

SHAH ISMAIL'S FERMANS AND SANADS: TRADITION AND REFORM IN PERSOPHONE ADMINISTRATION AND CHANCELLERY AFFAIRS

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For explaining the subject of my paper it deserves to present some preliminary or introductory remarks.

The first of these remarks must refer to the word "persophone" in the title of my paper. Already in the 12th century, may be even earlier, during the ruling period of the Seljuq *sultans*, and of their successors - the Atabeg dynasties in the West, and the Khorazmshahs in the East - a linguistic shift was to be observed in local and regional administration within what we use to call "the lands of the Eastern Caliphate", as the late British orientalist Guy Le Strange had put it into a wording. What I have in mind is the shift from Arabic towards Persian, in its capacity as a language of administration. The oldest original royal *ferman* in Persian language known hitherto is a decree promulgated by the Ildagiizid Atabek Muhammad b. Usman from 1233.

This transition from Arabic to Persian experienced a dramatic dynamics under the rule of the Mongol - or, more precisely Chingizid Il-Khans. They had established Azerbaijan's then already centuries old metropolitan location Tabriz as the eminent political and royal residential center of their empire. It were the Mongol Il-Khanid rulers and their multiethnic elite's who, in the thirteenth and fourteenth century established Persian as their first and most important linguistic

instrument of communication, just in contrast to their hostile Chingizid cousins in the Dasht-i Qipchaq, the rulers of the Golden Horde or, more correctly the Ulus Juchi who preferred Qipchaq Turki.

The Il-Khanid decision in favour of Persian engendered a development which ultimately resulted in Persian becoming the most important transregional *lingua franca* in the Eastern parts of the Islamic World among peoples having ethnically been non-Persians, from the Caucasus until India and beyond, in South-East Asia, and until Khinjiang and even China in the North-East. Persian language maintained this position until the nineteenth century, when under colonial rules Persian was on the one hand gradually replaced by English, Russian, and may be even Chinese, and, on the other hand as a response to colonialism, national languages started their emancipation into modernity, as, e.g., Turkic languages in the Caucasus and in Central Asia, Urdu and Hindi ("Hindustani") in the subcontinent, Pashto in Afghanistan, and other languages having shown a rather vernacular status until that time, like Balochi, Kurdish etc.

So, we may witness a more or less unilingual - persophone - tradition of administration within the area defined above, from the thirteenth until the nineteenth centuries.

The transition from Arabic to Persian occurred parallel to the change in administrative costumes and rules from "Islamic" traditions maintained by the Abbasid Caliphate and its vassals to the adoption of Chinese administrative traditions as they were taken over from the Chinese by the Chingizid Mongols directly or, through transmission by Qarakhitay bureaucrats. Late Il-Khanid Persian fermans issued at Tabriz, as some examples of them were found in Ardabil in the early Seventies, show therefore interesting characteristics: By bearing square seals originally manufactured by the Great Khan's chancellery in Khan-Baliq (Beijing) they recall immediately East Asian influences but, Persian texts in Arabic script

insinuate their origin from Islamic soil. Refraining from further usage of the so-called *tughra* they symbolized their break with the Caliphal traditions just in the same way as the shift from traditional Arabic towards Persian did. If we conceive the Cali-

phal traditions as, in terms of symbolism, "Islamic", the Mongols' measures may be interpreted as some kind of "proto-secularization" in Tabriz' royal chancellery, also in times when the Il-Khans had already converted to Islam. In order to distinguish their rule from the Caliphs but, at the same time to present themselves as a non-alien power belonging to the Middle Eastern region, they decided to denominate their territory by the legendary toponym "Iran". This word had fallen into oblivion after the breakdown of the Sasanian Empire, and continued to be used for a long time exclusively in a nostalgic and legendary meaning as the most famous example, Ferdousi's "Shahnameh" shows strikingly. By virtue of the Il-Khanid new interpretation of the meaning of "Iran", it turned out to become a specifically Il-Khanid tradition to conceive Iran as being represented by its capital Tabriz, a conception which was, by various changings continuously followed by Iranian rulers after the end of Il-Khanid reign. To put it into another wording: It is quite reasonable to understand the continuity of Iran in the sense of a political territory in history as the continuation of the Il-Khanids' perception of their empire.

My next explanatory note concerns the already mentioned *tughra*. What was a *tughra*? This was the professional denomination of a specific kind of what is usually called an *intitulation* in diplomatic studies which is the formal presentation of the issuing ruler's name at the top of a decree (the *sar-nameh* as it was called by indigenous bureaucrats). The *tughra* was a ritualized graphic shape of this intitulation. Under the Caliphs the *tughra* used to be shaped very typically. Until recently, we used to derive our knowledge about the Caliphal shaping of the *tughra* mainly through relation by the Mamluk Egyptian author al-Qalqashandi. From India, we know that the (Muslim) Delhi and Deccan chancelleries used to continue this Abbasid *tughra* tradition, as a sound number of original documents from India down to the early sixteenth century prove. But, the above mentioned *ferman* promulgated by the Ildaguzid Atabek Muhammad b. Usman from 1233 offers a unique original evidence for the usage of this pre-Mongol type of *tughra* in a local and persophone context! Allow me just a side

remark for those who are used to understand the meaning of *tughra* exclusively as the name of an Ottoman imperial symbol. In fact, the Ottomans had derived their *tughra* from the Abbasid *tughra* but this will remain outside of my subject.

Anyway, one important aspect of the *tughra* ought to be stressed particularly: In Islamic chancelleries, the *tughra* used to join the functions of the intitulation (presenting the name of the promulgator) with those of an

instrument of corroboration, like signatures or seals in occidental diplomatics. This combination of functions was responsible for the establishment of a specific position in the chancelleries, the so-called *tughrachi* or *tughra-kash*, who was responsible for the application of the *tughra* immediately in advance to the official promulgation of a *ferman*. By drawing the *tughra* he was responsible for the corroboration of the document.

Under Chingiz Khan's rule, a newly invented custom was introduced: Imperial decrees in Mongolian language were marked by a specific and brand-new type of an intitulation: After the ruler's name the Mongolian formula "*uge manu*" ("Our Word") was added.

The Il-Khanid chancellery adopted a variety of this specific Mongol element for issuing their persophone *fermans*. Their intitulation was like the following: After the name of the ruler, in Turkish (obviously in Eastern Turkish) the words "*yarlighimlimiz*", or, "*yarlig-him/imizdin*" or "*yarlighidin*" were placed. It goes without saying that the Il-Khans did not anymore follow the Abbasid tag/ira-tradition.

Interpreting this evidence, we have to pass over to the next preliminary remark I have to offer you: For interpretation of these various changes of *ferman* intitulations down to the early Safavids, we have to enter the methodologic realm of semiotics. This means that we have to aim on making clear what the notions of seemingly formal changes might have been!

Let me now start with my semiotic interpretations! What might have been the notion of the Il-Khans¹ using a Turkic formula within a Persian context? It was clearly the intention to distinguish this formula, obviously in analogy to the Mongol "*uge manu*" but, making it more

understandable to the public! This might be an indication that Turkish after 1300 was already recognized as the common vernacular of the Il-Khanid Mongols and therefore useful for translating and representing a formal Mongol expression of high prestige.

The Il-Khans' attempt to represent the Mongol imperial formula "*uge manu*" by a Turkish expression was not at all unique. The Khans of the Golden Horde undertook a similar effort: Recognizing themselves not as Great Khans but, just as the rulers of their *ulus* they refrained from using the plural as to be found in the Great Khan's decrees (Mong.: "*uge manu*" and Turkic: "*yarlighimiz/soztimiz*") in favour of the singular "*sozum*". The Khans of Crimea, late descendants of the Juchid Chingizids, used this specific formula "*sdzum*" until their surrender to imperial Russia in the 18th century!

It was Amir Timur in Transoxiana who started a next attempt of adopting a Turkic version of "*uge manu*". His bureaucrats invented a new type of intitulation in which The Amir's name was given, immediately followed by the formula "*sozumiz*" ("Amir Timur Gurakan -sozumiz"). This intitulation is headed by an 'Islamic' invocation of God, a simple "*huwa*". The semiotic implications of this innovation are more evident by another decree promulgated by Timur's son Miranshah with the intitulation consisting of two elements: "*Mahmud Khan yarli-ghidin* (first line) -*Amiranshah Gurakan - sozumiz* (second line)". This intitulation refers clearly to the fact that in the year 1396 when this *ferman* was issued the Chaghatay Khan Mahmud was still formally recognized as the legitimate "Khan" by Timur and his sons. On the other side, at the same time Timur had already usurped a transformed (turkified) version of "*uge manu*" in its plural meaning pointing out the fact that he, Timur had had in mind to replace Chingiz Khan himself, aiming at restoring Chingiz Khan's empire, The followers of his dynasty maintained this tradition "*sozumiz*" turned out to become somewhat like a typical Timurid element the name of the ruler being extended by the epitheton "*bahadur*" and, in some cases also by a so-called *kunya*.

Let us now pass to the Western fringes of the Timurid empire to

the lands of Eastern Anatolia and to Azerbaijan, in the first half of the fifteenth century!

Having been registered among Timur's vassals for a while, the early rulers of the so-called Qara-Qoyunlu federation of Turkmen tribes in this area, soon turned out to be the Timurids' most powerful rivals in the West, in the early 15th century. Under Jahanshah, the Qara-Qoyunlu not only conquered the Western part of the Iranian Plateau including large parts of Azerbaijan, they also took over Tabriz making it their capital. This was definitely conceived as a symbolic act: the *dor assaltaneh* Tabriz was still recognized as the already legendary Il-Khanids metropolitan capital, and conquering this city meant nothing else than to introduce themselves as the Il-Khans' immediate successors to the international public thus challenging their Timurid rivals in Herat, or Samarkand respectively. Hypothetically, I interpret the Qara-Qoyunlu rulers' political self-understanding as follows: Having conquered Tabriz they inherited the Il-Khans' claims for the territory they had used to call 'Iran', including main parts of the Timurid empire, as e.g., Khorasan. They had therefore to make publicly clear that they understood themselves as being at least equivalent to the Timurids but, at the

same time as the Timurid's most serious opponents. Subsequently, Jahanshah Qara-Qoyunlu presented himself as *padishah-i Iran* immediately after the takeover of Tabriz, and he made his chancellery deputies creating a specific intitulation for his *fermans*.

This Qara-Qoyunlu intitulation bore the following characteristics: Its first part was an element signaling "good old Islamism", a so-called *kunya* - in the case of Jahanshah "*Abu-l-Muzaffar*" - being followed by his proper name "Jahanshah" and the additional appellativum "*Bahadur*", the whole intitulation is finished by the already introduced Timurian expression "sozumiz". This intitulation is semiotically to be read as follows: "I, am Jahanshah, the *padishah* of Iran, ruling the metropolitan *dor assaltaneh* Tabriz; I am a ruler of the same rank as the members of the house of Timur did. I claim for Chingiz- Khanid sovereignty, to the same degree as Timur did. I am a pious Muslim ruler and represent the position of *ulu-l-amr* in the sense of the *shari'a*, I am the protector of Islam and the Believers". An additional attempt by the Qara-Qoyunlus to distinguish themselves from the Timurids and to stress their religious reliability might be seen in the fact that the Qara-Qoyunlus (and partly their successors, the Aq-Qoyunlu rulers too) inclined to the usage of particularly impressive and detailed invocations of God, offering much more than a short pious device like "*huwa*" in some cases accompanied by one of the ritual epithetons of God (like, e.g., "*huwa-l-ghani*"), as Timurid *fermans* prove. Such rich invocations as among the Turkmen princes are not to be found elsewhere, in the realm of persophone diplomatics.

In the second half of the 15th century, the Aq-Qoyunlu rulers starting with Uzun Hasan besieging Tabriz and, ultimately destroying Qara-Qoyunlu power tried to follow the Qara-Qoyunlu pattern as tight as possible thus imagining the idea that they were legal and legitimized successors of the Qara-Qoyunlus in all aspects. Consequently, they took over the full complex of the Qara-Qoyunlu intitulation but, they added just one element hitherto unknown to the Qara-Qoyunlu: They headed their intitulation by an additional pious device (as, e.g., "*al-hukm li-llah*", not to be confused with the invocation!) and crowned the whole construction by their so-called *tamgha*, which has been originally nothing else than the Aq-Qoyunlus' cattle-brand-mark the brandmark! The just mentioned pious device and the last element of "sozumiz" (i.e., the element "-miz") were inscribed within the square shape of the *tamgha*. The whole intitulation had a very complex shape, and it might have been in that time that the intitulation in the sphere of persophone diplomacy re-acquired the denomination of "*tughra*", may be because of its comparability with the Ottoman *tughra* which never underwent the Il-Khanid influence and was developed continuously out of the Abbasid *tughra* tradition.

The Aq-Qoyunlu *fermans* followed the Qara-Qoyunlu styles in another sense, too: My point is the usage of the royal seal. It seems plausible to assume that, under the Timurids the royal square seal following the Mongol-Chinese tradition had fallen into oblivion. As I

had mentioned above, until the early fourteenth century, this seal had used to be manufactured in Beijing and was pompously sent to Tabriz. Under the latest Il-Khan, Abu Sa'id the square seal was already produced in directly Tabriz, and the until then applied Chinese inscription was replaced by an Islamic text written in square Kufi ductus of the Arabic script. But, the

external shape of the seal remained to be square, also after the breakdown of the Il-Khans, under the Jalairid rulers. It was probably under Timur's reign when the shape of the royal seal was transformed from square to circle - I conjecture that this might have happened in analogy to the traditions of coin minting. The transformation from square to circle didn't change anything concerning the position of the seal, until the end of Aq-Qoyunlu rule: According to the Chinese tradition, the seal was to mark the end of a fermans text in order to prohibit forgery. For the same purpose, and also in accordance with Chinese chancellery customs, those spots on a document where two sheets of paper were glued together were also stamped by the royal seal ("*muhr-i sar-i band*" in Persian terminology). This means that under the Timurids but, also in Turkmen - i.e., Qara- Qoyunlu and Aq-Qoyunlu - chancelleries the seal was usually to be found in the left corner at the bottom of royal decrees.

This would Offer now an occasion to speak about*the symbolic peculiarities of decrees issued by non-ruling members of the royal family (i.e., princesses and princes, etc). With respect to our subject, I shall refrain from skip talking about this otherwise important matter.

What I did until now at length was to offer you a rough picture of the historical and material setting of my subject. We now turn to the period of Shah Ismail's reign. My basic question is: How did Shah Ismail or respectively, his administrative and bureaucratic body react to the new but, almost revolutionary situation being inaugurated by the Safavid movement's victory over the Alvand Beg, the last Aq- Qoyunlu ruler having been defeated by Shah Ismail's enthusiastic followers, in the year 1502? It was this year that Ismail- until then recognized as the inspired and spiritual leader of the extremist Sufi order having been

founded by his ancestor Sheykh Safi two centuries earlier - was enthroned at Tabriz as the functional and legitimized successor of the Aq-Qoyunlu rulers.

What are the consequences of this factual development in history for my subject? Let us first look for any kinds of innovation concerning the layout of Shah Ismail's *fermans*, in comparison to the data I offered you on the conditions under the Qara-Qoyunlu and Aq-Qoyunlu rulers.

First of all, it ought to be noticed that, under Shah Ismail the basic aspects of the Turkmen intitulation was, maintained just with one exception which would not surprise anybody: The Aq-Qoyunlu *tamgha* was immediately omitted. Shah Ismail's intitulations was as follows: "*Abu-l-Muzajfar* (his kunya) - *Ismail Bahadur* - *sozumiz*" - keeping absolutely to the Turkmen pattern! We have to admit that there was definitely no sensational change in the wording of the intitulation proper. But, there were less spectacular changes in the invocations: Phrases like *huwa* etc. were followed by the *basmala*, under which the formula "*ya Ali*" used to be placed.

In Shah Ismail's earliest *fermans*, we witness that the seal's stamp was still placed at the end of the document's text. But, there is also a slight change to be observed referring to the seal: The seal is not anymore a round circle but, shows rather the shape of a pear. The legend of the seal contains not only the name of Shah Ismail himself but, also the names of the Prophet Muhammad, the Twelve Imams and Fatima. After a couple of years, an additional change in the layout of Shah Ismail's *fermans* can be seen: The seal moves from the bottom to the upper part of the document, being placed directly under the intitulation proper! One may argue whether the intention of doing this was to include the meaning (i.e. the text) of the seal clandestinely into the intitulation?

What may be the interpretation of this new standards of Ismail's *fermans*? In my view, it means that from the very beginning the self-understanding of the new Safavid state aimed at the affirmation of Shah Ismail's rule being a kind of continuation of the Aq-Qoyunlu

kings' rule. Astonishingly enough, this idea of continuation seems to be much stronger than the revolutionary and radical break in religious thought! Historians should try take this aspect into their considerations. The new Shi'ite faith is only expressed by "*Ya Ali*" in the extended intitulation. It is, in fact the seemingly unspectacular movement of the seal from bottom to top which signified the political and ideological intensity of the new regime! This was really a break with a tradition which was observed tightly since the Il-Khans!

As Roger Savory has pointed out convincingly, in the Safavid state organization some positions were incorporated having belonged to the organizational structure of the Safavid Sufi order already decades earlier. One of these positions, may have been the most important one next to the Shah, was the so-called "*vakil-i nafs-i nafis-i humayun*" - something like a viceroy.

The bureaucrats in Shah Ismail's chancellery developed an absolutely new type of royal documents to be used exclusively for the correspondence of Ismail himself to his viceroy, the *vakil*.

In this new type of *ferman*, the royal seal moved even more to the top, replacing the intitulation totally. This means that within this type of document, the seal functioned as the intitulation - the name of the Shah was not given any more outside of the seal's stamp. As to serve the corroborating function of the intitulation, a new element was introduced: Instead of the intitulation, another formula was created to be written in coloured ink at the beginning of the *ferman*'s proper text, belonging syntactically to the text. This formula was "*farman- i humayun sharaf-i nafaz y aft*" and was then continued by a connecting "*an ki chun...*" ("a royal decree found the honour of being issued", "in the sense that...").

In comparison to the various types and kinds of royal documents having been in use since the Abbasid period, this was a surprisingly "modern" creation. What do I mean with "modern"? The royal *fermans* addressed to the *vakil* were, under aspects of bureaucratic "ergonomics" much more functional than any other categories of chancellery documents: The application of the royal seal by the *muhr*

dar substituted the artistic drawing of the intitulation, and the *tughra-kash* confined his activities to writing the introductory formula "*farman-i humayun sharaf-i nafaz yaft*" within a free space in the first line of the text, already spared by the scribe.

There is another interesting aspect concerning this new type of *ferman*: Until now, the main scriptorial ductus used for any kinds of *fermans* since the Il-Khanid period, was a ductus called *ta'tliq* (this is roughly similar to what the Ottomans used to call *divani*). Since the early 15th century, in the Persian and Eastern Turkic speaking (and writing) areas of the Islamic World, a then brand-new ductus gained gradually popularity being called "*nasta'liq*". As the name insinuates, this was, this was a sophisticated hybrid creation composed by elements of *ta'liq* and *naskhi* as well. The new type of *ferman* addressed to the *vakil* was the first type of royal decree having been written in *nasta'tliq* instead of *ta'liq* script!

Moreover, we know that Ismail used to issue one more type of royal document which was exclusively addressed to the Shah's intelligence agent among Sufi Qizilbash tribes living mainly outside of the Safavid empire - Iran -, the so-called *khalifat-al-khulafa*. We have not yet found any specimen for such a *ferman* having been issued by Ismail himself but, the earliest ones known until now dating back to Ismail's successor Tahmasp. But there is evidence by narrative sources about the fact that this type of *ferman* was already created in the chancellery of Ismail himself. Because of a very peculiar *tughra-like* graphic to be found on documents belonging to this type, bearing the genealogy of the Shah, this sort of decree was called "*shajara*".

These, at a first glance rather unspectacular changes in *ferman*-writing in Shah Ismail's chancellery set out the basic preconditions for a genuine change concerning the layout of royal *fermans*, roughly ten years after Shah Ismail's death. The then new types of *fermans* having been created by the bureaucrats of Ismail's successor Shah Tahmasp, were altogether based on the pattern of the one designed for the Shah's correspondence to his *vakil*. The seal's stamp replaced the intitulation, and the introductory formula (*ferman-i humayun sharaf-i nafaz yaft*)

underwent some specifications. Ultimately, almost all Safavid *fermans* used to be issued following this pattern. Even after the breakdown of the Safavids' power, the Shahs of Iran continued to follow this pattern, until the early Twenties of our century, only applying minor differentiation's!

We may conclude that the later typical Safavid *ferman* was basically invented as early as under Shah Isma'il but, it found its general application only about ten years after his death.

As a contrast to the career of the "*farman-i humayun sharaf-i nafaz yaft*" type of decrees, the *shajara* turned out to be much less successful. It remained to be used only within the very limited sphere of Qizilbash affairs. After Abbas, it fell virtually out of use but, was reintroduced under Shah Sultan Husain, and under his son and shadowking Tahmasp II when they tried in vain to reestablish the confidence of the tribes towards the Shah which they - the Shahs - had already lost in the early 17th century.

It is interesting to understand that in the beginning of Isma'il's rule he strove obviously much more for the affirmation of his rule under the aspects of continuation of the Turkmen rulers than chronicles and other sources may show. Otherwise the surprising decency in changing the layout of the royal *fermans* under Isma'il would not make any plausible sense.

X ü l a s ə
ŞAH İSMAYILIN FƏRMAN VƏ SƏNƏDLƏRİ: İRAN İNZİBATI VƏ
DƏFTƏRXANA İŞLƏRİNDƏ ƏNƏNƏ
VƏ YENİLİKLƏR

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Məqalədə Şah İsmayıl dövrü tarixinin maraqlı aspektinə - ali rəsmi sənədlərin, xüsusən, möhür və titulların istifadə olunma probleminə toxunulmuşdur.

XIII əsrdən başlayaraq Şorq dünyasında meydana çıxan müsəlman dövlətlərindəki rəsmi sənədlər və bu sənədlərdə ali titul və möhürləri göstərən terminlər təhlil edilərək orta əsr müsəlman mədəniyyəti inkişafının bəzi ümumi qanunauyğunluqları göstərilmişdir,

Məqalədə orta əsr müsəlman hökmdarlarının sənədlərdə istifadə etdikləri bir sıra rəsmi terminlər daha dəqiq araşdırılmışdır. Linqvistik təhlil yolu ilə müsəlman siyasəti və müsəlman siyasətçilərinin əsrlər boyu necə dəyişməsi göstərilmişdir.

Orta əsr müsəlman tarixində əsas istiqamət xəlifəlik hakimiyyətinin get-gedə zəifləməsi və yerli müsəlman hakimiyyətinin niyyətqıl-ləyinin artmasıdır. Xəlifəliyin şorqində bu meyl monqol siyasi amili ilə əlaqədar idi. Bu da müsəlman siyasi modoniyyətinin nisbi diinyəvi-ləşdirilməsini gücləndirirdi. Müəllifin fikrincə rəsmi sənədləri ərəb dilindən fars dilinə keçid bu transtənnasiyanın dramatik dinamikasını əks etdirmişdir. Məsələn, Elxanilər öz ərazilərini "İran" adlandınaq-la öz hakimiyyətlərini xəlifəlikdən fərqləndinnək məqsədi güdüdü-lər. Eyni zamanda onlar özlərini Yaxın Şərqi əənəvi siyasi qüvvəsi kinii təqdim edirdilər.

Abbasilər ənənəsinə uyğun olaraq müsəlman hökmdarlarının qrafik simvolu olan "tuğra" termini də məqalədə araşdırma obyektlərindən biridir. Monqollar tuğraya yeni elementlər əlavə etməklə dəyiş-dinriş və bu əlavələr türk faktorunun rolunu artırmışdır.

Daha sonralar Qaraqoyunluların öz titullarını "Padişah-İran" ki-mi işlətmələri bu sülalədən olan hökmdarların təkəbbürlü siyasətini daha qabarıq göstərir.

Nəhayət, kağız üzərində yazılması və möhürlərin yerləşdirilməsi daxil olmaqla Şah İsmayıl titullarının təhlili Ağqoyunlu ənənəsinin təsdiq olunmasını açıqlayır.

Beləliklə, məqalədə aparılan semantik təhlil göstərir ki, Şah İsmayıl hakimiyyətinin ilk dövrlərindən türkmən hökmdarlarının ənənələrini davam etdinnəyə çalışmışdı.