

A HPHAGS-PA SEAL OF 1295

by WALTER SIMON

The brass cast seal reproduced¹ on Plates I and II was handed to me for the purpose of identification. Its square base is 6.5 cm. long and 1.8 cm. high. The height of the whole seal is 7 cm. Into the bottom half of the top of the handle the character 上 *shang* has been traced to indicate how the seal must be held when sealing. Another character seems to have been traced into the top half but is no longer recognizable.

On the left side of the handle the following two lines, which give the date as 11th month, (blank) day, of the first year of *Yuanjen* (1295) and the Ministry of Rites of the Central Administration (*Jong-shu liibuh*) as issuing authority, are clearly legible:

	中
元	書
貞	札
元	部
年	
十	
一	
月	
	造
日	

On the right side of the handle the characters other than the first two have become rather faint through frequent use of the seal, but after reading the seal in the hphags-pa script, it was possible to recognize that the following line was traced in (vertically): 蒙古軍百戶印 *Mengguu-jiun*

¹ I wish to express my sincere thanks to Dr. D. S. Rice for having provided the photographs of the seal (Pl. I a), of the seal inscription (Pl. I b), of the seal inscription reversed (Pl. II a), and of the sketch in black and white of the reversed photo (Pl. II b), which is offered in lieu of an actual impression from the seal. Dr. Rice also confirmed to me that the seal was cast in brass (including the hphags-pa inscription) and that the Chinese characters had been traced in.

borhuh¹-yinn, this line thus being identical with the *hphags-pa* inscription, but for the Mongolian word *moñqol* taking the place of *mengguu²*. The seal was accordingly used by a 百戶 *borhuh³* "centurion" (*jayun-u noyan*).

The *hphags-pa* inscription of the seal is to be read as follows:—

First column	Second column	Third column
m	g	y
o	ü	u
ñ	n	y
q	b(a)	i
o	y	n
l		

or, taking into account the syllabic divisions⁴, arising from the gaps left between the letters joined together on the seal, *moñ qol gūn bay yu yin*.

For the sake of comparison I have reproduced (Pl. III c) the Tibetan alphabet in seal script as it is shown (followed by the syllables *ki, khu, ge, ño, kya, khra, gla, gya, lca, śha, rtsva* and such wishes as *bkra śis bde legs phun sum tshogs* and *gtan-du bde-ba thob-par śog*) at the bottom of the first plate included (after the title page) in Professor E. Teramoto's *Tibetan Grammar*⁵. It will be seen that the consonants *m, ñ* (col. I) and *g, b* (col. II)

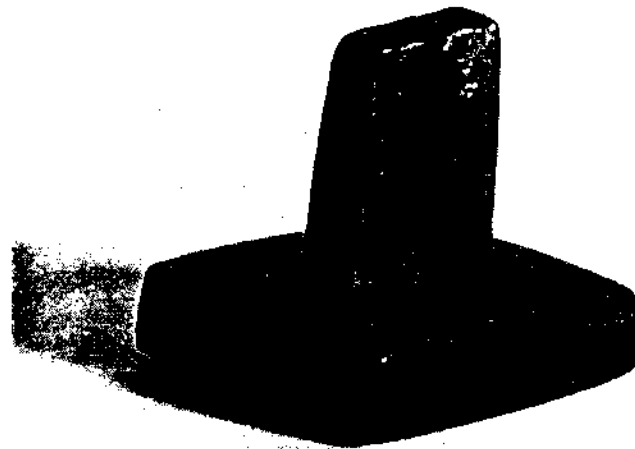
¹ *The Gwoyeu-tsyardean 國語辭典* by Uang Yi 汪怡 (and others), 2nd ed., 1948 in its entries *borhuh* (p. 31) and *borjia* (p. 32) makes allowance for the alternative readings *baehuh* and *baeshing*. This latter alternative was clearly favoured by the maker of our seal as being the usual pronunciation of the word for "hundred", and also, as is evident from Professor L. Ligeti's edition of the *Borjiašing* in *hphags-pa* script (*Le Pokia sing en écriture 'phags-pa, Acta Orientalia [Hungarica]*, Vol. VI, 1956, pp. 1-52), by the compiler of the latter work, its title reading in Professor Ligeti's transcription *bay gā siñ muñ gu wun*.

² While the transcriber of the *Borjiašing* transcribes *mengguu* as *muñ gu* (see above, note 1), the appearance of the Mongolian equivalent of *Mengguu* in an otherwise entirely Chinese context which we witness in our seal occurs also in the *hphags-pa* title, reproduced on Plate III (a), of the *Mengguu tzyhyunn* 蒙古字韻 (British Museum, Or. 6972, see about this MS., e.g., M. Lewicki, *La Langue mongole des transcriptions chinoises du XIV siècle. Le Houa-yi yi-yu de 1389*, Wrocław, 1949, p. 26).

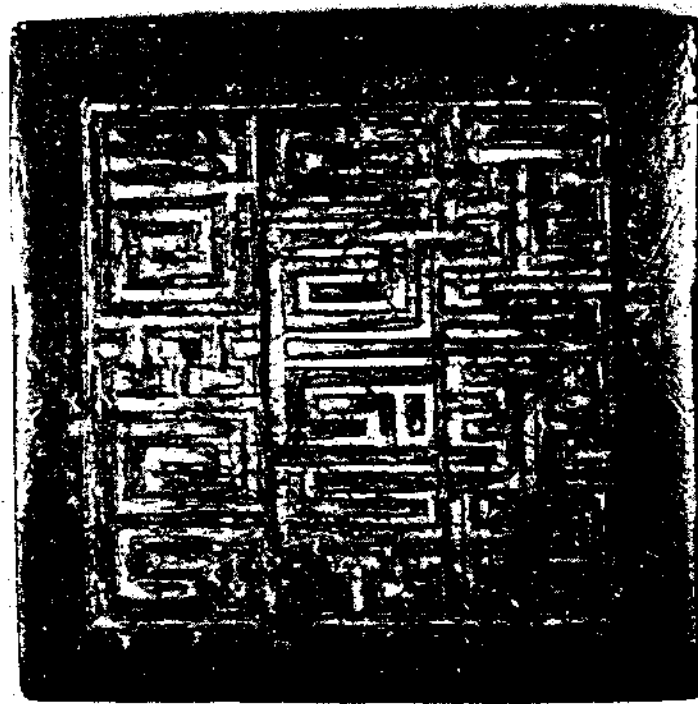
³ See *Yuanshyy*, J. 91 (*Bornah*, Ed., p. 8B), and P. Ratchnevsky, *Un Code des Yuan*, Paris, 1937, p. 144, n. 1.

⁴ I have to thank Sir Gerald Clauson for having suggested to me the addition of a transcription according to syllables (words).

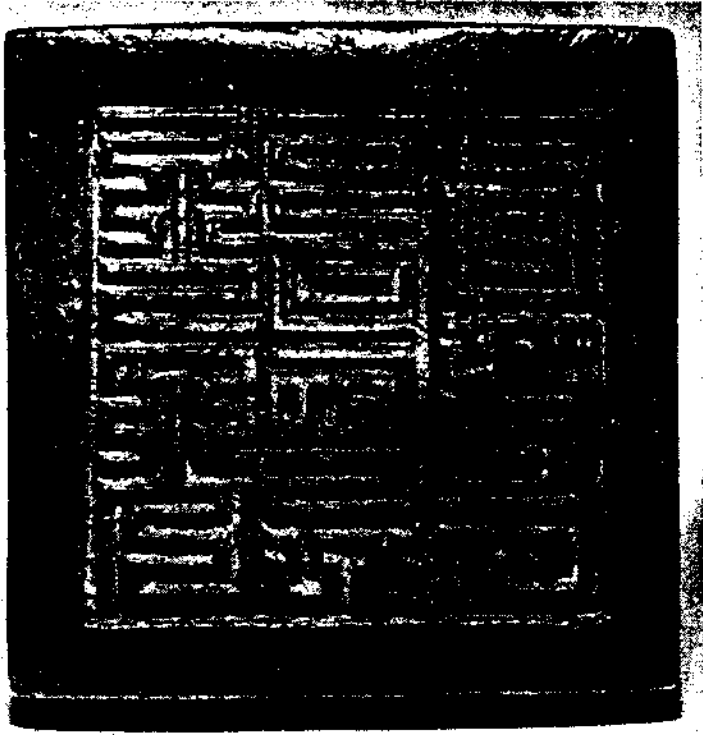
⁵ Teramoto Enga, *Chibetto-go bunpō*, Kyōto, 1940. Teramoto's alphabet and syllabary—the caption on the plate tells us that the original was in Professor Teramoto's private possession—seems to be identical with what is referred to as "primer" in the introduction to Professor Poppe's monograph on the "Mongolian Monuments in *hphags-pa* script" (2nd ed., transl. and ed. by J. R. Krueger, Wiesbaden, 1957, p. 15). The photographs on pp. 16-18 reproduce the alphabet itself and the syllables *ki* and *khu* of the syllabary. The booklet seems to have been a copy-book for practising the seal script.—A similar alphabet and syllabary in Tibetan seal script has already been reproduced (Plate V e) by Sarat Chandra Dās (see 'The sacred and ornamental characters of Tibet', *JASB* LVII [1889], pp. 41-48. See further about this alphabet A. H. Francke, *Note on the Dalai Lama's Seal and the Tibeto-Mongolian characters* (*JRAS*, 1910, pp. 1205-14), E. H. Walsh's *Examples of Tibetan Seals* (*JRAS*, 1910, pp. 1-15 and 465-70) and G. L. M. Clauson, *A Mongolo-Tibetan Seal*, (*JRAS*, 1929, pp. 117-119).



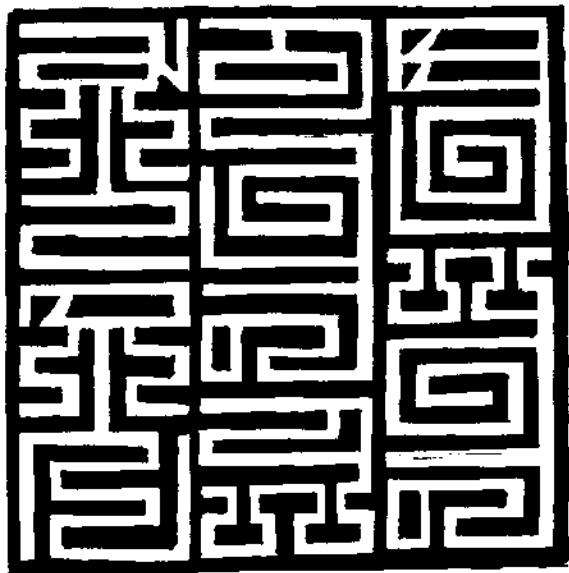
(a)



(b)

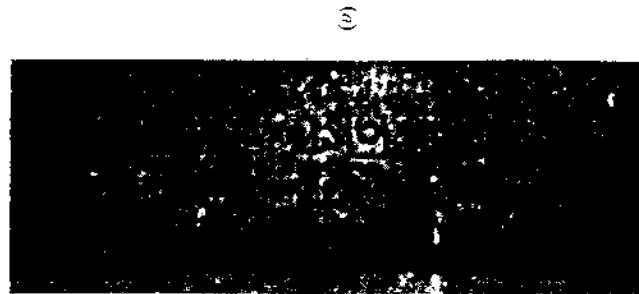


(a)



(b)

PLATE II



(c)



(d)



PLATE III

are identical, and that the consonants *q* (col. I) and *γ* (col. III) do not occur, as they are alien to the Tibetan alphabet.

While the occurrence of the second of these two consonants is quite in accordance with the originally voiced initial of the Chinese word, ancient *yuo* according to Professor Karlgren's reconstruction¹, considerable interest attaches to the use of *q* in what is now and also in the title² of the *Mengguu tzyhyunu* of 1308 written as *moñγol*. It may, then, be assumed that our seal has preserved an ancient orthography which has its parallels in such spellings as *qurban* "three" and particularly *miñqan* "thousand" in the Jiu-long-Guan 居庸關 inscription³. But I must leave to Mongolian scholars the discussion of the problem raised by these spellings.

The shape of the letter *y*, as occurring in col. II as final, and in col. III as initial, recalls that of the seal 太皇太后懿旨 Tay-hwang Tay-how yijyy (hphags-pa: *thay yon̄ thay yiw hi ji*) which heads the "Edict of Dharma-pāla's Widow".⁴ In the case of the variants for *l* (col. I) and *n* (cols. II and III), their "amplified" shape may perhaps be due to the fact that they occur in final position. The same may be true of the "fuller" form of *u*⁵. The bottom part of *ü* (col. II), notably varied in shape from *u*, is likewise of interest.

¹ See his *Grammatica Serica Recensa*, BMFEA, Stockholm, 1957, p. 34, No. 53.

² See Plate III a.

³ See the transcription of the inscription concerned in M. Lewicki's, *Les inscriptions mongoles inédites en écriture carrée*, Wilno, 1937, p. 52 and N. Poppe, *loc. cit.*, Text XII, pp. 60, etc. Professor Poppe's glossary includes a number of further words in which hphags-pa *q* corresponds to Mongolian *γ*, e.g., with initial *q*, *qajar*, *qar*, *qol*, *quc'in*, etc.

⁴ See Plate III b. I have reproduced this seal from A. M. Pozdnyeev's *Leksii po istorii Mongol'skoi Literaturui* (St. Petersburg, 1896, part II, plate between pp. 116 and 117). It was published before by A. A. Bobrovnikov (see *Trudui Vostochn. Otdel. Imp. Russk. Arkheol. Obshchestva*, St. Petersburg, Vol. XVI [1872], pp. 50-76) and forms the heading of Pl. IV in Professor Poppe's work quoted above.

⁵ Sir Gerald Clauson suggests to me that such variants in the shape of letters may simply be due to the desire on the part of the engraver to balance in length the various columns of a seal. This explanation certainly applies in the case of the final vowel (hphags-pa *i*) in the last two words of the seal reproduced on Plate III b.