

The Merchant Disciples of Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî

Abdullah Burgu | 0000-0001-9057-0688 | aburgu@selcuk.edu.tr

Assist.Prof.Dr. | Selçuk University | Faculty of Literature

Konya | Türkiye

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Abstract

During the Seljuk period in Anatolia, thanks to the economic policies developed by the sultans and statesmen themselves, commercial activities reached their peak in Anatolia and became an important part of daily life. As a result of increasing commercial activities, it is understood that the local and foreign merchants living in Konya, which became a cosmopolitan city, had intense relations with the sultan, emirs, and notables as well as the Sufis living in the city. The nature of the relationship between Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî's, who was known to have disciples and friends from among the merchants who frequently traveled to and from the city, and these people, who represented the most distinguished group of the period, was generally shaped within the framework of the mentor-disciple relationship. In addition, it is striking that while other scholars and Sufis living in Seljuk Konya had friends from the Maghreb, that is, from the Western world, Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî's had merchant friends from Eastern regions such as Khorasan, Iraq, and India. This situation undoubtedly stands out as a development related to the lands where Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî was born and his family ties. On the other hand, while Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî's relationship with merchants was shaped by the Sufi tradition, his relations with the city's notables blossomed with the dynamics of political and social life. These include details that allow us to learn the names of merchants living in Konya during the Seljuk period, some of whom traveled overseas, the jobs they did, and even the countries they visited. Thus, it is aimed to reveal both sections of the Seljuk trade life of the period and the ties that Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî established with the merchants. Original information was obtained from Mevlevi and Anatolian sources and interpreted using a prosopographic approach. Arguments that Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî had a network of relations with merchants, generally developing within the framework of mentor-disciple, were identified. Thus, conclusions were reached about the kind of contributions of merchant groups and city notables to the rich cultural atmosphere of the Seljuk world of Turkey in the context of their examples of devotion to a distinguished Sufi.



Keywords

Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Konya, Merchant

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Mevlânâ Celâleddîn Rûmî'nin Tüccar Müritleri

Abdullah Burgu | 0000-0001-9057-0688 | aburgu@selcuk.edu.tr

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi | Selçuk Üniversitesi | Edebiyat Fakültesi

Konya | Türkiye

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Öz

Türkiye Selçukluları zamanında bizzat sultanlar ve devlet adamları tarafından geliştirilen iktisadi politikalar sayesinde Anadolu'da ticari faaliyetler zirveye ulaşmış, gündelik hayatın önemli bir parçası haline gelmiştir. Artan ticari faaliyetler neticesinde kozmopolit bir şehir dönüşen Konya'da yaşayan yerli ve yabancı tüccarların sultan, emir ve eşrafın yanı sıra şehirde meskûn mutasavvıflarla da yoğun ilişki içerisinde bulundukları anlaşılmaktadır. Şehre gelip giden tacirlerden mürit ve dostları olduğu bilinen Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî'nin dönemin en seçkin zümresini temsil eden bu kişiler ile münasebetinin mahiyeti genellikle mürşit-mürit ilişkisi çerçevesinde şekillenmiştir. Ayrıca Selçuklu Konya'sında yaşayan diğer âlim ve sufilerin Mağrip'ten yani Batı dünyasından dostları varken Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî'nin Horasan, Irak, Hindistan gibi Doğu bölgelerinden tacir dostları olması dikkat çekicidir. Şüphesiz bu durum, Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî'nin doğduğu topraklar ve aile bağları ile ilgili bir gelişme olarak göze çarpmaktadır. Diğer yandan Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî'nin tüccarlar ile ilişkisi tasavvufi gelenek üzerinden şekillenirken, şehir eşrafı ile münasebetleri siyasi ve sosyal yaşamın dinamikleri ile gelişmiştir. Tüm bunlar, Selçuklular döneminde Konya'da yaşayan ve bir kısmı deniz aşırı yolculuklar yapan tüccarların isimlerini, yaptıkları işleri, hatta gidip geldikleri ülkeleri öğrenmemizi sağlayacak detayları içermektedir. Böylece hem dönemin Selçuklu ticareti hayatından kesitlerin hem de Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî'nin tüccarlar ile kurduğu bağların ortaya konulması amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışmada Mevlevi kaynakları ile Anadolu'nun yerli kaynakları üzerinden hareket ile özgün bilgiler elde edilmiş ve bunlar prosopografik yaklaşım ile yorumlanmıştır. Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî'nin tüccarlar ile genellikle mürşit-mürit çerçevesinde gelişen bir ilişkiler ağı olduğuna dair argümanlar tespit edilmiştir. Böylece tüccar zümrelerin ve şehir eşrafının, seçkin bir mutasavvıfa olan bağlılık örnekleri bağlamında Türkiye Selçuklu dünyasının zengin kültürel atmosferine yönelik ne tür katkı sağladıklarına dair sonuçlara ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Mevlânâ Celâleddîn Rûmî, Konya, Tüccar

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Introduction

Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî's (d. 672/1273) relations with merchants cannot be considered independently of the Seljuk economic system; more precisely, they cannot be separated from the commercial activities of the Mongols in Anatolia. Contrary to the prevailing view, and borrowing a concept from the historian of civilization André Miquel, the phenomenon referred to as an "internal conquest" — marked by the dynamism the Mongols brought to trade routes and the mobility of merchants — triggered the rise of a new commercial network in Anatolia. (Miquel, 1991, Vol. 1, p. 292). For instance, cities such as Erzurum, Sivas, and Trabzon acquired new commercial potential, while the Yabanlu Bazaar established in Kayseri attained the status of an international fair (Kazvinî, 1848, p. 357; Sümer, 1985, p. 15–16). Accordingly, during this very period, trade not only influenced the social diversity of the Seljuk capital, Konya, but also came to occupy a significant place in the daily lives of prominent figures such as Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî and Şadr al-Dîn Qûnawî (d. 673/1274). Indeed, Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî makes reference to the Yabanlu Bazaar in several verses of his renowned *Mathnawî* (Sümer, 1985, p. 11). Particularly, merchants of Jewish, Armenian, Venetian, Genoese, Cypriot, and North African origin settled in Konya, constructing houses and establishing neighborhoods (İbn Baţţûta, 2018, p. 282–283). For instance, the "Ermen-hans" located in and around Konya evoke the presence of Armenian merchants (Baykara, 1985, p. 67). It is also worth noting that in Seljuk Anatolia, the term used for merchants was *khwājagān* (hâcegân). Undoubtedly, this designation did not merely serve as a technical term, but rather denoted individuals of high social standing. In fact, the *khwājagān* were counted among the most influential figures of the city and were regarded in social life as important sources of information.

Merchants from Konya also undertook international journeys and were known by the nisba "al-Kûnawî al-tājir" (the merchant from Konya). For example, al-Ĥâjj Yûsuf b. Sawtagîn al-Kûnawî al-Tājir, mentioned in the endowment deed of Altun-Apa, along with Arıtmış b. Toghhan al-Kûnawî and İbn Ghâzî al-Kûnawî al-Ĥaydarî, was among such individuals (Aflākî, 2012, p. 185).

1. Merchants in the Circle of Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî

Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî attached great importance to commerce and to those engaged in trade. He encouraged his companions to engage in commerce rather than to seek assistance from others, and he had many merchant-disciples who supported him (Schimmel, 1980, p. 30; Paydaş, 2007, p. 32; Küçük, 2015, p. 509–510; Küçük, 2016, p. 88). This attitude appears to be closely related to both the economic structure of the region his family originated from and the social identities of those in his immediate circle. The city of Samarqand, where his father had migrated and temporarily settled, stood out as the most prominent commercial center of the Māwarāʾal-Nahr (Transoxiana) region; while Termidh, the birthplace of his teacher Sayyid Burhân al-Dîn Muḥaqqiq al-Tirmidhî, served as a

gateway from Māwarāʾal-Nahr to Khurāsān (Lewis, 2012, p. 81). Perhaps for this reason, merchants from Balkh and Nishapur held a significant place in Rūmī's recollections (Aflākī, 2012, p. 185). His father, Sulṭān al-ʿUlamāʾ Bahāʾ al-Dīn Walad (d. 628/1231), likened his departure from his homeland with his family to that of merchants—leaving everything behind in a spiritual exile (Lewis, 2012, p. 126).

Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's earliest experience as a teacher was also associated with the mercantile community. The *Madrasah of Penbefurūshān*, where he taught as a young scholar in Konya during the 1240s, is believed to have been endowed by the cotton merchants' guild (Lewis, 2010, p. 50). Thus, from his early years, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī established close ties with Konya's elite merchants and artisans. Aflākī, who provides detailed accounts of nearly every aspect of Mevlevī circles of the time, emphasizes that after Rūmī's death, the great merchants also seemed to have reached the end of their days:

Less than a year had passed since the death of the noble Mawlānā, when all the world's rulers, leading religious figures, elders, and great merchants departed for the hereafter, one after another. The land of Rūm was left orphaned and without leadership, and, as he had foretold, the world was turned upside down: all signs of order, harmony, and peace vanished from the face of the earth (Aflākī, 2012, p. 140).

In the following section, the dimension of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's relationships with merchants—based on real events—as well as his approach, predominantly shaped by the culture of manāqib (anecdotal hagiography centered on advice and moral teachings), will be analyzed.

a. Shams al-Dīn of Tabriz

One of the most striking aspects of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's closest friend and confidant, the architect of his intellectual framework, Shams al-Dīn of Tabriz, is the mention of his mercantile background in the *Maqālāt*. Shams al-Dīn's father was a cloth merchant who migrated from Khurāsān to Tabriz for trade purposes and settled there (Ceyhan, 2010, p. 511). The strongest evidence for Shams al-Dīn having been a merchant, or at the very least possessing a deep understanding of commerce, is seen clearly in the story of his arrival in Anatolia. According to the classical account, he embarked on his journey to Rūm, his first stop being Tabriz after leaving Damascus. He then stayed at a caravanserai in Konya, the *Shakarfurūshān Khān*, where merchant groups, particularly those from Tabriz, typically lodged. In fact, in an effort either to conceal his identity or to avoid standing out as a foreigner in the city, he took measures to be perceived as a merchant. Shams al-Dīn had previously traveled on his journeys, mostly in the capacity of a merchant (Baykara, 1985, p. 64). One of the most important authors of Mevlevī literature, Aḥmad Aflākī (d. 761/1360), recounted the process of Shams al-Dīn's arrival in Konya as follows:

He was inspired with the words, "Go to the land of Rūm to reach your true purpose and what you seek." Upon this, Shams fastened the belt of sincerity and set off for

the land of Rûm with complete truthfulness and great love. Some say that he came from Damascus to Rûm, while others claim he went to Tabriz first and then traveled to Rûm. Upon reaching the city of Konya, he famously descended at the Shakarfurûshân Khân. He rented a small room and, to ensure that people would perceive him as a wealthy merchant, he placed a rare lock worth two or three dinars on the door of the room. He tied the key to the end of a valuable scarf and draped it over his shoulder. However, inside the room, the only belongings he had were an old mat, a broken jug, and a brick pillow. Once every ten to fifteen days, he would dip a piece of dry bread into broth to make a stew and eat it (Aflākî, 2012, p. 125, 360–361).

According to this important account, Shams al-Dîn Tabrizî's journey from Damascus to Tabriz was no mere coincidence. During this period, as a result of Mongol rule, trade routes had shifted, and especially Tabriz's commercial potential had increased. The Tabriz route, operating along the Erzurum-Konya-Antalya line in Anatolia, was generally a preferred path for merchants (Burgu, 2023, p. 266). Shams al-Dîn Tabrizî's arrival in Anatolia and his choice of a merchant caravanserai over a Sufi lodge facilitates the conclusion that he was indeed a merchant. As previously mentioned, he was not someone unfamiliar with trade and economics. In his youth, he had been a disciple of the Sufi artisan Abu Bakr al-Selâbâf al-Tabrizî, who wove baskets and mats in Tabriz (Aflākî, 2012, p. 125). According to another narration, individuals with the *Tabrizî* nisba in Konya were known as merchants, and the Tabrizî merchants, mentioned in the Waqfiye of Altunapa, were prominent figures known for conducting Eastern trade in Anatolia (Baykara, 1985, p. 130).

b. Shihâb al-Dîn of Konevî

Shihâb al-Dîn Konevî (Rugânî-yî Karamîd), a merchant known for his stinginess among the disciples and within the family circle of Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî (Aflākî, 2012, p. 283), was one of Rûmî's sons-in-law, a member of his family. Shihâb al-Dîn Konevî married Efendipula Melike Hatun, the daughter of Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî and his wife Kira Hatun, in Konya, and likely remained married to her until his own death, which occurred after 1303. Rûmî wrote several famous letters, some of which were addressed to his son-in-law, Shihâb al-Dîn Konevî, in order to assist him with his commercial affairs, and most of these letters were sent to high-ranking officials. One such letter was addressed to Shihâb al-Dîn Konevî, who was facing difficulties due to the *bâc* (a type of customs tax) while conducting trade in Sivas. This letter was translated and published by one of the leading Mevlevî scholars of the late period, Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı (d. 1982).

May God grant a good end, the pride of merchants, our noble son, the faithful Shihâb al-Dîn, will elevate our letter to your highness. He is among those who pray for the prosperity of your state and for its success. He has dedicated himself to the righteous deeds that God loves and wishes to devote himself to this path. However, due to the large number of his children, he has been distracted by trade and was compelled to travel as far as Sivas.

Yet, because of the customs officers and their persistent troubles, he has been unable to continue his trade for some time. The blessings of the Sultan, the Emperor of the World, extend throughout the entire earth. He hopes that, with your blessed command, he will be freed from the customs officers and the tax, and will present this letter as proof, boasting about it to his peers (Mevlānā, 1963, p. 43-44; Lewis, 2010, p. 165).

The recipient of this letter was the powerful statesman of the time, Pervâne Mu'in al-Dīn Süleyman (d. 676/1277). In the letter, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī requests that his son-in-law be exempted from the high commercial taxes and other levies (Mevlānā, 1963, p. 260). Additionally, Rūmī had made it a regular practice to gather with his friends at his son-in-law's house to spend time together (Aflākī, 2012, p. 368). It is likely that Shihāb al-Dīn Konevī took care of the guests' needs, such as food and drink, during these gatherings.

c. Sheref al-Dīn al-Hindī

One of the merchants who played a significant role in the cultural world that nourished Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's Konya, coming from ancient civilization centers or residing and operating in the city, was Sheref al-Dīn al-Hindī. This merchant frequently traveled to India, bringing back goods that were especially sought after by individuals with refined tastes and those in search of rare items. It is noted that Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's wife, Kira Hatun, symbolically referred to a spiritual atmosphere when she presented a bouquet of roses to the wife of a man from the city. Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī was curious about these roses, which he had never seen before, and inquired with the city's perfumers to learn more about them. The perfumers of Konya, unable to identify the roses, were told by Sheref al-Dīn al-Hindī, "This rose is from India, specifically from the Serendip region. What is it doing here in the Rum climate? I need to understand how this came about and how it reached Rum." It is also recorded that Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī was somewhat disturbed when the roses were taken out and shown to foreign people (Aflākī, 2012, p. 125). As seen, in Konya, merchants and artisans, whom Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī would define as *namāhram* (those who are not of close kinship), also resided. However, the indirect interaction between his wife and this merchant suggests the existence of a more complex relationship.

d. al-Hajj Tāj al-Dīn

al-Hajj Tāj al-Dīn, also known as al-Hajj Kāshī in Aflākī's accounts, was one of the prominent merchants of the period, who acted as a messenger for scientific figures of the Seljuk era such as Sadreddin Konevī and Ahi Evren (d. 661/1262). In addition to carrying letters for these notable individuals, he also delivered letters from Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī to the Emir of Kırşehir, Seyfeddin Tuğrul, urging Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's son, Alaeddin Çelebi (d. 661/1262), to return to Konya, to his paternal home (Bayram, 2012, 67-68, 69). According to one view, the work *Tuhfetü's-Şekūr*, attributed to Ahi Evren or, according to Zehebi (d. 748/1348), to Sadreddin Konevī, was written for this merchant, al-Hajj Tāj al-Dīn (Bayram, 2012, p. 90-91). It is highly likely that this merchant, al-Hajj Kāshī,

was associated with the Kaşınhanı, located south of Konya. Over time, the name of Kāshī's inn seems to have evolved in local usage. al-Hajj Tāj al-Dīn was responsible for delivering three letters written by Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī to his son, Alaeddin Çelebi, as well as a letter to Seyfeddin Tuğrul. As demonstrated by this situation, the merchants surrounding Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī led an active life, gathering significant news and ensuring that various letters reached their intended recipients.

e. Merchant Tâceddîn

From the letters sent by Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī to the prominent Seljuk vizier Sahib Şemseddin İsfahânî (d. 1249), it is understood that a merchant named Tâceddîn was not only the messenger but also a highly praised and revered figure by Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. According to the contents of the letter, Tâceddîn was engaged in the timber trade and embarked on long journeys to sell various bronze tools. Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī requested that Sahib Şemseddin İsfahânî ensure prompt payment for the goods sold by Tâceddîn and expressed hopes for his safe return (Mevlânâ, 1963, p. 185).

f. Merchant Shamseddin al-Attâr

The merchant mentioned in a letter sent to Sultan II. İzzeddin Keykavus (d. 677/1278–79) —a letter in which Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī complains about the governor of the non-Muslim community in Sivas (referred to as the iğdişbaş) —is of particular interest. In this letter, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī requests that certain merchants, particularly Shamseddin al-Attâr, a merchant mentioned among his entourage, be exempt from taxes. Shamseddin al-Attâr appears to be regarded as a highly esteemed merchant by Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, as evidenced by the following passage in the letter: “There exists a filial bond between us. He has always regarded service to the dervishes as a sacred duty.” Moreover, it is notable that the merchant himself personally delivered this letter, and the following lines were written by Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī:

The one who brought our letter, our true son, the pride of merchants, Shamseddin, shares the bond of 'sonship' with us; he always considers serving the dervishes as a sacred duty. The Bey of the Sivas İğdişler, who has been asking for money and taxes from them and their relatives, has gone too far in his demands. We request that something be written to the Bey of İğdişler from you, so that he may know he is one of your servants; thus, by seeking refuge in your sultanhip and generosity, he will be released from all his troubles and will pray for the continuation of your state and its blessings.

The aforementioned merchant was entrusted with the task of delivering Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's letters to the vizier of the Seljuk state, Sahib Şemseddin İsfahânî, on various occasions (Mevlânâ, 1963, p. 178).

Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's relationship with merchants was not limited to Anatolia and Konya. Merchants engaged in the textile trade from Egypt were among his most esteemed merchant friends. They would bring him gifts of Alexandria fabrics and Utabî

textiles during each of their visits. Indeed, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī had a fondness for Egyptian garments.

2. Unknown Merchants

In classical Mevlevī sources, unknown merchants are generally mentioned in the context of miracles. They often serve as central figures in the unfolding of one of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's miracles. These narrative-driven events are primarily recorded in the form of moral advice or cautionary tales. As a result, merchants who disregarded Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's warnings had to endure the difficulties that befell them.

a. Merchant from Tabriz

A merchant who had come from Tabriz and stayed at the Şekerfürûş Khan in Konya inquired about the pious, revered, and knowledgeable individuals of the city and expressed a desire to meet them. The merchant was taken to Sheikh Sadreddin (Sadreddin Konevî), and upon seeing that he had servants, attendants, chamberlains, and slaves, he reacted by saying, 'I have come to the house of a prince, not a poor man.' (Eflâkî, 2012, p. 132). Disappointed by the Sheikh's affluent lifestyle, the merchant begged to be taken elsewhere, and eventually, he was brought to the madrasa of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. Here, it was revealed by Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī that the cause of the merchant's misfortunes and miseries was his ill-treatment of a dervish in the land of the Franks. Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī connected him spiritually to the Frankish dervish from the unseen realm, and after the merchant sought forgiveness and returned to Konya, he became a sincere disciple of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (Eflâkî, 2012, p. 132).

It should also be noted that Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī received donations from merchants in various ways. For example, he took 50 dinars from the merchant from Tabriz mentioned earlier." (Eflâkî, 2012, p. 132)

b. Selahaddin-i Zerkub's Merchant Friend

Selahaddin-i Zerkub, a well-known artisan and merchant, was among the sincere friends of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and was part of the circle that included many prominent figures of Konya. In fact, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī had a significant influence on figures such as Ahi Hüsameddin, one of the city's notables (Lewis, 2012, p. 168). Selahaddin-i Zerkub (d. 657/1258), who was a close friend of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, had a merchant associate who, likely wishing to engage in commercial activities in Istanbul, sought permission from Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī for this purpose. When the merchant set off for Istanbul, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī instructed him to visit a monastery in a town and deliver his greetings to the monk there. Upon reaching Istanbul, the merchant followed this instruction and entered the monastery, where he experienced certain spiritual sensations. The monk, recognizing the merchant as his friend, wrote a letter to the local lord requesting that he be protected and spared from any difficulties along his journey. After completing his business, the merchant returned to Konya and conveyed the monk's

greetings to Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî (Eflâkî, 2012, p. 158-159; Sipehsâlâr, 1977, p. 105-106).

As it is understood, Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî facilitated communication between his friends in distant lands through his merchant disciples. This was possible because merchants, due to the nature of their work, had the opportunity to enter various places and environments. Furthermore, Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî noted that in the city of Konya, merchants resided in larger and more magnificent houses compared to artisans (Eflâkî, 2012, p. 224).

c. The Merchant on the Pilgrimage

One of Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî's merchant disciples went on a pilgrimage to the Kaaba. His wife prepared halva to distribute among the poor, orphans, and neighbors, and she also brought a portion of it on a tray to Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî's disciples. The halva was greatly enjoyed by the disciples, and surprisingly, the tray never diminished. Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî took the tray, went up to the roof of the madrasa, and returned without it. When others inquired, he replied, 'I took the tray so that the pilgrim might also partake of it.' Later, when the merchant returned from the pilgrimage, he immediately visited Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî. After returning home, the tray of halva appeared among his belongings, and his wife, surprised, asked why the tray was with him. The merchant explained that while at Arafat, a hand reached out to him with the tray, which revealed that this event was a miracle of Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî (Eflâkî, 2012, p. 180-181).

d. The Merchant in the Desert

A young merchant, who had been separated from his caravan in the Syrian desert, was saved from perishing in the desert due to hunger and thirst through the intercession of Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî. He safely returned to Konya. After this event, the merchant became a disciple of Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî and offered various gifts in gratitude (Eflâkî, 2012, p. 243-244).

e. Merchants at Sea

Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî intervened spiritually when merchants traveling from Alexandria to Antalya were caught in a storm and faced the danger of sinking. This event was narrated by a member of the elite of Konya, named Tûrbedar Kadî-i Kürd. While each of the merchants sought help from their own pir and sheikh, Kadî-i Kürd invoked Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî, and it was through his intervention that the ships were saved from sinking. Upon witnessing this, the merchants came to Konya to visit Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî and presented various gifts. Among these, they gave him a robe made of Alexandria and Utabi fabrics, as well as two garments—one woolen and the other fabric—made of Egyptian cloth. They apologized for their delay in coming to him, as they had initially been delayed in saving their ships from disaster (Eflâkî, 2012, p. 378-379).

f. The Merchant Who Was a Disciple of Evhad al-Dīn Khoyī

A prominent merchant among the disciples of Sheikh Evhad al-Dīn Khoyī, who held deep affection for Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, had a son who persistently urged his father to allow him to become a disciple of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. However, the father refused to grant his request. During a gathering, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī performed a miraculous act that allowed the child to become a disciple. As a result, the merchant and his family became sincere disciples of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (Eflâkî, 2012, p. 430-431).

g. The Young Merchant Who Wanted to Go to Egypt

A young merchant residing in Konya and counted among the disciples of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī decided to travel to Egypt. His friends tried to dissuade him from this venture, and Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī himself did not approve of the journey, expressing a desire for the young disciple to abandon his intentions. However, ignoring all advice and admonitions, the young merchant set out on the road to Damascus and boarded a ship in Antioch, only to be captured by Frankish pirates. He was imprisoned in a pit for forty days, repeatedly lamenting that the misfortune had befallen him for disregarding his master Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's counsel. On the fortieth day, he had a dream in which Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī instructed him to respond, "*I know whatever the Franks ask,*" to any inquiry they might make. When the Franks approached and asked whether he knew medicine, he replied affirmatively. They then informed him that their commander was ill. Through Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's spiritual support, the merchant managed to treat the illness and, as a reward, was granted his freedom and allowed to return to Konya. Upon his return, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī advised the young merchant to pursue lawful earnings and contentment (Eflâkî, 2012, p. 154–155).

The late Franklin Lewis made a significant claim that the spread of the Mevlevi order can be traced back to its mercantile roots (Lewis, 2012, p. 473). This assertion aligns well with the urban foundation of the Mevlevi tradition. For many years, the Mevlevi Order maintained its presence under the patronage of the urban elite, stretching from Iran to the Balkans.

Conclusion

Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī took active steps to protect and support the merchants who were among his disciples and close companions. He communicated with the statesmen of his time through letters to advocate on behalf of these individuals. In return, prominent merchants and members of the local elite offered him their sincere support.

According to information derived from the chronicles of the period and the literature specific to the Mevlevi order, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī not only encouraged commercial activity but also maintained direct relationships with figures engaged in trade.

From the institutionalization of the Mevlevi order onward—shaped by Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî's teachings and evolving after his time—the movement came to reflect characteristics typical of urban culture, especially when compared to other Sufi orders active in Anatolia. This urban character of the Mevlevi Order is undoubtedly a result of its close connection with artisans and merchants, a relationship that continues to shape its role in modern urban life.

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