Ta’liq & Nasta’liq
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Ta’liq was the earliest form of Persian calligraphy that evolved from the Iranian eastern Kufic. The script is said to have sprung out of the melding of Riqqa’ and Tawqīf. It attained the title of ‘hanging script’, reflecting its flowing characters. Ta’liq letters exhibit the gliding strokes which change their width yet place an emphasis and exaggerate the curvature of the final letter. Ta’liq flourished during the reigns of Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasp (1524-76), and accordingly became a popular script among Persian calligraphers, who then spread it to Turkey and India.

Ta’liq was rendered with a thick reed pen and the letters appear vertically short and thin with broad emphasis on their horizontality. According to the social historian Ibn Khaldun (d. 808 AH/ 1406 AD), "Among the contemporary scribes it has become a habit that they connect some parts of the words and deliberately eliminate some letters that are not known by anyone except themselves and others will get confused. These are the writers of the royal account books and juridical register books". The Ta’liq script was short lived and was soon replaced by the Nasta’liq script. The IAMM collection has few folios of the Ta’liq style, yet all of them display the characteristics of the hanging script. Written partially in the Arabic language and partially in Persian, the folios demonstrate the strength and elegance of calligraphy.

"His alifs were like the tall sapling figures that give peace to the soul, and eye, his sad was like the eye of the youthful sweethearts. His dal and lam were like the tresses of heart-ravishing beloved, and the circles of the nun were like the eyebrows of devastating beauties. Every one of his dots was like the pupil of the darkened, every one of his strokes was like the water of life in the darkness of running ink"

These were the inspired contemplations of calligrapher Baba Shah (16th century AD) on the Nasta’liq script produced by the hand of the calligrapher Sultan Ali Mashhadi. The Nasta’liq script was called the Bride of Scripts, for its elegant and rhythmic appearance. It combined the Ta’liq and Naskh scripts in a harmonious manner leading to the evolution of a truly Iranian style of calligraphy. Nasta’liq emerged and flourished in Iran since the 16th century AD and has been reserved for the Farsi Persian language.

Few copies of the Qur’an in Nasta’liq were attempted by Persian calligraphers. The most famous example was produced under the patronage of Shah Tahmasp by the master calligrapher Shah Mahmud Nishapuri (now located in Istanbul) in 945 AH / 1538 AD, but the outcome was not satisfactory. The Nasta’liq script became a popular calligraphic decorative style on ceramics, metal ware, and even coins.

The IAMM collection presents some outstanding Persian single folios written in the Nasta’liq script from the 16th-19th century AD. Prominent calligraphers contributed to the collection and placed the folios in their proper historical repertoire. From the atelier of Shah Tahmasp, the collection displays the works of calligrapher Eyshi, and Shah Mahmud Nishapuri. From the 17th century AD, such prominent names as Abu al Baqa, Abdul Reahid al Deylami, and Mohammed Baqar rival in their excellence and beautifully rendered folios and from the 18th and 19th century calligraphers Hakim ibn Vesal, Khalil Allah and Abdul Latif Larijani. The collection displays the Nasta’liq bordering Ta’liq script in its earlier folios and Nasta’liq bordering Shikasteh script in other folios. The beauty and diversity of the Nasta’liq folios attest to the true spirit of the Nasta’liq as a free flowing, light and ravishing script.
Catalogue no. 35, 36, 37 & 38

Official document
Calligrapher: Ekhtiyar al-Din Monshi Gonabadi
Date: 951-1000 AH / 1544-1592 AD
Style: Ta'liq
Size: 12 x 18 cm
Acc. Num: 1998.2.10, 11, 12 & 13
Description

The four folios belong to the same official document or firman (letter). The text is written in black and blue ink in Ta’liq style, and framed with cloud-shaped outlines on gold ground. The text includes a Hadith and wise sayings as well as the names of prominent religious Imams such as Imam Ali Reza.

The use of coloured ink was known to calligrapher Sultan Mohammed Nur, a 15th-century Persian calligrapher. The Ta’liq script exhibited here is an elegant style in which the words float, one next to the other. According to Canby, this style of Ta’liq was used at the Turkmen courts of Tabriz. (Canby 2003, p.51)
### Catalogue no. 39

**16th century firman**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calligrapher:</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Beginning of the 16th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style:</td>
<td>Ta’ilq bordering Nasta’ilq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size:</td>
<td>6.6 x 11.0 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acc. Num:</td>
<td>1998.2.133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Description

The folio displays the developed Ta’ilq script, in three text lines. The text, which starts with the description of Caliph Ali, recalls some of his wise sayings and culminates with a statement that includes the date of its preparation: the morning of day seven of the month of Safar.

The beauty of the script and the free-flowing letters produces out of the few lines a puzzle of short hand. Similar composition is found in the firman of Shah Ismail written by Fakhri Beg dated to 910 AH / 1504 AD. (Canby, p.49)
Catalogue no. 40

A couplet in celebration of the Norouz
Calligrapher: Eyshi
Date: 951-981 AH / 1544-1573 AD
Style: Old Nasta’liq
Size: 11.0 x 22.0 cm
Accession Number: 1998.2.14

Description
The written panel depicts four lines of black Nasta’liq of the old style representing the transition stages that led to the development of the Persian script from Ta’liq to Nasta’liq. The couplets are written on a faded golden floral background, with superb side triangles, exquisitely painted in floral patterns reminiscent of 16th century Safavid Qur’anic folios.

The Persian text welcomes the beginning of the new year: the norouz, wishing good health and prosperity to future generations, "fortune and dignity, long lasting rule on the throne."

Eyshi stressed the curvature of the "L" character, which is repeated six times in the first line. This repetition creates the movement within his text, and allows for lifting the calligraphy upwards as if accelerating the sound of the plea.

Text
The year, the omen, wealth, health, family, progeny, luck and throne
May they be to you established and persisting, within the world and within the kingdom
New Year, good omen, prosperity and high spirit
Strong family, immortal progeny, exalted throne and good fortune.

تالاق و فل مال و حلال و اصل و نسل و نیک و خوش
بادت افزار جاه و دوست بر قرار و بر دوام
سال خرم فان نیکو مال وافر حلال خوش
اصل ثابت نسل بالقو تخت عالی
Catalogue no. 41

A folio of Masnavi poetry
Calligrapher: Shah Mahmoud al Nishapuri
Date: 16th century
Style: Classical Nasta’liq
Accession number: 1998.2.217

Description

The famed calligrapher composed this folio of 11 couplets or masnavis in a traditional arrangement. Particular to the Masnavi style, is that each verse has a particular melody, and that the last word in each hemistich (or a half verse) ends in the same letter allowing each two hemistiches to rhyme.

Sultan Mahmud al Nishapuri proudly yet humbly signs the centre of the folio in a smaller script, indicating that the folio was a single unit and not a part of a loose leaf. As Sultan Mahmud was a renowned calligrapher, the Muraqqa’ compiler re-inscribed the name of the calligrapher in larger font on top of the folio, to assert the importance of the calligrapher.
Catalogue no. 42

A folio of Masnavi poetry

Calligrapher: Unknown
Date: 1001 AH / 1592 AD
Style: Nasta'liq
Size: 19.5 x 9.7 cm
Accession number: 1998.2.34

Description

A single folio of three columns divided in the middle with diagonally placed triangles of floral pattern. The folio displays a highly thought out composition where the text and the decoration create a harmonious flow that attracts the viewer, yet separates the couplets in a melodic manner.

The Masnavi is a great poetic work of the philosopher, theologian and poet Rumi (d. 1273 AD). The style and poetry of Rumi's Masnavi have been the scope of further expansion by local poets throughout the ages, yet it is essentially a compendium of mystical, ethical and Sufi teachings. Its aim has always been to reflect the meanings and teachings of the Qur'an.