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ИСЛАМ ДІНІНІҢ ПАЙДА БОЛУЫНАН БАСТАП НАСТАЛИК ЖАЗУ ҮЛГІСІНІҢ ҚАЛЫПТАСУЫНА ДЕЙІНГІ КАЛЛИГРАФИЯ ӨНЕРІНІҢ ТАРИХИ ДАМУЫ

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التطور التاريخي لفن الخط من نشوء الإسلام
إلى نشأة خط النستعليق

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THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF CALLIGRAPHY ART FROM THE EMERGENCE OF ISLAM TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NASTALIQ SCRIPT

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ИСТОРИЧЕСКАЯ ЭВОЛЮЦИЯ ИСКУССТВА КАЛЛИГРАФИИ ОТ ВОЗНИКНОВЕНИЯ ИСЛАМА ДО ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ ПИСЬМА НАСТАЛИК

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Аңдатпа. Каллиграфия немесе хат өнері – бұл әріптер мен сөздердің әдемі, үйлесімді және эстетикалық жағынан тартымды түрде жазылуы. Адамзаттың көркем шығармашылығының көне әрі шынайы түрлерінің бірі саналатын бұл өнер түрі көптеген өркениеттерде, әсіресе ислам және иран мәдениетінде ерекше орынға ие.

Ислам өркениетінде Құран мәтінінің қасиеті мен оны жазуға берілген аса зор мәнге байланысты каллиграфия рухани сұлулық пен көркем үйлесімділіктің көрінісі ретінде дамып, ең жоғары өнер деңгейіне жетті. Қасиетті мәтінді көшірушілер, суретшілер мен хатшылар жазу өнерін жетілдіріп, барынша көркем жазуға талпынды. Иран жеріндегі каллиграфия тарихы жазу жүйесінің бірнеше кезеңдік өзгерістерімен ерекшеленеді. Алғашқы кезеңде қазба жазулары, пехлеви және авесталық жазу түрлері қолданылса, ислам діні келгеннен кейін копт және сириян жазу үлгілерінен шабыт алған куфи мен насх сияқты жаңа жазу үлгілері пайда болды. Хижраның IV ғасырында «мухаққақ», «райхан», «сулус», «насх», «руқға» және «тауқи» жазу түрлері қалыптасты. Кейіннен «насх» пен «талиқ» жазу үлгілерінің негізінде «насталиқ» жазуы пайда болды. Бұл мақалада каллиграфия өнерінің тарихи даму барысына шолу жасалып, «насталиқ» жазуының ерекшеліктері қарастырылады.

Түйін сөздер: каллиграфия, ислам өнері, Құран жазбалары, куфи, насх, насталик, иран мәдениеті.

الملخص: الخط أو فن الكتابة الجميلة (فن الخط) هو فن كتابة الحروف والكلمات بشكل جمالي ومتناسق. ويُعدّ من أقدم وأصدق أشكال التعبير الفني لدى الإنسان، وله مكانة بارزة في العديد من الحضارات، ولا سيما في الثقافة الإسلامية والإيرانية. لقد حاز هذا الفن في العالم الإسلامي على مكانة مرموقة، ليس فقط كوسيلة للتواصل، بل كمظهر للجمال الروحي والرقّي الفني. ومنذ أن تحوّلت اللغة المنطوقة إلى رموز مكتوبة، بدأ الشكل الجمالي للكتابة يحظى بأهمية كبيرة. وفي الحضارة الإسلامية، بسبب قدسيّة نصّ القرآن الكريم والقيمة العليا لإتقانه وكتابته، أصبح فن الخط من أرقى الفنون، وبذل الخطاطون والنساخ كل مهاراتهم في كتابته. إن تاريخ الخط في إيران عرف تحولات مهمّة، إذ استُخدمت في البداية خطوط مثل الكتابة المسمارية والبهلوية والأوستية. ومع دخول الإسلام، ظهرت خطوط جديدة مثل الكوفي والنسخ، متأثرةً بالقبطية والسريانية. وفي القرن الرابع الهجري، تطوّرت أنماط مثل المحقّق والريحان والثلاث والنسخ والرّقعة والتوقيع. وفيما بعد، أدّى تمازج النسخ والتعليق إلى ولادة خط نستعليق. تهدف هذه الورقة إلى تقديم لمحة موجزة عن تاريخ فن الخط، مع التركيز على تطوّر خط نستعليق وخصائصه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخط العربي، الفن الإسلامي، مخطوطات قرآنية، الكوفي، النسخ، نستعليق، الثقافة الإيرانية

Abstract: Calligraphy, or *fan al-khat*, is the art of beautiful writing and the harmonious arrangement of letters and words in an aesthetically pleasing manner. It is one of the oldest and most authentic forms of human artistic expression and holds a significant place in various civilizations, especially within Islamic and Iranian culture. This art form has occupied a distinguished status in many cultures, particularly in the Islamic world, not only as a means of communication but also as a manifestation of spiritual beauty and artistic elegance. From the moment humankind transformed spoken language into written symbols, the form and aesthetics of writing gained importance. In Islamic civilization, due to the sanctity of the Qur'anic text and the high value placed on its transcription, calligraphy rose to prominence as one of the finest arts. Scribes, illustrators, and calligraphers employed their utmost skill and creativity in writing the words of divine revelation. The history of calligraphy in Iran has always been marked by significant transformations. Initially, various scripts such as Cuneiform, Pahlavi, and Avestan were utilized. With the advent of Islam, new Islamic scripts like Kufic and

Naskh emerged, inspired by Coptic and Syriac scripts. In the early 4th century (AH), styles such as Muhaqqaq, Rayhan, Thuluth, Naskh, Ruq'ah, and Tawqi' were developed. Later, the combination of Naskh and Ta'liq scripts led to the creation of the Nasta'liq script. This paper aims to provide a brief overview of the history of calligraphy and explore the development and characteristics of the Nasta'liq script.

Keywords: calligraphy, islamic art, Qur'anic manuscripts, kufic, naskh, nasta'liq, iranian culture.

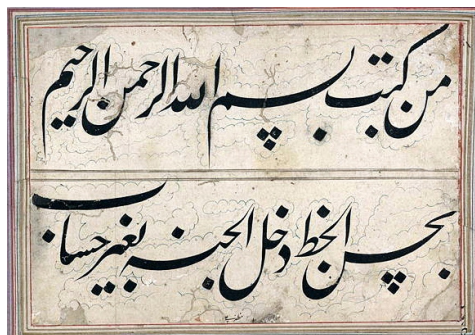
Аннотация: Каллиграфия, или искусство красивого письма (араб. фан аль-хат), представляет собой гармоничное и эстетически изящное написание букв и слов. Это одно из древнейших и подлинных проявлений человеческого художественного творчества, особенно значимое в исламской и иранской культурах. В исламской цивилизации каллиграфия заняла выдающееся место не только как способ письменной передачи информации, но и как выражение духовной красоты и художественной изысканности. Благодаря святости текста Корана и высокому значению его переписывания, каллиграфия была возвышена до уровня высшего искусства. Писцы и каллиграфы применяли всё своё мастерство для передачи Божественного Откровения. В истории каллиграфии в Иране происходили значительные трансформации: от клинописи, пехлевийского и авестийского письма – до исламских шрифтов, таких как куфический и насх, вдохновлённых коптским и сирийским письмом. В IV веке хиджры были разработаны стили мухаккак, райхан, сулюс, насх, рука и тауки. Впоследствии из сочетания насх и талика возник стиль насталик. Данная статья направлена на краткий обзор истории каллиграфии и анализ развития и особенностей письма насталик.

Ключевые слова: каллиграфия, исламское искусство, коранические рукописи, куфи, насх, насталик, иранская культура.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Calligraphy, as an elevated art form of writing, has its roots in the earliest civilizations – from the hieroglyphic pictorial scripts of ancient Egypt and the cuneiform of Mesopotamia to the spiritual brush calligraphy of China. With the advent of Islam, the Kufic script emerged as the first Islamic script, originating from Nabataean and Syriac scripts, and was standardized during the Umayyad period. Between the 9th and 11th centuries CE (3rd to 5th centuries AH), Ibn Muqla Shirazi revolutionized Islamic calligraphy by formulating the six classical scripts (*al-aqlām al-sittah*): Muhaqqaq, Rayhan, Thuluth, Naskh, Tawqi', and Ruq'ah. His system was further refined

and perfected by Ibn al-Bawwab in the 11th century CE. The pinnacle of calligraphy in Iran was marked by the creation of the *Nasta'liq* script by Mir Ali Tabrizi in the 14th century CE (8th century AH), later elevated to its peak of elegance by masters such as Sultan Ali Mashhadi and Mir Emad Hassani in the



16th and 17th centuries CE. In the Ottoman Empire, calligraphers like Hamdullah al-Amasi and Sheikh Abdullah Efendi developed styles such as Thuluth and Diwani, contributing to the rich diversity of Islamic calligraphy. During the Safavid and Qajar periods in Iran, *Shekasteh Nasta'liq*, a broken and flowing derivative of Nasta'liq, was invented by Darvish Abd al-Majid Taliqani, while the art of *tazhib* (illumination) reached new heights. In the modern era, calligraphy has embraced innovative expressions such as *Naqashi-khat* (calligraphic painting) pioneered by Mohammad Ehsai, digital typography, and conceptual art. While preserving its traditional essence, contemporary calligraphy has become a global artistic language, reflecting the ongoing interaction between the preservation of heritage and the acceptance of modernity. Islamic calligraphy emerged in the 7th century CE with the spread of Islam, driven by the need to record the Qur'an in a systematic and aesthetically pleasing manner. The Kufic script, inspired by Nabataean and Syriac, gained prominence as the first Islamic script. In the Abbasid period (9th to 14th centuries CE), Islamic calligraphy experienced remarkable development, with Ibn Muqla Shirazi laying the foundations of the six canonical scripts, further refined by Ibn al-Bawwab in the 11th century CE.

In Iran, calligraphy reached unparalleled heights, particularly during the Timurid and Safavid eras. Mir Ali Tabrizi, in the 14th century CE, created the *Nasta'liq* script, which came to be known as the "bride of Islamic scripts." Later, calligraphers such as Sultan Ali Mashhadi and Mir Emad Hassani perfected

this elegant style in the 16th and 17th centuries CE. In the Ottoman Empire, notable calligraphers including Hamdullah al-Amasi and Sheikh Abdullah Efendi advanced Thuluth and Diwani scripts. In modern times, particularly during the Qajar and Pahlavi periods, innovations such as *Shekasteh Nasta'liq* by Darvish Abd al-Majid Taliqani emerged. Today, calligraphy represents a fusion of tradition and modernism, occupying a prominent place in visual arts, graphic design, and *Naqashi-khat*.

2. THE EVOLUTION OF SCRIPTS IN ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

Since the Arabs traditionally led a nomadic, tent-dwelling lifestyle, they adopted writing systems much later than other ancient civilizations such as the Babylonians and the Chinese, who had developed intricate writing systems thousands of years earlier. Generally distrustful of written records, the Arabs relied heavily on oral transmission for preserving and conveying information. In the 6th century CE, as Arabic literature began to take shape, poetry was memorized and transmitted orally, with only a few poems, such as the famed *Mu'allaqat*, occasionally inscribed due to their exceptional cultural significance. These were even displayed on the walls of the Kaaba in Mecca as symbols of prestige. The first Arab tribe credited with inventing an alphabetic script was the Nabataeans. This group, descended from Bedouin Arabs and inhabiting the northern regions of the Arabian Peninsula, was eventually subdued by the Romans. However, their script survived even after the fall of their

kingdom. A notable example is the inscription on the tomb of the pre-Islamic poet and minstrel *Imru' al-Qais*, dated to 328 CE and written in the Nabataean script. Subsequently, other Semitic peoples living in the northern Arabian Peninsula adopted and refined the Nabataean script. By the 6th century CE, tribes from al-Hirah and al-Anbar – major trade centers of the time – contributed to its further development. The script gradually spread to Mecca and other regions, ultimately being recognized as the official script of the Arabian Peninsula. Historical accounts mention Shapour bin Abdul Malik, who, through his friend and father-in-law Harb ibn Umayyah, introduced and taught this script to the nobles and elites of Mecca. The earliest forms of the Arabic script were known as *Musnad* and *Jazm*, with *Jazm* considered a branch of *Musnad*. With the advent of Islam, the art of writing and calligraphy among the Arabs reached its zenith. Beyond the oral preservation of the Qur'an, the necessity of transcribing it became apparent to all. As a result, calligraphers dedicated themselves to beautifully rendering the sacred text, striving to uphold the dignity and reverence of the Qur'an. This endeavor led to the flourishing of calligraphic artistry within the Islamic world.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF KUFIC AND NASKH SCRIPTS IN EARLY ISLAM

Among the scripts that held a prominent position in the early Islamic period were Kufic and Naskh. The former, a bold, angular, and geometric script with a transcendent nature, was primarily used for transcribing the Qur'an and

religious texts. The latter, a cursive and fluid script, served daily writing purposes. It is important to note, however, that the Kufic script was not invented with the founding of the city of Kufa. Long before the establishment of Kufa, writings in Kufic existed. Nevertheless, the city's founding played a pivotal role in developing its decorative forms, transforming it from the original austere and rigid *Jazm* script into a refined and graceful art form. Undoubtedly, the most significant catalyst for the development of Arabic script, as previously noted, was the emergence of Islam itself. Through its potent simplicity, Islam liberated the art of writing, once the exclusive domain of the aristocracy, and popularized it among all eager seekers of knowledge. Those passionate individuals, driven by devotion to the Qur'an, transformed into dedicated scribes who left behind exquisite works, reflecting both their artistic sensibility and profound spiritual inspiration. In their efforts to preserve a connection between their calligraphy and the divine message of the Qur'an, these early Muslim calligraphers sought to harmonize their script's aesthetic elegance with spiritual purpose. Each act of writing related to the service of Allah was regarded as a form of worship.

It is worth noting that the first chapter revealed to Prophet Muhammad was *Surah Al-'Alaq*, a passage that reminds humanity of its Creator and the divine act of teaching through the pen: "Read! In the name of your Lord who created... who taught by the pen" (*Al-'Alaq*, 96:1-4). Similarly, the second revealed chapter was *Surah Al-Qalam*: "Nun. By the pen and what they inscribe..." (*Al-Qalam*,

68:1). These two surahs, emphasizing the pen and the act of writing, elevated the sanctity and status of the pen and script among Muslims. Consequently, with meticulous devotion, calligraphers engaged in creating beautifully crafted scripts through artistic pen movements and designed various styles of writing by arranging the Arabic letters in new, harmonious compositions. Examples of this deep reverence for calligraphy can be seen in religious inscriptions, architectural decorations, and even on the coins of the time – all testifying to the Muslims' dedication to mastering a sacred and rich art form.

4. EARLY CALLIGRAPHERS IN ARAB AND ISLAMIC HISTORY AND THE EMERGENCE OF PERSIAN CALLIGRAPHY

In the history of Arab and Islamic calligraphy, one of the earliest and most renowned figures is Amir al-Mu'min-in Ali ibn Abi Talib. Several distinctive calligraphic styles are attributed to him, including the Mecca, Medina, Basra, and Kufa scripts, especially in the transcription of the Qur'an. The artistic and spiritual value of these scripts is immeasurable, particularly cherished by Shi'a Muslims and the admirers of Imam Ali. From the 3rd to the 8th century AH (9th–14th centuries CE), calligraphy and the artistic expression of the Arabs reached their zenith during the golden age of Islamic civilization. However, by the 10th century AH (16th century CE), alongside the decline of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, the flourishing of this art gradually waned.

4.1. The Birth of Persian Calligraphy

Before the advent of Islam, various scripts such as Cuneiform, Pahlavi, and Avestan were common in ancient Persia. However, with the spread of Islam, the Persians adopted the Arabic alphabet and scripts. The history of the Arabic script and its stylistic development did not predate Islam but rather evolved almost simultaneously with the early Islamic conquests. Although Persians initially borrowed their script from the Arabs, they played a major role in its evolution and in transforming it into a sophisticated art form. The introduction of diacritical dots and vowel marks (i'rāb) in Arabic script is attributed to an Iranian named Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali al-Farsi in the 1st century AH (7th century CE). This innovation aimed to prevent misreading of the Qur'an and reflects the significant contributions of Iranians to the refinement of Islamic calligraphy.

4.2. Persian Calligraphy

Iranians even developed their unique styles within the established scripts of other Islamic lands. While the initial transition from ordinary writing to refined calligraphy was largely carried out by Persian artists, over time they devised distinct styles and methods that became uniquely Persian. Although these innovative styles gained followers in other Islamic countries, they remained primarily associated with Iran and the Persianate cultural sphere, including Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and India. In these regions, calligraphy has always been regarded as the highest form of visual art, distinguished by its delicacy and spiritual beauty.

5. ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY

Calligraphy has always held a special significance for Muslims, as it is considered the art of visualizing the divine revelation. Beautiful handwriting was used not only in transcribing the Qur'an but also in many other arts. In all Islamic countries, calligraphy has always been regarded as the highest form of art. Especially in Iran, this art has reached its zenith, becoming a central pillar among other visual arts. The oldest known Qur'anic manuscript is written in the Kufic script, attributed to Ali ibn Abi Talib. After the 5th century AH, the Kufic script was largely replaced by the Naskh script, which, unlike the angular Kufic letters, has smooth and curved forms. In the early 4th century AH, in the year 310 AH, Ibn Muqlah Bayzavi Shirazi developed six different scripts known as the "Six Pen Styles" (Aqlam Sitta), which include Muḥaqqaq, Rayhān, Thuluth, Naskh, Riqā', and Tūqī'. The main distinction between these scripts lies in the shape of the letters and the proportions of space and letter strokes in each script. He also established twelve fundamental principles of calligraphy, known as the "Twelve Principles of Calligraphy," which include: Composition, Balance, Proportion, Weakness, Strength, Space, Stroke, Upward and Downward Movement, and Grace and Magnificence. A century after Ibn Muqlah, Ibn Bawwab introduced new rules for the Naskh script and perfected it. In the 7th century, Jamāl al-Dīn Yāqūt al-Musta'şimī revitalized this script, transcribing the Qur'an multiple times. The capabilities of calligraphy as a functional tool have always been a major factor in the evolution of the art. While aesthet-

etic beauty has undoubtedly been a goal of calligraphers, the impact of printing and graphic design has greatly influenced the development and transformations of calligraphy. The traditional development of calligraphy did not remain static, and gradually, artists began to merge calligraphy with painting to explore new possibilities. This eventually led to the creation of a new genre called "Calligraphic Painting." The Saqakhāneh School can be seen as the birthplace of modern aesthetic innovations in calligraphy, particularly before the Islamic Revolution. After the revolution, calligraphy experienced a significant revival among the youth, with many artists competing in both traditional techniques and new creative approaches. The rise of graphic arts, the proliferation of computers as key tools in graphic design, and desktop publishing have posed new challenges for contemporary calligraphy.

6. THE NASTA'LIQ SCRIPT AND THE EVOLUTION OF IRANIAN CALLIGRAPHY

After the Islamic conquest of Persia, the Naskh script became the dominant style for calligraphy in Iran. During the Ilkhanid era, book pages began to be adorned with decorative motifs for the first time. In the Timurid period, calligraphy and the art of penmanship reached their pinnacle. It was in this era that Mir Ali Tabrizi, by merging the Naskh and Ta'liq scripts, created the Nasta'liq script – a style considered by most calligraphy experts as one of the most sophisticated, yet simultaneously the simplest and most graceful of scripts. The most famous Qur'an calligrapher of this period was

Baysunghur Mirza. The calligraphic styles known as *Persian scripts* were mainly developed for writing non-religious texts, such as collections of poetry, elegant literary pieces, and administrative correspondence. In contrast, calligraphy among the Arabs and Ottoman Turks predominantly held religious and sacred significance. Though they too used different scripts for secular and administrative purposes, their highest artistic expression – unlike Persian calligraphers – was primarily evident in Thuluth and Naskh scripts, used for transcribing the Qur'an and Hadiths. In Iran, Thuluth and Naskh were also employed for religious purposes, such as Qur'anic transcription, Hadith collections, and mosque and madrasa inscriptions. However, Iranians developed distinctive regional styles within these scripts as well.



The Ta'liq script can be regarded as the first truly Persian script. Emerging in the early 7th century AH (13th century CE) and lasting for about a century, it combined elements of Naskh and Riqā' scripts. It was standardized by Khājah Tāj Salmānī, and later expanded by Khājah 'Abd al-Hayy Monshi-ye Estarabādi, who further formalized its rules and principles. Following Ta'liq, which was the first Iranian-born script, Mir Ali Tabrizi

in the 8th century AH (15th century CE) created the script known as Nas'taliq by merging Naskh and Ta'liq. Due to its widespread popularity, the name was later simplified to Nasta'liq. This script revolutionized Persian calligraphy, achieving its peak elegance and perfection in the Safavid era under Mir Emad Hassani.

Nasta'liq flourished not only within the borders of present-day Iran but also in Greater Khorasan, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and notably among the calligraphers of the Mughal court in India, who maintained a deep affinity for Persian culture. The 9th to 11th centuries AH (15th–17th centuries CE) are generally considered the golden centuries of Iranian calligraphy. By the mid-11th century AH (17th century CE), a third pure Iranian script – Shekasteh Nasta'liq – was invented by Morteza Qoli Khan Shamlu, the governor of Herat, by modifying Nasta'liq for the purposes of speedier writing in administrative work and personal correspondence. This need for faster writing, combined with the Persian aesthetic sense and creativity, led to the creation of Shekasteh scripts, much like the earlier Shekasteh Ta'liq derived from Ta'liq. Darvish 'Abd al-Majid Taliqani later perfected Shekasteh Nasta'liq. During the Qajar period, calligraphy lost its primary practical role as a medium for transcription. On one hand, it evolved into a pure form of art through Siah-Mashq (dense practice writings), and on the other, it found new functions in lithographic printing and newspapers. In the Pahlavi era, commercial and advertising needs pulled calligraphy out of private libraries and collections into the public domain. Modern artistic movements gave rise to

new styles like Naqashi-Khat (calligraphic painting), which continues to be appreciated in global art circles. In the years following the Islamic Revolution (1979), calligraphy experienced renew-

ed popularity. The Iranian Calligraphers Association, established in 1950 (1329 AH), played a key role in enhancing both the quantity and quality of this art form.

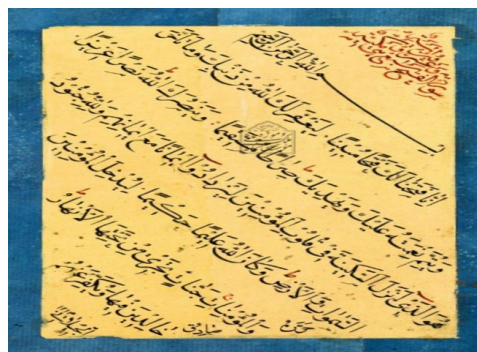
7. EVOLUTION OF MAIN SCRIPTS

Script	Creation Period	Characteristics	Usage
Kufic	1st Century AH	Geometric, Heavy	Early Qur'ans
Naskh	3rd Century AH	Legible, Smooth	General Writing
Thuluth	4th Century AH	Decorative, Majestic	Inscriptions
Nastaliq	8th Century AH	Fluid, Poetic	Persian Poetry
Shakkasteh Nastaliq	11th Century AH	Smooth, Fast	Correspondence

8. COMMON SCRIPTS IN IRANIAN-ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY (COMPREHENSIVE CLASSIFICATION)

a. Kufic Script: Kufic, the oldest Islamic script with origins in the 1st century AH, possesses unique features that distinguish it from other scripts. This script is designed with angular, geometric, and completely vertical letters that fit within hypothetical rectangles and squares. The structure of Kufic is based on uniform, horizontal, and vertical lines, giving it a sturdy and cohesive appearance. A notable feature of this script is the absence of any circles or curves in its basic structure, which adds to its simplicity and clarity. Initially, there were no diacritical marks or vowel signs in this script, which were later added. Kufic was primarily used for early Qur'anic transcription and the inscription of mosque walls. Over time, various types of Kufic evolved, including simple Kufic, geometric (Muqalli), leafy (Muraqq), and ornamental

(Mushajjar), each finding specific applications in Islamic art. This script, with its simplicity and strength, represents the first artistic efforts by Muslim calligraphers to create a visual identity for writing sacred texts.



Naskh Script: The Naskh script, created in the 3rd century AH and perfected by Ibn Muqla Shirazi, revolutionized Islamic calligraphy. With its unique characteristics, such as smooth, rounded letters, high readability, and precise diacritical marking, it quickly became the standard script for writing the Qur'an

and scientific and religious texts. The circular structure of Naskh, in which letters fit within a specific diameter, combined with an alif height equivalent to 3 to 4 dots and uniform pen thickness, gives this script a particular beauty and harmony. The consistent spacing between letters and words, along with systematic diacritical marks, has enhanced its readability to such an extent that it is considered the foundation for most Arabic and Persian fonts today. These features have made Naskh not only prominent in sacred texts but also in everyday writing, earning it recognition as one of the most influential Islamic scripts in history.



b. Thuluth Script: Thuluth script, known as one of the most majestic and ornamental Islamic scripts, features elongated and curved letters, with the height of the letter “alif” reaching up to 7 dots. This script, with its exaggerated curves and a mild rightward tilt, is considered one of the most challenging calligraphic scripts, requiring great skill and precision to execute. Unlike many other scripts, in Thuluth, letters are often written separately with limited connections between them. The diacritical marks in this script not only serve a functional role but also play a significant decorative role, harmonizing with the overall composition of the piece. Yaqut al-Musta’simi, one of the prominent masters of this script, pla-

yed a significant role in its development and dissemination. The primary application of Thuluth is in the inscription of mosque tablets and the creation of wall decorations, which, due to its large size and striking visual effect, has always been admired by Islamic artists and architects. This script, with its blend of beauty and strength, represents the grandeur of Islamic calligraphy.

c. Ta’liq Script: Ta’liq script, as the first script exclusive to the Iranians during the Ilkhanid period, brought a transformation to the art of calligraphy with its unique features. This script, with a distinctive 45-degree slope and abundant connections between letters, has a fluid and flowing style, making it suitable for fast writing. The elongated and tall letters of Ta’liq, combined with the small space between the lines, give the script a dense and continuous appearance.



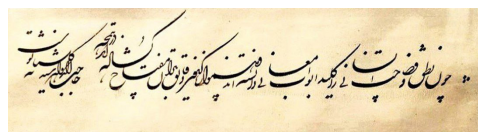
The diacritical marks in Ta’liq are mostly round and placed to the right of the

letters, enhancing its beauty and readability. The primary use of this script was in bureaucratic correspondence, which required speed in writing. However, its historical significance is greater due to its role as the foundation for the creation of Nasta'liq script. With a combination of practical and artistic features, this script not only met the administrative needs of the Ilkhanid period but also paved the way for one of the most beautiful Iranian scripts, Nasta'liq. Mastery of Ta'liq, due to its inherent complexities, has always been a criterion for measuring expertise in calligraphy.



d. Nasta'liq Script: Nasta'liq, known as the “Bride of Islamic Scripts,” was created by Mir Ali Tabrizi in the 8th century AH. This script, with its beautiful combination of Naskh and Ta'liq and its fluid movements, is primarily used for writing Persian poetry and literary texts. Notable masters of this script include Sultan Ali Mashhadi and Mir ‘Amad

Hasani. Nasta'liq is designed based on a circle with a diameter of 3.5 to 4 dots, and its letters move along two parallel imaginary lines. This script has a 15-degree rightward tilt and is distinguished by features such as elongated writing at the ends of words, small round dots, and wide spacing between lines for better visual appeal.



e. Shikasta Nasta'liq Script: Shikasta Nasta'liq, which was perfected during the Safavid period, is a faster and more fluid version of classical Nasta'liq. It was primarily used for correspondence and the transcription of poetry. Dervish Abdulmajid Taliqani is considered one of the pioneers of this script. This style is recognized for unique features such as a greater tilt (between 30 to 45 degrees), extensive connections between letters, prominent elongated writing, and the intricate interweaving of words. Unlike Nasta'liq, which emphasizes delicacy, Shikasta Nasta'liq places more importance on the speed of writing. Other notable features include compact and dense diacritical marks and a fluid, continuous structure that gives it a dynamic and lively feel.

f. Divani Script: Divani script, known as one of the official scripts of the Ottoman court, was used primarily for writing royal decrees. This script is distinguished by its compressed and ornamental letters, which create an intertwined and complex appearance, setting it

apart from other scripts. Notable features of Divani include extensive connections between letters, a gentle slope, and decorative and scattered diacritical marks, giving the text a formal and dignified appearance. The letters in this script are often intertwined and arranged artistically, which, in addition to enhancing its visual beauty, affects its readability. These combined features made Divani one of the most commonly used scripts in important governmental documents of the Ottoman Empire.



g. Ruqa'ah Script: Ruqa'ah script is recognized as an everyday and informal script, characterized by simplicity and

speed of writing. It was primarily used for administrative and personal matters. With short and compact letters, no elongated writing, and minimal diacritical marks, this script is practical and unadorned. Unlike decorative scripts such as Divani or Nasta'liq, Ruqa'ah focuses on efficiency and writing speed, so it lacks elaborate visual appeal. Its letter structure's simplicity and lack of complexity made it an ideal choice for quick notes, informal letters, and administrative documents.



h. Rayhan Script: Rayhan script is one of the most delicate and artistically refined branches of the Naskh script, specifically used for writing precious Qurans and valuable religious texts. While maintaining the overall structure of Naskh, it features finer and more precise letters, designed on a circle with a height of 3.5 dots for the letter "alif." The standout characteristic of Rayhan is its unparalleled geometric order, which

is evident in the precise spacing between the letters and lines. This script, combining visual beauty and high readability, is considered the epitome of calligraphic art in the service of sacred texts. The exquisite delicacy and perfect proportions of the letter components in Rayhan make it an ideal choice for works that aim not only to convey content but also to express the spiritual grandeur of the text.



i. Muhaqqaq Script: Muhaqqaq script is one of the most authentic and majestic Islamic scripts, known for its distinctive features such as large and magnificent letters, long extensions, the beautiful combination of Thuluth and Naskh elements, and a circular structure with a precise ratio of 4.5 to 5 dots. With limited and deliberate connections, systematic and precise diacritical marking, and appropriate spacing between words, this script was used in the golden centuries of the 4th and 5th centuries AH

for writing precious Qurans, important inscriptions, official documents, and decorative plaques in sacred places. Proper execution of this script, which requires high skill due to the large size of the letters and time-consuming nature, is generally done in larger formats, requiring a delicate balance between detail and the overall composition. Today, Muhaqqaq is regarded as one of the most difficult yet magnificent Islamic scripts, holding a special place among calligraphy masters and symbolizing the peak of calligraphic art in the early periods of Islamic civilization.

Each of these scripts represents a specific period in the evolution of calligraphic art, shaped by the religious, administrative, and cultural needs of Islamic societies. This artistic tradition continues to thrive today and is reimagined in contemporary art forms.

9. THE FORMATION AND EVOLUTION OF NASTA'LIQ: A MASTERPIECE OF PERSIAN CALLIGRAPHY ART

Nasta'liq script, rightly called the "bride of Persian scripts," emerged in the 8th and 9th centuries during the Timurid era and is recognized as the most beautiful and delicate script in Islamic calligraphy. This script is the result of the fusion of two scripts: Naskh (with its readability and straightforward writing) and Ta'liq (with its fluidity and smooth connections), and its name is derived from the combination of these two terms. Before Nasta'liq, the Ta'liq script was used for writing poetry and literary texts, but due to its complexity and difficulty in reading, there was a need for a new script. On

the other hand, while Naskh was legible, it lacked the softness and flow necessary for literary texts. It was here that masters like Mir Ali Tabrizi (and according to some sources, Mir Ali Heravi) innovated and created Nasta'liq—a script that combines the fluidity of Ta'liq and the orderliness of Naskh. Technical features of Nasta'liq include a gentle slope of 15 degrees, circular letter forms, balanced elongated writing, small and round diacritical marks, and golden ratio in the spacing of lines. This script found a special place in the writing of Persian poetry, literary texts, and calligraphy boards. Great masters like Sultan Ali Mashhadi, Mir Emad Hassani (who brought Nasta'liq to its peak during the Safavid period), and Abdurmajid Taliqani played a significant role in the evolution of this script. Nasta'liq rapidly spread in Persian-speaking lands from India to the Ottoman Empire and today is recognized as a symbol of Persian calligraphy art.

10. NASTA'LIQ: IRANIAN ART IN HARMONY OF FORM AND MEANING:

Nasta'liq, as the most prominent form of Persian calligraphy, is known for its unique features. Unlike angular scripts like Kufic or Thuluth, Nasta'liq has a fluid and soft quality with its rounded and curved letters. The beauty of Nasta'liq lies in the unparalleled balance between the components of the writing, known as “tarash,” and the harmonious elongated strokes of letters like “lam” and “alif.” The movement of the pen in this script, with calculated pressure changes, gives a dancing effect to the writing. The four fundamental principles

of this delicate script are: first, balanced composition and precise page layout; second, attention to the number and size of the “dent” in letters like “s” and “n”; third, the specific connection of letters like “m” and “w”; and fourth, precise diacritical marking with uniform sizes. These principles together form the unique harmony of Nasta'liq.

The applications of this authentic Persian script are vast, ranging from the writing of divans by great poets like Hafiz and Saadi to the decoration of architectural inscriptions during the Safavid era. In modern times, Nasta'liq has found a prominent place in the design of stamps and banknotes and has become a key element in contemporary visual arts, particularly in calligraphy-painting and graphic design. This script is not only a written art but also a symbol of Persian cultural identity around the world.

11. NASTA'LIQ IN THE PRESENT ERA: CONTINUATION OF AN ARTISTIC HERITAGE:

Nasta'liq, this precious gem of Persian art, has a vibrant and influential presence in the modern world. Over the centuries, this script has not only preserved its place but also adapted to the needs of the modern era. In the digital age, digital fonts of Nasta'liq, such as “Nasta'liq” and “Iran Nasta'liq,” have connected this authentic art to the virtual space and modern publishing. In visual arts, Nasta'liq has manifested as an expressive language in contemporary calligraphy-painting. Pioneers like Mohammad Ehsai, by combining tradition and modernism, have opened new horizons in the use of this script.

Today, serious efforts are underway to register this invaluable heritage with UNESCO, demonstrating the global significance of this art. Nasta'liq, this unique blend of geometry and mysticism, has evolved from the time of Mir Emad to the present day. We now see that this script not only holds a prominent place in traditional calligraphy workshops but also in contemporary galleries, graphic design, and even digital arts. This historical continuity shows the vitality and adaptability of this authentic Persian art, which continues to shine and inspire new generations of artists.

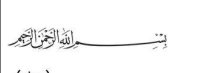
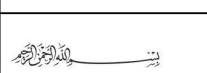
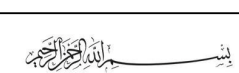
12. CONTEMPORARY CALLIGRAPHY: MERGING TRADITIONAL WISDOM WITH DIGITAL INNOVATIONS:

Ancient Iranian-Islamic scripts in the present era, while preserving their thousand-year-old authenticity, have donned a new attire. Contemporary calligraphy, with the use of advanced technologies, has expanded the traditional boundaries of this art. Calligraphy robots equipped with artificial intelligence algorithms are now able to mimic the most delicate pen movements of ancient masters, while virtual reality technology allows for the creation of three-dimensional works and immersive experiences of calligraphy art. These developments come with significant challenges. Issues such as preserving authenticity alongside innovation, replacing traditional master-apprentice methods with virtual approaches, and the risk of turning this art into merely a decorative commodity are key concerns for contemporary artists. However, call-

igraphy today has managed to carve out a new position in the contemporary art scene by participating in international exhibitions like “Horoofiyyeh” and collaborating with renowned global brands. The future of calligraphy hinges on the ability of artists to strike a balance between tradition and modernity. On one hand, the authenticity and spiritual depth of this art must be preserved, while on the other hand, it must align with the modern language of technology and the needs of today’s society. Contemporary calligraphy, by leveraging all these potentials, not only continues to thrive but also plays an important role as a bridge between Eastern and Western cultures in the dialogue of contemporary civilizations.

CONCLUSION:

Calligraphy exists in almost all cultures and holds great importance, but in the East, especially in Islamic lands and Iran, this importance is even more profound. Among visual arts, calligraphy has

 (نسخ)	 (ثلث)
 (ريحان)	 (محقق)
 (ريحان)	 (توقيع)

always been one of the most significant. In the Far East, calligraphy was given an equal status with painting due to its graphic quality and its symbolic role in conveying ideas. Both were created with a similar tool, the pen, and were considered courtly arts. In the Middle East,

despite the long history of this art in various regions, it can be said that the emergence of Islam and the writing of the Qur'an played a fundamental role in elevating the status of calligraphy. Before Islam, various scripts such as cuneiform, Pahlavi, and Avestan were common in Iran, but with the advent of Islam, our ancestors embraced the Arabic alphabet and Islamic scripts, replacing the previous ones. Since the Qur'an is the most important and sacred book for Muslims, it must be written in the best possible way, thus making calligraphy the most esteemed and distinguished Islamic art. Islamic calligraphy, and more specifically Iranian calligraphy, is a collection of elements that are harmoniously and cohesively placed together. The Kufic script was the first script used for writing the Holy Quran. This script, known for its geometric and orderly characteristics, was initially used for writing the Quran and later extended to other books, inscriptions, and the decoration of mosque doors and domes. It became one of the most important Islamic scripts during the early periods. Around the 4th century AH, a type of Kufic script known as "Iranian Kufic" was developed in Iran. This script reached its peak during the Seljuk period and became more artistic and decorative than its earlier form. Over time, the Kufic script became more ornamental, and its use in writing religious texts gradually diminished.

The Naskh script, one of the six primary scripts (known as "Aqlaam Sitta"), replaced Kufic script in Quranic and other texts' writing. This change occurred due to the greater ease and legibility of the Naskh script compared to Kufic. By

the 3rd century AH, Naskh became popular for copying the Quran and other texts and had almost completely replaced Kufic and its variants by the 5th century AH. One important branch of the Naskh script is the Iranian Naskh, which is attributed to the prominent calligrapher of the Safavid period, Ahmad Neirizi. This script is considered an excellent example of Iranian calligraphy due to its beauty and legibility in the history of Islamic art.

In the early centuries of the Islamic era, book decoration was highly regarded and was considered one of the main factors that determined the value of a book. Calligraphy, alongside gilding, painting, and binding, was an essential component of book decoration. The designs used in gilding typically included floral motifs, particularly the famous arabesque patterns. Sometimes, the arrangement and gilding of the lines went to the extent that reading the text became difficult. With the Mongol invasion, there was a halt in the growth of calligraphy and gilding. However, after the Mongol rulers converted to Islam, calligraphy and gilding revived. During this period, a script known as "Ta'liq" became popular in Iran. The characteristic of this script is that its letters tend to lean from right to left and from bottom to top. Gilding, during this period, continued to adorn the space between lines, and some manuscripts featured gold leaf on the paper background. Notable calligraphers of this period include Abdullah ibn Muhammad Hamadani and Abd al-Sirafi, the latter of whom is credited with the calligraphy of a manuscript of the book "Maqamat Hariri".

In the Timurid era, calligraphy and

gilding saw significant development. The most notable innovation in calligraphy of this period was the combination of the Naskh and Ta'liq scripts, which resulted in the creation of the Nastaliq script. This innovation is attributed to the famous calligrapher Mir Ali Tabrizi, whose masterpiece, "Homa and Homa-yun" (a work by Khajavi Kermani), became a landmark in the history of Persian calligraphy. The painting in this manuscript is attributed to Junaid. Other prominent calligraphers of this period include Ja'far Baysunghuri Tabrizi and Sultan Ali Mashhadi, known for his calligraphy of Alisher Navoi's Divan. In the Safavid era, both gilding and calligraphy underwent significant transformations. Gilding became a separate art from calligraphy, evolving into its own profession. Instead of being used in the main body of the text, gilding was applied to the margins of written works. The famous gilders of this period include Mawlana Hasan Baghdadi. Calligraphy in this era achieved independent artistic value and was often seen in the form of "riqa" (a script often used for letters). The influence of pain-

ting on calligraphy was also profound during this time. The Nastaliq script gained much attention during the Safavid era, with Mir Imad playing a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of this script. His style is considered one of the most beautiful and effective in the history of Nastaliq calligraphy, and he is regarded as the greatest master of Nastaliq. Another notable calligrapher of this period is Ali Reza Abbasi, who excelled not only in Nastaliq but also in the Thuluth script. During this era, thanks to the famous calligrapher Dervish Abdul Majid Tabriz, a new style of Nastaliq emerged, known as "Shakasteh Nastaliq". This style, which belongs to the group of Iranian scripts, is a combination of Ta'liq and Nastaliq, but with more curves and connections. The simpler and smoother version of it is called "Shakasteh Tahriri". Just as Mir Imad perfected Nastaliq, Abdul Majid Tabriz took Shakasteh to its highest level. His most priceless works are part of the numerous maqta' and murqqa' (fragments and compositions) in the manuscript of the complete works of Saadi.

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