

## **Nastaliq Calligraphy on Lahore Architecture at the mid-19th. Comparative Study on Architecture of Iran**

**Assist. Prof. Dr. Ghada el Gemaiey**

Assistant professor, faculty of archeology, Cairo University

[Ghada\\_elgemaiey@cu.edu.eg](mailto:Ghada_elgemaiey@cu.edu.eg)

### **Abstract:**

Nastaliq has gained a respectable notice in Iran, Turkey, India including subcontinent, and Arab world (Egypt, Syria, and Baghdad). Starting from the very minimum size used in miniature paintings to Jali size applied on architecture. Nastaliq was raised and used a lot in different manners because of its unique letter style; but at the same time there is still a hidden style representing the local Nastaliq related to the subcontinent region; this local style represents a new test which we have found in Lahore city in Pakistan at the second mid of 19c. Although the small number of architecture founded in Lahore had used Nastaliq inscriptions in Lahori style - for political reasons - but it deserves to be studied, and the calligraphers of this period are to be given credit for this new calligraphy style in order for their work to be recognized.

### **Research problem:**

Nastaliq has a huge history; having started from Taliq calligraphy in Iran, developing from it to create a new shape in Iran also; then started to move around the world and through this movement of Nastaliq it spread in different styles and shapes. Thus, this paper is aiming to reveal the Lahori Nastaliq style, which represented a new style from the original Nastaliq which spread in Afghanistan and Pakistan by the influence of India on the subcontinent region. This paper refers to the new style applied on architecture in Lahore, with comparative study with Nastaliq in Iran to distinguish the Iranian Nastaliq style and the local one on architecture during the British colonization. Obviously what was written on this subject represents paragraph or two maximum, which led to undervaluing of the Lahori style as a real and effective style. So, I found myself attracted to study this style, and compare it with the original and the influenced one in India.

### **Research objective:**

This paper aims to shed some light on a few of the differences between Lahori Nastaliq style on architecture, and the original base of Iranian Nastaliq style at the same period. Although there is no direct research that has addressed this issue before, but still there is many researcher refer to the idea by a way or another; like (Seher, 2016) who talked about traditional calligraphy in post partition Lahore in her thesis and referred to Imam Verdi not as pioneer or the founder of the Lahori Nastaliq but as one of the main calligrapher in Lahore, there is also (Mansour, Shar'a, Al-Rashdan, 2013) they study the roots and the schools of Nastaliq, referring to Lahori Nastaliq as Pakistani Nastaliq, and (Abdel hafiz, 2009) who studied the Nastaliq in Lahore during the Mughal period which helped to give a feedback about the Nastaliq style before the raise of the local Lahori style.

**Research methodology:**

This research will trace the Nastaliq style on architecture in Lahore at the mid and late of the 19<sup>th</sup> C., by tracing the calligrapher role on architecture and their work on Lahore, combined with a brief history of Nastaliq calligraphy styles, Lahore cultural, architecture and political history, additional to a comparative study with Iranian Nastaliq to reveal the difference between both styles.

**Keywords:**

Nastaliq, Lahore, India, Iran, Imam Verdi, Punjab, Pakistan.

**Introduction:**

Lahore is a city in Pakistan which was a part of India for a very long time, for that it's very clear the influence of architecture and art of India on Pakistan's monuments especially at the time of Mughal. Culture of pre-Islam India is very rich, therefore it has reflected on its art and architecture; but after Islam India was influenced by Iran in many concepts, which was reflected on Pakistani art and architecture. By time and before independence; Pakistan tried to find a way to express its own local culture. This local culture wasn't imperial as it was before, but anyway it reflected Pakistan as a totality, and that's an enough reason to create the Lahore Nastaliq calligraphy.

By going deep in this research it will be more clear the role of the city of Lahore as a change pioneer in many aspects in Pakistan, causing the raise of local culture, reflecting on art, architecture, miniatures and calligraphy.

**Brief history of Lahore:**

The city of Lahore is a historical city; its history and culture can be narrated through its art and architecture. Lahore knew the Buddhism before Islam. It was governed by Islamic governments mostly from India. It was under control by the Mughal Empire at the late of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Even before and between Indian domination and British colonization; Lahore was ruled by local individuals like Sikh [1] then gained independence at 1974 as a part of Pakistan.

The Sikh Empire (1707–1849) founded by Sikh Khalsa Army after the death of Aurangzeb (1618- 1707). Pakistan was ruled by individual armies known as "Mils", Sikh was one of those armies whom could control all of other armies under their role. By (1762-1799) at the hand of Maharaja Ranjit Singh the empire of Sikh extended to include the whole Punjab region (Major, 1999, pp. 54.55).

The empire represented the rise of local culture in general, because all of the military leaders were from Punjab's nobility, also Sikh monarchy to ensure the Muslim and others chieftains "ex-mils" loyalty; they allow them to govern some states by strict roles. This allowed them to spread their own local influence in the state they govern. East India Company, paved the road also to spread the Romanesque and Gothic style on art and architecture, when they start to interfere in political issue in Lahore at the 19<sup>th</sup> century before occupation.

### **Brief history of Nastaliq:**

Historians consider Mir Ali Tabrizi is the real founder of Nastaliq at the 8/14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nastaliq was written in two methods in Iran, the first is known as Jafr and Azhar developed at Khorasan by sultan Ali Mashhade then spread all over Iran, second method is known as Abdel Rahman Khwarizmi (884-894/ 1480- 1489) at west and south of Iran spread in India and subcontinent (Fadaily, 2002, p.417, 419-420). The difference between both of them are minor.

The oldest fine Nastaliq inscription on architecture was found in Iran wrote on tombstone of grandfathers of sultan Hussein Bayiqra in Herat at 882/ 1487 by sultan Ali Mashhade (Kakhki. Kianmehr. Ghelichkhani, Bijayem, 2016, p. 146). Nastaliq was considered the court style which was written on most architecture and artifact in safavid and Qajar period.

### **Brief history of Iranian/ Indian Nastaliq in Lahore:**

Lahore developed as a place for calligraphers from the early Ghaznavid Period, however a significant milestone took place during the period of Shah Jehan (Shah, 2016, p. 16) in the year 932/1526 Babur invaded the sub-continent, bringing with him Nastaliq style because of losing Fergana and Samarkand. Lahore was Emperor Akbar's capital (994 -1007/1586 -1598) during this time calligraphy in Lahore had its significant moment. Nastaliq in particular was cultivated at Akbar's court. Nastaliq Calligraphy continued their significant work during Shah Jehan period; especially after the arrival of Abdul Rashid Daylami, after the murder of Mir Emad al-Hassani 1024/1615, His nephew and student, Abd al-Rashid Daylami and other family members fled to the Ottoman Empire, soon appointed Royal Calligrapher at Shah Jehan's court. It is estimated that Daylami entered Shah Jehan's service in the year 1056/1623- 1624 and served his court for 23 years (shah, 2016, pp.18-19). The examples of Nastaliq calligraphy on mosques and madrassas of Lahore at the time of Mughal Empire clarify the form and structure of Iranian/ Indian Nastaliq style. what we can see in masjid wazir khan in Lahore 1634-1641 (Fig.2) and many others examples [2]. Comparing to Lahori Nastaliq (Fig. 1) which is clearly appearing in the letters (ك، ج، ح، ل) .

The east India company period marks the decline of calligraphy and other Islamic arts in the subcontinent, although a significant man appeared and changed everything and set a new style by many students, by his calligraphy style it was the beginning to refer to Lahore as a place of a new Nastaliq style.

### **Lahori Nastaliq:**

#### **The master of Lahore Nastaliq calligrapher and his school:**

\* Imam Verdi (1205-1297/1790-1880)

Imam Verdi, originally from Iran, born in Kabul, worked in Kashmir; then he was sent to Lahore by the Muslim governor of the Sikh rulers; his name is Imam Uddin [3]. Imam Verdi was a master of calligraphy who used to teach at some mosques in Lahore, he was noticed by the director of education in Lahore who was an English man whose name was Col. Holroyd (1860-1870) he admired the work of Imam Verdi and found a way to sell some of Imam Verdi student's work named Sayyed Ahmed. Imam Verdi didn't welcome the idea but it brought him fame and attracted students and people who care about calligraphy. His calligraphy style was

new then the Iranian/ Indian Nastaliq style. This man revived the calligraphy and created a new significant one.

Imam Verdi has monumental calligraphy in one mosque and tombstone, he also worked on manuscripts, like the Gulistan-i- Saadi, preserved in the National Museum in Karachi, and at the Fakir Khana Museum in Lahore. Imam Verdi Nastaliq style has its significant way to explore the new local style, the complete circle *daira* in Iranian Nastaliq became elliptical and vertical, due to that, *nun*, *ayn* and other letters with carves got more depth, regarding to the vertical letters like *alif* and *lam*, they started to stand taller and more vertical.

\* Students of Imam Verdi [4]:

Will recall their names because most of them out of the research timing frame.

-Sayed Ahmed: first student of Imam Verdi, he is the one who gave the Holroyd his homework with the correction of Imam Verdi on it, because of him Imam Verdi gained his reputation and gave rise to the Lahore Nastaliq.

-Khalifa Noor Ahmed: son of Sayyed Ahmed, he was very significant.

-Asadullah Khan: the calligrapher of the Akhbar-I Aam, wrote in Phool magazine and bible society (Amjad, p. 492)

-Munshi Abdul Ghani: known as Nathu Katibb, he developed a simple style for text books at the suggestion of Col. Holroyd. This new style was for writing English text (Amjad, p. 492).

- Abdel Majid Barven Raqm [5], he played a big role in the new Lahori style at the first and during the mid- 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Allama, 2001, p. IX)

### **The main differences between Iranian and Lahore Nastaliq:**

The differences between Iranian/ Indian Nastaliq and Lahore Nastaliq are:

- The point writing of Pakistani calligraphers takes a form that conveys to below and in an exaggerated manner. Fig (1, 2).
- Point writing in whole lozenge shape in Lahore Nastaliq, but  $\frac{3}{4}$  circle in Iranian/Indian Nastaliq School. Fig (1, 2).
- The curve in the letter like (ن) is vertical.
- The letters are thick and bulky in Lahore Nastaliq.
- The letters are more extended and longer in Lahore Nastaliq.
- Using the grammar format in Lahore Nastaliq.
- Iranian Nastaliq is known as a fluidity calligraphy, the emphasis of Lahori Nastaliq is on articulation of bold shapes, deep curvature of huroof, and refined shaping of the pointed ends. So Lahori Nastaliq is less fluid and more graphic than the Iranian one. (Seher, 2016, 28)

The similarity between Iranian/ Indian Nastaliq and Lahore Nastaliq are:

- The scale of the letter equals the scale of the  $\frac{3}{4}$  circle
  - The carve of the letters (ل، ي، ح، ص، س، ع) is very deep to below. Fig (1, 2).
- (Darman, 1991, p. 34) (Mansour, Shar'a, Al-Rashdan, 2013, p. 271) (Kazim, 2015, p. 404).

### **Lahore Nastaliq inscription on architecture by Imam Verdi:**

1 -Masjid Hammam Wali, it is also known as Shutar masjid. Pics (1, 2, 3, 4) Fig. (1)

Location: Sutar Mandi Bazar in the walled city, at area of the Haveli Nawab Sheikh Imam Uddin.

The mosque was rebuilt by Imam Verdi (Amjad, p. 492) there is no date inscription on the mosque to set his date.

The mosque is small in size, its rectangular in shape, divided to three equal sections, every section is featured with a shallow neck dome, with three arched entrance in the main porch where there is no courtyard in the mosque.

Nastaliq calligraphy is in the external porch; and some are inside the mosque. Pics (1, 2, 3, 4). It's clear the difference in Calligraphy, art, and architecture between Masjid Wazir Khan in Lahore in its golden time, and the Calligraphy, art, and architecture in Masjid Hammam Wali in Lahore at the time of India eastern company. Fig. (1, 2)

2 -Tombstone of governor's mother at shrine complex of Bibi Pak Daman:

Bibi Pak Daman Shrine Complex: is believed to house the graves of six ladies from the Prophet's household (Ahl al-Bayt), including Bibi Ruqayyah, the daughter of Ali Ibn Abu Talib with his wife Umm al Banin bint Huzaam, with six ladies with the names Bibi Haj, Bibi Shahnaz, Bibi Noor, Bibi Taj, Bibi Hur, Bibi Gauhar, who left the city of Mecca and reached Lahore immediately after the Karbala tragedy, the real names of those ladies were Bibi Ruqqaya, Ume Hani, Ume Luqman, Ramla, Zainab, Asma and the name of their servant famously known as Bibi Tanoori was Kaneez Haleema (Chewla, 2014, pp. 225-226, p.231). Bibi Pak Daman literally means the "chaste lady" and it is the collective name given to the six ladies buried in this mausoleum.

The shrine built by Mahmoud Ghaznavid (999-1030/ 1590-1621).

The grave yard of Bibi Pak Daman has two enclosure, one for the Darbār Bibi Pak Daman – 'ahl albayt - and the other one for local and common women. The shrine and the enclosure are allowed for women only (Chewla, 2014, p. 242)

The common graveyards have different types of graves [6] some of them are covered from all sides and their surfaces have a small opening at the top shaped as tili (traditional name of the shape of the ornament placed in the center), with a circular flower on top carved in the marble [7] and the other type is without. (Ali, 2019, 78)

### **Symbols of Nastaliq inscription on Iranian architecture:**

There are tens of examples using Nastaliq calligraphy on architecture in Qajar period, two examples were chosen randomly to clarify the difference between the two Nastaliq styles, with consideration of the imperial style of Qajar architecture and the local one of Lahore at the time of colony.

Both examples have the same plan approx. consisting of four Iwans with open court yard, both have the Britain clock tower, and many minarets which reach eight at Sepahsalar mosque.

1- Sepahsalar mosque in Tehran: The mosque was built in 1879 by Mirza Hosein Sepahsalar, the Premiers of Iran during Naser al-Din Shah 1848-1896. The mosque has many calligraphies everywhere in interior and exterior façades, in the courtyard, and the eight minarets, made by tiles.

2- Sayyed mosque in Isfahan: The mosque founded by Sayyed Mohammed Bagher Shafti, one of the most famous clergymen in Isfahan at the mid of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The mosque is fully covered internally and externally with the tiles of Nastaliq calligraphy.

## Conclusions:

- The Pakistani local culture had been dominated for hundreds of years by Indian Empire, which didn't allow to develop the local or community art and architecture. This had led to the poor appearance of the local style especially on architecture comparing to the imperial style of Mughal architecture.

- It is quite clear that Iranian Nastaliq calligraphy is the same as Indian Nastaliq calligraphy which spread in Pakistan at the time of Mughal until the first mid of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the Nastaliq calligraphy major styles are three:

1. The Iranian style: the founder place of Nastaliq, has influenced all below countries with different percentage. Although the Iranian style spread without major change in India, and subcontinent countries as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Baghdad.

2. The Turkish style: spread in Egypt and Sham.

3. The Lahore style: local style in Pakistan, began in Lahore and spread through the country.

-The founder of Lahori Nastaliq is Imam Verdi. His work reflected the desire of independence politically and culturally from India. From this point of view many Pakistani calligraphers - whom lived in Delhi writing Iranian Nastaliq- returned to Pakistan and started to write in Lahore Nastaliq even before independence, which is proven by history.

- The difference in architecture shape and form between the imperial architecture of Persia (during the Qajar period) and the local style in Lahore (at the time of colonization) is quiet apparent.

## Notes:

[1] Sikhism is a monotheistic religion, spread in Punjabi region, beliefs of Sikhism, articulated in the Guru Granth Sahib, the tenth and the last Guru of Sikh, includes faith and meditation in the name of god; unity and equality for all humankind. Guru Nanak (1469–1539), was the first Sikh Guru and the founder of Sikhism; they believe that the original founders of the Sikh religion are ten only, and there shouldn't be any change in the religion after them. (Colino, 2010)

[2] Abdel Hafiz made an archeological survey to the Inscriptions at the time of Mughal in Lahore, explained the material in use, the calligraphies styles, list of calligrapher, the meaning and description of the calligraphy at the time of Mughal in Lahore, which gives a feed back about the shape and technique, style of calligraphies and style in general and Nastaliq style in Lahore in specific before rising of the local Nastaliq in Lahore. For more details see (Abdel Hafiz, 2009, pp.291-382)

[3] Shaikh Imam ud Din (1819-1859): Shaikh Imam ud Din who was then appointed governor of the Jalandhar Doab, by the death of his father Imam ud Din took over as governor of Kashmir, with the title of Amin ul Mulk Jarig Bahadur. His fortune, however, was declined by the conclusion of the Anglo-Sikh treaty in 1846, but it was exonerated when he produced original letters written by Raja Lal Singh. His property in Lahore, which was earlier confiscated, was restored to him. In 1848, Shaikh Imam ud Din led 2,000 troops to assist Herbert Edward in the reduction of Multan, and succeeded in arresting Narain Singh, commander of Diwan Mul Raj. He was later rewarded with the title of Nawab and Bahadur, together with a pension of Rs 11,600 and confirmation of his jagir of Rs 8,400. Again in 1857, he helped the British by

fighting on their behalf in Delhi. He died in 1859 at the early age of 40 and he was buried in the vicinity of the tomb of the famous saint Data Ganj Bakhsh, at Lahore. [https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Shaiikh\\_Imam\\_Ud\\_Din\\_at\\_3/8/2020](https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Shaiikh_Imam_Ud_Din_at_3/8/2020)

[4] There is a point of view by Seher, A. Shah refer to the second generation of Imam Verdi as the origin of change of Nastaliq in Lahore (Shah, 2016, p. 29) depending on their nationality as Imam Verdi was originally from Iran, and she considered the second generation of Imam Verdi's scholars as the first calligraphers after partition; also because their writings were in Urdu mostly.

By examining historian writings as well as Seher's (Shah, 2016, pp. 27-28) and comparing the calligraphies, I believe that Imam Verdi was the founder of Lahore Nastaliq style; and the calligraphers after partition were extension to his work, and that's what the paper will prove.

[5] The second generation of Imam Verdi students, they wrote by Lahore Nastaliq in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu language. They are considered as contemporary calligraphers, first one was Abdul Majid Parvin Raqam (1319-1365/1901-1946). Taj al-Din Zarin Raqam (1324-1374/1906-55), and Muhammad Siddique Almas Raqam (1325-1392/1907-1972) were contemporaries of Parvin Raqam, and followed the newly created Lahori Nastaliq, reinforcing its popularity all over the world. (Shah, 2016, p. 6)

[6] There are similar ornaments and identifications marks used by Sikh and Muslim in the graveyard in Lahore, and some other countries where there we can find both community. (Ali, 2019, p. 72) (Singh, 2016, p. ) and that's due to mutual culture for many centuries, despite the political conflict between both sides. Historically Pakistan struggled to gain cultural identity, although the multicultural and multiethnic community which is connected to the multiplicity of visual culture exists as symbols used on gravestones (Tara, 2008, p.118)

[7] There are some similarity between gravestone in Pakistan, and Lahore with Iran, using similar figures with the same meaning, beside the cultural influence, Pakistan has known Shia as a recognized ideology. For more details about motives and format of gravestone in Isfahan see, (el Gemaiey, 2019, PP.55-76)

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