

Rabia Al-Adawiyya as The Ideal Wo/Human of Sufism*

Tasavvufun İdeal Kadını/İnsanı Olarak Rabia Adeviyye

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Özet

Tasavvufun en ünlü kadın mistiği olan Rabia el-Adeviyye, felsefe tarihinin en etkileyici kadın figürlerinden biri olarak toplumsal cinsiyet çalışan akademisyenlerin dikkatini çekmektedir. Her ne kadar bir filozof olarak kabul edilmese de, onun zihninde bir tasavvuf felsefesi olduğu muhakkaktır ve onun felsefesi tasavvuf öğretisinin oluşum döneminde zühur etmiştir. Tasavvuf felsefesi, Rabia'nın sevgi, samimiyet, benliğin yok edilmesi ve Allah ile birlik hakkındaki öğretileri üzerine inşa edilmiştir. Cennet ve cehennem yaklaşımı, tasavvuf tarihinde bir paradigma değişikliğine neden olmuş, süflerin kulluk yaklaşımını değiştirip Allah ile ilişkilerini yeniden inşa etmiştir. Rabia el-Adeviyye'nin tasavvuf doktrininin oluşumuna katkısı keşfetmeye yönelik bazı girişimler olsa da, bu konu henüz tam olarak analiz edilmemiştir. Bu makalenin amacı, Rabia'nın öğretilerini tartışarak, onların tasavvuf doktrinindeki önemini ortaya koymak ve Rabia'nın hayatına ve felsefesine toplumsal cinsiyet perspektifinden odaklanmaktır. Bu çalışmada öncelikle Rabia'yla ilgili anlatılara değineceğim ve ardından bu anlatıları feminist bir dünya görüşüyle eleştirerek bunların cinsiyetçi yönlerini analiz edeceğim. Son olarak, manevi bir otorite olarak Rabia'nın gücünü göstermek için özellikle "büyük süfleri hizaya getiren kadın" olarak Rabia'ya odaklanacağım. Bazı âlimler tarafından dini bir ideal olarak kabul edilen Rabia, bazıları tarafından tasavvufun ideal kadını olarak görülmektedir. Bense bir kadın olarak Rabia'nın tasavvufun ideal insanı olduğunu iddia etmekteyim.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rabia Adeviyye, Tasavvuf, Kadın, Mistik, Mistisizm, İdeal İnsan

Abstract

Rabia al-Adawiyya, who is the most famous female mystic of Sufism, attracts the attention of gender studies scholars as one of the most impressive female figures in the history of philosophy. Although she is not regarded as a philosopher, she definitely had a philosophy of mysticism in her mind which was manifested in the formation period of the Sufi doctrine. The philosophy of Sufism was constructed on her teachings about love, sincerity, the annihilation of the self, and union with God. Her approach to paradise and hell made a paradigm shift in the history of Sufism and changed

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the Sufis' approach to servanthood and rebuilt their relationships with God. Although there are some attempts to discover her contribution to the formation of the Sufi doctrine, it is not fully analyzed yet. The aim of this paper is to discuss her teachings to demonstrate their significance in the doctrine of Sufism and to focus on her life and philosophy from a gender perspective. In the first place, I give a brief outlook on the narratives about her and then analyze the sexist sides of them by criticizing those narratives with a feminist worldview. In the last place, I specifically focus on Rabia as "the woman who brought great Sufis into line" to show her power as a spiritual authority. She is regarded by some scholars as a religious ideal while some others see her as the ideal woman of Sufism. I argue that she was an ideal human of Sufism as a woman.

Keywords: Rabia Adawiyya, Sufism, Woman, Mystic, Mysticism, Ideal Human

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Introduction

Rabia al-Adawiyya is one of the most famous mystics of Sufism (Islamic Mysticism). There are various premodern and modern books about Rabia as well as films that picture her from different angles. In this paper, I will give a brief outlook on her life and philosophy and specifically focus on narratives about her concerning gender relationships.

There are various sources regarding Rabia's life and teaching, yet reading the sources chronologically doesn't tell much about her. As Tan argues, reading the sources through the history of Sufism with its forms of expansion and transmission would open wider fields to talk about.¹ Her aphorisms on asceticism, repentance, love, intoxication, union, the annihilation of the self (*fana*), submission, sincerity, etc. were used to construct a Sufi doctrine.

Rabia was the greatest of the female Muslim mystics and made a supreme contribution to the development of Sufism, however, there were many female mystics before her.² Even though she has been regarded as the founder of "love mysticism" in Islam, there are other male and female Sufis prior to her who expressed the importance of love for God.³

Muslim theologians usually attribute little capacity for thought, and less for religion to women. As Smith argues the women saints "represent the greatest height to which Muslim womanhood has attained".⁴ It is interesting to see that, despite the belief in the male sex's essential superiority, Rabia was considered one of the greatest teachers of the Sufi doctrine. Various significant Sufis mentioned Rabia in their books and they recognized her aut-

¹ Nedim Tan, *Bir Dinî İdealin İfade Biçimleri Rabia el-Adeviyye'den Kalanlar* (Istanbul: Pinhan Yayıncılık, 2020), 20.

² For early female mystics see Rkia Elaroui Cornell, "Introduction" in *Early Sufi Woman*, (USA: Fons Vitae, 1999), p. 60-70.

³ Rkia Elaroui Cornell, *Rabia From Narrative to Myth The Many Faces of Islam's Most Famous Woman Saint, Rabia al-Adawiyya* (London: Oneworld, 2019), 160-161.

⁴ Margaret Smith, *Rabia the Mystic and Her Fellow Saints in Islam* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1928), 204.