98632 - Ruling on selling archaeological statues

the question

What is the Islamic ruling on selling the protruding monuments, i.e. full statues, heads of statues and bodies without heads? I can trade in all types of monuments with archeologists and specialists in antiquities, monuments, and international museums and so on. The purpose is historical research.

My social and financial circumstances are difficult. I wanted to make sure of the Islamic ruling on this type of trade before I start it, I know that the ruling is always is the same regardless the financial status.

Detailed answer

It is not permissible to make statues and three-dimensional images of animate beings, whether they are humans, birds or animals, because of the stern warning that has been narrated concerning that. This has been explained in detail in the answer to question no. 7222. If it is haraam to make something, it is not permissible to sell it, because when Allaah forbids a thing He also forbids its price.

Ahmad (2678) narrated that Ibn ‘Abbaas said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “May Allaah curse the Jews. Fat was forbidden to them but they sold it and consumed its price. When Allaah, may He be glorified and exalted, forbids eating a thing, He also forbids its price.” This hadeeth was classed as saheeh by Shu’ayb al-Arna’oot in Tahqeeq al-Musnad; it is also to be found in al-Saheehayn.

Shaykh Ibn Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him) was asked: Is it permissible for the Muslim to sell statues and store them as trade goods, and to live on that?

He replied: It is not permissible for the Muslim to sell or deal in them, because it is proven in the saheeh ahaadeeth that it is haraam to make images of animate beings, and to set up statues in

general, and to keep them. Undoubtedly dealing in them is propagating them and helping in making them and setting them up in homes, clubs and the like.

If that is haraam, then earning money by making them and selling them is also haraam. It is not permissible for the Muslim to make a living from that or to eat or clothe himself from that. If he has done that then he must rid himself of it and repent to Allaah, may He be exalted, so that Allaah might accept his repentance. Allaah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “And verily, I am indeed forgiving to him who repents, believes (in My Oneness, and associates none in worship with Me) and does righteous good deeds, and then remains constant in doing them (till his death)” [Ta-Ha 20:82]. We have issued a fatwa stating that it is haraam to make images of animate beings in all cases, whether they are three-dimensional or not, by engraving, copying, dyeing or using modern equipment such as Kodak cameras. End quote from al-Jawaab al-Mufeed fi Hukm al-Tasweer by Shaykh Ibn Baaz (p. 49-50).

As for that which has had the head removed, it is not regarded as a haraam image, and there is noting wrong with keeping it and selling it if it can be made use of, so long as it will not help in doing anything haraam, such as if it is part of an image that is worshipped or from which blessing is sought and so on. The fact that images from which the head has been cut off are permissible is indicated by the report narrated by al-Tirmidhi (2806) from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) who said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Jibreel came to me and said: I was going to come to you last night, and nothing prevented me from entering the house where you were except the fact that at the door of the house there was a statue of a man. In the house there was a curtain on which there were images, and there was a dog in the house. So order that the head of the statue that is at the door be cut off, so that it will become like a tree, and order that the curtain be cut up and made into two pillows that will be thrown on the floor and stepped over, and order that the dog be taken out.” The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did that. That dog was a puppy belonging to al-Hasan or al-Husayn, that was beneath a bed, and he ordered that it be taken out.

This hadeeth was classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi.

It was also narrated by al-Nasaa'i (5365) that Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: Jibreel (peace be upon him) asked permission to enter upon the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and he said, "Come in." He said: How can I come in when in your house there is a curtain on which there are images? Either cut off their heads or make it a rug that is stepped on, for we angels do not enter a house in which there are images. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Nasaa'i.

Al-Ismaa'eeli narrated in his Mu'jam from Ibn 'Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "The image is the head; if the head is cut off then there is no image." Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami' no. 3864.

Based on the above, it is not permissible for you to deal in archaeological statues that depict images of animate beings, unless the heads are cut off. You have done well to ask about the ruling on this work before doing it.

You should remember that the storehouses of Allaah are full, and His provision is ample, and there is no limit to His giving. He has promised those who obey Him that He will grant a goodly provision. He says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And whosoever fears Allaah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty).

3. And He will provide him from (sources) he never could imagine. And whosoever puts his trust in Allaah, then He will suffice him. Verily, Allaah will accomplish his purpose. Indeed Allaah has set a measure for all things"

[al-Talaaq 65:2-3]

"Whoever works righteousness — whether male or female — while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islamic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter)"

[al-Nahl 16:97]

All you have to do is pursue the means, and seek the help of Allaah, and look for permissible work, then be assured of goodness and ample provision.

We ask Allaah to help and guide us and you.

And Allaah knows best.