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Painting and Imagery in Islam: A Juristic Analysis

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Abstract

Among the archaeological sources of history such as architecture, coins, stone inscriptions, calligraphy, and painting, the most objective archaeological material through which it is possible to restore the geographical environment, events, and the history of the people is painting. The main subjects of Muslim art during the Muslim era were calligraphy, stone inscriptions, painting, pottery decoration, and religious and secular architectural techniques. Although the excellence of painting was achieved by artists during the Muslim rule, ignoring the opposition of Islamic Sharia, subsequent Muslim rulers, be it the Indian subcontinent or the birthplace of Islam, the Middle East, patronized natural and scenic scenes, portraiture everywhere, leaving behind evidence of the bright tradition of Islamic pride and the splendor of the rulers of that time. The powerful rulers patronized and protected painting, as a result of which the practice of painting in the dominant monarchy gradually spread and, in the initial stage, inanimate portraits, vine leaves, geometric designs and calligraphy were presented as wall paintings without violating the precepts of Sharia. Muslim rulers employed non-Muslim painters to decorate palaces and other buildings, as a result of which the characteristics of previous civilizations were also reflected in Islamic painting. The article presents the development of Muslim painting, foreign influences on Islamic painting, the characteristics of Islamic painting, and finally, it extensively presents the opinions of experts on whether painting is prohibited from a religious perspective, the extent to which restrictions have been imposed on the presented paintings, how painting has been unhindered patronized despite religious obstacles, that is, whether the practice of painting is

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legal or illegal, and to what extent it can be relaxed or not, considering the circumstances.

Keywords: Art, Civilization, Painting, Portrait, Manuscript.

Introduction

Islamic art originated in Muslim dominated regions from 7th century onwards. The Arab world became an important Centre for wisdom, Philosophy, Ethics, Physic and science. The golden age of Islamic civilization began in the 8th century during the Abbasid caliphate. Over thousands of years, art flourished in painting calligraphy, printmaking, pottery, textiles, manuscripts and architectural decoration. Islamic Painting was first developed by emulating other previous civilization including Roman, Byzantine, Sasanian and others. Despite the various religious obligations and differences of opinion of Islam, painting has developed and acquired acknowledgement, there is no room for disagreement in this. In the initial stage, Islamic artist refrained from painting living people and creature. Nevertheless, Islamic painting and decoration gradually promoted over secular theme or object and effigy drawing, arabesque model, portrayal of Islamic Calligraphy, illustration of manuscripts. The patronage and inclination of the Muslim rulers about painting and vignette made the practice more gracious throughout the ages. Royal art gained ground during the reign of artistic rulers. The decoration of court architecture, the practice of wall painting miniature painting, portrait painting were prevalent in the Islamic world. It is worth nothing that in addition to the pre-Islamic era, a continuous trend of painting and drawing can be observed in Egypt, Syria, North Africa, Turkey, Persia, Spain, Mesopotamia and the Indian sub- continent during the Islamic era.

The Rudiments and Progression of Islamic Art

The practice of painting is not permissible in Islam, but it may be restrained in special circumstances. Although there is no direct prohibition in Quran against painting, it is Known from various Hadith Sharif (Bukhari Sharif, Muslim Sharif) that the legislators were not liberal towards painting. The area or parts of by Byzantine Empire of them came under Muslim rulers, the converted Muslim and professional painters of their introduced painting as an art and spreader it everywhere basically, the development of the creative mind of the people led to the emergence of art practice among Muslims as well. In the article under discussion, this issue has been presented how painting with unwavering faith in the teaching of

Islamic sharia, created its own style and direction and reached during the Muslim rule despite the strictures. The Islamic empire, which was in power over the fallen Sassanid and Byzantine empires, welcomed the practice of art by coming into contact with the culture of previous civilizations and the tradition continued in the case of hereditary regimes. The origins of Islamic art in the Sasanian art of the ancient Persian Empire, all-embracing ornamentation and specific architectural features survived. The basis of Islamic art is a unified style. Regional variations are encouraged mainly by materials and local customs. The invention and originality of Islamic art, decoration and design are derived from various sources and regions. Innovations and strength of style are one of the characteristics of Islamic art, Islamic painting were mainly bright in color with decorative motifs of architecture, foliage and geometric designs.

Painting developed during the Umayyad era, the Abbasid era, the Fatimid dynasty, the Ghaznavid dynasty, the Seljuk dynasty, Muslim Spain, the Safavid dynasty and the Mughal dynasty. During the era of the expansion of Islam, Muslim architects combined non-Muslim architectural styles and decorations to create new designs, including mosaics, tiles, wood carvings, pottery as were as new aspects of paintings Muslims never used images in the decoration of mosques and the Holy book Quran. Again, the decoration of the facades of houses and mosques were very carefully maintained and what was basically a simple Arabic design, Arabic Script, geometric designs, ornaments like flowers, vines and leaves. Muslim painting has various influences, such as Byzantine influence, Chinese influence. Nestorian and Christian masses of Muslim states influenced the architecture and art of Muslim rulers. The few surviving examples of ancient painting can be found in similarity with later Persian painting other characteristics of Chinese Painting were the depiction of dragons, mythical animals, birds and the appearance of billowing clouds.¹

Islam emerged in the 6th Century and Islamic civilization flourished in the conquered countries. Overtime, the magnitude of the Islamic empire increased. As Islam spreader to different parts of the world, local cultural influences blended with the cultural heritage of Islam, art naturally continued to advance with some restrictions. However, the artistically mind of man could never abandon the practice of art, so in the early days of Islam, Muslims were busy with warfare and religious propaganda, but later the contemplation of art began a renaissance in the Islamic world. Wall paintings, architectural Paintings, pottery

paintings, delicate miniature and Calligraphy script were painted in motley contemporary styles. The pre-Islamic desert Arabs used to build statues or sculptures to perform rituals or such a tradition was in place. After the advent of Islam, the Arabs developed as a civilized nation and abandoned paganism.² Basically, their life was simple. Later, the cultural elements of Byzantine- Syrian and Sasanian- Persian painting gradually in filtered Muslim culture. Analysis shows that Persian and Chinese painting styles were seen during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods. The source of Muslim painting is the excellent example of Byzantine painting, which is modeled on canvas printed in Christian churches and palaces of regent, the objective presented in the wall painting of Samarra.³ Some popular features of Islamic painting such as Hellenistic and oriental ornaments such as grapevines echanthus, geometric figures, corpse images and several drawings of scripts etc. were incorporated into the style of Byzantine art. The influence of Sasanian art is seen in sculpture, palaces and for tresses. The Abbasid period saw the use of limestone in portraiture, the physical structure of men and women in paintings, the folds of clotting and the depiction of figures, imaginary vine designs, and images of pemeta trees, royal scenes and the triumphs of emperors. Manichaeans played a role in maintaining Chinese influence in Muslim painting. The exchange of ideas between Muslim civilizations and various civilizations, the influence of foreign art on painting can be widely observed in the Safavid, Mongol, Timurid Paintings of the Middle-East. The painting of Indian sub- continent seen combination of European and indigenous influences with unique landmarks for the purpose of religious propaganda, the biographic and activities of the prophets are depicted on the walls of mosques and architectural works based on religious themes, including the depiction of manuscripts. The Jami-at-Tawarikh manuscripts depict various scenes from the life of the prophet Muhammad (sm.), Such as the portraiture of Buraq, the black stone covering during the reconstruction of the Al- Kaaba, the revelation of the Holy prophet (sm.) by Gabriel in the cave of Hira, His presence with Abu Bakar (R.A.) during the migration to Medina, the depiction of Mohammad prophet hood by a sage, the race, the reception in Medina, the plotting of the prophet's camel and the depiction of the round halo in the manuscript written by Al- Biruni, the depiction of the fall of Abu Jahl during the battle of Badar in the manuscript of Mirkhand, the removal of the idol of the Kaaba by Shia painter. The depiction of '*Qasasul Ambiya*' is depicted in the mosques of Medina, the depiction of the three Caliphs; the first meeting of Hazrat Mohammad (sm.) with

Bibi Khadija, the greeting of important people with a halo, in some cases the prophet is presented with only a lighter alters, showing respect. Among religious images, there are group pictures and portraits of various Sufi Saints, as well as dancing dervishes in Indian and Turkish paintings.⁴ Mesopotamian training centers centered on Baghdad developed in the third century. Religious opposition was ignored and under the patronage of rulers, wall painting and manuscript painting developed as training centers during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods. Painting became known as a major part of Muslim culture.⁵ Students/ Learners were formally admitted to painting training centers such as Herat, School of Tabriz, Samarkand and they built their career as established painters. In the Mesopotamian painting school, famous manuscripts such as Maqamat Al-Hariri, Materia Medica, Kalilawa-Dimna have been illustrated. The decorative style has been created magnificently, the use of more brilliant colors, such as blue, green, gold, yellow, red. The depiction or embodiment of various events or stories has emerged.⁶ The manuscripts show educational subjects such as Gaelic vignette, pictures of various animals and realistic pictures have been reflected, the evolution or development of Timurid and Mongol painting began from the discussed genre. Earlier, imitations of the art of the Eastern Roman Empire can be seen in various sculptures such as Gothic Sculptures or Romanesque incarnation. Muslim painting was influenced by the technique of religious painting on the walls of churches.⁷ Despite the prohibitions of theologians, mosaics, stone craving, minarets, pottery, metalwork, stucco can be seen in the decoration of Umayyad palaces and mosques. Lions, dogs, sheep were used in various palaces in the pre-Islamic period in Kufa, Jordan, Anzar Alexandria, Haram, Amman, Syria, Which were somewhat modified in the Islamic period since the main material of painting was paper, china owes the progress of human civilization to China is a country with realistic portrait painting.⁸ In Samarkand, Potters and craftsmen from china started working on the production of pottery and the depiction of various painting. Various famous manuscripts, including Yusuf Zulekha, Nizami's *Sikander Nama* were painted with the help of experienced and tasteful Chinese artists. When the city of Baghdad was attacked by the Mongol leader, Chinese painters also visited the Illkhaniddynasty of Persian and Iraq and Chinese influences became evident in fine arts. Chinese characteristics are generally enriched in their paintings through the use of costumes, helmets, facial expressions, armor horse saddles, flags, phoenixes, dragons, flying birds, halo painting techniques such as flames. Timur, by establishing his capital at

Samarkand, showed great weakness to Chinese art and it flourished to it's almost. A branch of the Mongol dynasty, the Jalayirid Sultanate, continued to exert a noticeable influence on painting during the reign of Baghdad. Even during the Ilkhanid dynasty, the natures of Chinese art were evident in Persian art.⁹ The art of oriental materials is a follower of the Coptic style. The Painting of Abu Zayd's son during his engagement with the ruler in the scene of Romeo sitting in a similar position to the ruler. The Indian sub-continent ruled by Hindu and Buddhist rulers, was dominated by mythological painting techniques that infiltrated the sultanate and Mughal painting. The painters of Ellora and Ajanta followed the style of painting on palm leaves and the style of fresco in wall paintings. Later under the patronage of Muslim art and culture, the Indo-Mughal style of painting emerged. It is worth mentioning that painting was given importance as a powerful method of spiritual development or as a way to gain divine knowledge during the Mughal period.¹⁰ The subjects of the paintings, such as Indian environment clothing, architecture animals etc. were clear. However, Persian influence from the middle is not excluded. For example, the war of the Pandavas in the Mahabharata, the conquest of Lanka in The Ramayana, The Rajanama, portraits of Hindu Brahmins and sages, repetitions of Indian animals, birds, dogs, cows, bulls, elephants, banana trees, rural scenes, scenes of Indian mountains in temples. Alexander's Indian expeditions portraits of Man Singh and Antapur in Rajasrangam etc. All adopt the Rajput style of India, which has been largely incorporated Mughal painting.¹¹

The Impact of Islamic Legal Restrictions on the Development and Amplification of Paintings

Painting is not religiously permissible, but despite not being permitted, there is a context for the practice and development of painting. Although it is not directly mentioned in the Quran and Hadith, its practice has been indirectly considered prohibited. Although in the early era of Islam, people naturally did not have courage to visit the practice and use of any painting. But patronage of medieval Muslim rulers, religious opposition is considered to have been somewhat neglected. Due to special reasons and considering the situations, it has been relaxed. In the present modern era, a citizen cannot live a state life without a picture or an identity card with a picture; this is now an essential matter.¹² The animalistic feature did not come as an animal in Islamic painting, but was considered a means of beautification. Because of this perspective, Muslim rulers welcomed foreign pre-Islamic

knowledge and subject matter. Admittedly the material available for such a book as this is limited. A few monuments with paintings have been brought to light. More numerous are the illustrated manuscripts discovered in libraries.¹³ The Qur'anic script in the painting is the Kufic Style (Qayrawant) calligraphy developed by Muslims artist in Andalusia during the Andalusian Period (711-1492 CE). It was narrated from Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Those who make these images will be punished on the Day of Resurrection and it will be said: Give life to what you have created." *Sahih Al-Bukhaari* (5607) and *Sahih Muslim* (2108).¹⁴ Originally, Islam did not accept Idols, sculptures or any such images from the concept that Islam has against idol worship. But over time, the practice of inanimate objects, oil painting, water painting and natural images became popular.¹⁵ It is clear that painting has been presented as a glorious witness of world history, which is a source of history that gives us an idea about the rulers of that time. Painting created its own style and direction through the fence of strict religious opposition. History shows that the emergence of art among Arab Muslims was a little late. Arab Muslims, with their unwavering faith in the teachings of *Sharia*, did not show the slightest laxity in observing religious prohibitions. Basically, desert Muslim focused on cultural and artistic practices after coming into contact with the transformation of Islam and advanced civilizations. Moreover, people who are skilled in art practice in order to maintain their normal life and livelihood and promoted it as a part of luxurious life. Although there are obstacles to practicing painting externally. Many people keep the interest in practicing it dormant their minds, waiting for an opportunity to bring legitimacy to painting through some loophole in the rulers and regulation of *Sharia*. Artists strived to practice painting in the spirit of submission and many touched by the artists mind, considered the strict prohibition of painting to be very relaxed obligation. The artists of that time expressed the practice of art or paintings as a mere desire to express the sweetness of the mind or talent.¹⁶

Different historians have offered a coherent explanation for the ambivalent Islamic attitude towards painting in different eras. The debate on whether painting is permissible or not in Islam is not believed to have been at the early stage of history. Although the number of fundamentalist Caliphs during the Umayyad period was small, since the Abbasid Caliphate was built on the ruins of the Umayyad Caliphate, differences can be observed in various religious disciplines.¹⁷ The

Abbasid movement was influenced by non-Arabs, so their main objective was to transform the Islamic international ideal state.¹⁸ After the death of the Prophet, there are many examples of laxity or liberality towards painting and even sculpture. It can be mentioned that in the early days of Islam, attention was not paid to the decoration of various palaces and the images of scenes that could disrupt worship, and they did not feel embarrassed to use various sculptures or war trophies, incense burners, and portraits of birds. Religious laxity is particularly noticeable in various archaeological fields during the Umayyad period. In Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria, the various garden houses of the then caliphs, which were modeled after the Romans, and the features there, such as the hammam baths, were all part of Hellenistic civilization.¹⁹ Since Islam was more active towards sovereignty and establishment, a considerable laxity was generally observed in some religious matters, such as painting, in the early period. Moreover, since there was no example of worship of any image, animal, or human image in the Jahiliyyah period, the question of partnership with Allah, i.e., *shirk*, did not arise regarding images. The Quran mainly mentions abstention from alcohol, gambling, idols, and worship of divine powers, which are considered to be at the level of *shirk*.²⁰

During the later Fatimid Caliphate and the Spanish Caliphate, sculpture and painting were also avoided to some extent due to religious fundamentalism because in the comparative standards of civilization, these artifacts were mostly considered as objects of competition for power and wealth. The Caliphs of that time took painting as a form of competition to prove whose history, tradition, culture was the best. They thought that they would lag behind in terms of civilization and culture, so they were more interested in art. Even the Muslim rulers of the Indian subcontinent believed that when a painter painted a picture of an animal or a person, it would not be possible for him to give life to it because only the Creator, Allah, can give life and take it away. The introduction of paper for painting manuscripts is related to this. Especially in the case of manuscript painting, it can be seen that there was no harm in the religious restrictions in the Roman and Syrian Christian translated literature, and it is also worth noting that the painters were of different religions. Painters and scribes worked on the same picture at the same time because more than one painter was needed to create different backgrounds for the picture. Basically, it can be said that despite the constraints of the theologians, the need for knowledge, the acceptance of painting in the practice of civilization and culture was growing.²¹ However, one thing is worth noting that

although the artists kept this excellence alive in terms of aesthetics, the patronage of painting people and animals in the religious buildings built during the Muslim rule was never given, they carefully nurtured conservatism. Although there are two exceptional examples of mosques converted from Christian churches of the ancient period, most mosques or religious buildings no paintings were painted in a way that hurt religious sentiments. Islamic art assimilated different civilizations, opened up its own thinking; used different decorations for aesthetics, and painters used Arabic script, arabesque designs and different decorations in religious buildings. The conservative attitude in painting was spread through the Hadith. Although all the idols of the Kaaba were destroyed after the conquest of Mecca, the Holy Prophet preserved the image of Jesus Christ on the walls of the Kaaba. There is no clear instruction in the words of the Holy Prophet (sm.) regarding the category of paintings, in this case, due to this tolerance; the victorious Muslims generally accepted the works of art as part of aesthetics.²² It was natural that the artistic mind of man would advance the trend of subsequent development in contact with art. Even if the enemy was defeated in war, artists or painters of different religions were given dignity. In ancient Arabia, art practice did not mean any other art knowledge except poetry, as a result, Muslim rulers used to bring in Roman Byzantine artists, Christian artists, and other experienced artists from outside to enhance the beauty of their buildings. Over time, Islamic painting developed continuously with various characteristics.

Painting began in the context of aestheticism. Moreover, in the middle of the 8th century, paper began to be imported from China to Samarkand and Baghdad, as a result of which, Greek, Latin or Indian translated manuscripts inspired painters to paint. The paintings in Abdur Rahman As-Sufi's '*KitabSawar Al-Kawqib As-Sabitha*' preserved in the Bodleian Library are an excellent example of Islamic manuscripts. Manuscript painting began in the 9th century. The various scenes in Ferdowsi's '*Shahnama*', Al-Biruni's '*Asar al-Baqiyya*', and Rashiduddin's '*Jami-at-Tawarik*' are excellent examples of Islamic painting. Over time, all these features and practices of Islamic painting developed in the Egyptian Mamluk Empire and later in the painting of Osman.²³ Many of the Turkish rulers themselves were skilled in painting, so even under the conditions of conservative guidance, the conscious artistic mind and patronage of the powerful ruling class shifted from a religious to a secular perspective.

Conclusion

Muslim painting occupies a prominent place in the history of the creative arts of mankind by creating otherworldly art. If we review from cave paintings to ancient Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek, and Roman paintings, it will be evident that creative artists tried to express themselves artistically through paint and brush in unparalleled artistic creations. We do not observe the history of Muslim painting as an exception to this. Although painting, as a symbol of monotheism, is a controversial subject in Islam, in fact, unlike other religious institutions, Islam did not use art as a tool of religion. Although there was no proper understanding of Muslim painting in the early period of Islam, art emerged with the expansion of the Muslim empire during the Umayyad period. In continuation of that, painting was studied for the sake of creativity in the Abbasid, Mamluk, Ottoman, and Mughal empires. However, it can be said with certainty that foreign influence is clearly noticeable in Muslim painting. Sasanian, Byzantine and Chinese art played a role in the emergence and development of Muslim painting. Although there is no clear instruction in the Quran against painting, the Hadith imposes a ban on painting. However, the fact that paganism, idol worship and the artistic creation of sculptors is not the same thing has repeatedly emerged from the creative statements of various historians. The rulers of that time also patronized painting. Without religious motivation, Muslim artists expressed their artistic expression, gentle growth, and innate artistic essence in wonderful painting. Finally, it must be said fairly that the view of theologians and the view of Islam are not the same. The extent to which conservative Ulema, in their efforts to expand their dominance in the Muslim empire, quoted from the Quran and Hadith and issued fatwas against painting was reasonable and effective has been discussed earlier. However, the art of painting has flourished and excelled over the ages under the patronage of worldly and ideological sultans. Painting is widely practiced throughout the Muslim world. Islamic civilization was at the forefront of knowledge and scientific practice and creation at that time. The main issue that was proven to be the question of legitimacy was the presentation of inanimate objects in paintings. Inanimate images were not used in religious affiliations or religious buildings from that time. Due to this view of Islam, Muslim rulers welcomed the knowledge and content of pre-Islamic matters and the new paintings that they created by combining them are essentially Islamic paintings. In a sense, it can be said that the contribution of pre-Islamic ideas and individual works to this Islamic innovation is undeniable.

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