


# A Comparative Study of the Position of the point in the Chalipa of Mir Emad al-Hosani and Gholam Hossein Amirkhani

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## Abstract

About a century after the invention of the suspension line, another line that was based on the nature of the artist and the aesthetic taste of Iranians appeared. Elegance is one of the characteristics of Nastaliq Mir Emad al-Hasani, with a brilliant and unique presence, exhibited new works in this field during the Safavid period. During the Qajar era, calligraphy found life again and Nastaliq was noticed. In the current era, Gholamhossein Amirkhani is one of the leaders of calligraphy and has a stunning presence in contemporary calligraphy. He has masterfully performed works with different genres. The first point in learning calligraphy is the point. The formation of words, lines and calligraphy works are affected by this element. The point can be of interest from various other aspects such as the effect on the legibility of the beauty aspect and being placed in different parts of the page. The researches carried out in relation to the role of the point in calligraphy have investigated the types of punctuation, the relationships between the points, and also the role of the point writing. The main problem in the current research is to visually examine the types of points in Nastaliq script (Chalipa style) in the works of Mir Emad and Amirkhani from a visual point of view, as well as to analyze the rules related to the relationship of calligraphy. The question is, what is the position of the point and the level of accuracy in the execution of the types of points, punctuation in line with the slope of the words, the Line and background line, the tendency to the right, and the transfer of meaning with point in the Safavid and contemporary eras in the Mir Emad and Amirkhani crosses? The present research is based on written sources and observation of the works of two professors and through descriptive-analytical documentary research. The result of this research and analysis shows the accuracy of Gadama's work and knowledge of punctuation, combining points, removing points, common points, extra points, observing silence and front, observing balance and equilibrium in the whole piece and it is static.

**Keywords:** Nastaliq, Chalipa, Point, Mir Emad, Amirkhani.

## 1. Introduction

The arts of calligraphy and language have always played a crucial and undeniable role in the formation of a nation's culture and civilization. The contribution of Iranians to global culture and art is evident through the masterpieces they have presented to the world, products of their ingenuity and creativity. Art is a mysterious discourse, narrating the pains, regrets, and joys of a nation through various expressive methods. The creation of any artwork that pleases the eye and soul requires numerous factors to achieve perfection and immortality. Nastaliq, executed with utmost delicacy, is one of the most precise and beautiful scripts, encompassing numerous principles, rules, and subtleties. The refinement of this script is attributed to Khaje Mir Ali Tabrizi. During the Safavid era, calligraphy was widely prevalent, with Nastaliq being favored above other scripts; nearly three-quarters of Iranian manuscripts from this period were written in it. Mir Ali Heravi, a contemporary of Sultan Husayn Bayqara, elevated Nastaliq to new heights. He was succeeded by Mir Emad, a contemporary of Shah Abbas Safavi. Mir Emad applied great effort, taste, and genius to the harmonization of individual letters and their coordination, developing an independent style in the last decade of his life that was later emulated by other calligraphers. He excelled in writing from delicate to large scripts, demonstrating both fine penmanship and powerful execution (Amirkhani, 2011, p. 17). The 13th century AH (19th century CE) is a prominent period in Iranian calligraphy, featuring masters such as Gholamreza Esfahani and Mohammad-Reza Kalhor. Their artistic heritage was passed down through an unbroken historical chain to contemporary calligraphers. Among the outstanding contemporary masters is Gholamhossein Amirkhani, who has been profoundly engaged with calligraphy for over six decades (Timuri, 2013, p. 339). The aim of this research is to examine the types of dots in Nastaliq script (within the \*chalipa\* format) in the works of Mir Emad and Amirkhani from a visual perspective, and to analyze the calligraphic rules related to dot usage in each artist's work.

The research question is: How do the positioning, precision of execution, alignment with word and line slope, adherence to the baseline, rightward inclination, and semantic conveyance of dots differ in the \*chalipa\* compositions of Mir Emad and Amirkhani? The hypothesis is that the positioning, execution, and application of dots in various dimensions were executed with greater deliberation and acuity by Mir Emad compared to Gholamhossein Amirkhani.

## 2. Literature Review

Research related to this topic can be categorized into several paths. The first includes studies on the lives and styles of Mir Emad and Amirkhani. Sedaghat Jabbari (2007), in a doctoral dissertation titled "Aesthetic Features of Mir Emad Hassani's Works and Their Reflection in the History of Iranian Calligraphy," provided detailed explanations about Mir Emad's life, style, and analysis of some of his \*chalipas\*. Mohammad Mehdi Qata' (2004), in an article titled "Foundations of Aesthetics in Mir Emad's Style," addressed the alignment of letters and words, examined word composition in lines and \*chalipas\*, and explained types of dots. Regarding Master Amirkhani, research has focused on his life, style, and exhibitions, such as Kaveh Timuri's article analyzing Amirkhani's calligraphic models from the 1970s to 1990s. The second path concerns research on Nastaliq, \*chalipa\*, and dots. For instance, an article on "The Role of Dots and \*Dang\* in Nastaliq Script" addresses their educational aspect. Gholamhossein Amirkhani (2005), in his book \*Adab al-Khatt Amirkhani\*, presented material on letters, dots, \*dang\*, and calligraphic formats. Kaspur and Charei (2019), in a comparative study of traditional and digital Nastaliq dots, noted that calligraphic principles of \*savad\* and \*bayaz\* (black and white) and balance have led to alterations in dot shape, which they examined. The final path consists of articles directly comparing Mir Emad and Amirkhani. One article conducted a visual examination of the relationship between dots and space in their works, focusing on dot alignment, slope, and visual weight. Es'haghzadeh et al. (2018) stated

that Mir Emad was more precise in non-perceptual, scriptural visual communications than contemporary artists. The present study aims to specifically examine dot types in the \*chalipa\* works of both masters from a visual perspective and analyze the rules governing their relationship to the overall calligraphy.

### 3. Research Methodology

This study is based on written sources and the direct observation and examination of works by Mir Emad Hassani and Gholamhossein Amirkhani. It employs a descriptive-analytical and comparative methodology through documentary research. These two masters were selected as preeminent exponents of Nastaliq in the Safavid and contemporary periods, respectively. From fourteen common \*chalipa\* subjects executed by both masters, four high-quality \*chalipas\* with similar compositions were chosen for their potential to yield new insights related to the research topic. The \*chalipa\* format was chosen because both masters devoted significant attention to it, and because Master Amirkhani has replicated several of Mir Emad's \*chalipas\*. Through meticulous examination of these works, the placement and role of dots within them are analyzed and compared.

### 4. Research Findings

**The Dot:** In calligraphy, the dot is the unit of measurement for letters and words. It is defined as the impression of the pen's nib on paper, ideally forming a rhomboid or square. Each dot is conceptually divided into six equal parts based on the nib's width, with each part called one \*dang\*. Each \*dang\* is used in constructing specific parts of letters and words. Traditional masters considered a perfect dot (square) as the basis for the fundamental design of letters (Amirkhani, 2005, p. 4).

**Structure of the Dot and Calligraphy Rules:** Beyond measurement, the dot standardizes distances between letters and words. This metric system, dating to Ibn Muqla, ensures standard sizing in terms of height, elongation, and curve

size (Yousefi, 2005, p. 22). Proportionality in Nastaliq is diverse and can be calculated based on the letter's size and its internal strengths ("qowat") (Farid, 2015, p. 12). The dot's position relative to the baseline varies depending on the placement of letter components. Dots above the baseline often lean slightly right, and those below lean left, following the script's oval inclination. Dots are integral to the artwork, contributing to its beauty and completion. They create space and activate the negative (white) space, impacting both quiet and active areas of the composition. Traditional masters placed dots below the baseline parallel to it, while upper dots often maintained a claw-like ("chang") form. In traditional styles, executed with a fine nib, dots had sharper angles. According to calligraphic principles, dot placement must follow the rule of balance ("savad" and "bayaz"). Dots must be at a logical distance from words—not so far as to detach, nor so close as to compromise the line's beauty (Kaspor & Charei, 2019, p. 121). In Nastaliq, due to abundant curves and limited space, dots are sometimes omitted or shared to avoid excessive blackness. Conversely, extra dots may be added to fill empty space and prevent excessive whiteness. Traditionally, three dots could be placed below some elongated letters (like "Sin" or "Shin") to distinguish them and fill space. There are typically two types of dots: the dot inside the "Nun" (ن), which should be complete and square, and dots elsewhere, which may resemble a rectangle.

**The Dot Visually:** Concepts like aggregation and dispersion can be conveyed through dots. Their placement in different parts of the frame imparts different concepts. Repetition and size variation can create density, expansion, rhythm, and movement. A central dot signifies balance; in the upper half, lightness; in the lower half, heaviness; and in corners, imbalance or loneliness. A black dot has depth, appearing to recede and pushing the white space forward.

**Types of Dot Placement Methods:**

1. **Diagonal Placement:** The corners of the dots are connected, aligning them along each other's diagonals.

2. **Side-aligned Placement:** The sides of the dots are connected, aligning them along each other's sides.

3. Half-side Placement: Half of one dot's side is connected to half of the adjacent dot's side (Qata', 2004, p. 105).

## 5. Conclusion

In response to the research question regarding dot placement in the \*chalipas\* of Mir Emad Hassani (Safavid era) and Gholamhossein Amirkhani (contemporary period), eight works were examined. Selected for their capacity for dot analysis, the findings reveal both similarities and differences.

**Similarities:** Both artists demonstrate consideration for aligning dots with the slope of words and the baseline. However, this alignment is executed more carefully and completely in Mir Emad's "chalipas". Both masters also emphasize the relationship between line beginnings and dot placement.

**Differences:** Several key differences emerged:

In Mir Emad's works, omitting a dot is preferred to executing a small, incorrect one; dot omission is rare and primarily serves to prevent excessive blackness or to maintain balance. In Amirkhani's works, dots are omitted more frequently.

Dot placement aligned with the strength ("qowat") and blackness of letters was carefully considered in traditional works but is less evident in Amirkhani's.

Mir Emad did not use faint dots, undersized dots, or dots connected to letters—all of which were observed in Amirkhani's works.

The combination and sharing of dots in Mir Emad's works are executed with skill and precision, contributing to the balance and equilibrium of the line and composition.

A rightward inclination in dot placement is observed in contemporary works but was not a significant feature in Mir Emad's.

Mir Emad occasionally used an additional subscript dot to create space or balance, a practice not observed in the selected works by Amirkhani.

In Mir Emad's compositions, dots are placed to achieve overall balance despite the presence of numerous circular forms, a consideration less apparent in Amirkhani's works.

In traditional compositions, lower dots are parallel to the baseline, while upper dots are often

placed in a crouching, ascending position. The placement of dots on imaginary curves at the top and bottom of the composition is carefully observed for beauty and rule consistency, which is not always maintained in contemporary compositions.

Attention to the strengths ("qowat") within letters and words is a noteworthy aspect of traditional dot placement, receiving less attention in contemporary chalipas. In summary, both Mir Emad and Gholamhossein Amirkhani executed dot placement with a full knowledge of calligraphic rules. However, it must be acknowledged that precision in dot application—including combining and omitting dots, adhering to calligraphic rules, aligning dots on curves parallel to the baseline, using dots for local and compositional balance, and conveying meaning—is more prominent in Mir Emad's works, reflecting the particular diligence of traditional masters.

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The author solely contributed to the conceptualization and writing of the article. The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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