A Calligraphic Piece
Written in Nastalîq

Iron
17th century
23 x 15 cm

Nastalîq is a combination of two technical scripts, naskh and tâ’lliq. The script should appear to flow into the air – indeed, the word tâ’lliq means ‘hanging’ or ‘suspended’. Nastalîq is a product of the Persian talent for combining form and beauty. The origin of this script is interesting and controversial, but what is beyond question is that it is Persian in conception. The calligrapher of this fine script was one of the greatest Persian calligraphers of nastalîq, ‘Imad al-Husani. ‘Imad al-Husani had a tragic end not unlike that of the great Abbasid vizier, Harun al-Rashid. They were both executed as a result of the intrigues, prejudices and jealousy of less competent rivals and ignorant rulers. The poem relates the longing of a lover for his distant beloved.

He can see that the clouds are laughing, yet his eyes are full of tears.
is a combination of two technical scriptus, nastaliq and i'jaz. The script is not a true "hanging" or "suspended." Nastaliq is a product of the Persian talent of form and beauty. The origin of this script is interesting and controversial, but what is beyond is its Persian in conception. The calligrapher of this fine script was one of the greatest Persian of the 17th century, Ismail al-Husayni. Ismail al-Husayni had a tragic end not unlike that of another famous Indian. They were both executed as a result of the intrigues, prejudices and jealousy of less it rivals and ignorant rulers. The poem relates the longing of a lover for his distant beloved.

He can see that the clouds are laughing, yet his eyes are full of tears.

These five lines of nastaliq are written diagonally within a rectangular panel. The calligraphy is of excellent quality, with clear formations connecting the successive lines. The decoration around the script is in gold, red and blue on a gold ground. The calligrapher, Abdullah al-Husayni, was a friend of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605-1627), who called him Mushkin Qalib (Golden Pen). This calligrapher was favored by Khurram and Jahangir painters (empresses) alike. Abdullah al-Husayni had two sons, both were great calligraphers. Al-Husayni died in AH 1023CE (1616).
مصطفی

1318
POETRY WRITTEN IN NASTA'LIQ

Iran
18th-19th centuries
15.4 x 25 cm
Nasta'liq

The calligraphic piece above features two lines of Persian poetry in large nasta'liq script and two lines in small nasta'liq surrounded by belts of delicate illumination. The poem questions the concepts of disobedience, insubordination and sin. This unknown calligrapher has an extraordinary calligraphic hand – every word is elegant. The beauty of the nasta'liq script is obvious here.

A PRACTICE SHEET

Turkey, Ottoman period
dated AH 1214/CE 1799
18 x 12.5 cm
Nasta'liq

This exercise sheet shows all the processes used to write certain letters. It is by Yosurtзадe Mustafa 'Izzet Efendi (d. 1849). Like his father, Mehmet En'at Yosurtзадe, he was a great master of the 'a'lif (by which the Ottomans mean nasta'liq) script. Here he shows the dots used by calligraphers to guide them in gauging the correct sizes of letters. These dots are not included in finished calligraphy.
This page – perhaps taken from a manuscript – has solid areas of gold surrounding the Shikastah script. Shikastah is a Persian script also used in Afghanistan; the name means ‘broken writing’ in Persian. This script, which is derived from nastaliq and ta’qī, is an important calligraphic achievement in terms of form and elegance.
Two Folios
Written in Shiraz

13x
18th-19th century
14.7 x 23.6 cm
Shiraz

— perhaps taken from a manuscript — has solid areas of gold surrounding the naskhi script.

It is a Persian script also used in Afghanistan; the name means 'broken writing' in Persian.

This script, which is derived from nasta’liq and naskhi, is an important

calligraphic achievement in terms of form and elegance.

A Page Featuring Shiraz

Ottoman period
18th-19th centuries
24.3 x 19 cm
Shiraz

An exercise sheet featuring a naskhi script. In Arabic this exercise is called inwāf, in Turkish kurallası and in Persian it is sometimes called üşūq mazāq. The exercise is designed to loosen the hand of the calligrapher before he begins to

write and is akin to a musician practising scales on his instrument before the actual performance.
A Section of a Qur’an
Written in Gold Jâli Dihwâni

Turkey, Ottoman period
19th century
37.5 x 30.5 cm
Jâli Dihwâni

This 19th-century Qur’an is one of the few Qur’ans written in this form. Both the script and the format are of exceptional quality. The jâli dihwâni script was reserved for government edicts, new laws, bequests and other official documents. A copy of the Qur’an in this script and of this quality would only be found among the courts of the Sultanate. Careful study of this Qur’an provides convincing proof that work of this opulence and this degree of calligraphic perfection must have been executed in the luxury of the actual workshop of the sultan’s palace. The verse endings consist of a simple wheat in red on a green ground. The side metalloids add further magnificence to the text and are also informative: they contain inscriptions in Kufic-Abbasid script in white on turquoise or gold on orange, are surrounded by further embellishment, and are outlined in fine blue ink which extends into darts above and below the script.
This 19th-century Qur’an is one of the few Qur’ans written in this form. Unlike the script and the format are of exceptional quality. The jali diwani script was reserved for government edicts, new laws, decrees and other official documents. A copy of the Qur’an in this script and of this quality would only be found among the courts of the Sultanate. Careful study of this Qur’an provides convincing proof that work of this opulence and this degree of calligraphic perfection must have been executed in the luxury of the actual workshop of the sultan’s palace. The verse endings consist of a simple whorl in red or green. The side medallions add further magnificence to the text and are also informative: they contain inscriptions in Kufi, Arabic script in white on turquoise or gold on orange, are surrounded by further embellishment, and are outlined in fine blue ink which extends into dots above and below the script.

A FIRMAN OF SULTAN ABDELLAH IL

TURKEY, OTTOMAN PERIOD DATED AH 1311/CE 1893 13.5 x 66 cm QURAN 1880 JALI DIWANI

This magnificently executed firman (imperial decree) of the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II is written with a superb calligraphic hand in jali diwani script, the official script of the Ottoman government. The decree was issued in recognition of the promotion of Mehmed Tâvluq Pasha on the 13th day of the month of Safar in the year A.H. 1311/CE 1893. The magnificent ragha` (the signature of the sultan) is written in gold, with the word alif (meaning the conquest) by its side. The text of this firman is written in gold and black ink in jali diwani script on alternate lines. The decorated pear-shaped inscription at the end reads, ‘written in the protected and guarded city of Constantinople’. Although this great work is not signed, it is almost certainly the hand of the master Ottoman calligrapher Sarn Elfeni (d. 1912), written at the peak of his powers, at around the age of 45. It is interesting to note that a dupangee in the Khalili Collection signed by Sarn Elfeni is almost identical in every aspect to the ragha` in this firman.