441733 - Presence of Paintaings of Some Muslim Scholars

the question

Why are there paintings of some Muslim scholars despite it being haram?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

(1) We have previously explained in the answer to question number (344172) the ruling on photography and the making of statues, the prohibition by the majority and the permission by some Jurists for a limited type of them, and the most correct view in this matter, so please refer to it.

(2) It is a well-established fact among specialists that Islamic civilization is more a civilization of the word than a civilization of the image; for this reason, most aspects of Islamic art are related to architecture, calligraphy, and ornamentation, and very little of it has taken the direction of painting and sculpture. Some historians have even stated that the Byzantine Church's prohibition of images and statues was influenced by Islam.

Dr. `Abdul Mun`im Majid says in his book "The Political History of the Arab State - The Era of the Umayyad Caliphs" (p. 34): "The doctrine of the Byzantine state itself will be influenced by the call of Islam to prohibit the worship of images."

(3) The foregoing does not prevent the existence of drawing and sculpted images, but this was minimal compared to the other manifestations of artistic civilization previously mentioned. This small amount goes back to the environment of palaces and rulers and kings in the Umayyad state, increased slightly in the Abbasid state, and then most of it spread during the Fatimid era and those influenced by them from the Mamluks. This is not surprising for the Fatimids, who deviated from the Shari`ah in the fundamentals of belief, and spread various types of superstitions and

polytheistic idolatries, which suited them to spread imagery and statues and other matters prohibited by the Shari`ah to block the means to polytheism and the glorification of the dead.

Dr. Salamah Muhammad `Ali says in his research "Carving Living Elements in Islamic Art": "The Arab spirit was averse to those Western forms and styles that were imported in the form of statues and images printed on fabrics and curtains, which were done by traders coming from the Levant and Yemen, and those countries were polytheistic with multiple gods...

And the Dislike of representing living creatures in Islamic art was a desire to distance from polytheistic manifestations."

(4) It is clear from the above that the legal and moral reality of Islam was the prohibition of statues and images, and that deviation from this reality occurred in the environment of rulers where types of deviation from the laws of Islam occurred, even exceeding the issue of images and statues.

Artists who engaged in photography and sculpture were sponsored by the state, and as far as we know, it has not been proven that any of the scholars of Shari`ah, Jurisprudence, and Tafsir worked in the industry of images and statues, as understood from the formulation of the question. If it did occur, it might have been from those who permitted this matter, not as a practice that one of the majority of scholars who prohibited it engaged in.

The occurrence of shar`i violations by some rulers or in some social circles is understandable, as humans are not infallible from sins and mistakes. Muslims obey and disobey, but Islam itself, in its theories, rulings, and values, forbids these violations, and none of the Muslim scholars have systematically and methodically involved themselves in them; otherwise, where is this jurisprudential heritage that establishes these practices or acknowledges them?!

If someone has portrayed a scholar from the Muslim scholars, then the one who did it bears the responsibility, whether in the past or present, and there is no sin on the scholar for that, nor does it necessarily mean that he approves of it.

And Allah knows best.