

## **The Visual Communication of the Nastaliq Script in the Masnavi of Khajavi Kermani Manuscript**

### **Abstract**

Nastaliq developed in Iran from *Naskh* beginning in the 13th century and remains very widely used in Persian-speaking countries and for written poetry and as a form of art. The version of Khajavi Kermani's Masnavi by Mir Ali Ibn Ilyas Tabrizi (preserved in the British Library) is one of the exquisite and early examples of Nastaliq calligraphy. Considering the age and quality of this copy, compared to the only remaining copy of the Nastaliq script of the famous Mir Ali Tabrizi (Khosro and Shirin Nizami version), this research aims to study the characteristics of texts, titles, objective and governing perceptual visual communication, dots and the methods of applying the baseline and grading. The method of conducting the present research is descriptive and analytical, and data is gained from library research. According to the findings, in the version of Khajavi Kermani's Masnavi, despite the age of the version and the primitiveness of the Nastaliq script, the calligrapher has achieved a remarkable harmony and exquisiteness due to observing the perceptual (hidden) visual communication throughout the page. Observance of this importance in the mentioned version and its organization has been made possible by lines, punctuation and specific calligraphic acts, whose lines and angles have assumed the main role of visual guidance along the page; thus, most letters influence the feature preceding. Also, the high quality of the writing in the titles of the edition compared to the text, artistic taste and mastery of the calligrapher's handwriting (despite the primitiveness of the edition) are also noteworthy.

### **Research aims:**

1. Recognizing the coordinates of the primary Nastaliq line.
2. Investigating the visual communication of the Nastaliq script in the Masnavi of Khajavi Kermani.

### **Research questions:**

1. What characteristics does the early Nastaliq script have?

2. What visual features does the use of Nastaliq script have in the version of Khajavi Kermani's Masnavi?

**Keywords:** calligraphy, Nastaliq, visual study, Mir Ali Tabrizi, Masnavi of Khajavi Kermani

## Introduction

Despite the differences of opinion presented in most sources and documents, the Nastaliq script has been attributed to Mir Ali Tabrizi as its creator. Mir Ali bin Hassan Tabrizi, known as "Qudwa al-Kitab Ma'ali" set principles and established guidelines for its inscription. The only surviving work of Mir Ali bin Hassan Tabrizi is a copy of Khosrow and Shirin by Nezami dated 808 AH, in the Freer Gallery of Washington. However, the Masnavi version of Khajavi Kermani is older than the version of Khosrow and Shirin, and its date of writing goes back to 798 AH. The author of this version is Mir Ali bin Ilyas Tabrizi, who is usually identified with Mir Ali bin Hasan Tabrizi. The mentioned book is preserved in the British library and is considered one of the valuable works of calligraphy history. One of the reasons for the importance of this edition is its writing date, which is older than the famous works of Mir Ali Tabrizi and bestows an extraordinary handwriting quality. In terms of its vital position in the advances of the Nastaliq script, the mentioned version is one of the most primitive examples of Nastaliq, and signs of the shape of the letters in the initial and nascent state can be observed in this version. This feature created the main motivation to understand the visual communication of Nastaliq script in the stated version. Consequently, in the process of conducting this research, various sources were studied to understand the visual relationships of Nastaliq script.

Regarding the background of the research, it should be said that so far no independent work in the field of writing has been published. However, some works have investigated the Nasaliq script in literary manuscripts. Fatemeh Shah Kolahi (2017) in an article titled "Rules of Mir Ali Tabrizi's calligraphy based on Khosrow Shirin's version" investigated the calligraphy of Mir Ali Tabrizi and besides extracting his calligraphy, she stated the characteristics of good writing and good composition. Alireza Hashminejad (2018) in the book "From Safa to Shan", in an article titled "Introduction of the most famous version of Khajavi Kermani's poems, British Library edition, book 798 AH" introduced the features of this version including the book, knowledge, scribe, time

of writing and script. Ruhollah Ishaqzadeh et al. (2016) in an article titled "Comparison of visual communication in Nastaliq script between Safavid and contemporary (Mir Emad and Amirkhani)" have examined the perceptual and objective visual communication in the two mentioned methods. According to the mentioned backgrounds, it can be said that the introduction of Nastaliq's characteristics has been expressed generally; thus, the present research by following a descriptive and analytical method, has sought to study and investigate the features of this version by referring to the available image samples and by analyzing details.

## **Conclusion**

The version of the Masnavi of Khajavi Kermani in the handwriting of Mir Ali bin Ilyas Tabrizi emphasizes the significant position and undeniable role of this master in the development and promotion of the early Nastaliq calligraphy. The harmony and beauty of the writing in this masterpiece becomes more evident with the perceptual connections that lead the eye downward and left in an angular manner, and its main role is played by the lines and punctuation. The findings indicate that the angle of the recalcitrant has affected the writing of this version to a degree that the beginning of the letter and the next word, the end of the word or the letter after it, the length of the lines and even the angle of the next word has overshadowed this feature; therefore, it seems that punctuation is used as a supplement to repeat these angles in a balanced way throughout the page. The various quality features of the handwriting in the titles compared to the text makes it clear that even in the period when Nastaliq was evolving and the Nashkh script was also functional, the principles and rules intentionally or unintentionally were applied in this version. The extended lines, charming circular strokes and features similar to present-day Nastaliq are obtained from the title and parts of the text; and such characteristics are proof to this statement. The columns and rows, despite maintaining their beauty, are close to today's Nastaliq standards (the average number of words in each column, the spacing of the rows, the alignments, and the balanced distribution of the lines on the entire page indicate this); Therefore, it can be said that this version, despite being very old, has given great importance to visual and perceptual values. This topic has greatly assisted the coordination and guidance of the audience's eyes and the role of Mir Ali Ibn Elias Tabrizi in the evolution of Nastaliq calligraphy is highly significant.

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