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A Look at the Pottery Style of Abu Zayd Kashani

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Abstract

The Islamic Middle Ages represented the flourishing period of various arts, including pottery, during which the increased artistic freedom gave rise to ingenious artistic and literary creations. Geographical and political situation in Kashan caused its local pottery to develop into a trans-regional industry. Despite the similarity between the themes used by the local workshops, differences are also evident. For precise identification of styles used in individual workshops, it is necessary to identify the styles specific to individual workshops and potters. Abu Zayd is the most common signature found on the Kashan pottery style. His aspiration to perpetuate his name on his works suggests that he was the leading figure in the advent and later advance of the style. The findings of this research show that a large number of works produced during and after Abu Zayd's lifetime closely resemble his own creations. He worked in the Kashan style, and his techniques were retained in other workshops after his demise. Potters have bequeathed valuable works that were modeled after Abu Zayd's style. The study of Abu Zayd's works reveals that while they share wide similarities with those of his fellows, a part from his signature he had employed his own peculiar designs and motifs. There are cases of single designs in which the main patterns were worked by Abu Zayd and the details were left for other hand(s). Such collaboration as well as mentoring were the main reasons behind the dissemination of his style.

Keywords: Kashan Style, Pottery Style of Abu Zayd Kashani, Mina'i Ware, Luster Ware.

Article Type: Research Article

Introduction

The Seljuk, Khwarazmian and Ilkhanid periods loom large in the history of pottery craft and coincided with many innovations. A plethora of ceramic objects, including vessels, tiles and mihrabs, from this period bear artist's signature. At least four generations of *Sayyid Hosaynis*[1] were engaged in making glazed tiles in the Kashan city for 15 years. From the late 12th century AD to the mid-14th century AD, the production of glazed pottery in Iran, as with many professional traditions, was passed on to succeeding generations among the families (Blair, 2008: 6).

Abu Zayd[2] Kashani was an Iranian artist who lived in the mid-12th and early 13th centuries AD. He was specialized in both tile and vessel manufacturing, and worked in both luster and mina'i techniques, and his work is of great importance as there exists an abundance of his dated and signed potteries. In the pre-Mongol and Ilkhanid periods, Abu Zayd left his own signed works more than other potters. Abu Zayd played a key role in the development of the Kashan style. Despite his eminent status, little research has covered his peculiar style in pottery and tile production.

Research Objectives and Methodology

Through a descriptive-comparative method, the present study compares the works of Abu Zayd with each other and with works of other medieval artisans kept on museums and private collections to establish

[1]He is the youngest descendant of Mohammad prophet, Husayn.

[2]Or Abu Zaid

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their relation to Abu Zayd's style. To introduce and identify Abu Zayd's works, his signed works are compared qualitatively with other pieces purported to be his creations before the idiosyncrasies of his works are introduced. The forms of the works made by Abu Zayd are first described. We proceed then to a contentual evaluation of the inscriptions he used on his products to determine the types of poetry he favored. Afterward, the signature he used is introduced. At the end, his motifs and ornamentation methods are examined and compared in detail. In comparing Abu Zayd' works, the works with his signature are used as the basis, and the pieces devoid of his signature are compared with the former to squeeze out the defining characteristics of Abu Zayd's works.

History of Research

In 1935, Ettinghausen published the dated potteries of the Islamic period in the London collections. Among the introduced tiles and pottery there was a bowl known as the Moharram vessel akin to Abu Zayd's signed works and several luster-painted tiles that were later became known as Abu Zayd's works. In this introduction, he pointed out the characteristics of these works and described them as typifying the Kashan style (Ettinghausen, 1935, 45–64). He compared the ornamental elements used in the Mihrab of the Kashan Jameh Mosque with another tile bearing the date 1203 AD (600 AH) and the signature of Abu Zayd, kept in the Cairo Museum, and observed many commonalities among their main ornamental elements such as rows of commas, curved lines. Ettinghausen evaluated other mihrab tiles in private collections and museums, observing that the Kashani suffix was used in some of these works. This observation was among the main reasons for his conclusion that the potters of these pieces were from Kashan and the pieces were probably produced in Kashan. He then explored the characteristics of these works (Ettinghausen, 1936a, 44–75). In his publication on the Iranian pottery in American museums, Ettinghausen introduced luster-painted tiles which were later attributed to Abu Zayd. Indeed, Abu Zayd is not cited in this publication, where he only describes the eight-pointed star of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, bearing the date 1206 AD (603 AH) (Ettinghausen 1936b, 146), which was later attributed to Abu Zayd. In his paper investigating the different styles of workshops that produced star and cross-shaped tiles covering the interior surfaces of buildings, Bahrami introduced a number of Abu Zayd's star-shaped tiles. In the inscriptions on these tiles, he read the potter's name "*Abu Rofazeh* or *Abu Rofadheh*." He compared the three signed pieces with the unsigned piece of the Pennsylvania Museum, in terms of the shape and style of the head, the hair falling on the shoulders, the human figures, and the other motifs. To him, the ornaments and motifs in this unsigned tile closely paralleled Abu Zayd's tiles, but he doubted in attributing this work to Abu Zayd (Bahrami, 1936: 180–191). In another article, he introduced the signed plate of Abu Zayd. In the middle of this plate, there is a scene of two fighting human figures, a different theme compared to other works of Abu Zayd (Bahrami, 1946: 110–113). In 1961, Guest and Ettinghausen presented a plate of Abu Zayd Hassani's work and read the inscription on this plate. Citing literary texts and comparative analysis of related works, they rejected the narrative of Khosrow and Shirin that was stated by Konel as the subject of the image, and discussed the different semantic aspects of the image from a formal court scene to historical, legendary narratives and mystical concepts. In this research, they only mentioned the possibility of the existence of each of these cases as the depicted subject. They read the signature of this vessel as "*made by sayyed Shamsoddin Al-hasani*" (Guest and Ettinghausen, 1961: 25–64). In 1987, Ghouchani correctly deciphered the signature of the concerned plate, kept in the Ferrier Collection, as: "*It was made by Al-Sayyed Shamsoddin al-Hasani Abi Zayd in Jamadi-ol-Akhar in the year six hundred and seven*." He identified Sayyed Shamsoddin Hasani Abi Zayd with Abu Zayd (Ghouchani, 1987: 33). In an article, Grube published two mina'i vessels dated 1186 AD (582 AH) and 1187 AD (583 AH) bearing Abu Zayd's name. He deemed these two vessels as excellent examples of Kashan style mina'i vessels (Grube, 1965: 209–228). Bahrami generally mentioned the designs and motifs used by Abu Zayd, without going into further details of the works of Abu Zayd (Bahrami, 1948: 71, 76–79, 80). While introducing the families of Iranian luster ware potters, Watson cited a series of dated luster pottery made by Abu Zayd and described the characteristics of Iranian luster-painted pottery. He considers Abu Zayd's fame and reputation after the change in the style of his works. Watson claims that Abu Zayd was one of the main figures involved in the advent of the Kashan style. He introduced the famous luster potter

families of the pre-Mongol and Ilkhani period, and there he mentioned 13 works signed by Abu Zayd and attributed two more works to him (Watson, 1985: 88–90, 108–109, 124–131, 178). Watson presented a number of Abu Zayd's mina'i bowls at a symposium in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1982. In this presentation, he compered Abu Zayd's signed bowl with some mina'i bowls that lacked the signature but bore comparable ornamentations and inscriptions, on which basis he concluded that all of them were made by Abu Zayd. He identified Abu Zayd who made these mina'i pottery with Abu Zayd who made the luster-painted pottery with the signature of Abu Zayd (Watson, 1994: 170–180). Mason investigated the typology of the Iran's medieval luster pottery and introduced the potters whose signatures occur on the luster potteries, including Abu Zayd (Mason, 1977: 103–135). He introduced 21 works belonging to Abu Zayd, before describing some decorative features of his works drawing on the analyses by the aforementioned scholars. Karimi pointed out Abu Zayd's full name as being "*Sayyed Shamsoddin ibn Mohammad Ibn Abi Zayd Hasani Kashani*" (Karimi, 1988: 506–509). Gouchani deciphered the inscriptions on tiles and luster and mina'i wares, with the name of Abu Zayd also occurring among these inscriptions (Ghouchani, 1992: 2, 10, 12, 18, 20). According to Mason, Abu Zayd connects the main section between two different styles of luster pottery in Iran. In his opinion, Abu Zayd, and perhaps two other potters (such as Abu Taher family), dictated the style and this process was chosen for that period and they created designs that were later imitated and copied by their disciples and colleagues (Mason ,1997: 121). In his book, Pope decrypted Abu Zayd's signature as *Abu Rofazeh*, considering him as the owner of a distinct style in pottery. He considered the works with the signature of *Abu Rofazeh* to be only a variation of the same design in terms of decoration. According to Pope, *Abu Rofazeh* was a poet, calligrapher, designer and potter. He gave a general explanation about Abu Zayd's, failing go into the details of his works. In his opinion, Abu Rofazeh was one of the artists who made the motifs the same and established this rule (Pope, 2008: 1812). Later on, while deciphering the inscriptions of Abu Zayd's works, Ghouchani introduced the correct form of his signature as Abu Zayd (Ghouchani, 1992: 2, 10,12, 18, 20). Blair published seven signed works of Abu Zayd, pointing out some of his work's characteristics. In his opinion, Abu Zayd played a key role in the development of the miniature style. He describes Abu Zayd as a poet and scriber a part rom his artistic skills (Blair, 2008: 155–176). Arabbegi and Abdi investigated the luster plate of Abu Zayd, where Abu Zayd's name appears next to *Sayyed Shamsoddin.* They considered the subject of the painting to be a folkloric love tale (Arabbeigi and Abdi, 2014: 21). Bagherzadeh investigated the motifs and designs of human figures and clothes on Moharram wares of Abu Zayd. He considered the painting subjects of these dishes to be passion-reading of Imam Hussain martyrdom (Bagherzadeh ,2015: 90–91). Based on the signatures and dates on the mina'i pottery, Yazdani and his colleagues assigned the production period of mina'i pottery to 1179–1219 AD (575–616 AH), and they attributed four works to Abu Zayd due to the similarities in designing, painting, selected subjects, variety of colors, shape of dishes and writing style (Yazdani *et al*, 2015: 45–46). Ghouchani attributed some of the poems on Abu Zayd's works to him and based on decorative similarities he also attributed some unsigned works to Abu Zayd (Ghouchani, 2016: 31–53).

In the present paper, to better identify the works of Abu Zayd, the artistic and decorative features of his works have been investigated in detail. In the form of cognitive stylistic analysis, on the one hand, Abu Zayd's works can be introduced better, and on the other hand, valid reasons can be presented in attributing the works to him.

Abu Zayd

Sayyed Shamsoddin Ibn Mohammad Ibn Abi Zayd Hasani Kashani was an Iranian potter, painter, calligrapher who lived in the mid-12th (6th AH) and early 13th century AD (7th AH). Abu Zayd was one of the pre-Mongol artists who created significant mina'i and luster potteries in a long period between 1172 and 1219 AD (568–616 AH). Abu Zayd was the virtual pseudonym of anyone named Mohammad. Apparently, this virtual pseudonym became customary since the Prophet Mohammad adopted *Zayd ibn Sabet* as his son. From the inscription "اللهم اغفر لمن استغفر لأبى زيد بن محمد بن ابى زيد النقاش" (Allahommagfer leman estagfer-a le Abi Zayd Ibn Mohammad Ibn Abi Zayd Al-Naqqash) (Oh God, forgive the one who asked forgiveness for Abi Zayd Ibin Mohammad Ibn Abi Zayd the painter) on the

luster mihrab of Astan Quds Razavi, makes it clear that the name of Abu Zayd's father was Mohammad, his grandfather's byname was also Abu Zayd, and his own nickname was *al-naqqash* (the painter). Therefore, it can be said that the name of Abu Zayd on the Imam Reza's mihrab, was *Mohammad bin Mohammad bin Mohammad al-Naqqash* (Ghouchani, 2016: 33–34). The Hassani suffix that Abu Zayd added after his name shows that he was from Kashani Sadat[1] . Blair (Blair 2008, 9) related the use of "*al-din*" (literally meaning *religion*) after the names of the contemporary potters and artists, such as *Shams al-Din al-Hassani,* to their religious status.

Two stages can be considered for Abu Zayd's work. In the first stage, he worked in the style of other artists and after a while beagn to put his own signature on his products. At this stage, there is not much difference between his works and those of other artists in terms of ornamentations, and he was known generally by his signature. An example of it occurs on a luster-painted piece made in 1172 AD (568 AH). It is in the second stage that motifs typical to him begin to appear, and the year 1186 AD (582 AH) seems to be the beginning of this latter stage. Yet, it does not imply that all the works produced by him at this stage exhibit his own specific charasteristics. For example, the leaf-shaped decorative elements used in the polychrome luster-painted tiles of Hazrat-e Masoumeh's shrine have been repeated in several other places.

Forms of Abu Zayd's Works

Abu Zayd made his pottery vessels in the form of plate, and round and flat bowls. The tiles made by Abu Zayd come in the various shapes of star, cross, octagon, square, and rectangle. Small interlocked octagonal and star-shaped tiles cover the shrines of Hazrat-e Masoumeh (Fatima Masumeh) and Imam Reza. Blair described the surface covering with a combination of five-pointed and cruciform tiles as one of Abu Zayd's innovations, suggesting that other potters adopted the style from him. Other works by Abu Zayd include luster-panited mihrabs and polychrome luster-painted tiles used in mausoleums and shrines (Blair, 2008: 7–8).

Content of the Inscriptions on Abu Zayd's Works

The verses used by potters such as Abu Zayd on their works are either monolingual in Persian or in Arabic, or a combination of both Persian and Arabic. These verses occur on the edges of the vessels and the tiles, and based on the remaining space at the end of the verses, signature and date of making or completion of the work are inserted. In some works, the verses are interspersed by phrases dealing with asking for forgiveness and good prayers for the owner of the container. In most cases, Abu Zayd, as with the rest of the Kashani potters, used poems by other poets on tiles and vessels. These verses and inscriptions were intended to attract the attention of the reader and the support of benefactors (Blair , 2008: 10–11). The inscriptions chosen by Abu Zayd are a selection of Iranian literature from the Middle Ages. He used a collection of Persian and Arabic poems, the hadiths of the Prophet Mohammad, the sayings of Imam Ali, and verses from the Quran and the Torah. Construction inscriptions also occur among them. Disloyalty and breaking the promise of beloved, love, sorrow, criticizing of misbehavior, criticizing the pride and misbehavior of others towards him, and wishing health to the owner of the container In his poems are the major themes of Abu Zayd's favored poems, which consisted of quatrains by Majdoddin Abu Sandal, Abolfaraj Rouni, Ibn al-Rumi, Sana'i Ghaznavi, Ghazi Shamsoddin Tabasi, Ohad al-Din Kermani, Emadi Shahryari, and verses of Abu Zayd's own.

Signatures and Phrases of Inscriptions

The date and signature on the works specify the time and place of their production. In one case, Abu Zayd signed his work with the phrase '*al-Sayyed Shamsoddin al-Hassani Abi Zayd*". Of the works bearing his name, the signature sometimes reads "*Abu Zayd*" and another work bears the title "*Abi Zayd*". The signature is preceded by the words "كتبه" (*katabahu*) and "لكاتبه" (*le-katebihi*) and is succeeded by "بخطّه" (*be-khatteh*). (Watson, 1985: 176) translates the term "كتبه" (*katabahu*) as "decoration," and considers it as exclusive to luster-painted ornaments. Yet, it has been suggested that the term should be translated as "inscriber" and the succeeding "بخطه" (*be-khatteh*) as "in his own handwriting" (Amid , 2009: 175, 437). The most complete phrases found on Abu Zayd's works are: "Written by Abi Zayd after what he did and made," and "Abu Zayd wrote it after what he did and made." Watson interprets the terms "عمله" (Amilahou) and "صنعه" (Sana'ahou)as each referring to a different stage from designing to the completion of the works

[1]Plural of Sayyed

(Watson, 1985: 176). So the translation of the above phrase is as follows: After working and making it, Abu Zayd (or Abi Zayd) wrote it. Another signature of Abu Zayd contain the word "قائله"(*qaelahou*), which means "the teller, teller of word, and the speaker and poet" (Amid, 2009: 735; Dehkhoda 1994, 15362; Mo'in Encyclopedic Dictionary, 1992: 2629). This shows that the poem was composed by Abu Zayd himself. Based on Abu Zayd's signature, we know that he was also a poet and a scribe in addition to his artistic skills. Abu Zayd signed his mina'i bowls with the phrase "نقله و کاتبه ابو زید"(*naqalahou ve katebahou*) . This phrase discloses that Abu Zayd was responsible for composing the poems used on the vessels (Blair, 2008: 8). Abu Zayd introduced himself as a painter in the mihrab of Imam Reza's shrine, a fact suggesting that he was in charge of ornamentation (Figure. 1).

Moharram bowls of Abu Zayd were introduced for the first time in a sale catalog of the Tabbagh Collection in New York in 1936, where the signatures were deciphered and the inscriptions were also translated. The translation of the signature on one of the pieces, with a date of 1186 AD (582 AH), is as follows: It was written by Abu Zaid- Kashani. The translation of the second piece, bearing the date of 1187 AD (583 AH), is as follows: "made (followed by date) … by Al-Kashani … for Lady Sabur (or Sabun) Zadeh …". The nisba was seemingly not used by anyone who lived in Au Zayd's hometown. More details were furnished in Sotheby's London sale catalog of Olsen collection in 1996. The following translation was published for the signature of the first piece: "written by Abu Zaid Kash …". The translation of the second piece read as the following: "written and (?) made by … Kashani (followed by date) for the Lady Sabur … Zadeh … Khatun …" (Watson, 1994: 172). As the present authors did not have access to the actual pottery made by the potter, they inevitably cite here Watson's statements. After the name and pseudonym of Abu Zayd, the date of production is mentioned, which may be written by numbers or by letters. Most likely, the manner in which the date was inscribed was a function of the space left for the inscription.

In his works, Abu Zayd used words such as as "عمله" (*Amilahou*), "صنعه" (*sana'ahu*), "کاتبه" (*katebahu*), "کتبه" (*kataba'hu*), and "" "قائله و کاتبه" (*ghaelahu va kateba'hu*). These phrases might refer to different stages, from designing to making and ornamenting and inscribing, which might be an indication that individual works were actually



Figure. 1: *Signatures on Abu Zayd's works; (1) the star-shaped luster tile in Imam Reza shrine's treasury (After:Ghouchani, 2016: 32), (2) the star-shaped luster tile at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (After: http://www.mfa.org), (3) the star-shaped luster tile at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (After: http://www.mfa.org), (4) the star-shaped luster tile in a private museum (After: Kolbadinezhad, 2013 :78), (5) the octagonal luster tile in Imam Reza Shrine's treasury (After: Ghouchani 2016: 11), (6) the octagonal luster tile in Imam Reza Shrine's treasury (After: Ghouchani 2016: 31), (7) the mina'i tile at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (After: http://www.metmuseum.org), (8) the luster bowl in the David Collection (After: http://www.davidmus.dk), (9) the luster plate at the Freer Gallery (After: https://www.freersackler.si.edu), and (10) the luster mihrab of Astan-e Ghods-e Razavi Museum*

produced by a group of artisans. In one of his works, Abu Zayd used only the word "صنعه" (*Sana'ahou*). This observation might suggest that other artists also collaborated in his works and Abu Zayd left some parts of the work to nother person/persons.

The type of Script Used in the Inscriptions

In the star-shaped luster-painted tiles of Abu Zayd, inscriptions occupy the tile's outer perimeter. On polychrome luster-painted tiles, the main part of the tile has an inscription in Naskh, and other inscriptions in Arabic occur on the upper and lower margins of the main inscription. In Abu Zayd's signed mina'i bowls, there is an inscription at the bottom of the pool or pond which has been thus far attested exclusively in his works. On the upper part of the bowl's interior, there is an inscription in Kufic, and on the upper exterior there is a section designed for an inscription (Figure 2). In the margins of star tiles, plates, bowls and in parts of the mihrab, a type of inscription is written in a fast cursive type. The cursive scripts written on the plates, bowls and tiles are the handwriting of the person who wrote them, and does not belong to any specific writing's rules[1].



Figure. 2: *Octagonal luster tile, 1215 AD (612 AH), Treasury of Imam Reza's shrine, Mashhad (After: Ghouchani, 2016: 31)*

The Contents of Motifs and Themes of Works Signed by Abu Zayd

Bowls and plates are often painted and ornamented on both the interior and the exterior. Yet, only a single surface stands as the main space and tends to richer in painted designs. Human figures are integral to Abu Zayd's works, and animals and plants occupy the second place. But, in the star-shaped tiles used in religious contexts, geometric and floral designs dominate. The images employed by Abu Zayd are characterized by a narrative flow[2]. Put it simply, each of them gives the impression of narrating several stories. In Figure 3, a human figure is depicted twice. This image depicts an assembly where chief and his companions are waiting for someone. On the right, a person is entering the scene, and on the left the same person is seen sitting and reciting a sermon. The only difference between the two depictions is the armband, which is red in the first scene and black in the second. Considering that the person enters after the chief person, he should have a higher status. Bagherzadeh interpreted the subject of the painted designs of Abu Zayd's Moharram dishes (Figure. 4) as the recitation sermon assembly of Imam Hussein's martyrdom (Bagherzadeh, 2015: 91). Comparing the luster-painted plate of Freer Gallery made by Abu Zayd (Figure. 5) with his previous works reveal some differences. In this plate, the painting of horse is very similar to the one at the Boston Museum. The faces and clothes are quite different from his previous and concomitant works (Figure. 6).

In this work, the horse is designed in a similar was as in Figure 7, and the design of the clothes and heads of the figures fifer from those in the signed pieces of Abu Zayd. In this work, Abu Zayd presented a general plan, and ornamentations of the human figures and other details were added by other artists. These designs of clothes and the shape of human figure's head can be seen in the rest of luster-painted works. This observation suggests that Abu Zayd had a workshop and developed a style of his own. In some of his works, photos of the lover and beloved are depicted and the spaces around the scene are imaginatively painted. Painter used his taste to depict a romantic atmosphere (Figures 8, 7).

Abu Zayd's star-shaped and octagonal signed tiles found at religious sites are ornamented with floral motifs. Mihrabs and quadrangle tiles made by Abu Zayd are only decorated with floral ornamentations and tendrils in the background. These decorations are more suitable for use in religious contexts.

[1] Abdollah Ghoochani, pers. communication, on 7.2.2018 in a training workshop held at the ICOMOS Cultural Institute of Iran entitled "Tilemakers and the Method of Making Mihrabs, Embossed Tiles and Star-shaped Tiles, introduction of inscribed tiles, and their dated examples."

[2] a flowing (streaming) story

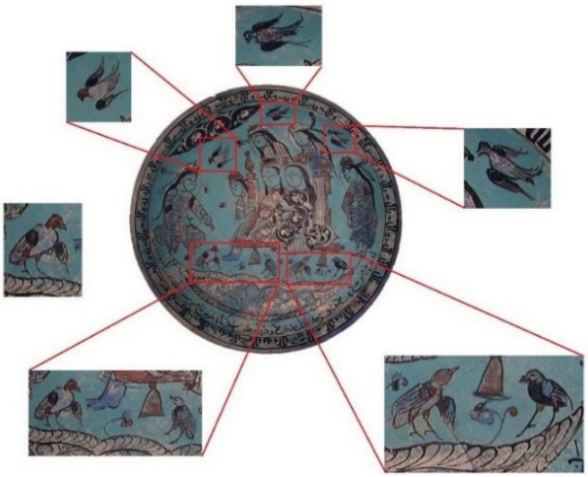


Figure .3: *Mina'i bowl, 1187 AD (583 AH), Metropolitan Museum of Art (After: http://www.metmuseum.org): the bird motifs used in the mina'i pottery signed by Abu Zayd*



Figure. 4: *Mina'i bowl, 1187 AD (583 AH), Metropolitan Museum of Art (After: http://www.metmuseum.org)*



Figure. 5: *Luster plate, 1210 AD (607 AH), Freer Gallery (After: https://www.freersackler.si.edu)*



Figure. 6: *Left: Luster plate, 1210 AD (607 AH), Freer Gallery (After: https://www.freersackler.si.edu); star-shaped luster tile, 1212 AD (609 AH), Museum of Fine Arts Boston (After: http://www.mfa.org): comparison of the horse motifs*



Figure. 7: *Star-shaped luster tile, 1212 AD (609 AH), Museum of Fine Arts Boston (After: http://www.mfa.org)*



Figure.8: *Star-shaped luster tile, 1210 AD (607 AH), Museum of Fine Arts Boston (After: http://www.mfa.org)*

Decorative Methods of Abu Zayd's Signed Works

In a few cases, luster-painted and mina'i ornaments occur on a single piece. Looking carefully in the human figures and animal motifs on Abu Zayd's works, given the great similarity of the motifs between his works, it can be seen that he used a stencil for his designs. In the example of Boston tile with the equestrian figure, the face is elliptical, the eyes are indicated linearly, the hair is braided and falls on the figure's shoulders, and a small line was used to mark the mouth.

In Abu Zayd's mina'i vessel dated 1187 AD (583 AH), the same shapes of the heads and the braided are discernible (Figure. 6). In the piece signed by Abu Zayd in Figure 9, a different stencil as applied, but the hair style is the same (Figure. 8). The shapes of heads and the hair in Figure 7 are similar to those in Figure 10 (Figure. 11). In Figure 12, Abu Zayd used a separate design to depict a human figure. In Abu Zayd's signed works, hands are designed with a special shape. Comparing the depictions reveals that the designs of the hands are closely resemble each other. The hands are indicated both open and closed. The open examples are depicted in such a way that express a pointing gesture or emphasis in speech (Figure. 13). The same designs for flowers shows that Abu Zayd had his own specific way for designing plants (Figure. 14). On the Boston tile, plump pigeons are depicted in side by side, affronted or addorsed positions. Compared to other examples with depiction of plum birds, it can be seen in the works of Abu Zayd (Figures. 15, 16). In another work by Abu Zayd, two affronted birds are seen, which unlike the previous designs, they are not fat (Figure. 17). Two pairs of addorsed fat pigeons are also attested in his signed works (Figure. 18). Fat pigeons are found among other works produced in Kashan. In his works, two fat pigeons are placed one on top of the other, each facing opposite directions (Figure. 19). The stencil design of the bird in this work is specific to Abu Zayd, and the same design can be seen in the same way in other similar works as well. Here, the birds are depicted both affronted and addorsed. There are other depictions of birds in Abu Zayd's works, some flying and others sitting on the ground, characterized by a type of design specific to his works. It is clear that he used his own stencil to produce these patters (Figure. 3).

The only quadrupeds depicted in Abu Zayd's signed works are spotted horses and dogs (Figures .5, 7). Clothes on some signed luster-painted works are ornamented with scroll motifs, spiral figures and "و" pattern. Compared to the background, designs are the same but pale. There are no visible outlines, and the painter has indicated the outlines through contrast. In Abu Zayd's luster-painted works, clothes are decorated with solid and thick scrolls, using tendrils (Figure. 20) typical to his works and undulating ornaments. In his luster-painted works, clothes exhibit a special pattern of scroll and tendril motifs. The tendril has a triple termination, and consists of two circular shapes with an elongated shape between them. This is a recurrent feature in most of his works (Figures. 21, 22).

One of the motifs in Mason's Group 5 is radial lines of the center design in the form of cross-beam. A number of works with this motif bear Abu Zayd's signature, and according to Mason, these were his own work or were produced in his workshop. Yet, as it is a generic motif commonly found on luster-painted works, it cannot be attributed only to Abu Zayd and rated a distinctive feature of his works.

The cartouche[1] and roundel[2] motifs on the contemporary works strongly resemble each other. Many of these motifs were popular among artists. The only difference between these motifs is the type of designs, each exhibiting slight variations (Figures .23, 24, 25, 26, 27).

Coloring features allow accurate classification of styles (Watson, 1985: 19). The body of Moharram dishes is painted with light azure color. Bright black color is used for human figure's hair, special clothes, trees and canopies, and matte red is seen in throne decoration, hats, bird wings and special clothes. Matt white is used to decorate tendrils. The pond is light blue and the cartouches on the exterior of the bowl are alternately painted in azure and red (Figures. 10, 27).

Star-shaped tiles are decorated with copper luster and azure colors, as are the mihrabs and polychrome luster-painted tiles. From this point of view some of Abu Zayd's works are not much different from the works of other artists. He used more balanced colors than others, which are evident by comparing the depictions of his mina'i works with those of the other artists.

[1]Toranj

[2]Shamseh



Figure. 9: *Luster plate, 1172 AD (568 AH), a private collection in Tehran (After: Bahrami, 1946: 111, Ghouchani, 2016:39)*



Figure. 10: *Mina'i bowl, 1187 AD (583 AH), Metropolitan Museum of Art (After: http://www.metmuseum.org)*



Figure. 11: *Above: star-shaped luster tile, 1212 AD (609 AH), Museum of Fine Arts Boston (After: http://www.mfa.org); Bottom: mina'i bowl, 1187 AD (583 AH), Metropolitan Museum of Art (After: http://www.metmuseum.org): the shape of the heads and the style of the braided hair in Abu Zayd's signed works*

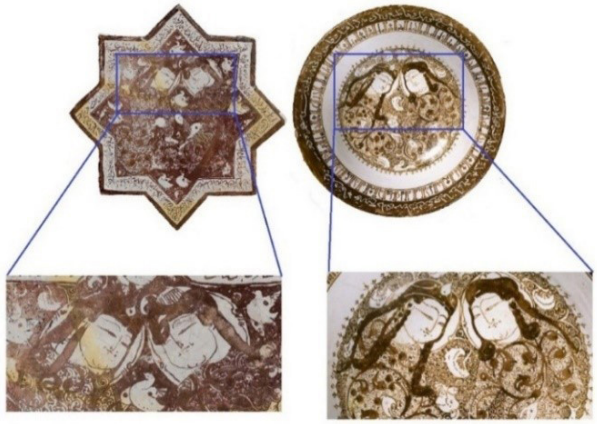


Figure. 12: *Right; luster bowl, 1204 AD (600 AH), The David collection (After: http://www.davidmus.dk); Left: star-shaped luster tile1210 AD (607 AH), Museum of Fine Arts Boston (After: http://www.mfa.org): comparison of heads and faces*



Figure. 13: *Above: star-shaped luster tile, 1210 AD (607 AH), Museum of Fine Arts Boston (After: http://www.mfa.org).*
Upper central: luster bowl, 1204 AD (600 AH), The David Collection (After: http://www.davidmus.dk).
Lower central: star-shaped luster tile, 1212 AD (609 AH), Museum of Fine Arts Boston (After: http://www.mfa.org).
Bottom: Mina'i bowl, 1187 AD (583 AH), Metropolitan Museum of Art (After: http://www.metmuseum.org):
the shape and posture of the hands in Abu Zayd's signed works



Figure. 14: *Mina'i bowl, 1187 AD (583 AH), Metropolitan Museum of Art (After: http://www.metmuseum.org): flowers used in the mina'i work signed by Abu Zayd*

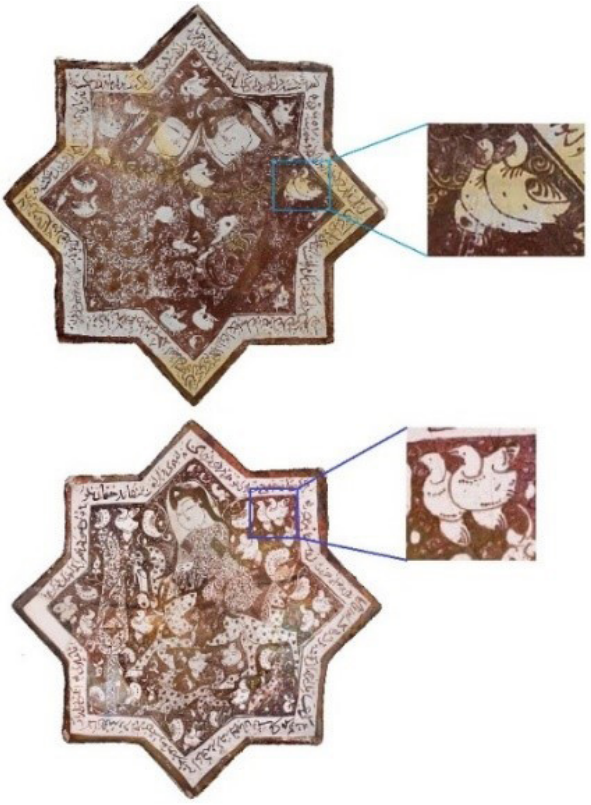


Figure. 15: *star-shaped luster tile1210 AD (607 AH), Museum of Fine Arts Boston (After: http://www.mfa.org); star-shaped luster tile, 1212 AD (609 AH), Museum of Fine Arts Boston (After: http://www.mfa.org): affronted pigeons*

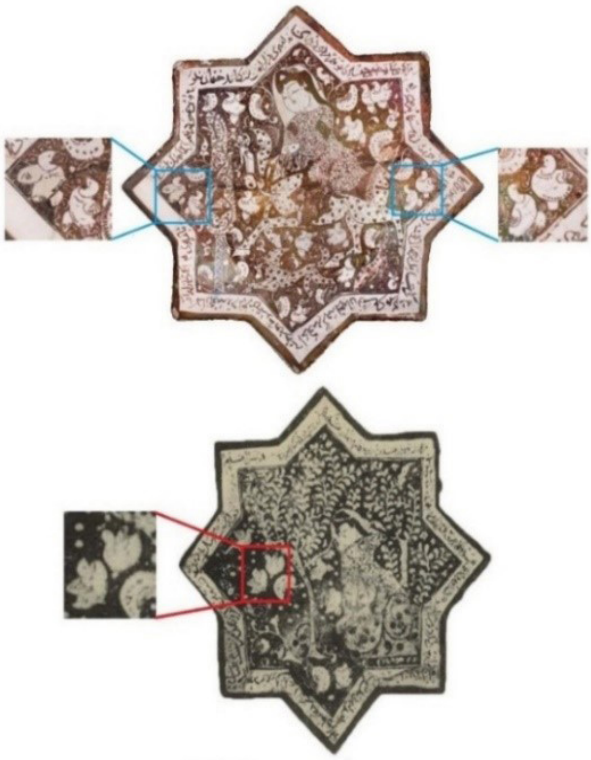


Figure. 16: *Abobe: luster star-shaped tile, 1212 AD (609 AH), Museum of Fine Arts Boston (After: http://www.mfa.org); bottom: luster star-shaped tile, 1212 AD (609 AH), Pasgal Collection (After: Bahrami, 1936: 191); affronted plump pigeons*

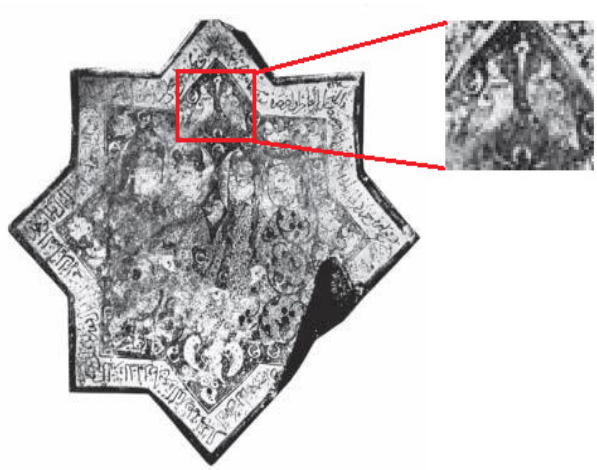


Figure. 17: *Star-shaped luster tile, 1203 AD (600 AH), Cairo Museum of Islamic Arts (After: Ghouchani, 1992: 1): affronted pigeons*



Figure. 18: *Cross-shaped luster tile, early 12th AD (late 6th and early 7th century AH) (After: Ghouchani, 1992: 19), addorsed plump pigeons*

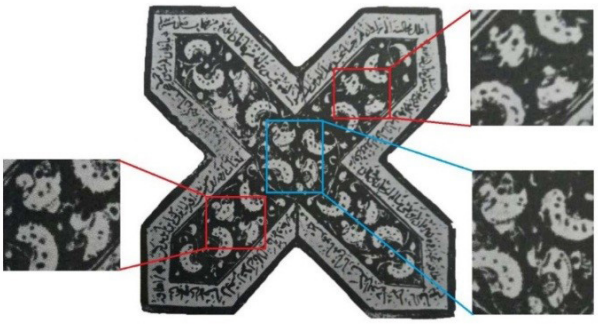


Figure. 19: *Cross-shaped luster tile, early 12th AD (late 6th and early 7th century AH) (After: Ghouchani, 1992: 19); Plump pigeons, one at the top and the other at the bottom*



Figure. 20: *Right: mina'i bowl, 1187 AD (583 AH), Metropolitan Museum of Art (After: http://www.metmuseum.org). Left: star-shaped luster tile, 1203 AD (600 AH), Treasury of Imam Reza's shrine: Geometric forms and tendril patterns*



Figure. 21: *Mina'i bowl, 1187 AD (583 AH), The David Collection (After: http://www.davidmus.dk): Canopy motif*

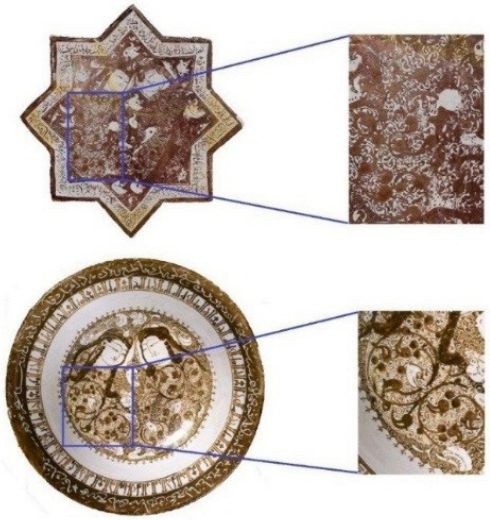


Figure. 22: *Above: star-shaped luster tile, 1210 AD (607 AH), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (After: http://www.mfa.org). Bottom: luster bowl, 1204 AD (600 AH), The David Collection (After: http://www.davidmus.dk): comparison of the patterns of the clothes*



Figure. 23: *Above: octagonal luster tile, 1215 AD (612 AH), Treasury of Imam Reza's shrine, Mashhad (After:Ghouchani, 2016: 31). Bottom: star-shaped luster tile, 1215 AD (612 AH), Treasury of Imam Reza's shrine (After: Ghouchani 2016: 11): cartouches used in works signed by Abu Zayd*

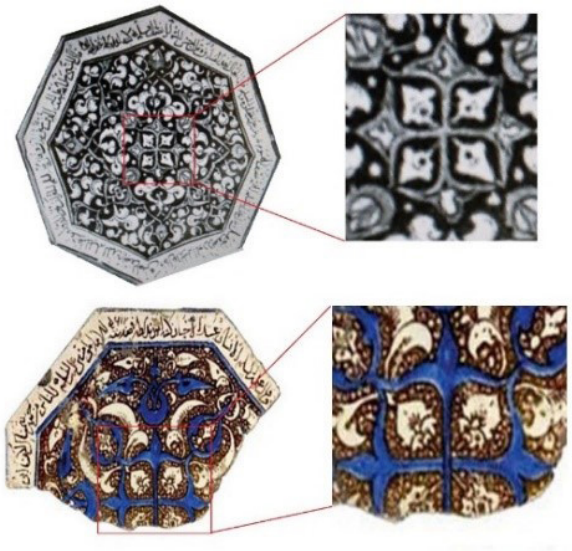


Figure. 24: *Above: star-shaped luster tile, early 12th AD (late 6th and early 7th century AH), Rostami collection (After: Kolbadinezhad, 2013: 78). Bottom: octagonal luster tile, 1215 AD (612 AH), Treasury of Imam Reza's shrine (After: Ghouchani, 2016: 32) motifs of roundels used in Abu Zayd's works*



Figure. 25: *Above: octagonal luster tile, 1215 AD (612 AH), Treasury of Imam Reza's shrine (After: Ghouchani, 2016: 32). Center and bottom: a part of a luster mihrab, 1215 AD (612 AH), Astan-e Ghods-e Razavi Museum: the flower motifs used in the signed works of Abu Zayd*

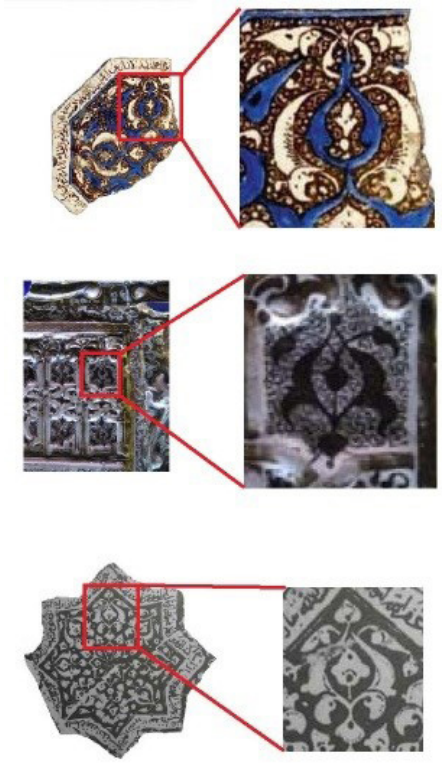


Figure. 26: *Above: octagonal luster tile, 1215 AD (612 AH), Treasury of Imam Reza's shrine (After: Ghouchani, 2016: 31). Center: a part of the luster mihrab, 1215 AD (612 AH), Astan-e Ghods-e Razavi Museum. Bottom: star-shaped luster tile, 1215 AD (612 AH), Treasury of Imam Reza shrine: distinct cartouches used in Abu Zayd's works*



Figure. 27: *Mina'i bowl, 1187 AD (583 AH), David collection (After: http://www.davidmus.dk): distinct cartouches used in Abu Zayd's work*

Conclusions

The art of pottery has long been a foremost representative of cultural, social and artistic indicators of Iran. In the Islamic Middle Ages of

Iran, we are witnessing the peak of Islamic pottery. In the meantime, luster-painted pottery and tiles are of special importance, because they were produced exclusively and their production method was not available to anyone other than certain pottery families. By checking the works in the Islamic Middle Ages, there are many similarities in many arts from design to theme. This is also true in pottery and tiling. Many themes and motifs have been common among artists. Only with a closer look and more detail can the difference between the artists' works be recognized.

The dates on Abu Zayd's works span 1172 to 1219 AD (568 to 616 AH). From this time onwards, the Kashan style began to outstrip works in other styles, and Abu Zayd's products assumed the highest quality at the time of the manufacture of these potteries. By comparing Abu Zayd's works with other works, we see the predominance of works produced in this style. In a way, this style served a common prototype for related productions. Judging from the existence of his signature on a large number of works, Abu Zayd was famed and renowned both within and beyond the cultural borders of Iran.

The titles and pseudonyms used by artisans suggest Kashan as being a main center of production for these pottery pieces. Based on the signatures and the number of signatures, Abu Zayd Kashani can be considered as the most prominent craftsperson specialized in the mina'i technique. Abu Zayd probably worked both in mina'i and luster techniques. Examination of his works reveals that, apart from his signature, he made use of peculiar ornamentations which can be regarded as being typical to his work. The most significant feature of Abu Zayd's work is his signature. The names he uses in his works are: *Abu Zayd, Abi Zayd, Abu Zayd Kashani, and al-Sayyed Shamsuddin Hassani Abi Zayd.* He often specifies the particular stages that he was involved by employing certain terminology. In particular, in cases he used the terms" كتبه "(*katabahu*), " لكاتبه"(*le-katebihi*), " قائله"(*qaelahou*).In others he puts بخطه"(*be-khatteh*). And there is a single case where the term النقاش"(*Al-naqqash*), comes after him name. Sometimes, his name is followed by the title "Al-Kashani," which in turn is followed by the piece's date of creation, inscribed either by numbers or letters. Main part of Abu Zayd's works consists of scenes with human figures with a narrative flow, and the main focus of ornamentations used in religious contexts is plant ornaments. Moharram vessels, portrays of lover and beloved, and scenes with local folklore themes are the major themes of his works.

Given the many similarities shared with the motifs of his works, it is possible to surmise that Abu Zayd possibly used stencils to create the designs of his works. The designing of the heads, hands, and are specific to him. Plump pigeons standing abreast, affronted plump pigeons, addorsed plump pigeons, affronted ordinary pigeons, superimposed plump pigeons facing the same direction, and superimposed plump pigeons facing opposite directions are defining features of his works.

Clothes in Abu Zayd's works are in a paler design compared to the background designs that are decorated with the same designs, and outlines of the depictions are not very clear, and the painter was able to render the outlines through contrast. Abu Zayd's scroll and tendril patterns are unique to him. The tendril terminates in three parts and consists of two circular shapes separated by an elongated shape. This feature is often seen in most of his works. The cartouche and roundels motifs in Abu Zayd's works find parallels in the works of other artists in terms of outline. The only difference is the type of designs, which show slight differences in details, and these differences become discernible through comparing the designs. In terms of color, there is not much difference between Abu Zayd's and others works. It can only be said that like his designs, the painting was done more accurately. The poems used by Abu Zayd deal with love, sorrow, wish for health, moral advice, and so on. These poems were popular at the time. Some poems were composed in imitation of Shahnameh.

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