

Received 2015/28/02

Accepted 2015/22/06

Critiquing of Traditionalists point of view about beginning of Islamic Calligraphy

Seyyed Mohammad Hadi Mousavi Rokni*

Abstract

Traditionalism as a new brand thought having claimed thousands years thought base even in human history, try to analyze and study all civilization's appearance. This analyze is so wild that there are no appearances of human life out of it. One of these appearances that Traditionalists have emphasized is art. Art as one of basic appearances of and society's sense, culture and civilization was been attended by them. Among all of various kinds of Islamic Art, Islamic Calligraphy has a special place. It has had a deep linkage with other kind of Islamic Art such as Holy Quran Writing and other related arts, architecture and building decoration and in current time it has a strong connection with visual arts. So it is one of alive art in this kind of world art. Islamic Calligraphy could adjust itself with geographic and environmental conditions so well and developed as a main art in Islamic and even non Islamic countries. Traditionalists who studied Islamic Arts, have perused Islamic Calligraphy and among them Seyyed Hosein Nasr, Martin Lings and Titus Burckhardt have most portion about theorizing in Islamic Calligraphy. Among their theories and point of views about Islamic Calligraphy, their attitude about the beginning of it has been investigated in this article and tried to meanwhile our precise investigation, measure them with critical look to find out if we can embed traditional point of view about the beginning of Islamic Calligraphy in top rate of theories or not. Traditionalists generally have five theories about the beginning of Islamic Calligraphy. First source is "First Word". Ambiguity in explanation of this phrase is our first serious critique to this theory. In addition, this theory's contrast with rationality and even with their metaphysical bases must add to other critiques. Second source that Traditionalists try to theorize is Holy Quran. Even if this theory is correct and coincident with historical facts but it is just one of various causes that create Islamic Calligraphy. Arabs verbal tradition and lack of calligraphy's past among them as well as occurrence some non-sacred happening that they motivate Muslims to write Holy Quran and necessity of governmental and literary writings propel Muslims to create Islamic Calligraphy. So just by revelation of Holy Quran did not create an art such Islamic Calligraphy. Furthermore we must say that Traditionalists have confused between writing of Holy Quran and Holy Quran Calligraphy. Third source is Islam itself or in Traditionalists' interpretation totality of Islamic culture and civilization. Ambiguity in explanation of terms in their words just make their theory complex and possible interpretation. In addition if they try to offer it as Muslims' reaction to Holy Quran, we explain our critiques in second source. Forth source is Loh-e Mahfuz. Ambiguity in their word and terms is saw in this theory too. Furthermore we analyzed it rationally and found out that this theory about the beginning of Islamic Calligraphy is in serious and obvious contrast with Traditionalists' other theories in metaphysics and basic thoughts. Meanwhile they did not attend to peripheral, historical and geographical facts that they have important and deep influence on everything especially on art. Fifth source is Imam Ali (a.s.). This theory is one of few theories that there is disagreement among traditionalists. Seyyed Hosein Nasr believed that Imam Ali (a.s.) had made Islamic Calligraphy but Martin Lings thought that it is not possible because the Holy Qurans that they referred to Imam Ali (a.s.) never can write by him since their script refer to beginning or middle of Hijri third century. While Imam Ali (a.s.) had lived in first century and passed away in 40 of Hijri. In the end we concluded that among five sources that Traditionalists have theorized for the beginning of Islamic Calligraphy, four of them which include Allah or First Word, Islam, Loh-e Mahfuz and Imam Ali (a.s.) are in contrast with historical facts, rationality and logically necessities and even traditionalists' metaphysical basis. So we must reject them. Only Holy Quran as one of the five sources that they mentioned is acceptable. But it is necessary that we pay attention that Traditionalists have not perused all futures of this source and they ignore important and great part of historical facts. As a result we must say that Traditionalists' point of view about the beginning of Islamic Calligraphy is not reasonable and scientific.

Keywords

Traditionalists, Islamic Calligraphy, Cryptography, Holy Quran.

.....

*. M. A. in Philosophy of Art. Lamei University of Gorgan. Iran. mousavirokni@yahoo.com

Introduction

Calligraphy, as one of the main and lasting forms of Islamic art, has interested historians and aficionados of Islamic arts. Amongst, a group of intellectuals, who call themselves traditionalist and consider themselves heirs of a tradition extended through the history of human thinking, has also commented on this issue. They have different views about the causes of immersion of calligraphy among Muslims. In this paper, it was tried to analyze their views relying on reasoning, logic, rationality, as well as referring to the principles of traditionalists.

Traditionalists' lack of attention to historical and scientific development of calligraphy and even their outspoken view about their inattention to the history of art do not make them exempt from historical criticism. Traditionalism, to be able to form -according to its claim- on the basis of divine rationality, requires no internal contradiction as well as no contradiction between their claims and human reasoning. How is it possible to accept a claim despite its serious conflict with reasoning, and even consider it as the superior and right attitude in any issue?

Moreover, this paper will attempt to not rely solely on historical criticism, but in most cases to insert criticism to the sphere of internal and external conflicts of the traditionalist' view and to use historical facts in order to confirm the criticisms. Thus, it cannot be said that simply because of the traditionalists' lack of attention to the history of art, any word from them, without any close relation with outer reality and documentary, can be realized as truth.

Review of the Related Literature

Discussion on criticizing the views of traditionalists embodies a broad scope, from their intellectual foundation to their intellectual requirements. In this way, it can be referred to Mohammad Legenhausen's article entitled "Why I'm not Traditionalist (a critique of opinions and ideas of traditionalists). Legenhausen tried to consider all intellectual requirements of traditionalists and criticize traditionalism from this point of view. In the mentioned article, he attributes traditionalism as a school of thought which results in exclusiveness and narrowness of their views and analysis (Legenhausen, 2007: 14-17).

Mustafa Malekian in the book entitled "A Way to Freedom: essays on rationality and spirituality" criticized traditionalists and referred to the results obtained from traditional thinking while criticizing some parts of their metaphysical views; accordingly, he believed that the traditionalists cannot occupy any

stance in today's rationality (Malekian, 2002).

Despite the existing criticisms on the traditionalists' thought from this point of view, no research includes specific and detailed discussion about the traditionalists' debates. In the present article it was tried to focus on a specific subject of traditionalists' artistic attitudes and assess and criticize their view.

Calligraphy from the perspective of traditionalists Among the traditionalists, those who have studied the art of Islamic calligraphy are rare, and only Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Titus Burckhardt, Martin Lings can be mentioned that Nasr has the most contribution. Although reliable contents are few, in this paper, it was tried to assess their views about the origin of Islamic calligraphy according to their words, and study their claims on the basis of historical and intellectual criticism in order to verify their statements.

Using the traditionalists' foundation of thought is necessary to understand their views in the first step and to criticize them in the next. Since the scope of this article is only dedicated to a particular topic, so only the relevant principles will be reviewed quickly. But, it will also be tried to present and discuss the issue in the same way the traditionalists did.

Traditionalists believe that art of calligraphy, like all of sacred arts, in the beginning calligraphy, has divine origin. But, different views have been presented about its origin that are attributed to traditionalists; so that, even Seyyed Hossein Nasr introduces several origins for Islamic calligraphy in the book entitled "Art and Islamic Spirituality", though all of them return to the same truth.

The first point was introduced as the first origin of calligraphy. Seyyed Hossein Nasr claims that when God created the first point that is the origin of all creatures, this point became the origin of calligraphy.

"The first creative act of God was creating 'the first Word' -the origin of all sounds and Quran as an auditory world- and 'the first point' at the same time. This first point is considered as the origin of sacred calligraphy that at the same time is the very embodiment of "sacred word" (Nasr, 1996: 23).

In explaining the nature of the first point, Nasr tries to explain it by the use of metaphor and cipher and clarify it through the dot under the letter "b" in Persian. He believes that this is the beginning of all the rules of calligraphy and consequently the nature of Islamic architecture. The rule which is based on sacred science, not merely a mathematical and mundane science (Ibid: 24, 29-30).

Discussion and Analysis

In documents and epistles on calligraphy, there is no part in which the origin of calligraphy is discussed particularly. In many epistles, sacredness of calligraphy has been noted that originates from the mystical and spiritual attitude of the authors and atmosphere of the period in which the epistles were written. Considering God as the source and origin of calligraphy is such a matter that cannot be confirmed except by clear words of God. However, in some hadiths and verses, description of documentation is attributed to the realm of divine by irony but, as it is clear, these remarks are just through irony and metaphor in order to make it clear for the mind. Otherwise, it is clear that description of writing in terms of holding pen and writing words can never be assigned to God because hand is the first authoring tool that God, because of the simplicity of existence (as claimed by traditionalists), is without the body. Therefore, God does not have the first and foremost condition for writing.

Albeit, God has always been known as the creator of the universe, and based on the traditionalists' view, God is the Creator of all creatures and effects of the world; and calligraphy as one of the creatures in the universe is not exempt from this rule. But this attribution has an intellectual background that has casted shadow on the judgments and claims of the traditionalists and even the writers of the Epistles of calligraphy. Nevertheless, even with such an intellectual background God cannot be thought of as the direct creator of calligraphy because no rational justification for this claim has existed or been raised. When Nasr speaks of the first act of God, it means that God has multiple actions, while this is in contradiction to the mystical teachings and metaphysical views that consider act of God to be a single act. Indeed, Nasr has spoken contrary to his claims in his alleged metaphysics traditionalism. It may be argued that the use of the word "first" was merely due to tolerance and its exact meaning is not under Nasr's determination. In this case as well, the previous forms are presented otherwise; and that is how God can be considered as the direct Creator of Islamic calligraphy whereas such a subject is far from rationality and logic.

Moreover, when traditionalists speak about the origin of calligraphy, there is no doubt that it should be spoken of time. But, according to the statements of the traditionalists like Nasr, it can never be spoken of time about the divine action. Thus, it should be said that Nasr's statement about the divine action

as the origin of calligraphy is not a scientific view, or at least in accordance with the traditionalists' intellectual foundations.

In addition, many of the traditionalists avoid from clear and detailed explanation of their terms and phrases that are hidden in the guise of aesthetics. Examples of this can be found in Nasr's lack of explanation for "first point", the phrase which Nasr tries to explain it only through cipher and metaphor, though his explanation adds to this ambiguity. This problem is not only limited to the words of Nasr and his statements about calligraphy, but is a critique that can be seen on all body of traditionalism. However, since this paper only discusses the issue of the origin of calligraphy, Nasr's statement about the origin of calligraphy is only criticized.

Nasr attempts to explain the first point by comparing it to the dot below the letter "B" in Persian, but he does not explain its relation with the first point that emerged from the first act of God. He does not explain how the first act gave birth to the first point, but he only uses vague and poetic phrases that do not have any scientific meaning in the form of a disciplined thinking.

Nasr also believes that the first act gave birth to the first point that itself gave birth to "sacred word". Aside from the usual criticism about the ambiguity of the exact reference of the word 'sacred', the relationship between the sacred word and the first point is not clear, how the first point causes "the very embodiment" of the sacred word and what the meaning of embodiment exactly is. Frequent ambiguities as well as meaningless statement with good appearance make Nasr's statements not be accepted.

Another origin that Nasr cites is Qur'an. Nasr believes that divine revelation to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) was in aural form and Muslims gave it written form by calligraphy. Since the Quran is the word of God and his act, so its written form has the same sanctity (Nasr, 1996: 24).

Discussion and analysis

This statement is a claim that is in compliance with the historical truth because revelation and the necessity of writing, however, were one and only one of the important causes of formation of calligraphy in the Islamic lands (Kavusi, 2013: 3, 4; Sahragard, 2013: 19-20). Although the beginning, survival, and continuation of calligraphy were not necessarily writing books, but the for written correspondence and

even later the need for writing literary verses and prose have also played a key role in the creation, promotion, and development of calligraphy. Therefore, lack of comprehensive and detailed attention to the events involved in the origin of calligraphy is considered an appropriate critique to traditionalists. In this sense, Grabar's statement – a historian of Islamic art – can be regarded as a statement having scientific basis, he believes that “the written word creates a comprehensive literary culture in which the written word has become the main medium for thinking and understanding, and due to the sanctity of word among Muslims, calligraphy emerged. But the art of calligraphy art cannot be regarded a purely religious art because the main stimulus of formation of this art was book production and all procedures related to it as well” (Grabar, 1995: 76-77).

Applying a common cause and generalizing some parts of it and even its dominance on other causes are matters that are beyond the scientific scope. In explaining this cause, traditionalists tried hastily and emotionally to seize it for their thoughts' sake. In fact, regardless of other factors involved in the origin of calligraphy that are associated with writing, they considered the whole process of writing in inscribing the Qur'an. As if no other writing existed in the beginning of revelation.

Even this claim is in contradiction with the traditionalists' own admission to the oral culture of the Arabs. One of the things that the traditionalists and historians of Islamic art agree upon about at the origin of calligraphy is the lack of historical and artistic background for calligraphy among Arabs. Historians believe that Arabs lacked special visual arts and even they used writing when it was needed (Bloom, 2006: 7; Grabar, 2009: 13; Grabar, 1994: 214). Traditionalists, like historians, also believe that pre-Islamic Arabs had no background for the art of calligraphy and this art was fully emerged from the heart of Islam and after its vogue among Muslims.

Nasr believes that although the pre-Islamic Arabs put specific emphasis on oral literature, especially poetry, they had no interest in writing and inscribing and did not show any interest in calligraphy. He also believes that the ancient Persians had no interest in writing and art of calligraphy. In fact, after the arrival of Islam in Iran calligraphy prospered there, and many of the greatest calligraphers of all ages were trained and started to innovate and create valuable works (Nasr, 1996: 30). Though Nasr's claim about the absence of background for calligraphy in Iran is absurd because there are many existing examples

which show that Iranians had their independent orthography and their special art of calligraphy before the arrival of Islam in this country. Even by a superficial comparison it can be found that many modes of Islamic calligraphy emerged from Pahlavi's calligraphy.

Also Martin Lings, like many historians, believes that it was Quran that made writing and calligraphy necessary:

“First, it must be said that before the revelation of the Quran, Arabic script was not yet in the form of art. Yet, nothing was called calligraphy. At that time written script was used in conventional purposes. As we know, the Arabs liked poetry, but their poets did not like their poetry to be written. They preferred that their poetry be memorized by people of the next generation and they transfer it to the future generations. But the revelation of Quran made writing absolutely essential. Every syllable of this holy book must be carefully recorded. It was no longer possible simply to trust on human memory which is subject to error” (Lings, 2001: 29).

Moreover, Lings believes that the pre-Islamic Arabs were constantly at war and had rural and uncivilized life before the advent of Islam; accordingly, they assigned no place to calligraphy in their art collections. They only relied on oral literature and powerful memories of their youth and they were unwilling to write the poems (Lings, 2005: 13-14).

Now, it must be asked how it is possible that people who had no background of calligraphy and those whose culture has been based entirely on oral tradition, suddenly created methods of calligraphy by a revelation which itself was in aural mode. The methods which it takes centuries to be formed and thrived, those which are still created and go through a lot of changes without relying on the Quran.

An important point is that traditionalists did not pay attention to how Muslims decided to convert the aural form of the Quran into visual and written form; whereas, many years after the revelation, the writing of books were not started. What happened that suddenly Muslims decided to convert the miraculous aural form in to the text? Lack of traditionalists' attention to simple historical events explains their unrealistic view on the origin of calligraphy.

On the other hand, it should be asked that why these changes has lasted all these years and still continue? The important point in this issue is that the traditionalists, like Nasr, have conflated the writing of Quran and its beautiful writing. In fact, early Qur'ans were written in a simple orthography

known as Hejazi. Accordingly, Muslims inclination to convert the Quran's aural form to written form cannot be interpreted as the origin of calligraphy, because this claimed conversion occurred somehow before the rise of calligraphy. Moreover, given the variety of different orthographies with which Qur'an was written, why Muslims never agreed on a single orthography in writing Quran, and as Nasr said they realized this visual miracle differently in every age! With regard to the history, it was after the death or martyrdom of those who memorized the Quran that many Muslims felt the risk of loss of divine verses and then began to think about writing them. Thus, the mere revelation cannot be regarded as the cause for the rise of calligraphy; rather a set of causes should be taken into account.

The next origin is Islam. It appears that Nasr's meaning of Islam is a totality of Islamic traditional culture and civilization. However, in this study it is tried to quote directly from the traditionalists so that no to rely on our possible interpretations as the basis of judgment. Nasr believes that Islam is the origin of Islamic calligraphy. "While calligraphic text of Quran comes from Islam, and it also represents the response of Muslim nations' spirit to the message of God" (Nasr, 1996: 24). As is clear Nasr considers calligraphy as the response of Islamic civilization (the spirit of Muslim nations) to revelation. As if when Muslims found the revelation having miraculous aural aspect, they tried their bests and devoted themselves to writing make the written aspect of such revelation miraculous. Here the meaning of pious man submitted to the will of God becomes clear. Believer who is submitted to the will of God like a pen in hand and God writes his words and verses by his hand and creates a written form of Quran that is a sign of a unique divine art. In fact, it was God who took the pen and wrote his speech through a divine handwriting, as God says: "So you did not slay them, but it was Allah who slew them, and you did not smite when you smote (the enemy), but it was Allah who smote, and that he might confer upon the believers a good gift from himself; surely Allah is hearing, knowing" (Al-Anfal: 17).

Discussion and Analysis

In explaining his meaning of Islam, Nasr regards Islamic civilization as his interpretation of the word Islam. Though, the traditionalists' interpretation of Islamic civilization is traditional culture that forms based on divine commands and following

these commands. But, Nasr did not pay attention to developments and changes and tools of these developments that has changed Islamic civilization. Nasr does not deny the developments of calligraphy, but he believes that in all these developments, the essence of calligraphy is constant (Nasr, 1996: 31). Again, here Nasr's meaning and purpose of essence of calligraphy Nasr is unclear. If Nasr's purpose of essence of calligraphy is the writing modes of the different types of handwritings, the essence has never been constant and has always changed throughout the history is still crossing the path of evolution. By essence of calligraphy, if he means the type of handwriting, it should be said that handwritings have always been generating, expiring, or changing along the history, so the type of handwriting cannot be considered as the essence of calligraphy. The ambiguity of this term, as many other statements of traditionalists, is a serious criticism on them.

Nasr interprets calligraphy as "response of spirit of the Islamic nations", he does not give any clear explanation about what exactly the spirit of Islamic nations is, in reaction to which issue this response has led to the creation of the Calligraphy, and what stimulated the spirit of Islamic nations to give such response. All these uncertainties should also be included in all ambiguities of traditionalists' former statements. In addition, it seems that Nasr's interpretation mostly refers to the response of Muslims to the revelation. The issue that was reviewed earlier showed clearly that traditionalists' interpretation is incomplete, emotional, and away from wisdom.

Another factor that traditionalists, like Seyyed Hossein Nasr, mention is the preserved book. In mystical and religious literature the preserved book is attributed to a level of the truth of the world in which God has written the truth of all the creatures in the world and they move based on what is written in the preserved book. In fact, it can be interpreted as the detailed knowledge of God.

Nasr believes that "the the preserved book contains samples of forms and formats of this world, especially the origin of the traditional calligraphy of the Qur'an that all of its methods have formed based on the nature of biblical revelation and reflect it" (Nasr, 1996: 24-29).

Discussion and Analysis

Concerning the origin of the preserved book, Nasr mentions "nature of the Quran" but never reveals

his meaning by saying the nature of God's word. Nasr also believes that the preserved book includes methods of calligraphy but it should be said that why these methods are so numerous and why some of these methods have been forgotten even within traditional Islamic civilization and are not present now or are out of date. While in the traditional civilization, what is coming out of the preserved book must not be forgotten. Because according to his claim traditionalists' deep bond between tradition and origin of calligraphy that is reserved tables, not the effects Decrees, in the heart of the traditional civilization wiped out. Because according to the traditionalists' claim, the effects of the preserved book, that is the tight link between tradition and the origin of calligraphy, should not be lost at the heart of the traditional civilization. Because loss of such effects is an obvious indicator of the current modern era but not the golden traditional age! This apparent contradiction in the statements of traditionalists shows that they neither had a glance at the evolution of calligraphy nor thought about the consequences of this view.

On the other hand, how is that in some geographical areas some hand-writings have changed or prospered according to the culture of that region, and in some other regions hand-writings did not change? Are the methods of the preserved book depended on geographical determinism? Since traditional civilization emerged out of Divine Revelation and the preserved book and the revelation is the same for all people of the same land, so why should some of the methods be out-dated in some geographic areas and some get reputation and reach their ultimate perfection?

On the other hand, why there is such diversity and variety in the methods of calligraphy? How many methods of calligraphy are there in the preserved book that such high number of Islamic calligraphy hand-writings was created, especially at the heart of the traditional Islamic civilization? What is the nature of divine revelation that such multiple methods have originated from it?

Even it should also be considered that why these methods have gradually been invented? Above all, why so many calligraphers that have extracted some of the hand-writings from other hand-writings attributed them directly to themselves and even admitted that these hand-writings are not from the preserved book, rather they created them through delicate rotations changes of the pen in some other hand-writings?

Another important point is that why we know some of these hand-writings better than others and prefer them? What is the reason for this aesthetic view and from where are the standard of such preference achieved? Is it possible that what comes from the preserved book contains aesthetic rating? Since all these hand-writings have their beauty from the divine nature, only one of them cannot be considered better solely because of better elegance or longer stretch of the pen. Because all these features suggest earthy and physical characteristics suggest that are not heavenly. All these unanswered questions face traditionalists who consider the preserved book as the origin of calligraphy.

Another reason for the rise of calligraphy, that many traditionalists emphasize on, and one of the controversial points about calligraphy is that it is attributed to Imam Ali (PBUH). In many mystical texts and books that have been written about calligraphy with religious and mystical approach, Imam Ali (PBUH) is known as the origin of calligraphy and the primary creator of it. But it is important that such a claim, even among traditionalists, is of disputation and doubt.

Discussion and Analysis

Nasr strongly believes that Imam Ali (PBUH) created "the oldest and most important" style of calligraphy (Nasr, 1996: 28). Although the source of Nasr is the report that Ghazi Ahmed gives by seeing the Qurans written by Imam Ali (PBUH) (Nasr, 1996: 39), Martin Lings, who is a well-know contemporary traditionalist, is against the claim. He believes that the handwriting, with which the Quran attributed to Imam Ali (AS) was written, was not created until the beginning or middle of the third century, and the first written version of the revelation was written down by a very basic handwriting which was common in Hijaz. Moreover, aesthetics in handwritings entered into Arabic handwritings many years after the revelation and Islamic calligraphy went through a long time to evolve (Lings, 2001: 29,30). Albeit, Lings then points out that perhaps this assignment is because Imam Ali (PBUH) was the spiritual origins and the inspiration of calligraphy. Because he was the first one who started writing Quran completely after the death of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him and his progeny).

"It is likely that Imam Ali (PBUH) "wrote" this Qur'an for a special purpose because the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "Anna Madinat al-Alam va Ali Baboha" and it can be said that the

inspiration of this art in general came from this “Bab”, it means that expressing the need to have something for eye as what we have for as ear” (Lings, 2001: 30). Although Nasr’s claim has been violated by other traditionalists such as Lings, this statement of Lings is also questionable. Because, many Muslims also wrote Quran sporadically before Imam Ali (PBUH) or at least contemporary to him. Why should not we consider them as the source of spiritual calligraphy? On the other hand, Francois Deroche also believes that these attributions are due to the ignorance of Muslims in following centuries:

“For example, many of the Qurans that are attributed to the third century with partial certainty, contain some statements at the end of them that are mistakenly attributed to Imam Ali (PBUH) and Osman, the third caliph of Rashedin’s Caliphs. The reason for this issue is that these inscriptions seemed so old for the Muslims of the following centuries that they were convinced that such inscriptions may only be written in the first century” (Deroche, 2000: 11).

Moreover, Lings’ statement is only a claim and he presents no evidence to prove it. It seems that he only says them by emotions, the emotions that have no place in scientific criticism.

In justification of the traditionalists’ statement and their dispersion about the origin of the calligraphy, perhaps it may be said that we can refer all causes to the actual truth of the universe, God. But the fundamental question is how the divine nature can be the origin of Islamic calligraphy without intermediaries? His divine nature that based on the definition of traditionalists should definitely through the triple worlds intervene in the material world, can never directly create modes of calligraphy. Even if we accept that God created this through metaphysical issues, then we can claim that any hand-writing whether in the past or in the future is from God and is derived from the nature of God.

Even this point can be employed to traditionalists’

bigger claim that if God is the source of all arts of the world, why a lot of modern arts cannot be regarded as derived from the nature of God? Because then whatever called art must include some form of divine beauty. If the traditionalists claim that modern art does not contain divine grace, we will ask what is the reason of making difference between the arts and putting value on them? How can it be claimed that one art has come from the Divine nature and another is the inauspicious creation of modern ignorant world? Is it unlike that despite the traditionalists’ claim about the timelessness and placelessness of the nature of God and His eternal effects, they limited His beauty effects in time and place, and prevented the manifestation of the divine nature in the present time! The critique that traditionalists impose on the body of the modern art is in fact a serious critique on their own metaphysical approach to art and beauty!

Discussion

As mentioned in the literature, no specific criticism has been written in the field of artistic thinking of traditionalists. Focusing on one of the main types of Islamic art namely calligraphy, the present article tried to review, discuss, and negotiate the traditionalists’ view about the origin of this art. According to what was discussed in previous sections, it became apparent that the traditionalists’ views about the origin of Islamic calligraphy art had no scientific and historical basis. In line with other criticisms on the views of traditionalists, it should also be noted that in this particular case, the traditionalists failed to provide any legitimate statement. Therefore, this article should also be considered in line with the existing criticisms on traditionalism. Despite most of the criticisms that focused on more general and basic issues of traditionalism, the present article should be considered as a critique of one of the main approaches of traditionalists to the Islamic calligraphy art.

Conclusion

Based on what was discussed, two main conclusions can be derived:

1. Out of the five origins that traditionalists mentioned for Islamic calligraphy art, four origins, namely God, Islam, preserved book, and Imam Ali (PBUH) do not comply with the historical facts, rational requirements, or even the traditionalists’ metaphysical intellectual foundation, thus they are not reliable.
2. Quran is one of the five origins that traditionalists cited for the art of Islamic calligraphy which is their only notable claim. But in this case, the traditionalists did not consider all aspects of the issue and ignored an important part of the historical facts. They merely try to prove their claim through the emotional and unscientific statements which itself results in a claim that lacks scientific basis.

References list

- Bloom, J. et al. (2009). *Expression of Notion in Islamic Art*. Translated to Persian by Gheitasi, A. Tehran: Sureh Mehr.
- Deroche, F. (2000). *The Abbasid Tradition: Qur’ans of the 8th to the 10th Centuries. A.D.*, The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art. Translated to Persian by Behtash, P. Tehran: Karang.
- Grabar, O. (1994). Mosque as a Religious Art in Islam. Translated to Persian by Mohammad Saiid Hanaii Kashani. *Journal of Honar*, (26): 43-78.
- Grabar, O. (1995). *Islam and Visual Arts*. Translated to Persian by Musavinia, S. R. *Journal of Honar*. (28): 211-233.
- Grabar, O. (2009). Art and Culture in Islamic Countries. In: *Memari- ye Eslami [Islamic Architecture]*. Translated to Persian by Gheitasi, A. Tehran: Sureh Mehr.
- Kavusi, V. (2013). *Pishineh [The Past]*. In: *Khosnevisi*. Tehran: Ketab- e Marjaa.
- Legenhausen, M. (2007). Why I am not a Traditionalists. *Journal of Kheradnameh Hamshahri*. (15): 14-17.
- Lings, M. (2001). *Honar Qura’ni- ye Khoshnevisi va Tazhib [Quran Calligraphy and Illumination]*. Raz va Ramz- e Honar- e Dini [Religious Art’s Mystery and Code]. Translated and Edited to Persian by Firuzan, M. Tehran: Soroush.
- Lings, M. (2005). *Splendours of Qur’an Calligraphy and Illumination*. Vaduz: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation.
- Malekian, M. (2002). *Rahi be Rahaii: Jastarhaii dar Zamineh Aghlaniat va Maanaviat [A Way to Emancipation: Queries about Rationality and Spirituality]*. Tehran: Negah- e Moaser.
- Nasr, S. H. (1996). *Art and Islamic Spirituality*. Translated to Persian by Ghasemian, R. Tehran: Daftar- e Motaleat- e Dini.
- Sahragard, M. (2013). *Ketabat- e Quran (Quran’s Writing)*. In: *Khoshnevisi*. Tehran: Ketab- e Marjaa.

