MAKING THE MARK

"On the little finger of the right hand... is worn a seal-ring (khutba), which is generally of silver, with a carnelian, or other stone, upon which is engraved the wearer's name. The seal-ring is used for signing letters and other writings; and its impression is considered more valid than the sign-manual. Almost every person who can afford it has a seal-ring, even though he be a servant." (Edward W. Lane, An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians (1860), p. 30)

Seals have been in use in the eastern world since the beginning of recorded history and carried the weight of the modern written signature. The seal, primarily attesting the authority of the person who used it, was also used on various materials to show ownership of property. The image or inscription on a seal was executed in reverse, in order to appear correctly in the impression.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) adopted a khutba around 7 AH/628-29 CE, reportedly made of silver and inscribed with the words Muhammad rasul Allah (Muhammad is the messenger of God). Collected traditions of the sayings of the Prophet (the Hadith) forbade men from wearing gold, thus the officially approved metals for seal rings included silver, copper, bronze, etc.

The most common inscribed stones set into such rings were varieties of cryptocrystalline quartz, such as carnelian, and jaspers and agates of various colours. Not uncommon as well were rock crystal, garnet, turquoise, lapis lazuli and coral. More luxurious choices were precious stones such as spinel, sapphire, ruby and emerald. The inscriptions on seals most often included the name of the owner, sometimes accompanied by a pious expression or proverb such as 'Glory is God's (Alone)' (see LNS 855 J). In a significant number of instances, a religious inscription alone served as an individual's seal.

Seals were a necessity in governmental, business and daily affairs. For example, English officials in India were required to own seals with their names in Arabic characters (see LNS 2019 J).

Seals are abundant all over the Islamic world, and countless impressions and extant seals remain to show that Muslim rulers and others regularly used seals, from the early caliphs to the Mughal emperors and the Ottoman sultans. Seals were most commonly worn as finger rings; though stamp seals, which frequently had holes for suspension (see LNS 47 HS, LNS 2486 J, LNS 855 J and LNS 2019 J), were also common. Distinguished individuals even had seal bearers who carried their seals in a small bag, producing them when needed.

The al-Sabih Collection preserves the most extensive, exhaustive and distinguished collection of medieval Islamic jewellery in the world, with seals, in both ring and stamp forms, comprising one of the strongest areas.
The Dar al-Atwar al-Islamiyyah (DAI) was created to be a cultural organisation that encouraged people to learn more about the history, beauty and traditions in science, thought, architecture, literature, music, and more of Islamic art and culture. Originally, this meant supporting the loan of The al-Sabah Collection of art from the Islamic world to the State of Kuwait. Today, of course, the role of the organisation is much greater.

This season, Cultural Season 17, the Dar al-Atwar al-Islamiyyah is offering more: more lectures, more music, more workshops for adults, more opportunities for young people, more chances to interact with parts of the collection, and more. Like the signet rings and seals that are the visual representation of this season, the DAI will make its mark this season on more people in many more ways.
Stamp seal made of silver, the stamping face of lobed teardrop shape with a 6 lobed base, the top with a hole for suspension, engraved in rhombus with the owner’s name ‘al-Abd Nashir bin Ali’ and the Shī‘a invocation ‘Call upon Allāh, the paragon of wonders; you shall find him of help in your misfortune. All anguish and all sorrow shall disappear through thy divine friendship. Oh ‘Ali, Oh ‘Ali, Oh ‘Ali’

Iranian World, 9th -10th century AH/15th - 16th century CE.
heavy finger ring made from gold with plaquettes, the sunken-capped quatrefoil on the circular bezel engraved in Latin with 'bullar, the greatest, al-a'zib'; the latter indicating that the ring was a very high official of the Roman world, circa 6th-7th century AH, 1260-1380AD.
Large finger ring made of gold inlaid with niello with tiny thuluth inscriptions around the bezel and set with a silver and niello seal inscribed in nasta'liq script reading ‘The humble and unworthy Abd al-Wahhab’

Iranian World, 9th-10th century AH/15th-16th century CE

خالص من الذهب عليه شرائط بالتنانير دقيقة
بخط الكتابات حول المسطح الذي يعمل حسبما من القصة
برز عليه بالتنانير بخط التنانير نفسه، بالتفصيل
الحفيظ عبد الوهاب
إيران 9-1358هـ/15-1940م
شلفد

Gold ring with two plaques, inscribed in Arabic with the name 'Salman'.

East Iranian World, 6th century AH/12th century CE
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Stamp seal carved from jade, with a rounded stamping face inscribed in ornamental kufic reading "God is sufficient [Iam sufficent for you]

East Iranian World, 5th-6th century AH/11th-12th century CE.
Finger ring made from gold, with a plain wire shank and a flat rectangular bezel inscribed in naskh with the name (in Persian form), ‘Ummar b. Abu Bakr ‘Muhammad al-Ghazw’.

East Iranian World, 6th–7th century AH/12th–13th century CE.

غزلتی
میلانگار

خاتم من نهذب، یکند وسطه استخوانی علیه دعاء‌من السلك الغالی از الزوارف، وظیفه بلندی‌الاسمی یک‌یک
محمد الغاری
شرق ایران، قرن 6–7 ه/12–13 م.
Finger ring carved from one piece of jade, the band inscribed with the supplication to God, 'On fashioned, Supporter in the greatest of concerns'.

The ancient world, 8th century AH/14th century CE.
Finger ring made of one piece of jade, the bezel featuring the name and date 'Karib da Li 1781' in neo-Hittite and 'Karibdad' in devanagari script.
India, 1781 AH/1864-65 CE.
Finger ring made of silver with pointed shoulders, set with a garnet set within a granule of rolled glass. "Glory to God's Ajana." Early Islamic World, 9th century AH/15th century CE.
Stamp seal made of silver; the stamping face of lobed, teardrop shape with a ribbed base, the top with a hole for suspension, engraved in Hebrew with the owner's name 'Abd Allah ibn Nuri and the 40th's inscription 'Call upon Allah, the thron of wonders; you shall find him of help in your misfortune. All angels and all men shall disappear, through the divine providence. 
Ar M, Ar M, Or W'.

Iranian World, 13th century AH/15th–16th century CE.
The KIPCO Group is one of the biggest diversified holding companies in the Middle East and North Africa. The Group has significant ownership interests in a portfolio of over 70 companies operating across 26 countries. Its main sector focus is financial services, insurance and media. Through its core companies, subsidiaries and affiliates, KIPCO has interests in the real estate, industrial, education and management advisory sectors.

Once again, KIPCO is proud to be the sponsor of this year’s Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah calendar.

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إن شركة مشاريع الكويت تعود مجدداً برمجتها للتقويم السنوي لدار الأثر الإسلامية هذا العام.