



## MAḤALLĀTI, MOḤAMMAD

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**MAḤALLĀTI, Moḥammad**, a master calligrapher of the Timurid period, known only through three surviving works on wood and stone (a cenotaph, a door, and a stone plaque), which reflect the stylistic influence of the Timurid prince and master calligrapher [Ġiāt-al-Din Bāysonqor](#) (for a detailed description, see Golmohammadi, 2006, pp. 61-69). The three surviving works are:

1. The undated cenotaph in Emāmzāda Ḥabib b. Musā in Kāšān, which has been called the grave of Shah ‘Abbās I. It is a rectangular, polished porphyry cenotaph in an apsidal structure located on the southeast side of the shrine, on a stone platform. It bears inscriptions exquisitely wrought in the *tulṭ* script (see [CALLIGRAPHY](#)) on the two long sides and one end, as well as on the top ([FIGURE 1](#), [FIGURE 2](#), [FIGURE 3](#)). The inscription on the sides starts with “Āyat al-korsi” verse (Qur’ān 2.256), followed by the phrase *ṣadaqa Allāh al-‘Azim*, and the name of the calligrapher, Moḥammad Maḥallāti ([FIGURE 2](#)). The name of the stonemason, Mobārakšāh appears at the end of the cenotaph ([FIGURE 3](#); Narāqi, 1969, pp. 155-56; Meškāti, p. 260). There are no historical records of the burial place of Shah ‘Abbās. André Godard was the first scholar to argue that this cenotaph marks the grave of Shāh ‘Abbās I, using as his principal evidence the description of the death of Shah ‘Abbās and its circumstances in the supplement of Reżāqoli Khan Hedāyat to the *Rawzat al-ṣafā* of Mirḳvānd (Hedāyat, 1960, I, pp. 436-38; Godard, 1936, pp. 216-17). According to André Godard, the black stone was a gift of the Georgian officers of the entourage of Shah ‘Abbās (Godard, p. 217). Allāhyār Ṣāleḥ also mentioned that the kind of

stone used for this cenotaph was not found anywhere in Persia. Therefore, he concluded that the carrying of such a heavy piece from a far-away location could only have been for a king such as Shah ‘Abbās (Zarrābi, Şāleḥ’s comm, 1977, pp. 555-56). Godard’s view was accepted by Narāqi, who also referred mainly to Eskandar Beg Torkamān (1955, pp. 1078-79, tr., II, pp. 1303-4), the royal secretary of Shah ‘Abbās, who states that the shah’s body rested there in the shrine of Emāmzāda Ḥabib b. Musā, pending the time when it would be carried to one of the major holy shrines (*yaki az amāken-e moşarrafa*). Narāqi further argued that the shah had expressed the wish to be buried in this shrine, and mentions the statement in the supplement to Eskandar Beg’s history, according to which, Shah Şafi I paid respect to the burial place of the “world conqueror” (i.e., Shah ‘Abbās) when he was passing through Kāşān (Narāqi, 1964, pp. 14-17; idem, 1966, pp. 134-36; idem, 1969, pp. 155-56). Yet, the identification of this cenotaph as the burial place of Shah ‘Abbās is disproved, by the appearance of the name of the calligrapher, MoḤammad MaḤallāti, on the next two objects in the same region, which are clearly dated to the Timurid period.

2. The door of the Boq’a-e Şāhzāda Qāsem in Fin-e Bozorg, dated 884/1479-80. This door, which is badly damaged, is now kept in the shrine storage. It consists of two leaves and a number of panels carved with a design of palmettes in low relief. Below the upper horizontal panels on either side is an inscription in *tulṭ* (Golmohammadi, 2006, pp. 64-66), of which the one on the right contains the name of the donor, MoḤammad son of ‘Ali surnamed Bahādor (FIGURE 4); and the one on the left, mentions the name of the carver al-Sayyed Tāj-al-Din ‘Ali son of Sayyed Amir, and the date 884. At the end of the inscription on the left is another small inscription shaped like a round seal, reading MoḤammad al-MaḤallāti wrote this (FIGURE 5).

3. The stone plaque in the shrine of Emāmzāda Solṭān-‘Ali b. Imam MoḤammad al-Bāqer, dated 893/1488, in Ardehāl, at about 49 km west of Kāşān. Over the entrance door to the courtyard of the shrine is a stone plaque consisting of seven sections (FIGURE 6). It bears, in calligraphic *tulṭ* script, the command of Şāhroḵ Mirzā and Abu’l-‘Ezz Mirzā, dated 893/1488, exempting the sayyeds and dependents of the Bo’qa-ye Sultan ‘Ali b. Imam MoḤammad al-Bāqer from paying taxes (Marandi, 1961, pp. 32-33). The inscription ends with the mentioning of MoḤammad al-MaḤallāti as the calligrapher and Mobārakşah as the mason with the date 893.

The mention of MoḤammad MaḤallāti as the calligrapher and the



unquestionable similarity of the style of calligraphy on the two dated works of the Timurid period clearly disproves the argument initiated by Godard and furthered by Narāqi, Şāleḥ , and Meškāti, which identifies the cenotaph in the Emāmzāda Ḥabib b. Musā as the grave of Shāh ‘Abbās I, who died more than a century later in 1038/1629.

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