

TO PLUCK A ROSE FROM GÁF AND LÁM: ON THE DISSOLUTION OF THE DERVISH  
LODGES IN TURKEY

by

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To Pluck a Rose from Gáf and Lám: On the Dissolution of the Dervish Lodges in Turkey

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In 1925, the Republic of Turkey passed “The law relating to the closure of dervish lodges and tombs, and the abolishment of various titles” as one part of its sweeping reforms aiming to modernize the country. The law, which closed down dervish lodges of all Sufi sects and banned the usage of religious titles and clothes, also ruptured the fabric of everyday religio-cultural life in many localities.

This thesis aims to examine the impact of Law no. 677 through the case study of the Mevlevî order. Through a series of interviews conducted with eight modern-day descendants of members of the Mevlevî order, this work analyzes the memory of the closure that interviewees have inherited from their community. It demonstrates that, despite being some of the most ardent supporters of the closure, the members of the Mevlevî order experienced inter-generational trauma through their efforts to adhere to the law.

## CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

I.	“THE SILENT ONES” .....	1
II.	THE MEVLEVÎ ORDER AND ITS PRACTICES .....	6
III.	LAW NO. 677 AND ITS INTELLECTUAL LINEAGE .....	12
IV.	LITERATURE REVIEW .....	17
V.	NOTES ON METHOD .....	20

### CHAPTER I: THE MEVLEVÎS AS ENTHUSIASTIC SUBJECTS OF THE LAW

I.	A HISTORY OF THE MEVLEVÎ COMMUNITY IN THE AFTERMATH OF LAW NO. 677.....	25
II.	INTERVIEWEES’ EFFORTS TO INTEGRATE THEMSELVES INTO THE LARGER NARRATIVE OF THE TURKISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, THE FORMATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY, AND MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK .....	34
III.	THESIS OF DEGENERATION: HOW INTERVIEWEES JUSTIFY LAW NO. 677 IN KEMALIST TERMS.....	42

### CHAPTER II: THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN STATE AND TRADITION—NARRATIVES OF LOSS

I.	“THE SILENT ONES” .....	54
II.	GÜZIDE ÇELEBİ.....	56
III.	FERDA TARZI.....	59
IV.	DILEK YAZICI.....	64
V.	EVRİM BULUT .....	66
VI.	GÜLÖREN SAKIZ & NILGÜN ÇAKMAK .....	70

CONCLUSION.....	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	76

## FIGURES

1.	The Yenikapı Mevlevî dervish lodge (Istanbul) from Birdseye view .....	1
2.	A classroom in Fatih Sultan Mehmet University's Topkapı Campus .....	2
3.	The last four Makam Çelebi .....	5
4.	Headdress of the Mevlevî order: Sikke.....	10
5.	Headdress of the Mevlevî order: Arakiyye.....	11
6.	Lale Dai (right) and myself.....	21
7.	The Çelebi family in Aleppo, Syria.....	29
8.	Sheikh Abdülbâkî Baykara .....	31
9.	Sheikh Bahâeddin of the Eskişehir Mevlevî dervish lodge and his son Hüseyin Cahit.....	32
10.	Abdülhalim Çelebi and President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk .....	36
11.	Two weaving machines at Eskişehir Mevlevî dervish lodge.....	53
12.	Güzide Çelebi and Celaleddin Çelebi with their daughter in Aleppo, Syria.....	56
13.	Celaleddin Çelebi with two Dedes in Aleppo, Syria .....	58
14.	Hüsametdin Yenier .....	53
15.	The wood-panel ceiling of the Semahane of the Demirci Mevlevî dervish lodge .....	53

## INTRODUCTION

### “THE SILENT ONES”

I find a sort of haunting beauty in a dervish lodge. As a child, I loved to trace their corridors and imagine the way dervishes would have moved quietly through the space, every movement a controlled performance of a ritual. I liked to imagine it alive: dervishes exiting the building backwards, bowed in respect to the space, the living side by side with the silent dead, whose graves covered a large portion of the complex, an initiate sitting in the corner of the kitchen peeling piles of onions and remembering teachings of how to control his ego...

It was because of this that a particular incident that occurred, back in 2011, affected me deeply. My mother had just returned from a visit from the Yenikapı Mevlevî dervish lodge, a vast complex just outside the old city limits of Istanbul that once housed over 100 dervishes (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> I had particularly fond memories of that dervish lodge, as various relatives of mine had lived there over several generations, and both my great and great-great grandfathers were buried



Figure 1: The Yenikapı Mevlevî dervish lodge (Istanbul) from Birdseye view. The cemetery (Hamuşan) can be seen on the far left.

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<sup>1</sup> *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. “Yenikapı Mevlevîhanesi,” accessed July 20, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/yenikapi-mevlevihanesi>.

in the cemetery on the grounds. My mother told us, “They didn’t allow me to enter the grounds.” *They*, of course, were the doormen of Fatih Sultan Mehmet University, who used the complex as one of their campuses (Fig. 2).<sup>2</sup> She continued, “I told them who I was and that I was just going to go pray at my grandfather’s grave but they still didn’t let me in. They told me to do my prayers from outside the compound wall.” Instead, my mother had huddled in front of the wall surrounding the complex and managed to catch a glimpse of the graves through its bars.

At that time, I could not understand why she had not been allowed in. It was as if she had told me that she had been denied entry to her home by two strangers. At the same time, I was aware that this thought process was somewhat absurd—visiting the grave of a family member, while a respectful and caring act, is not as serious to liken it to an exile. Coming from a Sufi family of the Mevlevî tradition, I was taught that “Believers do not die, at most they move from one home to another.”<sup>3</sup> Death is a return to the only Truth, God, who is everywhere and within



Figure 2: A classroom in Fatih Sultan Mehmet University’s Topkapı Campus. The campus is the restored building of the Yenikapı Mevlevî dervish lodge. The classroom depicted below would have been the cell of two Mevlevî dervishes.

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<sup>2</sup> “Topkapı Yerleşkesi,” Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf Üniversitesi, accessed May 22, 2019, <http://ffsmsem.fatihsultan.edu.tr/FSM-SEM-Foto-Galeri-Mekan-Resimleri--Topkapı-Yerleskesi-Egitim-Mekanlarimiz>.

<sup>3</sup> Celaleddin M. Bakır Çelebi, in discussion with H. Hüseyin Top, quoted in Top, *Mevlevî usûl ve âdâbı*, 245.

everything. Focusing on the physical space of my grandfathers' graves was illogical, as their bodies were simply temporary, mortal coats for their souls. They were not at their graves, they were now everywhere.

Yet I could not deny the act of visiting their graves *was* important to me. In the Mevlevî order, a graveyard is known as *Hamuşan*, or the “Silent Ones.”<sup>4</sup> Like in many other Sufi traditions, Mevlevîs believe that God and those who have returned to him are everywhere, yet the space of the grave is regarded as the locus of their lasting presence. Mevlevî Sheikh Hüseyin Top explains, “Those elders of Islam and Sufism that we visit at their graves are blessed individuals who spread spiritual richness and honor from their graves [...] Those who are in their blessed presence, can purify themselves by breathing in their spiritual prosperity and plentifulness, and experience many great emotions [...] and conduce towards gaining those great individuals' favor.”<sup>5</sup> In the same way, the Silent Ones are everywhere, but they are *particularly* there in their graves. Mevlevîs in the presence of a *silent one* act the same as when they are in the presence of a spiritual elder. They bow while entering their presence, they leave by slowly backing away.

This points to a larger issue: one cannot progress along the Sufi path by simply reading a book, or taking in information. Knowledge is only truly known when it is experienced, as opposed to being merely known—and the method to do this is through action.<sup>6</sup> Yet, one part of me insisted that the act of venerating a grave site was a non-essential religious practice, and another insisted that it was. One side said the Mevlevî tradition was less a Sufi order and more a

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout this thesis I have employed the modern Turkish spellings of technical terms except in cases where the term has entered the English language; in those cases, I have followed Merriam-Webster.

<sup>5</sup> Top, *Mevlevî usûl ve âdâbı*, 59.

<sup>6</sup> Lapidus, “Knowledge, Virtue, and Action,” 39.

“path of love and a cultural movement,”<sup>7</sup> and another thought that it was a Sufi order with all the trappings of one. In my mindset, there were two “Mevlevî traditions,” one that focused on embodying centuries of tradition, and one that was a uniquely modern phenomenon born in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century. One was a Mevlevî tradition had become disembodied and internalized, and the other was based in specific spaces and practices.

This was why I was brought to such pain at the idea of not being able to visit my grandfathers’ graves, and also why I had such difficulty explaining to myself and others why it brought me such pain. This thesis is, on one level, an effort to explain to myself and others why I, my family, and my friends experience this pain. My self is deeply intertwined with the feelings and knowledge of the path of a Mevlevî because I am a 23<sup>rd</sup> generation descendant of Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî, the *Pir* (patron saint) of the Mevlevî order. The descendants of Rumi have been the spiritual leaders of the Mevlevî order for more than 700 years.

In 1923, the Ottoman Empire took its last breath and from its ashes the Republic of Turkey was born. The nation was born already exhausted from years of war, but there was a sense of enthusiasm for this new beginning. A series of sweeping reforms followed, changing everything in the country from its laws and its institutions to what its people wore. Among these reforms was one that particularly affected my family—Law no. 677, titled “The law relating to the closure of dervish lodges and tombs, and the abolishment of various titles.”<sup>8</sup> Following the passing of this law, the government seized the assets of dervish lodges, evicted their inhabitants, and sealed their doors.

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<sup>7</sup> Top, *Mevlevî usûl ve âdâbı*, 59.

<sup>8</sup> Tekke ve zâviyelerle türbelerin seddine ve türbedarlıklarıyla birtakım ünvânların men’ ve ilgâsına dâir kânun, (Law no. 677/1925) (Tur.).

For my family, it meant that my great-great-grandfather Abdülhalim Çelebi had to order all of his dervishes to leave their dervish lodges within the borders of Turkey (Fig. 3). My family, who had lived in the dervish lodge surrounding the tomb of Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî, had to leave its premises as it was converted to a museum. The men of my family put away the particular religious garb of a Mevlevî dervish, and put on the hat and suit of the Western, modern man. All of their wealth and land, which had been tied to the institution of the Sufî order, was donated to the Republic of Turkey. More importantly, however, they lost the space of the dervish lodge and the particular knowledge that stemmed from that space. They lost the particular type of people who lived in those spaces. Though I am a woman and could have never been a dervish in this male-dominated tradition, there is a bone-deep sense of loss instilled in me, a sense that something untouchable and unnamable is missing.

Yet my family has always been proud to say they adhered to Law no. 677, and have always been enthusiastic advocates of the then president of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. While there were many complex factors that gave rise to Law no. 677, in the Turkish public imagination its sole creator was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk—and my family has

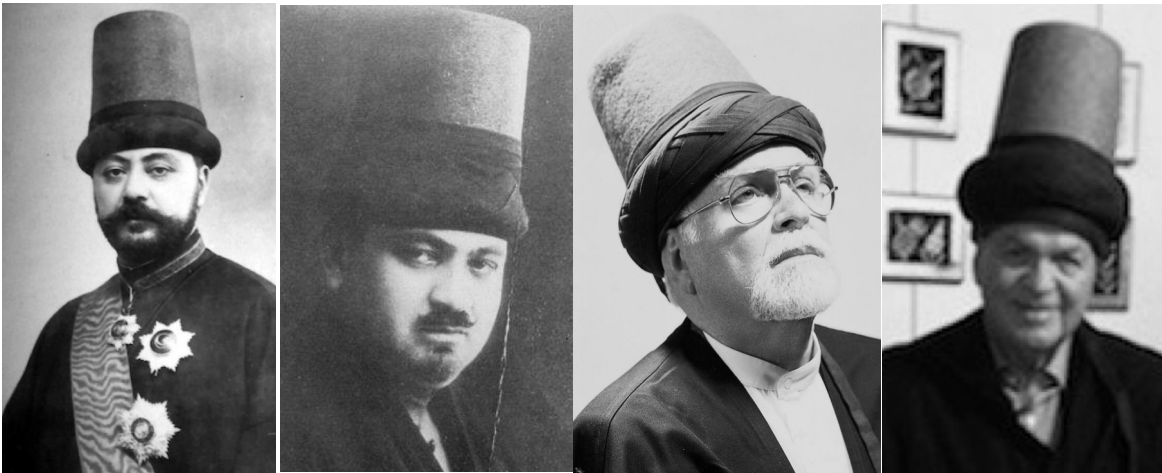


Figure 3: The last four Makam Çelebi. From left to right: Abdülhalim Çelebi, Bakır Çelebi, Celaleddin Bakır Çelebi, and Faruk Hemdem Çelebi. From the Çelebi family archive.

always loved the man for it. We proudly declare ourselves “Kemalists,” and attempt to live up to the deceased president’s ideals. When one looks upon us it would be difficult to recognize dervishes, but instead a group of bankers, engineers, businessmen and women, dressed in Western-style clothes. Not a single one of my ancestors would have criticized Atatürk for “his” choice of deciding to close the dervish lodges, because Atatürk worked in their best interest. We say, “Atatürk was a lover of Sufism” and “Atatürk loved the Mevlevî order, but he had to close it for the good of the country.”<sup>9</sup>

We are not alone. In this thesis, through a series of interviews I conducted with modern-day descendants of members of the Mevlevî order prior to Law no. 677, I will demonstrate the shared effect the law had on the members of this community. I will argue that, despite being some of the most enthusiastic supporters of the law, the members of the Mevlevî order experienced inter-generational trauma through their efforts to adhere to it. This was due in part to the notion that religion is an internalized state, a notion that was used to cleave externality from the tradition as a whole. Subsequently, Mevlevîs struggled between their deep connection to Kemalism and the state, and the tangible and intangible heritage they lost through its effects.

## THE MEVLEVÎ ORDER AND ITS PRACTICES

Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî was a 13<sup>th</sup>-century Sufi saint, poet, and jurist. Rumi, who was born in the city of Balkh within the borders of modern-day Afghanistan, lived most of his life in the Seljuk Empire. He died in 1273 in the city of Konya, part of what would later be the Republic of Turkey.<sup>10</sup> Upon his death, he left behind a large number of followers, who continued to learn from his teachings. These followers, already known as “Mevlevîs”, were formally

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<sup>9</sup> However, sources that aim to prove such claims are mostly anecdotal and lack subtractive evidence.

<sup>10</sup> *Encyclopædia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Djalâl al-Dîn Rûmî.”

organized as a Sufi order by Mevlâna Celâleddin-i Rumi's eldest son Sultan Veled.<sup>11</sup> With his death, the leadership of the Sufi order continued in patrilineal fashion, a line that remained unbroken until 1925. This leader of the Mevlevî order came to be known as *Makam Çelebi*. Through the generations, the Sufi order slowly spread, eventually establishing over thirty-four dervish lodges across the Balkans, Anatolia, and the Middle East. Konya remained the center of the Mevlevî order, and the location in which the *Makam Çelebi* lived.

As generations passed, the method in which Rumi's teachings were taught and embodied in the dervish lodges changed and evolved. In the Mevlevî tradition, this embodiment of Rumi's teachings is frequently described in one word, *adab*. Literally, it is a word meaning a "hereditary norm of conduct [...] derived from ancestors and other persons who are looked up to as models."<sup>12</sup> It was a concept of what a person should know, be, and do to perfect the art of living.<sup>13</sup> In this manner, *adab* is "part of a system of Muslim ideas, part of an interrelated set of concepts that constitutes the basic vocabulary of Islamic belief and makes up a Muslim anthropology of man."<sup>14</sup> In its most basic sense, it argues that the religious knowledge imparted in the Qur'an, hadith, and sharia can only truly be understood by action and experience. Further still, it makes a comment about the nature about knowledge itself, and that true knowing is insight: experience charged with feeling.<sup>15</sup> If the institution of a Mevlevî dervish lodge was to educate people on Rumi's teachings, it needed to turn it into a code of conduct (*adab*) that, by embodying, dervishes could forge both their characters and their minds. This code of conduct influenced everything in the dervish lodge, from the manner in which one prayed to how one

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<sup>11</sup> *Encyclopædia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Djalâl al-Dîn Rûmî."

<sup>12</sup> *Encyclopædia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Ādab."

<sup>13</sup> Lapidus, "Knowledge, Virtue, and Action," 39.

<sup>14</sup> Lapidus, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Lapidus, 39.

entered a room, ate food, greeted other people, and comported oneself. By acting in this manner, a Mevlevî dervish could perfect the art of living as an ideal Muslim.

Nearly all the practices of the Mevlevî order are based around the building of the dervish lodge.<sup>16</sup> The Mevlevî dervish lodge is intentionally designed to facilitate the character formation of its dervishes. While there are some variations between the architectural designs of Mevlevî dervish lodges, they always include the following spaces: *Selamlık* (public quarters), *Harem* (private quarters), *Semahane* (the Sema ritual room), a tomb, a masjid, *Meydan-ı Şerif* (square), *Matbah-ı Şerif* (kitchen), and *Derviş Hücreleri* (dervish cells).<sup>17</sup>

One enters the dervish lodge through a public gate called *Cümle Kapısı*, which separates the dervish lodge complex from the outer world both physically and spiritually. The dervishes live, sleep, and pray in their individual cells, which are typically connected with a narrow corridor to the *Matbah-ı Şerif*.<sup>18</sup> From the *Matbah*, or kitchen, the *ser-tabbâh* or *aşçı dede*, literally meaning “the Cook Elder,” both organizes the cooking of food and the teaching of novices. Through the daily acts necessary for running a kitchen, he spiritually “cooks” or matures novices into dervishes. If the dervish lodge is big enough, there may be a *Somathane* or dining room nearby, containing large circular tables where Mevlevî dervishes eat in a specific ritual that facilitates feelings of brotherhood and respect. Typically, in a separate building there is the *Semahane*, meaning literally “the house of Sema,” a large room containing a central circular stage in which the Mevlevî Sema ceremony is performed.<sup>19</sup> There is usually a tomb of a

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<sup>16</sup> Gölpınarlı, *Mevlevî adab ve erkânı*, 13–14.

<sup>17</sup> Gölpınarlı, 13–14.

<sup>18</sup> Gölpınarlı, 13–14.

<sup>19</sup> The Mevlevî Sema ceremony is a particular version of Sema characteristic of the Mevlevî order. Sema is a devotional practice in which the listener, by listening to music or poetry, aims to induce intense emotional transports or states of grace. These manifestations are often accompanied by movements, physical agitation or dance which are of set form or otherwise. Mevlâna Celâleddin-i Rumi is noted to have been particularly fond of this ritual, and organized Sema gatherings with his followers. Through the

prominent Saint or elder semi-attached to the building of the *Semahane*, and a masjid either attached or close-by.<sup>20</sup> Typically, slightly separate from the rest of the complex with its own door, there is a *Harem*, a house or apartment in which the sheikh and his family live.<sup>21</sup> Like a sheikh, the family residing in the *Harem* were public figures and represented the Mevlevî way in the larger community.

As with most Sufi orders, there are levels of initiation to the Mevlevî order. There are three ranks: sheikh, *dede*, and novice.<sup>22</sup> A Mevlevî *dede*, meaning literally “grandfather” or “elder” in Turkish, is a dervish who has fulfilled his period of trial (*çile*) and has right to live in one of the cells of the dervish lodge. Mevlevî dedes are also allowed to marry and move to a private house. They can be recognized by the tall and thin felt hat they wear, called a *sikke* or *dal sikke* (Fig. 4). A novice, or *muhip*, is a candidate dervish who goes through levels of initiation that eventually culminate in a period of 1,001 days of service, called a trial. They can be recognized by the short, felt hat they wear, called an *arakîyye* (Fig. 5). Sheikh, a term meaning “Elder” in Arabic, is an individual who guides novices and dervishes along the Sufi path. In the Mevlevî tradition, such an individual must have an *icazet* (permission) from another Mevlevî sheikh, and a *Makam Çelebi*. He is the spiritual and material head of a Mevlevî dervish lodge, and is known as *Efendi* (Master). He is quickly recognizable from the colored turban wrapped around his *sikke*, called a *destar* (Fig. 4).

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contributions of figures such as Sultan Veled, Ulu Arif Çelebi, and Pir Adil Çelebi, the Mevlevî Sema ceremony became a form of Sema in which the act of dancing was put to the forefront. When previously the dancing of a Sema was spontaneous, the Mevlevî Sema ceremony formalized every aspect of the ritual and dance and packed it with signs that reminded the dervish of the path he was on. The Mevlevî order would later become known specifically for their special emphasis on the Sema ceremony.

*Encyclopædia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “samā”; *Encyclopædia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Mawlawiyya.”

<sup>20</sup> Gölpınarlı, 13–14.

<sup>21</sup> Gölpınarlı, 13–14.

<sup>22</sup> *Encyclopædia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Mawlawiyya.”

While this hierarchy also functions as socio-political status, its true purpose is to facilitate teaching and learning. Without this hierarchy, knowledge cannot be transferred to the next generation of dervishes, as the nature of this knowledge is oral and demonstrative. Without the Mevlevî *dedes*, there is no one to guide and teach the novices. Without the sheikhs, there is no one for the Mevlevî *dedes* to look as an exemplar and turn to when the need arises.

Alongside the different ranks, dervishes also have separate fixed roles, which are also accompanied by titles such as: *kazancı dede*, *aşçı dede*, *meydancı dede*. Each duty of the dervishes' functions on multiple levels. For example, the *Pazarıcı*, the novice who goes into the bazaar to shop or sell goods, is on one level accomplishing the simple economic needs of the Mevlevî dervish lodge. He is also functions as a symbol of the dervish lodge, demonstrating the elegance of the Mevlevî tradition within the larger community through his controlled demeanor. However, by being a public figure in this manner the *Pazarıcı* too can further develop his self, and is assisted in his attempts to embody the Mevlevî tradition.

This is not to say that the Mevlevî order functioned solely as a monastic tradition. As Carl Ernst notes, “although many Sufi lineages have maintained lodges where members could reside under the instruction of a master, there were various levels and degrees of involvement with Sufi



Figure 4: Headdress of the Mevlevî order. At the front sits Sheikh Nedim Karnıbüyükler, wearing *destarlı sikke* that denotes his position as a sheikh. At the background sits his dervishes, who wear *dal sikke*, which denote their position as dervishes.

orders by merchants, rulers, and ordinary people on a less than full-time basis.”<sup>23</sup> The same is the case for the Mevlevî order, which had formal initiation rites for laypeople where they were bestowed an *arakîyye*. While what a layperson exactly *did* is not clear in the literature, it is possible to piece together a picture of a day in the life of a lay Mevlevî through oral and written accounts. Lay Mevlevîs were most likely connected to a specific dervish lodge and sheikh.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, it seems that laypeople would visit the dervish lodge they were connected to often.<sup>25</sup> At the dervish lodge, laypeople could listen to religious discussion (*sohbet*), ask advice and guidance from their sheikh or Mevlevî dedes, perform certain rituals, and observe certain rituals. They would have tried to embody Mevlevî *adab* in their daily lives, but of course their level of dedication could not be the same as a full-time dervish. However, it is clear that a large group of people took advantage of the knowledge that was available to them within these spaces.



Figure 5: Headdress of the Mevlevî order. An *arakîyye* denotes a layperson or novice.

<sup>23</sup> Ernst, *Sufism*, 121.

<sup>24</sup> The *Defter-i Dervîşan* (dervish notebook) of the Yenikapı Mevlevî dervish lodge, a notebook containing the notes of several generations of sheikhs (from Sheikh Ali Nutki Dede (1762–1804) to the last Sheikh of the Yenikapı Mevlevî dervish lodge, Sheikh Abdülbâkî Baykara), contains lists of laymen and laywomen who were given *arakîyye*. This is supported by lay Mevlevîs who have written about their lives, such as Hasan Ali Yücel and Tevhîde Hanım, who specifically note they were connected to the Yenikapı and Manisa Mevlevî dervish lodges respectively. Kaya and Küçük, comps., *Defter-i Dervîşan: Yenikapı Mevlevîhanesi günlükleri*; Yücel, *Geçtiğim günlerden*, 48; Tevhîde Hanım, *Tevhîde Hanım ve Dîvânı*.

<sup>25</sup> For example, in his childhood, Hasan Ali Yücel often visited the Yenikapı Mevlevî dervish lodge with his mother.

## LAW NO. 677 AND ITS INTELLECTUAL LINEAGE

Law no. 677 was merely one among a series of reforms put forth by the regime of President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk that aimed to “modernize” all aspects of life in the Republic of Turkey so the region could “catch up with the West.”<sup>26</sup> With this aim, the Kemalist regime reformed everything from the political system, the economy and education to even changes in cultural life. To accomplish this, between 1924 and 1928 the state launched a drastic secularization program: the Caliphate was abolished and with it the removal of the position of *Şeyhülislam* (the office of the chief *mufti*) and the closure of religious schools (March 1924), Islamic law courts were dismantled (April 1924), all Sufi orders and lodges were shut down (1925). A civil code of law was established to replace Islamic law (1926), and Islam was dropped from the position of state religion (1928).<sup>27</sup> With these reforms, religion, which had been an important part of state legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire, was confined to the private sphere in the Republic of Turkey.

Law no. 677 stated:

All the dervish lodges in the Turkish Republic, either in the form of *vakıf* [religious endowments] or under the personal property right of its sheikh or established in any other way, are closed. Those used as mosques and masjids may be retained as such.

The wearing of dervish garbs, and using and giving service to titles such as sheikh, dervish, *mürid* [disciple], *dede* [Elder], *çelebi* [descendant of Rumi or Hacı Bektâş-ı Veli], *seyyid* [descendant of the Prophet Muhammad], *baba* [sheikh], *emir* [descendant of the Prophet Muhammad], *nakib* [dervish leader], *halife* [deputy sheikh], fortune-teller, magician, and healer are prohibited.

The tombs of the dervish orders are closed, and the profession of tomb keeping is abolished. Those who open closed dervish lodges or tombs, and those who re-establish them or those who give temporary places to Sufi orders or to people who are called by

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<sup>26</sup> Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, 81.

<sup>27</sup> Altunışık and Tür, *Turkey*, 21.

any of the mystical name mentioned above or those who serve them, will be sentenced to at least three months in prison and will be fined at least fifty Turkish liras.<sup>28</sup>

On the level of religious practice, this meant that the monastic life of dervishes could no longer be continued. Additionally, dervishes, novices, and laypeople could not meet with or serve their sheikhs, and pilgrimages to and venerations of tombs of prominent Sufi figures were banned. It is important to note what this law does *not* state, which is that “Sufism” or “Sufi rituals” are not outlawed. Instead, the law works to only to dismantle Sufi orders as a social class. Aspects such as titles, clothes, and buildings gave expression to social and political structures that could undermine the newly formed democracy.

While buildings also express socio-political institutions, as the prior description of the Mevlevî tradition has demonstrated, the Mevlevî tradition had formed nearly all of its rituals around the space of the dervish lodge. Hamid Algar notes in “Devotional Practices of the Khalid Naqshbandis of Ottoman Turkey” that “The complex ceremonies, rich in outward detail, movement, and accoutrement, of orders such as the Mevlevîs, Bektaşîs, Rifâîs, and even Kâdirîs, made them infinitely more needful of the [dervish lodges] than the Nakşibendîs; for them the [dervish lodges] were a cultic structure, whereas for the Nakşibendîs it was little more than a meeting place.”<sup>29</sup> Cutting away these aspects of the Sufism in Turkey, while transformative for Sufi orders such as the Nakşibendî, was catastrophic for the Mevlevî order. Training the next generation of Mevlevîs could simply not be as rigorous. In the same way, titles and clothes were not just expressions of social class, but played a large role in pious subject formation. As Saba Mahmood notes, outward bodily gestures and acts such as religious garbs clothes are

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<sup>28</sup> Tekke ve zâviyelerle türbelerin seddine ve türbedarlıklarıyla birtakım ünvanların men’ ve ilgâsına dâir kânun, (Law no. 677/1925) (Tur.). Translation taken heavily from Mevlevî Sheikh Ibrahim Gamard’s website, <http://dar-al-masnavi.org>.

<sup>29</sup> Algar, “Khalid Naqshbandis,” 222.

indispensable aspects of the pious self in two senses: “first in the sense that the self can acquire its particular form only through the performance of the precise bodily enactments; and second in the sense that the prescribed bodily forms are necessary attributes of the self.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, the Sufi religious garbs the law outlawed were necessary not just as an outer expression of the dervishes’ adherence principles of a tradition, but also as a method with which to invoke the principles of a tradition within the wearer.

Moreover, while the most visible members of Sufi orders were dervishes and sheikhs who devoted their lives to their specific doctrines and practices, as mentioned prior, there were also less demanding forms of affiliation which rendered the dervish lodge and religious practice occurring within it more accessible to ordinary people.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, scholars such as John Robert Barnes and Zeynep Kezer have noted that the closure of the dervish lodges and tombs marked the end of a variety of communal practices and “ruptured the fabric of everyday life in many localities.”<sup>32</sup> During the 1920s, in Istanbul alone, there were approximately 250 lodges, which is one indication of the pervasiveness of Sufism.<sup>33</sup> During WWI, nearly twenty-five percent of the male population of Istanbul was affiliated with a dervish lodge in some capacity and visited one at least once a week.<sup>34</sup> The closure of these dervish lodges effected not just these dervishes, but the communities around them.

Of course, this is only the law itself; coupled with the law itself was the rhetoric it was soaked in, which effected Sufis just as heavily. Three months before passing Law no. 677, President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk would hint towards the rationale behind the law as the

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<sup>30</sup> Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 133.

<sup>31</sup> Kezer, *Building Modern Turkey*, 98.

<sup>32</sup> Kezer, 98.

<sup>33</sup> Barnes, “Dissolution of the Dervish Orders,” 33.

<sup>34</sup> Kreiser, “Dervish Living,” 49.

following:

What could the purpose of existing *tarikats* [Sufi orders] be but to make their followers happy in earthly and spiritual life? I will never accept people so primitive as to search for material and nonmaterial happiness in the warning of so and so sheikh instead of knowledge, science and the light of civilization (Strong clapping). Dear Sirs and Lo, the people, know this well, the Republic of Turkey cannot be the land of sheikhs, dervishes, disciples, and followers. The most correct, the truest *tarikats* [path] is the *tarikats* of Civilization (Continuous clapping). To do what civilization commands and requests is enough to be human. *Tarikats* [Sufi order] leaders will understand this truth I am uttering and they themselves will immediately close their dervish lodges, and accept that their disciples have reached the right path.<sup>35</sup>

The rationales of “modernity, science, and civilization” would not only be used in this law, but all of the Kemalist reforms, from large decisions such as the abolishment of the Caliphate to surface-level reforms such as the Hat Law which required citizens to dress in European style. It is thus very important to understand what the Kemalist elite meant by the term. In an interview with a French reporter in 1923, Atatürk lays his perspective on the issue in clear terms:

“Countries are manifold, but civilization is singular. For a nation to progress, it must join this singular civilization ... We always walked from East to West ... All our work was to create a modern, and thus Western, government in Turkey.” The idea that civilization is singular cast the West as civilization *itself*. Thus, within the context of this rhetoric, there were only two options: to be Western and progress, or to be Eastern and not progress. Atatürk’s creation of the Turkish nation-state functioned very much in the same manner, replacing everything that was “backward” and “Ottoman” with everything that was “modern” and embodied modern Turkish civilization.

This concept was rooted in the thought of the Young Turks, the ideological precursor to the Kemalist regime. The law was just one other stone thrown in the effort to “modernize” the

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<sup>35</sup> Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, “Kastamonu’da ikinci konuşma,” August 30, 1925, Republican People's Party Kastamonu headquarters, transcript, in Arsan, comp., *Atatürk söylev ve demeçleri*, 215. Translated to English by myself.

region and “catch up” to European civilization, an effort that began 86 years ago with the beginning of the Ottoman Empire's *Tanzimat* (Reorganization) Period (1839–1876). Occurring in what would later be named by historians as the “Decline period” of Ottoman history, this period was marked by a series of reforms inspired by Europe with an aim to once more become political rivals with the region and stop the slow dissolving of the Ottoman empire. Among many of the reforms, European style modern education and culture was encouraged, and various elites were sent to Europe (particularly France) to study. This had a huge effect on the Empire not only physically, in the creation of institutions and laws, but also in the mentality of the elite and middle classes. The Young Turks, a movement that was both born of the *Tanzimat* period and was its end, was strongly influenced by European thought. Wishing to make even more radical reforms than what the *Tanzimat* period had presented, religion was just one more aspect that could ensure the modernization of the country. Young Turks such as Ziya Gökalp and Ahmet Rıza saw religion as an instrument of social control and cohesion. Islam had an important function as the cement of society, a common ground between Turks. Good Islam was that which was controlled by the nation and served the nation, while Bad Islam was anything that went against certain Western ideals. However, the ideals of the West were seen to be broad, including everything from the positive sciences and democracy, to the listening to Western music and wearing Western-style clothes.

As the ideological inheritor of the Young Turk movement of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, the Kemalist elite also took on its dichotomous view of religion. By creating the Ministry of Religion, they institutionalized “Good Islam” and gained control of it. Islam, which had previously been multi-faceted, not just with the presence of different sects but also different congregations, became singular and centralized. The religion of Turkey was Sunni Islam, created

by muftis who were government bureaucrats and taught at primary and secondary schools, with mosques as its institutional epicenter, and shunning all “excess” religious practice.

The “Reactionaries” were those who did not adhere to this model. The Mevlevî order was thus in the position of a Reactionary group—but could redeem itself by “immediately closing their dervish lodges themselves, and accepting that their disciples had reached the right path.” Indeed, this is what the Mevlevî order did. It seemed that, if they did this, there would be a place for the Mevlevîs in the new Republic.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There is surprisingly little literature explaining the impact of Law no. 677,<sup>36</sup> not because of lack of interest, but due to its continuing importance. Books studying the religious reforms of the 1920s typically mention the topic of the closure of the Sufi orders in one sentence, and then promptly move on.<sup>37</sup> However, among these changes in the religious fabric of the country, the closure of the Sufi orders and lodges is the only one which has not remained in effect. Many scholars note how citizens merely ignored bans on visiting tombs of prominent Sufi saints,<sup>38</sup> and that Sufi orders went underground, mutated into new structures, and created new practices.<sup>39</sup> Yet, as practicing within the confines of a Sufi order has been illegal since 1925, Sufi groups have been closed-off to outsiders and clandestine about their perspectives and actions until very recently. The current government, led by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has created a unique situation where Sufi orders and rituals are still illegal yet not policed, allowing for various Sufi

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<sup>36</sup> Küçük, “Sufi Reactions,” 124; Apaydın, “Belgeler ışığında.”

<sup>37</sup> An example of such a work is Altunışık and Tür, *Turkey*.

<sup>38</sup> Kezer, *Building Modern Turkey*, 100–102; Aslan, “Museumification of Rumi’s Tomb.”

<sup>39</sup> Kafadar, “New Visibility of Sufism,” 312.

groups to be newly public and vocal about their presence and opinions.<sup>40</sup> Coupled with this is a new urgency to further study this subject due to the rise of Fethullah Gülen,<sup>41</sup> the coup d'état that has been attributed to him, the recent arrest of Islamic creationist Adnan Oktar and several of his followers, and the subsequent debate in Turkish society on the harms of Sufi orders. These recent events, by bringing attention to the continuation of illegal Sufi institutions and the government's ignorance of them, creates a situation ripe for further research on Law no. 677.

The little scholarship that presents a comprehensive study of Law no. 677 has focused most of its energy on establishing the government's rationale behind the decision and tracing its ideological lineage. This is strongly influenced by the strong national interest in studying Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the large variety of populist "History of Reform" books, the nationally mandatory class and its textbooks on this topic. Sufi individuals and groups appear only in The Menemen Incident, an uprising in 1930 attributed to the Nakşibendî order, and the Sheikh Said Revolt, a Kurdish revolt led by the Nakşibendî Sheikh Said in 1925, the two only violent incidents involving Sufis during this period.<sup>42</sup> However, this is a one-sided image of what occurred and ignores how the law affected the very communities it marginalized. On the political level, the Sufi reaction to the closure of the Sufi orders and lodges was not homogenous, and

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<sup>40</sup> Examples of contemporary Sufi groups that are in the public eye are the Cerrâhî Halvetî, the Rifâî, the Kâdirî, various arms of the Nakşibendî order such as the İsmailağa. Typically, such groups have formal existence in the form of non-governmental organizations.

<sup>41</sup> Fethullah Gülen (b. 1941) is a prominent interfaith Islamic scholar, former imam, and leader of the *Hizmet* (Service) Movement. The ideological inheritor of the neo-Sufi ideological campaign of Said Nursî (1876–1960), he argued that education and work was the ultimate means to transform Muslims and their environment. To this end, the Gülenist movement spread into a complicated national and international network of educational facilities that began as a renewal of Muslim traditions, but ultimately became dangerous to the government. Currently, the Turkish government claims that Fethullah Gülen and his organization was behind the Coup attempt of 2016, though the USA has denied such allegations. For further information, refer to Yavuz, *Islamic Enlightenment* and Yavuz and Balci, *Turkey's July 15th Coup*.

<sup>42</sup> As argued in Küçük, "Sufi Reactions," 123.

there were Progressive Sufis as well as those who were Reactionary.<sup>43</sup> Among these scholarship, only İsmail Kara and Hülya Küçük have attempted to display this wide range of political responses.

However, both writers focus solely on the political responses of major Sufi figures to the religious reforms. While such study is necessary, it gives very little information on the societal, economic, cultural, and psychological impact of Law no. 677 on these communities. Such impact is glossed over, claiming that Sufi orders adapted to the situation and experienced a revival. Hülya Küçük notes “The vast majority of Turkish Sufis simply limited their religious thoughts to their individual lives ... today, nearly all Sufi orders continue performing their functions and ceremonies,”<sup>44</sup> Zeynep Kezer notes “They were resilient: they could retreat into survival mode and continue to perform their communions clandestinely ... until the opportunity to return to the public sphere would arise again,” Cemal Kafadar notes “In recent years organized Sufism ... has enjoyed a remarkable revival. Several sheikhs and their prominent followers ... grew up under the Republican state and adapted to its conditions...”<sup>45</sup> While indeed factually correct, such statements give the impression that Sufis were not overly affected by the law, and continued on with business. A close study of the narratives of Sufis who quietly continued on shows that many of them have stark and sad memories of this period, and had difficulty adapting.

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<sup>43</sup> Küçük, “Sufi Reactions,” 124.

<sup>44</sup> Küçük, “Sufi Reactions,” 142.

<sup>45</sup> Kezer, *Building Modern Turkey*, 102.

## NOTES ON METHOD

This thesis was born 2016 through a series of interviews with Lale Dai, in her capacity as the sole surviving individual who has lived in a Mevlevî dervish lodge (Fig. 6).<sup>46</sup> Lale Dai is my aunt, or more specifically my grandfather's cousin, and was raised alongside my grandfather in the Mevlevî dervish lodge of Aleppo, Syria. I interviewed her in July over a period of three days, with the aim of using our interview in a piece I was working on about women in dervish lodges. However, my interest was piqued when my initial question of "How did you come to Aleppo?" ended with a half hour tale of the Turkish War of Independence and closure of the dervish lodges. As I note in part two, "Law No. 677 and Its Intellectual Lineage," much of what she said and how she said it was mirrored what I had heard from other Mevlevî in my daily life, yet is missing from written sources of the subject. I hypothesized that, if I were to interview other Mevlevîs, I would find themes of trauma relating to the closure of the Sufi orders similar to that within Lale Dai's narrative.

Employing oral sources was essential on multiple levels. First, of course, I aimed to explain the long-term effects of the closure on this community. Second, there are little written first-hand accounts by Sufis on their experience of the closure of the Sufi orders, as being a member of a Sufi order was illegal post-1925. Third, as the Mevlevî order was highly hierarchical, oral narratives provide a voice for individuals not typically included in the scholarship.

I decided that nine interviews, supplemented by written primary and secondary sources, would be enough to begin to formulate an argument. In the summer of 2018, I interviewed four modern-day descendants of sheikhs of various Mevlevî dervish lodges: Baki Baykara, Dilek

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<sup>46</sup> This is according to my colloquial knowledge of the subject. There may be other survivors in other countries, cut off from the main Mevlevî community in Turkey.

Yazıcı, Ferda Duru Tarzi, Nilgün Çakmak and Gülören Sakız. Nilgün Çakmak and Gülören Sakız are mother and daughter, and I interviewed them jointly. I also interviewed two Çelebis: Faruk Hemdem Çelebi, and Evrim Bulut. I originally planned to interview three Çelebis, including Esin Çelebi, but I found this difficult as she was being interviewed in detail by Dr. Dilek Güldütuna of Üsküdar University during this period. Instead, after the edited transcript of this interview was published as an informal autobiography, I employed this book as an oral history instead of an interview.

Interviewees were typically grandchildren or great-grandchildren of these sheikhs, and narratives they had about the period of the closure of the law was handed down to them through family members. The memory of the closure of the dervish lodges may have been too removed in another family unit, if not for the way the Mevlevî order was structured. During the final years of the history of the Mevlevî order, sheikhs of dervish lodges were chosen from the eldest male child of the previous sheikh, creating families of sheikhs that spanned numerous generations. Thus, interviewing modern-day descendants of sheikhs meant that frequently I was interviewing



Figure 6: Lale Dai (right) and myself, Yasemin Paçalıoğlu (left), taken at the end of our interviews together in the summer of 2016.

individuals who would have been leaders in the Mevlevî order if not for Law no. 677. As such, these interviewees had an unusual amount of information relating to the generation alive during the 1920s, handed down to them from their family.

As with all oral history accounts, the bias of the interviewer is frequently as pivotal to the finished product as the speaker. This was no more evident during my process of selecting my interviewees. While there no longer exists a “Mevlevî order” in the formal sense, Mevlevîs are loosely organized in the same structure that existed prior to Law no. 677. For this reason, I know most of the Mevlevî community from the relationships I have forged in my personal and religious life. Consequently, four of the interviewees are direct family members. Faruk Hemdem Çelebi (the current Makam Çelebi) is my uncle, Güzide Çelebi (mother of Faruk Çelebi and wife of Celaleddin Çelebi) is my grandmother, Lale Dai (cousin of Celaleddin Çelebi) is my great-aunt, and Baki Baykara (grandson of the last Sheikh of Yenikapı) is my uncle four times removed. Two of the interviewees, Dilek Yazıcı (granddaughter of the last Sheikh of Isparta) and Ferda Tarzi (granddaughter of the last Sheikh of Eskişehir) are family friends. I met Evrim Bulut through my niece, as she was playmates with her daughter. Thus, I conducted all of my interviews thanks to my connection to the Çelebi family. While at times I did think that this affected the topics spoken about and the tone of the interview, it was also thanks to my position that I even had the chance to conduct some of these interviews. Only my interview with Nilgün Sakız Çakmak, whom I knew in her capacity as my art teacher during my Bachelor’s education, was conducted in no relation to my position as a member of the Çelebi family. However, even then, my position very much colored the content of our interview and the manner in which we related to each other.

Even my use of the printed materials may be affected, as many of the figures who wrote them are distant family friends (Hasan Ali Yücel, Tahir’ül Mevlevî) or relatives (Esin Çelebi Bayru

is my aunt, Celaleddin Çelebi is my grandfather). Even many of the secondary sources have similar issues, as some of their writers are either relatives of mine (Dr. Ahmet Güner Sayar) or family friends (Abdülbâkî Gölpınarlı). This is less because of my bias in source selection, and more because the Mevlevî world is in many ways a small one.

To battle my bias, I attempted to focus my narrative not only on the Çelebi family and the upper-echelon of the Mevlevî order (such as the Yenikapı, Konya, or Kütahya Mevlevî dervish lodges), but also on sheikhs of lesser-known dervish lodges. It was unfortunately not possible to integrate more individuals who were simply dede, novices, or laypeople, as sources on them are scarce and their modern-day relatives were often impossible to find.

As a last note, I find it important to mention that my ability to conduct these interviews was very much in thanks to the context of today. The religious landscape of Turkey has changed significantly in the last ten years, in large part due to the leadership of an AKP-majority government. The AKP party, or the Justice and Development Party, is a political party that came to power in Turkey in the general elections of 2002, that drew significant support from non-secular Turks and has faced objections from some segments of Turkish society that it harbors an Islamist agenda that could undermine Turkey's secular foundation.<sup>47</sup> The government has turned a clear blind eye to the actions of many Sufi orders and other religious groups and, under their leadership, many structures (particularly Madrasa, dervish lodges, tombs, and mosques) have been restored. I found that my interviews were very much aided by this atmosphere of acceptance. Interviewees were not afraid to state in detail what religious practices they performed in their houses.

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<sup>47</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Justice and Development Party," accessed May 18, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Justice-and-Development-Party-political-party-Turkey>.

In addition to this is the fact that the *Mevlevî Sema ceremony*, known to the West as the *Whirling dervishes*, has become an acceptable practice. Since 1953, when the local government of Konya allowed a group of Mevlevî dervishes to perform a *Sema* ceremony for “touristic and cultural reasons,” the government has slowly begun to employ the figure of the whirling dervish as a Turkish cultural icon. In 2005 various Mevlevîs and scholars<sup>48</sup> under the banner of the *International Mevlana Foundation*, in coordination with the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Tourism, applied to UNESCO for “Sema and Mevlevî Music” to be added to the UNESCO list of “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.”<sup>49</sup> They succeeded, and subsequently, UNESCO declared the year 2007 to be “International Year of Mevlana Rumi.”<sup>51</sup> This created renewed interest in Mevlevî practices and thought. Ferda Tarzi, great-granddaughter of the last Sheikh of the Eskişehir Mevlevî dervish lodge, explained that she decided to dedicate her life to the Mevlevî path after seeing the International Mevlana Foundation’s application document to UNESCO.

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<sup>48</sup> Dr. Bârihüdâ Tanrıkorur, Musician Bekir Reha Sağabaş, Dr. Esin Çelebi.

<sup>49</sup> “About and News,” The International Mevlana Foundation, accessed December 11, 2018, [https://mevlanafoundation.com/index\\_en.html](https://mevlanafoundation.com/index_en.html).

<sup>50</sup> “Mevlevî Sema ceremony,” UNESCO Intangible World Heritage, UNESCO, accessed May 28, 2018, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/Mevlevî-sema-ceremony-00100>.

<sup>51</sup> “UNESCO 2007’yi Mevlana yılı ilan etti,” *Hürriyet*, March 7, 2006, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/unesco-2007yi-mevlana-yili-ilan-etti-4038352>.

CHAPTER I: THE MEVLEVÎS AS ENTHUSIASTIC SUBJECTS OF THE LAW  
A HISTORY OF THE MEVLEVÎ COMMUNITY IN THE AFTERMATH OF LAW NO. 677

To study how an individual *remembers* a historical incident, one must first understand in depth what factual knowledge exists about said incident and period of history. In the same way, to explain how the interviewees are constructing the memory of Law no. 677 and its aftermath in their narratives, it is necessary to first establish what factual knowledge we have about this time period. Through establishing a history of this period, it becomes clear why Mevlevîs struggled between their loyalty to the state, and the Mevlevî tradition. The Mevlevî order had, from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century onwards, been a part of the move towards reform and modernization and, in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, they became political allies of the Kemalist state. After 1925, the state's alliance with the Mevlevî order continued, but this relationship became increasingly one-sided. The relationship between the Mevlevî order and the state was full of contradictions, and necessitated many sacrifices on the part of the Mevlevîs.

Cemal Kafadar explains the demeanor of the Mevlevî order of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as:

Since the eighteenth-century Mevlevîs have conveyed the impression, to reformist Ottoman statesmen and European visitors alike, that theirs was the most enlightened and sophisticated order. European travel literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for example, commonly presented visits to a Whirling Dervish (Mevlevî) as a civilized cultural exchange and depicted visits to a Howling Dervish (Rufai) ritual as encounters with the wild and irrational religiosity of the Orient.

By the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, this general trend had manifested in various prominent Mevlevîs becoming involved in the move towards Westernization and constitutional democracy. Ahmet Cahid Haksever, in his book on the subject, *Modernleşme sürecinde Mevlevîler ve Jön Türkler* (Young

Turks and Mevlevîs in the process towards modernization), argues that the Mevlevî order, as a Sufi order where artists and writers flocked to, had a special relationship with the Young Turks and the Ottoman Palace. He explains in detail how the Yenikapı Mevlevî dervish lodge in Istanbul had been frequently visited by the Young Turks, who went as far as to conduct political meetings at the location.<sup>52</sup> This is noteworthy as, while the Konya Mevlevî dervish lodge is the political center of the Mevlevî order, the Yenikapı Mevlevî dervish lodge was its largest dervish lodge and functioned as its cultural heart. During this same period, Veled Çelebi İzbudak, a man who would later become the Makam Çelebi in 1910, was involved in the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihat ve Terakki), the primary Young Turk organization of the time. Shortly after 1909, he co-founded an association called “Türk Derneği” (Turkish Association), which published seven editions of a magazine by the same name.<sup>53</sup> At the time he was the Sheikh of the Galata Mevlevî dervish lodge, the second largest Mevlevî dervish lodge in Istanbul. Ideologically, Veled Çelebi was very much an advocate for democratization and Turkish nationalism (or “Pan-Turkism”). Through these two examples, it is clear that, in the Mevlevî order’s cultural heart of Istanbul, Mevlevîs had become ideologically and politically tied towards this shift towards nationalism and democratization.

Later, like much of the rest of the country, Mevlevîs became involved in the Turkish War of Independence and following formation of the Republic of Turkey. In 1921, Veled Çelebi ran away to Ankara via Antalya to join the rising Turkish War of Independence. After arriving, he served as a member of parliament for a total of 20 years.<sup>54</sup> He spent much of his life studying

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<sup>52</sup> Haksever, *Mevlevîler ve Jön Türkler*.

<sup>53</sup> *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. “Veled Çelebi İzbudak (1869-1953),” accessed July 20, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/izbudak-veled-celebi>.

<sup>54</sup> *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. “Veled Çelebi İzbudak (1869-1953),” accessed July 20, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/izbudak-veled-celebi>.

Turkic languages at the Turkish Linguistics Society (Türk Dil Kurumu), during which he co-authored and published a 12 tome Turkish dictionary. Abdülhalim Çelebi, who also served as the *Makam Çelebi* during this period, was also involved in the Turkish War of Independence. He served as a member of the first parliament, and received a Medal of Independence for his efforts during the war. Nuri Köstüklü in his book *Vatan savunmasında Mevlevîhaneler* (Mevlevî Dervish Lodges Protecting the Homeland), explains in detail various economic and socio-political aids the Mevlevî dervish lodges gave within period.

These details create quite a strong history of Mevlevî adherence to the modernization movements of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Turkish history. However, history after the passing of Law no. 677 becomes vague and full of tension. It is first important to establish that the Mevlevî order did not cease activity post-1925, but simply shifted centers. Many of the dervish lodges that the Mevlevî order had under its umbrella were also spread across the Balkans and the Middle East, and any law passed in the Republic of Turkey could not apply to them. Thus, after the closure of the Konya dervish lodge, the center of the Mevlevî order was transferred to outside the borders of Turkey, to Aleppo, Syria. What happened to the leadership of the Mevlevî order in this period reveals that they had a deeply confusing relationship with the government.

Typical of the period, the transfer from Konya to Aleppo was wrought with complications, and narratives vary wildly. What is certain is that shortly after the passing of the law the *Makam Çelebi*, Abdülhalim Çelebi, left Konya for Istanbul where he checked in to a hotel. By morning his belongings, containing jewelry at what other precious materials, had been stolen, his servant was missing, and he was found dead or near dead (accounts vary) at the bottom of the balcony of his room. Reasons for this death vary from “falling off the balcony due

to diabetes,”<sup>55</sup> to “he was robbed and murdered by his servant,”<sup>56</sup> to “he was assassinated,” to “he was assassinated by orders of Atatürk.”<sup>57</sup> Whatever occurred, the circumstances of the death of Abdülhalim Çelebi, one of the most powerful Sheikhs in the Ottoman Empire, seems deeply suspect.

Whatever occurred, upon his death he was buried in Istanbul’s Yenikapı dervish lodge, and the role of head of the order transferred promptly to his eldest son Bakır Çelebi, who had been sent to Aleppo sometime prior (Fig. 3).<sup>58</sup> The accounts of Gölpınarlı and Celaleddin Çelebi (Bakır Çelebi’s grandson) claim that making Aleppo the new center of the Mevlevî order was done with the permission of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who had given Bakır Çelebi the job of assisting with the rejoining of Hatay to the Republic of Turkey.<sup>59</sup> In the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne,<sup>60</sup> Hatay had been placed within the borders of French-mandated Syria.<sup>61</sup> The Hatay province, formally known as the province of Alexandretta, was a former Ottoman sanjak. Turkey attempted to annex this area, arguing that it was a Turkish-majority region. In 1938, the people of Hatay formed a new independent state with the aid of Turkey and the permission of the League of Nations, and immediately after, the parliament voted to unite with Turkey.<sup>62</sup>

According to Lale Dai, the Mevlevî dervish lodge at Aleppo, the closest major Syrian city to Hatay, functioned as a center for Ottoman ex-patriots and was thus an ideal space from which

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<sup>55</sup> *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. “Abdülhalim Çelebi (1874–1925),” accessed May 18, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/abdulhalim-celebi>.

<sup>56</sup> Baki Baykara, interview. All translations of interview materials are my own.

<sup>57</sup> Lale Dai, interview.

<sup>58</sup> Gölpınarlı, *Mevlana’dan Sonra Mevlevilik*.

<sup>59</sup> Gölpınarlı, *Mevlana’dan Sonra Mevlevilik*; *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. “Abdülhalim Çelebi (1874–1925),” accessed May 18, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/abdulhalim-celebi>.

<sup>60</sup> The Treaty of Lausanne was the final peace treaty between the Turkish national movement and the Allied powers, and the first time the Allied powers recognized the sovereignty of the new republic.

<sup>61</sup> *Border Disputes: A Global Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Syria-Turkey.”

<sup>62</sup> *Border Disputes: A Global Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Syria-Turkey.”

to collect information for the Turkish state's plans to annex the Hatay province. The recently diseased Abdülhalim Çelebi's family and a number of Turkish dervishes also moved to Aleppo following this incident (Fig. 7 & 8).<sup>63</sup> Lale Dai notes that because of this, along with the presence of Ottoman Armenians who had been forcefully exiled to Aleppo, the dervish lodge functioned as a center for Ottoman ex-pats in Syria. Lale Dai notes that her father Celal Kadri Barlas, who lived in the dervish lodge, was a spy for the Turkish government and had regular correspondence with Atatürk.<sup>64</sup> How much Bakır Çelebi was involved in the collection of intelligence on Hatay and influencing the region is unclear. However, according to Lale Dai, Bakır Çelebi's younger brother Veled Çelebi, who was an employee at the Turkish consulate in Aleppo, actively ferried the intelligence back to Turkey for a period under the excuse of visiting friends and family.

The unique socio-political position of the Aleppo Mevlevî dervish lodge I have detailed above, coupled with presence of Celal Kadri Barlas, a well-known spy, living in the premises demonstrates that there was some kind of intelligence work going on in the dervish lodge. This



Figure 7: The Çelebi family in Aleppo, photographed in September 1940. From left to right sequence: Veled Çelebi, Kevser Çelebi, Celaleddin Çelebi, Növber Barlas, Lale Dai nee Barlas.

<sup>63</sup> According to Celaleddin Çelebi, Lale Dai, and Güzide Çelebi.

<sup>64</sup> This is supported by the work of Halıcı, "Yüzellilikler," who wrote in detail about Celal Kadri Barlas's intelligence work for multiple sides.

note about collecting intelligence is confusing as it was done for the Republic of Turkey and within a dervish lodge, a structure illegal in the Republic of Turkey. This was a functioning center of the Mevlevî order: Bakır Çelebi ran the order from here until 1937, running the Aleppo dervish lodge and appointing new sheikhs for the Şam and Şam Trablus Mevlevî dervish lodges upon the death of their predecessors. This demonstrates, already, that some part of the tensions occurring in the narratives of the interviewees are because of the state has, historically, treated the Mevlevî order in a contradictory manner.

In 1937, Bakır Çelebi, who had gone to visit family in Turkey, was barred from re-entering Syria due to his work with Hatay. He spent the rest of his life in Istanbul, experienced significant economic hardship due to his inability to access the funds available to him in Syria, and died at age 53. Shortly after his death, the Syrian government ordered the Çelebi family to leave the Aleppo Mevlevî dervish lodge. Celaleddin Çelebi, Bakır Çelebi's son and the new Makam Çelebi, had no dervish lodge to run, and lived out his days working a small business in a house bestowed to him by the Syrian government (Fig. 3). In 1958, Celaleddin Çelebi and his family fled Syria overnight after a friend in the government informed them that Turks in Syria would be attacked after the political upset following the Iraqi Revolution. These series of unfortunate events occurred because the Mevlevî order had created Aleppo as its new center – a decision that it seems it made for the sake of the Republic of Turkey. It is noteworthy that, throughout these events, there was no help from the state, either economically (monetary aid or bestowing a new profession) or politically (protecting the inhabitants of Aleppo Mevlevî dervish lodge against this systematic exile).

After they re-settled in Istanbul, Turkey, his family notes that Celaleddin Çelebi was careful to be respectful of the law, and ceased any activity that could be construed as illegal.

While Celaleddin Çelebi was being careful to not act illegally, within this same period, the state slowly incorporated the Mevlevî tradition as a semi-legitimate cultural institution. From 1953 onwards, the Mevlevî *Sema* ceremony was re-allowed for “touristic and cultural reasons,” and the government slowly began to employ the figure of the whirling dervish as a Turkish cultural icon. Today, there are two Mevlevî troupes under the direct employment of the government, and perform the ceremony weekly in Konya (at the Mevlana cultural center) and Istanbul (at the Galata Mevlevî dervish lodge museum).

What, then, about those dervish lodges left within the borders of Turkey? It is, perhaps, not surprising that various narratives point to the notion that Mevlevî dervish lodges within the borders of Turkey were slowly emptied out after 1925 with no protest. However, despite this unique position and the Mevlevî community’s alignment with Kemalist ideology, the members of the Mevlevî community suffered much in the aftermath of Law no. 677. Mevlevî sheikhs and dervishes had trouble finding long-term sources of income, faced serious economic problems due to this and their loss of property, and died uncharacteristically young. Many fell into self-destructive actions, such as contemplating suicide, alcoholism, refusing to speak about Sufism or



Figure 8: Sheikh Abdülbâkî Baykara, from the collection of his grandson Baki Baykara.

their lives before 1925, or destroying their belongings relating to Sufism.

For example, Abdülbâkî Baykara, Sheikh of Yenikapı, held a position at the *Dar-ül Fünun* as a professor of Persian language, until it transitioned into a modern university (“Istanbul University”) (Fig. 9).<sup>65</sup> Upon the transition, he lost his job. From the closure of the Sufi orders to his death until his death at age 52, just 10 years, he experienced much economic hardship and changed professions five times.<sup>66</sup> Many of his poems from this period were highly pessimistic in tone, and shortly prior to his death he even stated he yearned for death by writing “If only God could take me to the great sin.”<sup>67</sup> Sheikh Resûhî Baykara, son of Abdülbâkî Baykara, was noted by his son Baki Baykara to have later fell into alcoholism. Sheikh Bahâeddin of the Eskişehir Mevlevî dervish lodge, after 1925, balanced farming with two positions in local NGOs (Head of the *Eskişehir Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*, and treasurer of the *Tayyare Cemiyeti*) (Fig. 10).<sup>68</sup> He died in 1930, at age 55, and shortly after his family fell into deep economic hardship. His son,



Figure 9: Sheikh Bahâeddin of the Eskişehir Mevlevî dervish lodge (left) and his son Hüseyin Cahit.

<sup>65</sup> Erdoğan, *Abdülbâkî Baykara Dede*, 67.

<sup>66</sup> Erdoğan, 63-67.

<sup>67</sup> “Alsa harîm-i izzete bârî Hudâ beni.” Erdoğan, 69.

<sup>68</sup> Adalıoğlu and Arslan, *Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi*; “Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi Post Dedeleri ve Dönemleri,” Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi, Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi Kültür Derneği, accessed May 18, 2019, <http://www.eskisehirmevlevihanesi.org/id57.html>.

Hüseyin Cahit, became a career soldier and, according to his daughter's oral account, refused to speak about his childhood at Eskişehir until his death, upon which he left his family a tape-recording detailing life in the dervish lodge in fond tones. Overall, one of the clearest trends in the interviews was the manner in which all sheikhs and Çelebis the interviewees were related to died a maximum of 10 years after the passing of Law no. 677. Along with Sheikh Abdülbaki Baykara and Sheikh Bahaeddin Dede of Eskişehir, Sheikh Abdülhalim Çelebi died in 1925 (age 56),<sup>69</sup> Sheikh Ali Dede of Isparta died around the year 1932,<sup>70</sup> Sheikh Nuri Dede of Demirci died around the year 1918.<sup>71</sup>

Today, institutional aspects of the Mevlevî order are almost non-existent, the number of practitioners educated in the complex liturgy of the Mevlevî order is very few, and much knowledge of Mevlevî practices has been lost to history. Children and grandchildren of sheikhs have little knowledge about Mevlevî doctrine, and all interviewees held professions completely unrelated to religion, and were raised to value Turkish nationalism, democracy, and positivism. In alignment with these values, all interviewees verbally agree with the law during their interviews, except Evrim Bulut and Baki Baykara. Additionally, all interviewee ancestors are also presented to have adhered with the law and agreed with it, to the exception of Baki Baykara, who notes his adherence but their light disagreement. Yet narratives of the current generation involve a sense of loss and nostalgia relating to pre-1925, and deep sadness for the sheikhs and dervishes who underwent the closure. It is clear why this was the case from the series of incidents illustrated in this section. Mevlevîs achieved their aim of a modern, westernized nation-state that they had had throughout the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, but this achievement meant that there was no

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<sup>69</sup> Gölpinarlı, *Mevlana'dan sonra Mevlevîlik*.

<sup>70</sup> Akdemir, "Kaybolmuş bir değer: Isparta Mevlevîhanesi."

<sup>71</sup> Erkul, "Demirci Mevlevîhanesi," 131.

space for them in the new state.

INTERVIEWEES' EFFORTS TO INTEGRATE THEMSELVES INTO THE LARGER  
NARRATIVE OF THE TURKISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, THE FORMATION OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF TURKEY, AND MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK

Of course, the reason why we have a slew of information about how the Mevlevî community was a supporter of reform and revolution is, of course, because there are certain advantages to focusing on these topics. Like the scholarship on this period, the interviewees overwhelmingly preferred to focus on this period of political history.<sup>72</sup> Interviewees were eager to discuss the struggles and heroism of their family members in the time of the Turkish War of Independence. This, I argue, served to integrate their family histories into the larger narrative of the Turkish War of Independence, the formation of the Republic of Turkey, and the character of President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. By emphasizing that the Mevlevî order was an agent of the revolution, and the interviewees create space for the Mevlevî tradition within the state.

Dilek Yazıcı noted with pride that her grandfather, Sheikh Ali Dede of the Isparta Mevlevî dervish lodge, was the head of the Isparta regional militia forces (“Kuvâ-yi Milliye”) during the Turkish War of Independence.<sup>73</sup> She knew little of specifics, beyond a story told by her maternal grandmother that the famous militia soldier Demirci Efe had once stayed at their house. Despite this, Ms. Yazıcı made Sheikh Ali Dede a hero of Isparta: “Isparta was never taken by the enemy, and I think Ali Dede has a big part in that.”<sup>74</sup> It was interesting to note that most of Dilek Yazıcı’s knowledge of her grandfather was based on his political actions, and she knew very

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<sup>72</sup> All interviewees, except for Evrim Bulut, discussed this period of political history. However, Evrim Bulut is naturally excluded from this group, as she has no knowledge about her family history prior to the 1920s.

<sup>73</sup> Akdemir, “Kaybolmuş bir değer: Isparta Mevlevîhanesi.”

<sup>74</sup> “*Isparta hiçbir zaman düşman tarafından alınmıyor, ve bence bunda Ali dede'nin payı var.*” Yazıcı, interview.

little of his religious life. She notes about her grandfather: “He had, from the garbs of a sheikh, wrapped himself in the purpose of saving the country”<sup>75</sup> and “Ali Dede was a political figure, and this was what dominated his life.”<sup>76</sup> It is also noteworthy that Dilek Yazıcı connected Sheikh Ali Dede to the larger context of all Mevlevîs, explaining that: “Of course this [that he was involved in the war] is not a strange thing for a Mevlevî. From what I’ve learned through my readings, most of the Mevlevîs put their heart and soul into saving the country. Whatever needed to be done, they did. You see, the motherland is important to the Mevlevîs.”<sup>77</sup>

This idea of a widespread Mevlevî effort to protect the motherland is mirrored in Lale Dai’s interview. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, to explain how it came to be that she was born in Aleppo, Lale Dai felt that she had to recount Abdülhalim Çelebi’s history of involvement in the War of Independence, side-tracking for 10 minutes to give an off-topic story on how the women in her family secretly fled by wrapping cloth around their horses’ hooves, before finally arriving at the closure of the Sufi orders.

Yasemin P.: “What age were you when you first arrived at the Aleppo Mevlevî dervish lodge?”

Lale D.: “I was born there.”

Yasemin P.: (Surprised) “You were born there?”

Lale: “Of course, where would I come from, but there? (With a serious tone) Now when the dervish lodges in Turkey closed, of course there was a lot of political upheavals and whatnot [...] Atatürk says, ‘My Çelebi’—my grandfather Abdülhalim Çelebi was also the parliamentary representative of Konya, and speaker of the parliament. Also, Atatürk’s close friend! When he gets bored he would come to Konya [to Abdülhalim Çelebi] and stay with him [at the dervish lodge]—Atatürk said, ‘The dervish lodges will be shut down. If the other dervish lodges were like the Mevlevî dervish lodges I wouldn’t have closed them.’ But all they do is say ‘Huu Huu Allah Huu Allah’ until nighttime. I mean, they all just sit around. Whereas, there was a Mevlevî battalion, as soldiers. There’s even a picture of it, my grandfather in a fur over-robe next to Atatürk...”

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<sup>75</sup> “Dedelikten vatan kurtarma kıyafetine bürünüyor.” Yazıcı, interview.

<sup>76</sup> “Ali dede politik figür, ve bu ağır basıyor.” Yazıcı, interview.

<sup>77</sup> “Tabii ki bu Mevlevîler için çok acayip birşey değil tabii, rastlanan birşey bu. Benim okumalarımından öğrendiğim kadarıyla, Mevlevîlerin çoğu zaten, vatan kurtarılması sırasında, canla başla çalışmışlar. Ne yapmaları gerekiyorsa, ortamları neyse, onu yapmışlar. Vatan önemli yani, Mevlevîler için.” Yazıcı, interview.

The phrase “there was a Mevlevî battalion” refers to the creation of a battalion of dervishes from various Sufi orders, called the *Gönüllü Mevlevî Taburu* (The Volunteer Mevlevî Battalion). The picture she describes is a photograph of Abdülhalim Çelebi and Atatürk in Konya, taken in the Revolutionary War period (Fig. 11). The topic of the Mevlevî battalion is detailed by Nuri Köstüklü in his book *Vatan savunmasında Mevlevîhaneler* (Mevlevî Dervish Lodges Protecting the Homeland), but for our purposes what is important to note is this battalion has nothing to do with Atatürk or the Turkish War of Independence. Instead, this slip on Lale Dai’s part further demonstrates her efforts to situate the Mevlevîs as devoted to the Motherland, and thus loyal to Atatürk. This quote from Lale Dai’s interview very much echoes Dilek Yazıcı’s effort to portray a country-wide Mevlevî effort. This is not to say that Mevlevîs did not put in this effort—the first section of this chapter has established in detail that the Mevlevî order assisted Revolutionary War effort. Instead this common theme demonstrates how Dilek Yazıcı and Lale Dai see themselves and the Mevlevî community of this period primarily through the lens of their heroism, and how eager they are to demonstrate their loyalty to it.



Figure 10: Abdülhalim Çelebi (right center), greets Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Left center) on his arrival to Konya Train Station. He is accompanied by many Mevlevî dervishes.

It is also significant that, within this quote, Lale Dai felt the need to first explain her family's relationship to Atatürk before explaining her presence at Aleppo. The national narrative of this period equivocates everything done during the war and the formation of the Republic of Turkey to the sole actions of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. By saying that Atatürk approved of the Mevlevî order, Lale Dai is arguing that the state itself approved of it. In the same way, by saying that Atatürk was a friend of Abdülhalim Çelebi, Lale Dai is arguing that the state were close allies with the Mevlevî order. Lale Dai was very insistent that her grandfather, Abdülhalim Çelebi, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk were close friends, mirrored in the quote above that notes Abdülhalim Çelebi was "Atatürk's close friend! When he gets bored he would come to Konya [to Abdülhalim Çelebi] and stay with him [at the dervish lodge]." This was a theme constantly repeated throughout the three days of interviewing, in various levels of detail.<sup>78</sup>

Indeed, Lale Dai portrays her family to have an almost self-defeating level of loyalty to Atatürk. A particularly noteworthy instance was a long tragic scene of the dervish lodge receiving news of Atatürk's death:

Lale Dai: "When Atatürk died all hell broke loose in our dervish lodge, in Aleppo. How they cried, wailing and wailing! [...] They were all Kemalists, intense Kemalists. They never said, 'Because of him the dervish lodges closed down, because of him our father died, because of him we are in this wretched situation.' They loved him so, so much [...] There was a bust [of Atatürk], on a high-end table, which fell and broke. They said, 'Look, it broke the day he died, this is a sign' [...] They cried so much!"

Yasemin P. "Who cried?"

Lale Dai: "Well, my mother, my [grandmother], my [aunt]... I don't know, there was a crowd [...] Occasionally my eldest uncle would come [and say] 'Stop crying missus, stop howling! Shut up, missus!' I was around 7 or 8 at the time [...] [Later] they said a prayer in commemoration."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Esin Çelebi spends roughly half her book listing stories and interactions of Abdülhalim Çelebi and Atatürk from sources such as *Atatürk ve Din* by Sadi Borak, *Atatürk ve Konya* by İhsan Kayseri, and *Atatürk Konya'da* by Mehmet Önder. These narratives also forge a very personal relationship between her family and Atatürk.

<sup>79</sup> "Atatürk ölünce Halep'te, bizim tekkede, kıyaamet koştı. Nasıl ağlıyorlar, bağıra bağıra! [...] Hepsi Atatürkçü, koyu Atatürkçü. Hiç demiyorlar, 'Onun yüzünden tekkeler kapandı, onun yüzünden babamız öldü, onun yüzünden perişan olduk' demiyorlar. Müthiş Atatürkçülerdi. Çok çok severlerdi [...]"

The image of Atatürk breaking turns his moment of death to an almost miraculous event. What Lale Dai means by stating “They never said [...] because of him our father died, because of him we are in this wretched situation” refers to an earlier part of our interview, where she described the death of her grandfather. She explained that she believed that he had been killed on orders from Atatürk:

Lale Dai: “I thought that he was killed [...] In my opinion, he was killed. Because they killed sheikhs who had much responsibility and a lot of backers. There’s one in [the city of] Antep for example [...] they killed him too [...].”

Yasemin P.: “Was it Atatürk who ordered [him killed]?”

Lale Dai: “Of course, yes.”

We can never know what exactly caused Abdülhalim Çelebi’s death. However, Lale Dai seems convinced that he was assassinated on orders from Atatürk, that her family knew this, and despite this knowledge, they lamented his death to almost ecstatic level. This is a loyalty that is self-defeating, and presented to be all the more intense for this quality. I found that this rhetorical move functioned to make the tragic events in her family’s past—the untimely death of her grandfather, their presence in Aleppo, their economic troubles—into a heroic endeavor instead of a tragic one. By presenting these events as a heroic endeavor, a sacrifice for the sake of Atatürk, Lale Dai was able to create a sense of ownership over her home of Turkey. Her family were not outsiders, declared illegal by the state, but one of the groups who created the state.

Ferda Tarzi mirrors this type of self-defeating loyalty in her description of the day her family left the Mevlevî dervish lodge of Eskişehir:

When in 1925 the law was passed [...] this dignified air [of the Mevlevîs] sometimes kept going. Even though they said, “You can take whatever of the goods [of the dervish lodge] you want,” and “You can reside here, until you get your affairs in order,” everyone took

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*Bir tane büst vardı, yüksek bir sehpanın üstünde, o düşmüş kırılmıştı. Dediler ki ‘Bak, öldüğü gün büst kırıldı, bu bir nişan’ [...] Amma çok ağlaştılar [...] Annem, anne-cicim, Abi annem, İzzet yengem... Ne bileyim, kalabalık birileri vardı [...] Ara sıra büyük dayım geliyordu, ‘Karılaaar, ağlamayın, karılar ulumayın! Susun karılar!’ Ben 7–8 yaşındaydım o zaman [...] [Sonrasında] dua okundu.” Dai, interview.*

their luggage and the dervish lodge was emptied out in one night. But this was not a protest. As your grandmother says, “It was something that had to happen.” In our family, whomever you ask, everyone is a devotee of Atatürk. His reforms, the changes he made [...] My father was also a great devotee of Atatürk. So much so that, when he went to Germany, we went with some photographs of Atatürk. He takes them to an artist in Germany and says, “Make me an oil painting from these.” That oil painting still hangs at home, handed down to me. I know from my childhood, it used to sit in the most prominent corner of the house.<sup>80</sup>

She adds, later, that they refused to take even the pots and pans in the kitchen, because “they now belonged to the state.” No one would have judged the family for having taken these objects, and all evidence seems to suggest that they were simply left in the building after it was bolted shut. It is noteworthy that Ferda Tarzi also, like Lale Dai, connects this narrative of sacrifice to an icon of Atatürk. Of course, images of Atatürk play a prominent part in the lives of all Turks, and are placed in prominent locations in business-places, schools, and homes throughout the country. It is also possible to find similar themes in other interviews—In Esin Çelebi’s autobiography the photograph of Abdülhalim Çelebi and Atatürk in Konya, first noted by Lale Dai, plays a prominent role.<sup>81</sup> It has also been noted by many other curious interviewers that Esin Çelebi has hung this photograph in a prominent place in her office at the International Mevlana Foundation in Konya.<sup>82</sup> This imagery of Atatürk in Lale Dai, Ferda Tarzi, and Esin Çelebi’s narratives function as physical evidence of their and their family’s loyalty to him.

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<sup>80</sup> “1925’te, Tekke ve Zaviyeler kanunu çıkınca, [...] bu vakur eda bazen de devam etmiş. Her ne kadar ‘Mallardan istedikleriniz alabilirsiniz,’ veya ‘Burlarda oturabilirsiniz, toparlayana kadar’ denmesine ragmen, herkes bavulunu almış ve bir gecede Mevlevîhane boşaltılmış. Ama bu bir protesto gibi değil. Yani, anneannemizin dediği gibi ‘Olması gereken birşeydi.’ Ve bizim ailede, kimseye sorarsanız sorun, hepsi Atatürk hayranı. Yani inkılaplarına, yaptığı değişikliklerine [...] Babam da müthiş Atatürk hayranıydı. O kadar ki, Almanya’ya gittiğinde, elinde Atatürk’ün resimleri varmış. Onları Almanya’da bir ressamı götürüyor ve diyor ki ‘bunlardan bana yağlı bir tablo yap.’ O tablo halen, benim evime kadar, evde asılıdır. Ben küçüklüğümde biliyorum, evde en baş köşede dururdu.” Tarzi, interview.

<sup>81</sup> Çelebi Bayru, *Evet aşk güzel şeydir*. It may be pertinent to remind the reader that Esin Çelebi is my aunt.

<sup>82</sup> Çelebi Bayru, *Evet aşk güzel şeydir*.

Narratives of heroism and sacrifice could also appear in narratives of struggle. Unlike previous narratives, that were more heroic in nature, the Çakmak family still did not refrain from explaining the struggle their family went through during the War of Independence. Their narrative focused on Greek attacks on their town of Demirci, noting that they attacked their house because of their position as religious leaders. Similar to the Çakmak family's narrative, Ferda Tarzi details how her family fled their city of Eskişehir with great difficulty and hid in the city of Konya during the War of Independence. These stories bubbled up organically in our interview, and also worked to integrate the families into the larger narrative of nation-building.

Of course, not every interviewee integrated their family stories into the formation of the Republic of Turkey. Dilek Yazıcı also noted in detail about her grandfather Fehmi Aksu's position as the president of the Republican People's Party's (CHF) Isparta branch. This party, headed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was the first political party in Turkey and, for a period, was the only political party in Turkey. Dilek Yazıcı proudly went into detail the various things that Fehmi Aksu did in his capacity as its regional president: writer of the *Yeniün* magazine (a CHF magazine), writing a book about regional names of Isparta,<sup>83</sup> attending "the first Turkish language convention." It is important to note that Fehmi Aksu was slated to be the next Sheikh of the Isparta Mevlevî dervish lodge, but even after questioning his religious life Dilek Yazıcı could give little detail on it. His political character dominated Dilek Yazıcı's family memory of the man.

Baki Baykara went further back in history, to explain that the Yenikapı dervish lodge, and thus his family, was "the start of revolutionary movements in the Ottoman Empire" and note that the first constitution of the Ottoman Empire was written in Yenikapı dervish lodge. He was the

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<sup>83</sup> Fehmi Aksu, *Isparta İli Yer Adları*. Isparta: Isparta Halkevi Yayınları, 1936. No copies of the book exist today.

only interviewees to employ this connection against the creation of Law no. 677. I made a comment to Baki Baykara that he and his family were very different from Ferda Yazıcı of Eskişehir, and he responded:

The Yenikapı crowd, they were very proud to be in the Yenikapı Mevlevî dervish lodge. They are arrogant in that respect. I don't know about Ferda's family,<sup>84</sup> they wanted to adapt to the new system more. But when you look at the Yenikapı Mevlevî dervish lodge, it was a group that very much supported the revolutions of late-period Ottoman history. You know it, everyone knows it, Hasan Ali Dede also writes it: the first constitution of Turkey was written at Yenikapı [Mevlevî dervish lodge] [...] It could be said they were the head of the revolutionary movements of the late-period Ottoman history. That's why they're proud. Like, "We did the right thing. Ok, then why did you close us down? Is this progressivism?"<sup>85</sup>

Everything Baki Baykara notes has quite a lot of evidence to back it up, enough that Historian Ahmet Cahit Haksever has dedicated a book to the subject, *Modernleşme sürecinde Mevlevîler ve Jön Türkler* (Mevlevîs and Young Turks in the Period of Modernization). Baki Baykara employs this information to do the same thing that the other interviewees have done, which is to integrate himself and his family into the larger narrative of revolution and modernization.

I include Baki Baykara's outlying perspective to demonstrate how his fellow interviewees could have taken a completely different stance in their organization of facts. As I have noted, every historical incident interviewees have stated has enough evidence to suggest it is true. However, they have chosen to organize these factual events into a narrative that demonstrates loyalty and sacrifice for Atatürk and the revolutionary cause. By doing so, every interviewee

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<sup>84</sup> Baykara had previously brought up the topic of Tarzi when he asked who else I had interviewed. From this I learned that Baykara knew of Tarzi and her family, but not personally.

<sup>85</sup> "Yenikapılılar, onlar Yenikapı Mevlevîhanesinde olmaktan çok gururlular, kibirliler o hususta. Ferda'ları bilmiyorum, onlar daha yeni sisteme daha adapte olmak istemişler. Fakat Yenikapı Mevlevîhanesine baktığınız zaman, son zamanlarda Osmanlı'daki 'revolution'ları çok destekleyen bir grup. Sen biliyorsun, herkes biliyor, Hasan Ali dede de yazıyor: Türkiye'nin ilk anayasası Yenikapı'da yazılıyor [...] Osmanlı'daki son dönem revolutionary hareketlerin bir nevi başları oluyorlar. Ondan gururlular. 'Biz doğru şey yaptık, biz doğru iş yaptık. Peki, eee, niye bizi kapattınız şimdi? Bu ilerencilik mi?' havasında." Baykara, interview.

demonstrates that they and their families are modern and revolutionary too. Baki Baykara shows how one can create an image of a modern and revolutionary Mevlevî ancestor, and still criticize Law no. 677. However, Baki Baykara is very much an outlier of the Mevlevî community.

#### THESIS OF DEGENERATION: HOW INTERVIEWEES JUSTIFY LAW NO. 677 IN KEMALIST TERMS

Throughout the interview process, it became clear that interviewees justified the law in terms of Kemalist ideology. To do so, interviewees also had to understand their own history and the history of the Mevlevî order in terms of this ideology also. This section will demonstrate that interviewees and their family members believe that Sufi orders had somehow degenerated towards the modern period (though no specific dates are given), and attempt to explain how this argument came about. Through this, I will explain that this thesis of degeneration functions to shift the blame of Law no. 677 to the Sufi orders, and create a state in which Mevlevîs feel the need to perpetually justify or apologize for their actions.

Klaus Kreiser, notes in his article “Dervish Living,” that while rural dervish lodges were largely self-sufficient, urban dervish lodges were largely reliant on income from endowment funds, gifts and regular subsidies from sovereign and high-ranking individuals.<sup>86</sup> However, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, “Ottoman society had grown increasingly dissatisfied with those dervishes who gave themselves over to leisurely activities once their prescribed recitations and rituals were done. Many came to view dervishes as indolent parasites. As one popular saying put it, [It is easier to become a sheikh than a true dervish].”<sup>87</sup> Determining the utility of a dervish by his economic output was, of course, a uniquely modern phenomenon. Islamic theologians

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<sup>86</sup> Kreiser, “Dervish Living,” 49–50.

<sup>87</sup> Kreiser, 53.

such as al-Ghazali (d.1111) stated that economic activity as a merchant or official was incompatible with the existence of a Sufi.<sup>88</sup> Even as far back as the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, the decision to lead the life of a dervish dependent on charity or to support oneself by labor had remained largely a personal one.<sup>89</sup> Yet, in 1925, this is what was used to publically justify Law no. 677, and that “the Kemalist press denounced the dervish lodges as places of superstition and refuges of idle pleasure seekers.”

This narrative appears in many different locations. Another text that invokes this theme in relation to the Mevlevî order is a story told by Hafız Yaşar Okur, that he claims he saw first-hand. Written down by Sadi Borak in his book *Atatürk ve Din (Atatürk and Religion)*, the story is about a long speech Atatürk gave at a dinner table in defense of Mevlevî called Hasan Ali Yücel, after the civil servants around him began to insult him for being a Mevlevî. Atatürk goes into a long spiel about the genius of Rumi, his important service to the Turkish nation. Hafız Yaşar Okur recites:

This speech from Atatürk, who had closed the Sufi dervish lodges, was seen as in opposition to his actions. The youngest at the table asked this question: “Then, the dervish lodges are a Turkish institution.” Atatürk said: “Of course. During their founding, they were so. However, after they did their duty, they regressed. They finished their natural life-spans. They became harmful.”<sup>90</sup>

Again, this quote shows a thesis of degeneration, that in turn is used to justify the closure of the dervish lodges. This story about Atatürk’s defense of Hasan Ali Yücel appears, cited or un-cited, in many other books.<sup>91</sup> While there is little evidence of this story being accurately portrayed by

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<sup>88</sup> Kreiser, “Dervish Living,” 53.

<sup>89</sup> Kreiser, 53.

<sup>90</sup> Borak, *Atatürk ve din*, 62–55.

<sup>91</sup> To name a few: *Atatürk: Din ve Laiklik üzerine* by Doğu Perinçek, *Atatürk ve Konya* by İhsan Kayseri, and *Atatürk Konya’da* by Mehmet Önder.

Hafiz Yaşar Okur, its widespread usage demonstrates the tenacity of this idea in the public mindset.

This background is necessary to understand the narrative of degradation that many Mevlevîs had during this period. Dr. Muhittin Celal Duru, in his book on the history and practices of the Mevlevî order, *Tarihi Simalardan Mevlevî* (Mevlevîs from the Pages of History), makes a series of harsh criticisms about the Mevlevî order of his childhood. This book was brought to my attention when Ferda Tarzi, one of my interviewees and a relative of Dr. Muhittin Celal Duru, read it aloud in our interview. Ferda Tarzi's own analysis and implementation of these lines are analyzed in detail below; however, I believe it is first necessary to understand Dr. Duru on his own terms first.

Dr. Muhittin Celal Duru (1887–1966) was the grandson of Sheikh Hasan Hüsni Dede of the Eskişehir Mevlevî dervish lodge (1830–1908), and the cousin of Sheikh Bahâeddin Dede (1875–1930), the last Mevlevî Sheikh of Eskişehir. He himself was a dede of the Eskişehir Mevlevî dervish lodge, who in 1991 became a Medical doctor. The book, originally published in 1952, was republished in 2011 by his nephew Erdağ Duru, with some edits. It has remained a book in little circulation, and much of the contents of the book argue for the idea that would be quickly contested by Mevlevîs today, such as arguing that Sufism is an “*esotérique*” part of Islam born from its interaction with traditions such as Zoroastrianism, Shamanism, Sabianism, and Greek philosophy. The book is, however, very interesting for being a history of the Mevlevî order and its practices, written by a Mevlevî that drastically swings between praising the beauty of the Mevlevî order and harshly criticizing it. In his chapter, “*Dergâhlar ve Yönetimi*” (Dervish Lodges and Their Government) he argues that “in time”<sup>92</sup> the appointment of Mevlevî sheikhs

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<sup>92</sup> No specific date is given.

were heavily influenced by “personal gains,” and gives an example where he claims that Abdülhalim Çelebi appointed a sheikh due to their familial relationships and not their knowledge.<sup>93</sup> In his chapter, “*Matbah-ı Şerif ve Çile*” (The Kitchen and Trials), details of what he means by “personal gains” is revealed:

The increasing number of dervish lodges and the *vakıfs* that served the comfort of the dervishes, caused dervish lodges to turn into a place of exploitation, and dervishes into parasites. This, in turn, eased the way to shutting down the dervish lodges. Sheikhs, with the aim of profusely exploiting their *vakıfs*, refused to let anyone but one or two ignoramuses, layabouts, and cripples. Aiming to give the dervish lodge and the title of ‘sheikh’ to the same person, they turned dervish lodges into simply inheritance, and sheikhs who felt no need to read or write multiplied.<sup>94</sup>

Dr. Duru then goes on to employ similar quotes from Kenan Rifâî, prominent *Mesnevi* interpreter and sheikh of the Rifâî order, and Samiha Ayverdi, prominent writer and student of Kenan Rifâî, as evidence of his point. In summation, Dr. Duru argues that the title and position of sheikh became handed down from father to son, and the rationale of doing this was to ensure these families could lazily live off the *vakıf* of the dervish lodge.

It is important to establish that this narrative of Dr. Duru is very much that, a narrative. John Robert Barnes’ demonstrates, in his article “A Short Note on the Dissolution of the Dervish Orders in Turkey,” that dervish lodges were starved of resources during the 19<sup>th</sup>-century and hardly spaces of luxury.<sup>95</sup> Barnes notes in this work that one of the reasons there was not a general outcry against Law no. 677, despite Sufism’s importance in the religious life of the Turkish people, was due to the disastrous effects of 19<sup>th</sup>-century economic reforms on Sufi orders. During the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, the Ottoman government had increasing difficulty in taxing landed property, which was previously one of its main sources of revenue. The reason for this

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<sup>93</sup> Duru, *Tarihi simalardan Mevlevî*, 158–159.

<sup>94</sup> Duru, 204.

<sup>95</sup> Barnes, “Dissolution of the Dervish Orders,” 37.

lied in how Turkish landholders had increasingly pledged their lands as *vakıf* (religious endowments) “which could neither be sold, mortgaged, nor taxed,” for the aim of dodging government taxation.<sup>96</sup> This had become such a problem that, by the 19<sup>th</sup> -century, approximately two-thirds of the land in the Ottoman Empire had become *vakıf*, and became a large detriment to the imperial treasury.<sup>97</sup> John Roberts cites a variety of 19<sup>th</sup> -century Western observers of the Ottoman Empire<sup>98</sup> to argue that the 1840 creation of the Ministry of *Evkaf* (plural of *vakıf*) caused a disastrous effect on dervish lodges, causing them to fall into disrepair. Dervish lodges are typically built on property endowed to them by pious persons, and are run through the revenue these endowments provide for them (be it money through rent, or food through the utilization of land). When all *vakıf* lands were put under the supervision of the Ministry of *Evkaf*, *vakıf* revenues began to “be used increasingly for secular ends instead of those for which they were intended: the upkeep of religious buildings and the support of their members.” What Barnes does not add is that WWI and the following the Turkish War of Independence exacerbated the situation. When Sheikh Haji Nuri Efendi of the Demirci Mevlevî dervish lodge died, no sheikh was appointed in his place.<sup>99</sup> This was very likely because it occurred during the Revolutionary War period, and the town of Demirci was, on and off, occupied by the Greek army during this period.

If, indeed, as Dr. Duru states, the quality of dervishes deteriorated (“one or two ignoramuses, layabouts, and cripples”) and their educated suffered (“sheikhs who felt no need to read or write multiplied”), this is more likely to be because of the dual factors of economic hardship and political unrest caused by the series of events described above. Instead, Dr. Duru’s

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<sup>96</sup> Barnes, 37.

<sup>97</sup> Barnes, 37.

<sup>98</sup> Lucy Garnett, Charles MacFarlane, Bishop Southgate, the London Times.

<sup>99</sup> Erkul, "Demirci Mevlevîhanesi," 131; Sakız and Çakmak, interview.

narrative works to push the responsibility of Law no. 677 to the Sufi orders themselves. By situating the law in these terms, Dr. Duru formulates the Turkish state as saving the Sufi orders from themselves. The state did not harm Sufism, they saved Sufism.

During interviews, the majority of the interviewees invoked this thesis of degradation and had a tendency to make justifications against these specific criticisms against dervish lodges that exist in the public consciousness. Nilgün Çakmak notes “After they (the dervish lodges) were closed after the law, and I’ve heard this since childhood, it was because ‘This needed to be done, and it was done.’” Her mother, Gülören Sakız, added in explanation:

It (dervish lodges) had become a nest of sloth. They would just stay there for days. Whereas, it was supposed to be akin to a space of education. But people had begun to... Idle away there. That’s why Atatürk closed them down. But Atatürk apparently said, at his death bed, “I was not able to open an educational facility in place of a dervish lodge.” We had just come out of the war, making a democracy... Of course, there were some things even he couldn’t do. But apparently, that was one of the last things he said at his deathbed.

Of course, Nilgün Çakmak and Gülören Sakız’s point is very much informed by the history of the Demirci Mevlevî dervish lodge described above. The fact that the dervish lodge had no sheikh and was in a war-torn region makes it very likely that the dervish lodge to not run as it should have.

The concept of “degeneration” is seconded by Lale Dai, with a twist. Lale Dai’s childhood in Aleppo dervish lodge involved the presence of many servants, which caused me to assume that they lived in wealth. When I was surprised that, as a child growing up in the Aleppo dervish lodge, she did not have access to an indoor toilet, she quickly corrected me “We were dervishes, dervishes!” and “We didn’t even have a toilet!” She then went back in time to explain her grandmother’s, Kevser’s, life prior to Law no. 677 as the wife of the Sheikh of the Konya Mevlevî dervish lodge and the *Makam Çelebi*, Abdülhalim Çelebi:

My grandmother, for example, would want something in Konya. She would see some jewelry, or something else, it would strike her fancy, and she would want to buy it. She couldn't buy it. They weren't gluttons like the other hodja in other dervish lodges. So that's why Atatürk said, "If the others [other Sufi orders] were like you [the Mevlevî order], we wouldn't have closed them [referring to Law no. 677]." Atatürk was connected to the Mevlevî order.<sup>100</sup> He would come often, tell all of his troubles to my grandfather.<sup>101</sup>

Later, Lale Dai noted again:

Atatürk said, "if all dervish lodges were like the Mevlevî dervish lodges he says I would never feel the need to close the dervish lodges." Because the Mevlevî dervish lodges were working, alive, instructing like a university, like a Conservatory, and like a Faculty of Literature... Whatever one had a leaning towards. Every dervish, according to his own talents, gave lessons to men from the outside. For example, someone who wants to be a calligrapher, wants to make beautiful calligraphy write Ottoman Turkish, comes and takes lessons from a calligrapher dervish who has nice writing.

In Lale Dai's narrative, the Sufi orders had indeed "degenerated," but the Mevlevî order was made to be the one exception of the rule. Throughout her interview, she repeated many times different variations of this same idea of the Mevlevî order's exceptionality. As Cemal Kafadar notes, since the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Mevlevîs have "conveyed the impression [...] that theirs was the most enlightened and sophisticated order."<sup>102</sup> In the first quote, the reason the Mevlevîs are exceptional is because of their frugality and industriousness. In the second quote, the reason seems to lie in their industriousness and educational utility.

It is important to note here that Lale Dai and Gülören Sakız do not know of each other, and brought up this theme without any particular pressure from myself, the interviewer. Neither of

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<sup>100</sup> This phrase can be translated to either "a member of the Mevlevî order" or "connected to the Mevlevî order."

There is no evidence that Atatürk was either connected to or a member of the Mevlevî order. However, there is evidence that Atatürk had visited the Konya Mevlevî dervish lodge numerous times and enjoyed their hospitality. The reason for these visits could be fondness, and it could also be the necessity to befriend the Çelebi family to keep control over the region of Konya.

<sup>101</sup> "Cici-annem mesela, Konya'da birşey istermiş. Bir mücevher, herhangi birşey görürmüş, hoşuna gidermiş, almak istermiş. Alamazmış. Öyle kalkıp da öteki tekkeler gibi, lop lop yiyen hocalar değil. Atatürk de zaten ondan demiş, 'Başkaları da sizin gibi olsa, kapatmazdık' demiş. Mevlevîliğe mensupmuş Atatürk. Sık sık gelir, bütün dertlerini büyükbabama anlatırmış..." Dai, interview.

<sup>102</sup> Kafadar, "New Visibility of Sufism," 312.

them had ever heard of Dr. Muhittin Celal Duru or read his book on the history and practices of the Mevlevî order. It is thus noteworthy that both of them viewed the history of this period through the lens of this thesis of degeneration.

In both Lale Dai, Gülören Sakız, and Dr. Duru's perspectives, the "true" function of a Mevlevî dervish lodge is one of education, a function they believe had deteriorated. This very much embodies the Kemalist ideals of education as a tool for reform. In their narratives, education functions as the antithesis of idleness, and is thus valuable only because it facilitates change and progress. Moreover, the concept of education is very much formulated in secular terms: "sheikhs who felt no need to read or write" and "instructing like a university, like a Conservatory, and like a Faculty of Literature." However, this is not the type of education a Mevlevî dervish lodge aims to give. While the sciences are a large part of this education, all of this information works to educate and perfect the character of the dervish. By putting primacy in aspects of the education of a dervish lodge that can transcend religious concerns, they devalue their own tradition. The stark contrast between Lale Dai and Gülören Sakız is that Lale Dai believes the Mevlevîs were the one exception to this trend, while Gülören Sakız believes they were the same. However, both interviewees demonstrate a deep internalization modern conceptions of knowledge.

Seemingly in response to such criticisms, Ferda Tarzi, Dilek Yazıcı, and Gülören Sakız in their interviews went out of their way to explain how the Mevlevîs were not idle, without any prompt from my part. When Dilek Yazıcı, great-granddaughter of Sheikh Ali Dede of the Isparta Mevlevî dervish lodge, was explaining that one of the only things she had from the dervish lodge was the deed of the *vakıf*,<sup>103</sup> she subsequently went into a spiel defending Mevlevî dervish

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<sup>103</sup> Turkish "*Vakıf senedi*."

lodges: “The Mevlevî dervish lodges were under the umbrella of a *vakıf*. Mevlevî dervish lodges weren’t left idle. The Ottoman government assisted them. Then periodically an inspector came from Istanbul, in the way of ‘We’re sending them money but let’s see! Go look what they’re up to.’”<sup>104</sup> Here Dilek Yazıcı seems to be attempting to deconstruct the narrative of the idle dervish lodge, explaining that it could not be true as they were under the supervision and inspection of the Ottoman government. Again, Dilek Yazıcı does not know Ferda Tarzi or Lale Dai, and seems to have come to the need to defend this point by herself.

Other interviewees preferred to defend against the argument that Mevlevîs were idle within the confines of these modern conceptions of education and knowledge. Ferda Tarzi was particularly focused on the industrious nature of the Mevlevî order. I would later learn that this was very much influenced by a tape left behind in 1990 by her father, Hüseyin Cahit, who spent a significant portion of the recording detailing the industriousness of Mevlevîs:

The dervishes and dedes, alongside their worship and work with music, had to know at least one craft. My father [Sheikh Bahâeddin] placed much importance in this. There were three undervest knitting machines, and four sock knitting machines. They repaired their own shoes. The undervest and socks were sold in the city and the profits were added to the dervish lodge’s budget [...] Every dervish or dede in the dervish lodge had to know a craft. Rumi especially wishes for this. You see, that was the kind of Mürşit [Teacher] he was. Oh, his saintliness Rumi! Oh, friend of God!<sup>105</sup>

I only learned later that Ferda had mirrored these lines from her father almost word-for-word, noting about the dervishes at the Eskişehir Mevlevî dervish lodge: “They all had jobs” and “It is

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<sup>104</sup> “Mevlevîhaneler bir vakıf şemsiyesi altında yürütülüyor. Başı boş değil Mevlevîhaneler. Devlet onlara yardım ediyor, Osmanlı devletinden bahsediyorum. Dönem dönem de İstanbul’dan müfettiş geliyor, ‘Para gönderiyoruz ama git bakalım bak bunlar ne yapıyorlar bak’ gibi.” Yazıcı, interview.

<sup>105</sup> “Dedeler, dervişler zikir ve musiki çalışmalarından başka mutlaka bir zanaat sahibi olurdu. Babam (Şeyh Bahâeddin) bu konuya çok önem verirdi. 3 tane fanila örme makinesi, dört tane çorap makinesi vardı. Kunduralarını kendileri tamir ederlerdi. Fanile ve çoraplar pazarcı eliyle şehirde satılır ve geliri ile dergahın bütçesine yardım sağlanırdı [...] Bunu Mevlana özellikle istemişti. İşte o böyle bir mürşit idi. Ya Hazreti Mevlana!... Hak Dost.” “Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi Post Dedeleri ve Dönemleri,” Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi, Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi Kültür Derneği, accessed May 18, 2019, <http://www.eskisehirmevlevihanesi.org/id57.html>.

a tradition from Rumi, all dervishes must have a job. It was not allowed for Mevlevîs to beg for money, like the Bektaşî order did.” Ferda Tarzi then went on to explain in detail how the dervish lodge had a sock-sowing machine, and that the dervishes would make socks to sell at the market. This image has also been placed in a prominent place in the website her NGO has created about the Eskişehir Mevlevî dervish lodge (Fig. 12).<sup>106</sup> Hüseyin Cahit, in his recording, had noted the industrious of the Mevlevîs—however, Ferda Tarzi was the one who re-organized this information to demonstrate how the Mevlevîs into stark contrast with other, “idle,” Sufi orders. Ferda Tarzi has felt the need to transform something that has a basis in fact into a defense against this larger thesis of degeneration.

Ferda Tarzi’s point about the exceptionality of the Mevlevîs was undermined when she opened Dr. Muhittin Celal Duru’s book and began to read from it. As mentioned before, Dr. Muhittin Celal Duru is Ferda Tarzi’s great-uncle, and the book was published by her cousin Erdağ Duru. She specifically read from the previously provided quote from Dr. Duru, which argues that the reason the Mevlevî order was shut down was that they took advantage of the *vakıf*



Figure 11: Image taken from [Eskisehirmevlevihanesi.org](http://Eskisehirmevlevihanesi.org), depicting two weaving machines (for either socks or vests) and four Mevlevî dervishes.

<sup>106</sup> “Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi Post Dedeleri ve Dönemleri,” Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi, Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi Kültür Derneği, accessed May 18, 2019, <http://www.eskisehirmevlevihanesi.org/id57.html>

system and lived as “parasites.” When I asked, “Do you agree with your uncle that they were not productive?” she responded, “I both agree and disagree with that statement” and then added, “It was necessary.” At that moment, I was very much struck by how this statement echoed Nilgün Çakmak’s phrase of “This needed to be done, and it was done.” However, I was also struck by the reality that, by agreeing with Dr. Muhittin Celal Duru, even partially, she had undermined her detailed point about the productivity of the Mevlevîs at Eskişehir. Ferda Tarzi seemed almost caught in between the opinions of her father, Hüseyin Cahit, and her uncle, Dr. Muhittin Celal Duru.

The all-encompassing nature of this thesis caused me to directly inquire after it during my last interview with Baki Baykara, the grandson of the last Sheikh of the Yenikapı Mevlevî dervish lodge. As he was my uncle, and we had discussed topics such as this in our casual conversations before, towards the end of our interview I directly asked him his opinion on this thesis of degeneration. He responded: “I don’t accept this [that the dervish lodges had begun to degenerate]. Anything can deteriorate. If to clean something you need to close it, today you could very easy close every political party [in Turkey]. This is not a reason, it’s an excuse. Yes, nonsense things probably happen in dervish lodges. But doesn’t it also happen in Catholic orders? Those who molest children... But their *tarikât* [Sufi orders] do not get closed.”

Baki Baykara does excellent work in explaining the issues with this thesis being used as justification for the closure of the dervish lodges. If problems of this nature were indeed occurring in dervish lodges, this does not necessitate their closure. It could have, instead, necessitated their reformation. Indeed, Sufi orders had already attempted to respond to such criticisms when, in 1918, the *Meclis-i Maşayih* (Council of Sheikhs) enacted extensive statues

that required dervishes to take up a craft or a beneficial profession.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, this thesis of degeneration seems unlikely to be the true reason for the closure of the Sufi orders. As historian Zeynep Kezer notes, the likeliest reason for the Kemalist government closing the Sufi orders was that they saw them as political threats.<sup>108</sup> During the Turkish War of Independence, Sufi orders managed to rally soldiers and provisions for the Turkish nationalists. Seeing their extraordinary ability to rally the general populace, the Kemalist government also realized they were potentially a threat. Instead, by publically employing this thesis of degeneration, the state shifted the blame to the Sufi orders, and created a state in which Mevlevîs feel the need to perpetually justify or apologize for their actions.

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<sup>107</sup> Kreiser, "Dervish Living," 53.

<sup>108</sup> Kezer, *Building Modern Turkey*, 86.

## CHAPTER II: THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN STATE AND TRADITION—NARRATIVES OF LOSS

### “THE SILENT ONES”

While frequently the interviewees were not self-aware that it was so, the manner in which they constructed the narrative of their family’s experience with Law no. 677 was one of inter-generational trauma. The majority of the Mevlevî community, as demonstrated in chapter one, tried to adopt the new republican ideals and assimilate themselves into the broader narrative of nation-building. However, the manner it effected this generation and those following it demonstrates that the Mevlevî community had, in fact, much difficulty in adapting to their new circumstances. They did they did not anticipate that aspects of their tradition that seemed to be non-essential revealed themselves to be critical, and fed into their particular ideas about the self, ideas about sacred space, and ideas about ethical conduct.

The disconnect between these two worldviews manifested itself as an effort to be silent and forget. Forgetting can, too, function as memory. Judith Zur in her work with Guatemalan war-widows, notes that “Silence and forgetting are not lackings; rather, they are present absences or negative spaces which shape what is remembered. This has a communal aspect, in that there is tacit agreement about what is to be remembered or forgotten. The ‘forgotten’ is, therefore, as much shared as what is remembered.”<sup>109</sup> In the case of the Mevlevî community, what seemed to have been transferred to the next generation was fewer memories, and more the “forgotten.”

Marianne Hirsch uses the term “postmemory” to describe the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic experiences that precede their births but were

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<sup>109</sup> Zur, "Remembering and Forgetting," 49–50.

nevertheless transmitted to them as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.<sup>110</sup> While Hirsch employs this term to describe remembrance of the Holocaust, it is a framework which can be applied to a wider scope. The interviewees, as descendants of the generation to experience the trauma of the closure first hand, grew up in an atmosphere where the dismissal and forgetting of the Mevlevî tradition were normal. However, many interviewees noted the moments where the previous generation exhibited illogical and often contradictory actions that revealed that the dismissal was false. Their families clearly cared about aspects of the Sufi tradition they were trying to dismiss, and were struggling to find peace within this contradiction.

Why the first generation remained quiet in the face of these changes is unclear. Hasan Ali Yücel in his autobiography notes on his grandmother, Ayşe, whom he described as a dervish of the Kadirî tradition:

When the dervish lodges were abolished, they scared her by saying that they would search houses, and if they found any objects relating to being a dervish they would throw the owner in jail. The poor woman gave away these 500-year-old prayer beads and kept only the one with ninety-nine beads. That one is now with me. I keep it with care.<sup>111</sup>

Hasan Ali Yücel's language use suggests that this act of her grandmother was unnecessary, and they would not have done such a thing. However, from this account, it is clear that at least some individuals kept silent due to fear. This may, indeed, be the reason why some interviewees' families remained silent on the matter. However, as demonstrated extensively in chapter one, another factor for some was the need to assimilate themselves into the new state. Whatever the rationale, through the recording of the interviewees' narratives, we can state in certainty is the effect this silence and dismissal had on the following generations.

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<sup>110</sup> Hirsch, "Generation of Postmemory," 1.

<sup>111</sup> Yücel, *Geçtiğim günlerden*, 28.

## GÜZIDE ÇELEBI

One day, I was sat with my grandmother, Güzide Çelebi, casually chatting about my interview with Lale Dai, my aunt. Suddenly, my grandmother began to tell a story about one of the dervishes in Lale Dai's narrative, and I scrambled to record the story. As mentioned before, after being vacated from the Aleppo Mevlevî dervish lodge, Celaleddin Çelebi and his mother moved to an apartment given to them by the Syrian government. When Güzide Çelebi married Celaleddin Çelebi, her cousin, she moved in with them (Fig. 13). While the dervishes continued to live in the dervish lodge, they would occasionally come to visit. She described in detail the last three Mevlevî dervishes who lived in the dervish lodge when she was in Aleppo: Raşit Dede, Gazi Dede, Ferhat Dede (Fig. 8). Ferhat Dede, she explained, had been cast out from the Afyon Mevlevî dervish lodge (in Afyon, Turkey) and somehow made his way to Aleppo. She noted about Gazi Dede: "Actually, when the dervish lodge was still open, Gazi Dede was the cook."<sup>112</sup> He was the head of all the dervishes. By the time I came [...] Gazi Dede was very old. He looked



Figure 12: Güzide Çelebi and Celaleddin Çelebi with their daughter in Aleppo, Syria. Taken from Çelebi family archive.

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<sup>112</sup> The *ser-tabbâh* or *aşçı dede*, literally meaning "the Cook Elder" is the most highly ranked dede after the sheikh. The title of "cook" is an allegorical one, and he does not actually cook food. Instead, he is the dede endowed with the job of spiritually "cooking" and maturing novices and dervishes from the space of the kitchen. Abdülbâkî Gölpinarlı describes the *aşçı dede* as having the role of the dervish lodge's tutor and governor (*mürebb*), while the sheikh is the "representative" of the Mevlevî way and the final authority.

after the flowers in the garden. If there was an animal he looked after them too. You see, he was an old man.”<sup>113</sup> She explained that Raşit Dede had taken on the responsibilities of cooking after Gazi Dede had grown too old. Raşit Dede would also come to her house to cook, and his wife Hayriye would come to clean and do housework.<sup>114</sup> She notes about them: “One day, the two separated. The Dede became very sad. Later, he stopped coming. Later still, they [?] went and saw that he had hung himself. It was a passionate love.”<sup>115</sup> Afterward, Güzide Çelebi was quiet for a long time, and it was some time before we could begin to talk once more. Finally, I asked:

Yasemin: “When the dervish lodge closed, what happened to these three?”

Güzide: “They continued to stay there. But the day came when we had to leave for Turkey. Gazi Dede had died. Raşit Dede had hung himself. The last remaining Dede, he had stopped visiting us. He probably died quietly by himself. I don’t know...”<sup>116</sup>

We sat in silence for a while, and the air grew heavy as my grandmother’s face collapsed in grief. Eventually, my grandmother said she had grown tired, asked to close the tape recording, and quickly fell asleep. The recording in total took just 10 minutes, but had deeply tired her.<sup>117</sup>

As Gadi BenEzer notes in their article “Trauma Signals in Life Stories,” long silences and loss of emotional control are two signals of trauma when an interviewee is recounting a traumatic experience.<sup>118</sup> Recounting these memories was, also, clearly mentally exhausting for

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<sup>113</sup> “Gazi dede esasında tekke açıkken, Gazi dede aşçı dedeydi. Bütün dedelerin başıymış. Ben geldiğim zaman, artık tekke boşandığı için, [...] Gazi dede de çok yaşlanmıştı. Bahçedeki çiçeklere bakardı. Bir hayvan varsa ona bakardı, yemeğine içmesine. Böyle yaşlı bir adamdı işte.” Güzide Çelebi, interview.

<sup>114</sup> It is important to note that there are some inconsistencies between Güzide Çelebi and Lale Dai’s narratives about Raşit Dede, putting the factuality of these memories into question. Lale Dai called Raşit Dede’s wife “Leman,” while Güzide Çelebi knew her name to be “Hayriye.” Güzide Çelebi also believed the couple had no children, and Lale Dai knew them to have two.

<sup>115</sup> “Bir gün, ayrıldılar onlar. Çok üzüldü dede. Sonradan gelmez oldu, sonra gittiler gördüler ki kendisini asmış. Büyük aşktı.” Güzide Çelebi, interview.

<sup>116</sup> “Yine orada kaldılar. Ama bir gün geldi ki, biz Türkiye’ye gidiyoruz, şey öldü... Gazi dede. Raşit dede zaten kendini astı. En son kalan dede de, o da artık bize gelmez oldu. Demek ki kendi kendine öldü. Bilmiyorum...” Güzide Çelebi, interview.

<sup>117</sup> While my grandmother was 90-years-old at the time and had a tendency to take many naps, it was uncharacteristic that she should become tired from just 10 minutes of talking.

<sup>118</sup> BenEzer, “Trauma Signals in Life Stories,” 34.

her. The details of who they were—Gazi Dede and his flowers and animals, Ferhat Dede’s complicated past, Raşit Dede’s passionate love—had only added to the tragedy of her last comment about their eventual ends. These were people she had known well, whose undignified ends did not fit with the dignity in which they lived their lives.

My grandmother is one of the few interviewees to experience the trauma of the closure of the Mevlevî dervish lodge first hand.<sup>119</sup> From this interview with my grandmother, it became clear that to locate these small traumas and tragedies, one needed to read in-between the lines, in moments cut short and stories avoided. I only knew how tragic the situation she was recounting was due to my knowledge, if little, of the Mevlevî tradition. That Gazi Dede, the most highly ranked *Aşçı Dede* in the Mevlevî order, had died in an empty dervish lodge far away from his homeland, with only two dervishes at his side, was very uncharacteristic of his position. Similarly, the fact that Raşit Dede had committed suicide, an act deeply antithetical to Islam as the Mevlevî tradition understood it, revealed that something had gone deeply wrong in his



Figure 13: Celaleddin Çelebi with two Dede (names unknown) in Aleppo, Syria. The individuals are either Raşit, Ferhat, or Gazi Dede. Taken from the Çelebi family's archives

<sup>119</sup> Güzide Çelebi had been to Aleppo Mevlevî dervish lodge a few times as a youth, when had visited and stayed with her aunt (and mother of Celaleddin Çelebi), İzzet Çelebi. While she had been removed from the dynamics of Law no. 677 as a youth, as she had not been a Mevlevî, marrying into the Çelebi family meant that it was now her tradition also.

practice in the Mevlevî path, and the support network he should have had as a dervish living in a dervish lodge.

It was deeply strange that I had no idea my grandmother knew this information about these individuals, despite her having raised me since 11-years-old. Even in this interview, one can observe that Güzide Çelebi never told me she was sad about their ends, and through utilizing an excuse that she had grown tired from recording, managed to avoid the speaking about the sadness of the subject. The rest of the interviewees mirror this dynamic, between the first generation and the second, in many ways. The way my grandmother reacted to this sadness, with silence, is mirrored in the way other interviewees noted their families reacted to the incident of the closure. They had inherited a trauma that had stemmed from the memories their families remained silent on.

#### FERDA TARZI

I met Ferda Tarzi in her capacity as president of the Eskişehir Mevlevî Dervish Lodge Cultural Association,<sup>120</sup> an NGO formed in 2006. Ferda Tarzi was a businesswoman who had become interested in the Mevlevî tradition after the death of her father. She explained that, when she was growing up “We [herself, her siblings, and her cousins] knew we were from the Eskişehir Mevlevî dervish lodge, but we were disinterested” and “in the family, this topic was never discussed.”<sup>121</sup> What “this topic” refers to was unclear, a term as expansive as Sufism, or Islam itself. Her father Hüseyin Cahit, a career soldier, was a man who lived far from the Mevlevî tradition, and even did not perform his Salat except on Fridays. She notes that, despite

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<sup>120</sup> More information can be found about Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi Kültür Derneği through their website, [eskisehirmevlevihanesi.org](http://eskisehirmevlevihanesi.org)

<sup>121</sup> “Ailede hiç bu konu açılmazdı.” Tarzi, interview.

her insistence that he write about his childhood in the Eskişehir Mevlevî dervish lodge, he always avoided doing so. After her father's death, she found that he had left her and her children a cassette containing a voice recording of fond memories of living in the dervish lodge. She noted "I listen to it, sobbing. We never even visited it together, even once." We are lucky that this voice recording by Hüseyin Cahit still exists, and can be found on the Eskişehir Mevlevî Dervish Lodge Cultural Association website.<sup>122</sup> The recording reveals that he knew a slew of information about the Mevlevî tradition, from how to perform the Mevlevî Sema ceremony to how to play the reed-flute. His cassette reveals a deep love for the tradition, singing from memory his favorite two Mevlevî Sema ceremonies, in Turkish and Persian. Yet, due to his life-long silence, Ms. Tarzi had not known he knew any of this information.

There are two traumatic events in this narrative. The first is Hüseyin Cahit, Ms. Tarzi's father, who experienced the closure of the dervish lodges first-hand. Ms. Tarzi's father, according to her account, suppressed his trauma relating to the closure of the Sufi orders, refusing to speak about it in any capacity. Though the line between history and memory is a fraught one, there is enough information here to conclude that Hüseyin Cahit was attempting to keep silent about something that he, in the end, could not keep silent about.<sup>123</sup> The abrupt and uncharacteristic change in his habits, from silence to leaving a long, confessional cassette, reveals that he had a need to tell a story before he died.

Ever since Breuer and Freud's notion of the "talking cure," understanding of the patient's need to talk and tell stories has been basic to modern psychotherapeutic approaches.<sup>124</sup> Thus

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<sup>122</sup> "Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi Post Dedeleri ve Dönemleri," Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi, Eskişehir Mevlevîhanesi Kültür Derneği, accessed May 18, 2019, <http://www.eskisehirmevlevihanesi.org/id57.html>.

<sup>123</sup> Other interviewees, such as Baki Baykara and Esin Çelebi, seconded the notion that Hüseyin Cahit did not speak about the Mevlevî order.

<sup>124</sup> Leydesdorff et al., "Trauma and life stories," 18.

Jeremy Holmes and Glenn Roberts, co-authors of a recent volume on *Narrative Approaches in Psychiatry and Psychotherapy*, call their discussion on working with trauma “stories in search of a voice.”<sup>125</sup> They write of the torment of the solitude in not talking, of the “curse” of a “toxic story.”<sup>126</sup> Beyond a deep love for the tradition, the way Hüseyin Cahit structures his cassette recording, by unloading a slew of information about the Mevlevî tradition without any specific rationale behind the details, reveals how important he finds each of these details: first beginning with singing hymns, then explaining in excruciating detail how the Mevlevî Sema ceremony was performed, how he learned to perform the Sema, the name of each piece of clothing a Whirling dervish wears, the layout of the dervish lodge, the various rituals of how to exit and enter a room... Hüseyin Cahit, who had left the dervish lodge as a 14-year-old and trained as a soldier and inheritor of Kemalist ideology, had responded to the systematic devaluation of his tradition with a silence that was, clearly, disturbing to him. The way in which he has remembered all of these details and found the necessity to record them as a part of his childhood life narrative reveals how important he found these seemingly unimportant details about the Mevlevî tradition.

The second trauma experienced here is that of Ms. Tarzi. The trauma of her father became actualized within Ms. Tarzi when her father revealed what he had suppressed, and brought what were previously minor memories to a new forefront. In her interview, Ms. Tarzi pieced together instances of her father performing acts relating to the Mevlevî tradition, which she at the time had not realized were so. These became examples of his silence on the matter. For example, she explained that her father would murmur songs to himself, and would fall silent when someone approached him. She noted that she only learned later, after dedicating herself to

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<sup>125</sup> Roberts and Holmes, eds., *Healing Stories*.

<sup>126</sup> Leydesdorff et al., “Trauma and life stories,” 18.

her NGO, that what he had been singing were Sufi hymns. She had not known, until listening to his cassette, that he could sing the music of a Mevlevî Sema ceremony from memory.

After noting that “in [her] family, this topic was never discussed,” she explained that through speaking with her cousins she realized that they, too, had gone through experiences such as between her father and herself. In another story, she heard from a cousin, son of Governor Hüseyin Avni Duru, she explained:

My uncle Avni, the governor, [due to the necessity of his work] had to go from province to province, from village to village. He would stay one year in one place, three years in another... And he played the lute and the reed-flute. Everywhere he went, he would take his lute and reed-flute also. One day, his wife got angry at him, “Oh Avni, enough is enough! We carry this lute and reed-flute everywhere on our backs. Everyone thinks we’re musicians!” My uncle takes offense and becomes sad. Keeping just one string of the lute, he throws away the reed-flute and lute. His daughter still has that string stowed away. You see, they have this thing: if something is finished, it’s finished [...] Of course, these are sad things. He wanted to remain spiritually connected, by playing his music [...] but it is broken off somehow. Also, my beloved father’s voice was very beautiful [...] only later did I understand that he was saying hymns!<sup>127</sup>

This is another rare moment of Ms. Tarzi’s family simultaneously revealing how important the Mevlevî tradition was to them, and also denying its importance. There is no way that Ms. Tarzi could have observed this event first-hand; however, she describes the event as if she, herself, had observed it. In the Turkish language, there are two past tenses: one of them is *görülen geçmiş zaman* (seen or direct past tense) and the other one is *duyulan geçmiş zaman* (heard, indirect, reported or inferential past tense).<sup>128</sup> The first grammatical form is used for events that one has

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<sup>127</sup> “Avni Amcam, kaymakam, [işi gereği] ilçe ilçe, köy köy gezmek zorunda. Bir sene bir yerde kalıyor, üç sene bir yerde kalıyor... Ve ud çalarmış, ney üflermiş. Ve her gittiği yere neyi ve udu geliyor. Bir gün hanımı kızıyor, ‘Ay Avni, yetti gayri. Her yere sırtımızda taşıyoruz, şu udu ve neyi. Herkes bizi çalgıcı sanıyor!’ Amcam da çok alınıyor ve üzülüyor, sadece udun bir telini saklayarak, ud ve ney’i atıyor. O teli kızı hala saklamakta. Yani bir de böyle şeyleri var - Bitti mi birşey bitti . Bize haz birşey mi, zamanına haz birşey mi [...] Tabii ki bunlar üzücü şeyler. Manen bağlı olmak istiyor, müziğini icra ederek, [...] ama kopartılıyor bir şekilde. Babacığımın da sesi çok güzeldi [...] ama sonra anladım ki ilahi söylüyor!” Tarzi, interview.

<sup>128</sup> Turkish, Altaic-Language Wikibooks (Wikibooks), [http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Turkish/Seen\\_Past\\_Tense](http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Turkish/Seen_Past_Tense).

witnessed themselves, and second is used for actions that one hasn't witnessed, and they have heard from somebody else. While Ms. Tarzi should have employed "reported past tense," she spoke with "seen past tense." As Hirsch's framework of "postmemory" explains, trauma can be transmitted to the second generation so deeply and effectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.<sup>129</sup> Ms. Tarzi has turned this event into a prosthetic memory.

Yet, for Ms. Tarzi, the silence of her family had, itself, become a memory. She explained the silence of her family in her own terms as "Everyone had spiritually secreted themselves away."<sup>130</sup> When I asked her what she meant by this later on, she explained "They secreted themselves away to do whatever was necessary for the Republic," and that Mevlevîs never protested, never petitioned, never continued on secretly. She added much later "We owe much to their pain." This theme of "secreting away" was constantly repeated in her narrative, after giving numerous examples of family members keeping silent.

Ms. Tarzi portrayed the discovery of this "secreting away," and the end of her father's silence as a significant event in her life. She noted that it was her father's leaving of this cassette that caused her to become interested in the family history. Ferda Tarzi visited the city of Eskişehir by herself a short time later, and with assistance from the local mayor, created an NGO to restore the building and run it. Today, the NGO runs a variety of activities and hosts a whirling dervish troupe of 50 people. She explained "I was angry with myself" because "it [the Mevlevî way] was under my very nose, and I never took advantage of it." Creating the NGO and dedicating her life to it was her way of taking ownership of the tradition that had never been handed down to her. Her narrative was fraught with the act of research, hungry to locate

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<sup>129</sup> Hirsch, "Generation of Postmemory," 107.

<sup>130</sup> "Mevlevî olarak herkes sırlanmış." Tarzi, interview.

information that she was never given. In essence, she was trying to resolve the silence of her family. Perhaps, through resolving the silence, she aimed to revolve the trauma of it as well.

#### DILEK YAZICI

Dilek Yazıcı was a mother and affluent owner of a translation firm, who later in life had become interested in spirituality. Similar to Ferda Tarzi, her narrative was fraught with the silence of her family, and her constant effort to research her family's past. Unlike Ferda Yazıcı, Dilek Yazıcı's family had left behind the Mevlevî tradition almost in the first generation. Sheikh Ali Dede of the Isparta Mevlevî dervish lodge had ten children, and Dilek Yazıcı could not recall any of them knowing how to play any musical instruments relating to the Mevlevî tradition, let alone any other ritual. Throughout her interviews, she revealed a family who had been deeply disinterested in anything "oriental," her grandfather going as far as to ban the playing of arabesque music in worry that it would cause his family to become lazy. Instead, our conversation focused on one individual, Sheikh Ali Dede himself.

Dilek Yazıcı noted one story between Ali Dede and his mother, who remained nameless. She notes that Ali Dede, whose wife had died, had a stern mother who looked after his ten children for him when he was at work at the dervish lodge. One day, Dilek Yazıcı said, his mother turned to him and demanded:

"When are you going to look after your children? I have gotten too old. Come, take care of your children, and give the dervish lodge a rest already!"

Ali Dede responds, "This place is my life, if I leave this place I will die"<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> "Çocuklarına ne zaman sahip çıkacaksın? Ben artık çok yaşlandım. Gel çocuklarına sahip çık, bırak Mevlevîhaneyi artık." Ali Dede'nin cevabı da, "Burası benim hayatım, ben burayı bırakırsam ölüyorum." Yazıcı, interview.

This is a man portrayed to be devout to the Mevlevî path, to the point that he could not live without it. Yet, in what must have been a handful of years later, the dervish lodge shut down, and Ali Dede had to leave. Much later in our interview, Dilek Yazıcı describes the aftermath of the law:

In 1925, when the dervish lodges were closed, or about to be closed, I don't know... It is said that Ali Dede left Isparta. It is said that he went to a mountain, stayed there for a long time, and then when everything calmed down he came back to Isparta. Afterward, he showed little activity. Was it a little bit of sulking? There's a bitter story there, but I don't know much. But... Just like that, Ali Dede passed away 7–8 years later.<sup>132</sup>

Ms. Yazıcı trailed off, her face distorted in grief, and her voice sad. The fact that she did not know anything about Ali Dede seemed to be as traumatic as Ali Dede's "bitter story." By not knowing anything about him other than his activities as a revolutionary militant, she had been denied knowledge of what had actually made him such a well-known and prominent figure in the community. She was denied knowledge that she could, in turn, give to her children with pride. This was the only moment in our story where Ms. Yazıcı spoke about the event that most likely changed her great-grandfather's life the most.

Through my occasional questioning about the information she did have on her family's Mevlevî past, Ms. Yazıcı began to become agitated and, reflecting on my questions, she started to question this silence: "Were there some kind of accusations directed to Ali Dede? Something must have happened. Otherwise, they would have to describe him in great pride." It is very unlikely such a thing happened to Sheikh Ali Dede, and this quote reveals more the manner in which Ms. Yazıcı could not understand the logic behind her family's rejection of his Mevlevî

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<sup>132</sup> "İşte sonra 1925'te Tekke ve Zaviyeler kapatılınca, kapatılma kararı alınırken mi, bilmiyorum ama... Ali Dede'nin Isparta'yı terk ettiği söylenir. Bir dağa gittiği, orada uzun süre kaldığı, daha sonra herşey süt liman olduktan sonra Isparta'ya döndüğü, ondan sonra fazla bir etkinlik göstermediği [söylenir.] Birazcık bir küskünlük mü acaba? Orada buruk bir hikaye var çok bilmiyorum. Ama yani... İşte 7–8 sene sonra vefat ediyor Ali Dede." Yazıcı, interview.

identity. Throughout her narrative, Ms. Yazıcı describes Ali Dede is described as very impressive, and she was obviously very proud of Ali Dede's accomplishments during the Turkish War of Independence. These were the stories that her family was proud of, and thus had handed down to her. Yet, Dilek notes, "the family acted as if it never happened." Again, what "it" refers to was unclear, a term as expansive as "Law no. 677" or even the presence of Sufism itself. Over and over again, Dilek Yazıcı repeated that her family avoided talking about "such subjects," and that she knew very little. This theme of avoiding speaking about Sheikh Ali Dede, the Isparta Mevlevî dervish lodge, or the Mevlevî order itself seemed to be all-expansive.

She noted later, "I am a little angry at my elders," in a stern and serious tone. "I have transferred this knowledge to my son. Without it, there is a blank in one's identity. There is something missing, and you end up asking yourself 'what is this?'" Like Ms. Tarzi, Ms. Yazıcı too tried to absolve this blank in her history by dedicating herself to research. Her narrative was filled with knowledge she had "read in a book," hunting down rare books, hunting down relatives for more information, and even archival work in the form of going to the Isparta municipal archive. She, too, had a hunger for information that had been denied to her, and seemed to see this as the way to absolve her family's trauma.

#### EVİRİM BULUT

When I met Evrim Bulut, she told me she knew only a single story, and that was the only thing she could tell me. In an interrupted length of 10 minutes, she told me this story at rapid speed. This is the narrative she drew, heavily edited for readability:

[It was said that] when [Law no. 677] was being discussed, the family in Konya<sup>133</sup> sent their male children away from Konya.<sup>134</sup> [My grandfather] moved to Elazığ with his mother. In the

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<sup>133</sup> I.e., the Çelebi family.

<sup>134</sup> Esin Çelebi confirmed this point when I reached out to her for confirmation.

period he lived in Elazığ, the moment [the fact he was a Çelebi] was heard, the community would leave him offerings. For example, he would wake up one morning, and at the door there would sit a plate of *baklava*, or freshly cut chicken. The community would try to show as much respect and courtesy as they could. My grandfather would go crazy over this: “What did Atatürk tell you? You mustn’t do this, there is no longer a social class like this, who claims authority over you!” He would quickly move from there after this was heard. Wherever he went, he brought a library of books with him. After, [...] my grandfather became an attorney, then an attorney general.<sup>135</sup> This was always kept a secret, even from his closest friends. He never spoke of this subject with his children [...] When my grandfather was 50–55, he came home one day saying, “I resigned.” My grandmother just stared. He said “I also resign from my family responsibilities, like the children. I don’t want anything. I bought a house—” He took his library and moved into that house “—I am becoming a hermit. I am going to do research, I want to keep to myself.” After, my family’s commentary on this incident was that he had gone through a spiritual regret. This was the manifestation of all those rejections. It was a period he spent vigorously writing and researching. Then seven years later he died. [When my grandfather died] my father couldn’t believe how precious the texts were, hand-written manuscripts...<sup>136</sup>

There is not enough information here to prove that Evrim Bulut’s grandfather, Hüsametdin Yenier, was a first-generation experiencer of the trauma of the closure of the dervish lodges (Fig. 14).<sup>137</sup> However, the evidence Evrim Bulut presents is enough to suggest this being very probable, and enough to entertain the possibility that Hüsametdin Yenier was indeed a descendant

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<sup>135</sup> Hüsametdin Yenier was attorney general of Adana between 1950–1956. “Başkanlarımız,” Adana Barosu (website), accessed May 20, 2018, <http://www.adanabarusu.org.tr/tr/baromuz/baskanlarimiz>.

<sup>136</sup> “[Tekke ve Zaviyeler kanunu] konuşulurken bir şekilde Konya’dakiler ailede olan erkek çocukları Konya’dan göndermeye karar verdikleri [söylendi]. [Dedem] annesiyle beraber Elazığ’a göçmüş. Elazığ’da yaşadığı dönemde, bu [Çelebi olduğu] duyulduğu anda, ikramlar yapılmaya başlanırmış halk tarafından. Mesela, bir sabah kalkarmış, kapıda bir tepsi baklava duruyor. Halk geldiğinde saygı ve hürmet göstermeye çalışıyor. Benimki de bunlara deli olurmuş. ‘Atatürk size ne anlatıyor, siz bunları yapmayacaksınız, böyle bir zümre yok, sizin üzerinizde hakimiyet gösteren!’ Hemen oradan taşınmış bu duyulduktan sonra. Sonra [...] dedem savcı olmuş, sonra baş savcı olmuş. Hep gizli tutmuş, en yakın dostlarına bile asla paylaşmamış, çocuklarıyla bu konuyu bir gün konuşmamış [...] Dedem 50–55 yaşlarında, babam lise birdeymiş, Dedem bir gün eve gelmiş “ben istifa ettim” diye. Babaannem de bakmış öyle, nasıl yani diye. Demiş ki “Ben aile sorumluluklarından da bırakıyorum, çocukları filan. Hiçbir şey istemiyorum. Bir ev tuttum kendime-” Bu arada, el yazmaları var. Yanında bir kütüphanesi var, her yere gezdirdiği, hiç kimseyi sokmadığı. O kütüphanesini almış ve o eve taşınmış. “İnzivaya çekiliyorum. Ben araştırma yapacağım, kendi halime kalmak istiyorum.” Sonra bizimkilerin yorumu, manevi bir pişmanlık yaşadı. Bütün o reddin geri dönüşü oldu. Haldır haldır birşeyler araştırarak, yazarak geçirdiği bir dönem olmuş. Son yedi sene, sonra vefat etmiş. [...] Konya’dan beri yanındaymış. [Dedem öldükten sonra] Babam gördüğünü inanamamış, el yazması...” Bulut, interview.

<sup>137</sup> “Başkanlarımız,” Adana Barosu (website), accessed May 20, 2018, [www.adanabarusu.org.tr/tr/baromuz/baskanlarimiz](http://www.adanabarusu.org.tr/tr/baromuz/baskanlarimiz)

of Rumi that denied it throughout his life. The basic facts are this: Hüsametdin Yenier was from the district of Konya the Çelebi family was known to live in, he was named a very popular Mevlevî name,<sup>138</sup> and he also named his children other popular Mevlevî names.<sup>139</sup>

The narrative Evrim Bulut draws about her grandfather has some dramatic similarities to that of Ferda Tarzi's narrative about her father: a life-long silence and dismissal that is only revoked in their twilight years. Similar to other narratives in this chapter, the character of Hüsametdin Yenier is portrayed as acting extremely irregularly. Small incidents, such as receiving an impromptu plate of baklava, are responded to with extreme reactions, such as moving to a new house. Moreover, his actions are contradictory: never telling anyone about his family past yet continuing to carry precious hand-written manuscripts from his childhood in Konya around with him, rebuking the "social class" of dervish or Çelebi yet acting as a monastic in his twilight years. It is clear that the character of Hüsametdin Yenier is one that professes to wish to abandon the trappings of the Sufi path, yet in all actuality cares deeply for it.



Figure 14: Hüsametdin Yenier

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<sup>138</sup> Hasan Hüsametdin Çelebi was a follower of Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî, and one of his contemporaries.

<sup>139</sup> Hüsametdin Yenier's sons were called Abdurrahman and Ali. There are 5 recorded "Abdurrahman"s in the Çelebi family, making it the most common name in the family. The fourth caliph, Ali ibn Abi Talib, is an important figure in Sufism. The Mevlevîs, like most Sufi orders, trace their lineage to Muhammad through Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Despite noting time and time again that she did not know anything, Evrim Bulut's story of silence inadvertently revealed much information. Primarily, the presence of information that was purposefully not transferred to her. This purposeful silence was the most central part of the narrative she drew, which can be demonstrated by how Evrim Bulut chose to begin her interview:

Yes. Let's see, where should I start... Well, for one, this is not a subject that's spoken much about in our family [...] You could even call it a topic that was secreted away. The things I heard [...] were from the conversations between my father and my [patrilineal] grandmother [...] You see, no one sat me down in front of them as a child and told me this story [...] My father died last June. I even told [my husband]: maybe the family had some kind of block. It was something so suppressed, that with his death that block was opened up. Because, to be honest, [my daughter] and I do not have this urge to hide this away. But maybe this urge to hide went away when all of them died... Recently I made up this cosmic explanation for the whole thing, as it were.<sup>140</sup>

The only thing she knew was the family's silence about the subject. Yet, Evrim Bulut had many memories of these instances of silence, explaining the dynamics of it through various examples. This was what she had inherited, through many retellings throughout her childhood: that this is information that must be forgotten, and that there is a negative space here which's shape must not be explored. She explained that when her uncle had gone to research the family history, her grandmother had told him: "You cannot search for something your father has rejected. You must respect his wishes." She noted that her father had told her that, in his childhood, his mother had told her two sons: "There is something like this in the family history, but you must hide it."

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<sup>140</sup> "Evet. Şimdi nereden başlayım bakayım... Ee, bir kere, bu bizim ailede çok konuşulan bir konu değil [...] Hatta böyle gizlenen bir konu, tabir rica etse. Benim duyduğum şeyler [...] babaannemle babam arasındaki konuşmalardan [...] Hani karşısına alıp da 'bak çocuğum' diye anlatılmadı bana böyle bir konu. [...] Benim babam geçen Haziran vefat etti. Hatta ben [kocama] söyle açıklıyorum: belki ailede böyle bir tikanıklık vardı. O kadar bastırılmış birşeydi ki bu, hani onun vefatı ile o tikanıklık açıldı. Çünkü [kızımda], bende öyle bir bunu saklamaya yönelik bir dürtümüz yok açıkçası. Ama onlardan gelen bu saklama dürtüsü hani onların tamamının gitmesiyle belki ortadan kalktı. Gibi de böyle bir kozmik açıklama getirdim geçenlerde." Bulut, interview.

This enforced silence was clearly discomfoting to Evrim Bulut, referring to it as a “block” and something that was “suppressed” in the quote above. She explained “If someone could tell me ‘no, it’s wrong,’ I could finally relax. Knowing it’s there but not knowing anything about it creates a feeling of emptiness.”<sup>141</sup> As she spoke, she constantly doubted the truth of what she said, trying to prove its truth to herself first, and me second. She explained “This thing we call inheritance is not just material, but also cultural. I wanted to tell [my daughter] about this. My grandfather committed an injustice against us by denying our cultural inheritance. Rumi is important all around the world, but our family never saw his importance.”

#### GÜLÖREN SAKIZ & NILGÜN ÇAKMAK

I met Nilgün Çakmak in her capacity as my instructor for a ceramic sculpture class I had taken in my undergraduate. Throughout our classes together she had noted a few times to her classroom of virtual strangers, with pride, that her great-grandfather had been a Mevlevî sheikh. This introduction to her Mevlevî past was in stark contrast to her family history, who had historically been deeply disinterested in their old home, the Demirci Mevlevî dervish lodge.

When I proposed to do an interview with her, one of the first things Ms. Çakmak told me was “we found the ceiling of the dervish lodge,” showing me an image of it and the story surrounding its re-discovery (Fig. 15). In our interview, together with Gülören Sakız, they retold the story to me:

Gülören Sakız: “When the house was made, they dismantled the ceiling of [the *Semahane*], and put it in the drawing room. Later we sold the house, and my big brother became very sad. He wanted to buy the ceiling from the buyer. He said, ‘Let me make you a new ceiling.’ They said, ‘It brings blessings to the house’ and didn’t give it to him. [After years had passed] my big brother spoke to the new owner of the house, ‘sell this

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<sup>141</sup> “‘Yok değilmiş’ dese birisi, rahatlayacağım. Varken bilmemek boşluk yaratan bir his.” Bulut, interview.

house to me.’ The man said ‘all right,’ and sold it. He re-bought our house. And that ceiling of ours is still there.”<sup>142</sup>

Nilgün Çakmak: “There is also this interesting story: My uncle was having a cultural center built at the Celal Bayar University’s Demirci campus. He insisted that the ceiling of the cultural center have a pattern like a honeycomb or a Seljuk star, and drew the shape of it himself. He spoke with the architects, and somehow, in the end, convinced them [...] The other day, I asked for a picture of the ceiling’s current form. My uncle realized, suddenly, that the thing he had drawn has been, unknowingly, the same as that ceiling. He sat and cried! Let me show you, look.”<sup>143</sup>

Gülören Sakız: “Now, we are also a very spiritual-minded family. For example, when my mother would get sad she would say ‘let me go sit in the dervish cells of the dervish lodge,’ [and go sit in the drawing room]. [A neighbor of ours] said ‘Every night from your house I can hear the sound of the Qur’an. A lovely voiced person is reciting the Qur’an.’”<sup>144</sup>

Unlike other interviewees, the İzmiroğlu family was very lucky to have built the Demirci Mevlevî dervish lodge on their own property, and had not turned it legally into an endowment.<sup>145</sup> For this reason, when Law no. 677 was to pass, the family swiftly demolished the dervish lodge to retain their private property. After the swift destruction of the dervish lodge, the family also gave away all the objects relating to the dervish lodge to randomly to acquaintances. Ms. Sakız noted that her grandfather gave away the musical instruments to strangers, that her father sold all the old property that the dervish lodge stood on, and that her aunt would hand the crystals from the chandeliers as presents to her school friends. Eventually, the only thing the family retained from the dervish lodge was the ceiling of the *Semahane*, which was now affixed to their house.

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<sup>142</sup> “*Sema edilen yerin tavanı, ev yapılıncaya, sökülüp misafir odasına koymuşlar. Sonra biz evi satmıştık, abim çok üzüldü. Tavanı almak istedi, satın alandan. ‘Ben size yapayım tavan’ dedi. Onlar dediler ki, ‘O ev onunla şerefli,’ ve vermediler [...] [Birkaç sene geçtikten sonra] Abim o evi satın alanla konuşmuş, ‘bu evi sat bana’ diye, ‘tamam’ demiş adam, satmış. Yine aldı evimizi. O tavanımız da orada.*” Sakız and Çakmak, interview.

<sup>143</sup> “*Şöyle de bir enteresan hikaye var: Dayım Celal Bayar Üniversitesinde bir Kültür Merkezi yaptırıyor, Demirci’deki kampüsüne. O kültür merkezinde ısrarla, yapısını da kendisi çizdi, bal peteği gibi Selçuklu yıldızı gibi olmasını istedi. Mimarlarla konuştu, olur mu olmaz mı... Sonunda bir şekilde ikna etti [...] Geçen gün ben tekkenin tavanının son halini istediğimde, dayım bir fark ediyor ki aslında çizdiği şey, farkında olmadan, o tavanın aynısı. Oturup ağlamış! Göstereyim, bak.*” Sakız and Çakmak, interview.

<sup>144</sup> “*Şimdi manevi şeyler de çoktur bizde. Mesela, annem üzüldüğünde, ‘tekkenin çilehanesinde oturayım’ dermiş [ve misafir odasına oturmuş]. [Bir komşumuz] dedi ki, ‘her gece sizin evden kuran sesi gelir. Çok güzel sesli bir kişi kuran okuyor.’*” Sakız and Çakmak, interview.

<sup>145</sup> Erkul, "Demirci Mevlevîhanesi," 131.

The slow selling of everything shows how disinterested the family was in these objects. In sharp contrast to the previous generation, the current generation has put the ceiling, the sole remainder of the dervish lodge, in a divine position. Nilgün Çakmak presents her uncle having been so haunted by the ceiling that he unconsciously drew it after years of separation. Gülören Sakız presents the ceiling as a source of miracles (*keramet*).

Gülören Sakız noted twice that something was missing: “We couldn’t continue it,” she said sadly, referring to the Mevlevî tradition. This was confusing to me, as Ms. Sakız had received quite a vigorous religious education for a housewife, having grown up being taught the Qur’an at her local mosque and having the *Mesnevi* read to her at home. Throughout our interview, it was clear that her religion had a very important place in her life. This had been the aim of Law no. 677, a Sufism with no hierarchy and no rituals; yet Ms. Sakız still felt she had not done enough. Indeed, I had observed that they did not speak as an insider of the Mevlevî tradition, not knowing the proper terminology for many of its concepts.<sup>146</sup> Anything about the dervish lodge building or Mevlevî rituals had not been spoken of in their family, and thus such information had not been handed down to her. The desperation the family had for this ceiling revealed that they, too, felt this absence and had a need to absolve it.



Figure 15: The wood-panel ceiling of the Semahane of the Demirci Mevlevî dervish lodge, now affixed onto the ceiling of a drawing room.

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<sup>146</sup> For example, Gülören Sakız called the Mevlevî Sema ceremony as “*Sema gösterisi*” (Sema performance), a term used by those who observe the ceremony in touristic settings, instead of an insider term such as “*Sema ayin-i şerif*” (the honored Sema ceremony). Or, she called rooms in the dervish lodge incorrect names: “The place where they did Sema” instead of *Semahane*.

## CONCLUSION

Muhittin Celal Duru finishes his book, *Tarihî simalardan Mevlevî (Mevlevîsm from the Pages of History)*, by noting “Mevlevîsm could only be understood by living it,” and quoting a verse from the *Mesnevi*:

هیچ نامی بی حقیقت دیده‌ای  
یا ز گاف و لام گل گل چیده‌ای

Hast thou ever seen a name without the reality (denoted by the name)?  
Or hast thou plucked a rose (*gul*) from the (letters) *gáf* and *lám* of (the word) *gul*?<sup>147</sup>

The word rose, in Persian *gul*, is written with the Persian letters of *gáf* and *lám*. Rumi explains that the signifier (the word rose) is separate from its signified (the concept of a rose). As such, you cannot smell roses from the letters of *gáf* and *lám*, you can only go to a rose garden to smell a rose. This concept, eloquently explained centuries later by Ferdinand de Saussure, is one that any scholar trained in semiology would instantly recognize. Rumi here makes two statements. Firstly, that a signifier is not the same as the signified: one cannot pluck a rose from the writing on a page. Secondly, that the signified is still inseparable from its signified: one cannot see a name without the reality denoted by the name. Sheikh Hüseyin Top Efendi interprets these lines as Rumi’s attempt to tell the reader that, while worshiping God by saying “God, God,” through the denotation of the word God, you must find God within your heart.<sup>148</sup> This is, on one level, a statement about how inseparable practice is from belief. Rumi does not mean to say that by yelling “God, God!” you cannot reach God, but to say that while doing this worship one must reach further to what it signifies. In much the same way, the centuries of teachings and methods of the Mevlevî path function as signifiers of Rumi’s teachings. Without Rumi’s teachings, the

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<sup>147</sup> Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî, *Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi*, vol. 2, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (London: E. J. Brill, 1929), vol. 1., line 3456.

<sup>148</sup> Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî, *Mesnevi-i Ma'nevi Şerhi*, vol. 3, trans. H. Hüseyin Top (Istanbul: Rumi Yayınları, 2012), vol. 1., line 3456.

rituals mean nothing to the Mevlevî tradition. However, the signifier is still inseparable from the signified. For the Mevlevîs, without these rituals, Rumi's words are simply words on a page.

This is a concept that Law no. 677, and the government that wrote it, ignores. It is ironic that Dr. Duru employs these lines in a book that heavily criticizes ritual as an excess of Sufism, and supports the dissolution of the Sufi orders. Talal Asad explains that secularism is not merely the division between public and private realms, but by forming a division produces a new definition of "religion."<sup>149</sup> The Kemalist regime, through its vigorous efforts to secularize the new Turkish nation, constructed a concept of religion that was a modern, privatized Christian one. Scholars such as Talal Asad, J.Z. Smith, and Wilfred Cantwell Smith have explained in depth how our current understanding of religion, which assumes that belief is a distinctive mental state characteristic of all religions, is one that was heavily influenced by European scholars of the early modern period.<sup>150</sup> Talal Asad, in his article "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," explains in depth the problems of this definition by intervening Clifford Geertz' concept of culture and religion. He points out that the manner in which Clifford Geertz searches for a "trans-historical essence of religion" artificially puts internality at the forefront of his study of religion. Due to this, he construes ritual as only a mechanism through which beliefs are portrayed and symbolized rather than a medium through which embodied habits, dispositions, sensibilities, and capacities of performance are consolidated.<sup>151</sup>

Talal Asad notes the problems of defining religion in this manner, but I wish to add the *dangers* of the manner in which "religion" gets constructed by "religious studies." Trauma bubbles between the disconnect between the reality of the Mevlevî tradition, in which internality

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<sup>149</sup> Connolly, "Europe: A Minor Tradition," 76.

<sup>150</sup> Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 47–48.

<sup>151</sup> Connolly, "Europe: A Minor Tradition," 77.

cannot be separated from externality, and the claim that it can. The memories that interviewees chose to report, and thus those which affected them enough for them to remember and to place within their narrative, were those stories in which family members acted in a contradictory manner. This contradiction was that between their love of the new, modern, secular path of the state, and their love of the tradition they had been raised in. Remaining silent in the face of the loss of the tangible and intangible aspects of their heritage, they inadvertently handed the trauma of this loss onto the next generations.

As Hasan Âli Yücel, an initiate of the Mevlevî order, once noted:

“... I knew Rumi not as a simple text, but as a voice, a mood that I have heard and loved since my childhood. For me, He was an element of my life.”<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> “... *Ben Mevlana'yı, sade bir eser olarak değil, çocukluğumdan beri bir ses, bir gönül havası olarak duydum ve sevdim. Benim için O, bir hayat unsuru gibi oldu.*” Sayar, *Hasan Ali Yücel*, 48.

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