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## Original Research Article

# Studying the Formation of Separate Letters in Nasta'liq Script According to Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir's Anthology (Bayaz)\*

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## Abstract

**Problem statement:** The Iranians set about creating unique scripts in the early 14th century, resulting in introduction of three scripts: Tali'q, Nasta'liq, and Shikasta Nasta'liq. It remains apparent that the development of pens did not occur overnight, but rather over time.

**Research objective:** The primary goal of this study would be to investigate the trend of growth in individual letters (Mofradat) in Nasta'liq. Another objective of this study is to argue about how Naskh and Taliq have encouraged the emergence of Nasta'liq.

**Research method:** As a contrast, we used letters in Baysonqori Shahname as an index of Nasta'liq following Mir Ali Tabrizi. We began comparing anthology scripts after identifying and classifying early Nasta'liq in Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir's anthology. According to what has already been stated, and also based on the belief that Mir Ali Tabrizi improved Nasta'liq and it appeared in Shiraz before that time, along with Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir's anthology in the University of Isfahan's Central library, which is a valuable manuscript dating from 1380 . in Shiraz for Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir during the Shah-Shojae kingship in Fars (1359-1385), this article deals with the formation of Nasta'liq separate letters (Mofradat) in 14th century in Iran.

**Conclusion:** The evidence suggests that Mir Ali Tabrizi is not the sole founder of Nasta'liq, but that he has just ordered the script according to some criteria. According to some documents, the early Nasta'liq script was also encountered in Shiraz at the same period as Mir Ali Tabrizi. On the other hand, the Nasta'liq script can be described as a hybrid of two script rules: Naskh and Taliq.

**Keywords:** *Early Nasta'liq, Separate letters, Mir Ali Tabrizi, Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir's anthology, Shiraz.*

## Introduction

Having gained perfection more than other

artworks, Calligraphy has perhaps displayed the highest level of Iranian Muslim artists' inventiveness. Some Iranian artworks may

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appear to be a cultural and geographical hybrid of other countries, even becoming unrecognizable at times, but a piece of Nasta'liq Siyah-masghq cannot be attributed to other nations or countries. In most Arabic and neighboring countries of Iran, Taliq and Nasta'liq are referred to as Persian script (Khat-e-Farsi). It's worth noting that there are numerous manuscripts written with "Early Nasta'liq," a name chosen by Dr. Iraj Afshar before or concurrently with Mir Ali Tabrizi. Artists' interest in achieving an independently pure Iranian script is clear in light of available handwritings, and it happened by changing the form of Naskh script and using it for transcribing Persian manuscripts from the beginning of the 14th century. Thus, the main purpose of this research is to study the development of separate letters in Nasta'liq. On the other hand, specialists believe that the word "Nasta'liq" is made up of the words "Naskh" and "Ta'liq" in two meanings from the time it was created till now: first, Ta'liq was abolished (naskh) by Nasta'liq. Second, Nasta'liq was made by mixing the letters and rules of Naskh and Ta'liq. Until the 16th century, this word was known as "naskh-e-ta'liq." The other goal of this study is to determine how Naskh and Ta'liq have influenced Nasta'liq. Based on the foregoing, as well as the existence of Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir's anthology, which is kept as a valuable manuscript in the University of Isfahan's Central library and belongs to Taj al-Din Ahmad, the minister of Shah Shoja in Shiraz in 1381, the authors decided to research the formation of the Nasta'liq script in the 14th century in Iran. Since this anthology was extremely valuable, it was published twice. The most notable feature of this anthology is that it contains over 85 distinct themes written in Persian and Arabic, all of which were transcribed by 75 prominent figures in the 14th century. As a result, the many handwritings in this book may be regarded a leader in teaching us the way to the Nasta'liq script and its history, which is a significant object for Iranians.

It is fairly obvious from primary examinations of handwritings in Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir's anthology that some scripts are similar to early Nasta'liq scripts. There have been traces of Nasta'liq mixtures even in segments of the text where the script is Naskh. In this regard, the questions are: Can we assert that Mir Ali Tabrizi is not the only creator of Nasta'liq? Could Shiraz be one of Nasta'liq's birthplaces? Is it feasible to determine the path of Nasta'liq from its beginning to its perfection based on different handwritings in the anthology? We're hoping that investigating will aid in the discovery of reasonable solutions to these concerns.

## Literature review

The literature review is broken into two pieces. The Nasta'liq script comes first, followed by Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir's anthology. There have been numerous studies conducted on the formation of the Nasta'liq script, all of which claim that Nasta'liq is the second Iranian script, which was either abolished Ta'liq or mixed Naskh and Ta'liq. "History of Nasta'liq Development" by Chehrazai (1996), "Appearance of Nasta'liq and Mir Ali Tabrizi" by Fazel Neyshabouri (1997), and "Appearance & varieties of Nasta'liq calligraphy in the 8th and 9th Hijri centuries" by Jabari (2008), which discussed Nasta'liq formation, its geographical areas, and its currency in other periods until Mir Emad's time. Separate letters are not mentioned in "Political, social, and cultural conditions of Iran and their role in Nasta'liq formation" by Shafiei Alavijeh and Mehrabi (2019). Khazaei and Farid (2013) mentioned social and environmental conditions in Iranian arts appearances in their speech "A speech about Nasta'liq appearance." As a result, there hasn't been any research that deconstructs the individual letters in this script to determine which one is the second Iranian script: Nasta'liq or naskh-e-ta'liq?

The anthology of Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir must

be highlighted as it is the topic of discussion. In all researches about it, the most important component is text, not codicology which includes discussing scripts. As a Ph.D. treatise titled “Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir’s anthology, an exclusive manuscript (782 AH)” by Zamani Alavijeh (1997) is a rereading and a correction of the anthology. “Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir’s anthology” by Zaker Al-Hoseini (1998) is a contrast between the facsimiled and the printed one. Another article that discusses handwriting, word pronunciation, and other topics is “A codicology research about Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir’s anthology (782 AH)” by Afshar (2004). However, no research has been done on the different types of handwriting and scripts.

### Research methodology

Initially, various texts and books on the formation and appearance of the Nasta’liq script were studied, as well as past research opinions. Then, from the University of Isfahan’s Central Library, scanned photos of the anthology were obtained. The next step was to conduct texture studies on anthologies based on their printed editions. There are several articles about this manuscript, but Ali Zamani Alavijeh’s article is the most helpful. The scripts were then compared. All of the writing scripts were divided into five groups, one of which was “early Nasta’liq,” and only ten of the 69 handwritings used for transcribing were “early Nasta’liq.” After that, time was ripe for using software to analyze early Nasta’liq scripts. In each of the ten groups, distinct letters were recognized. An index was required for comparison, thus Jafar Tabrizi’s letters by Baysonqori Shahname were chosen as indices. This manuscript, dated 1430, can be found in the Golestan Palace Library, No. 716. The dots were then compared using a chart (noqteh). The following chart was created for separate letters. It’s worth noting that connected letters were studied in M.A. theses as well, but because this

is an excerpt, that part will be discussed in another article. The final step was to examine the dots and letters, as well as the formation.

### Nasta’liq script

The genesis of Ta’liq, Nasta’liq, and Shikasta Nasta’liq resulted from an Iranian initiative to construct unique pens that began in the middle of the 14th century, with the use of the Six Pens (aqdam-e-seteh) for transcribing declining from that time (Pakbaz, 2016, 600). Nasta’liq was founded around the same time as the Timurids entered Iran, and Hirat and Shiraz were centralized at the same time. Transcribing has a long history in Fars territory, dating back to the first centuries of Hijrat. From the Achaemenid era until now, Fars has been the center of cultural and artistic gatherings. Furthermore, the attacks of Alexander the Great and the Mongols were unable to destroy the original cultural and artistic roots of Iran. Shirazis (People of Shiraz) were fortunate in that they were spared from the Mongol invasion in the 13th century, and Shiraz became one of Iran’s literary and artistic flourishing centers in the midst of social and political turmoil in the 14th and 15th centuries (Ghelichkhani, 2011, 7). Different people have different ideas about who created Nasta’liq. As Sultan Ali Mashhadi mentioned in Serat al-Sotour, Mir Ali, Hasan Tabrizi’s son, was the first creator of Nasta’liq. Nasta’liq, on the other hand, was created in Shiraz at the same time, according to Seraj Shirazi’s Tohfah al-Mohebin. There are two main theories: first, Mir Ali Tabrizi created the Nasta’liq script, and second, he simply organized it, and Nasta’liq has previously appeared in Shiraz. Dr. Mahdi Bayani stated that Nasta’liq, like other scripts, was not created overnight; rather, it evolved over time. Because it can be seen in some texts that Naskh script gradually changed to Ta’liq between the beginning of the 14th century and around 1350, some manuscripts with scripts similar to Nasta’liq have been discovered. As a result, Mir Ali established rules for it (Bayani, 1984, 443).

According to some manuscripts transcribed by early Nasta'liq at the beginning of the 14th century, such as "Koliyat-e-Ashar-e Khajouye Kermani" dated 1350 by Mohamad Ibn Emran al-Kermani (Fig. 1), it can be stated that the formation of Nasta'liq happened in two eras: the first era began at the end of 13th century and continued till 1400. but transcribers didn't know the korsi, proportion, etc. The second era also began in 1400 and separate and connected letters got the appropriate round and surface (Mayil Hirawi, 2018, 365). According to what has been mentioned in some treatises and also by studying manuscripts, it can be concluded that Nasta'liq formed in Shiraz and Tabriz schools and penetrated Hirat and Baghdad from the beginning (Jabari, 2008, 81).

### Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir's anthology

Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir's anthology was chosen as the basis of this research to investigate the formation of Nasta'liq among acknowledged manuscripts transcribed in the second half of the 14th century, therefore some information about it is required. This exclusive anthology was collected for Taj al-Din Ahmad who was the minister (wazir) of Shojae King (760 - 786 AH) in Shiraz at the second half of 14th century. It contains notes, poems, and memorable written things and due to its difference from the common handwriting in Fars territory, it is of utmost importance (Afshar, 2004, 35). This manuscript was bought by Fazlolah Ibn Rouzbegan Ibn Fazlolah Khonji, so-called Khajeh Molana who was a scholar in Hirat in 1506, and wrote a valuable note at the beginning of it. Until the last century, no one knew anything about it. This manuscript was added to the Isfahan Municipality Public Library on December 29th, 1926, and was assigned the number 940. On August 1971, it was transferred to the Central Library of the University of Isfahan (Hesari, 1987). Its current phone number is 3-210.



Fig. 1. Koliyat-e-Ashar-e Khajouye Kermani. Source: National Library of Iran, No. 5-12493.

### Different scripts used in the anthology

Following a thorough examination of Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir's anthology, the scripts were divided into five categories, as illustrated in Table 1.

Because this study is focused on Nasta'liq development, only early Nasta'liq examples (ten groups) are displayed in Table 2. There are also additional clarifications concerning transcribing dates, transcribers, and identifying codes included in the Table 2.

### Comparison of Scripts in the anthology

Following a thorough examination of the anthology's scripts, some charts are provided to aid in comparison. As you can see in Table 3, dots are compared with Baysonqori's, the index of the study.



Table 1. Different scripts used in the anthology. Source: Authors.

Row	Script Type	Pictorial Example
1	Reqa	
2	Naskh	
3	Ta'liq	
4	Early Nasta'liq	
5	Tahriri (Handwriting)	

As it can be seen, dots must be compared from three points of view (Table 2):

- **Dots' mass and size**

It shows that one-dots are the biggest of all, according to [Table 3](#) and their identification codes are 02, 15, 20, 24, 46, and 68. The size of all dots in one-dot, two-dot, and three-dot letters are the same in advanced Nasta'liq, as it is in Baysonqori indices. The other considerable point is the size of dots in one letter. Some letters have dots that are the same and some have dots that are not the same, as in three-dots in 02, two- and three-dots in 24, two- and three-dots in 44, and three-dots in 46.

## Dots' space

In all examples, an impressive space is visible between the dots in two-dots and three-dots letters, which can be seen in Baysonqori's dots, too.

- **Dots' angle**

As the angles are different in two-dot and three-dot groups, they must be studied separately.

- **Two-dot letters**

All two-dots are transcribed on an assumed completely horizontal korsi in all groups of early Nasta'liq scripts in the anthology. This assumed korsi can be seen under the dots of Baysoqori's, too.

- **Three-dot letters**

The angle for transcribing the three-dots is different

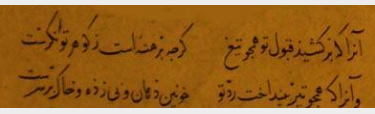
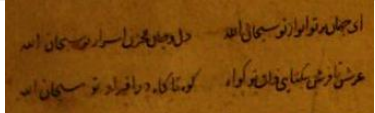
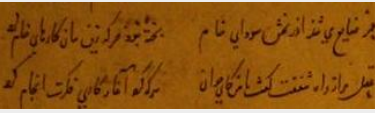
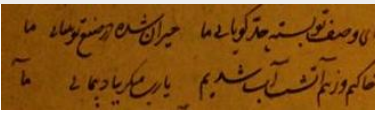
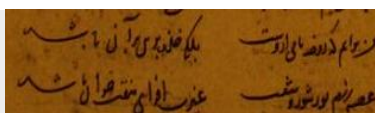
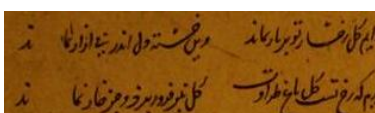
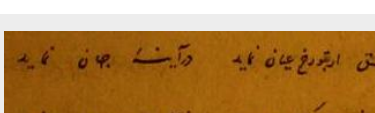
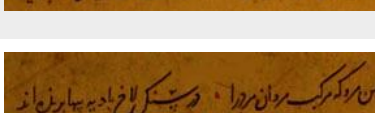
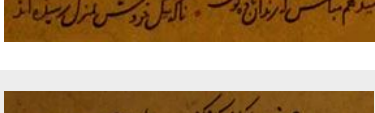

in various scripts of Bayaz. In some examples such as codes 24, 31 & 44, the angle is nearly 15 degrees. In code 34, the angle is less than 15 degrees. And in some examples like 03, 46 and 68 the angle is more than 15 degrees. On the other side, in some codes such as 02, 15 and 20, there is no gradient and korsi is somehow horizontal. These angles are shown in [Table 3](#).

## Separate letters

After studying the dots, it's time to move on to individual letters known as “mofradat”. The manner and style of transcribing separate letters are shown in [Tables 4 and 5](#). Not only the similarities and differences with the index are discussed, but also the tendency of the letters to Naskh and Ta'liq is mentioned.

After studying the separate letters, it is clear that both Naskh and Ta'liq footmarks are visible. For instance, transcribing الف in both 02 and 05 is like Naskh and is similar to Baysonqori's. Letter ب in 20 is so close to Baysonqori's. Tali'q is somehow visible in جيم with 24 and 68 codes. Transcribers may not follow Naskh or Ta'liq rules for writing سين. But as it is seen in سين کشيده in code 15, Ta'liq's effect is clear. In code 02 for writing عين Naskh manner is used and in 24 Ta'liq is obvious. ف is close to Naskh in 03 and it is close to Ta'liq in 46.

Table 2. Early Nasta'liq examples in the anthology. Source: Authors.

Row	Early Nasta'liq Script Example	Transcribing Date	Transcriber	Identification Code	Page
1		N.D.	N.T	02	4
2		N.D.	N.T	03	17
3		N.D.	Yahya Ibn Moein	15	125
4		N.D.	Jalal al-Din Farajolah Ibn Rezvan Tabrizi	20	159
5		1381	?	24	192
6		1381	Shahab Ibn Shams al-Din Mohamad Shahab	31	225
7		1381	N.T	34	242
8		N.D.	N.T	44	287
9		1381	illegible	46	290
10		1400	Mohamad Ibn Ahmad Ibn al-Soufi al-Samarqandi	68	466

قاف in 10 looks like Naskh. The only lawful code for writing کاف is 15. لام in 02 code is and ميم in 02 and 34 are close to Naskh and in 03, 20, 44 and 46 look like Baysonqori's. Two kinds of نون in 02 are Naskh, it is

Tali'q in 20 and 44 and it is very close to Baysonqori. There is no rule for writing واو in all codes. و is transcribed differently in all codes. In 02, 15 and 31 ی is close to Baysonqori's and in 46 and 68 another

Table 3. Comparison between dots. Source: Authors.

Row	Identification Code	One dot	Two dots	Three dots
1	02	با	تا	شا
2	03	خا	تا	عش
3	15	با	تا	شا
4	20	خو	نس	سر
5	24	با	تا	شا
6	31	فا	لستم	عش
7	34	خر	حست	عش
8	44	ن	تی	عش
9	46	حد	لست	شا
10	68	ند	لست	کشا
11	Baysonqori	ز	بی	سر

ی belongs to Naskh. By focusing more on letters' transcribing, it can be said which letters were more flexible for changing into Nasta'liq and they are (ب/

پ/ات) in 03 and 31 and they are close to the indices. Letters (د/ذ) had also the capacity for changing into Nasta'liq and it is visible in 03, 15, 34, 44, and 6.

Table 4. Comparison between separate letters. Source: Authors.

Row	Identification Code	الف	ب	جیم	سین	سین کشیده	عین	ف
1	02	ا	ب	ج	س	س	ع	ف
2	03	ا	ب	-	س	س	-	ف
3	15	ا	ب	ج	س	س	ع	ف
4	20	ا	ب	-	-	-	-	-
5	24	ا	ب	ج	س	س	ع	ف
6	31	ا	ب	ج	-	س	ع	-
7	34	ا	ب	ج	-	س	ع	-
8	44	ا	ب	ج	-	س	-	-
9	46	ا	ب	ج	س	-	ع	ف
10	68	ا	ب	ج	-	س	ع	-
11	Baysonqori	ا	ب	ج	س	س	-	ف

This desire is also recognizable in (ر ز) and (شین) سین especially in 34 and 44 because they are close to Baysonqori's Nasta'liq. It is also worth mentioning that لام and میم had the capacity to do so.

## Conclusion

It is vital to respond to the research questions based on the findings. It might be claimed that the purpose of this study was to highlight the fact that Mir Ali Tabrizi (who died in 1401) was not the only one who invented Nasta'liq; he just made it legal. Simply reading this essay one more time will reveal this fact. On the other hand, since Taj al-Din Ahmad Wazir's anthology was collected in Shiraz in the 14th century and its scripts form the basis of our article, "Shiraz" can be considered one

of Nasta'liq's birthplaces. And the last question was "Is it possible to check the formation path of Nasta'liq according to different writings in the anthology?". To answer this question, we must first admit that confirming the exact way was impossible due to the broken binding and page arrangement, as well as the fact that certain writings did not contain dates. Four groups of 1381 dates and one group of 1400 dates were found in Early Nasta'liq's ten scripts. These observations reject the idea that Ta'liq was abolished (naskh) by Nasta'liq. Thus, it can be said that Nasta'liq was made by mixing the letters and rules of Naskh and Ta'liq and Mir Ali Tabrizi was the one who made it lawful.

Finally, academics interested in scripts and calligraphy should look into manuscripts from the



Table 5. Comparison between separate letters. Source: Authors.

Row	Identification Code	ی	ه	واو	نون	میم	لام	کاف	قاف
1	02								-
2	03							-	
3	15								
4	20								-
5	24								
6	31								
7	34								-
8	44	-		-			-	-	-
9	46								
10	68							-	
11	Baysonqori								-

second half of the 14th century. to learn more about the formation of Nasta'liq.

## Endnotes

1. There is no pens' thinness and width in Tahriri (handwriting) so aesthetics rules are not presentable.

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