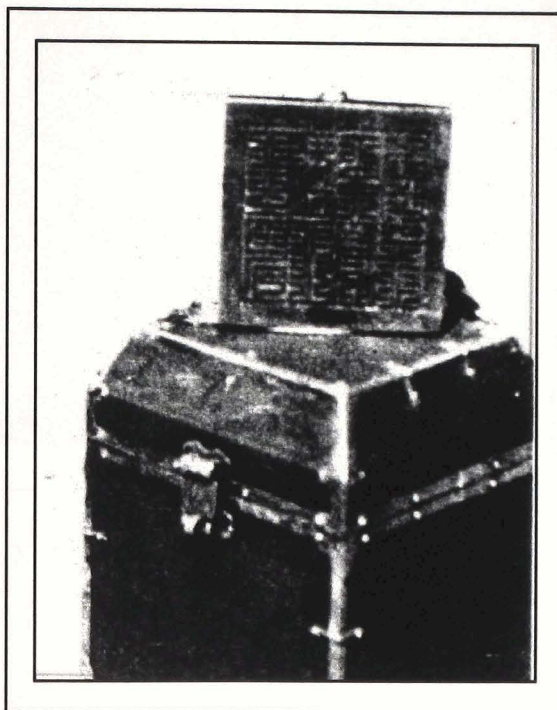


SOME TIBETAN SEALS ILLUSTRATED AND DESCRIBED

by

DERRICK DAWSON



KARMAPA'S SEAL

Said to have been given to him by Kublai Khan (1260-1294)

(Photo courtesy of Hugh Richardson.)

**PUBLISHED by GEOFFREY FLACK
© COPYRIGHT 1997**



A gold seal given to the XI Dalai Lama, Khedrup Gyatso, c. 1850 by the Ch'ing Emperor Hsien Feng.

INTRODUCTION

*"And he wrote in the King Ahasuerus' * name and sealed it with the king's ring and sent letters by post on horseback ..."*

Book of Esther ch. 8. v.10

* (Better known as Xerxes I, King of Persia.)

This must be one of the earliest glimpses of pre-stamp postal history, c.486-465 B.C.. Collectors of postal history are familiar with seal letters. This small work is, however, particularly concerned with a study of Tibetan seals. Collectors of the postal history of Tibet have long prized documents bearing the seals of Dalai Lamas, Panchen Lamas, Regents, Prime Ministers, to mention but a few, and the inclusion of one or more specimens in a collection adds a rather special dimension which is not confined to the rarity of the pieces. A few seals have been illustrated in various publications over the years, some with greater clarity than others, but only a minority seem to have been translated. It has seemed desirable to attempt a more systematic collation which would also seek to explain the composition and meaning of each seal. This small book, of whose limitations I am all too painfully aware, attempts to do this.

To start with the most obvious comment, Tibetan seals may be impressed in ink or wax. Ink seals are generally, though not invariably, used as "inner seals" on letters or documents; wax seals are almost always seen as "outer seals". Red seals are the prerogative of the clergy, an exception being the seal of the Si-lön or Prime Minister in his official capacity. Laymen invariably used black seals.

The composition of the seals varies considerably. The maze-like impression of the Dalai Lama's seals is in fact his title in the Tibetan language but written in Horyig, a Mongolian script. This adds somewhat to the complication of translating into an English text. The problem becomes more complex in the examples of the seals of the Regents and Prime Ministers where the lengthy 7 column Horyig inscriptions are replete with honorifics. The English must necessarily be a free translation. In the examples shown the Horyig design is followed by the equivalent Tibetan script and then by the Romanised Tibetan. A free translation follows.

On the other hand the seals of the Panchen Lama are inscribed in Lantsa, an Indian script based on the Devanagari alphabet. Yet other seals are symbolic based on floral or geometric patterns or on letters of the Tibetan or Horyig alphabets used as a sort of shorthand. Examples are the red banknote seals and the red ink seal of the Monk Dzongpön of Lhüntze Dzong.

Because of the less than perfect impressions found of some of the seals it has been necessary either to make drawings or to complete or correct them for illustrative purposes. The Däh-Se-Gah-ni seals of the three large Lhasa foundations of Drepung, Sera and Ganden are particularly mentioned in this respect.

Many of the seals shown are from my own or other collections: others are based on descriptions and illustrations from other sources corrected occasionally where necessary. For example any slight overinking often results in distortion of characters which may give rise to a false translation. The aim throughout has been to render as accurate a representation as possible.

I am indebted to Hugh Richardson for the photograph of the Karmapa's seal and to Geoffrey Flack for the illustrations of seals of the Grand Secretary, the Sakya Lama, Trekhang Shapé and the ink seals of Tsarong and Tshipön Shakabpa, and to Nicholas Rhodes for the seal of the Lhasa Post Office and the splendid colour photograph of the seals and impressions of Dzasa Depön Sonam Laden La. He also provided much useful background information.

There are of course many more important Tibetan seals. This publication is mainly concerned with those likely to be met with by collectors of Tibetan Postal History. References to Tibetan seals can be found in much of the literature on Tibet, sale catalogues, etc.. Particularly important for those wishing to study the subject in greater depth are articles by E.H. Walsh, A.H. Francke, and L.A. Waddell in various issues of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (between 1910 and 1915), and "Grundlagen tibetischer Siegelkunde" by Dieter Schuh, published by VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, Sankt Augustin, 1981.

D.D.

PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

The richness of its postal history has helped Tibetan philately to become accepted as a modern classic. The wax and ink seals of Tibet have formed an integral part of many of the great postal history collections of this fascinating country. For many years collectors have coveted these seals, but until now the availability of information and literature has been very limited. Derrick Dawson's *Some Tibetan Seals Illustrated and Described* is an important addition to the philatelic literature of Tibet.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to work with such a distinguished philatelist as Derrick Dawson. Mr. Dawson is a former civil servant and diplomat, now retired. He has collected Tibetan postal history for 30 years and has twice visited Tibet, in 1983 and 1987. He is a member of the Nepal and Tibet Philatelic Study Circle, the India Study Circle for Philately, the China Philatelic Society of London, the Civil Service Philatelic Society, and is Past President of the Edinburgh Philatelic Society. Mr. Dawson has won silver and bronze awards for exhibits of Tibetan postal history. In 1988, he was awarded the President's Prize of the Nepal and Tibet Philatelic Study Circle. He has published various articles in the *Postal Himal* ("An Interesting Historical Letter from Tibet"; "From the Pön Wang of Lo"; "Response to Tibetan bi-lingual Postmarks"; "Post Offices of the People's Republic of China in Tibet") and in *The Philatelist* ("Letters from the Land of the Snows"). Mr. Dawson has subsidiary collections of Sikkim, Bhutan, Ladakh, Early Indian Cancellations, Postal Markings of China, and Mount Everest Expeditions.

This is the fourth publication in this series on Tibetan philately, and as a publisher it has been by far my biggest undertaking to date. Previous publications have involved word processing and some scanning on my part, but in the past I have had the pages printed commercially. The small printing and large number of coloured illustrations made commercial production impossible. All of the pages were printed and collated at home. It has been much more work than I had anticipated, but it has also been very rewarding. I have learned a great deal about Tibetan seals and could ask for no better a teacher than Derrick Dawson. There is, however, a drawback to this kind of desk top publishing: there is no one else to blame when there are problems.

I hope Tibet collectors will find, *Some Tibetan Seals Illustrated and Described*, a useful addition to their libraries.

Geoffrey Flack
Box 65987, Station F
Vancouver, B.C.
Canada V5N 5L4

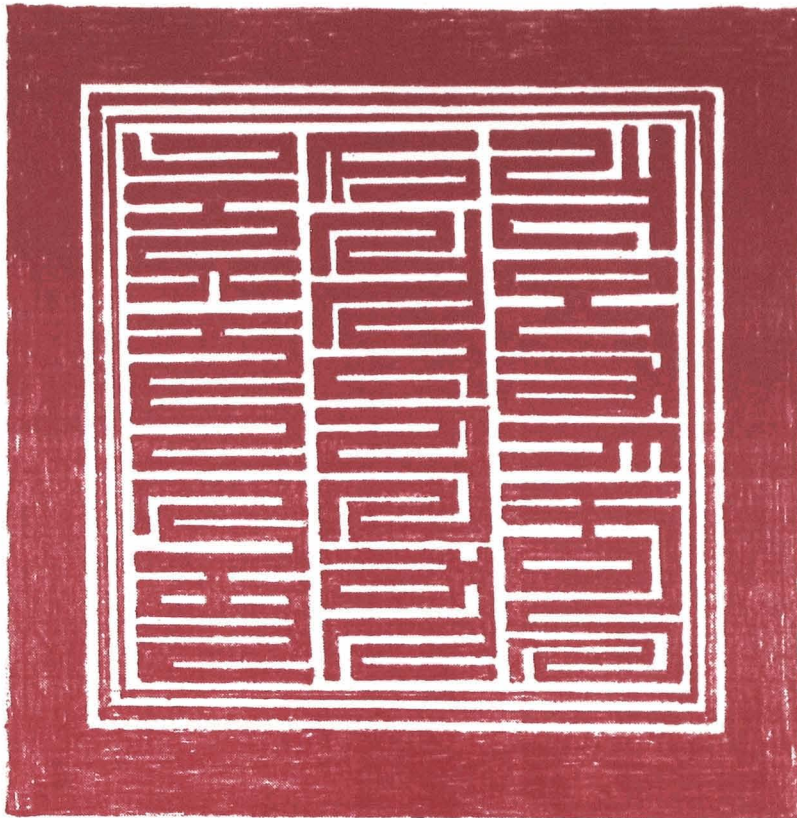
CONTENTS

		Page
Introduction		iii
Publisher's Foreword		v
Seals of the Dalai Lama.	Nos. 1-7	1
Seals of the Dalai Lama's Administration.	Nos. 8-16	9
Seals of the Prime Minister of Tibet.	Nos. 17-19	17
Seals of the Tibetan Regents.	Nos. 20-22	21
Seals of the Panchen Lama & his Court.	Nos. 23-30	25
Seals of the Sakya Lama.	Nos. 31-33	31
Monastic seals.	Nos. 34-40	35
Administrative seals	Nos. 41-49	39
Postal seals.	Nos. 50-54	45
Banknote seals	Nos. 55-60	48
Seals of the Nobility.	Nos. 61-65	51
Miscellaneous seals.	Nos. 66-67	54
Appendix. The Horyig and Tibetan characters as found on some important seals and their Roman forms.		56
Index		57

SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA

THE GREAT SEAL OF TIBET, THE GOLDEN KING
 (gSer tham. "the Golden Seal")

Seal No. 1



Size 111mm square

Description. Dates from 1578 when the then Mongol ruler Altan Khan was converted to Buddhism by Sonam Gyatso on whom he conferred the title Tale Lama, Ocean of Wisdom, and gave him this large gold seal. It was used by successive Dalai Lamas on important documents, and impressions are known between 1642 and 1899 (5th to 13th Dalai Lamas). Used in red ink as Inmost Seal.

Horyig	Tibetan	Roman															
		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>rdo</td> <td>ta</td> <td>ji</td> </tr> <tr> <td>rje</td> <td>la</td> <td>tham</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>'i</td> <td>ka</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'chhang</td> <td>bla</td> <td>rgyal</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>ma</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	rdo	ta	ji	rje	la	tham		'i	ka	'chhang	bla	rgyal		ma	
rdo	ta	ji															
rje	la	tham															
	'i	ka															
'chhang	bla	rgyal															
	ma																

The inscription translates as:-
 "The Royal Seal of the Dalai Lama, Holder of the thunderbolt."



Size 138 mm x 142 mm

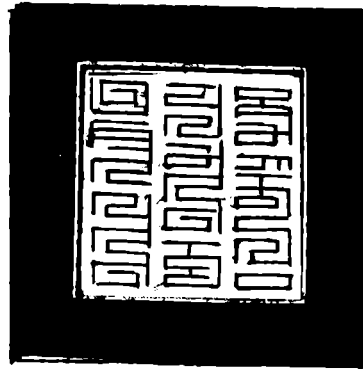
Description. The largest of all Tibetan seals seen to date, this red ink seal dates from 1909 and in all probability is the seal given to the XIII Dalai Lama by the Tibetan people on his ceremonial return to Lhasa from exile in Mongolia and China following the 1904 Younghusband Expedition. It was highly regarded as symbolising Tibetan independence. It was also used by the XIV Dalai Lama. The two outer columns are in Horyig script, the second in Lantsa and the third in Tibetan. The Tibetan script reads:-

Line	1	'phags pa 'i yul
	2	nas sangs rgyas kyi

Line	3	bka lung rgyal
	4	dbang 'jig rten
	5	gsum mgon rten
	6	kuns sten gi kun
	7	khyab rgyal bstan
	8	yongs la mnga dbang
	9	bsgyur ba thams chad
	10	mkhyen pa 'gyur med
	11	rdo rje 'chhang rgya mchho'i
	12	bla ma lha mi yongs kyī
	13	spyi bos mchhod pa'i
	14	yid bzhin dbang gi
	15	rgyal po'i phyag rgya

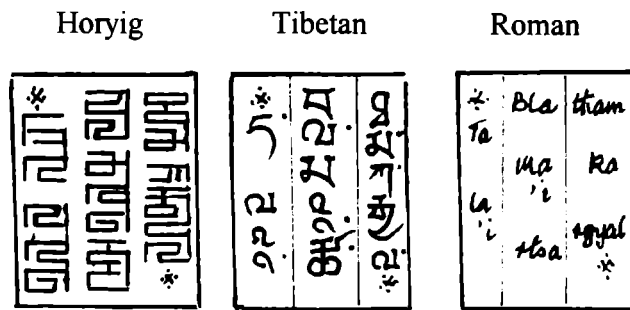
Translation

“The Seal of the Great Sovereign who possesses the wisdom of the Lord Buddha from the Glorious Land, the Lord of the Three Worlds, the Victorious Spreader of the Doctrine, the All-Knowing who exists without change, Holder of the Thunderbolt, the Supreme Teacher anointed and honoured by men and gods.”



Waterfall Type 3
Size 44mm x44mm

Description. Red ink seal generally seen used as the Inmost seal of the letters of the XIII and XIV Dalai Lamas. Inscribed in Horyig script.

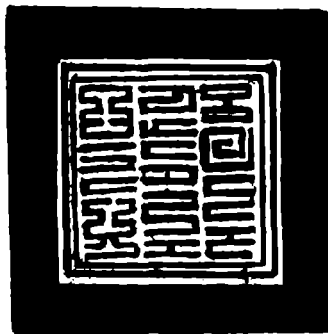


The inscription on the seal can thus be translated as:-

“The official royal seal of the Dalai Lama.”

This was the seal of the XIII Dalai Lama but was also used by the XIV for a time.

* The first and last characters in the Horyig are meaningless and are inserted merely to balance the seal.



Size 44mm x 42mm

Description. Red ink seal seen used as the Inmost Seal of the XIV Dalai Lama.

It differs from earlier Dalai Lama seals in that the script appears to be a mixture of the usual Horyig and some other as yet uncertain characters. The meaning is therefore still to be determined.

Waterfall makes passing reference to it.



Size 24mm
(diameter)

Description. Red ink seal used as the Inmost Seal on personal correspondence.

The design is the endless knot, one of the eight auspicious signs of Buddhism, on which is superimposed a diamond shaped lozenge bearing the Tibetan **ཨ** sign (the letter “A”), probably the initial letter of “Aum” in the Buddhist mantra, “Aum mani padme hum”; this central design is surrounded by two solid concentric circles and an outer circle of pearls. The top margin bears the sun and moon indicating the upmost position of the seal. This personal seal is said to be the scarcest of all the Dalai Lama seals and to have been the original possession of Sanggye Gyatso, the Regent of Tibet following the death of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama in 1682.

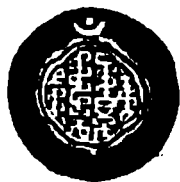
Letters bearing this seal do not as a rule have an outer seal.



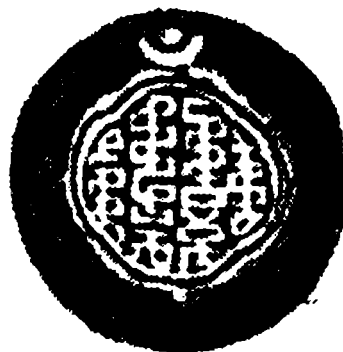
The XIII Dalai Lama

SMALL SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA

Seal No. 6



Diameter 22mm



at 200%

Description. Red ink seal with a snake-like design used as the outer seal on correspondence. Seen on letters of the XIII Dalai Lama.

Seal No. 7



Diameter 18mm



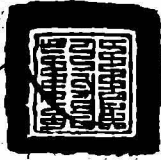
at 200%

Description. Red ink seal with crossed thunderbolts design in use as an outer seal also by the XIII and earlier Dalai Lamas.

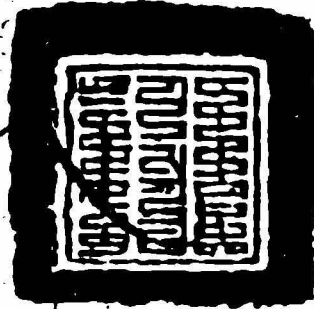
SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA'S ADMINISTRATION

SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA'S ADMINISTRATION

Seal No. 8



Size 21 mm square



at 200%

Black ink seal of the KASHAG, the four man Cabinet of the Dalai Lama. The seal dates from the inception of the Kashag in 1728 during the early stages of the Chinese overlordship under Emperor Yung Ch'eng. The central column contains the Tibetan words "bde skyid" ("happiness and contentment") in Horyig script. This square seal was used as the inner seal on documents. Tibetans called it "officialdom yellow and grey" (yellow hats of the clergy and the laymens' grey clothes).

Seal No. 9



Size 18mm square



at 200%

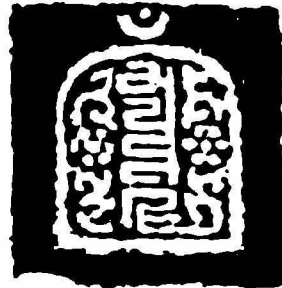
Red ink seal of the KALON LAMA, the monk member of the Kashag. The central column reads "bDe legs", "well being", the outer column being decorative.

SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA'S ADMINISTRATION

Seal No. 10



actual size



at 200%

Size 19mm square

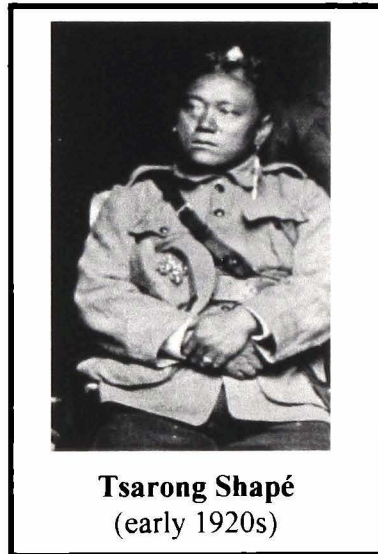
Seal of TSARONG SHAPÉ

Description. Black ink seal with a central vertical row of Horyig characters reading “Spyi dza”, conveying the meaning of “superiority”, “chief among others”.

The seal is in the possession of Tsarong’s grandson from whose papers this impression comes.

Shapé was the title of the four men forming the Kashag, the Dalai Lama’s cabinet.

(Courtesy Geoffrey Flack)



Tsarong Shapé
(early 1920s)

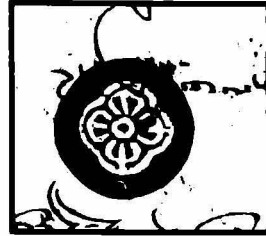
SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA'S ADMINISTRATION

Seal No. 11

Trekhang Seal? Member of the Trade Mission? Shakabpa's Younger brother? (Information from Shakabpa's grandson.)



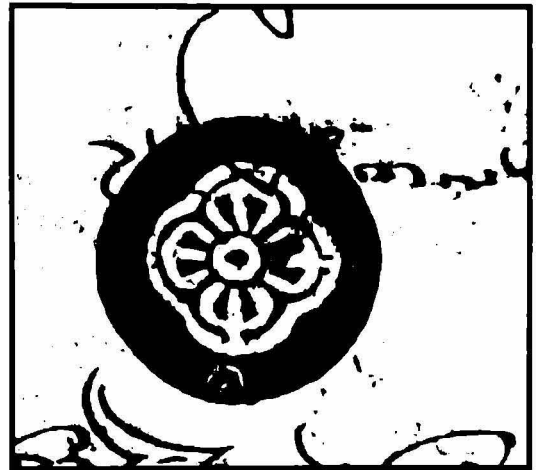
Diameter 19mm



Enhanced

Description. A red ink seal depicting crossed thunderbolts. The seal has been enlarged and enhanced to show detail more clearly.

The seal was provided by Shakabpa's grandson who apparently was unsure of the exact position of Trekhang. His suggestions were incorrect. The Trekhang family was one of the old aristocratic families who traditionally provided a member to train as a monk official for the Government service. This seal belonged to Trekhang who served as a Monk Shapé during the 1930s. He opposed the policies of the Reting Regent who forced him to resign in 1939. Trekhang was an uncle of Tsipön Shakabpa.



Enhanced (at 200%)

SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA'S ADMINISTRATION

Seal No. 12



actual size



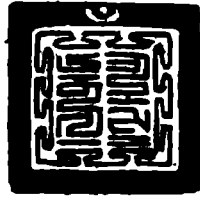
at 200%

Size 12mm diameter

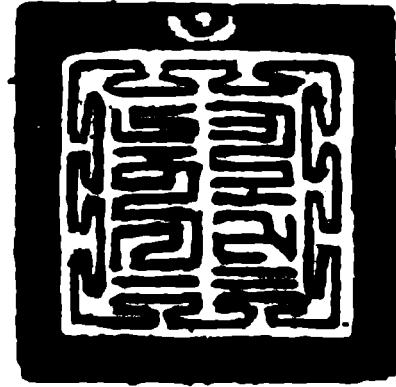
Black wax seal of the KASHAG. This was used as the outer seal on letters. The central circle contains two characters in Chinese apparently indicative of the influence of the Ch'ing dynasty in the establishment of the Kashag.

SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA'S ADMINISTRATION

Seal No. 13



actual size



at 200%

Size 21 mm square

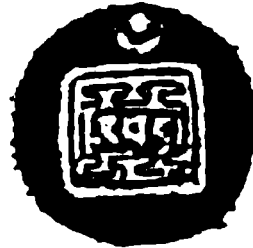
SEAL OF THE TSONGDU (The National Assembly)

Description. Black ink seal with two lines of Horyig Script reading (left) “rGyal” and (right) “zer sa”, i.e. The place of victorious speech.

Seal No. 14



actual size



at 200%

Size 14mm x 14mm

Black ink seal of the **Assembly Member Do-Phing Dorje** shows his initials in Tibetan script, “D ph D”.

N.B. Both these seals share a common border design and this may be indicative of seals belonging to members of the Tsongdu.

SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA'S ADMINISTRATION

Seal No. 15

Grand Secretary



actual size



at 200%

Size 19mm square

Description. This black ink seal was used as the signature on documents emanating from the Grand Secretary's office. It is made up of three vertical columns of Horyig script. These are analysed below:-

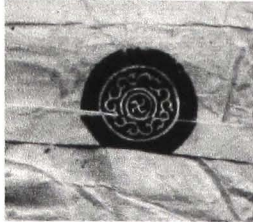
Horyig	Tibetan	Roman												
		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yig</td> <td>la</td> <td>tha</td> </tr> <tr> <td>thang</td> <td>dsin</td> <td>-m</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>kha</td> <td>dg</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>-r</td> </tr> </table>	Yig	la	tha	thang	dsin	-m		kha	dg			-r
Yig	la	tha												
thang	dsin	-m												
	kha	dg												
		-r												

“Yig thang la dsin kha tham dgar” translates as “The seal of the Secretary, keeper of the writing and the speech”.

SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA'S ADMINISTRATION

Seal No. 16

Round Black Seal of the Grand Secretary



actual size



Diameter 15 mm

Description. The black ink circular seal was used as an outer seal on letters etc. A central anti-clockwise swastika is enclosed within two concentric circles which are surrounded by a continuous tendril design and an outer circle.

The four Grand Secretaries were known collectively as the Kadung, or Ecclesiastical Court (also known as the Yig tsang or Nest of letters). This was subordinate to the Kashag. Among other things the Kadung was responsible for the selection of young novice monks from among the leading Lhasa monasteries for training as Tse-trung as the priestly branch of the Administration was known. They were trained at the Tse Lap-tra or Peak School in the Potala. The 175 strong Tse-trung provided the corps of Monk Dzong-pons, etc.. Their lay counterparts, the 175 Trung-khor, were selected from the Yutog School where the sons of the aristocracy and leading families were taught. The Grand Secretaries were themselves chosen from the Trung-Khor.

SEALS OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF TIBET

SEALS OF THE PRIME MINISTER (SILÖN) OF TIBET

Seal No. 17



Size 53 mm square

Description. Red ink seal used on official correspondence. The Prime Minister was the only layman authorized to use a red seal in his official capacity. Red was otherwise the prerogative of the clergy. This seal is in the usual Horyig script and was used as the Inmost Seal.

Horyig	Tibetan	Roman
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 rgyal dbang mekhog 2 gi bkai lung gi 3 ngo mtsher kun khog 4 chos ldan rgyal po'i 5 chhat srid 'phrin las 6 kyid dge mtshan 'bar 7 pa'i bde skyid 'phel

Translation of the Seal:-

“By the supreme order of the Most Excellent King, Protector of the perfect religion, who has authority to carry the affairs of government for the happiness and welfare of all.”

SEALS OF THE PRIME MINISTER (SILÖN) OF TIBET

Seal No. 18

Alternative version of the seal on the preceding page.



Size 48 mm square

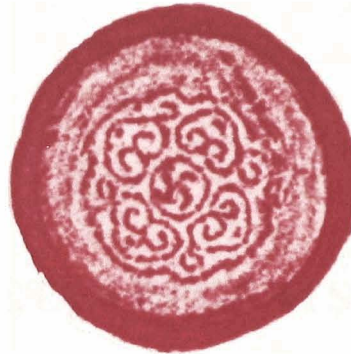
This smaller seal differs from the preceding seal only in the addition of an inserted symbol at the foot of each column to balance the layout. The text remains the same.

SEALS OF THE PRIME MINISTER (SILÖN) OF TIBET

Seal No. 19



actual size



at 200%

Diameter 21mm

Description. Red wax seal usually found as an outer seal on official correspondence. The Prime Minister was the only layman authorised to use a red seal in his official capacity. On private correspondence he used a black seal.

The design shows a rounded clockwise swastika surrounded by a four-fold floral design.

SEALS OF THE TIBETAN REGENTS

**THE GREAT OFFICIAL SILVER SEAL OF THE
TIBETAN REGENTS**

Seal No. 20



Size 80 mm square

Description. Red ink Inmost Seal used on important documents. The seal was a gift from the Chinese Emperor Chi'en Lung in 1759 to the first of the elected Tibetan Regents, Demo Rimpoche Trulku Ngawang Jampel Delek of Tenggyeling who was Regent from 1757-1777 on the death of the VII Dalai Lama.

In the centre are five rows of Tibetan script, to the left two rows of Manchu script and to the right two rows in the Mongolian.

The Tibetan characters read:-

“Bod Kyi las don
Khur 'dzin zhwa ser
bstan pa 'dzin byed
dpal ldan no min
han kyi tham ka.”

This translates as “Seal of the glorious No min khan who has responsibility for the government of Tibet and for the teaching of the Yellow Hats.”

SMALL SEAL OF THE REGENT

Seal No. 21



actual size



at 200%

Diameter 18mm

Description. Red ink seal used as an outer seal by the Regent, late 19th century. The design shows a floral arrangement in the centre surrounded by eight smaller designs, abstract and animal.

**SEAL OF THE REGENT OF TIBET
THE TAKTRA RINPOCHE, 1941-1950**

SEAL No. 22



Size 55mm square

Description. Red ink Inmost Seal used on correspondence of an official character. The seal is inscribed in seven vertical lines of Horyig script.

Horyig	Tibetan	Roman
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1234567 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1234567 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sar bsi na pa'i 2 gsal ba dri seng shyong 3 stag brag mgal pan-di. 4 ta ran ting tal 5 'pong na las dgar mchhan 6 mchhog di 'bar ba'i tham 7 ga bde skyid ringa chho

Translation of the seal:-

“The seal of the Most Excellent Taktra Pandita, Exalted Holder of the Highest Office, profound in knowledge, learned in teaching, radiating as the sun the sense of joy and happiness to all.”

**SEALS OF THE PANCHEN LAMA
AND HIS COURT**

EARLY SEALS OF THE PANCHEN LAMA

Seal No. 23



Size 70 x 65mm

Seal No. 24



Size 70 x 70mm

Description. Two early red ink seals of the III Panchen Lama Lobsang Palden Yeshe (1758-80). Inscribed in Lantsa script. The word “Mangalam” (blessing) is placed either side of a composite supposedly possessed of secret powers. This represents the ten letters o, u, m, h, k, sh, l, w, r, and y and is called the “nam-chu-wang-dam”, i.e. “the ten powerful letters”.

AN EARLY SEAL OF THE PANCHEN LAMA

Seal No. 25



Size 70 x 68mm

Description. Red ink seal of the 18th century Panchen Lamas inscribed in the Indian Lantsa script. This variety of the Devanagari alphabet was much used by Buddhists in India and Tibet.

The nine characters appear to be

Phu	rbu	ghu
ru	ka	sha
la	su	ba

The “phurbu” is the ritual dagger used in Lamaist ceremonies; and “kasha” (or “Kusha”) is a type of grass also used in religious rites. The seal might therefore be translated as

“The Great Teacher who holds the Thunderbolt dagger.” (Purbu Guru)

The Panchen Lama was referred to in Tibet as “Tsang Panchen Rimpoche”. “The Precious Learned One of Tsang.”

SEAL OF THE PANCHEN LAMA

Seal No. 26

(hJah-sa bKah-tham. “The Seal of Heaven and earth”)



Size 39mm square

Description. Red ink seal usually seen used as the Inmost Seal on documents and letters. The seal's design shows a central monogram in Lhantsa script resting on a lotus cushion and crowned by a conch shell. The monogram is a ten letter composite to which the lamas attributed mystical powers. At each side is the word “mangalam”, the Sanskrit form of the Tibetan “bKrashis”, i.e. “blessing” as in bKrashis lhun po (Tashi lhünpo), the name of the Panchen Lama's monastery near Shigatse.

SMALL SEALS OF THE PANCHEN LAMA AND HIS COURT

Seal No. 27



Diameter 19mm

Red ink seal used by the Panchen Lama. Example known from the 6th Panchen Lama, Chökyi Nyima (1883-1937).

Seal No. 28



Diameter 17mm

Red ink seal seen used on correspondence of the 4th Panchen Lama, Tempe Nyima (1781-1854). Used as an outer seal in red ink.

Seal No. 29



Diameter 17mm

Red ink seal used by the Treasurer of the Panchen Lama.

Seal No. 30



Diameter 18mm

Red ink seal of the Secretary of the Panchen Lama. This shows use of Chinese characters instead of the Conch shell of the other seals.

SEALS OF THE PANCHEN LAMA'S COURT



The actual seal is
in red ink.

The Panchen Lama's small red ink seal (No. 27) seen used
on one of his crested envelopes.

SEALS OF THE SAKYA LAMA

OFFICIAL SEAL OF THE SAKYA LAMA

Seal No. 31



Size 55mm x 55mm

Description. Red ink seal used as the Inmost seal on official documents.

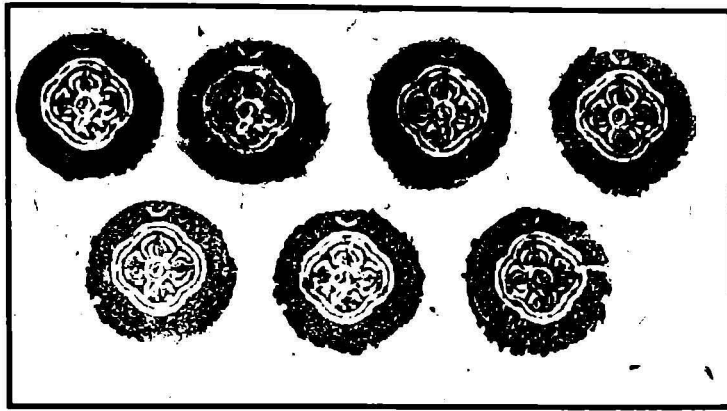
Horyig	Tibetan	Roman																		
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>ས</td> <td>ཀའཇི</td> <td>འཇིའཇི</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ཡ</td> <td></td> <td>ཀ</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ལ</td> <td>ཉི</td> <td>/</td> </tr> </table>	ས	ཀའཇི	འཇིའཇི	ཡ		ཀ	ལ	ཉི	/	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Sa</td> <td>dbang</td> <td>las</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Saya</td> <td></td> <td>ka</td> </tr> <tr> <td>pa</td> <td>gyi</td> <td>/</td> </tr> </table>	Sa	dbang	las	Saya		ka	pa	gyi	/
ས	ཀའཇི	འཇིའཇི																		
ཡ		ཀ																		
ལ	ཉི	/																		
Sa	dbang	las																		
Saya		ka																		
pa	gyi	/																		

Translation of the seal:-

“The seal of the operation of the Sakyapa’s power.”



Part of a cloth backed Monastery Letter bearing the seals of the SAKYA LAMA.
(Courtesy Geoffrey Flack)



The actual seals
are in in red ink.

Impressions in red ink taken from a brass monastic seal acquired in Shigatse on 10th May 1983. The crossed Dorje design is strikingly similar to that of the small Sakya seal on the previous page, and the seal might well be from the Sakya monastery following the Chinese ravages during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s.

MONASTIC SEALS

MONASTIC SEALS

The three large monasteries in the Lhasa area, Drepung, Sera and Ganden, the three seats, were referred to collectively as the Däh-Se-Gah-ni. Impressions of their seals are rarely seen and are usually so poorly struck as to be largely illegible. The illustrations below have been reconstructed from a few examples noted from time to time. They are, therefore “best attempts” and may indicate broadly what the seals were like.

Seal No. 34



DREPUNG

Diameter 16mm

Description. Red ink seal. Top and bottom are Tibetan characters for “Bras” and for “spung” (‘Bras spung being the Tibetan spelling of Drepung). This is repeated in Horyig left and right. The centre is a floral design.

Seal No. 35



SERA

Diameter 18mm

Description. Red ink seal. At the top are the Tibetan characters སེ་ར་ (Se ra), on the left རྩ་ (Gya), at the bottom རྩ་ལྷོ་ (chhen) and at the right ཐ་ (Tha). These translate as “The Great Seal of Sera”, (“The Rose Fence”).

Seal No. 36



GANDEN

Diameter 19mm

Description. Red ink seal. At the top are the Tibetan characters དག་ལོ་ (dGah) and at the bottom ལོ་ (blo). These are obviously abbreviations, “dGah” being the first syllable of dGah-Idan, GANDEN, and “blo” giving the meaning of INTELLECT.

MONASTIC SEALS

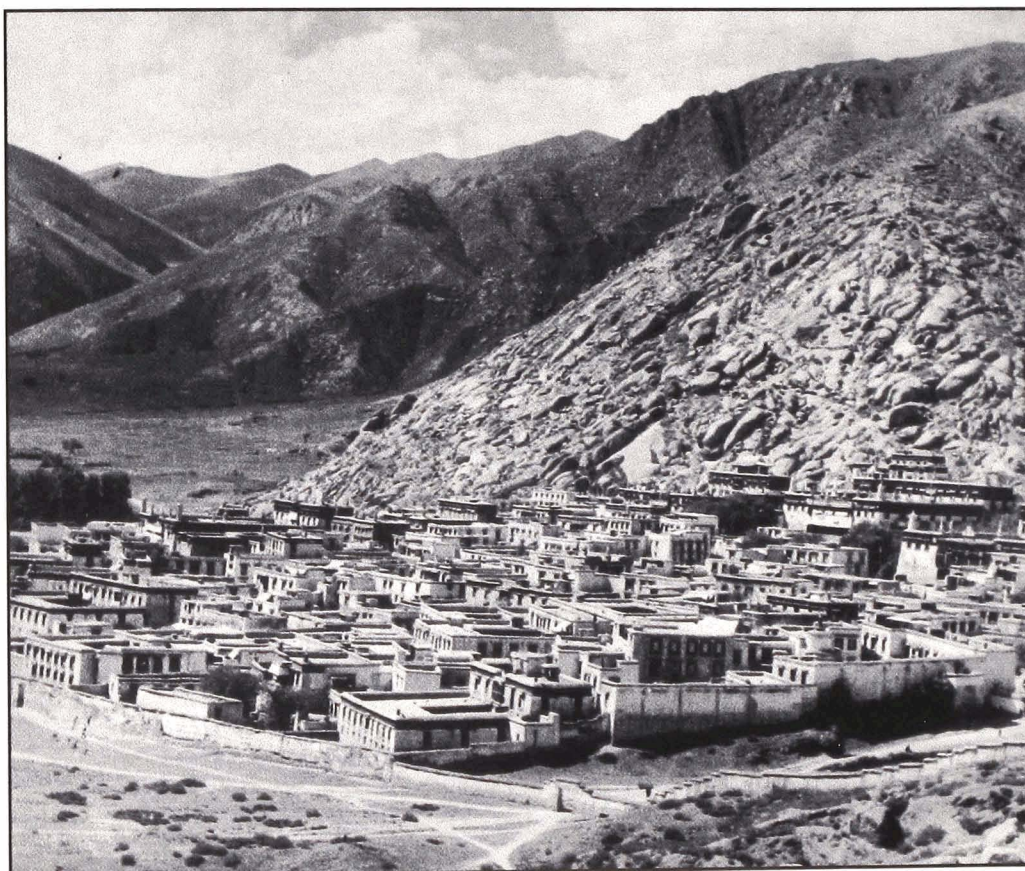
Seal No. 37



Diameter 20mm

SERA MONASTERY, LHASA, SMAD COLLEGE

Description. Red ink seal showing the Tibetan characters ཨ་ཧྲཱི་བླ་བྱ་ལོ་ཐང་། “A-tsa bla-brang lo-thang”. i.e. “A-tsa Residence Revenue Office.” There were three colleges at Sera, Sera Me (Smad), Sera Je and Sera Ngag-pa. Sera Me taught novices and was the oldest foundation dating from 1419.



SERA MONASTERY, LHASA founded 1419

MONASTIC SEALS

Seal No. 38



Size 17mm square

SEAL OF THE ABBOT OF PALKOR CHOIDE MONASTERY IN GYANTSE.

Description. Red ink seal of the Abbot in Horyig characters. Those in the left column read “dPal-chhos” and in the right “spyi dag”. This is an abbreviated form of “d Pal khor Chos sde spyi khyab dag po” which translates as “The Chief Official of the Palkor Choide Monastery.”

Seal No. 39



Diameter 20mm

SEAL OF ZHAB KHANG SO NAM OF PALRI MONASTIC ESTATE IN PENAM.

Description. Black ink seal of this Monastic Official used as witness to signatures on a legal document.

Seal No. 40



Diameter 9mm

SEAL OF GE-LA SI OF ZAR MONASTERY

Description. This tiny black ink seal was used to witness a legal document.

ADMINISTRATIVE SEALS

ADMINISTRATIVE SEALS, THE DZONGS

Seal No. 41

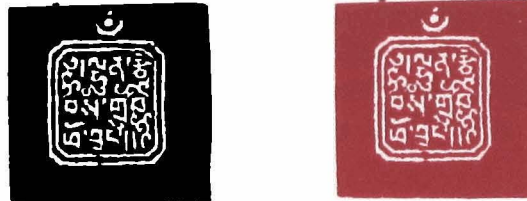


Size 20mm square

SEAL OF THE PHARI DZONGPÖN

Description. Black ink seal with three lines of Horyig script, (left) reading “Phag”, (centre) “ri” and (right) “rDzong”. Several ornamental characters throughout balance the seal. The seal reads “Phari Dzong.”

Seal No. 42



Size 26mm square

SEAL OF LHÜNTZE DZONG

Description. Seal seen in in both black and red inks. Three lines of Tibetan script read
“Lhun rtshé
bSa grub
Pho brang”

This is the abbreviated form of “Lhun rtse bSam grub gling Pho brang”, “The Palace of Lhuntse, accomplishment of one’s purpose.”

ADMINISTRATIVE SEALS, THE DZONGS

Seal No. 43



Size 34mm square

SEAL OF THE MONK DZONGPÖN OF LHÜNTZE DZONG

Description. Red ink seal with the Horyig character “ta” used decoratively.

Lhüntze Dzong was a massive hilltop fort and administrative centre in Takpo province commanding the approach from India some 60 miles north of the Kameng Frontier Division of the North East Frontier Agency. Here the XIV Dalai Lama halted briefly on his flight from the Chinese Communists in 1959. During his stay he set up the Provisional Tibetan Government in Exile. The Dzong has since been destroyed by the Chinese.

ADMINISTRATIVE SEALS

Seal No. 44

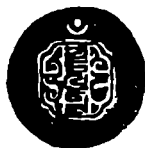


Size 18mm

SEAL OF THE TIBETAN TRADE AGENT, GYANTSE

Description. Black ink seal inscribed in three vertical columns of Horyig script. (Left) “Phun”, (central) “tshogs”, (right) “bde skyid”. this translates as “Heaven’s contentment.”

Seal No. 45



Size 11mm

SEAL OF THE FINANCE MINISTER, TSIPÖN SHAKABPA

Description. This small black ink seal has a design in three vertical columns in which the outer columns depict tendrils with mock Horyig in the centre. Seen on a note from Shakabpa dated December 1947.

Seal No. 46



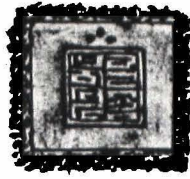
Size 14mm diameter

A FURTHER SEAL OF TSIPÖN SHAKABPA

Description. This small ink seal appears on a letter from Shakabpa dated June 1959 when he was living in exile in Kalimpong. It is struck in a dark brown ink. The central character seems to be the Horyig “ra”. The seal is probably a private one. The letter was addressed to the Commander of the Chu-shi Gang-druk- “Four Rivers Six Ranges” - the Khamba guerilla force fighting the Chinese invaders in Tibet after the flight of the Dalai Lama to India, and was probably taken by special messenger.

ADMINISTRATIVE SEALS

Seal No. 47



Size 18mm square

SEAL OF THE TAX OFFICIALS OF NYANANG.

Description. Nyanang (also known as Kuti or Nielamu), Tibetan border town in which the Nepalese enjoyed extra-territorial rights. Inscribed in a pseudo-Horyig script this **black wax seal** has been seen on a letter to the Maharaja of Nepal as an outer seal.

ADMINISTRATIVE SEALS

Seals Nos. 48 & 49



The actual seals showing the finely chased workmanship.

SEALS OF THE DZASA DEPON SONAM LADEN LA

Seal No. 48



Size 22mm square



Seal No. 49

Size 12mm square

Description . These two black ink seals belonged to the Dzasa Depon (General) Sonam Laden La, who was appointed by the XIII Dalai Lama to organize a Police Department in Lhasa following the Chinese withdrawal from Tibet in 1912. Laden La was given the rank of Depon and became Superintendent of Police. Both seals are inscribed in Horyig. Seal No. 48 has three vertical columns reading (i) “legs”. (ii) “tshogs kun”, (iii) “ldan rgyal”. This may be translated as “The Victorious Presence, many joys”. The smaller seal, No. 49, has the one word “legs”. This may mean “Joys” or it could be an abbreviation of Laden La which in Tibetan is spelt “Legs-ldan lags”. (Photograph and impressions by courtesy of Nicholas Rhodes.)

POSTAL SEALS

POSTAL SEALS

Seal No. 50



Diameter 23mm

PHARI POST OFFICE

Description. Black ink seal used very rarely to cancel mail when the regular canceller had been mislaid or was not available. The central square contains the characters for “Phag”, the first syllable of “Phag-ri”.

Seal No. 51



Diameter 22mm

GYANTSE POST OFFICE

Description. Usage as above. The central square contains the characters for “rGyal”, the first syllable of Gyantse.

Seal No. 52



Diameter 19mm

PENAM POST OFFICE

Description. Usage as above. The smallest of the five. The central square contains the character for “Pa” the first syllable of “Pa rNam”.

POSTAL SEALS

Seal No. 53



Size 22mm

SHIGATSE POST OFFICE

Description. A black ink seal with the same rare usage as the other postal seals. It differs from the other seals in that it bears a complete inscription instead of the abbreviated identification common to the others. The two lines of Tibetan script read “gShi-sa-rTse / yig kad”, i.e. “Shigatse Letter Post”.

Seal No. 54



Size 22mm

LHASA POST AND TELEGRAPH OFFICE

Description. This black ink seal has only recently come to light. It shows in the centre the Tibetan characters for “LHA”, the first syllable of “Lhasa”. The only known usage is on a Telegram form as a receiving mark. This was sent from Gyantse to General Dzasa Laden La in Lhasa in 1923/4.

BANKNOTE SEALS

All Tibetan banknotes bore two seals. The red ink seals shown below were impressed on the left side of the note by the monk official of the issuing authority. These Tse-cha seals are shown below.

Seal No. 55



Diameter 17mm

Description. This Tse-cha seal showing a four-fold scroll pattern appears on the first issue of banknotes in 1890 denominated in trangkas.

Seal No. 56



Size 11mm

Description. This seal is seen on the lower value notes of the 1892 issue denominated in srangs. The pattern is irregular and without meaning.

Seal No. 57

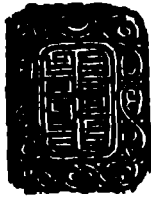


Diameter 11mm

Description. A circular seal again showing a meaningless and crowded mass of symbols. Used on notes of 25 srang and above.

BANKNOTE SEALS

The following black seals are found on the right side of banknotes. These are the Lacha seals of the lay official of the Treasury.



Seal No. 58

Type 1 Size 25 x 19mm



Seal No. 59

Type 2 Size 16 x 14mm

Type 1 is seen on the highest value note of the 1890 issue (50 trangkas or 7½ srang); **Type 2** on the 1892 notes of 5 and 10 srang. The two lines of Horyig script run vertically and are identical on both seals.

Horyig		Tibetan		Roman	
x				g	d
				Zhu	Ngul
				ng	Khang
					ng

Translation: “gZhung dNgul-Khang”
“Government Treasury”

Type 3 Size 23mm x 19mm



Seal No. 60

Type 3 also has two vertical lines of Horyig script but the text is different from that in Types 1 and 2. The border is in the design of thunderbolts and characters reminiscent of the stamps of the 1933 issue of Tibet.

Seen on the higher value notes of the 1892 issue.

Horyig		Tibetan		Roman	
x				S	d
				r	pal
				zh	bar
				i	

Translation: “Srid-Zhi dPal-’bar”
“Tranquil Government,
Glorious radiance.”

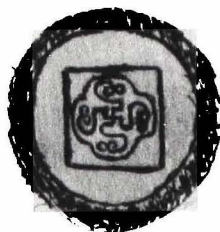
This was the official designation of the Kashag.

SEALS OF THE NOBILITY

SEALS OF THE NOBILITY

The Taring Family

Seal No. 61



Size 15mm sq.

Description. Black wax square seal of the Taring's Dopta Estate near Shigatse. The design shows a central swastika springing from a four-fold tendril motif.

Seal No. 62



Size 10mm long

Description. A tiny oval shaped black wax seal of the Taring's Gyantse Estate. The tombstone design contains a pattern of bars.

SEALS OF THE NOBILITY

The Tsarong Family

Seal No. 63



Size 33mm

Description. Black wax personal seal of Tsarong Shapé. Oval with a design of swastika and thunderbolts. At the top are the Tibetan characters ལྷ་ལྷན་ཚ་རང་ལག་, i.e. “Lha-ldan Tsharong Shag” and at the bottom in English “Tsarong Lhasa”.

Seal No. 64



Diameter 15mm

Description. Black wax seal of the Agent of Tsarong’s Phari Estate. A central vertical column bears the Tibetan characters ལོ་ར་ལ་ i.e. “Nor-la” with a design either side.

Seal No. 65



Diameter 15mm

Description. Black wax seal of the Steward of Tsarong’s Shigatse Estate. Showing a central oblong containing symbolic characters flanked on either side by a design of bars.

MISCELLANEOUS SEALS

MISCELLANEOUS SEALS

Seals of the King of Mustang (Lo)

Seal No. 66

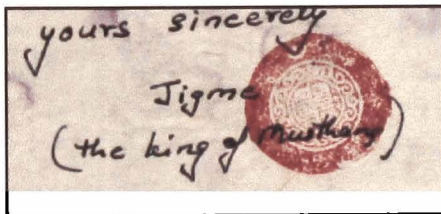


Size 25mm

Description. Black wax seal the design being a lotus cushion in the centre of which are the Tibetan characters for “Yi gLo rGyal”, i.e. “The King of Lo”. Mustang is an ancient Tibetan Kingdom now within the borders of Nepal and the only former Nepali territory to maintain a semi-autonomous status. (Circa 18th-19th centuries)

Seal No. 67

Seal of the King of Mustang
(on 1972 letter)



actual size































































at 200%

Red ink seal of King Jigme Dorje Tandrul. The enlargement has been enhanced to show the design.

APPENDIX

The Horyig and Tibetan Characters as found on some important Seals, and their Roman Forms.

Horyig	Tibetan	Roman	Horyig	Tibetan	Roman
		ka			tsha
		kha			dsa
		ga			wa
		nga			zha
		cha			za
		chha			ha
		ja			ya
		nya			ra
		ta			la
		tha			sha
		da			sa
		na			ha
		pa			a
		pha			
		ba			
		ma			
		tsa			

NOTE: Horyig vowel signs are usually affixed to the lower right corner of the consonant, thus ki ཀཱཱ, ke ཀཱཱ, ku ཀཱཱ; exceptionally "o" is subjoined, thus ku ཀཱཱ. Tibetan vowels are usually placed over the consonant thus ki ཀཱཱ, ke ཀཱཱ, ko ཀཱཱ; exceptionally "u" is placed below, thus ku ཀཱཱ.

INDEX

Altan Khan	2	Mangalam	28
Banknotes	49, 50	Mustang - see Lo	
Ch'ien Lung Emperor	22	Nam-chu Wang-dam	26
Ch'ing Dyansty	ii, 13	National Assembly -see Tsongdu	
Däh-Se-Gah-ni	36	Palkor Choide	38
Dalai Lama V	7	Panchen Lama III	26
XI	ii	IV	29
XIII	2, 5, 7, 8	VI	29
XIV	2, 5, 6, 41	Penam	38
Demo Rimpoche	22	Phari	40, 46, 53
Dophing Dorje	14	Phurbu Guru	27
Dopta Estate	52	Potala	16
Drepung	36	Prime Minister	18, 19, 20
Ganden	36	Regents	22, 23, 24
Gela si of Zar	38	Sakya Lama	32, 33, 34
Gnya nang	43	Sanggye Gyatse	7
Golden King	2	Sera	36, 37
Grand Secretary	15, 16	Shakabpa	12, 42
Gyantse	38, 40, 46, 52	Shigatse	28, 47, 52, 53
Hsien Feng Emperor	ii	Silön - see Prime Minister	
Jah-sa Kah-tham	28	Sonam Gyatso	2
Jigme Dorje Tandrul (King of Mustang)	55	Taktra Rimpoche	24
Kadung	16	Taring	52
Kalon Lama	10	Tashilhünpo	28
Karmapa	i	Trekhang Rimpoche	12
Kashag	10, 11, 13, 16, 50	Trung-khor	16
La cha	50	Tsarong	11, 53
Laden la	44	Tse cha	49
Lantsa	26, 27	Tse Lap-tra	16
Lhasa	16, 47	Tse trung	16
Lhüntze Dzong	40, 41	Tsongdu	14
Lo	55	Yig tsang	16
		Yung Ch'eng Emperor	10
		Yutog	16
		Zar	38
		Zhab Khang Sonam of Palri	38