



The Prophet of Islam in the Mirror of Islamic Art: A Case Study of Calligraphy and Music

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Abstract

At the dawn of Islam, the prevailing art was eclectic, largely influenced by Byzantine and Persian art. Over time, however, it acquired distinct characteristics that are now referred to as Islamic art. A study of the Qur'an, the sīra (the biography and conduct of the Prophet), and the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) shows that "beauty" in its general sense and "art" in its specific sense play a significant role in the text of the Holy Qur'an and in the Messenger's sīra, and neither is overlooked. This article seeks to determine the point of connection between the noble Messenger of Islam and art, and in doing so examines two forms of art: music and calligraphy. We explore these two subjects within the Prophet's personal conduct, temperament, guidance, and way of life, and analyze the influence of his sīra on these two arts. We begin by offering an account of the concept of Islamic art, so that the reader becomes aware of its various definitions and understands that there is no uniformity or consensus among scholars in this field regarding the concept of Islamic art and its origins. We then present details of the Prophet's views and sayings concerning the art of calligraphy, and examine the influence of his sīra on that art, including ḥilya writing (the calligraphic depiction of the Prophet's physical and moral attributes). We then explore the Prophet's hadiths, conduct, and character concerning music. This research was carried out using a descriptive-analytical method, drawing on library and documentary sources. Given the sensitivity of the subject, primary and well-known sources have been used as far as possible, and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* (i.e., personal interpretation) has been avoided as much as possible in the descriptions.

Keywords: Prophet of Islam, Islamic art, music, calligraphy

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1. Introduction

Art is a concept that originates in the mind of a gifted creator, takes objective form in familiar or unfamiliar forms, and has had—and continues to have—a profound influence on human life. In pursuit of this end, and also for the elevation of the human spirit, Islamic art too plays an influential and tangible role. By arousing a sense of beauty in the viewer, Islamic art stirs their aesthetic sensibility and, on an unintended journey, seeks to guide them beyond the earthly realm and immerse them in the realm of meaning. The Muslim artist, too, by contemplating the divine attributes found in two authentic and inspiring sources—the Qur'an on the one hand and the Prophet's sīra on the other—refines their own spirit. "The essential features of what we today recognise as Islamic art were laid down during the century following the Prophet's death, at the end of the Umayyad caliphate. Before this, it was an eclectic art influenced by Byzantine and Persian traditions" (Pakbāz 1385SH, 726). Nevertheless, even in those early years of Islam, the personality, character, and views of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) served as a model for the creation or shaping of certain arts, including architecture, calligraphy, and music. For example, the form of the earliest Islamic mosques, as an expression of Islamic architecture, was established on the basis of the Prophet's Mosque (Masjid al-Nabī), the mosque whose construction the Prophet himself ordered.

In this article, we aim to undertake a case study of the influence of the Prophet's sīra on two branches of Islamic art, namely calligraphy and music. In calligraphy—which may be regarded as the first Islamic art—given the importance of writing the Word of God (kalām Allāh), as well as the Prophet's taste and aesthetic sensibility, he played a prominent role in its growth and flourishing. With regard to music, it is also necessary to consider the basis on which the Prophet's personality influenced this art. The Qur'an itself is a text centred on speech, and from the very beginning it was recited in a beautiful voice; this point may be regarded as the beginning of Islamic music. Before turning to these discussions, it is necessary to address the concept of Islamic art. We therefore turn to the views of various thinkers in the fields of Islamic studies and art studies and present their views. We then undertake a case study of the two aforementioned branches of Islamic art, namely calligraphy and music, and examine the influence of the Messenger on them.

2. Islamic Art

Although there is considerable disagreement regarding the origin and history of art, art has, from the beginning of human existence to the present day, played an

important role in human development, civilisation, and social life. At the same time, religion, in its general sense, has also maintained a close relationship with what we call art. Throughout history, art has often developed within the framework of religion and has taken on religious characteristics in order to convey the intentions of religious communities to their intended audience. The closeness and mutual influence between art and religion have been such that the overall concepts and various artistic styles within different religions have undergone fundamental changes, a matter that calls for considerable thought and reflection in this field, since the history of the Islamic societies is both thoroughly religious and, at the same time, artistic. Reflection in this area leads us to a concept composed of art and religion, which is termed religious art, and within the geographical context of Islam, it may be called Islamic art. What we refer to as the concept of Islamic art is a term that was first employed by classical Orientalists, who subsequently conducted research and wrote extensively in this field. Islamic art became an established subject of study from the nineteenth century CE, which marked the peak of the activities of Orientalists at the forefront of colonialism in the Islamic world, and in the contemporary period, particularly in recent decades, it has been the subject of extensive research (Nasr 1375SH, 7). In the preface to the book *Islamic Art and Architecture* by Ettinghausen and Grabar, Azhand states that the term “Islamic art” was first established and defined in British academies and was subsequently adopted by French Orientalists, who were the first academic researchers in the field of Islamic art, and later appeared in the works of other Europeans (Ettinghausen and Grabar 1378SH, 10). In fact, Islamic art began after the triumph of Islam under the leadership of the Prophet in the seventh century CE (the first century AH), and developed and flourished in the farthest regions where Islam succeeded in establishing itself as the dominant power. Islamic art cannot be confined to a particular period or country. Its geographical scope is so extensive that, over many centuries, it spread from the Levant to Iran and from India to al-Andalus in Spain, leaving behind original and enduring artistic traditions (Pakbāz 1385SH, 725).

There is considerable disagreement over the definition of Islamic art. Some refer to it as the art of Islamic lands, in which artworks influenced by Islam were produced under the particular policies of the ruling powers of the time in Islamic territories and were consequently called Islamic art (Brend 1383SH, 10; Price 1364SH, 9). Others consider Islamic art to be the art of those who embraced Islam, that is, Muslims. In this view, the Muslim artist is the central point, as the creator of artistic works influenced by Islam. Indeed, according to this approach, Islamic art has no external existence in itself; rather, Muslim artists take its place, although the influence of Islam on

individuals is not overlooked (Hoag 1979, 9; Atasoy et al. 1990, 7). Another view of Islamic art is the text-centred perspective. According to this view, the principal source of Islamic art is the text of the Holy Qur'an, and this perspective regards Islamic art as entirely religious and, in fact, as a continuation of the religious text of Islam. In this regard, the driving force is the religious commonality among artists in different parts of the Islamic lands. This view regards Islamic art as celestial art, derived from heaven and from the *tawhīd* emanating from the Holy Qur'an (Nasr 1375SH, 12; Du Ry 1368SH, 3). According to another definition held by traditionalists, Islamic art is a sacred art derived from the sacred signs and symbols of Islam (Brend 1383SH, 227). From this perspective, the foundation of sacred Islamic art rests upon sacred forms and symbols, and the forms of the Ka'ba, the Black Stone (*al-Ḥajar al-Aswad*), and other Islamic symbols receive their sanctity from heaven, all of them being gifts from paradise to human beings on earth (Burckhardt 1365SH, 17). From this perspective, Islamic art seeks to reveal a world beyond tangible materiality. Through its references, signs, and metaphors, this art emphasises the transience of matter and the eternal and everlasting nature of the Truth (the Absolute One), acquaints human beings with higher realms, connects them to these realms, and creates a space in which, wherever one looks, one senses the presence of God (Nasr 1375SH, 180–1).

In the theoretical discussion of what Islamic art actually is, other views also exist, such as Arab art, Iranian art, among others. This in itself indicates the lack of certainty in defining the content of Islamic art. Nevertheless, one thing remains constant across all these propositions, and that is Islam. That is to say, the point of connection among all perspectives in the field of art, within the geographical context of Muslim habitation, is the Islam founded by Muhammad (PBUH) in the seventh century CE. It is through examining the *sīra*, way of life, guidance, and character of this Qurayshī Messenger that Islamic art can be better understood and, more importantly, the extent of the influence of his personality on Islamic art can be assessed, enabling us to understand its totality, quality, and relationship with the Prophet of Islam (PBUH).

3. The Prophet of Islam and Beauty

God says in the Holy Qur'an: "Say: Who has forbidden the adornment of God which He has brought forth for His servants, and the good things of provision?" That is, who has forbidden the beauties that God has provided for His servants, as well as wholesome foods and provisions? (Qur'an 7:32). Is this conception of beauty, which the Qur'an presents as an example, not precisely the art manifested in the various aspects of life that God has made pure and lawful for humankind? In the author's view, art is part of

this beauty that is explicitly affirmed in the Qur'an.

A God who so explicitly affirms beauty could not have sent a messenger devoid of taste, a love of beauty, and aesthetic sensibility to guide humankind. The Prophet of Islam was sent by a God whose attributes include beauty. God therefore attaches value to the outward manifestations of beauty and feeling. What has been transmitted to us from the *sīra* of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) shows that beauty held a special and cherished place for him. It is related that whenever the Prophet saw his own face in a mirror, he would say: "Praise be to God, who made my creation perfect and my face beautiful" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1365SH, 316).

The Prophet was very particular about the clothes he wore and would choose the most beautiful garments, which bore the symbols of nature. It is said that the green and white colours that the Prophet combined and wore had a distinctive and beautiful appearance to those who saw him (Ibn Hishām 1396SH, 3: 120).

Some assume that the Prophet of Islam was concerned only with spiritual forms of beauty, but this was not the case. He had both aspects of beauty in mind, to the extent that he regarded having a beautiful spouse as one of the pillars of worldly happiness (Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī 1414AH, 3: 555). Or, in another tradition from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), it is stated that God is beautiful and loves beauty (al-ʿAyyāshī n.d., 2: 14). There are many traditions of this kind, attesting to the Prophet's particular attention to art and beauty.

4. The Prophet of Islam and Calligraphy

Oleg Grabar, in his book *The Formation of Islamic Art*, holds that early Islamic art was largely rooted in the artistic traditions of Rome, early Byzantium, and Iran. He nevertheless makes an exception in two areas: in the field of crafts, a new form of pottery emerged, while in the field of ornamentation, Arabic script came to the fore in decoration and symbolism (Grabar 1396SH, 267).

The sacred nature of the divine word, the writing of the Holy Qur'an, and the Prophet's (PBUH) concern for preserving and disseminating the divine teachings had a profound influence on the manner of writing and the ornamentation of calligraphy. Nevertheless, Arabic calligraphy, although modest in prominence, did exist in the pre-Islamic period. Shayestehfar, in the preface to Annemarie Schimmel's book *Islamic Calligraphy*, maintains that Arabic script "was adapted from the Syriac or Nabataean alphabet, and thus its existence dates back to before Islam. However, at the beginning of Islam, it possessed little more than primitive and rudimentary features, and many letters appeared similar to one another. Since the letters were not marked for their

vowel sounds, the meaning of many words was determined from the context” (Schimmel 1381SH, 5).

The inscription found at Umm al-Jimāl, dating to the sixth century CE (512 CE), confirms the derivation of Arabic script from Nabataean script and demonstrates the clear development of the various forms of the Arabic script. Arabic script flourished in the fifth century CE in northeastern Arabia, particularly in the lands of al-Hira and al-Anbar, and by the end of the fifth century CE had spread from there to the Hijaz in western Arabia. It is well known that Bishr ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, with the assistance of Harb ibn Umayya, brought Arabic script from the Hijaz to Mecca, from where it subsequently spread to Medina. One of the calligraphers of Medina was Zayd ibn Thābit, who achieved considerable renown and became the most famous secretary and scribe of the Prophet (PBUH) (Safādī 1381SH, 9–10).

Although Islamic calligraphy was founded upon the scripts current in Arabia at the dawn of Islam, it is nevertheless rooted in Qur’anic teachings and in the sīra of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH), and it would not be an exaggeration to call it the oldest and earliest Islamic art. God, the Glorified, has sworn by the pen, and the Prophet of Islam likewise consistently emphasised the importance of beautiful writing, saying most eloquently: “al-khaṭṭ al-ḥasan yazīdu al-ḥaqqā wuḍūḥan” — that is, beautiful handwriting makes the truth more manifest (Mottaqī 1413AH, 4: 2939).

Moreover, in *Golestān-e Honar*, written by Qāḍī Aḥmad Qomi, it is reported from the noble Prophet: “man kataba bi-ḥusn al-khaṭṭ ‘Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm’ dakhala al-jannata bi-ghayri ḥisāb” — that is, whoever writes “Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm” beautifully will enter Paradise without reckoning (Bolkhārī Qahī 1396SH, 62). In the same book, Qāḍī Aḥmad relates another saying attributed to the Prophet: “al-khaṭṭ niṣfu ‘ilm” — meaning that whoever writes well is as though he has mastered half of all knowledge (Qāḍī 1383SH, 13). The matter of calligraphy and beautiful writing was so important to the Prophet that he encouraged his executor and successor, Imam Ali (PBUH), who was the first scribe of revelation, to write beautifully. Imam Ali himself became one of the most renowned calligraphers of his time (‘Alī Afandī 1926, 1: 13). Qāḍī Aḥmad likewise emphasises the encouragement given by the noble Prophet (PBUH) and Imam Ali (PBUH) towards beautiful handwriting in these verses:

“The purpose of Mortaza Ali in writing was not merely the word, the letter, and the dot,

Rather, it was the principles of purity and goodness that he intended by pointing to fine handwriting” (Qāḍī 1383SH, 7).

It is not surprising that most of the renowned calligraphers of the Islamic world, as well as the founders of this art and the chain of their masters, trace their lineage back to Imam Ali (Tawḥīdī 1910, 1: 245–247; Schimmel 1381SH, 13). Since Imam Ali himself is the “gate of knowledge” connected to the “city of knowledge”, namely the Prophet, it would not be an exaggeration to regard the Prophet as the originator of the chain of Islamic calligraphy, which passed from him to Ali, and from Ali to others (‘Avānī 1375SH, 299).

In addition to Imam Ali (PBUH), Khālīd ibn al- Hayyāj and ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān were among the other Companions of the Prophet who learned writing from Bishr ibn ‘Abd al-Malik and Harb ibn Umayya. ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān transcribed a valuable copy of the Qur’an during his caliphate (23–35 AH), while Khālīd ibn al-Hayyāj is regarded as the first person to have written the Qur’an in fine calligraphy in the early Islamic period. He wrote the sūrahs al-Shams and al-Ḍuḥā in gold script, in their entirety, on the qibla wall of the Prophet’s Mosque (Kārgar and Sārīkhānī 1390SH, 48).

Calligraphers, like divine wayfarers who advanced along a path of discipline and hardship through remembrance, prayers, ritual worship, and fasting, likewise advanced through practice, perseverance, and hardship along the path of learning this beautiful art, in order to give form to divine meanings on paper, parchment, or cloth. They willingly endured hardship so that they might give the most beautiful possible form—one befitting God and His Messenger—to what their Prophet had brought from God the Exalted (Rashnūd 1392SH, 76; Faḏā’ilī 1382SH, 39).

In addition to the Prophet’s concern and insistence on elevating the art of calligraphy so that the Qur’an might be written and preserved in the most beautiful form, the sīra and sayings of the Messenger of God have also had a profound influence on the art of calligraphy throughout the history of the Islamic world. A clear example of this is the beautiful art of ḥilya-writing. The word *ḥilya* literally means an ornament or adornment, and as a technical term it refers to a description of the physical appearance of the Prophet of Islam and, in a limited number of cases, of other prominent figures in Islam, such as the Shi‘a Imams. Ḥilya-writing is a type of illuminated calligraphic panel that generally relies on beautiful handwriting and, as an expression of love for the Prophet, uses calligraphy to record his characteristics and conduct, thereby becoming one of the most important branches of calligraphy in its own right. Owing to its sacredness status, this art was most widespread during the Ottoman Empire, and Iranians likewise became among the foremost artists of this style.

Ḥilya-writing essentially consisted of sentences describing the Prophet of Islam

(PBUH), portraying the outward features as well as the character and conduct of the noblest of God's creation. These descriptions are usually transmitted from Imam Ali (PBUH) and are regarded as the most authoritative ḥilyas (Behtāsh 1379SH, 38–42). The most famous and oldest of these ḥilyas is a hadith from 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭalib (PBUH) describing the Prophet. In this hadith, the Prophet's physical and moral qualities are described in eloquent, rhetorically rich, and beautiful language. The text of this ḥilya is a kind of self-portrait rendered in calligraphic form, describing the Prophet's outward features, from the colour of his eyes to the shape of his eyebrows and his manner of walking. The form of ḥilya-writing was as follows: a large vertical rectangle was drawn, within which a circle was placed, and around the four sides of the main circle, four smaller circles were positioned. Then, above and below the main circle, two large horizontal rectangles were drawn, and beneath the lower rectangle, a smaller rectangle was also drawn. Inside the upper rectangle, above the main circle, the phrase "Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm" was written. In the lower rectangle, below the main circle, a Qur'anic verse describing the Prophet of Islam was written—most commonly, the verse "We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds" or "And indeed, you are of a great moral character." Inside the central circle, a hadith from the Prophet was written, while in the four surrounding circles, the names of the Ahl al-Kisā' (the People of the Cloak) or, in some cases, the Rightly Guided Caliphs were written. In the smaller lower rectangle, if the hadith or narration in the central circle continued, the remainder was written in that section (Muḥammadi Pārsā 1396SH, 73–108).

5. The Prophet of Islam and Music

"And We certainly gave David bounty from Us: 'O mountains, echo [Our praises] with him, and the birds as well,' and We made iron pliable for him" — that is, We bestowed a great favour upon David and said to the mountains and the birds: "O mountains and O birds, join him in glorifying God," and We made iron pliable for him (Qur'an 34:10). There has long been, and continues to be, extensive debate over whether music is lawful or forbidden. Some jurists consider music and singing entirely forbidden, while others consider only music that, in their view, constitutes *ghinā'* to be forbidden (Najafī al-Jawāhirī 1413AH, 41: 47). Still others consider only music and singing associated with gatherings of sin and drinking to be forbidden. On the whole, the majority of jurists have opposed music and singing in their entirety. However, the view that regards only frivolous music, or music associated with sinful gatherings, as forbidden is a relatively recent position in jurisprudence, and appears to be more

consistent with the general teachings of the Qur'an and the sīra of the Messenger of Islam and the Imams. It is well known that God granted the Prophet Joseph beauty of face, the Prophet Job (PBUH) great patience, the Prophet Noah (PBUH) a long life, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) beauty and the seal of guidance, and the Prophet David (PBUH) a beautiful voice.

We must consider that if music and singing in every form were forbidden, then — God forbid — the Prophet David (PBUH) would have committed a forbidden act, and God would have attributed a forbidden deed to him, mistakenly counting it among the blessings bestowed upon him in verse 10 of Sūrah Sabā'. This is not the case; therefore, even *ghinā'*-based music cannot be regarded as forbidden simply by virtue of being *ghinā'*. To establish this claim, it is sufficient to examine the meaning of *ghinā'*. *Ghinā'* is a sustained sound that resonates in the throat and produces *ṭarab*. *Ṭarab* refers to a kind of release from oneself and lightness of spirit, whether arising from joy or sorrow. Many melodies, laments, and even many recitations of the Qur'an are themselves *ghinā'* (Ḥusaynī Zharfā 1395SH). Given this, are the recitations of 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ, al-Minshāwī, and other great reciters of the Qur'an — all of which, by the definition of *ghinā'*, qualify as *ghinā'* — therefore sinful and forbidden acts? It is unlikely that any jurist would find fault with these reciters or declare their voices forbidden. It must therefore be accepted that what is meant by forbidden music is not music based on *ghinā'*, and that music cannot be deemed forbidden merely because it is stirring or evokes emotions in the listener.

Before turning to the discussion of the Prophet and music, we considered it necessary to raise a few points concerning matters of jurisprudence. In the history of Islam and Shi'ism, there are relatively few hadiths from the Infallibles (peace be upon them) concerning music. These traditions number 37 in total. Sayyid Jawād al-ʿĀmilī, a scholar of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, provides a statistical account of these traditions concerning music in volume 12 of his book *Miftāḥ al-Karāma*, stating that among our traditions there are 25 traditions condemning music and 12 traditions praising it — a ratio of 25 to 12. On this matter, the views of Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī and Muḥaqqiq Sabzavārī merit consideration. These two scholars argue that all 25 traditions opposing music pertain solely to the music of that particular period and concern a specific type of music that was prevalent at the time (Ḥusaynī Zharfā 1395SH). Contrary to what is commonly assumed, the Prophet of Islam was not opposed to music and pleasant melody as such, as he himself stated: "Among the most beautiful of beauties are fine hair and a beautiful melody of the voice" (*min ajmal al-jamāl al-sha'r al-ḥasan wa naghmat al-ṣawt al-ḥasan*).

Or, in another tradition attributed to the Prophet: “Recite the Qur’an with the melodies and voices of the Arabs” (*iqra’ū al-Qur’āna bi-alḥāni al-‘Arab wa aṣwātihā*) (Kulayni 1407AH, 2: 614–5). That is to say, the Qur’an should be recited using the musical modes of the Arabs, and from that time to the present day, the Qur’an has continued to be recited in these musical modes. In addition to the recitation of the Qur’an in the musical modes and *maqāms* of the Arabs, as Islam spread, the Qur’an also came to be recited in the musical modes and *maqāms* of non-Arab peoples who had embraced Islam, and this practice continues to the present day. Had the Prophet regarded *ghinā’* in itself as forbidden, he would never have instructed people to recite the Qur’an in the musical modes of the Arabs, since this manner of recitation was itself a form of *ghinā’*. There are even traditions permitting singing that concern singing outside the context of Qur’anic recitation, such as the permissibility of singing in order to hasten the pace of camels (Majlisī ²1385SH, 16: 298). With regard to musical instruments as well, nothing in the Prophet’s *sīra* indicates their prohibition. Looking at history, we find that the features of Qur’anic recitation and the various aspects of *qirā’a* took shape in the early first century AH. During the lifetime of the noble Messenger (PBUH), terms such as *tartīl* and *tazyīn* came into use, which in later periods came to be referred to as *tajwīd* (Sarboland et al. 1397SH, 48). The term *tajwīd* literally means to make something good or beautiful, and in practice refers to the principles governing beautiful and correct recitation of the Qur’an.

With the expansion of the Islamic territories, the musical richness of Qur’anic recitation also increased. For instance, following the conquest of Egypt, Qur’anic recitation was influenced by ancient Egyptian music. It is interesting to note that the first person to recite the Qur’an in the Egyptian musical mode at the Grand Mosque of Egypt was one of the Egyptian Companions of the Prophet (PBUH), named ‘Ubayd ibn Mukhammar al-Ma’āqerī (Sarboland et al. 1397SH, 49). It should also be noted that, since the first century AH, Qur’anic recitation has been set within musical modes and *maqāms*, and this remains the case today. Over time, order and structure were given to the musical modes of Qur’anic recitation, which were influenced by the musical traditions current throughout the Islamic world. Today, the modes of reciting the Holy Qur’an comprise seven *maqāms*: (1) Bayātī, (2) Rāst, (3) Sīkāh (*Sīgāh*), (4) Hījāz, (5) Ṣabā, (6) Chāhārgāh (*Jahārkāh*), and (7) Nahāwand (*Nahvand*) (Mirzā Mahdī Tihrānī 1374SH, 1: 55). The importance of noting these points lies in showing the extent to which the Qur’an is intertwined with music, and that the Prophet neither disregarded

music nor could have declared it forbidden in its entirety.

In Shaykh Tusi's book *al-Amālī*, a tradition is related in which the Messenger of God, upon learning from certain individuals of someone's wedding, stated that a wedding should not be held in secret, and that smoke should rise and the sound of the *daf* (tambourine) should be heard, for the distinction between a wedding and fornication lies precisely in this public display and the playing of the *daf* (Ṭūsī 1414AH, 518). In another tradition, it is related that on the wedding night of Lady Zahra, the Messenger of God (PBUH) heard the sound of a *daf* and asked what it was. He was told that Asmā' was playing the *daf* to keep Lady Zahra cheerful, so that she would not feel the absence of a mother. The Messenger of God (PBUH) then prayed: "Just as Asmā' has made my daughter joyful, O God, make her joyful too," and instructed Asmā' not to say anything unseemly amid their rejoicing (Tamīmī al-Maghribī 1385AH, 2: 206). In yet another tradition, the playing of the *daf* on the wedding night of Imam Ali (PBUH) and Lady Fatima (peace be upon her) is mentioned. When people heard the news of the marriage of Imam Ali (PBUH) to Lady Fatima (peace be upon her), they went to offer their congratulations. At that time, the Messenger of God (PBUH) instructed his wives to play the *daf* for Lady Fatima (peace be upon her), which they did (al-Irbilī 1381AH, 1: 359). It is related that among the Jews and Christians of the Prophet's time, joy, celebration, singing, and dancing were forbidden. One day, the Prophet (PBUH) passed by a group of Muslims who were engaged in celebration, dancing, and singing. He told them to continue in this manner, so that the Jews and Christians would know that in our religion there is freedom (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd 1404AH, 6: 331).

The noble Prophet (PBUH) said: "All the prophets were sent with beautiful voices," and elsewhere: "I have been given a flute among the flutes of the House of David" (*ūtītu mizmāran min mazāmīri āli Dāwūd*) — meaning that I have been granted a melodious voice from among the melodious voices of the House of David. This statement conveys the idea that my voice, too, is beautiful like that of the Prophet David, and he himself said that people could not bear to hear the full beauty of his voice (Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī 1414AH, 12: 85; Fayz Kāshānī 1388SH, 3: 33).

6. Conclusion

Islamic art may be regarded as both a product of Islam and a product of Muslims and of the lands inhabited by Muslims, and there is no need for dispute over the naming or origin of the term. To be sure, from a theoretical standpoint and for a historical understanding of the subject, study and careful examination in this field are highly

important. What appears to be even more important, however, is the person who brought Islam to humankind on behalf of the Lord, for it is this person's relationship with art that shapes the relevant concepts and influences everything in this domain. It is therefore necessary to understand the conduct of the Prophet of Islam with regard to art and beauty. Art is undoubtedly among the characteristics and needs of human life, and religions, too, have not been indifferent to art. In Islam in particular, art has occupied a distinctive and important place. Islamic art, in its general sense, cannot be understood apart from the Prophetic *sīra*; the various arts must be distinguished from one another, and their relationship to the Prophet's conduct must be examined. By examining the two arts considered in this study — calligraphy and music — we find that both held particular importance within Islam and in the words of the noble Prophet of Islam (PBUH), and that both received his attention and regard. Among these, calligraphy held an exalted position in the Prophet's view, owing to the sacred status of the Word of God and the preservation of divine teachings. It may be claimed that following the emergence of Islam, the art of calligraphy underwent remarkable and dazzling development in the lands that embraced Islam, including Iran. Moreover, an important branch of Islamic calligraphy, namely *ḥilya*-writing, deals directly with descriptions of the Prophet's *sīra* and physical form and has itself become a beautiful gem set within the ring of Islamic calligraphy, directing the aesthetics of calligraphy towards new horizons.

Calligraphy may be called the principal art of Islam, since from the very beginning of Islam, the Prophet (PBUH) placed special emphasis on, and made numerous statements concerning, the virtue of calligraphy and fine handwriting. With music, however, the matter is somewhat different, since conflicting views exist on this subject. From the perspective of orthodox adherents of Islamic jurisprudence, there is indeed a view that music is forbidden and that the Prophet (PBUH) had no tolerance for it and was averse to it. Yet, when we examine the text of the Qur'an, the *sīra* of the Prophet, and his traditions concerning music, we find that he was not opposed to music; on various occasions, he spoke of its merit and, like the Prophet David, possessed a beautiful voice and took pleasure in beautiful sounds. By studying the beginnings of Islam and the *sīra* of the noble Messenger, we find that Islamic music has its roots in that period and that the Prophet never issued a ruling categorically forbidding music, having himself been an advocate of spiritual music. Regrettably, however, owing to the opposition of certain jurists to music throughout the history of Islam, this sacred art has faced significant opposition and has, at times, been pushed to the margins.

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