



DĀMĠĀNĪ (2)

DĀMĠĀNĪ, *nesba* of a father and two sons from Dāmġān who worked as engineers, builders, and stucco carvers in the early 14th century.

1. Ḥosayn b. Abī Ṭāleb Dāmġānī was responsible for most of the superb foundation inscription in cut plaster that runs around the flanged tomb tower abutting the congregational mosque at Beṣṭām (Blair). The inscription, one of the finest examples of monumental epigraphy surviving from the Il-khanid period, is composed of two registers, each with fifty-six panels, and is written in a stately interlaced Kufic. The panels are divided horizontally into three zones, the lower zone containing the basic shapes of the letters, which are rarely interlaced, a middle zone in which the stems of the letters are interlaced, and an upper zone in which the stems and interlacing terminate in flourishes or palmettes. The inscription in the lower register identifies the building as the tomb that the Il-khanid sultan Öljeitü (Üljāytü) ordered for his infant son in Rajab 708/December 1308-January 1309; it is signed “the work of Ḥosayn b. Abī Ṭāleb, the engineer (*mohandes*) from Dāmġān.” The upper register contains a koranic passage (48:1-7) and the signature of Ḥosayn’s son Moḥammad (see 3, below), who was responsible for eight more mannered panels at the end of the band, as well as other signed work at Beṣṭām.

2. Ḥājī b. Ḥosayn b. Abī Ṭāleb Dāmġānī signed a stucco inscription that survives in the ruins of a small mosque abutting the Pīr-e ‘Alamdār in Dāmġān (Combe et al., no. 5156; Blair) and, along with his brother Moḥammad (see 3,



below), a band dated 702/1302-03 around the first room of the monk's cell in the shrine of *Bāyazīd Bestāmī* at Bestām (Combe et al., no. 5155). Use of the *nesba* Dāmġānī and the fact that Ḥājī worked on a small mosque in Dāmġān suggest that members of the family were specifically recruited to work at the site of Bestām, about 85 km away from their hometown, in order to execute the fine plaster work ordered by the Il-khanid sultans Ġāzān (694--703/1295-1304) and Öljeitü (703-17/1304-17) during their restoration activities there.

3. Moḥammad b. Ḥosayn Dāmġānī, Ḥājī's brother, executed much of the fine stucco carving added to the shrine of *Bāyazīd Bestāmī* and the nearby congregational mosque on the orders of Ġāzān and Oljāytü (Blair). Beside the band that he signed with his brother (see 2, above), he left four more signatures at the site: on the arch of the *meḥrāb* in the mosque adjacent to the tomb (Combe et al., no. 5329); in the upper register of the band around the flanged tomb tower (see 1, above); in the upper band around the portal recess leading from the congregational mosque to the tomb tower; and in a large band dated 713/1313-14 around the entrance corridor leading to the courtyard (Combe et al., no. 5328). Most of his work is done in a spidery cursive with punched stems, played off against a thin, angular script used for framing bands.

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