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Doris Decker

Frauen als Trägerinnen religiösen Wissens

Konzeptionen von Frauenbildern in
frühislamischen Überlieferungen bis zum
9. Jahrhundert

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“IN GOD THERE IS NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE”¹
GENDER RELATIONS IN HAGIOGRAPHIC LITERATURE

Maria SENOGLU
Freiburg i. Br.

These are actually the words of the Apostle Paul, who called upon the Christian community not to make any separation between anyone, neither Jews and Greeks, nor slaves and free men, nor men and women, for everybody was equal in Jesus Christ. In the context of the Muslim faith we could slightly change the words and say that “In *God* there is neither male nor female”.

I. THE MANLY WOMAN:
THE NEUTRALISATION OF GENDER DIFFERENCES

Particularly in ascetic-mystical circles it was often stressed that gender differences would decrease in importance in accordance with a growing knowledge of God. The Prophet is supposed to have said, “God does not regard your outward forms.”² Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (d. ca. 627/1230) answered, when asked why he accepted Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya into the circle of men, “When a woman becomes a man in the path of God, she is a man and one cannot anymore call her a woman.”³ This topos of the *mulier virilis* (= manly woman) can already be found in biographies of female ascetics of late antiquity and expresses the idea that such a woman “has overcome the natural weakness of the female gender”⁴ which was normally ascribed to her. In the spiritual context, she was now considered a man although biologically she certainly continued to be a woman.

Not only the excessive worship of God, but also the tasting of the unity during *fanā*’ (= annihilation) that the male and female mystics experience, blurs the distinctions of the genders. According to Abū ‘Abd

¹ Analogous to Galatians 3:28 and inspired by the book of Conrad, “*In Christo ist weder Man noch Weyb*”.

² Arberry, *Muslim saints and mystics* 40.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Wittern, *Frauen, Heiligkeit und Macht* 13.

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CHAPTER 17

Gender

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Preliminary Remarks on Gender-Related Hadith

Many contemporary Muslim scholars have highlighted the androcentric and, at times, misogynistic nature of many hadith reports and their role in the construction of gender non-egalitarian cosmologies in the Islamic interpretative tradition (Ali 2010; Lamrabet 2018; Duderija 2011). Examples of such traditions, cited by Aslan (2013, 42), include:

If I were to command you to bow down before any power other than God, I would order you to bow down to your husbands.

A woman ought to smile when her husband enters the house; when he leaves she should be silent. If she finds sustenance she may eat; if she finds none, she should be silent.

All eyes commit *zinā*' (extramarital sexual relations). If a woman puts on perfume and goes to the places visited by men, she commits *zinā*'.

A straw carpet is more useful than a woman who cannot bear children.

Some contemporary Muslim scholars (Kodir 2007; Shaikh 2004; Duderija 2011, 2015a,b) have argued that the hadith can also be read and interpreted in gender-just ways if approached from certain methodological and hermeneutical vantage points. This chapter describes the hermeneutical approaches employed in this kind of scholarship.

The hadith literature, as a whole, presents a picture of the Prophet as issuing orders or advising the contemporary Muslim community on a vast number of issues concerning Islamic dogma, law, theology, ethics, and morality, even to the extent of laying down rules concerning the most private spheres of an individual's life. These include rules

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