Khurasan, for the English traveler James Baillie Fraser, who journeyed through that region in 1821–2, described seeing part of this copy in a shrine at Quchan. A handful of pages ended up in the shrine library at Mashhad; others in Tehran, and still others in private collections.

Each page (Figure 7.11) contains seven lines of text, a relatively unusual arrangement, inscribed on thick sheets of creamy white paper that measure a whopping 1.75 × 1 m. Assuming that the pages had the requisite borders on four sides, then each page would have measured on the order of 2.25 × 1.5 m. The text is transcribed only on one side, probably because the other side of the sheet was too rough to take the ink smoothly. This roughness was likely the result of the method used to make the paper: it is impossible to produce such huge sheets by the regular method of dipping the mold into the pulp, for the filled molds would have weighed a back-breaking 350 pounds (172 kilograms). Instead, the papermakers must have resorted to the traditional method of ladling pulp into floating molds. Such a technique requires many more molds (each sheet had to dry before it could be removed from the mold), thereby explaining why different pages have different numbers of laid lines per cm.116 Papermakers still find it difficult to make such gargantuan sheets, and some of the pages, like this one, are made from pieces that have been patched together.118 Such piecing was one of the many techniques of speciality papermaking that developed at the Timurid and Turkoman courts, when calligraphic specimens were mounted on pieces of different colored paper and bound in albums (see Chapter 2).

The glory of this gigantic manuscript is its majestic script, the type of mubaqqaq sometimes called ya’ll [clear or plain] and later ya’llf [great or glorious]. A special pen was needed to produce the rhomboidal points and strokes that measure more than one centimeter wide and fourteen centimeters tall. Another pen with a nib one-third that width was used to add vocalization. Other punctuation, such as the full stop indicated by the letter ta’ [for mutlaq, absolute] or the optional stop indicated by the letter jinn (for ja’iz, permitted), is added delicately in red. Other than a simple gold and blue ruling, the text is left plain, with verses marked only by small roundels in gold surrounded by blue.119

This page exemplifies the triumph of calligraphy over illumination. The strong verticals of tall letters form the backbone of the page. The grid is broken occasionally by diagonals, such as the sweeping upper stroke of kaf and the large winged strokes of the lam-alif combination (the second letters of the page) that soar like the wings of a stork. Much of the power of the page comes from the large amount of blank space. The bodies of the letters are squished into a narrow zone near the baseline. Descending letters are correspondingly compressed, their nesting tails often set parallel like hairpins (Figure 7.11a). The effect is enhanced by the wide voids [some 7 cm] left between...
lines. This manuscript exemplifies the conspicuous consumption of paper, the main material.

This elephantine manuscript was one of several large Koran manuscripts in muhaqqaq made under the Timurids and Turkomans, some transcribed by princes themselves like Ibrahim Sultan. Other, unsigned copies were smaller. In these manuscripts, the majestic script is accompanied by splendid illumination for opening pages and chapter headings, in which the text is often penned in gold outlined in black, with ultramarine used to fill the blind letters. The extraordinary illumination is accompanied by headings in a variety of scripts, ranging from various of the Six Pens like thuluth and naskh to a distinctive spindly kufic with interlaced stems.

In addition to juxtaposing the text script with different display scripts for headings and colophon, calligraphers of this period revealed in displaying their talents by combining several scripts for a continuous text on the same page. Used occasionally in the twelfth century (Figure 6.13), this format became widespread in Iran and surrounding areas at this time. In one arrangement found in several Koran manuscripts, three lines of large script sandwich two blocks with smaller script, often in a different color. A single-volume Koran manuscript in Dublin, for example, has three lines of large script in gold outlined in black and blue for the eyes of the letters, sandwiching two blocks, each with six lines of black naskh. To further enliven the page, the calligrapher wrote the top and bottom lines of large script in muhaqqaq, but used thuluth for the middle line.

One of the most complex examples juxtaposing large and small scripts is a thirty-volume copy of the Koran transcribed in 888/1483-4 by Zayn al-'Abidin ibn Muhammad, al-katib al-Shirazi (the Shirazi scribe), for the Aqquyyunlu ruler of Tabriz, Ya'qub Beg [r. 1478-90]. Regular pages resemble the typical Koran manuscript, with three lines of large script – the top and bottom in black muhaqqaq, the middle in gold thuluth – sandwiching smaller blocks with two lines of black naskh, sometimes with unauthorized connections between letters and with stops indicated in red. The opening pages have rich illumination, much of it in blue, but Zayn al-'Abidin reserved his finest calligraphic skills for the closing page of each ruz, in which he juxtaposed as many of the Six Pens as possible. In this page (Figure 7.33), for example, he wrote the top line, as elsewhere, in a bold black muhaqqaq. The second line containing the end of the Koranic text is written in naskh, the small script found on regular pages, but with an unauthorized connection between the ru' and ya' of nasrana, the last word of the Koranic text. For the third line offering God's affirmation, he used the same small script but increased the number of unauthorized connections so that it resembles the riza' that he used elsewhere for his signature. Line four, the large line in the center, continues with Muhammad's affirmation, written like its counterparts on regular pages in a large and bold thuluth penned in gold outlined in black. Compared to the large line of muhaqqaq at the top, the central
EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL STYLES IN THE LATER MIDDLE PERIOD

line of thuluth script is more curvilinear, the letters are nestled within one another, the tails of mim and other letters return upwards, alif is slightly shorter, and final ha' is open like a squiggle.

Zayn al-Abidin introduces two more scripts for the bottom three lines. The two lines in the lower box containing his signature and the date are written in rayhan, the smaller and lighter counterpart of the large muhaqqiq used at the top. Compare, for example, the closed final ha' in both scripts. Finally, for the bottom line with more praises to Muhammad and his family, Zayn al-Abidin used tawfi', the large counterpart of the small riq'a used in the third line. Note, for example, the opening phrase in which the final alif maqurro of salla provides a seamless connector to the initial alif of allah.

Such a format is not to all tastes. This mixture of scripts was not popular in contemporary Egypt and Syria, where a change in script indicated a change in text (see Chapter 8), and some modern experts, accustomed to the Arab tradition, do not accord it high praise. This format seems to have been especially appealing in Iran and adjacent lands at this time as part of the taste for calligraphic specimens, which often juxtaposed different scripts written at different angles in different colors. Nor were these six scripts the only ones mastered by Iranian calligraphers in this period. Many of these same artists were even better known for their work in the hanging scripts.

The hanging scripts

At the same time that Yaqut and his followers in Iraq and Iran were refining the round scripts known as the Six Pens, calligraphers in the same region were also developing two new styles of hanging script, called ta'liq and nasta'liq. Virtually all Safavid authors - from Dast Muhammad writing in 1544, to Qadi Ahmad, writing a century later - credit Taj al-Din Salmani, a scribe working in the court atelier under the great warlord Timur, with the invention of ta'liq, and his contemporary Mir 'Ali Tabrizi with the invention of nasta'liq. Extant examples show, however, that these scripts had been developed much earlier and that these famous calligraphers - just like their predecessors Ibn Muqla, Ibn al-Bawwab, and Yaqut - were responsible only for standardizing and refining scripts that had evolved over a long period. Their names were, in short, convenient pegs on which to hang already fashioned [and fashionable] coats.

These hanging scripts were particularly suitable for writing Persian. Persian differs from Arabic in its proportion of straight and curved letters. It also lacks the definite article al-, whose upthrust al and lamed lend a distinct verticality and rhythm to text in the Arabic language. It is no surprise, therefore, that both of the hanging scripts developed in Iran and then spread to India and Turkey, where they were used for both Persian and Turkish. They were rarely used for writing Arabic (for one exceptional manuscript of the Koran in nasta'liq, see Figure 10.7) and were never popular in the Arab lands.

CALLIGRAPHY IN IRAN AND ITS ENVIRONS

Ta'liq, literally meaning the 'hanging' or 'suspended' (script), was the typical chancery hand used in this period. A highly stylized script, it is commonly said to have evolved from naskh, riq'a, and tawfi'. This explanation makes sense, for ta'liq shares many peculiarities with these scripts, but is more stylized. It reveals in curvilinear elements, extraneous loops, extreme contrasts between compression and expansion, and connected letters, all traits that make it difficult for the novice to decipher. Ta'liq was used rarely for manuscripts, sometimes for poems and calligraphic specimens, and typically for decrees [Persian firman] and other official documents such as diplomatic correspondence and letters of patent and congratulation, which are usually written in widely spaced lines that curve and ascend at the end of a line on the left.

Ta'liq had a long gestation. Some modern writers on calligraphy suggest that the sinuous style of the letters goes as far back as the Pahlavi and Avestan alphabets of pre-Islamic times and name Khwaja Abu'l-Al (of whom nothing is known) or the tenth-century scribe Hasan ibn Husayn 'Ali al-Farisi al-katib as the originator of the style. Such a derivation must remain hypothetical, for no examples of these hands survive. Using the evidence from Persian manuscripts, Francis Richard identified several features that prefigure ta'liq in the regular round script used to transcribe Persian manuscripts in the pre-Mongol period. Most notable is the connection of the letters alif, dal, ra', lam, and waw to the following letter. These same ligatures are also found in riq'a, but the letter shapes differ in the two scripts. The unorthodox connections in ta'liq also led to modifications in some letter shapes. Alif, for example, usually has a serif on the upper left, as opposed to the right-hand one found in other round scripts. Richard illustrated these features in several manuscripts dating from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries that were transcribed not only in Iran, but also in Anatolia, for the Rum Saljuqs also used Persian as the language of court.

By the late thirteenth century ta'liq had achieved a definitive style, sometimes called ta'liq-i qadim (old ta'liq) or ta'liq-i asl (original ta'liq), probably driven in part by the burgeoning Ilkhanid bureaucracy's need to standardize written Persian. One early example is a tax decree dated Jumada II 692/June 1292 (Figure 7.13). The text on the scroll is written in a mixture of languages that exemplifies the cosmopolitan nature of Ilkhanid rule. The first three lines, containing the heading written in larger script, are in Turkish. The opening lines name the Ilkhanid ruler Ghiyathu'll-din Qa'it Buq'atu [r. 1291-5], here called Irjanin Borji (jewel diamond), the Tibetan name conferred upon him by Buddhist priests or scribes. The second line names three Mongol amirs who were the real power behind the throne during Ghiyathu'll-din's short reign: Shiktur, Aq-Buqa, and Togha Chur. The third line displays the emblem (taghtra) of Ahmad, referring to the vizier Sadr al-Din Ahmad Zanjani, minister of finance. The nine lines in Persian in smaller ta'liq script contain the main text, granting tax

270

271
EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL STYLES IN THE LATER MIDDLE PERIOD
exemption to a village near Ardabil that had been endowed to a Sufi hospice.

The Ilkhansid decree shows some of the same features as the one issued by the Fatimid chancellery in 350/1163 [Figure 6.7]. In both cases, the decree is written on a long paper scroll approximately a quarter of a meter wide, though the Ilkhansid scroll, incomplete at the top, is only one-quarter the length of the Fatimid one. In both cases the scribes left wide spaces between lines, a sign of conspicuous consumption meant to underscore the importance of the sender, and wrote across the line so that the words ascend and pile up on the left in order to prevent additions at the end. In both cases a larger script distinguishes the names of the officials who issued the decrees.

Close scrutiny, however, reveals significant differences between the scripts used for the texts in the Fatimid and Ilkhansid decrees. The Fatimid decree, written in Arabic in riqa' script, uses many words with the definite prefix al- (the), and the individual words generally sit flat on the baseline. In the Persian text, by contrast, the letters in the individual words slope from upper right to lower left, while the words rise in steps. The sloping nature of the script is enhanced by the long curving tail of the final letter in each word. The long tails are usually only on letters that were often extended in other scripts, such as ba’, lam, and ra’, but even on final fa’ or qa’ so that almost every word ends with an extended looping tail. Moreover, there are more unauthorized connections than were found in earlier styles. Dal or ra’ for example, is almost always connected to final ha’.

The Ilkhansid decree also shows several innovations in format. One is comparable to the elevario of Western diplomatic, in which books are divided and names of important people are listed out of the text and made more prominent, in this case by setting them in the right-hand margin. In the decree issued under Gaykhatu, the phrase ‘everlasting’ (nuz-afzun) is set in the right margin four lines up from the bottom. It is the benediction following the word ‘government’ (dawlayl) mentioned in the middle of the line. A carat in the middle of the line shows the reader where to insert the word. Similarly, the name Baytaish Aqa, the amir who made the village, is set at the top of the third line of the text, following his designation at the end of the previous line as the ‘great amir’ (amir-i buzurg). After the Ilkhans converted to Islam, the names of God were often set at the side in this way. Setting off such words in the margin made it easier for the reader to grasp the subject of the text without reading the whole document.

Another significant innovation in the Ilkhansid scroll is the use of a seal stamped in red to cover the joins between the sheets of the scroll, thereby preventing the unauthorized addition of extra sheets. This royal seal (al-tamgha) was sent by the Yuan emperor Qubilai from his capital at Khanbalig to mark the investiture of the ilkan, his nominal subordinate in Iran, and entrusted there to the minister of finance, who was authorized to stamp all fiscal decrees. Such seals were written in phagha, the script
drawn up by a Tibetan lama and introduced by Qubilai in 1269.10 Once the Ilkhans had declared their independence from the Great Khans in China, they issued their own seals written in Arabic in the script closest to phagha, square kufic.11

Chancery clerks (nushtu) continued to use ta’liq for documents issued from the Bosphorus to the Indian subcontinent from the Mongol period onwards for several hundred years. In order to write faster, clerks streamlined the script by increasing the number of unorthodox ligatures and dropping the pointing on many letters, features that make it more difficult to read the script and also more difficult to alter the text. Some letters were reduced in size, while others were written thinner strokes or in new shapes. This new style, known as shikasta ta’liq [broken ta’liq] to differentiate it from the older style, was used systematically from the end of the fourteenth century. According to the version given by Safavid chroniclers, after the script was ‘invented’ by Taj al-Din Salimani, it was perfected by ‘Abd al-Ha’i Tarabali, chief clerk under Timur’s great-grandson Abu Sa’id (r. 1451-69).12 He developed two varieties — a more flowing style associated with the Timurids in Khorasan and a more linear and solid style associated with Aqquyunlu in Iraq and Azerbaijan.13 Chancery clerks continued to use these styles, as shown by a handful of surviving documents issued by the Turkoman chancellories. None is signed, but examples like a letter from the Aqquyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan to the Ottoman sultan Bayazid show a standard format and a script even more conventionalized than that used in the Ilkhansid decree.14

Though most common for court documents, ta’liq was also used for shorter documents, which were later gathered in albums. These pieces are often signed, thereby enabling us to identify individual hands.15 The Aqquyunlu sultan Yaqub Beg himself was a master of ta’liq.16 So was his grand vizier Shaykh Najm al-Din Mas’ud.17 Another piece dedicated to Yaqub Beg preserved in one of the albums in Istanbul [Figure 7.14] is signed by ‘Abd al-Ha’i ibn Hafiz Shaykh Muhammad al-Bukhari.18 The specimen, which offers praise to the sultan who traverses the celestial sphere, the jamshid whose vulture is in the orb of the sky, represents some of the finest calligraphy penned in Iran in the late fourteenth century. Its value is clear from the materials used. It is written on expensive paper that is tinted deep mauve and sprinkled with gold. The dedication to the sultan at the top of the page is also written in gold, whereas the main text is penned in black ink. As with the longer firmans in ta’liq, the lines with the dedication to the sultan rise to the right, and the tails of the final letters in the lines or hemistiches swing out to the left. The hand is smoother and more fluid than that used in other documents, perhaps because of the paper used. The letters are also more clearly written, and many more are pointed. For example, to distinguish sin from shin, ‘Abd al-Ha’i often put three dots under shin, characteristically written as two dots above a small dagger.
From the fifteenth century, ta'liq became the major chancery style used in Iran and adjacent areas in the eastern Islamic lands. Scribes in the Ottoman chancery tried to turn ta'liq into a literary script, but this attempt was short-lived [see Chapter 9], and ta'liq remained primarily the script for transcribing documents, while nasta'liq, the other hanging script, became the literary script par excellence for writing Persian, particularly poetry. The name nasta'liq is a contraction of the Persian naskh-1 ta'liq, meaning a hanging or suspended naskh. Using dated or datable manuscripts, Elaine Wright meticulously traced its evolution in fourteenth-century Iran and showed how it developed not from combining naskh and ta'liq, as is commonly thought, but from naskh alone. Wright isolated a dozen traits that distinguish naskh from nasta'liq, including the slant, height, and shape of various letters, notably kaf, and their position in relation to the baseline. She tested these characteristics in forty-six published manuscripts, assigning each trait within a particular manuscript a numerical score on a scale from one to five. Based on a general consideration of the twelve traits, she then gave each manuscript a final score on a scale of one [pure naskh] to nine [pure nasta'liq].

In addition to showing the overall progression from naskh to nasta'liq over the course of the fourteenth century, Wright's method of ranking identified three key periods of change, all of which took place in Shiraz. In the 1330s and 1340s, Shirazi scribes, particularly those transcribing copies of the Shahnama, increased the number of piled-up or slanted words, perhaps to add visual interest to the page. A second and more dramatic shift took place between 1355 and 1366, when Shirazi scribes transformed angles into curves and curves into straight strokes so that the horizontal and vertical axes faded in favor of an oblique one. This shift was visible not only in poetic manuscripts written in columns, but also in prose texts where the pile-up of words could not have been due to the exigencies of the multi-column format. The final period of change began with the first appearance of the fully developed form of nasta'liq in a manuscript of the collected works of 'Imad Faqih dated 772/1370 and readily attributable to Shiraz.

Wright also found new textual evidence to support the visual evidence she had amassed in her argument for the Shirazi origins of nasta'liq script: a document drawn up c. 1430 by the Timurid scribe Jafar, supervisor of Baysunghur's scriptorium at Herat. Writing about a half century after the events he is describing [and therefore the earliest surviving source to describe the evolution of nasta'liq], Jafar told a rather different story from that recounted by Safavid historians writing a century or two later. According to Jafar, it must be known that nasta'liq is derived from naskh. Some Shirazi [scribes] modified it [naskh] by taking out the flattened [letter] kaf and the straight bottom part of the letters sin, lam, and nun. From other scripts they then brought in a curved sin and stretched forms and introduced variations in the thickness of the line. So a new script was created, to be named nasta'liq. After a while Tabrizi [scribes] modified what Shirazi [scribes] had created by gradually rendering it thinner and defining its canons, until the time when Khwaja Mir 'Ali Tabrizi brought this script to perfection.

Thus, our earliest written source also credits Shirazi scribes with the development of nasta'liq and Mir 'Ali Tabrizi with its canonization. Wright's study of the development of nasta'liq is important for several reasons. First, it shows some of the advantages [and the pitfalls] of the quantitative method. To obtain the overall score for each manuscript, Wright could not simply average the twelve individual characteristics, for some traits are interrelated [the hanging or slanted nature of the script, for example, engenders a chain of reactions, including the lack of adherence to a baseline, the sloping of individual letters such as alif and kaf, and the visual foreshortening of letters in nasta'liq due to their burial amidst the heap of other letters] and some characteristics [notably, the stacking and overlapping of letters and words, the combined effect of the traits, and the overall impression of precision and control] were more important. In other words, mathematics alone is not sufficient; some individual judgment is also needed.

Second, her study underscores the importance of choosing a representative sample. The execution of any hand varies depending, among other considerations, on the funding and time that the calligrapher could put into penning the text. Following her training as an
art historian, Wright worked mainly from fine illustrated manuscripts, most of which are poetic texts produced in Shiraz, literary capital of Iran in this period. In his complementary essay published in the same issue of *Manuscripta Orientalia*, however, Frank Richard, who was trained as a linguistic and librarian, showed that 'texts on history, religion, and mysticism were also written in some version of a hanging script, including some manuscripts produced in Tabriz. The picture, therefore, may be slanted more complicated, especially as artists often moved from place to place in this volatile period. The calligrapher Ahmad Shah, for example, was born in Tabriz, designed the inscription for the major shrine of the Mirjanhvi Complex founded by the Mirjanhvi governor in 578/1181, bore the epithet zarin golam shirazi [golden pen of Shiraz]; and signed brass candles of a typical Shirazi style. Geographical rubrics are thus as difficult to apply to styles of calligraphy as they are to contemporary styles of painting.

Third, Wright's study points up the effectiveness (and even necessity) of combining visual and written sources. She began with the manuscripts themselves and added corroboration from texts. Such a combined approach is needed, for chroniclers often paint a picture that is not only hard to interpret out of context but sometimes one-sided or distorted, as with the Safavid arrangement of chains of transmission. Such a historical slant also privileges a teleological linearity, whereas, as Wright showed, the development of *nasta‘liq* took place in fits and starts. That is not to say that written sources do not have much to contribute to the history of calligraphy. Indeed, Richard pointed out another textual source still to be mined: contemporary literature. Poems like 'Assar Tabrizi's *Mthir va Mashhat* contain numerous references to writing, and unraveling the complex metaphors imbedded in these verses can tell us much about the allegorical role of calligraphy and how contemporary literary society viewed it.

Finally, Wright's study shows that the sources themselves do not answer the question of why *nasta‘liq* developed at this time. Its development was undoubtedly connected to the use of Persian, which lends itself to a suspended script. It is surely no coincidence that *nasta‘liq* was developed for Persian poetry at the same time that chancery clerks developed the other hanging script, *ta‘liq*, for court documents. *Nasta‘liq* is especially suitable for writing poetry, whose hemistichs encourage the pile-up of letters against the intercolumnar ruling. Only later was it adopted for the other *nasta‘liq* with the change from narrative to lyric poetry that took place at this time. Calligraphers, she suggested, could not help but be affected by the language and emotion of the new genre. One might hope to draw analogies between the fluidity of this new *ghazal* [short monorhyming poems often dealing with love] and the fluidity of the new hanging script.

The next problem in tracing the evolution of *nasta‘liq* is establishing the identity of the person who canonized it—Mir 'Ali Tabrizi—so at least two scribes of that name were active in Tabriz at the turn of the fourteenth to the fifteenth century. One was 'Ali ibn Iyas al-Baqawardi (the taster). He worked for the Jalayirid sultan Ahmad [r. 1383–1410], for whom he transcribed the well-known manuscript of Khwaju Kirmani's three *mathnavis* finished in Jumada I 798/March 1396. Penned in elegant *nasta‘liq*, the manuscript was clearly a royal production, originally decorated with ten magnificent paintings, one signed by Junayd, the first unquestionably genuine signature in Persian manuscript painting. Western scholars, long familiar with his manuscript, often assumed that this Mir 'Ali was the 'inventor' of *nasta‘liq*. Working from other calligraphic specimens, Bayani showed, however, that the Mir 'Ali credited with the invention of *nasta‘liq* had a different genealogy. Mir 'Ali's most famous pupil signed a calligraphic specimen in Tehran saying that it was written by 'Alar in the tradition (taraj) of the inventor of the archetypal *nasta‘liq*, 'Ali ibn Hasan al-sultani. 'Alar's master, therefore, was someone named 'Ali ibn Hasan al-sultani, the only surviving example of Mir 'Ali ibn Hasan's hand (Figure 7.15) is a splendid but incomplete manuscript of Nizami's *Khamsaw and Shrin* in Washington, DC.

The text is one of five romantic poems in the *Khamsa* [Quintet] composed in the twelfth century by the master of the genre, Iyas ibn Yusuf Nizami of Ganja in Azerbaijan. This multi-poem poem became particularly popular in the fourteenth century: fine illustrated copies were produced, and Asir Khusraw Dhlavi [1255–1325], known as the Parrot of India, composed his own shorter version. The colophon to this fragment with the ill-fated love-story between the Armenian princess Shirin, her royal husband Khusrav Parviz, and her tragic rival Farhad, says that it was transcribed (harrara) by 'Ali ibn Hasan al-sultani at the capital [dar al-sultani] Tabriz. The last words in the colophon with the date are lost, but the style of the five fine paintings that are contemporary with the text suggests that the manuscript was copied between 1405 and 1415. This must have been near the end of the calligrapher's life, for Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi, whose poem about calligraphy was incorporated in Qadi Ahmad's treatise, says that Mir 'Ali, the inventor of *nasta‘liq*, was a contemporary of the poet Kamal Khajandji [d. 1400].

Priscilla Soucek articulated the key elements of the *nasta‘liq* that Mir 'Ali ibn Hasan used in this manuscript of *Khamsaw and Shrin*. Her work shows a sharp eye for Wright's approach, created by the slightly pitched *sif* [slanting lines], elongated letters such as *sin* and *kaf*. The tiny bodies of the letters contrast with the long sweeping strokes. Soucek also pointed out the small distinctions between the *nasta‘liq* of 'Ali ibn Iyas had used in his copy of Khwaju Kirmani's poems and the one 'Ali ibn Hasan used less than a generation later in his copy of *Khamsaw and Shrin*. The latter work has smooth curves for the teeth of *bu* and *sin* and more tension created by packing the words
EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL STYLES IN THE LATER MIDDLE PERIOD

together, writing each one on a distinctive slant, and often stacking up a letter or word at the end of a hemistich.

According to Safavid sources, Mir ‘Ali passed his style of nastā’ilq to his son ‘Ubaydallah, whose hand was reputed to be indistinguishable from that of his father. 166 The style of nastā’ilq codified by Mir ‘Ali then passed from the Agoyunlu court at Tabriz to the Timurids in Khurasan, as ‘Ubaydallah ibn ‘Ali taught it to Ja’far, a native of Tabriz who moved to Herat, where he worked for prince Baysunghur, thereby gaining the epithet Baysunghuri. 167 Ja’far was in charge of forty calligraphers in the royal studio there and personally calligraphed many of the finest illustrated manuscripts made for the prince. 168 A unique report (‘arzadashi) preserved in one of the albums in Istanbul gives a progress report on how these manuscripts were progressing and gives us a glimpse into how this royal book atelier functioned. 169

A text page from the copy of Sa’di’s Gulistan [Rose-garden] copied at Herat in 830/1426–7 [Figure 7.16] gives a good example of Ja’far’s hand. 170 A collection of anecdotes illustrating ethical truths written in short prose passages with verse endings, the text is considered the preeminent of elegant composition and a classic of Persian literature still used as a primer by schoolchildren from Turkey to India. This fine manuscript, of modest size but lavishly illuminated in gold and ultramarine, is the earliest illustrated copy to survive. Ja’far calligraphed the text in a smooth nastā’ilq typical of early times, in which the individual graphic units are placed at a 30° angle to the horizontal writing line. Alif is small, serifless, and pitched slightly to the right. Connectors and letters, particularly sin/shin, are extended with long swooping strokes that widen at the end [Figure 7.16a]. Both rhythm and spacing are tightly controlled, and the sujudah headings in the text written in gold or blue, here with bayt ‘verse’ and elsewhere with hikayat [story], mathnawi [poem], and ruba’i [quatrain], are stretched to echo the elongated forms of the nastā’ilq. The breaks between poetry and prose and the irregular divisions between verses add a somewhat jumpy quality to the page, enhanced by Ja’far’s nastā’ilq script, which has not yet reached the elegance and fluidity it achieved under his pupils and successors who made it the predominant script for copying poetry, reputedly used by the mid-fifteenth century for three-quarters of everything written there. 171

Ja’far trained several students in nastā’ilq, of whom the most famous was Zahir al-Din Azhar Tabrizi. 172 Signed manuscripts allow us to trace Azhar’s career, particularly in Herat, where he worked for several Timurid princes, from Baysunghur to Abu Sa’id. 173 According to Dust Muhammad, masters of the art of calligraphy judged Azhar’s style of nastā’ilq to be better than that of his teacher, 174 and a manuscript of Nizami’s Haft Paykar in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, datable to the mid-fifteenth century, attests to its elegance. 175

The words are evenly spaced and slope more dramatically than they did in Ja’far work. The upper stroke of kaf, for example, is set at 45° to

Figure 7.15 Opening page to a copy of Nizami’s Khusrw and Shirin with twenty-five lines per page transcribed by Mir ‘Ali ibn Hasan al-Suhani at Tabriz, c. 1410.

The calligrapher is to be identified as the Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi who is credited with the canonization of nastā’ilq script. He used a fine fluid script for the poetic text, with smooth, swinging curves for the teeth and often stacked words at the end of the verse.
the baseline. To balance, the bodies of other letters, particularly sin and kaf, are lengthened.

Nasta’liq achieved its classical form under Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, a student of Azhar (or perhaps of one of Azhar’s students). Orphaned at an early age, Sultan ‘Ali spent most of his long career (c. 1453–1520) in Herat working for the major bibliophiles at the Timurid court, the ruler Sultan Husayn and his boon companion ‘Ali Shir Nava’t.176 In 1514, after Sultan ‘Ali had retired to Mashhad, he wrote a verse treatise on calligraphy which Qadi Ahmad incorporated in his history of calligraphers and painters.177 It contains both practical and autobiographical information and demonstrates the close association between religious discipline and the practice of calligraphy.

Sultan ‘Ali penned some of the finest manuscripts of the late fifteenth century, including a copy of Farid al-Din ‘Attar’s Mantiq al-Tayr (Conference of the Birds) completed on 1 Jumada I 894/55 April 1487.178 The text, written in 1187 by one of the classic Sufi poets, is an allegory in which thirty birds, symbolizing humankind, search for the Divine through seven valleys only to discover it in themselves. The author and his works became popular in Timurid times, particularly during the reign of Sultan Husayn. His court poet Dowlatabad Samargandi included ‘Attar in his Tadbirkat al-Shu’ara, the biography of poets prepared for the prince in 1487, and several luxury copies of the Mantiq al-Tayr were made at this time.179 The manuscript penned by Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi is the finest.

Each page [Figure 7.17] contains twenty-two lines and four columns of the elegant nasta’liq developed under the Timurids. Alif, written without a hook, is pitched slightly to the right to emphasize the sloping script. Compared to the hand of his predecessor Ja’far [Figure 7.16], Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s is more spacious and delicate [Figure 7.17a]. He shows a mastery of control and modulation, introducing visual rhythms by elongating and emphasizing certain forms, notably the stroke on kaf which guides the eye over the page. He stressed rhymes and other parallels between hemistiches. Thus, the final -asti in the hemistiches flanking the title with huwayli is raised above the end of the line. Initial kaf, which often opens a hemistich, usually projects into the right margin. It occurs five times in the right column and introduces a link between the lines. Initial cha’ forms a similar pattern. All together, Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s script demonstrates a fine balance between fluidity and discipline, the same characteristics that he mentioned in his treatise on calligraphy.

The art of nasta’liq reached great heights during the reign of Sultan Husayn at Herat. Not content with merely penning nasta’liq in ink on paper, artists also developed the technique of the cut-out page collage and, more rarely, découpage [see Chapter 7]. The most famous example to survive is the dispersed copy of the ruler’s collected poems in Chaghatay Turkish [Figure 7.7]. As with Sultan ‘Ali’s page in Persian from the Mantiq al-Tayr, the upper stroke of kaf sets the rhythm in the page of Sultan Husayn’s love-poetry, but since the letter is more frequent in Turkish (it is used, for example, four times in the first line and six in the second), it lends a stronger beat to the hanging script when used for Turkish.

Examining the page from Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s copy of the Mantiq al-Tayr [Figure 7.17] also shows the close interaction between script and decoration in late Timurid times, when some of the finest illustrated books ever made in the Islamic lands were produced. During copying, the calligrapher left space in the text for illustrations, cut-outs, and linings, which were added later, usually by different specialists. In copying this manuscript, Sultan ‘Ali left space for eight, nearly full-page paintings. In order to set out the illustrated pages so that the painting is framed by the specific verses that describe it (and also to alert the painter as to what scene to illustrate), the calligrapher stretched out the preceding text with diagonal boxes, just as Sira’il-Husayn had done in the copy of Yazdi’s Zafarnama.
that he had transcribed at Shiraz in 893/1486 (Figure 7.10). This page, for example, faces the final illustration on folio 49a, showing Shaykh Mihna and the Villager. The text describes Shaykh Mihna’s quest for the spiritual way. The specific story begins three-quarters of the way down the page (Figure 7.17a) at the large blue box bearing the caption in Araki (khat). It recounts how the shaykh approached a pious villager who had light emanating from his head. When the shaykh asked him to explain his ecstatic state, the aged villager replied with advice about the need for patience for those who travel the mystical path. The calligrapher wanted to have a painting showing the shaykh approaching the villager. To do so, he stretched out the text in diagonal boxes, so that the hemistich beginning, ‘The shaykh turned to him [the old villager]’ falls at the top of the facing page and the space for the painting is framed by couplets containing the villager’s advice. The painter, who may have been at something of a loss to illustrate such a metaphysical concept, filled the large space with vignettes of daily life, such as weighing melons.

Looking carefully at this page also shows that the decorated headings were added afterwards, for they run over the calligraphy. The heading with khat (Figure 7.17a), for example, covers up most of the madda on the alif in agha. Similarly, when painting the red heading with al-nagqalat (discourses) in the middle of the page, the illuminator had to leave a small gap at the lower right corner of the frame to allow space for the final ya’ of kayi. The eight paintings were also done after copying. The last four were done soon after Sultan ‘Ali had finished transcribing the text in 893/1486. The first one showing the beggar who professed his love for a prince (fol. 38a) is even dated to the same year. Despite the quality of the calligraphy, this splendid copy of the Manzi q al-Tayr was apparently left unfinished, and the first four paintings in the manuscript were added more than a century later in Safavid times. At the same time Zayn al-‘Abidin al-Tabrizi added an illuminated frontispiece, the text pages were set in margins made from marbled and gold-foiled paper, and the folios were bound in a tooled and gilded cover. This work was carried out under Shah ‘Abbas, who recognized the astounding quality of the calligraphy and endorsed the manuscript to the Safavid dynastic shrine at Ardabil. To do so, the pages with the colophon and illustrations were stamped with the library seal of Shah ‘Abbas and the word waqf (religious donation) scrabbed across them.

Such a long gestation for a manuscript was not unusual in these troubled times. According to the long and detailed colophon (Figure 7.18), the same thing happened to another splendid copy of Nizami’s Khamsa now in the Topkapi Library. The Timurid prince Abu’l-Qasim Babur (r. 1447-57) commissioned Jafar’s student Akbar to transcribe the text, but the manuscript was still unfinished at the prince’s death. After the Qaraqoyunlu ruler Jahanshah sacked Herat a year later, the manuscript passed to Jahanshah’s son Pir Budaq. It then went to the Aqqoyunlu ruler Khalil (r. 1478), who commissioned
Figure 7.18 Colophon added to a copy of Nizami’s Khamsa begun by Azbar for the Timurid prince Abu’l-Quasim Babur in Herat and finished by ‘Abd al-Rahim al-Khwazrami, known as Anisi, for another copy on prince Ya’qub at Tabriz in 886/1481.

In the early sixteenth century this colophon was added to explain the long and complicated history of this peripatetic manuscript that was penned by two of the most famous practitioners of nasta’liq in two different cities [Herat and Tabriz] and illustrated by two masters of the genre (Shaykh and Darwish Muhammad) over the course of some four decades. The scribe who added it used a nasta’liq similar to that used for the text, but set in clouds.

Figure 7.18a

The calligrapher ‘Abd al-Rahim Khwarazmi, known as Anisi, to finish copying the text and two artists, Shaykh and Darwish Muhammad, to illustrate it. Still unfinished at Khalil’s death, the manuscript passed to his brother Ya’qub. He too died before the book was completed, and it finally passed to Isma‘il I (r. 1501–24), founder of the Safavid dynasty, under whose patronage it was finally finished. Anisi, the calligrapher who finished this peripatetic manuscript of Nizami’s Khamsa, came from a renowned family of calligraphers. Although their nisba suggests that they came from Khwarazm, they worked mainly for various Turkoman rulers in Western Iran and Iraq. Anisi’s father ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Khwazrami, who worked in Shiraz and then in Baghdad under the Qaraqoyunlu ruler Pir Budag, developed a distinctive style of nasta’liq in which the exaggerated strokes vary in thickness, perhaps because he trimmed his nib differently than his colleagues. The idiosyncratic style was continued in the work of his two sons, who both worked at the Qaraqoyunlu court. One hundred forty specimens of their work are preserved in two albums in Istanbul [H 353 and H 368] thought to have been prepared for the Qaraqoyunlu sultan Ya’qub. ‘Abd al-Rahim was particularly close to the sultan and adopted the pen name Anisi [friend], which he used as an epithet along with sultan [royal] and ya’qubi [belonging to sultan] Ya’qub. Anisi’s swooping script with its variation between thick and thin, returning ya’, and long tail on mim resembles that of his father. Specimens of ‘Abd al-Karim’s nasta’liq hand show many of the same features.

In the early sixteenth century this informative colophon was added to the peripatetic copy of the Khamsa. It contains both written and visual puns. For example, the name of the author, Nizami of Ganja, is given laudably as treasurer of the treasure of Ganja, scatterer of treasures from the treasure-house of the Khamsa [ganvar-i ganj-i ganja wa ganfashan-i ganfis-i ganja], that is, the sultan of poets, Nizami. The calligrapher underscored the phrasing by stacking up the floury titles in the middle of fourth line from the bottom, a pile highlighted by the puffy cloud-band enclosing it (Figure 7.18a). The poet’s actual name, Nizami of Ganja, is set off in its own cloud at the end of the line, with a long returning tail of ya’ that acts like a pointer directing the reader’s eye to the main subject of the line, the author Nizami, sultan of poets.

It is no wonder that finely calligraphed manuscripts like this one were preserved and embalmed by succeeding generations, for good calligraphy was expensive. Surviving documents, ranging from letters to chronicles, tell us incidentally about the economics of calligraphy in this period. Calligraphers working at court ateliers were expected to pen a daily quota of verses. An average load ranged from fifty to a hundred verses. According to Muhammad Haydar Dughlat, Sultan Ali Mashhadi produced fifty, writing thirty verses for Mir ‘Ali Shir and another twenty for Sultan Husayn. Shaykh Mahmud, director of the Qaraqoyunlu studio at Shiraz for Pir Budag, complained that he and his students could barely meet their quota of eighty verses of narrative poetry [mathnaviyat] and fifty verses of lyric poetry [ghazaliyat]. Sometimes higher totals were expected. According to Qadi Ahmad, the Timurid prince Iskandar Sultan expected his court calligrapher Mawlawna Ma‘ruf to produce five hundred verses a day, and on a bet Simi Nishapuri was reported to have written two thousand verses, which, the Safavid chronicler adds, was beyond the capacity of any poet or calligrapher. According to one document, about one-third the cost of a luxury Shahnama manuscript was the fee due the calligrapher.

Colophons in surviving manuscripts bear out these statistics and also show that calligraphers may have worked on several projects simultaneously. One of the best documented is another copy of Nizami’s Khamsa in the John Library penned in a good nasta’liq script with illuminations and illumination typical of mid-fifteenth-century Shiraz. The manuscript contains five colophons, all dated in sequential order, between 5 Sha‘ban 848 and Safar 849 (17 November 1444 to May 1445). The anonymous calligrapher thus penned the
EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL STYLES IN THE LATER MIDDLE PERIOD

29,000 verses over a period of seven months, for an average of some 138 verses a day. He did not, however, work at a steady rate on each poem. It took him about a month to pen three of the poems (Khusraw and Shirin, Layla, and Majnun, and Iskandarnamene), but three months to finish the Sharafnama. Towards the end of the project, he must have taken up other work, perhaps while painters and illuminators were busy completing the decoration of the first poems.

Like ta’liq, which was taken by Aggyounlu scribes from Western Iran to Istanbul, where Ottoman scribes transformed it into divani, so too in the late fifteenth century nastta’liq was taken from Western Iran to the Ottoman capital, where it developed as a minor style, contum-ingly known as ta’liq (see Chapter 11). Nastta’liq was also exported to the Indian subcontinent, where it became the model for a local variety which developed an ever thicker horizontal stroke and became the standard script for writing Urdu (see Chapter 9). Nevertheless the style of nastta’liq penned by such Timurid masters as Sultan ‘Ali remained the epistle of the style, assiduously collected and treasured by later connoisseurs and emulated by his successors for centuries to come.

Notes
2. Confusingly, the same word qitā’ is used for cut-out, meaning coupe or découpage; a technique of cutting out letters in one material and pasting them on another used for calligraphic specimens (Figure 2.6), whose nastta’liq calligraphy is discussed below.
3. On the construction of an art history in this period and some of the problems in accepting it as a straightforward recreation of names and dates, see David J. Roxburgh, Prefecting the Image: The Writing of Art History in Sixteenth-Century Iran, Studies and Sources in Islamic Art and Architecture, Supplements to Muqarnas (Leiden, 2001).
4. By the sixteenth century, for example, the tradition had been established that the style of Six Pens passed from the master Yaqut to six followers. Three in Iraq/north-western Iran and three in southerneastern Iran. Other followers like Ibn al-Wahid in Cairo (see Chapter 8 and Figure 8.13) were not even mentioned. These two traditions were said to have passed to a second generation, exemplified by ‘Abdallah Sayrafi, who worked in Tabriz, and Fir Yahiya al-Sufi, who worked in Shiraz. The same geographic division holds true for the hanging scripts. The Timurid, for example, were said to have favored a more ‘luscious’ ta’liq, the Aggyounlu a more sober one. ‘Afar, the master of nastta’liq at the court of Baysunghur, is described in a line that goes back to ‘Abdallah Sayrafi, while his contemporary and rival Shams-i Baysunghur belonged to a line going back to Fir Yahiya al-Sufi. The script continued to the end of the century, with ‘Afar’s disciple, Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, the master at Herat juxtaposed to Anisi, who worked for the Aggyounlu.

286

CALLIGRAPHY IN IRAN AND ITS ENVIRONS

5. It pervades, for example, the study of Safavid painting. Since the majecterial work of Martin B. Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch, The Houghton Shahnama (Cambridge, MA, 1983), scholars have traditionally viewed Safavid painting as the mingling of a more refined and cerebral Timurid style with a more exuberant and luscious Turkoman style. The division reflects the one that Safavid chronicle makes about calligraphy, but reverses the categories (the Turkomans, who were said to have had more ‘sobrer’ calligraphy, are said to have had more ‘luscious’ painting). Perhaps it is time to rethink the unquestioned assumptions of this theoretical framework.

Something of the same situation exists in China, where a vast theoretical literature on calligraphy and its origins developed in the post Han period. Michael Nylan, ‘Calligraphy, the Sacred Text and Text of Culture,’ in Character and Context in Chinese Calligraphy, ed. Cary L. Liu, Dora C. Y. Ching, and Judith G. Smith (Princeton, 1999), 17-77, has tried to go beyond the usual stark dichotomies of content vs. form, religious vs. secular, and the like, and set the development of Chinese calligraphy in historical context, arguing that the development of Chinese calligraphy as the premier art form in China was due to the break-up of the Han empire and the rejection of the old canons.

6. Similarly, Eugene Y. Wang, ‘The Taming of the Shrew: Wang Hsi-Chih (303-361) and Calligraphic Concentration in the Seventh Century,’ in Character and Context in Chinese Calligraphy, ed. Cary L. Liu, Dora C. Y. Ching, and Judith G. Smith (Princeton, 1999), 133-73, has recently shown that looking at a letter that is not part of the traditional canon of work by the fourth-century Chinese master Wang Xizi shows a more nuanced personality with a wilder style than the personas of refined and gentlemanly self-control whose graceful style was deliberately created by Tang historians three centuries later.
8. Colophons show that many fine manuscripts were produced there. They include luxury copies of the Koran, such as a very large (47 x 34 cm) single-volume manuscript transcribed in 710/1310-11 by Sulayman ibn Muhammad al-Jaylani at the Mustansiriya Madrasa (ITEM 238; David James, Qur’ans of the Mamluks [London, 1988], no. 43).

287
EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL STYLES IN THE LATER MIDDLE PERIOD


Sheila S. Blair, ‘Yaqut and his Followers,’ Manuscripta Orientalia 9, no. 1 (December 1955), 63–77.

The incident about Yaqut’s residence in Baghdad during the Mongol invasion became something of a cliché. Illustrations to Qadi Ahmad’s treatise on calligraphy often show Yaqut sitting in a miniature and continuing to write while the Mongols besieged the city, see Qadi Ahmad, Calligraphers and Painters: A Treatise by Qadi Ahmad, Son of Mr. Munsfi (Circa AD 1055/AD 1606), trans. V. Minorsky, Occasional Papers (Washington, DC, 1939), pls. 2 and 3.

These dates are borne out by the latest surviving specimen of Yaqut’s calligraphy (TKS H3/160, fol. 82a), which is dated 695/1295–6.


Qadi Ahmad (Gallistian-i hunar, ed. Ahmad Suhaybi; Khânsard [Tehran, 1332/1954], 25; Calligraphers and Painters, 58) quotes a verse by Yaqut mentioning all the elements of writing:

\[ wa’l wa takrib, kurra wa nishbat \]
\[ su’al wa tashmeh, mu‘ann wa ursal \]

The verse is metaphorical and implies the reader’s prior knowledge. These terms were not entirely clear to all readers, and so in a prosaic treatise on the principles and rules of writing the Six Pens composed in 955/1548–9 [Moscow, Institute of Oriental Studies B531], Fathallah ibn Ahmad ibn Mahmud added a whole subdivision to explain the verse. Minorsky, in his translation of Qadi Ahmad (n. 143), incorporated Fathallah’s comments, translating the line thus:

The fundamentals (ua’il), the ligatures (tarkibi), the support *kurra* (†) and interrelation (nisbat)
The upstroke (su’ul) and tashmir (renovis), the downstroke (mu‘ann) and the flourish (ursal).


The first line refers to the four basic principles of calligraphy already cited by Ibn Muqâla. The first term (ua’il) means fundamentals or principles. The phrase ua’il al-fikih refers to the fundamental principles of jurisprudence, and similarly ua’il al-khatt were the fundamentals of calligraphy. Yusoffi described the first of Ibn Muqâla’s four basic principles as respect for the elements (ua’il), by which he meant giving all the letters of the alphabet their proper degree of boldness or fairness and proper shape.

The second term tarkib is generally taken to mean arrangement or composition and refers not only to the arrangement of letters, but also to the composition of words, sentences, and lines to produce a pleasing layout. Minorsky translated the terms as ligatures, as with al-fikih which has no ligature (tarkib) to the following letter, but the idea of composition seems to fit better here.

CALLIGRAPHY IN IRAN AND ITS ENVIRONS

The term kuras, the plural of kursi, means seats or couches and refers to the seating or positioning of the letters. Like tarkib, the term kuras can be extended to mean the placement of words in a line or hemistich in relation to each other.

There are at least three seats: the top or head of the letter (ra’s al-khatt), the middle (wa‘sat), and the tail or bottom (bawal al-khatt). Many later calligraphers, however, divide the first and second seats into two parts, making a total of five seats. Thus, the head can refer to the top of tall letters such as alif, lamed and lam as well as to the top of dal, ra, sâd, sa’, ‘ayn, ‘a, qaf, mim, ha’, and wa‘. The middle position is the baseline. On the one hand, it corresponds to the bottom of tall letters such as alif and lam; the bowl of ‘a’ and its variants, including ka‘f, and the beginning of the tail of ‘im and ‘ayn. On the other hand, the middle position can also refer to the bottom of dal, ra and final sin, sâd, qaf, nu‘un and ya‘. The tail refers to the bottom of final ‘im, ‘ayn, and the like. In his treatise Fathallah represented these five seats in the guise of a five-line staff on which separate characters are disposed, and the rulings in the illuminated heading on a page from a Koran manuscript calligraphed by Yaqut (Figure 7.1) shows such rulings.

The fourth term nisba, translated by Minorsky as interrelation but rendered better by Yusoffi as proportion, refers to the calligraphic sense to the proportional relationship among the parts of the letter but also between the letter and the surrounding space. The noun nisba is related to the adjective mansub (well proportioned), used by many writers on calligraphy, including the twelfth-century Saljûq writer Râhât al-sudra wa‘yûl al-sarlâr, ed. Muhammad Iqbal [Cambridge, 1931], 441 and the fourteenth-century Mamlûk chronicler al-Qâqâshânî, and often applied to Ibn Muqâla’s regularization of the proportioned script (al-khatt al-mansub).

The second line attributed to Yaqut contains four other terms about the elements of calligraphy. They are arranged in two sets of opposites, a striking artifice that tends to work against today’s preoccupation with precision and clarity. The terms su‘ul and mu‘ann convey the idea of ascent and descent. According to Fathallah, they refer to the strokes of the pen upwards and downwards, and Minorsky translated them as upstroke and downstroke. Yusoffi defined the terms as heightening and lowering and divided each into two parts, also opposites. According to him, real ‘arakh meaning the extension of final alif, medial lam, and final ka‘f, whereas unreal (majazi) heightening refers to the raising of the end of the letter when making a round stroke, as in the upstroke added to the tails of letters differently.

Real lowering applies to the shortening of the stroke in detached alif, lam, and ka‘f, in initial lam and ka‘f, and in the tail of mim, whereas unreal lowering refers to lowering the beginning of semi-circles and elongating the crossbars of ka‘f.

Similarly, the final two terms, tashmir and ursal can be seen as opposites. According to Fathallah, tashmir, or shamar, means literally ‘tucking up the garment’ and is used to describe the rounding of the tail at the end of a letter. It contrasts with ursal, literally meaning letting-off or release and referring to the release in pressure on the pen at the end of a stroke. This allows the pen to move more freely when finishing off certain letters, as, for example, in flattening ra’, wa‘, and final mim or elongating final ta‘ and nu‘un. Minorsky translated the term ursal as flourish, but his translation coincides better with the way Mamlûk authors used ursal as a synonym for tarwîs, the hook at the beginning