sense, and it is clear from the context, and also in comparison with Ghāzān's edicts, that it should be read as *ommat* as in *ommat-e Moslamān*.

¹⁴ Cleaves translated this third sentence as "In the Protection of the Great Fortune Flame" even though he admits that the etymology of the word *jali* is unclear. In consideration of the pattern of using foreign terms in these Turkic formulae, it seems that *jali* represents the Arabic word *jali* (manifest, shining) and that the whole sentence reflects a power derived from a Fortune akin to the Iranian *farr/khvarnah* whose main attribute is brilliance.

Thus, similar to the Iranian tribes who believed in the concept of the Aryan *khvarnah* (the Fortune tied to the Aryan nation),¹⁵ Turco-Mongols, who had also descended from the central Asian steppes onto the Iranian plateau, seem to have believed in a fortune tied to a clan or tribe. No matter how strong was their adherence to Islam, their tribal beliefs persisted. Even though Abu-Sa`id was a second generation convert to Islam and had been brought up according to Irano-Islamic ethics, the opening invocation [1] of his *farmān* verges on blasphemy (if judged by Islamic standards). For, despite some Ottomanists' contention that Tengri referred to a monotheistic god, and was therefore equivalent to Allah, the fact is that for the Mongols it represented a specific god, a sky god; and word-combinations containing *tengri* were all sky-related.¹⁶ Moreover, [1] follows the exact formula used by Guyuk (r. 1246-48) in his letter addressed to Pope Innocent IV (see fig. 7).¹⁷ If an Iranian prince would have started his letters in the post-Islamic period with an invocation addressed to Ahurā-Mazdā and in the manner of his Sasanian predecessors, he would have certainly been accused of blasphemy. One cannot plausibly argue that Guyuk was a monotheist, nor does it make sense to say that by "Tengri" Abu-Sa`id meant "Allah." Less hampered by

¹⁵ *Yashts* 18:2-5 of the Avesta; see for instance www.avesta.org, or *AVESTA* 1381, I:481-82.

¹⁶ EVEN and POP 1994, pp. 342-43. The name Tengri-verdi (Tengri-given) for instance, is more akin to Mehr-dād (Mithra-given) than Allah-dād of Allah-verdi (Allah-given). Tengri may have been used later on in lieu of a generic term for god, even though when Shaybāni Khān uses it, one has the distinct impression that he still refers to the sky-god (see KILIÇ 1997, p. 65, where mistranslations occur, for instance *Lik tingriga irur bu revshan...* has wrongly been translated "but my light comes from God," instead of "it is clear for Tengri.."); I am indebted to W. Thackston for this remark).

¹⁷ For a complete reproduction see NATALINO 1991, p. 67, for a translation see LUPPRIAN, 1981, pp. 188-89.

Islamic orthodoxy in a Turkic context, Abu-Sa`id saw no need to abide by strict Islamic rules in his Uyghur *farmān*.

More surprising though is the invocation of the Bāyondor Fortune alongside godly powers, in a Persian-Islamic context, and by an Āq-Qoyunlu ruler whose dynasty was renowned for religious orthodoxy. It is clearly a testimony to the importance of tribal beliefs, and to the esteem that Turco-Mongol rulers held for Il-Khānid models and formulae.

3.5. Section 6

The title-signature of Uzun Hasan is yet another example of mixing tribal traditions with Islamic doctrines. In a little noted remark in his seminal work on the Āq-Qoyunlus, Woods draws attention to the fact that the word *lellāh* in the first segment of the Uzun Hasan *toghrā* was conceived to reflect the *tamghā* sign (i.e. the brand that tribes used to mark their herds with) of the Bāyondor clan, as depicted—among others—by the historian Rashid-oddin Fazlollāh (d. 1319) in his *Jāme`-ot-tavārikh*.¹⁸ Indeed, as evidenced in figure 6, the dotted line pattern was all that was required to produce *lellāh*. The x-marked line was added on top, in order to incorporate the Bāyondor *tamghā* sign into the heading. Shaping the name of God into a cattle-brand was certainly not an expression of Islamic piety. Previously, Persian scribes had incorporated the bow and arrow of Saljuq chieftains into their *farmān* headings. It led to the creation of the *toghrā*, the bow and arrow shaped calligraphy of the ruler's name (see appendix). At that early stage however, the *toghrā* did not incorporate any religious invocation. The mix of tribal and Islamic tenets into the same title-signature is one-step further than Saljuq or Il-Khānid scribes had dared to take.

¹⁸ WOODS 1999, p. 26.

Another interesting feature in Uzun Hasan's *toghrā* is the use of the word *syuzumiz* ("our words," i.e., has said) that originated in Mongol times.

As people of the steppes, the Mongols were not a talkative people. Hence, when their *khān* spoke, it was perceived as an order, and was called: a *yarliq* (literally "words of"). And when the spoken word had to be transmitted in written form, a person of trust, one who had so close an access to the *khān* as to be able to hear his utterances, needed to vouch for it. Louis XI of France used to say that the most trusted person of his realm was his barber who held a knife on his throat everyday. Similarly, the most trusted persons of a Mongol *khān* were his *keshik*, the officers who stood guard, or were on duty, before his tent, which included the *bāurchi*, the kitchen superintendent. Because of their easy access to the *khān*, the *keshik* officers could easily kill or poison him.

Thus, on the back of a Uyghur letter of Ghāzān to Pope Boniface VIII in 1302, we have an attestation by his trusted *keshik* officers:

It's *ūjig* (correct). First day of the *keshik* (guard) of Üred (?), Qotlogh-shāh, Rashid-od-dowleh (*Erisidküle*), Ramazān (*Iramadan*)¹⁹

Three things need to be noted in this attestation. Firstly, Rashid is named according to his initial *konya* Rashid-od-dowleh, and not Rashid-od-din by which he is better known.²⁰ Whereas the administration people and historians respectfully called him Rashid-od-din

¹⁹ CLEAVES 1951, p. 516. Cleaves was unable to decipher the name that he transcribed as *Erisidkül*; but it is clear that after dropping the prothetic vowel that Turkic people add before foreign names starting with an "r" (Ramazān for instance was spelled *Iramadan* in the same line), it is clear that it should be understood as Rashid-od-dowleh, the initial *konya* of Rashid.

(especially after writing commentaries on the Qorān), among the Mongols he was still referred to by his initial *konya*. Secondly, it should be of no surprise to see his name written in the company of the *amir* Qotlogh-shāh's as members of the same *keshik*, for Rashid himself recounts that when he was wrongly accused of demeaning this *amir* before Ghāzān, upon seeing him Qotlogh-shāh exclaimed: "We have been together in one *keshik*, and nothing has ever come between us to cause anger. Why have you attacked me before the emperor?"²¹ Thirdly, while Rashid was obviously not a military man to stand guard by the imperial tent, the reason that he was included in the *keshik* was that prior to his ascension to the vizierate, he was a *bāurchi*, and that according to one account "Ghāzān would not eat except from his hand and the hands of his son."²²

The same type of countersigning on the back of an imperial document appears for instance in the case of a letter of Uljāytu to King Philippe Le Bel of France in 1305, and a *farmān* of Abu-Sa'id dated 1320, both written in Uyghur.²³ While conservatism was a characteristic of Turkic bureaucratic procedures, Persian officials who were eager to have their names included on the face of the document rather than on the back, were probably waiting for an opportune moment to modify this countersigning procedure. The reign of the feeble Gaykhātu (r. 1291-95) provided such an occasion. To give weight to a *yarliq* issued in the name of this ineffective *il-khān*, the vizier Ahmad-e Khāledi-ye Zanjāni, known as Sadr-e Jahān (d. 1298) devised a new procedure: On an order issued in 1292, instead of having the *keshik* countersign the *yarliq*, he added below the *il-khān*'s name, the name of the three most

²¹ RASHID-OD-DIN 1957, III:326 (tr. by W. Thackston). The false accusations had come from the vizier Sadr-e Jahān (see below).

²² ALLSEN 2001, p. 127.

²³ CLEAVES 1951, pp. 508 and 523; CLEAVES 1953, p. 33.

powerful military commanders, Shiktur, Toghāchār, and Āq-buqā, as officers who repeated (i.e. vouched for) the “word” of the *il-khān* (fig. 9). And to differentiate their “words” from the “word” of Gaykhātu, he used the term *suzindin* (“words of them,” in a plural form) after their name, which was synonymous with the honorific plural *yarliqindin* written after the name of the *il-khān*. In the process, Sadr-e Jahān was also able to sneak in his own name (below those of the *amirs*) followed by the same term *suzi* (“his word”) in singular form.²⁴

Perhaps Ghāzān understood the negative effect of this change of procedure on the *il-khān*’s authority and banned it, since we have no such specimen surviving from his time. But beginning with the reign of Uljāyту, we see powerful *amirs* affixing their names once again on *farmāns*, followed by the words *suzi* or *suzindin* (depending on the number of *amirs* involved).²⁵ Half a century later, Teymur would do the same and mention the name of his puppet Changizid *khān* at the top followed by *yarliqindin*, and then mention his own name followed by *suzumiz*, a more honorific version of *suzi*.²⁶ When the last of Teymur’s Changizid puppets died and Teymur found no replacement for him, he simply scratched the top line. Thus began the tradition of prefacing *farmāns* with the name of a Turco-Mongol ruler followed by *suzumiz*, or *syuzumiz* (which followed the western pronunciation of the same word).²⁷

²⁴ The *farmān* begins with: “Irinjin–turji (i.e., Gaykhātu) *yarliqindin*; Shiktur, Toghāchār, Āq-buqā, *suzindni*; Ahmad Sāheb Divān (i.e., Sadr-e Jahān) *sozi*”; SOUDAVAR 1992, pp. 34-35.

²⁵ See for instance HERRMANN 1997, pp. 332.

²⁶ FEKETE 1977, pls. 1 and 3.

²⁷ FRAGNER 1999, p.287.

Appendix

There are two main schools of thought on the origins of the word *toghrā*. The first sees it derived from a Turkic secretarial emblem called *toghragh*, and the second as an effort by Persian scribes to shape the name of the ruler into a bow-like element called *torgha/torghāy*, subsequently mispronounced as *toghrā*.²⁸

The primary argument for the first school is a remark by Mahmud al-Kāshghari in his *Divān lughat-et-Turk* lexicon written between 1075 and 1094:

“the *toghragh* is the seal (*tābit*) and signature (*tawqi*) of the king [in] Oghuz dialect (*ghozziyya*) and not known to the [Western] Turks; I do not know its origin”²⁹

There are several problems though with Kāshghari’s account:

- 1- As Kāshghari himself admits he does not know what the origin of his *toghragh* is, and since then, no philologist has been able to provide a satisfactory etymology for it.
- 2- The spelling *toghragh* appears only in a unique surviving manuscript of Kāshghari’s lexicon copied two centuries after the original, and chances are that if the author himself did not misspell *toghragh*, a later scribe did.
- 3- One can envisage the drop of the last “gh” in everyday parlance, but then one expects it to resurface in other combinations of the word; for instance, one should have had *toghrāghi* instead of *toghrāyi* (i.e., the person in charge of drawing the *toghrā*). In addition, the drop of the last letter does not explain the transformation of the short “a” into a long one.

²⁸ DOERFER 1963, pp. 342-345; EQBĀL-E ĀSHTIYĀNI 1350, pp. 533-34 (original article dated 1319); MO`IN 1353, II:2227, CAHEN 1945, p. 168.

²⁹ BOSWORTH et al. 2003, *Tughra*.

More generally, when nomadic tribes rise to power and establish control over an empire, by necessity, they have to rely on the bureaucratic practices of their predecessors, as well as their scribes and functionaries. As a result, bureaucratic practices tend to be very traditional. When rudimentary transaction instruments, such as the incised sticks that the Mongols used for the dispatch of horses, can even be traced back to Achaemenid bureaucratic practices,³⁰ it should be of no surprise to see the Sasanid royal epithet *bay* (Lord) adopted by Turkic rulers as *bäg* (which eventually led to the popular Turkic epithet *beyg/beg*).³¹ In the same vein, since Balāzuri relates from Ebn al-Moqaffa` that “whenever a Sasanid king issued an edict, he had his stylized signature (*tawqi`*) added to it,”³² one would expect that when Turkic rulers had their names written as a signature on top of their edicts, it was in following of an existing—non-Turkic—bureaucratic practice.

The *toghrā* however, was not a simple signature but one with a distinct characteristic: it had a curved line crossing the name,³³ often described by Persian poets as a crescent, eyebrow, or a bow.³⁴ The 14th century Persian lexicon *Sehāh-ol-fors*, and the 12-13th century poet Ghavāmi-ye Rāzi, in particular, describe it as a bow-like curve. The description of the latter carries weight since the poet Ghavāmi was a friend, and a panegyrist, of Ghāvāmi-ye Toghrāyi who in the year 512AH/1118 was appointed to the Toghrā Office of the Saljuq

³⁰ SOUDAVAR (forthcoming-a)

³¹ *Bäg* is first attested in the Orkhon inscriptions of the 8th century; BAZIN 2003, *Beg*. For a discussion on the evolution of the Achaemenid word *baya* (god) into a royal epithet *bay* (Lord), see SOUDAVAR (forthcoming-b).

³² BALĀZURI 1886, p. 465.

³³ TABRIZI 1362, p. 1355; DOERFER 1963, p. 344.

³⁴ DEHKHODĀ 1994, IX:13640-41.

chancellery.³⁵ Earlier on, in a poem in praise of Tāj-ol-molk Marzbān b. Khosrow-Firuz-e Shirāzi, the *toghrā* officer of the Saljuq Malekshāh (r. 1072-92), Mo'ezzi-ye Neyshāburi specifically describes it as a bow and arrow combination, at the very time that Kāshghari was composing his lexicon.³⁶

From times immemorial, the bow represented a symbol of power. The Assyrians and the Achaemenids depicted their rulers with a bow, and the rebellious satrap Datames (d. 360BC) who struck coins in his own name held a bow in his hand.³⁷ Similarly, the Parthians who descended on the Iranian plateau from the north-east, had their coins struck with the effigy of a ruler holding a bow in his hand, and the Saljuqs, who centuries later followed the same route, had a bow and arrow emblem struck on their coinage. A study by Bulliet shows how, in a tacit division of the empire between Toghrol Beyg (r. 1038-63) and his brother Chaghri Beyg, the Saljuq coinage for the territories west of Neyshābur bore the bow and arrow sign of Toghrol, and those to the east of Neyshābur, bore the emblem of Chaghri Beyg, even though both types of coinage were issued in the name of Toghrol.³⁸ What this discrepancy between the written word and the signage shows is that for the Saljuq power base, i.e., for the Ghos tribesmen, tribal emblems were more important than the written name. It therefore seems quite natural that Persian scribes would try to incorporate this cherished emblem of the Saljuq rulers into their signature, in the same way that centuries later, they incorporated the Bāyondor *tamghā* into Uzun Hasan's title-signature.

³⁵ SAFĀ 1368, II:696-97.

³⁶ EQBĀL-E ĀSHTIYĀNI 1350, p. 534.

³⁷ SOUDAVAR 2003, pp. 1-3.

³⁸ BULLIET 1994, p. 295.


Even though we do not have a *toghrā* specimen from an imperial Saljuq *farmān*, we can guess from a 1325 edict of Mohammad b. Toghloq in Delhi, how it might have looked, since chancery scribes carried their practices from Iran to India (fig. 10).³⁹ When compared to coins issued in Toghrol's domain bearing his bow and arrow mark (fig. 11), even though the “nun” letter of the Toghloqid *farmān* provides a concave line, its relationship to the Turkic tribal emblem jumps to the eye. On the other hand, since the heading of the Ildogozid *farmān* of our fig. 7 does not have a crossing curved line, we must assume that in Saljuq times, the *toghrā* was reserved for the rulers of the house of Saljuq. After their demise though, it is probable that scribes of the successor dynasties began imitating it. Eventually, all title-signatures were referred to as *toghrā*, whether they had or hadn't a bow-like line.

The above scenario ties in well with Kāshghari's remark that the *toghrā* originated with the Ghoz (Oghuz) people whom he disdainfully calls the *ghozziyya*. Since the Saljuqs were the most prominent clan of the Ghoz tribes to ascend to power, the advent of the *toghrā* must surely be associated with them. Clearly, the Qarakhānids who were their predecessors, and with whom Kāshghari was affiliated, did not have a *toghrā* sign. Because the Saljuqs were initially clients of the Qarakhānids, it would have been normal for Kāshghari to treat them with contempt, and avoid elaborating on a sign that his kinsmen never had.

Moreover, like the Persian Achaemenids, who had to rely on Elamite and Mesopotamian scribes, and who adopted Aramaic as the bureaucratic language of the empire, the Saljuqs had to rely on Persian scribes, and on the Persian language as the lingua franca of their empire. It then seems quite plausible that the Persian scribe who first incorporated the Saljuq bow into the stylized signature of his king, misunderstood and mispronounced the

³⁹ For a complete image and description, see ROBINSON 1976, pp. 283-84, pl. 150.

Turkic word *torghāy*, and as a result, in the Persian bureaucratic parlance, *toghrā* gained currency. If the *toghrā* was indeed, first devised for Toghrol, then the transition from *torghāy* to *toghrā* might have been facilitated by its affiliation to a ruler whose name started with the letters “*t-gh-r.*”

Finally, it seems that in designing their *toghrā*’s with arrows piercing a convex bow, the Ottoman scribes followed to some extent the emblem of the  descendants of Chaghri Beyk whose line ruled as the Great Saljuqs in Iran and Anatolia.⁴⁰ To this date, Persian calligraphers call the curved line of an Ottoman-like *toghrā*, the *kamān* (bow), and its three elongated *alefs* as *neyzeh* (spear, arrow).⁴¹



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⁴⁰ BULLIET 1994, p. 293.

⁴¹ The late calligrapher and scholar Ahmad-e Soheyli-ye Khonsāri who designed my own *toghrā* mentioned it to me.

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