



The Names of the Prophet Muhammad  
(peace be upon him and his Household)  
in the Poetry of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa



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the Poetry of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa  
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**Abstract**

Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings be upon our master Muhammad and upon his pure and immaculate Household.

This study examines one aspect of the poetic corpus of the Christian poet Saeed Jirjis al-Issa (1917–1991), namely the aspect in which his poetry reflects an influence of Islam—its Qur’an, its Messenger (peace be upon him and his Household), and the Arab culture that emerged under the auspices of the true Islamic faith. These influences engaged the poet’s consciousness and motivated him to write on their basis. Within this context emerge the names of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) in his poetry.

The poems of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa addressed in this study fall into two main categories. The first consists of texts imbued with an Islamic spirit, which subtly evoke the image of the Greatest Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) and implicitly allude to his blessed names. The second includes texts explicitly marked as poems of Prophetic praise, numbering three poems in total.

This study forms part of a broader research project concerned with examining the image of the Greatest Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) in modern Arab Christian poetry.

## The Prophetic Names

One of the most prominent manifestations of Prophetic presence in the poetry of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa is his invocation of the names of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household). These Prophetic names stimulate acts of reception by recalling two central issues. The first is the image of the Prophet as it has been anchored in collective memory. We argue that there exists a correspondence between the name and the image, on the basis that the name activates the imaginative capacity of the recipient and thus creates a harmony between the name and the named. This rests on the premise that there is an intrinsic relationship between a personality and its names, and a clear cohesion between an entity and the names by which it is called<sup>1</sup>, especially when these names carry religious significance.<sup>2</sup>

The second issue activated in the recipient's memory upon recalling the names of the Noble Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) is the presence of a referential operation accompanying the use of each name. This referential dimension may derive from the Qur'anic text, or from other sources. In both cases, the name appears laden with referential meanings that enhance its semantic weight and intensify its impact on the receiving subject.

### 1. Ahmad

Among the foremost names employed by Saeed Jirjis al-Issa, and the most frequently cited among the blessed Prophetic names, is the name Ahmad. This noble name does not merely precede others alphabetically, but also surpasses them in frequency of poetic invocation. Its presence in the poet's work exceeds that of other names of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household).

This blessed name has a Qur'anic reference and appears once in the Holy Qur'an as a prophecy conveyed by the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), foretelling the mis-

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1 Khadijah Talib Karim Al-Shibr, "Proper Names in Abbasid Poetry up to the End of the Fourth Hijri Century: A Study in the Light of Cultural Criticism" (University of Al-Qadisiyah., n.d.), p. 57.

2 Al-Shibr, p. 95.

sion of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household), as stated in the verse:

“And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel, indeed I am the Messenger of God to you, confirming what came before me of the Torah, and giving glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me whose name is Ahmad.” (Qur’an, Al-Saff: 6)

Accordingly, the name Ahmad bears a clear connection to the Christian religious spirit, as it is—according to the Qur’an—Christian in origin. Hence, this name enjoys a notable presence in Christian poetry, particularly in the poetry of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa, the Christian poet who was captivated by the noble Prophetic figure and drawn to the name Ahmad. He says<sup>3</sup>:

Say: the Seal of the pure Messengers, their Ahmad,  
Whom you have exalted among mankind beyond all resemblance.

Here, Ahmad is annexed to the “pure messengers,” an annexation that grants it semantic richness in two directions. First, it affirms that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) is the heir and continuation of prophethood, connected to every divine message, completing and perfecting it. Second, the annexed form “their Ahmad” implies a superlative structure, suggesting that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) possesses virtues unmatched by any other prophet or messenger.

This annexation enriches the Prophetic name with additional semantic layers and renders its invocation in al-Issa’s poetic discourse a form of identification by the Christian poetic self with the Prophet of Islam. Thus, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) is perceived as an echo of both Christian and Islamic visions.

In another instance, Ahmad appears as an annexed form in the poet’s words<sup>4</sup>:

Glory be to your Lord when He took His Ahmad by night

<sup>3</sup> Majid Al-Hakawati, *Arab Christian Poets and Islam: Poetic Texts*, 2nd editio (Kuwait: Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Foundation for Poetic Creativity, 2014), p. 207.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Hakawati, p. 208.

From God's mosque on one of His nights.

In this verse, Ahmad acquires a unique distinction, as it is annexed to the pronoun referring to the Divine Essence. The pronoun "His" refers to God Almighty, rendering Ahmad here a divinely affiliated being in the Christian poet's perception.

This annexation echoes a Qur'anic structure found in the verse:

"Glory be to Him who took His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque." (Qur'an, Al-Isra': 1)

Such an annexation reflects the Christian poet's faith-based vision of the Messenger (peace be upon him and his Household), a vision grounded in the Qur'an and consciously connected to it.

The same pattern of annexation appears elsewhere when Ahmad is linked to the messengers, reinforcing a religious dimension that completes the contours of the Prophet's personality within the Christian vision preserved in modern Arab Christian poetic discourse, particularly in the poetry of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa. This vision approaches the Greatest Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) through two dimensions: his human perfections and his religious fulfillment.

Ahmad also appears annexed to temporal elements, such as the day of birth, as in<sup>5</sup>:

The noble rhymes came to you on Ahmad's day,  
Graceful, whereas before they wandered astray.

The poet titles this poem "On the Birth of the Arab Messenger."<sup>6</sup> Ahmad is also annexed to Prophetic light, as in<sup>7</sup>:

A birth wherein guidance appeared,  
And the light of Ahmad shone forth.

This verse functions as both the opening and the conclusion<sup>8</sup> of the poem titled "The Noble Birth,"<sup>9</sup> indicating the poet's preference for invoking the name Ahmad in

5 Al-Hakawati, p. 215.

6 Al-Hakawati, p. 215.

7 Al-Hakawati, p. 218.

8 Al-Hakawati, p. 219.

9 Al-Hakawati, p. 218.

annexed constructions, perhaps due to the stylistic energy such structures offer.

By contrast, Ahmad also appears without annexation, as in<sup>10</sup>:

Ask the ages that have swiftly passed:

Did any but Ahmad revive history?

As night he was, and Islam his star,

As tangled woods, and the Qur'an his shield.

Here, Ahmad appears unqualified, absolute in presence, unrestricted by time or place—Ahmad alone, sufficient in himself.

Another mode of invocation places Ahmad alongside Jesus (peace be upon him), as in<sup>11</sup>:

Jesus and Ahmad clasped hands in the heavens,

And on earth, white hands clasped in response.

This conjunction does not merely reflect historical sequencing, but rather an ideological leveling of the two prophets and, by extension, their religions. It signals a broad, inclusive religious vision grounded in tolerance and expansive understanding.

## 2. Al-Amin (the Trustworthy) and Al-Hurr (the Free)

Among the blessed Prophetic names invoked by the poet are Al-Amin and Al-Hurr, which appear together in a single verse<sup>12</sup>:

On feast day, foreheads bowed in dust

For the Trustworthy, the Free, Taha.

The observation is that these two names are followed by a third name among the names of the Beloved, the Chosen One (peace be upon him and his Household), namely Taha. However, this study focuses on al-Amin (the Trustworthy) and al-Hurr (the Free) for two reasons. The first is that they appear together in the same poetic line. The second is methodological, as this study observes alphabetical sequencing when presenting the names of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household).

<sup>10</sup> Al-Hakawati, p. 208.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Hakawati, p. 221.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Hakawati, p. 218.

Since these two names are consecutive alphabetically, meaning that one follows the other, they are discussed together, while discussion of Taha is deferred to its appropriate place later in this study.

These two names are examined here together due to their joint occurrence and in accordance with the alphabetical methodology of this study. Their reference is not directly Qur'anic. The Quraysh called the Prophet Muhammad "the truthful, the trustworthy" before prophethood<sup>13</sup>, while his freedom is inferred from his noble character and elevated moral stature.

Although the attribute "trustworthy" appears as a description of other prophets in the Qur'an—"Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy messenger" (Qur'an, Al-Shu'ara': 143)—what applies to the prophets collectively applies most fully and perfectly to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household), who embodies its highest and most complete manifestation across all ages.

### **3) Al-Khatam (the Seal)**

Among the Prophetic names invoked in the poetry of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa is the name al-Khatam (the Seal). This blessed Prophetic name appears only once in the Holy Qur'an, in God's saying:

"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets; and God is Knowing of all things." (Al-Ahzab: 40)

This indicates that this blessed name parallels Ahmad in that it occurs only once in the Qur'an. However, the two noble names are not parallel in the poetry of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa, because Ahmad enjoys a more substantial presence than al-Khatam. Perhaps this superiority in presence for Ahmad required greater stylistic variety than Khatam, which appears fewer times and therefore exhibits less variety in its stylistic structures. Khatam appears only once, in an annexed construction, in the poet's line<sup>14</sup>:

Say: the Seal of the pure Messengers, their Ahmad,

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13 Ibn Ishaq Muhammad Al-Muttalibi, *Kitab Al-Siyar Wa Al-Maghazi*, ed. Suhayl Zakkar (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1972), p. 78.

14 Al-Hakawati, *Arab Christian Poets and Islam: Poetic Texts*, p. 207.

You have exalted them among mankind beyond all resemblance.

There is an evident affinity between Ahmad and Khatam in this verse. It may also reveal the depth of the poet's assimilation of Islamic religious concepts. The idea of the Messenger's "finality" (peace be upon him and his Household) is a doctrine, a rank, and a mission; one cannot assert it without penetrating the Islamic theory of prophethood. Such an idea does not enter poetic discourse unless the poetic self has internalized the Prophet's attributes, religiously and humanly, and unless it possesses a reference frame which, although Christian, accepts Islam and expands its vision of it to the extent that the poem becomes grounded in those meanings after the poet has absorbed Islamic propositions and made them a sustaining essence that nourishes his text.





#### 4) Al-Rasul (the Messenger)

Reference has already been made to God's saying: "...and bringing good tidings of a Messenger to come after me whose name is Ahmad" (Al-Saff: 6). This suggests that the name al-Rasul (the Messenger), as a designation for Muhammad, has become common among Christians. The name al-Rasul appears in the poetry of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa in two forms.

The first is that it comes with the definite article al-, followed by an adjective. This occurs once, as the title of one of the poet's texts, namely: "On the Birth of the Arab Messenger."<sup>15</sup> If titling is considered part of poetic discourse<sup>16</sup>, then it is methodologically valid for this study to treat this title as a form of crafting and deploying blessed Prophetic names within the poet's corpus. Opening a poetic text with the Prophet's name signals what the poet expects from the strong affective capacity of the name used at the outset. It also suggests that the poetic self draws for the reader an interpretive horizon by which reception proceeds, until the reader reaches the intended interaction with the message the poet wished to store within his text, clothed in Prophetic names.

As for the body of the poem previously mentioned ("On the Birth of the Arab Messenger"), the word rasul occurs twice. In both instances it appears in an annexed form and as an address. The poet says<sup>17</sup>:

Come to her aid—Messenger of God—against her protectors,  
And lower for her, from her land, the banner of the foe.

Here rasul is annexed to the Divine Essence, represented by the name of God, Glorified and Exalted. It also appears as a vocative with an omitted particle of address, which indicates the closeness of the Messenger (peace be upon him and his Household) to the poet—closeness of judgement and spiritual intimacy. Moreover, the

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15 Al-Hakawati, p. 215.

16 Ahmad Karim Bilal, *The Title and the Structure of the Poem in Contemporary Arabic Poetry*, 1st editio (Egypt: Dar al-Nabigha, 2018), p. 19.

17 Al-Hakawati, *Arab Christian Poets and Islam: Poetic Texts*, p. 217.

phrase “Messenger of God” is a Qur’anic construction, as in God’s saying:

“Muhammad is the Messenger of God, and those with him are harsh against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves...” (Al-Fath: 29)

The word *rasul* also occurs in the poet’s saying<sup>18</sup>:

O Messenger of goodness among us,  
Send forth the buried glory.

Here *rasul* is defined by annexation and preceded by the vocative particle *ya*, and the Messenger is addressed as one who is near—meaning that he is positioned as a close, hearing and seeing presence with the poet. He is paired with goodness; and in this intimacy, and in this association with goodness, Saeed Jirjis al-Issa draws a dignified image of the Greatest Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household). The annexation—making the Messenger the annexed term and goodness the term annexed to—suggests the poet’s view that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) is absolute goodness, wholly devoted to goodness. This vision carries a clear celebration of the elevated Prophetic rank from a Christian poet.

### **5) Sayf Allah (the Sword of God)**

The noble Prophetic names vary: some are names of beauty, such as Ahmad and other names that will appear in this study; and some are names of majesty, pointing to strength and power. This is on the basis that Islam, and thus the Prophetic mission, has two dimensions: one—predominant—concerned with gentle, invitational, message-oriented forces; and another—less frequent—relying on force as a means of defending the integrity of the faith and protecting its domain.

Among the names belonging to the second category is Sayf Allah (the Sword of God). It is among the names that rarely appear as a designation for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) in the poetry of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa; it is invoked only once, in the poet’s lines<sup>19</sup>:

A sword of truth—on the desert he unsheathed it—

<sup>18</sup> Al-Hakawati, p. 218.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Hakawati, p. 208.

God's hand; keen, from His sharp blades.

I still glimpse from it, in the Hijaz, a radiance

That covers the Hijaz and flows through its valleys.

This name appears in an annexed construction. Perhaps this echoes Ka'b ibn Zuhayr's description of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) when he said<sup>20</sup>:

Truly the Messenger is a sword by which one seeks light,

An Indian blade, from God's swords, drawn forth.

Or perhaps the nominal phrase "Sword of God," with its exact wording—or with slight modification—has become a ready-made poetic formula, easily repeated with minimal variation or the addition of an adjective, as in: "keen, from His sharp blades."

In Saeed Jirjis al-Issa's two lines, the image of the sword blends with the Prophet's radiance, as if the poet distances himself from militant names and favors luminous, radiant imagery. In my view, employing a luminous name is likely an effect of the heritage of the famous Prophetic praise tradition—whether in Ka'b ibn Zuhayr's line cited above, or in the well-known text of al-Busiri, such as<sup>21</sup>:

How can your elevation be attained by the prophets?

O heaven—no heaven has ever matched it...

In al-Issa's two lines there is a close association between the sword and the Prophet's light. Yet there is only a brief, passing reference to the sword, followed by a decisive transition to meanings and images that move the poet away from the sword as a poetic subject. This suggests that the poet favored images of peace over others—either under the influence of Islam's tolerant spirit, or the Prophetic praise tradition indicated above, or due to reliance on a Christian cultural frame in which peace is a lofty prophetic value.

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20 Kaab ibn Zuhayr, *Diwan Kaab Ibn Zuhayr*, ed. Mufid Qumayha (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Dar al-Shawaf for Printing and Publishing, n.d.), p. 115.

21 Sharaf al-Din Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn Said Al-Busiri, *Diwan Al-Busiri*, ed. Muhammad Sayyid Kaylani, 1st editio (Egypt: Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi Printing and Publishing Company, 1955), p. 50.

## 6) Al-Tuhr (Purity)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) has been described as purity and guidance. Among the names of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) celebrated by Saeed Jirjis al-Issa are those that reflect the Messenger's purity and guidance. Accordingly, he titled one of his texts "The Birth of Purity and Guidance,"<sup>22</sup> in which he says<sup>23</sup>:

Your compassion—this is the birth of purity and guidance;

Is there in the remembrance a refuge for one whose grip has slipped?

Three points may be observed in this poetic line. First, the Prophetic name purity appears coupled with guidance, which is typical of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa, who may combine more than one Prophetic name within a single verse. Second, the poet uses the Prophetic name purity as part of the title of the poem ("The Birth of Purity and Guidance"), making the title an entry point for marking the Prophet's image (peace be upon him and his Household). Third, he repeats the name within the body of the verse, which signals his profound reverence for the Greatest Messenger and confirms that he is characterized by purity and guidance—since repetition is among the markers of emphasis.

These three elements work together to establish the strong presence of this blessed Prophetic name and its poetic manifestation within dynamics of influence and reception. The poet invokes purity within a Prophetic birth poem, thereby pointing to the purity of the birth itself, to the extent that the name purity merges with the event of birth, producing a unified, harmonious description: the Prophet's birth as the birth of purity and guidance.

## 7) Al-Qurashi (the Qurashi)

The measure of Arab personality is not realized solely through individuality, but also through tribal affiliation. For this reason, the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) was described as the son of Quraysh. In this context, the poet shifts from

<sup>22</sup> Al-Hakawati, *Arab Christian Poets and Islam: Poetic Texts*, p. 220.

<sup>23</sup> Al-Hakawati, p. 220.

marking the self as an individual element to marking it as a collective identity, where the individual remains known even when presented within a group. He says<sup>24</sup>:

Yesterday it was the cry of the son of Quraysh,  
And today it is the roar of the son of Saud.

The image of the Prophet as al-Qurashi in this verse functions as a preparatory image for a praise-oriented image; it is therefore not invoked for its own sake, as is the case in most instances of blessed Prophetic names. Rather, the invocation of this Prophetic name within a praise poem places it within a comparative frame between what is Prophetic and what is not. This reduces part of the spiritual radiance and reserve of the Prophetic name, because “son of Quraysh” is introduced in order to pave the way for “son of Saud.” Yet what may excuse the poet is that Arabic praise poetry—through its long history—has often viewed the praised figure as an extension of the Greatest Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household), thereby endorsing the praised subject and elevating his standing.

### **8) Al-Karim (the Generous)**

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) was generous in lineage, spirit, and material giving; therefore, al-Karim is a Prophetic name with a Qur’anic reference, derived from God’s saying: “Indeed, it is the word of a noble messenger.” (Al-Takwir: 19). This name appears once in the poetry of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa, in the poet’s line<sup>25</sup>:

From the eye of the sorrowful, you went on wiping away,  
With the hand of the Generous, the voiceless tear.

Here the poet invokes the name in a definite form with al-. The definite article here is specific (referring to a known, particular referent), and it gives al-Karim a strong semantic force and expands the scope of generosity. Commonly, generosity is understood as material giving; but in this verse the meaning develops so that the Generous merges with the Merciful. One of the conditions of mercy is to console the sorrowful and to wipe away his tears; yet here this becomes a requirement of generosity. Thus,

<sup>24</sup> Al-Hakawati, p. 213.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Hakawati, p. 224.

the Generous is the one who consoles the wounded through spiritual giving and personal devotion before consoling him through material giving.

That al-Karim undergoes this semantic development suggests that Saeed Jirjis al-Issa distances himself from the inherited, traditional sense when he invokes this name, and instead activates a deeper meaning that diverges from the established heritage-based connotation. This study further suggests that the new semantic reserve acquired by al-Karim in this verse arises from a Christian vision rooted in human values that view generosity as standing beside weakness and vulnerability.

### 9) Muhammad

As for Muhammad, this blessed and auspicious name, it is among the loftiest and greatest names of the Greatest Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household). It is mentioned four times in the Holy Qur'an: in God's saying, "Muhammad is no more than a messenger; messengers have passed before him." (Al 'Imran: 144); His saying, "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets." (Al-Ahzab: 40); His saying, "Muhammad is the Messenger of God, and those with him are harsh against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves." (Al-Fath: 29); and His saying, "And those who believe and do righteous deeds and believe in what has been sent down upon Muhammad..." (Muhammad: 2).

A careful examination of the four Qur'anic occurrences indicates that the name Muhammad in the first three verses appears coupled with his attribute as a messenger. In the fourth verse it appears coupled with the Qur'an itself. In other words, it appears together with the message. This means that the name Muhammad in the Qur'an does not occur except within a prophetic, message-oriented atmosphere: it does not appear as a bare name, but is invoked along with religious prompts of reception that enrich the religious understanding of Muhammad and his message as that of a prophet and messenger.

In the poetry of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa, the name Muhammad occurs twice.

The first is in the poet's line<sup>26</sup>:

<sup>26</sup> Al-Hakawati, p. 217.

I greet you, O feast, the feast of Muhammad,  
And I am nothing but a nightingale that sang within you.

Here Muhammad appears in an annexed construction (the feast is annexed to Muhammad). The poet describes the feast as “the feast of Muhammad” because this designation occurs within the poem titled “On the Birth of the Arab Messenger.” The appearance of Muhammad in annexation—whether annexed to something, or something annexed to it—suggests that the poet prefers annexation over other structures when mentioning Muhammad, and that annexation becomes a stylistic habit whenever Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) is mentioned, as in the line above, and also in the poet’s saying<sup>27</sup>:

I tell her: exult in the memory of Muhammad.  
Did not the Most Merciful choose Muhammad long ago?

In this verse the name Muhammad appears twice: once annexed to what precedes it, and once without annexation, in two different grammatical positions, with stylistic variation and a concentrated gathering of Prophetic names. In addition to the two occurrences of the name Muhammad, the verse also carries the notion of divine choosing (selection). This indicates that the activity of names is present stylistically, generating poetic momentum and psychological impetus, and reflecting the deep spiritual bond between the poet and the Greatest Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household), who is the subject of the text.

### **9) Al-Mustafa (the Chosen One)**

Connected to the verb “chooses” that appears in the verse mentioned above is the presence of the name al-Mustafa, a blessed Prophetic name. It does not occur in the Qur’an in the exact singular form “al-Mustafa,” but it occurs in the plural referring to the prophets (peace be upon them and upon our Prophet and his Household), as in God’s saying: “Indeed, We purified them with a pure quality: remembrance of the Hereafter; and indeed, with Us they are among the chosen, the excellent.” (Sad: 46–47). It may also occur as a verb, either in the past tense—“Indeed, God chose Adam

27 Al-Hakawati, 125.

and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imran above the worlds." (Al 'Imran: 33–34)—or in the present tense—"God chooses from the angels messengers and from the people." (Al-Hajj: 75).

The name al-Mustafa appears twice in the poetry of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa, as in his saying<sup>28</sup>:

And the company of God's prophets, in ranks,  
Encircled the Chosen One, each greeting him.

Here al-Mustafa, one of the blessed Prophetic names, appears as a singular, non-an-nexed form, defined with al-. Its presence in this poet's work stems from the rich semantic energy the poet senses in this name. He celebrates it as a unifying common denominator between the Prophet and his brothers among the prophets and mes-sengers, and as an extension that links them. Consequently, believing in the divine choosing of one prophet requires—Qur'anically—believing in the choosing of other prophets as well. This is particularly significant for a Christian poet whose conscious-ness expands beyond the rigid claim that what he believes is truth and what he does not believe is not truth.

In this sense, a poet whose orientation accepts the other finds that his belief in the choosing of Jesus (peace be upon him) inspires him, in fairness, to affirm the choosing of Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household), and thus leads him to employ the name al-Mustafa as poetic material.

There may also be a stylistic factor supporting the use of al-Mustafa in this verse, namely that its musical structure fits the metrical pattern of al-basit, on which the cited line is composed. This yields two conclusions: first, al-Mustafa harmonizes with the meter both outside the line and within it; and second, building on the first point, invoking al-Mustafa in this line becomes stylistically easier than invoking other bless-ed Prophetic names.

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28 Al-Hakawati, p. 208.



Another context in which al-Mustafa occurs is the poet's saying<sup>29</sup>:

I forgave myself a lapse of intention once,  
For my poetry was strengthened by the name of the Chosen One.

Typically, al-Mustafa appears defined with al-, and it may combine two stylistic features: it may appear definite, and it may also appear in an annexed relation. In this verse it combines definiteness and annexation (the name is both definite and annexed to). Al-Mustafa does not occur outside these two contexts, which indicates that the poet's desire to invoke this name is less than his desire to invoke other names that he preferred to employ as poetic material when composing texts intertextually connected with Islamic religious reference.

### **10) Al-Nabi (the Prophet)**

Among the Prophetic names invoked by Saeed Jirjis al-Issa is the name al-Nabi (the Prophet), a name with Qur'anic reference<sup>30</sup>. It appears in many Qur'anic verses, such as: "O Prophet, sufficient for you is God and those who follow you of the believers." (Al-Anfal: 64); and: "O Prophet, indeed We have sent you as a witness and a bearer of good tidings and a warner." (Al-Ahzab: 45). Indeed, the Qur'an identifies a connection between the Messenger-Prophet and the Christians—who are the poet's community—through God's saying: "Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find written with them in the Torah and the Gospel..." (Al-A'raf: 157).

The poet employs the name al-Nabi (peace be upon him and his Household) in four contexts, in three stylistic modes: it may come as an indefinite noun, it may come as definite with al-, and it may come in an annexed construction. The poet says<sup>31</sup>:

A nation you built—a prophet—  
Above the throne of spears and the soaring of prey.  
Here the name prophet appears as an indefinite noun. The stylistic function of indef-

29 Al-Hakawati, p. 215.

30 Majd al-Din Muhammad ibn Yaqub Al-Firoozabadi, *Basair Dhawi Al-Tamyeez Fi Lataif Al-Kitab Al-Aziz*, ed. MuM hammad Ali Al-Najjar (Beirut, Lebanon: Al-Maktaba Al-Ilmiyya, n.d.), p. 11/6.

31 Al-Hakawati, *Arab Christian Poets and Islam: Poetic Texts*, p. 213.

initeness here likely aims at magnification and elevation: to say that the builder is “a prophet,” with the breadth and grandeur implied by indefiniteness, suggests firmness of the building and the loftiness of its builder.

Another instance of the name prophet as an indefinite noun occurs in the poet’s saying<sup>32</sup>:

A prophet called to truth a people who dispersed;  
A dark night of ignorance enveloped them.

This is the second context in which the name (the Prophet) (peace be upon him and his Household) appears in the indefinite form. The line seems to divide the world into two domains: one containing prophethood and the truth it entails, and another containing “a people” (also indefinite), associated with a dark night of ignorance. However, this elevated image recedes quickly in the following line, where the poet says<sup>33</sup>:

In the valley of Mecca he rose as a guide  
To God, for those among them who had strayed from God.

Among the instances where the Prophetic name al-Nabi appears defined with al- is the poet’s saying<sup>34</sup>:

The land of prophethood and brotherhood and guidance:  
The night-journey of the Prophet, and the cradle of Jesus the redeemer.

Here the poet adopts the definiteness strategy. The name the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) appears alongside the name of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), pointing to two matters. The first, indicated in the first hemistich, is the sanctity of these lands shared by Christianity and Islam, and that a social structure grounded in the presence of both religions can become a basis for cohesion and social integration. The second, indicated in the second hemistich, gestures toward the complementarity of the two messages, their divine effect, and their shared message-oriented direction.

32 Al-Hakawati, p. 220.

33 Al-Hakawati, p. 220.

34 Al-Hakawati, p. 221.

The third stylistic mode, in which the name the Prophet appears in annexation, occurs in the poet's saying<sup>35</sup>:

Peace upon the best of the prophets whenever a worshipper prays,  
And whenever a pilgrim in Mecca responds to the call.

The annexation here carries a preferential meaning: as if the poet views the chosen Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) as superior to others, placing him in a rank higher than other creatures, even higher than the ranks attained by his brothers among the prophets and messengers.

### **11) Al-Hadi (the Guide)**

The overwhelming majority of the noble Prophetic names chosen by Saeed Jirjis al-Issa are Qur'an-derived names used to describe the Noble Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household). In other words, these names intertextually connect with the Qur'anic text, and they represent one aspect of Qur'anic presence in the poetry of this poet.

Al-Hadi (the Guide), as a name of the Messenger (peace be upon him and his Household), further supports the claim that most of the names invoked by this poet are Qur'an-based. In his saying<sup>36</sup>:

In the valley of Mecca he rose as a guide

To God, for those among them who had strayed from God—

He invokes a Qur'anic designation for the Greatest Messenger (peace be upon him and his Household), a designation found in God's saying: "And indeed you guide to a straight path." (Al-Shura: 52), and: "You are only a warner, and for every people there is a guide." (Al-Ra'd: 7). It is noteworthy that this designation appears in two forms: verbal, as in the first verse, and nominal, as in the second. The poet employs the nominal form as it appears in the second verse ("...and for every people there is a guide"), preferring the nominal structure over the verbal one. This suggests that his influence from the second verse is stronger than his influence from the first, which is phrased verbally.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Hakawati, p. 220.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Hakawati, p. 220.

## 12) Al-Walid (the Newborn) and Al-Mawlood (the Born One)

Many Christian poets, including Saeed Jirjis al-Issa, celebrated the noble Prophetic birth. This indicates that the occasion itself becomes a stylistic guide when writing modern Arab Christian poetry with Islamic orientations. Consequently, such a poem develops its own lexicon and distinctive stylistic centers, and it also develops its own names, produced in accordance with the occasion for which the poet writes. It is therefore unsurprising that a Christian text may grant the Prophet of Islam Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) names other than the well-established ones that have settled in the reader's consciousness as fixed Prophetic names. Among these names are al-walid (the newborn) and al-mawlood (the born one), as in the poet's saying<sup>37</sup>:

So take pride in the newborn as the glory of time,  
And exult before mankind in the newborn.

The newborn, whose childhood was harsh, becomes in Saeed Jirjis al-Issa's poetry a symbol of challenging childhood and confronting the obstacles of one's world. Al-Issa also connects spiritually to this designation, as he repeats it twice in the line, while describing that newborn as the pride of time.

The newborn is among the epithets given to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household), described as bewildered and like the outcast<sup>38</sup>; then he becomes a pride by which the valleys of Mecca may rightly boast. The image of that newborn grows into that of a prophet, a messenger, and a leader, to the extent that his cloak, which he gave to Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, becomes a cloak of glory cast upon the valleys in which the Noble Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) lived. The poet says<sup>39</sup>:

The newborn built your edifice and bestowed  
The cloak of glory above it, and immortality.

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37 Al-Hakawati, p. 213.

38 Al-Hakawati, p. 212-213.

39 Al-Hakawati, p. 213.

Among the poet's uses of the name al-mawlood (the born one) is his saying<sup>40</sup>:

O best of the born, and O best of the birth:

Blessed are you as the born one, and blessed is the birth.

Al-mawlood converges with al-walid; the two are synonymous in meaning and close in morphological form, since walid is on the pattern fa'il with a passive sense (maf'ul), that is: "born." Therefore, they share one semantic horizon in Saeed Jirjis al-Issa's poetic discourse. This is likely what led this study to treat the two designations as one, given their closeness and adjacency when surveying the epithets used for the Greatest Messenger (peace be upon him and his Household) in the poetry of this poet.

### **13) Al-Yatim (the Orphan)**

Connected to the designation of the Noble Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) as al-walid, that is, the newborn, is another invoked designation: the recall of the Messenger's childhood (peace be upon him and his Household), namely that the Prophet was an orphan at the beginning of his life, as Saeed Jirjis al-Issa presents it when he says<sup>41</sup>:

The newborn whom you knew as an orphan,

Who walked within you bewildered, like a castaway.

Whenever he sought from you a glance, he turned away,

Provided with nothing but the bitterest of hardship.

The poet Saeed Jirjis al-Issa thus shows particular attention to the childhood of the Noble Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) and to his upbringing as an orphan, and to how that harsh childhood was transformed into spiritual substance and moral provision upon which the Prophet's personality (peace be upon him and his Household) was positively grounded. Whenever the Prophet's suffering childhood is recalled, it is invoked in this poet's work through its positive meaning, as in the poet's saying<sup>42</sup>:

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40 Al-Hakawati, p. 217.

41 Al-Hakawati, p. 213.

42 Al-Hakawati, p. 218.

With the orphan, existence exulted  
Under the protection of the Most Merciful.

In this verse, orphanhood is presented as a luminous, affirmative quality that grants the Greatest Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) a cosmic presence, clothed in a merciful, divine aura. It is an orphanhood fused with the great divine mercy; an orphanhood that produces nothing but a compassionate Prophetic spirit, transforming the bitterness of orphanhood, the burdens of divine mission, the hardships of conveying the message, and the harm he endured for the guidance of people—transforming all of this so that the Greatest Messenger (peace be upon him and his Household) fulfills what is due from him in truth, lowering his wing, and being toward the believers kind and merciful.



## Results and Findings

This study settles on a set of findings, including:

The Prophetic names invoked in the poetry of Saeed Jirjis al-Issa are connected to what may be termed occasional poetry, meaning that the poet mentions the Greatest Messenger (peace be upon him and his Household) on Muslim occasions—whether general Islamic occasions such as Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and the like, or specific occasions such as the noble Prophetic birth.

The poet Saeed Jirjis al-Issa preferred crafting Prophetic names of aesthetic content, favoring them over names of a majestic or martial connotation. Thus, he invoked Ahmad, Muhammad, the Messenger, the Seal of the Messengers, and similar names more frequently than names with a militant content such as Sayf Allah and others.

Islamic religious reference appears with clear force in the invocation of Prophetic names. The Holy Qur'an—both as spirit and as a mode of expression—was among the most evident Islamic references present in the poet's work when he evokes the noble Prophetic names.

The attentive reader cannot miss the Christian imprint that clearly appears in Saeed Jirjis al-Issa's Islamic-oriented poetry. This imprint is evident in the poet's vision, which is closer to the tolerant spirit found in the teachings of Jesus son of Mary (peace be upon them), positively engaging with the different other. It is as though the poet—although extending his gaze toward an Islamic reference—continues to proceed from his primary reference, both in his selection of Prophetic names and in stylistic features that signal that choice.

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