



ABŪ ZAYD B. MOḤAMMAD KĀŠĀNĪ

ABŪ ZAYD B. MOḤAMMAD B. ABĪ ZAYD KĀŠĀNĪ, perhaps the single most important luster potter of Kāšān known to us. More signed and dated works (from 587/1191 to 616/1219) are known by him than by any other potter, and his signature occurs on a greater variety of wares, including both tiles and vessels. His high status as a potter is shown by his collaboration with Moḥammad b. Abī Ṭāher (see [Abū Ṭāher](#)) in the decoration of the two holiest Shi'ite shrines at Qom (602/1205) and Mašhad (612/1215-16). Abū Zayd's work is of excellent technical quality and in general of great artistic skill, and his best pieces are among the masterpieces of the period. In its fullest form his signatures reads: *katabaho Abū Zayd be-kaṭṭehe ba'da mā 'amalaho wa šana'aho* "decorated by Abū Zayd in his own hand after he had made and fashioned it," which indicates that he was involved at all stages of the ceramic production, and was not just a decorator. The name of his father and grandfather are given on the *meḥrāb* at Mašhad. The phrase *be-kaṭṭehe* "in his own hand" is often appended to his name and has in the past caused confusion, being read by A. U. Pope as Abū Rofāza and by M. Bahrāmī as Abū Zayd Bāza.

The most important of Abū Zayd's surviving work consists of tiling. In the shrines mentioned above, his signature appears on frieze tiles, star tiles, and, at Mašhad, a large *meḥrāb*. This latter piece is his finest work, showing the highest quality of calligraphy, molded arabesques, and painted scrolling. A



number of his star tiles and vessels show him as an accomplished figure painter. While his two earliest dated pieces are painted in the so-called “Ray” miniature style, the rest of his works are painted in a highly developed Kāšān style—in whose creation he may well have played the formative role.

His signed and dated wares (all in the luster technique) are as follows: vase fragment (587/1191), private collection; dish (598/1201), private collection; star tile (600/1203), Cairo Museum; tiling (602/1205), in situ, Āstāna at Qom; dish (604/1207), Reitlinger Collection, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (unpublished); star tile (607/1210), Boston Museum of Fine Arts; star tile (608/1211), Boston Museum of Fine Arts; bowl (609/1212), private collection; star tile (609/1212), Cairo Museum; tiling (612/1215), in situ, shrine at Mašhad; bowl (616/1219), Gemeente Museum, The Hague. Two undated pieces are recorded: rim sherd of bowl, British Institute of Persian Art, Tehran; star tile, Gemeente Museum, The Hague.

From the differences in the form of his signature it is unlikely that he is identical with [Abū Zayd Kāšānī](#) who signed two *mīnāʿī* bowls. A. U. Pope, on the basis of readings from unpublished photographs, suggests a brother for Abū Zayd, named ‘Alī b. MoḤammad b. Abī Zayd, though this can not be confirmed.

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