

CONTEMPORARY MEVLEVIYE IN TURKEY  
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS:  
“NEW MEVLEVIS” OF ISTANBUL AND KONYA

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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## ABSTRACT

CONTEMPORARY MEVLEVIYE IN TURKEY  
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Mevleviye as a religious order is established in Anatolia after the passing of Rumi in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Thenceforth, Mevleviye has been a great influence in the spiritual lives of people. However, until today, it experienced many changes. The closure of dervish lodges in 1925, return of the religion to the public sphere in 1950s, and the emergence of new religious movements in 1970s and 1980s in Turkey may be listed among the factors behind Mevleviye’s transition from a religious order to the individualistic spiritual path of today. This thesis benefited from the literature of new religious movements to be able to understand the “newness” of contemporary Mevleviye. As a part of this ethnographic study, throughout 2017, I interviewed, ate, prayed and even lived with my informants who I address as “new Mevlevis”. And this is their story.

Keywords: New Religious Movements, Spiritual Search, Mevleviye, New Mevlevis

## ÖZ

### YENİ DİNİ HAREKETLER ÜZERİNDEN TÜRKİYE’DE GÜNÜMÜZ MEVLEVİLİĞİ: İSTANBUL VE KONYA’DAKİ “YENİ MEVLEVİLER”

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Mevlevilik, Mevlana'nın göçüşünün ardından, 13. Yüzyılda bir tarikat olarak Anadolu'da kurulmuş, o günden beri de insanların manevi hayatlarında önemli bir etkisi olmuştur. Fakat, Mevlevilik bugüne kadar pek çok deęişim yaşamıştır. Türkiye’de, 1925’te dergahların kapatılması, 1950’lerde dinin toplumsal alana geri dönüşü ve 1970’ler ile 1980’lerde yeni dini hareketlerin ortaya çıkışı Mevlevilięi bir tarikatten bugünkü bireysel manevi yol haline dönüştüren etkenler arasında sayılabilir. Bu tez günümüz Mevlevilięindeki bu “yenilięi” anlamak için yeni dini hareketler literatüründen faydalanmıştır. Bu etnografik çalışmanın bir parçası olarak ben de 2017 yılı boyunca “yeni Mevleviler” olarak adlandırdığım görüşmecilerimle birlikte yedim, ibadet ettim ve hatta yaşadım. Bu tez de onların hikyesidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeni Dini Hareketler, Manevi Arayış, Mevlevilik, Yeni Mevleviler

To My Parents,  
My Love  
and Beloved



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NRM	New Religious Movements
NRS	New Religions Studies
NSM	New Social Movements
NAM	New Age Movements
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Turkey / Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi
DP	Democrat Party / Demokrat Parti
CHP	Republican People's Party / Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi
MP	Nation Party / Millet Partisi
AP	Justice Party / Adalet Partisi
MSP	National Salvation Party / Milli Selamet Partisi
RP	Welfare Party/Refah Partisi
AKP	Justice and Development Party / Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi
HİS	Federation of Sports for Everyone / Herkes İçin Spor Federasyonu

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Today, like every other day, we wake up empty  
and frightened. Don't open the door to the study  
and begin reading. Take down a musical instrument.

Let the beauty we love be what we do.

There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground. (Mevlana, 13<sup>th</sup> Century  
in Barks 2002: 123).

#### **1.1.DERIVING FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

The key is experience that is for sure.  
Without experience the knowledge means little.  
(Interview, IM60, 20.05.2017)

“Spiritual search” as a concept has always been a part of my life since my childhood. My father being a yoga instructor, and my mother being interested in all sorts of Islamic and far eastern religious philosophies, the way I view this subject is effected by my family immensely. After my first year in university, I followed the footsteps of my family and became a yoga instructor when I was 18. Since yoga is, in fact, a Hindu spiritual practice, I expected to see different practices and beliefs among my yoga students but nothing could prepare me to meet with such different views and life styles in my six years of teaching career. I started to understand that not all

people are trying to find comfort for their bodies and minds through yoga but for their “souls” as well with the words of a student of mine.

One day, a new student came to my yoga class in Ankara and I asked her about her expectations from this practice as a part of a standard first class. She said that she is searching something that she did not know what and could not find yet. She hoped that philosophy behind yoga may be the answer for her. When I saw several people nod at her, I wondered if they feel the same. Therefore, after the class, I asked them personally if this was a reason for them to be here, and more than half of the class said yes. But when I asked if anyone found what they were looking for, the number lessened. So, many were still “in search”. This spiritual search would be one of the focal points for my research in the future.

After this point, I started to observe my students and other yoga instructors closely out of curiosity. I started to see that these people have many similarities aside from spiritual search although they may choose to follow different paths at the end to find what they search for. I asked more questions to people who participate to my yoga classes and they said similar things while describing their reasons for being in those classes differently “to find their place to belong”, “to feel safe”, “to feel completed”, “to not to be so stressed anymore” because of the “modern”, “busy”, “outside” world. I noticed similarities in their lifestyles, educational backgrounds and even political viewpoints. Although there was no way of asking such personal questions back then, I wondered if these characteristics were really common among them and what else could be common. When I learned that there were several people who linked their search to Islamic mysticism even in my relatively small yoga class, I knew I was onto something since this was so different for me. But I was unable to gather Islamic mysticism, spiritual search and other similarities of these people in my mind under a title and so, these were just scattered thoughts back then.

Late in my bachelor’s level, I and a fellow yoga instructor friend of mine went to a pub near where we work. She liked to dress in a style that fashion designers would call bohemian I think, wearing flowy shalwars and colorful hair with dreadlocks. I asked to learn for her viewpoint on this: What was with this style? She surprised me with her answer saying she started to dress like this after she become a musician in



a group where they perform Mevlevi and Bektashi chants although she was not a Mevlevi or Bektashi herself. In fact, I knew that she was identifying as a Buddhist and recently became vegan to be able to follow that path fully. She described her style as “*çiçek çocuklar gibi ama Anadolulu*” (like flower children but from Anatolia) while showing her shalwar, and said that she feel freer to act the way she wants this way. This sentence stayed with me for a time. I understand that her style choice was basically reflecting her preferred life style and world-view but linking those to Mevlevi and Bektashi traditions was another issue. Then, I shared my thoughts about people who search asking if she is searching too. And she said “Don’t we all?”.

She was right. I realized that the issue I was wondering all along was not yoga or new age specific but many people in Turkey are searching something to practice, believe and live in their own ways which brought a new meaning to the existence of Mevlevi and Bektashi traditions in her life for me.

Linking these thoughts to the concept of “new religious movements” come after I started to my Master’s Degree. After some friends and yoga students of my father choosed to follow the Mevlevi path too, I decided that there is something to study there because the word Islamic mysticism and Mevleviye was popping from many different directions, always linked to “searching”, “finding” and various other spiritual practices.

When the time for choosing a research subject came, I talked about my experiences with my advisor. “New religious movements” turned out to be the title that I was looking for to gather all those different experiences. But the issue was different from what I read in the literature because Islamic mysticism in Anatolia in fact was not so “new” in terms of origin. But I wondered if there were some “newness”. Especially the followers seemed very ‘new’ and ‘different’ with their discourses and lifestyles. Along the way, I met with people who become Mevlevis whose discourses sounded the same with the ones who converted to Buddhism for example. So, who were them really? This became my initial question.

## 1.2. DESCRIBING THE RESEARCH

There are many things to tell but how can I express the search, the way we fall, the thing we search for, things that we found, our reasons...  
(Interview, IF48, 22.05.2017)

Although there are many discussions about religious orders in Turkey, there is not much field studies on the issue. Major aim of this research is to explain the changes that occurred in belief in the level of religious orders in Turkey from the perspective of “new religious movements”. To be able to do this, I selected Mevleviye as my case.

Belief or the way of thinking and acting that can considered under the term religion is known to humanity for a long time. Many sociologist define religion as a cultural system of shared rituals and beliefs that produce the sense of meaning and purpose through the idea of sacred (Durkheim, 1965; Berger, 1967; Wuthnow, 1988 in Giddens, 2013: 580). Theorists like Weber and Durkheim stated that the importance of religion would decline in time (Giddens, 2013: 582). Because “Secularization theory had a very simple proposition: ...modernity inevitably produces a decline of religion.” (Berger, 2014: 16) “...both in society and in the minds of individuals.” (Berger, 1999: 2). In contrast, religion in this day might have a “rediscovered” effect on the individualized people of the “modern” age (Karaatlı, 2006: 6).

I think, new religious movements (NRMs) might be seen as the way such rediscoveries happen. NRMs refers to religious and/or spiritual groups that have “modern” origins or form around modern re-interpretations. The term itself is inclusive, flexible and pluralistic rather than unilateral. Rise of NRMs seems to be connected to different processes in modernity like detraditionalization, fragmentation, secularization, globalization, and individualization both as an answer to it and as a result of it. Although NRMs are quite popular in global literature, there are not much study or attention on the issue in Turkey. I believe that studying Mevleviye through the lenses of NRMs literature can offer a picture for contemporary Turkey while also contributing to sociology of religion since Islam is

often equalized to strong dogmas rather than mysticism today but “there is no single voice of Islam” (Bowker, 1995: 70).

As it is known, Mevleviye is one of the most known Islamic religious orders all around the world and it is affecting spiritual lives of people for over 8 centuries. When its history is read, it can be seen that Mevleviye experienced several periods of decline but the most serious one came with the foundation of the Republic that wiped off many traditions and blocked training of new dervishes. Like many other religious orders, Mevleviye also experienced a transition that came with processes like industrialization, urbanization and individualization. In that sense, ‘contemporary’ Mevleviye is not the same as the old ones (Mevleviye of 13<sup>th</sup> century or even the one that existed before the foundation of the Republic for example) in terms of its system, organization, followers and even rituals.

This study started from a simple observation which made me notice that many people in Turkey are in a “spiritual search” and some of them find what they were looking for in Mevleviye, so they started to identify with Mevleviye. In that sense, they are the “new” Mevlevis of contemporary Mevleviye. As a result, I asked “Who are “new” Mevlevis?” as my research question. I hoped that this question would show me the similarities and differences among new Mevlevis and also, help me to understand new/contemporary Mevleviye.

Questions of “How are people become Mevlevi?” and “Why?” followed naturally as additional research questions since all formed one single picture of contemporary Mevleviye in today’s Turkey that could be understood well from the perspective of NRMs.

Throughout this writing, I will be providing the relevant historical context while trying to answer stated questions on the basis of the findings from my fieldwork in Istanbul and Konya. At the end, I wish to offer a glimpse of experiences of new Mevlevis while discussing the parallels between contemporary Mevleviye and NRMs.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As I mentioned, after I encountered people who are in “spiritual search” and see that many realize this search in Mevleviye. I started to wonder characteristics of these people and reasons behind their choice of Mevleviye. To answer these questions I benefitted from the notion of spiritual search and literature of new religious movements (NRMs). I benefitted from various studies on spiritual search because the phenomenon was visible in the field from the very beginning and people were acknowledging it by saying they were in the *arayış* (search). The concept of spiritual search naturally gave way to NRMs because spiritual search is one of the predisposing conditions that create the demand for NRMs in society and spiritual seekers are known to realize this search in NRMs rather than established religions. After I started to read the literature I became aware of other similarities between NRMs and the experience of my informants who are, in fact, identifying with Mevleviye.

Therefore, I started this chapter with theoretical discussions on religion to be able to form a common ground for the further discussions that would include new religions and spiritual search. I then, discussed the emergence of NRMs as well as the fundamental and empirical characteristics of NRMs. At the end, I discussed the concept of Sufism and Rumi’s Sufism which are two important bases that we need to discuss to be able to understand contemporary Mevleviye.

These discussions will form the theoretical framework of this study and lead us to a better understanding on the issue of spiritual search and NRMs in Turkey and their

relations to contemporary Mevleviye. In this sense, notions and discussion that are provided here will be visited later on while discussing the findings of the study.

## **2.1. SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO RELIGION**

My father would say, religions are like talking in foreign languages,  
you speak differently but you say the same thing.  
(Interview, IF48, 22.05.2017)

Having a sociological understanding of religion and defining the religious phenomena is crucial to be able to discuss religious movements. Especially new religious movements (NRMs) are quite difficult to pinpoint while discussing since they vary in terms of their origins, doctrines, organizations and rituals, and the term itself is quite flexible and more inclusive from the terms like cult and religious order. It is clear that NRMs are still religions, therefore they bound to the concept of religion, but we also need to look through discussions on religion to be able to locate the “newness” of new religions I think.

Religion had very important place in lives of people throughout the history and still has. In one way or the other, it can be observed in all known societies (Giddens, 2013: 579). In that sense, defining religious phenomena is important. According to Giddens, many sociologist define religion as a cultural systems of shared practices and beliefs, and the existence of religion in societies is often linked to humanity’s search for meaning and purpose (Durkheim, 1965; Berger, 1967; Wuthnow, 1988 in Giddens, 2013: 580). Here, I will look through various sociological approaches to religious phenomena to be able to generate an understanding of religion for this study.

In literature, discussions on religion generally starts with theories of Marx, Weber and Durkheim that are also dubbed as classical theories. Although he greatly influenced the literature, Marx does not directly focus on religion as a phenomena. He, very much like Feuerbach, perceives religion as a “total of values” that is

produced by humanity through time but those values attributed to Gods since humans could not understand their own “historicity”. Feuerbach uses “alienation” as a term to refer the recognition of divine powers because people are subjected to those forces and even controlled by them. Marx accepts that religion alienates people to themselves since it is inherently hiding truth and misguiding humans while creating an illusion (Settimba, 2009: 230). Like famous quote from Marx states “Religion is the opium of the people”. So, it consoles them and makes them blind to their own interests. But it still acts as the “heart of a heartless world” since it offers a spiritual shelter to people (Giddens, 2013: 583).

Unlike Marx, Durkheim focuses on religion in many of his studies. According to Durkheim, religion is a social institution which could be studied like a knowledge form. Durkheim does not link religion to power relations or social inequality rather studies it through its functions. For Durkheim, “an institution cannot rest upon falsehood” if so it cannot exist (1995: 2). Simply, there can be no “false” religion. He also states that “[primitive religions] fulfill the same needs, play the same role and proceed from the same causes [with the others]” (1995: 3) indicating a functional and fundamental similarity among all religions which includes new religions too I think. He does not view religions only as issues in personal belief but recognizes their societal functions too like rituals and customs that bring people together. In this sense, the true function of religion for him is “to make us act and to help us live” (1995: 419). Therefore, although religion will fade in modern society, new rituals and changed customs might fill the gap.

Weber’s work focuses more on the relation between religion and social change. His thesis oppose to Marx’s since Weber does not view religion as a necessary protection power but as a motivation for change and social movements that would bring that change. For example, Protestantism became the basis of Western capitalism through Protestants’ “will to serve to God well”. In “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”, he discusses that capitalism rises in Europe because of Puritan ethics that says only predetermined selected ones would be saved (Weber, 1930: xii) and doing well this worldly often seen as a sign of being among the selected ones. For Weber, religion responds to need of people against the problem

of “theodicy”. Word by word, theodicy means “justifying God’s ways” (Encyclopedia Britannica, retrieved in March 2018). Weber thinks that people feel distressed because they do not know why evil and/or imperfections of life exist when there is an almighty being that created and rules the world. People simply “need to know” (Giddens, 2013: 586). Religion offers some answers and salvation, and at least, a reprieve “from meaningless suffering” while providing meaning (Berger, 1967).

Simmel, on the other hand, gives importance to “subjective” elements in society which offers us a broader perspective. For Simmel there is religion with its content and then religious form which is religiosity as a life style. In this view, “Just as cognition does not create causality, instead causality creates cognition, so religion does not create religiosity, but religiosity creates religion.” (Simmel, 1997: 81). Such approach puts religion as a private issue which is inherently needed since religiosity is seen as the individual foundation of religion itself. But creation of religion is seen as a result of “externalization” and “purification” of this religiosity. Like many other, Simmel also thought that modernity preponderates objective spirit. Unlike Weber and Durkheim, he did not believe in any decrease in religiosity through modernity. On the contrary, he thought that there will be a new question of religion.

Freud touches upon “needs” of people while discussing religion. He thinks that civilization demands people to “suppress” the instinctual necessities (1975: 7-8). According to him, there are three reasons for the existence of gods: “They must exorcize the terrors of nature, they must reconcile men to the cruelty of fate (death), and they must compensate people for the sufferings and privations which a civilized life in common has imposed on them.” (1975: 18). These are important elements for explaining individual and personal reasons for one’s tendency to believe which are used in many different theories with similar or different terms. Freud also defines religion/god as an illusion while predicting a defeat in the face of science like some of the previous theories did and adds that “Religion has lost a part of its influence over human masses precisely because of the deplorable effect of the advances of science.” (1975: 37).

Coming to writings of Nietzsche, he has two basic ideas. First one is the “death of God”, and the second one is the “overman”. “God is dead!” is a well-known quote from Nietzsche but people mostly took it too literally. The statement means that with the rise of modernity and scientific mentality, modern people would lose any possible “meaning” of life which was supported through faith, and morality turn into senselessness. Therefore, we can simply say that religion was a tool for creating a meaning for so to say painful, senseless existence like Weber and Berger would also agree. Here, Nietzsche observed that the image of God is not powerful to be the ground for that “ultimate truth and morality” that brings order to society. Nietzsche’s “overman” is a term that is cogitated as an answer to “nihilism” (Nietzsche, 2010: 13-14) which is a very similar feeling to Durkheimian “anomie” that refers to an emotion of aimlessness linked with a transformation of accepted values. Overman is the “best possible form” of individual who can create his/her own “morality” to cope with such nihilistic world (Nietzsche, 2010: 13-14).

Berger knocks many of these well accepted viewpoints to offer a useful perspective. For him, there are three important processes to understand religion: “externalization, objectivation, and internalization” (Berger, 1967: 4). According to Berger’s terminology, we are choosing how to “externalize” ourselves and change the world around us, so, this brings new choices to make. Because our relation with world is constantly changing, we feel “off balance”. Therefore, in this perspective, human’s ultimate wish is to be in balance or to have a stable order to be able to know the world and able to guess its ways better. In that sense, society’s main aim is to create such sense of “stable predictable order” and to make all people believe in it. Society does this through “objectivating” which means, learning to make the same choices while we externalize ourselves which happens through socialization. Berger uses “the nomos” to refer to a total of human choices that all could be altered. But nomos appears as “objectively true” and stable. If the nomos is questioned, society may drag into being without nomos which Berger calls “anomy” like Durkheim’s “anomie” to express a similar feeling. For Berger, because anomy is risky probability, the society tries to strengthen the nomos as a “shield against terror” –a case where nomos is shaken or destroyed by foreign experiences for example-



(Berger, 1967: 22), i.e. “senseless life” like in Weberian understanding. If the nomos starts to be taken-for-granted, society’ meanings would be universe’s meanings too. Simply, “The nomos becomes the cosmos”. Religion means the ultimate externalization and legitimates the nomos effectively since it links uncertainties to ultimate reality. It is said that “The power of religion depends, in the last resort, upon the credibility of the banners it puts in the hands of men as they stand before death.” (Berger, 1967: 51).

At the end, religion still exists in the modern world unlike the predictions of many sociologist like Marx. From the lenses of new religions, it becomes clearer that all religions show fundamental and functional similarities like Durkheim states. In terms of fundamental similarities, most religions including the new ones offer the idea of the existence of a divine reality. Through that idea, religions offer answers about the unknown like the problem of theodicy and death leading to “meaning” and “purpose” which are often seen as “needs” for people. Religions also support or form shared societal norms. In that sense, they might be acting as ways of protection against alienating and anomic ways of modern life. So, it can be said that new religions are still religions in terms of their fundamental features.

Functional similarities, on the other hand, can be summarized with the concepts of societal order and social change. In Durkheimian sense, each religion is true and needed in society and in Weberian understanding religions might be acting as motivations for change. At the end, these are two valid opinions for new religions of our time because other than fundamental reasons that I mentioned, new religions exist since they are needed in society and they are as movements are bound with the idea of change. This brings me to Simmel who said religion will not disappear in the modern world but there will be a new question of religion. To conclude, new religions are still addressing the same issues and occur from similar ideas but the uniqueness of NRMs lies in the “newness” I think which I will discuss in the next section.

## **2.2. UNDERSTANDING NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS**

My son was asking: “Mom, why am I Muslim?”  
And I thought, when you born in a Muslim family you became a Muslim.  
However, it was not sounding that meaningful even at that moment.  
(Interview, KF63, 22.07.2017)

### **2.2.1. Emergence of New Religious Movements**

New religious movements (NRMs) can be considered as a global phenomenon. There are NRMs that developed out of far eastern and pagan beliefs as well as Islam and Judeo-Christian tradition. Although there are a large number of NRMs today, number of people who are affected by them is not that notable statistically (Barker, 1999: 15). However, the very emergence of NRMs might be a sign of change in religious tendencies and closely related to social change. Therefore, their importance is not fixed to statistical data. I personally think the real importance of NRMs lies in their emergence and existence as ‘new’ forms of religion in ‘modern’ society. In line with this, modernization and its processes might be viewed as conditions that prepared the emergence of NRMs. Processes like secularization and individualization refer to a certain change in the society and social change is known to come with tension. Having said that, fast change and tension are also two terms that are often used to explain the reasons of emergence of NRMs.

“Traditional society” as opposed to modern society refers to a living that relies on agriculture. These types of societies operate on kinship and traditional religions. By traditional religion I mean practices and beliefs that exist in society for a long time without much change. Traditional societies died out with industrialization which moved most of the population to cities (Giddens, 2013: 73-74). Modernization, together with the evolution of the modern industrial state, refers to a change in the system through ‘progress’, administrative and economic rationalization, and social differentiation. As a concept modernization may cover processes like secularization, cultural differentiation, urbanization and rationalization. As a whole, modernization

changes society and hegemonic modernization known to effect people through alienation and anomie.

Although modernism points out a break from previous forms of thinking, there are still parts of traditional culture that continues. In this sense, concepts of modernization limit the field of religious domain but modern times cannot be thought as totally non-religious. Barker states that “One of the features of modern society which sociologists of religion, such as Durkheim, Weber and Wilson, have frequently pointed out is that organized religion no longer has the kind of hold over social institutions that it has enjoyed in earlier periods” (1999: 18-19) which is mostly a result of processes like individualization and secularization.

There are three main arguments about the relation between modernization, secularization and religion. First one argues that modernization necessarily will bring secularization and religion will disappear at the end. As Berger states, “Secularization theory had a very simple proposition...Modernity inevitably produces a decline of religion.” (2014: 16) “...both in society and in the minds of individuals.” (1999: 2). In line with this theory, many expected secularism (secularization of state) to bring secularization in organizational and individual levels too and some theorists like Bruce are still backing the classical statement that modernity will diminish traditional forms of religion (Davie, 2007: 50-56).

Criticism towards secularization theory mostly states that the theory does not look at the existence of experienced religion where people continued to believe although scientific mentality became dominant (Smith, 2007: 14). It can be said that since 1960s, world went toward a different direction than what many theorists suggested. People of different economic statuses, ages, genders and educational backgrounds seem to be even more involved with different religious activities. Religious revival in modern society may be seen as a reaction that is triggered by modernization itself.

This brings us to the second view that criticizes the first one. It remarks that religion -that is assumed to disappear- still exists and it is even getting stronger. So, this thesis argues dispensability of religion. But it seems to be changing. Barker states that religion is becoming more and more of a leisure activity that is “privatized” and

“individualized” and as a result, “dominant organizations lost members in Europe and even in US” (1999: 18-19). Davie states that there is a visible decline in the participation to religious activities in some places like Western Europe. This is often used to support secularization thesis, however it is hard to measure religiosity (1999: 66). For example, only 2 percent of people of Iceland seems to be going to church, although many continue to believe the existence of an afterlife (81 percent) and soul (88 percent) (Stark, 2000: 52). Therefore, second thesis state that an “un-churched” person may not be simply secularized. This situation explained as “believing without belonging” by Davie (1999: 71) which means people did not secularized but their way of believing might have been changed.

This idea brings us to the last argument that states religion and modernity effects each other simultaneously. Casanova is one of the most known names who support this perspective and he defines secularization as a process that differentiate and emancipate secular spheres form religious institutions but in his definition, modernity does not necessarily bring a decline in belief or rituals in society. Here, religion does not only refer to traditional institutions but has a more inclusive meaning. In this view, religion and modernity can exist together and religion does not disappear because of secularization but just changes its form very much like new religions.

I think, Berger as a sociologist who changed his mind about secularization theory offers the most suitable perspective for this study:

The world today is not heavily secularized, with two interesting exceptions that have to be explained. One is geographical, it is Western and Central Europe, and the other is an international intellectual class that is heavily secularized...The rest of the world is massively religious. In some areas of the world, more religious than ever. The [secularization] theory is wrong. Now, to conclude that the theory is wrong is the beginning of a new process of thinking. I came to the conclusion some years ago that to replace secularization theory -to explain religion in the modern world- we need the theory of pluralism. Modernity does not necessarily produce secularity. It necessarily produces pluralism, by which I mean the coexistence in the same society of different worldviews and value systems. That changes the status of religion (2014: 16).

Pluralism as an idea seems to be triggered by processes of modernity too and often linked to postmodern thought. Postmodernism as a thought is emerged from the modernity itself to criticize and offer an alternative to it. In line with this, postmodernism makes alternative readings of religion possible. As opposed to modernity's exclusionist attitude toward religion, postmodernism brings tolerance because of its relativist attitude towards truth itself which result with religious pluralism and so, coexistence. According to religious pluralism, all spiritual paths are valid and each person may follow their own way or choice of belief to reach God. In fact, many times, these ways are not even perceived as that different in their essence. Sociologically, religious pluralism showed its face first in the West through NRMs.

After the Second World War, Europe experienced a decline in Christianity and a raise in NRMs partly due to the alternatives produced by societies against the authority of established religions and partly due to fast change and tension. Barker states that:

Concomitantly, in place of a relatively homogeneous, coherent, and more or less shared culture, we have witnessed the growth of religious pluralism, interwoven with numerous social changes such as increased social and geographical mobility, universal franchise, universal education and the break-up of a traditional occupational structure, traditional values and authority structures – all of which can contribute to a dissatisfaction with, or at least a second look at, the beliefs and practices that might otherwise have been passed on by parents or others in roles of authority – thus creating a potential 'demand' (in the economic sense) for alternative ways of satisfying spiritual and religious requirements (1999: 18-19).

NRMs started to spread in 1960s. Spiritual alternatives first became possible for middle class youth late in the student unrest or counter-culture movements both in Europe and US. It is said that communes started to emerge in sacred centers and “then the hippies started to move into more structured, but none the less religious or spiritual (rather than political) organizations” and movement reached to “mainstream” society where other religions previously exiled because of secularization (Barker, 1999: 22). This also shows how the atmosphere of fast change or tension through the crisis of modernization and secularization gave birth to alternatives.

Emergence of NRMs would not be completed without their converts of course. Conversion to NRMs might be explained through the seven-step model of Lofland and Stark I think. In this model, a person should firstly experience some kind of tension and then, the solution to this tension should be seen in religion. This would make them to perceive their quest as a “spiritual search”. These three steps may be seen as “predisposing conditions” for the creation of a possible convert. When the person is ready to search, they meet with the “cult” that they join which will happen in “a turning point” of their lives. After this point, people will start to bond with some other members of the cult while their attachments outside of this circle weaken which possibly end up with intensive interaction within the circle. (Lofland and Stark in Dawson, 2003: 118) and at the end, person will be converted fully. Reasons may not be the same for all converts. What they seek in an NRM may change from member to member and NRM to NRM but various studies state that they found purpose, meaning, community and/or family, surety, spiritual experience or even healing which may mean like Enroth says, NRMs are emerged successfully because they meet the basic human needs (2005: 14).

### **2.2.2. Defining New Religious Movements**

At the beginning, focusing more on the extreme cults, many researcher interpreted NRMs as social problems that are not compatible with modern social world. But we should note that when social scientists entered this area of subject, there were already a certain level of media coverage around NRMs –mostly negative- and established institutions like churches already settled on a perspective that see NRMs as “dangerous” and “wrong”. Obviously, social sciences prefer to study NRMs from an objective point of view without labeling them negatively which is also a reason for utilizing a new term like “new religious movements” rather than sect or cult.

In academic literature, sociologists became aware that teachings of NRMs and their followers were different and so, they were different from traditional denominations. Therefore, more profound studies of NRMs were needed to “revise ‘old’ theories”

(Arweck, 2006: 33). Some social scientists interpret widespread emergence and increase of modern NRMs as a proof of religious revival against modernization and/or secularization while sociologists like Bromley tries to research the contribution of NRMs to society (Dawson, 2014: 54-56). In this case, defining NRMs seems to be crucial but it is not easy since there is not only one answer but many. Therefore, definitions that will be given here will be useful more than purely right.

To begin with, we may try to understand the very term “New Religious Movement”. Since we already discussed religion itself, it is easier to explain the “religious” part of NRMs. Briefly, NRMs are called “religious” since they offer answers to “ultimate questions” about God, human existence and meaning of life that are generally seen as concerns of religions (Barker, 1999: 16). It is clear that these movements offer guidance in an area that is accepted as religion with similar reasons and backgrounds while addressing the same questions and dealing with the same issues that we discussed in previous part.

NRMs are “movements” because they simply mobilize people towards shared norms and have transformative features. In this sense, social movements can be defined as actions toward (or against) change in life style or world-view in society (Türkdoğan, 2013: 27). NRMs are generally associated with “new” social movements (NSMs). It is clear that both NRMs and NSMs challenge the mainstream world and choose “pre-figurative” over instrumental action but their ways of reaching their goals are somewhat different since there is stronger sense of individualism in NRMs (Szerszynski, 1992: 9). Also, it can be said that NRMs appeared because of the same reasons with NSMs. Clearly, transformation in any part of the structure creates a tension which is the primary factor for the emergence of social movements and new religions.

Newness of NRMs is the most discussed issue when a definition is needed. It is known that there are lots of new forms of religion from religious orders to orthodoxies throughout history. In fact, all religions that come to today was once a new religion (Bromley, 2009: 2). So, newness is not about being new historically. Even, the teachings of NRMs are not totally new (Arweck, 2006: 29-30).

NRMs are considered new because they appeared to be “different” among religions. The way they intermix different beliefs and teachings is new for example. Enroth states that some NRMs put new formulations together to reach “truth” that is gathered from different sources which results with “unique” properties in an NRM (2005: 19). New interpretations, intermixed life styles and individual beliefs that are fed by pluralism and individualism is a new scenery for sociologists of religion. This new way of thinking that forms and interprets NRMs also attract new groups of people to religion. These groups of people are considered “new” because they are “disproportionately white and from the better-educated middle classes” in the West (Barker, 1999: 21) and “relatively young, well educated, idealistically minded, mostly middle class, receptive to religious or spiritual matters” (Arweck, 2006: 30-31) in general. I will utilize a similar viewpoint when I talk about my sample too. Before the emergence of NRMs people who become members of this kind of groups would be considered deviant. We need to mind that there are various types of “memberships” here. People might be completely “committed” to the movement or some may just come to rituals regularly or people may agree with the movement’s beliefs without going in deeply (Barker, 1999: 17). Beyond these, NRMs are called “new” also for practical reasons because many accept that they became visible after the Second World War.

According to Bromley, NRMs continued to offer an alternative (or an experimental) life style when counter-culture began to decline in the late 1950s (2009: 6). It appears that NRM as a notion started to be used in industrialized secular Western societies during 1960s. Throughout 1970s, notion spread many other parts of the world to represent spiritual movements that emerged (or re-emerged) because of fast change and unrest in societies to answer ‘modern’ problems while sometimes accommodating the existing system and sometimes resisting it. As Beckford states:

New religious movements are important indicators of stressful changes in culture and society. They are also interesting attempts to come to terms with rapid social change by imposing new interpretations on it and by experimenting with practical responses. They therefore amount to social and cultural laboratories where experiments in ideas, feelings and social relations are carried out (1992: xv).



Clarke also states that “the most common sociological explanation for the rise of NRMs interprets them as a response to the crises of identity, moral meaning and profound cultural upheaval brought about by rapid social change.” (2006: xii). In US where pluralism is incorporated into the life style, many different explanations are suggested:

When first the counter-culture and then NRMs emerged, sociologists of religion examined them, addressing, for example, the role of deprivation (Glock, 1964), religion and society in tension (Glock and Stark, 1965), the origin of religious groups (Glock, 1973), the new religious consciousness (Glock and Bellah, 1976), the broken covenant (Bellah, 1975), conversion to a deviant perspective (Lofland and Stark, 1965) (Arweck, 2006: 47).

Explaining the emergence of NRMs as a result of “modern dislocation” or seeing them as “protests against modernity” (Bromley, 2009: 6-7) is crucial in terms of seeing the newness of NRMs, however even all these may not be enough to explain such phenomenon that shows various attributes and has many distinct cases all over the world.

In line with this, John Saliba lists various approaches to NRMs which will help us to summarize the discussion too. First, NRMs can be perceived as a result of “rapid social change” and so, the state of normlessness or anomie or alienation or modern dislocation which we discussed. This is one of the most accepted sociological explanation for the existence of NRMs I think. NRMs may be seen as genuine religious revivals too. Especially if we accept secularization thesis or even exceptions of de-secularization thesis (existence of secular global intellectual elite and secular Western Europe), NRMs can easily be seen as religious revivals in modern world saying people are disillusioned with secular perspective of the West. So, NRMs may be taken as confirmation of secularization thesis, if we see them as an affirmative or negative reaction to secularization. This also bring the perspective that sees NRMs as disenchantment with “the establishment” (religion or system) that born from questioning the relevance of traditional institutions which is a case that can be observed I think. There is also another idea close to this one that perceives NRMs as a result of deterioration of “civil religion” (innate religious values of a society) or NRMs might be seen as some sort of experimental religion too like Bromley and Beckford state from time to time in their writings. And lastly,

NRMs might be interpreted as a sign of the coming of a “new humanism” (Saliba, 1990 in Arweck, 2006: 48). We actually touched nearly all of these approaches very briefly and they already seem to overlap in many cases and studies. I think the most important similarity of all these approaches is mentioned “new” groups of people who search spiritual answers in these “new” organizations in modern world which might be a starting point for me when it is time to analyze the findings of this study.

Clearly, these movements differs from each other in terms of their roots, belief systems, rituals, way of organization, and world-views. Therefore, it is not easy to classify them but there are some widely accepted typologies that try to classify NRMs. Three most known and used typologies today, respectively utilize NRMs’ origins, their perspective on dualism/monism distinction, and their perception of modern world.

First typology separates NRMs as Christianity based ones and the ones that have their origins in East Asian beliefs. Origin of teachings as a way of distinction seems to be used more in older studies. Today, we know that there are NRMs whose origins go to Islamic and Pagan traditions too. Therefore, such reduction is a little problematic. However, the idea of looking at the origin of an NRM might be useful since this would provide some information about the belief system that they utilize.

The second typology that is used often classify NRMs as dualistic and monistic ones. It is first used by Robbins, Dick and Richardson in 1978. Dualistic NRMs separate secular and religious domains and accept an ethical dualism that centers both human and God (Richardson, 2006: 645). On the other hand, monistic ones bring some religious rules to life since they perceive everything as a part of one single existence. I think, understanding the philosophy of a NRM would be helpful to understand the promoted life style and the experience of its followers.

Probably the typology of Wallis is the most useful one since it offers an understanding of the world-views of NRMs. It classifies NRMs as world-accommodating, world-rejecting and world-affirming ones. In his view, world-accommodating NRMs focus mostly on personal belief and exist on the edges of established beliefs in a society (2003: 36-58). They emphasize spiritual enrichment

of individuals as opposed to material possessions (Clarke, 2006: 644). World-rejecting ones want their followers to remove their previous ties and encourage to live as a small community. They wish to change existing values and institutions with another set of values and institutions (Clarke, 2006: 644). On the other hand, world-affirming NRMs accept norms of society (Wallis, 2003: 36-58) but focuses on individual changes through potential of a person without needing them to withdrawn from the society (Clarke, 2006: 644).

Although Wallis' typology is useful, there are still some lacking points in terms of understanding NRMs fully. One of those points is experienced characteristics of NRMs. Despite all differences among NRMs, there are some common characteristics that can be observed in many of these movements. Some of these characteristics might be "first-generation enthusiasms, the unambiguous clarity and certainty in the belief systems, the urgency of the message, the commitment of life-style, a charismatic leadership, and strong them/us and/or before/after distinctions" (Barker, 1999: 20).

It is clear that new religions mostly consist of people who are converts. So, a researcher may expect to meet new followers -whose current religious belief did not come from family or other authorities- more than the people who born into that religion in the field. As it is mentioned, NRMs mostly attract "limited segments of population" (Enroth, 2005: 21). As a result of new membership tendencies in NRMs –young, well-educated, inexperienced in religious issues etc., members observed to be excited, emotional and satisfied with the respective new belief. People who feel this way commit the life-style that is offered since these groups fulfill perceived needs and promise simple answers to discontinuities in society (Enroth, 2005: 20). This even might mean cutting ties with family and friends in some cases. In others, social circle of the convert may accept the person's change.

Change is something visible in most NRMs. These changes might be behavioral changes or they may be about daily life and rituals as well as change of clothing or eating habits. These are the changes often create the before/after distinctions in a person while accepting a distinctively different or exclusionary life style and/or world-view together with the new religion may result with a dichotomous

perspective that lead people to adopt the them/us distinction. On the other hand, if the belief offer a tolerant and pluralistic world-view, them/us distinction may show itself simply as the feeling of belonging and being a family. In any case, external controversy is something to be expected in an NRM since beliefs, practices, and values of NRMs generally counter to dominant culture (Enroth, 2005: 22) while many times, emotional and social affirmations within the group create the feeling of rightness and certainty in the belief.

It is also expected to have a charismatic leader in an NRM especially during emergence or re-emergence periods. For the most NRMs, charismatic leader is actually the founder but in many cases, new leaders who represent the authority of the first founder also needs to be charismatic to be able to make the group continue to act. Charisma is described by Weber as a personal quality that sets the individual apart from ordinary. Charismatic leader often legitimizes the perception of being extraordinary with some deeds which lead to a follower base. This charismatic leader who builds his power on loyalty and allegiance of its followers would have the authority over the doctrine itself and practices of the followers (Enroth, 2005: 21).

Today, there are many NRMs that institutionalize after they lost their leader or because of other internal changes like birth of the second generation into the movement. Even external changes like the Internet might be influential on the place of an NRM in a society.

We also need to remember that “both the meaning and the application of the term new religion can vary from culture to culture and region to region” (Clarke, 2006: 454). For example, Japan experienced things differently at different times than Europe. It is said that Japan experienced first wave of NRMs immediately after the Second World War and it has been experiencing a second wave of NRMs since 1970s that is called New-New Religious Movements or Neo-New Religions which are the ones that correspond to NRMs of the West since the first wave seem to effecting the lower-middle class housewives rather than well-educated youth (Barker, 1999: 22-23).

It is for sure that Turkey also has its own originalities and historicity that effected the emergence, types and characteristics of NRMs in Turkey. I will be discussing the case of Turkey in the Chapter 3.

### **2.3. RESEARCHING SPIRITUAL SEARCH**

People are searching. I do not know any person who would say I do not have an inner search. They might be searching for different things for different reasons and found it in different places but they are searching.  
(Interview, IM49, 22.05.2017)

“Spiritual search” was the first concept that I encountered in the field. Even before this study, I was aware of the experience of spiritual search in people’s lives as I mentioned in the first chapter. Spiritual search is an initial part of conversion to NRMs and even seen as a predisposing condition. As a result, spiritual search became the notion that lead me to benefit from NRMs literature during this study making me aware of the existence of NRMs in Turkey. Therefore, I wish to make this often used notion, “spiritual search” or “spiritual seeking”, clear before we move on. Here, I will try to understand “What is spiritual search?”, “Is there different types of spiritual search?” and “Who are spiritual seekers?”. I believe answering these questions will create a framework that might be utilized while analyzing my findings.

Search or seeking is considered as a part of believing from the very beginning. This could be search for the sacred, search of a promised land, searching in one’s inner world or even searching for something to believe in. However, research about the content and features of spiritual search seems to be limited. Spiritual search or seeking can be simply seen as a process, movement, journey or quest that “self-directing” and “self-authenticating” individuals practice to reach a “personal spiritual meaning” apart from “historical religious traditions” (Smith and Denton, 2005: 79). Searching naturally brings the term finding. This could mean finding

purpose and meaning in existence, finding security, a family or a place to belong, reaching to a peaceful mind or “awareness” and many other things. It can be even said that findable things can be as plentiful as the number of seekers in modern world. Therefore, it is easy to claim that spiritual search was always there and changes in social world make its rise possible -even necessary- more than ever. Because of this, spiritual search as a phenomenon is inherent in the emergence of NRMs. To be clear, “searching” can be seen as one of the reasons behind the emergence of NRMs while it can also be seen as a characteristic of people who participate in NRMs. This also shows that search for meaning became more prominent in the last decades (Crawford and Rossiter, 2006: 80). As we discussed, NRMs might offer answers and satisfaction to individuals, brought options to believing while its characteristics created a safe shelter against meaningless life in our fast changing society. As a result, NRMs became suitable places for modern person to articulate spiritual search.

The transformation brought by the last decades was not expected. Spirituality that is despised by assertive positivism made a comeback and legitimate itself. It might be said that “The hard-edged scientism of modernity has given way to the softer and fluffier notion of spirituality that characterizes postmodernity” (Bridger, 2001: 7). Bridger says that in the 1960s, people would be mocked if they discussed spirituality, however in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, doing as such is a part of the most recent “cultural wave” which also proves the rise of spirituality (2001: 7).

According to Bauman, the gap left behind with the decline of religion in the West created the search for more personal and “this-worldly” spirituality, so, the search may not be for “other-worldly” spirituality. In this view, the resurrected spiritual journey shows the end of dominant rationalism period (Bauman, 1995). Heelas also makes a similar point saying that 37 percent of British people state that they believe God within each person which indicates an emphasis on “spirituality within life” rather than a life of a “transcendent theistic God” (Heelas, 2008: 1).

Rising interest in spirituality itself may be referring to “discontents of modernity” such as mind body dualisms, emphasis on rationality, bureaucratized society, patriarchal structures in religion, and inexpression of the self as a whole (Roof,

2009: 59). Today, it is often presumed that people are seeking precautions to protect themselves from “the anomic and alienating effects of modern life” when they turn to religion (Dawson, 2014: 52). It is said that:

During the period of modernity, the tools for the demotion of spirituality were provided by the Enlightenment belief in progress underpinned and guaranteed by positivistic science. However, postmodernity has shattered this naive faith, so that all that is left for individuals (and perhaps societies) is to assemble their own packages of meaning and belief that will provide ontological security once more (Bridger, 2001: 9).

New Age spiritualities, in this sense, seem to oppose to “the restrictive” and “the regulatory” (Heelas, 2008: 3). At the end, it can be said that the search became a more prominent issue because “relevance of traditional sources of meaning like religion declined”, “individualism is greatly emphasized” that lead people to find their own meanings, and rapid “‘progress’ in Western technological societies brought personal confusion and social unrest more than happiness” (Crawford and Rossiter, 2006: 80).

In line with this, Roof writes that there is a rise in “spiritual quest culture” in the US which is now recognized by society. Quest culture refers to “an ethos emphasizing spiritual seeking and exploration” which may show itself as “journey”, “growth”, “discovery”, and “cultivation of the interior life” (Roof, 2009: 50). Such culture shows itself in daily conversations (through preferred words and subjects), in religious and non-religious practices (from practices like meditation to various clothing and eating habits), and in many other ways. Spiritual search, here, puts the emphasis on individual choices unlike established religions that represent the institutionalization. And most importantly it shows a division from more ‘traditional’ forms of believing.

Roof also argues that post Second World War generations were the center of such changes in US (2009: 51). For example, Baby Boomers and Generation Xers who matured during cultural revolutions and liberations from traditional “American ways of life” generally seen as the “original” spiritual seekers of America (Smith and Denton, 2005: 73). As we discussed, spiritual world transformed after the Second World War all around the world because of the counter-culture perspective that

brought experimental or 'alternative' life styles and values that contrasted with the traditional ones. During those times, there was a wish for change and more sensitivity towards spiritual matters. Social movements showed the important values for those generations like "environment, the reclaiming of the feminine, the holistic, and quality of life" which are mostly defined as "post-materialist" values (Roof, 2009:51). Beside, people lead to feel dislocated socially and culturally. Together with rising pluralism, it was expected for spiritual search to involve much more than traditional or civil religions.

Moreover, these generations grew up in a society learning anything can be consumed. And spiritual seekers knowingly or unknowingly may act as "spiritual consumers" by defining themselves as seekers who are authorities of "truth and relevance" since they often think through "how things subjectively feel to them" (Smith and Denton, 2005: 73). So, the quest culture grew. With the coming of the information age, well-educated young people meet with the Internet through advancements of technology. These developments carried spiritual search to middle-class and rest of the society.

All these also effected the place of contemporary spirituality in societies, turning it into an option among many rather than "a given reality" (Roof, 2009: 50-52) which brings us to the issue of source change in terms of religion. Feeding from the lacking of 'religious capital' -that refers to "the skills and experience specific to one's religion including religious knowledge, familiarity with church ritual and doctrine, and friendship with fellow worshippers" (Iannaccone, 1990: 299 in Verter, 2003: 158)- alternatives find themselves a response in the society. Today, there are new outlets like "bookstores, self-help groups, retreat centers, alternative medicine, spiritual seminars, workshops on spirituality in businesses and corporations, and now cyberspace" that act as a medium for those who search for spiritual teachings and "religious field" in Bourdieuan sense expanded to cover them (Roof, 2009: 60-61).

The next big question is who are spiritual seekers? It is clear that spiritual seeking as a phenomenon did not came to an end after so-called "original" generations grew old. There are younger people who found themselves in such spiritual search. Today,



“I am spiritual but not a religious person” is a phrase that might be seen as a motto of self-reflexive believers all around the world including Turkey. It is widely used in NRMs which leads people adopt it to explain their journey to other people. The phrase mostly mean that they are interested in spiritual subjects yet do not see themselves as a part of an organized or established religion. They might be still searching and experimenting while going from one system to another or some might have found something that satisfied them. Hearing this sentence is often taken as a strong sign of a person who is spiritual seeker. These people seems to be liable to believe in the existence of numerous truths, willing to create intermixed sentiments and practices, and tend to perceive proselytizing negatively (Smith and Denton, 2005: 73).

Roof also states findings of his study under three parts that shows empirical patterns of spiritual search similarly. These three parts are non-involvement in organized religion, broad spiritual interest, and spiritual journeys. According to study, organized religion is just another option for these people and often it is an option that do not satisfy them, they may practice religion in various institutions or choose a more personal spirituality (2009: 54-55). Also, spiritual seeker viewpoint support that one should look for truth wherever it can be found which brings ideas like “one belief may not have all the answers” and “all religions might be true” (Roof, 2009: 55). Traditional believers, on the other hand, would feel dutiful towards their belief in terms of participation to practices and think that their religion is the “truest”.

The last part of Roof’s writing offers three major types of “spiritual journeys”. Clearly, each spiritual journey have its own way and characteristics. The first type of spiritual journey brings people who were non-religious or nominally religious back to faith (Roof, 2009: 57). For this type of journey to be successful, seeker needs to find a certain belief that felts right and comfortable where one feels accepted as an individual and supported in terms of spiritual search, and person should be able to ask difficult questions without being rejected. This might be the end of searching, therefore, many people in this group seems to be older who tried other alternatives and could not find what they looked for. The second type of journey includes people who were believers but experience a resurgence or “growth” in faith that is built

around this-worldly needs and support (Roof, 2009: 57-58). The last type of spiritual journey is the journey of “highly-active seekers” who explore various spiritualities continuously not finding what they search for and sometimes creating an intermixed form of belief for themselves for self-fulfillment. Barker also says that:

It would not be impossible for committed seekers in California, Amsterdam or Highgate to spend twenty minutes in Transcendental Meditation each morning before embarking on their Tai Chi, then going on to attend a channeling session on Monday, to meet with their Co-counsellor on Tuesday, have an Alexander lesson on Wednesday, watch an Osho video on Thursday and participate in a Forum Seminar throughout the weekend. Two months later one might find them chanting ‘Hare Krishna’, ‘Om Shanti’ or, perhaps, ‘Nam Myoho Renge Kyo’ (1999: 17).

They seem to be the most avoidant of traditional religious organizations and they are the most ‘non-conventional’ ones because “energy flow”, “higher power”, “awareness”, “cosmic consciousness”, “realization of all human potential” and similar terms are freely used among them and in terms of their characteristics, many are well-educated, upscale professionals (Roof, 2009: 58-59).

	Highly-Active Seekers (N=50)	All Others (N=486)
Over 35 years of age	62%	54%
Some College	72	53
White Collar	67	60
Professionals	31	28
Earns \$40,000+ annually	37	45
Married	54	66
Female	54	50
Liberal Political Views	44	26
No Religious Affiliation	24	7

Figure 1 Roof’s table for “Characteristics of Highly-Active Seekers” (2009: 59).

Roof adds that highly-active seekers do not care about established religions much since God can be found within (2009: 59). Also, they are likely to desert the religion they grew up in to choose what to believe and they utilize the Internet and newsletters while forming their belief more than other spiritual seekers (Roof, 2009: 59). In my opinion, there is an undeniable link between these three types of journeys. In real life, people who were highly-active seekers might turn to other ones easily which was a case I observed in the field.

Another study may help us to understand characteristics of spiritual seeking is “US’s National Survey of Youth and Religion” that is carried out in 2002-2003 period. Smith and Denton, analyzing this extensive survey, try to list general attitudes of spiritual seekers. Belief about trueness of one’s religion, belief about religious particularity, view on religious conversion attempts, and view of religious congregations accepted as four important notions that shape “seeker attitude” (Smith and Denton, 2005: 74). In detail, spiritual seekers are expected to believe that many religions may be true and it is okay to practice more than one faith, therefore, it is not necessary for believer to be involved in a religious congregation. In line with this, religion is an individual issue and people should not try to convert them.

Nevertheless, showing all these characteristics may not make one directly a spiritual seeker although the attitude may be placed inside the approach of spiritual search. In addition to these, there needs to be a “readiness” and a “wish to choose” which beliefs among all one wants to believe and which ones to disregard (Smith and Denton, 2005: 75).

Other than these common beliefs and tendencies, spiritual seekers seem to show some common characteristics like the followers of NRMs. Smith and Denton classify teenagers that they interviewed in terms of their families’ religious tradition, level of religious service attendance in the family, worldviews of close friends and family, place of residence, level of income, and educational backgrounds of parents. It is safe to say that such personal differences may affect one’s religious tendencies. For example, a Mormon American is often much more conservative than a Protestant resulting with lesser seeker attitude in them. At the end, a young person who is from a non-religious, non-conservative or nominally religious family, and the child of well-educated parents who live in an urban setting and gave less importance to religious service attendance may be more prone to personally experiment with various spiritual practices than others (Smith and Denton, 2005: 83-85). Since there is no study like this carried out in Turkey that would show us the common traits among Turkish spiritual seekers, I thought that the second best would be to evaluate and compare similar traits of people I interviewed for this study.

Moreover, belief systems like Buddhism, Sufism, Hinduism, Unitarianism, Wicca and Christian Science are among the most mentioned paths for people who went on a spiritual journey. However, Smith and Denton state that the religious option that have the biggest influence on American youth is not an “exotic” faith but forms of the dominant American faith (Smith and Denton, 2005: 82) which might be indicating an important point. For example, dominant faith of a country might be readily influencing intermixing tendencies of spiritual seekers of that country which would affect the NRMs of that country in the same direction. In that sense, as the dominant religion in Turkey is Islam, NRMs of Islamic origin could appear more preferable to the Turkish spiritual seekers which would be Sufism. In the next part I will be discussing fundamental and functional features of Sufism and Mevleviye which will be even more meaningful if we think about the characteristics of NRMs.

## **2.4. SUFISM AND THE WAY OF RUMI**

The difference of Mevleviye is its tolerance.  
It defines Islam in a more enlightened way.  
It is about the spiritual growth.  
(Interview, IF35, 24.05.2017)

### **2.4.1. Definition and Historical Context of Sufism**

Sufism as a word is used to indicate the way of Sufi dervishes who wear wool clothes and wool enunciated as *suf* in Arabic. Kara offers different possible origins to the word Sufi. It might also coming from the word stem *safv* which means clear, from the prayerful clan of *Benu Sufe*, from the word *sifat* (face), from the Greek word *sophos* that means philosopher, or from a desert plant named *sufane* (Kara, 2006: 23). According to some Islam philosophers, Sufi is a person who is like soil that grows only beautiful things (Cuneyd from Bagdad), who leaves people and be together with God (Şa’bi), who is single and alone (Hallac-ı Mansur), and who stays

awake at nights with a blessed sorrowful face because of heart burn and tears (Rumi) (Kara, 2006: 23-25).

Sufism can be seen as a special kind of mysticism (Atacan, 1990: 21). Roots of mysticism as a Greek word offers various meanings like ‘to close eyes’ or ‘to conceal’ but it is mostly narrowed down to ‘secret’ or ‘the hidden thing’ today. Many times, it is simply described as the “spiritual river that flows through all religions” (Kara, 2006: 11; Schimmel, 2012: 22).

Schimmel explain mysticism under the titles of “mysticism of infinity” and “mysticism of personality” (2012: 23) which help one to distinguish underlying philosophy of the said system. Mysticism of infinity is generally used to define the belief to the absolute one which puts all other things into a limited state of existence while also undermines the personality and human responsibility (Schimmel, 2012: 23-24). Mysticism of personality is more about the relation between human and God. Most of the time, these two appear to be combined in life.

In line with this, Kara’s definition says that the goal of religious mysticism is to find the truth, to reach God, to be satisfied spiritually and to be saved (2006: 11). However, the path to this goal may change from society to society, from mystic to mystic. For this, religious mysticism is a state that needs to be experienced and practiced through a training with an opposing attitude toward materials, one may mature and finally meet with nihilism and love (Kara, 2006: 12-13).

If mysticism is “a universal yearning of humankind for the personal communion with God” (Arberry, 2008: II) then Islamic Mysticism can be seen as the endeavor of Muslims for that and so, it can be seen as the collection of spiritual thoughts and actions that are emerged in Islamic world (Kara, 2006: 18). But it should be noted that different forms of mysticism influenced from each other throughout history since there is no possibility of a religious movement that come to be with no contact to others (Arberry, 2008: II). In detail, Islamic Mysticism is a system of ethics and contemplation that is formed around teachings of Koran and hadith to show transience of the material world, and advises to discipline the heart (Kara, 2006: 19). And the person who follows such system “may hope...to win a glimpse of

immortality by passing away from *fena* (self) into the consciousness of survival in *baka* (God)” (Arberry, 2008: 14).

Mystic movements generally includes an organization that revolves around an idea, element of human, an institute, and a book (Kara, 2006: 13). Islamic religious orders generally revolve around Sufism. In this sense, religious order can be defined as the institutionalized form of Sufism. Mevleviye is also one of those religious orders. However, in Islam, there were no establishments as religious orders or Sufism until the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Tanilli, 2008: 170). Gölpınarlı also puts that first Sufis emerged in the 8<sup>th</sup> century starting with Abu Hashim from Kufa (1999: 145) while Schimmel states an idea that says Sufism is originated from Muhammed’s own mysticism (2012: 27). It is clear that separations like order, school and sect were always part of all systems including religions and all kinds of political, philosophical, geographical and economical differences may influence this separation (Kara, 2006: 149).

For Sufis, there are countless number of ways that reach to God, therefore, everyone may follow a different method for their own salvation which is a strong sign of religious pluralism that is embedded in the system of thought of Sufism. At first, these methods were more personal and these ways were not seen as established orders. Sufism was still a personal experience in the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Atacan, 1990: 23-24). Through time, spiritual authority gained a more pronounced form, and guidance of a mentor known as *mürşit* (sheikh, mentor) became crucial for salvation of *mürit* (disciple, follower) and in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, groups formed around sheikhs started to be more organized while various new rules are implemented in Sufism in addition to Islamic law which turned willing prayers into necessities that should be done in specific numbers in a specific way (Atacan, 1990: 24; Tanilli, 2008: 170).

The 11<sup>th</sup> century became the time when normative Islam started to take religious education under control and many official theological schools are opened but Sunni religious orders were allowed to be in the time of Seljuks. At the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, religious orders were already using physical places to get together and teach. These transformed into mystical schools that are known with the name of their mentors or sheikhs. Naturally, teachings, life style and rules of these mentors

turned into ways to follow for their disciples. In line with this, it can be said that every religious order has its own way and lineage. But then, *tarikât* (religious order) means “way” in Arabic (Gölpınarlı, 2014: 186). Needless to say, it is a spiritual way. In terms of Sufism, it is a way of pleasure, joy, love, understanding and *cezbe* (ecstatic pull of absolute existence) that reaches one to God (Gölpınarlı, 2014: 187). Since these mentors were able to give their disciples *icazetname* (permission to be mentors themselves) for them to be mentors in their own centers, these ways started to spread faster at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Religious orders might be observed anywhere in Islamic world throughout history. On the ground of the subject of this study, I will be giving a closer look at Rumi’s approach to spirituality since he is the mentor that Mevleviye found after.

#### **2.4.2. Rumi’s Approach to Spirituality**

To be able to understand the spiritual way that is established after him –Mevleviye- as a whole, it is crucial to understand the development of Rumi’s approach to spirituality.

Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi was a Sufi mystic and poet who lived in Anatolia for the most of his life. He and his family settled there at the end of a long migration period because of Mongol invasions in Central Asia. Disciples of Rumi’s father, Bahaeddin Veled, was also with them since he was also a mystic, theologian and mentor from Balkh. The 13<sup>th</sup> century when Rumi is raised as a child and lived was the worst period of Anatolian Seljuk Empire (Gölpınarlı, 1999: 3) because of wars, riots, invasions, wrong political decisions and even scarcity. All these can be seen as reasons behind the dissolution of centralized administration which lead to an inevitable state of uncertainty and disorder in society.

In the meantime, Anatolia was a land where many different religion and sect meet. Sufism was one of them. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, toleration that Seljuks offered, continuous Mongol invasions and all those mentioned unrests resulted with the

prosperity of Sufism since it was a path of spiritual growth, love, equality and all the ‘good’ things while sharia forbade love, women, music and dance. As Gölpınarlı puts:

Sufism, on the one hand, was allowing mankind to breathe with its advanced and free way of thinking, and on the other hand, it was a source of consolation to man through its unbounded tolerance. Exhausted people were able to elude from the ties of time and place, and find peace in Sufism that offers manifestation of God and an eterne unity (1999: 18).

So, this was the background of the place where family of Rumi raised him. His father Muhammed Bahaeddin Veled was known as *Sultan-al-ulema* (king of clerics) and he was the first teacher of Rumi. According to Sultan Veled who is son of Rumi, after Bahaeddin Veled’s death, Rumi took place of him since the disciples who see Rumi as “the heir of his father’s spiritual beauty” requested (Lewis, 2014: 106). After this, there are several names to mention to be able to talk about Rumi’s spiritual growth.

When Rumi started to be known as *Pir* and *Mevlana* (my master) he met with Seyyid Burhaneddin who come Konya to visit, in fact, Bahaeddin Veled. It is said that Seyyid Burhaneddin saw a lack of *hâl* (spiritual state, a special way of conducting self) in Rumi’s doings which resulted with Rumi’s surrender to Seyyid Burhaneddin as a mentor (Gölpınarlı, 1999: 45). This is important because when one reads Seyyid Burhaneddin’s writings, origin of some ideas of Rumi’s philosophy becomes clearer. Expressions of “slaying self”, “death before death”, “self-knowledge” and “reunion with God” can be found in his poems like in Rumi’s (Lewis, 2014: 110-112). Period he spent with his father and first teachers generally seen as Rumi’s preparation period when he grounded his spiritual education.

Another important character for Rumi’s way is undoubtedly Şemseddin from Tebriz who mostly known as Şems or Shams. In line with the meaning of his name (sun in Arabic), Shams said to be a light in Rumi’s life and thoughts. People who wrote about Shams like Sultan Veled and Aflaki told that he was very charismatic and learned. Here, I want to touch on their well-known story of first meet:

“Tell me.” said Shams to Rumi “Who is greater, Muhammed or Bestami (Beyazid)?”



“What kind of question is this? Muhammed is greater of course.”

“Then how is it that Muhammed prayed for forgiveness every day for 70 times saying he did not know ‘Him’ as well as ‘He’ should be known while Bestami said ‘How mighty my glory is!’?”

When Rumi heard the depth in this question, he fainted. After he revived, he said “Muhammed was growing 70 times every day while Bestami was overwhelmed with the greatness of the state he reached.” (Barks, 2011: 2, Gölpınarlı, 1999: 68).

This story explains many things about Rumi’s viewpoint. First and the most important one is that Rumi was in the way of Muhammed unlike some westernized and romanticized reflections of him. It is important to remember this point throughout this writing since some findings will become more striking if reader keeps this point in mind. Second, this story tells that he perceived spiritual growth as a path that in every step the walker finds themselves all over again which is again a sign of a fundamental similarity with NRMs. And from this point on, life of Rumi entered into a period of state of divine love and trance.

Further to that, their meeting and years they spent together brought a change to Rumi’s understanding of spirituality. Shams set him in fire and burned his books as Rumi describe and this transformed his approach to spirituality too which is evident in *Sema*, whirling prayer ceremony, that Rumi learned from Shams and started to practice it although it was impermissible in terms of religious law (Lewis, 2014: 165-166).

Before Shams, Rumi was a prayerful Sufi, but Shams shattered his way of being and brought him to the world of love and if such meeting did not occur, Rumi would be an ordinary sheikh and would not even known as a poet (Gölpınarlı, 1999: 118). At the end, it can be said that coming of Shams transformed Rumi’s way to be freer and more challenging in terms of thinking and full of love in terms of living. I think, these features are still attracting spiritual seekers to his way.

There are different ideas on the departure or passing on of Shams, but one thing is for sure that his absence also effected Rumi and enhanced the depth in his poetry (Barks, 2011: 4). After Shams’ disappearance, Rumi’s life and spiritual thoughts went toward a period that is called peace period. He choosed Selahaddin the

goldsmith for communion who he described as the moon if Shams was the sun, and Selahaddin brought a calmness to his state. When Selahaddin passed away *Çelebi* (educated person, well-mannered, successor of Rumi) Hüsameddin became Rumi's companion for ten years and was chosen to be the successor of Rumi (Lewis, 2014: 206). In addition to this, Çelebi Hüsameddin requested Rumi to write a book and so, his famous work, *Masnavi*, started to be written (Gölpınarlı, 1999: 119).

Rumi's mysticism is about to grow in a world of *irfan* (comprehension), *tahakkuk* (realization), *aşk* (love) and *cezbe* (ecstatic state of being pulled to presence of God). Signs of such understanding show themselves in one's social and personal life with a broad and advanced perspective, an unbounded tolerance that comes from the wish for unity of humankind, and ethics that are meliorative (Gölpınarlı, 1999: 168).

Researchers studying Rumi's writings mention some themes. These themes are important for me since they are keys to his teachings and his teachings are important to understand my sample.

One of the themes is choosing heart over reason, not because he was opposed to rationality but because he saw limitations of it (Lewis, 2014: 356). He thought philosophers were lacking since they only used reasoning while writing about human existence. Yet he still used some methods of western philosophy in his manner of telling. It is even said that there are some Neo-Platonist themes in his work but it is difficult to understand and analyze his writings fully (Schimmel, 2012: 335). This is a theme that is visible in many NRMs too because as I mentioned perspective of NRMs gave way the spirituality as opposed the hard-edged rationality of modernism.

Understanding of *vahdet-i vücud* (unity of existence) is another theme in Rumi's work. In his view, all creation is a colored manifestation of a single colorlessness (God) and separations are coming from colors that keep this universe captive (Gölpınarlı: 1999: 173). Since everyone is looking at the world from their own colored glasses, they see it differently (Lewis, 2014: 369). Thinking everyone and everything as a part of one being brings the tolerance and love for all the things for

their essence at the end which is the link to co-existence and religious pluralism that NRMs all over the world support and experience.

In Rumi's way of thinking world is not a wicked place but ego, greed and connivance to the truth make it so. Moreover, he believed that all human spirits evolve in this world. Once they mature, they will unite with absolute being and the ones that do not mature will live the consequences of their doings whether it is pleasure or misery when they leave this form of existence (Lewis, 2014: 373; Gölpınarlı: 1999: 178). The misery here is described as a way to "purify" since human spirit is also not wicked in its essence. This shows that the problem of "will" and "option" is answered differently by Rumi than other Sufi traditions. In his view, until being one with the absolute being, human "should take the blame, know that 'He' made the action possible" (Gölpınarlı, 1999: 184). Individual responsibility, spiritual growth and self-development are ideas that one may come across in various new religions. It is an old idea but an idea that suits the lives of modern people. And the very answer that is given here for the existence of wicked (problem of theodicy) and misery (pain and fear of death) shows the fundamental similarity that brings all belief systems together.

For Rumi, being in the path of spiritual growth which is known as *seyru süluk* was about searching self and finding self instead of forgetting self like in many Sufi traditions and in line with this, he did not advise "unnatural" practices in his teachings like celibacy (Gölpınarlı, 1999: 172). He did not advise zikr or seclusion too since it is only good for motivating the ideas but what really matters is *cezbe* for spiritual growth (1999: 173) or spiritual growth may simply create such state in a person. But to find self, he wrote that one should slay the self and "die before they die". These are mostly metaphors for disciplining the heart and destroying the ego to be able to reflect what is inside in fact (Lewis, 2014: 374).

His approach to teaching was also simpler, bare and so, more understandable for people than many other mystics' (Gölpınarlı, 1999: 168). Often, he would use ordinary life situations to attract listeners and sometimes to shake them he would use unexpected, funny or even rude expressions (Schimmel, 2012: 336-337). I think this is still a reason for many people to be pulled to Rumi's teachings. Rumi's

teachings and his way of teaching became a guide for the ones who want to follow his way up until today as we will see while discussing the findings of this study.

Rumi passed away on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December in 1273 (Gölpınarlı, 1999: 128). When he passed on, Hüsameddin as his designated successor became the head of Rumi's disciples. However, Mevlevi Order is actually formed by Sultan Veled who took place of Hüsameddin after he passed away. Order takes its name from his disciples' way of addressing Rumi, Mevlana (my master).

When Sultan Veled became the head of the order, he regulated *Sema* ceremony (Schimmel, 2012: 332). Regularization of positions in the order claimed to be done by Sultan Veled too (Lewis, 2014: 380). But there was already a well-established custom and nearly all Sufi doctrines that existed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century was covered in *Masnavi*. Although it was hard to derive a Sufic system from stories in *Masnavi* (Schimmel, 2012: 333), the order was able to follow Rumi's way through Sultan Veled's systematization (Gölpınarlı, 2006, 72).

After the formation of the order, *Çelebi* (successor of Rumi) who represented the order and the authority of Rumi generally descended from Sultan Veled (Gölpınarlı, 1999: 137) starting with Ulu Arif Çelebi (Gölpınarlı, 2006: 98). Çelebis of Konya spread Mevleviye –mostly under their own names till 1460 when Pir Adil Çelebi passed away. After Pir Adil Çelebi, traits of previous periods seems to be diminish since position of Çelebi became a thing of greed (Gölpınarlı, 2006: 103-104) and superior sheikhs emerged outside of Konya gaining acknowledgment as representors of Rumi (Gölpınarlı, 2006: 148). After this point, the order started to be known as Mevleviye. The order is sometimes criticized, sometimes praised but it never ceased to exist from people's lives.

## **2.5. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Every religion starts as a new religion and there are fundamental and functional similarities among all religions as we discussed. They address to the same questions

and problems while functioning to satisfy needs of people that are linked to the problem of theodicy, need to know, loneliness and even death. They all attract people who wish to sooth their fears and/or curiosity. So, what makes NRMs different?

The thing that makes things different is the society I think. Through modernization and its processes, we observed the rise of religious pluralism interlaced with social change and the dissolving of 'traditional' values and structures in somewhat consistent and uniform Western world. These created a demand so-to-say for alternatives to fulfil spiritual needs that could not be satisfied by the dominant religion in the society or the religion of the family. Thus, people went on a spiritual quest to find new answer in new religions.

As I will discuss in the next chapter, things did not unfold much differently in Turkey. Here, I want to remark that the dominant faith of a country might be readily influencing NRMs and choice of spiritual seekers which is Islam for Turkey. In that sense, NRMs of Islamic origin might also be preferred by spiritual seekers of Turkey. This is an idea that I will revisit in detail after I discuss modernization and secularization processes in Turkey as well as the recent history of Mevleviye to be able to show the way Mevleviye has changed and became contemporary Mevleviye.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

As I mentioned, this study tries to understand contemporary Mevleviye from the perspective of new religious movement (NRMs) through the experience of new Mevlevis since they seemed to live similar to ‘followers of NRMs’ and ‘spiritual seekers’ while identifying with Mevleviye. In line with this, we defined and discussed reasons and conditions of emergence of NRMs as well as seeker attitude and spiritual search as a phenomenon. We also discussed Sufism itself and Rumi’s spirituality to be able to understand the connection between these three pieces of new Mevlevis: new Mevlevis as followers of an NRM, new Mevlevis as spiritual seekers and new Mevlevis as Mevlevis.

As Mardin states, religious orders in Turkey or around the world are often not approached as a part of new social movements. In Turkey, researches that are interested with neo-Sufi movements seems to be dealing with biographic stories of charismatic leaders and saints (Mardin, 2011: 59-60). In this sense, I thought contemporary Mevleviye as an NRM in Turkey. Here, first, I discussed the historical context that lead Mevleviye to transform to contemporary Mevleviye, a version of itself that is closer to an NRM in terms of its organization and followers. In that sense, I handled the issue of religious orders, conditions of emergence of NRMs and development of spiritual search in modern Turkey separately in hopes of showing the contextual similarity between them. I tried to follow a chronological order while organizing this chapter (1925 to 1950, 1950 to 1980, 1980 and onwards) since it seemed like a single story to me. At the end, I discussed contemporary Mevleviye itself. These discussions will help us understand the sample and design of the study

better in the next chapter while they will form the base of the discussion that will be carried on in the findings chapter later on.

### **3.1. RELIGIOUS ORDERS AS AN ISSUE IN TURKEY**

When system is working it leads to beauty but when it is broken it comes and bites itself like a scorpion. Fights for unearned income and position, deserters etc. dervish lodges were already degenerated when Atatürk closed them down.  
(Interview, KM50, 23.07.2017)

#### **3.1.1. Religious Orders in Turkey**

The last centuries of Ottoman Empire and Turkey are often assumed to be periods that Islam lost its influence while secularization rised (Mardin, 2011: 43). Similar to the global literature, the rise of secularization in Turkey is also linked to modernization by many like Berkes. That said, each society and state show idiosyncratic characteristics on the issue of secularization and modernization. No doubt, Turkey did and still is. For example, duality of religion-state was never an issue in Turkey's past, on the contrary, unity was the natural and ordinary form of ruling (Berkes, 2003: 17) and later on the state decided to control religion instead of seclude it completely and gave it a role inside the system (Sayarı, 1978: 180). In line with characteristics of Turkey in this issue, the term secularization refers to a matter of emancipating from a "sacred tradition" rather than being a mere problem of a separation between state and church." (Kongar, 1999: II) since in Islam, function of traditional institution of religion is not limited to spiritual affairs (Berkes, 2003: 20) and limiting the effect of religion in social, political and educational domains brings the issue of "reactionist" movements. After this point, for many, discussion turns into conflict between "modern" and "reactionary" (Berkes, 2003:23).

The influence of Islam on social life, polity and legal structure become more prepotent after caliphate pass to the Ottoman dynasty in 1517 and it started to lose

this influence during the time of political reforms of Ottoman Empire starting with 1939. First, *Ulema* started to lose prestige together with their role in the administration. Later on, educational system seems to be secularized. It is said that during this period, religious orders like *Nakşibendi* (Naqshibandi) moved towards a gradual but mostly hidden development which may be seen as the roots of the revival of religious orders in Turkey (Mardin, 2011: 59-61).

Religious orders was always an issue in Turkey especially since the foundation of the Republic. Even before, there were signs of conflict like Kadızade-Sivasi discussions but foundation of nation-state can be seen as a turning point in this case since Turkey went into a process of westernization and modernization through the formation of the Republic. Although the idea of change was there, only after the Republic, those changes became truly possible. Modernization in this period might be seen as a continuation of the Ottoman westernization at first but once a closer observation is done it becomes clearer that reforms that came after the Republic are much more radical and shows a deeper split (Kara, 2008: 27-28). In this sense, modernization was not there only to westernize economy and politics but modernization of culture was aimed too and so, it was a total change (Giritli, 1988: IV).

Starting form 1923, restriction of Islam's impact in political and public domains became really important in terms of forming a secular nation-state. Newly founded Republic employed a common national identity as a unifying force for the new country instead of pan-Islamic religious identity that was used by Ottoman Empire (Harmanşah, 2006: 15). Sovereignty of nation and independence put opposed to religion and dynasty (Berkes, 2003: 522). General political agenda of this new Republic was to create a national consciousness in order to mobilize masses, to adopt an ideology that is suitable for purposes of nation-state, and to ensure authority of state over individuals and ethnic or religious groups in society (Sayarı, 1978: 175). To be able to realize this vision, several reforms and changes has been done. This series of changes that can be named as Republican Revolution, Turkish Reform or Kemalist Revolution were aiming to alter religious domain completely including religious orders. Some of these can be listed as the law on unity of education that



lead to a state approved curriculum, the law regarding abolishment of the caliphate, and removing ministry of religious affairs from administration while assigning Directorate of Religious Affairs instead (3 March 1924).

Atatürk might be still perceiving religion as a way to mobilize rural population but The Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925 caused a hesitance (Mardin, 2011: 75). Later on, the rebellion's Sunni Islamist views are mirrored in different areas of Turkey by groups that want the rule of religious law or think that religion is lost. With this incident, taking action might become urgent and it definitely created an excuse. So, the law on the maintenance of order implemented on March 4, 1925. This let the policymakers to have a better control on religious movements. This is followed by abolishment of spiritual courts. On September 2, use of religious symbols and clothes were banned except for people in official religious positions. On November 30, 1925, dervish lodges closed down.

If we look from the viewpoint of Kemalist Revolution, religious orders were increasingly degenerated in the early period of Republic and this was the viewpoint that the Republic wished to spread. Today, this is the explanation that is still used by 'Kemalist' and 'secular' Mevlevi dervishes while talking about closing of dervish lodges (Expert Interview No.1, Konya, 23.07.2017). Harmanşah analyzed two books that are published in that era of Turkey which are *Nur Baba* by Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, and *Bir Bektaşî Babasının Hatıratı* by Habil Adem. She wrote that they reflected a "negative attitude" towards religious orders and it seems like they were written to "legitimize the policies of the government against the religious orders" and their aims were to "degenerate religious orders" relating them to immorality, inappropriate relations with women, and drinking (2006: 42-43). This was understandable since modernization is an inherently *tektipçi* (standardizing) project (Kara, 2008: 183).

Religious orders that are institutionalized forms of Sufi practices organize in physical places like *tekke* (dervish lodge) and *zaviye* (zawiya, smaller dervish lodge), therefore the most contradictory implementation for them was the law on the closing of dervish lodges and shrines, and prohibition of religious titles like *Dede* (elder, sheikh), *Çelebi* (successor of Rumi in Mevleviye) and dervish that is also

introduced on November 30, 1925. It was seen as an important step for modernization but it showed clearly that religious orders and nation-state cannot exist together in terms of secular ideals of Kemalist Revolution. And Atatürk's famous statement from his speech in Kastamonu is an open declaration of this: "Republic of Turkey cannot be the country of sheikhs, dervishes and members of religious orders." (30.08.1925). The law is still effective, although it is breached continuously until this day.

Modern Turkish state, tried to maintain its secular perspective until 1940s (Mardin, 2011: 69). Throughout one party system that followed ideals of Kemalist Revolution, religious movements formed themselves out of the system and mostly in rural. After the early Republican period, involving religion in politics perceived as a violation that is often punished by constitutional courts or even military, and this may be traced during multi-party regime. We can observe many incidents throughout the history of the Republic that reflects conflict between religious orders and state.

Starting from transitioning to multi-party regime in 1946, we can discuss increasing influence of religion on political power again (Sayarı, 1978: 180). After the Second World War, Turkey also experienced a change in the way that secularization and religious issues handled. Many attempts for founding political parties that focus on traditions and morality may be seen as a sign of dissatisfied people and rising spiritual necessities of people. According to Mardin, the wish to return to religion that emerged in the late 1940s might be happened in two ways: the first group wanted to continue the ideas of Sunni Ulema and the second wanted to return to "*volk Islam*" (softer Islam of masses) (Mardin, 1983: 111).

Transition to industrial society starting from 1950s also brought social mobility and social movements. In line with this, fast changes in social formation, urbanization and labor migration to European countries lead people to a sense of normlessness, emptiness and deprivation which became more visible in the 'arabesque' culture in big cities later on. This atmosphere prepared the revival of religious orders in cities and as I mentioned those religious orders were just keeping a low profile until that time. As Kara states, they subsisted and carried on changing. The term change is

crucial for me because it indicates that they did not revived as 'the same old' religious orders. In terms of their traditions and accumulation of knowledge, they weakened but in terms of their adaptation methods, they grew stronger (Kara: 2008: 188). Nation-state was not enough to fulfill all necessities of people and where state is withdrawn, religious orders entered to the stage. They mostly operated under the names of Islamic foundations and organizations to be able to work on religious as well as economic and social problems of people. Through time, their circles built up and they became more powerful. Some religious orders acted as opposition while some of them supported by the system for a time at least.

In this period, right wing governments emerged. Although they related with Sunni identity mostly, they continued to support Sufi orders like reopening their shrines to visit. In return, they might be supported by religious orders too. Here, the first name that come to mind would be the *Nurcu* Movement. The Nurcu Movement is an ideology centric religious order and its founder Said Nursi is only a symbol for this Islamic ideology. It can be seen that the movement have a strong substructure that is located in various countries and sectors from higher education to media outlets with a different (than traditional) but stiff hierarchy (Atacan, 1990: 37). Although they have an official principal about not to meddle in politics, the movement supported Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti/DP) in 1950s. DP is elected as government putting Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi/CHP) to the position of the opposition party for the first time in the history of the Republic. The court case against Said Nursi which stated that he was against secularism, started to be discussed on December 25, 1952. Furthermore, on 8 March 1953, the activities of the Nation Party (Millet Partisi/MP) were stopped on charges of harming Kemalist principles and play politics with religion. In 1954, it was decided that MP should be closed. The environment that government of Adnan Menderes (DP) created attracted the attention of all opposition groups, especially the military. Reign of DP is ended with a bloody military coup. Later on, support of the Nurcu movement moved onto Justice Party (Adalet Partisi/AP) and they supported National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi/MSP) throughout 1970s. MSP is also

closed after the coup in 1980s and Welfare Party (Refah Partisi/RP) took its place in political arena.

When religious order is taken as a current phenomenon, Atacan mentions two kind of religious orders which is I think closely related to the change that they experienced and their adaptation methods. First one is religious orders as “intermediate forms” which carry out some duties for fast changing modern society. These type of religious orders are generally more individualistic, they emphasize unification, and a more secular and up-to-date master-disciple relation may be observed in them (1990: 17-18). Second type of religious orders is called “ideology centric” religious orders that aim transforming life style and social relations in line with Islamic ideology and so, they emphasize difference. These two type of religious orders differ in their modes of organization, values, world views, and course of actions (1990: 17-18).

For example, the Gülen Movement or FETO with the name it is given today might be considered a religious order that is ideology centric although its adaptation methods lead them to appear more ‘modern’. Its founder Fethullah Gülen was a follower of Said Nursi for years and his life shows us that religious orders were successful in terms of religious education in rural areas (Mardin, 2011: 89). Similar to the Nurcu Movement, the Gülen Movement is also operates as an Islamic organization with followers that is spread to different ‘secular’ sectors like media. He moved to US since the military restrained his actions in Turkey too much. Later on, corruption crisis that occurred at the end of *Şeb-i Arus* (Rumi’s passing away and reunion with God) in 2013 started a conflict that includes tapes about graft of multiple ministers. This was the breaking point of government and the Gülen Movement’s relationship. After the incident, many supporters of the government started to ask for more control over religious orders referring the law regarding the closing of dervish lodges. From here, conflict only got bigger. Ruling party started to take actions against the Gülen Movement. Turkey experienced a coup attempt on 15 July 2016 that is claimed to be supported by the Gülen Movement. This is resulted with state of emergency which still continues in 2018.

In conclusion, especially after the foundation of the Republic, religion in Turkey turned into an issue that is handled with the idea of control. Modernization, secularization and westernization of Turkey is often dealt with the influence of Islam in society and administration which forced religious orders to operate mostly in rural areas of Turkey discreetly. They did not disappear but as we discussed their system and knowledge diminished and they transformed. After the Second World War, modern Turkish state also revised the way it handled the issue of religion and in the late 1940s, revival of religious orders in cities started. This revival was answering spiritual necessities of people that could not be answered by secular state and it was a reaction to rapid change and modernization itself. Today, the only thing that did not seem to change is that state still wants control over religious activities in Turkey. But although they changed and adapted, many religious orders still continuing to exist. And today, religious orders might still be functioning to shatter political and social structures, to go beyond established social positions and material relations, to create a space for people and their ideas to exist (Kara, 2008: 245). In the next part, I wish to place Mevleviye as a religious order in Turkey in this discussion to be able to discuss contemporary Mevleviye in Turkey at the end of this chapter.

### **3.1.2. Mevleviye as a Religious Order in Turkey**

Mevleviye is one of the most known religious orders all around the world. It has a history of more than 800 years. Its lodges were wealthy with large number of disciples and lovers for a long time. It was also a way that mostly consisted of intellectuals. Although in the beginning it seemed more like it was popular among the folk, later it moved to an elite environment (Expert Interview No.1, Konya, 23.07.2017). Mevlevi lodges were divided as *zaviyes* (zawiye, retreat) and *asitanes* (threshold). Asitanes were bigger than zaviyes and after the central one in Konya (Asitane-i Aliyye), there were asitanes in Bursa, Eskisehir, Gelibolu, Aleppo, Kastamonu, Karahisar, Kutahya, Manisa, Egypt and Rumelia. In addition to these, there were nearly 80 zaviyes from Jerusalem to Belgrade which does not include

little *zawiyes* in rural areas (Gölpınarlı, 2006: 307). In dervish lodges, arts, music, teachings of Rumi, foreign languages and even some physiological methods thought to disciples (Interview, KM50). System of the way filed people in these places both physically and spiritually.

When the history of Mevleviye is read it can be seen that it experienced several periods of decline but the most serious one came with the foundation of the Republic. According to Gölpınarlı, Abdülhalim Çelebi and Veled Çelebi of Mevlevi Order were members of the parliament. (2006: 174). Abdülhalim Çelebi who was the *Makam Çelebisi* (successor of Rumi who is also from the line of Rumi, resides in Asitane of Konya) during the War of Independence, was decorated with a green ribbon medal for his spiritual support (21 October 1923) and he as representative of Konya was elected vice-president in the first Parliament (Mevlana Foundation, Mevlevi Order, retrieved in April 2018). Later on, Çelebi requested permission to return to Konya and Veled Çelebi's deputyship continued for a long time (Gölpınarlı, 2006: 174).

Although their opposition was soft, reforms of Kemalist Revolution was not favorable for Mevleviye. Even today, Mevlevis still say that there were already some problems and non-functionality like rivalry for the position of Makam Çelebisi and people being dervishes for desertion from military and these diminished the spiritual dimension of religious orders at that time (Interview, KM49). But for Mevleviye it was hard to continue as religious order since Mevleviye needs a special physical place for its ritual, *Sema*.

After Makam Çelebisi of the time Abdülhalim Çelebi is passed away in 1925, his son Mehmed Bakır Çelebi decided to continue his duties as the sheikh of the Mevlevi lodge in Aleppo (Gölpınarlı, 2006: 174). When chain of Çelebis moved to Syria after the closing of dervish lodges, although continued for a while, system in Turkey is broken due to this separation. Mevlevis in Turkey left without a leader and a place to pray but they were still living here. Therefore, as it is said by Celalettin Dede "After dervish lodges were closed, these people did not disappear and so, they began to teach life and teachings of Mevlana in their own houses to small local groups. And people continued to transfer their knowledge as much as we know."

(Expert Interview No.1, Konya, 23.07.2017). Here, it is important to note that Mausoleum of Rumi is reopened to the public under the status of museum two years later as an exception (Lewis, 2014: 412). Moreover, books of Rumi is translated to Turkish with the help of the Minister of Education of the time, Hasan Ali Yücel (International Mevlana Foundation, Mevlevi Order, retrieved in April 2018). These are developments that cared by Mevlevi even today since it enabled the protection of some traditions, allowed them to be in that very place and it simply offered them a space to exist in the modern Turkey (Interview, IM59).

Mehmed Bakır Çelebi accused of being a Turkish spy and deported in 1937 while his brother headed the Mevlevi there. After he passed away in 1944 in Istanbul, new Syrian Government did not recognize the new Çelebi (Lewis, 2014: 405) and decided to terminate dervish lodges in 1945. As I mentioned, after the Second World War the attitude of modern Turkish state towards religion had to change too. This is also the period that the influence of religion rised in the society and revival of religious orders in cities started. Mevlevi allowed to use Mevlevi music in *Şeb-i Arus* (Rumi's passing away and reunion with God) which is carried out after a conference on September 17, 1943 (International Mevlana Foundation, Mevlevi Order, retrieved in April 2018). In 1953, old Yenikapı Lodge's drummer Sadettin Heper approached to Konya's mayor for him to let *Sema* ceremony to be publicly performed and although the ceremony kept as a celebration of Rumi as a Turkish poet, Heper insisted Koran to be recited (Lewis, 2014: 412). In 1953, ceremony included two musician and two *semazens* (whirling dervishes) in ordinary clothes but it is repeated in 1954 and 1955 with more proper preparation and it is started to be advertised by Tourist Association of Konya (Lewis, 2014: 412). Programs started to include lectures about Rumi (International Mevlana Foundation, Mevlevi Order, retrieved in April 2018) which can be seen as an improvement since order continued to be banned in terms of law. Although state continued to keep, perceive and advertise *Sema* as a cultural and even as a touristic event rather than as a religious ritual, state's flexibility on *Sema* reinvigorate the Mevlevi Order and let it to be spread around the globe (Lewis, 2014: 412-413). Today, the biggest tradition of Mevleviye that still continues seems to be *Sema*. Some people may even think that

Sema is Mevleviye but it is actually only a small part of it although still important. People all over the world is attracted to Sema ceremony and get caught by Mevleviye from here. It is also important in terms of its revival. Sema, as a traditional Mevlevi ceremony, has an important role in this because it was allowed to exist even though under the control of secular state.

Çelebi family moved back to Turkey, Istanbul in 1958 (Expert Interview No.2, Konya, 22.07.2017). Celaleddin Bakır Çelebi was the Makam Çelebisi between 1971 and 1996. (International Mevlana Foundation, Mevlevi Order, retrieved in April 2018). But religious orders like Mevleviye, Rufais and Qadiriyya, active in the elite, were already integrated with the changed social structure trying to live religion on an individual level (Atacan, 1990: 18). This means, Mevleviye changed too. And as time goes on, controversy between backers of secular state and religious organizations is sharpened because of religion that gained strength. This conflict showed itself nearly everywhere from political to personal life. For example, for several years, before and after the military coup of 1980, Mevlevi meeting places were busted by police to stop them to do rituals and religious ceremonies (Interview, KM46). But Mevleviye might be seen as one of ‘softest’ ways among other Islamic religious orders in terms of its gentle attitude and tolerant world-view, so, these often did not create conflict but lead them to pray even more discreetly. Beside dervishes’ extremely kind way of acting and dominant non-violence idea in Rumi’s approach to spirituality, Mevlevis never politicized their life style and welcomed everyone without discrimination which may be seen as the base of their mild attitude. At the end, this softness and Mevleviye’s acting as an individualized “religious order as intermediate form” without implementing an Islamic ideology to society ensured that they were not perceived as dangerous as some other religious orders by state.

However, not all Muslims had positive perspectives towards Mevlevis, “even in modern times” (Lewis, 2014: 406). Actually, Sufism was objected by the Sunni Ulema since the very beginning, mainly because of the life style of Sufis and their interpretation of Islam (Atacan, 1999: 24). It is known that, Mevleviye underlines religion and belief as a private experience. Many times it is considered equal to gnostic beliefs because of Sufism’s perspective on esoteric knowledge and things



like adopting Sema as a religious ritual although it is against religious law. The attitude against esoteric and spiritual ideas still lead to negative reactions like it can be seen in a statement of Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs about mysticism: “We know our responsibility to inform our cherished nation in the face of modern lies that fed by criminal, spiritualist or gnostic trends which try to shake the society’s essential assets” (Radikal, 25.03.2014).

On the other hand, UNESCO announced 1997 as the year of Rumi in honor of the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his passing and in the same year, government in Turkey made an “International Mevlana Seminar” in Ankara during Şeb-i Arus (Lewis, 2014: 412). Along with Sema ceremony, interest of foreigners in philosophy and poems of Rumi also effected its revival. As it said in one of my interviews: “Mevleviye is saved by foreigners. When they became more interested and started to come to Konya and asked about Mevlana, we started to embrace his way as something to love and not to hide anymore.” (Interview, KM49).

Some say religious orders like Mevleviye lost popularity among people today because of their traditional way of conducting self and hierarchy, but like many other religious orders, Mevleviye also benefitted from structural changes in the last century. Its way of organization became more flexible and individualized while the ideas like tolerance and love attract new groups of people. Some new centers opened for getting together, Sema ceremony, zikr, and communion under names of foundations and organizations. It is clear that Mevlevi lovers still exist although Mevleviye as an order is damaged. Today, nearly 50.000 people attend Şeb-i Arus week in Konya every December both form Turkey and foreign countries. Every year hundreds of thousands of people visit tomb of Rumi and number is increasing (Lewis, 2014: 413). According to statistics of General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums, the most visited museum was Mevlana Museum in Konya in 2017 with 2.480.433 people (Kültür Varlıkları, Müze İstatistikleri, Retrieved in June 2018).

Currently, position of Makam Çelebi is held by Celaleddin Bakır Çelebi’s son Faruk Hemdem Çelebi (International Mevlana Foundation, Mevlevi Order, retrieved in April 2018). And he seems to be maintaining the traditions in terms of relations with

state. As the 22<sup>nd</sup> generation grandchild of Rumi and president of the International Mevlana Foundation, he stated that “Mevlana had laid out the principle of secularism by saying ‘Come, whoever you are, come’.” and emphasized that this principle is essential for unity and solidarity. (Milliyet, 26.12.2016).

## **3.2. NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS AND SPIRITUAL SEARCH IN TURKEY**

Rumi brought meaning to our lives, filed our sharp edges, trimmed our given labels and parts that are mechanized under the name of modernization. It happened in time through experience, living the doctrine of Pir.  
(Interview, KM50, 23.07.2017)

### **3.2.1. New Religious Movements in Turkey**

Similar to the emergence of NRMs in the West, and revival of religious orders in Turkey, modernization and secularization periods of Turkey is also influenced the emergence of NRMs in Turkey.

Modern generally refers to things that are different than ‘old’ and things that belong to ‘present’. In Turkey, modern as a word connotes ‘contemporary’ which shows meanings of modern and modernization may differ for ‘non-Western’ countries because “modernity” means a form of social life or system that is born in Europe roughly around the 17th century and from there it influenced nearly all world (Giddens, 1996: 1). Some, even define modernity as a change towards societies that are accepted as “modern”. Here, we also used the term westernization to explain this process that is experienced in Turkey simply because policymakers themselves put “westernization” as a goal in the early republican period. But the very process of reaching modernity by non-Western societies is often called modernization.

Modernization as a process might include political modernization, economic modernization, social modernization and cultural modernization. After the

formation of the Republic, Turkey also entered into a modernization and westernization period through Kemalist reforms as we mentioned in the previous section. Modernization in this period was not utilized only to westernize politics and economy but Kemalist Revolution aimed modernization of society and culture too (Giritli, 1988: IV). As we discussed, modernization brought the exclusion and control of religion, however, religion did not disappear although clearly, modernization did not care where the excluded life styles or ideas went.

Because of modern Turkish Republic's emphasis on secularism, religion is often given a more "marginal" or even a reactionary characteristic in engagement with modernity (Özdalga, 2010: 69). We can see the early Republican period as a time that secular nationalism and modernism was very dominant, and religion re-emerged as a response to this in the late 1940s. We already discussed similar points while we talk about the emergence of NRMs (NRMs attracting dissatisfied and dislocated people with rising spirituality as a response to hard-edged modernity and social tension) and revival of religious orders (religious orders revived to satisfy people's spiritual needs after a period of strict secularism during an anomic time in Turkey). These all were a part of conditions of emergence of NRMs in Turkey but to be able to understand NRMs fully we mostly look at the period that is after the Second World War in Turkey since this is the period that emergence of NRMs referenced in the global literature.

As I mentioned, political and spiritual developments all over the world gained a new dimension with the end of the Second World War including Turkey (Unat, 2012: 270). DP's victory in 1950 as a political party that emphasis Islamic values and traditions might be seen as a sign of this new dimensions. DP era brought new hopes, however during DP administration relations with the opposition was not good. Even, one of the first changes that DP made was changing the law that made the Turkish azan legally compulsory and a general amnesty forgave all crimes that are committed during early republican era. Moreover, DP's oppressive attitude increased day by day. This increasing oppression was a ride for a fall.

Turkey was also experiencing many social changes in 1950s. At the beginning of 1950s, processes like urbanization was newly starting. For example, apartment life

was not a widespread phenomenon even in cities and in many neighborhoods, it was normal to see water fountains to fill buckets and water-bearers with donkeys (Ortaylı, 2011: 101). It was the times when politicians still envisioned villagers as masters of the country while slums at the edge of cities were starting to spread. According to 1955 census, there were 1.5 million people living in Istanbul and those people were already complaining about new comers who were mostly workers that left their families behind (Ortaylı, 2011: 107). Societal order was not intact which can be observed in lootings of 1955 that targeted Rum citizens in big cities. In fact, they were signs of fast changing Turkey and anomie in society. These were effective in the rise of religious organizations and also leading to gradual change of many of them like Mevleviye that turned even more to the inner world and became even more individualized.

In 1960, Turkey was an industrializing and urbanizing country but the most of the population was still villagers. Domestic migration to cities was the increasing case which made slums that have conservative political tendencies bigger (Ortaylı, 2011: 112-113). Differences in world-views and life-styles became more prominent in society. Religion and secularism was an ongoing discussion in politics. People of different economic statuses, ages, genders and educational backgrounds became more involved with religion as a result of all these rapid changes, the state of normlessness that is created and constant discussions. On May 27, 1960, ‘due to the impasse that democracy has fallen into’ and ‘to prevent blood from spilling’ a military coup announced (Unat, 2012: 279). This period resulted with closing of DP and execution of 15 people including prime minister.

Between 1960 and 1965, we witnessed the first coalition government –that brings CHP and AP (continuation of DP) together- of Turkey. Starting from 1965, a similar rift of 1950s repeated itself and in 1972 another military intervention resulted with the formation of a short lived ‘supra’ government. This period ended with 1973 elections which CHP came out as leader. Turkey continuously suffered from political and ideological polarization, and violence throughout 1970s (Şimşek, 2004: 111). Instability, violent social movements, and weak administration continued throughout these years feeding the tension, and dissatisfaction and dislocation of

people. On September 12, 1980, another military coup took place which closed all political parties and TBMM. This deranged all political life in Turkey. For some, these military interventions constitute modernization but for others they created obstacles against progress.

For the modernization process in Turkey, 1980s is a turning point. Unlike first visions about modernization, Turkey did not become a homogenous, secular country that is at the level of other civilized cultures. Instead, there were many ethnic, religious and urban-rural conflicts that born from the clash of old and new. There was a tendency towards liberal economic policies before 1980s too, however, it became more observable. Insufficient work opportunities and rapid population increase brought millions of young and unemployed people to cities that resulted with fast demographic and economic changes (Şimşek, 2004: 119). This resulted with a change in social structure and culture naturally that is also fed by the atmosphere of uncertainty and unrest of late 1970s and early 1980s together with the pressure of the military coup. As I mentioned, NRMs as new social movements influenced by tension in the West too and often, the reason of their emergence is explained as rapid change by sociologists. We now know that when people return to religion they often assumed to trying to protect themselves from the alienating and anomic ways of modern life. The emergence of NRMs in Turkey also seems to be similar in that sense. Modernization was already repressing many cultural and religious elements in society. It harmed ethical norms and cultural values in West too leading to loss of identity and sense of honor (Berger et all, 1974). When the authority of nation-states started to diminish because of globalization, technological advancement and global communication, the marginalized and the traditional elements started to be seen in the public sphere again (Şimşek, 2004: 119). Some people who feel mentioned tensions in their lives started to see an answer to their crisis in religion because such feelings lead people to ask questions like “What should I do?” and “Why is this happening?” and although these questions are necessary for a person to place themselves in a stable social world, answers are often come from religions. At the end, this would lead people to begin their spiritual

search. As we know now, this is when people often met with cults and NRMs that they join.

The only condition that was lacking for the emergence of NRMs in Turkey was religious pluralism because existence of a dominant religion or constant control on religion may first lead to a decrease in religious activity in a country instead of religious pluralism. This might be the case that secular middle-class experienced in Turkey until 1980s. And pluralism also had some boundaries like Islamophobia, bias and fear against Islam and Muslims. Islamophobia mostly showed its face in more ‘modern’ segments as a fear of reactionism in Turkey. Göle uses terms of “othering” ‘traditional’ religious segments and “affinity” with ‘modern’ Western to explain this situation while Kozanoğlu chooses to say “*benzeşme ama birleşememe*” (similarity but not being able to unite) (Bölükbaşı, 2012: 44-45, Kozanoğlu, 1997: 45). To elaborate the attitude of this group of people, I want to remind a well-known discussion that is revived in 2010 here.

*Endişeli Modern* (worried modern) as a notion first used to describe a social segment that is consist of modern, well-educated people who are worried about the various practices of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi/AKP) government. This segment was afraid that religion would interfere with their way of living. At the beginning of the discussion, Binnaz Toprak stated that:

I am truly worried about the future of this country. I observe that many people in my social circle also share similar worries with me. Conservatism is not a force for creativity and diversity in the world. If Turkey is closer to modern societies with its artists, successful women and diverse metropolises, this is owed to the fight against conservatism. I am worried that this fight will reverse and destroy this creativity and diversity (Radikal, 17 October 2010).

In addition to this, Fuat Keyman divide “worried moderns” into two groups in his writing as *dışlayıcı modernler* (exclusionist moderns) who do not want to live together with religious people and *endişeli ama demokratik modernler* (worried but democrat moderns) who actually regard democratic values but have “justifiable” worries about democracy and modernity in Turkey (Radikal, 05 December 2010). So, in this view, secular middle-class is not a homogenous group and worried moderns are not simply against religion. There were criticisms towards Keyman’s

terminology. For example, Ethem Mahçupyan said that such separation is only a go for democratizing the image of strict secular mind of CHP's base-support. However, discussion found a response in society. According to Toprak, conservatism in Turkey was growing and this was starting to threaten modern life-style in Turkey while AKP adopted an increasingly exclusivist and oppressive way of doing politics through majoritarian democracy which created a social segment that is highly disturbed (Radikal, 13 December 2010). Six years later, in 2016, Toprak even said that those worried moderns are now moderns who are in panic (Karaca, Bianet, 18 March 2016).

Bekir Ağırdir says that worried modern as a notion is used in a survey of KONDA for people who are 'modern' in terms of their life-styles and worried for the future of their freedoms. Survey revealed that, in terms of their characteristics, these people are relatively younger (under 35), belong to middle or upper-middle class in terms of their economic status, better-educated, students or professionals and children of better-educated parents. Moreover, individualism, liberalism and proactive tendencies are prevalent inside the group (Ağırdir, T24, 21 October 2010). Here, we need to note that "worried moderns actually show very similar characteristics with people who are attracted to new religions and highly-active seekers. As we mentioned, religious revival was already being experienced in Turkey, but all these "worries" might lead these people to seek answers to their tensions outside traditional religion, Sunni-Islam.

Instead of practicing traditional or normative religion of a country or believing to an established religion, choosing to be a part of an individualized and flexible belief system is what NRMs are about. Such change in tendencies shows transformation of religion and emergence of 'modern' religions. Today, formations and symbols correspond to NRMs are highly visible in Turkey too. In fact, they are so widely accepted that it is not surprising to hear someone who explains something unknown saying "energy" and "karma" as often as "Allah" and "faith" in certain social circles. As we said, NRMs adopt to new locations uniquely and intermix different practices and beliefs in their bodies. In Turkish society, influence of Islam can be seen in both of these processes. This means a person now might identify as a Muslim and perform

Buddhist practices turning belief something totally individual. Global terms like “spiritual journey”, “positive feelings”, “awareness” and “surrender” seem to be intertwined with other more ‘Islamic’ words like *tekamül* (spiritual development) and *eyvallah* (all right/okay) in these people’s discourses. They are also utilized by NRMs that have Islamic and non-Islamic origins in Turkey. The thing is that all these new organizations offer acceptance, surety, belonging, answers, purpose, identity and help to modern person at the end in similar ways like we discussed.

NRMs in Turkey might be movements, religious orders, cults and even sects. At the end, in line with their origins, characteristic and features, many of these religious orders, sects and cults may be collected under the general name of NRMs today. As we discussed NRMs can be defined through their (1)conditions of emergence, (2)adaptation periods to new context, (3)newness in organization, (4)intermixed practices and beliefs, (5)certain empirical characteristics and (6)new converts with certain traits. These need to be applied to said movement for us to be able to consider that movement as an NRM which we will be doing for contemporary Mevleviye at the end of this chapter.

### **3.2.2. Spiritual Search in Turkey**

If the time from the foundation of the Republic to 1950s was important to understand revival of religious orders and period between 1950s (period after the Second World War) and 1980s was important for the emergence of NRMs in Turkey, the period after 1980s might be considered when “spiritual search” became an important notion.

Structural and cultural changes experienced in Turkey which occurred in last decades revealed some new religious forms as they affect the presence of religion in society. Notions like globalization and pluralism make their presence felt in Turkey in their more ‘exotic’ forms as wells as Islamic forms which create a new scenery. As a result, modern person’s spiritual search showed itself in Turkey too. If the emergence of NRMs is taken as a sign of such search, spiritual search might



also be traced to 1950s when revival of religious orders also started. However, more ‘visible’ (striking, foreign, NRMs of non-Islamic origin for Turkey) formations of NRMs like spiritual practices of far eastern traditions seem to accelerate in 1980s with the effect of globalization which may be considered to be the biggest sign of the of spiritual search in a context. Kozanoğlu also states that without understanding the period form 1980s to 1990s, it is not possible to evaluate new age movements (NAMs) in Turkey (Kozanoğlu, 1997: 44).

Reşat Güner as a Turkish author who writes about spiritual development and one of the founders of *İzmir Ruhsal Araştırmalar Derneği* (İzmir Spiritual Researches Association) that is founded in 1990 says in one of his writings that:

I personally experienced the development of NAMs in Turkey. In our country the first serious interest about spiritual issues started with the lead of Dr. Bedri Ruhselman in 1950 when he founded *Metapsişik Tetkikler ve İlmi Araştırmalar Derneği* (Metapsychic Investigations and Scientific Researches Association). After him another important name in this area in Turkey is Ergün Arıkdal. Later on, he also together with some other members of Metapsychic Investigations Association, found *İnsanlığı Birleştiren Bilgiyi Yayma Vakfı* (BİLYAY-Foundation for Spreading Knowledge that Unifies Humanity) in 1994. Additionally, *Ruh ve Madde Dergisi* (Spirit and Matter Magazine) published continuously since 1960 by first the Association and then the Foundation, and this publication is the longest continuous publication in Turkey. Again the Foundation’s publishing houses *Ruh ve Madde Yayınları* and *Meta Yayınları* made publications relevant to spiritual issues (Güner, 13 January 2015).

And the number of this kind of publishing houses increased throughout the years. Beside what we already discussed like effects of secularization, industrialization, urbanization, modernization in Turkey, 1980s also opened the door for new relations with foreign countries both trade and culture wise, especially, after widespread use of newer media outlets like the Internet. Like Berger said, there are things that shake the “nomos” (belief that appear to be objectively true) of people and one of them is certainly is meeting foreign or alien practices (Berger, 1967).

Moreover, spiritual search was able to find itself a place in Turkey in a more observable scale in 1980s because the general atmosphere of the country was more suitable than ever. During military coup, people and communities were under a lot of pressure, and surveillance lead people to privatize their social and religious

relations and practices. As we mentioned, people were doing ‘secret’ Mevlevi rituals in their private places and they were still busted by police. So, people needed more opportunities to experience and express. As Barker states, the significance of new forms of religion is that they may occasionally function as a barometer for some members of a society who feel a need that is not met by other means (1999: 26). In line with this, ‘discontinuation’ and general situation of Turkey were leading people into confusion and unhappiness. Together with polarization of society and anxiety that passed from late 1970s, people could only retreat to their own private internal worlds to build their very own beliefs and world-views.

During 1980s, first, mass media and spreading effects of globalization, then, the Internet “normalized” spiritual search for many people while providing more and more options spiritually I think. I still remember the advertisements about call-people who tell your future or cast a horoscope in TV. Each channel was offering their own shows for exploring ‘mysteries’ like *Üçüncü Göz* (The Third Eye) or *Sınır Ötesi* (Beyond Border). In these shows, there was a wide range of mysteries to explore like UFOs or jinnis. Although some of these might be stopped by RTÜK, even the news were presenting ‘experts’ and ‘hodjas’. Printed media also wanted a share from such interest and magazines like *Bilinmeyen* (Unknown) together with newspaper supplements like *Gizemler Dünyası* (World of Mysteries), *Focus* and *Fenomen* became prevalent (Kozanoğlu, 1997: 38). All these let different practices to settle into religious life of people. Since they are fed by tools that can be reached by everyone, they also spread easily in mainstream society. It is clear that the combination of all these feed individualization and believing without ‘belonging’ or without being involved in politics. When we reached to the 1990s it was clear that there was no Turkey that could be generalized (Kozanoğlu, 1997: 44).

However, although Turkey’s experience with spiritual search is notably similar in terms of its basic reasons etc. with Western countries, it is not the same. First of all, Turkey do not provide that many options for people to believe I think. Turkish Republic’s secularity ideals is one of the reasons for that. Like Sayarı stated the state decided to control religion while trying to secularize the country (1978: 180). This situation is not changed much over the years, even parties with ‘Islamic’ ideals

wanted to control religion in Turkey. This obviously effects options and freedom regarding people's religious lives. Then, we need to mention the influence of conservatism in Islam. Very much like the example of Mormon teens that we discussed in the previous chapter, it can be imagined that strong believers of Islam would be less prone to search something spiritually than others. So, influence of Islam should not be overlooked, even if it is experienced 'nominally' since it still effect the culture and norms of people. We may think of it as the "cosmos" people live in and their nomos is definitely will be effected. Like we mentioned, young Americans who mostly go to Christian-based beliefs even when they show a spiritual seeker attitude. Islam is the religion that many people grew up while learning and observing it in schools and streets even if not in the family in Turkey. At the end, it can be said that spiritual search in Turkey is forming itself close on West's heels and contemporary forms of religion becoming more and more visible, however, Islamic formations and religious orders is definitely a part of this spiritual search.

As we discussed in previous parts, Islamic organizations in Turkey also undergo changes in all these milestones (like 1925, 1950s, and 1980s). Search of modern person reached them too which might be because of their transformation (becoming more 'modern' and relevant to today's spiritual 'demands' so to say) and such involvement might also create some changes in these communities in a more contemporary direction.

Today, people still discuss about esoteric mysteries of Koran or 'miracles' that happen somewhere in the world during late night shows like *Öteki Gündem* (The Other Agenda) and *Teke Tek* (One-on-One). We watched TV shows that look for 'extraordinary' talents like telekinesis or telepathy and even magic during 2000s like *Fenomen* (The Phenomenon). And lastly we filled our "best seller" racks in bookshops with books about spiritual growth and self-development, alternative healing, and belief. The range of different teachings is so wide that one may find books about healing that comes from angels, the doctrine of Sufism, Osho's ideas on death and rules of Buddhism in the same rack. People are telling their own "salvation" stories or simply offer ways to reach happiness and peace through

spirituality like Metin Hara (writer of Sufi self-development book *Yol*) or Hakan Mengüç (writer of *Ben Ney'im* that tells a Sufi spiritual journey). There are many other examples that can be listed here but all these are showing a demand that emerge from the search of people in Turkey and this demand is answered by 'exotic' NRMs as well as Sufi-based ones as it can be seen.

The reason behind this demand in Turkey might also be explained with the statement of Barker who says that NRMs might be offering alternatives in more totalitarian societies, and it is not only the positive suggestions of those movements that pull people but oppressiveness of the regime makes the "offer" more attractive to people too (1999: 26). At this point, I would like to give a recent example to be able to explain the relation between the authority and spiritual search or seekers in Turkey. As we mentioned, spiritual quest culture became visible in the West through East Asian originated beliefs like Hinduism and Buddhism. It is not much different in Turkey. People started to see the newness and the change through introduction of these more foreign belief systems rather than Sufi-based ones for example. It can be said that highly active seekers of Turkey often visit "East Asian beliefs" as stops in their spiritual journey like their Western counterparts and my example will offer a glimpse of these belief systems' experience in Turkey.

Everything started in 2013 when "The Ministry of Interior asked 'Is the Yoga Studios are permissible?' to The Directorate of Religious Affairs" and as a result, Directorate of Religious Affairs stated that "Yoga can be practiced for sportive purposes. If there is any religious meaning, it would be inconvenient." (Radikal, 25 October 2013). At the same day, Milliyet also gave the news saying "Ministry of the Interior Wanted a Fatwa for 'Yoga'" (Milliyet, 25 October 2013). Subsequently, in 2014 a news in HaberTürk wrote "The State's Hand on Yoga" while mentioning a Facebook campaign for signatures of Yoga lovers and trainers that is named "*Sertifikanı Sahip Çık!*" (Protect Your Certificate!). According to the news, Ministry of Youth and Sports was trying to place Yoga under the body of *Herkes İçin Spor Federasyonu* (Federation of Sports for Everyone/HİS) that works under the Ministry (HaberTürk, 12 October 2014). Yoga instructors were against such fusion since they did not want to lose their international certifications and be trained

like ordinary coaches by the Federation and above all, it was not right to classify Yoga as a sport for them. Therefore, both associations and instructors reacted. This also initiated an attempt for an independent Yoga Federation and its then President reminded that “Yoga is a part of a millennial tradition that belongs to world culture” in an interview. According to him, the State provision may be good to keep Yoga from false regulations, however, it should be done while sticking by its philosophy so, not perceiving it as a sport (HaberTürk, 12 October 2014)

On the other side of the coin, there was HİS. Its Chairman Prof. Dr. Erdal Zorba stated that “There is an authority gap on the subject of Yoga for many years and Ministry of Youth and Sports demands such regulations since 2010”. There are several comments to his approach from different groups that I run across in various news stories and one of them was from the Turkish Representative of International Yoga Federation, Bora Ercan: “HİS is an important institution that hosts hobby sports. On the other hand, Yoga is a philosophical system. It is unfair to put Yoga side-by-side with skateboard -for both Yoga and skateboard. As a transitional stage, Yoga may be connected to the HİS, but in the long run, due to the nature of Yoga, such structure is unacceptable. Yoga must be independent.” (HaberTürk, 12 October 2014). However, Directorate of Religious Affairs already made perspective of the state on this issue clear while stating: “We know our responsibility to inform our cherished nation in the face of modern lies that fed by criminal, spiritualist or gnostic trends which try to shake the society’s essential assets” (Radikal, 25 March 2014).

Nearly a year later on September 9, 2015, Hürriyet gave the news saying there are now new regulations for Yoga since it is incorporated into HİS. As it is understood, HİS listed the rules that follow: “From now on, yoga centers cannot use religious objects, paintings, sculptures, divine music, and prayers of different religions in Yoga studios while practicing Yoga” (Hürriyet, 09 September 2015). Yoga centers had to obey conditions above or image of Buddha, and mantras that are actually integral parts of Yoga and meditation can be considered as reasons for closure. According to the news, old Yoga Teachers Association Chairman stated that their living spaces and beliefs are restricted with the rules that created from nowhere. His comment specified that everyone can have a different religious belief and he added

that: “Also, it does not clear what they meant with expressions like ‘religious symbol’ and ‘different religion’. Yoga is a culture that contains five thousand different doctrines. This statement leaves places that use symbols under suspicion.” In the same way Yoga Foundation President had a word at that time saying that symbol and music are natural parts of Yoga and in all countries, such symbols/objects are used like pictures of enlightened persons like Mevlana and Buddha that symbolize our inner world (Hürriyet, 09 September 2015). After the stir that this regulation created, Technical Committee President of HİS stated that they prepared an ordinance for Yoga for the first time and also, defend it while telling that it is prepared against missionary activity. As with all ‘gyms’ and Yoga centers also should not use religious icons since politics and missionary starts when symbols get into the studios.

Now merged with website of Directorate of Religious Affairs, then, “fetva.diyenet.gov.tr” published a statement in 2015 that says “It is contrary to Islamic principles if a Muslim person practice Yoga intentionally. It also should be known that, nations exist in line with their own religious and national cultures and these values keep them on the stage of history (existence). In this regard, hoping for a help from other cultures’ moral beliefs and internalizing them cannot be possible for a Muslim who has holy religion of Islam that offers to live in harmony with oneself and the environment. The principles of Islam are sufficient for providing both earthly and spiritual happiness of all mankind.” (fetva.diyenet.gov.tr, Yoga, Retrieved in April 2015). Today, they make their statements about mysticism, Yoga, various other NRMs and NAMs, and spiritual search in general in their new site and in books they published like *Çağdaş İnançlar Kitapçığı*. For example, it is stated that “An important part of the yoga centers that have become widespread in recent years in the form of bodily exercise and psychological therapy activities in our country, distinguish themselves from these religions and act by saying they are independent yoga practitioners. However, it is not exactly true that Yoga does not have any religious side. Because, in Indian religions, Yoga continues to exist as a religious practice. Accordingly, it is not appropriate for a Muslim to practice Yoga knowing that it is based on the beliefs and worship of another religion.”

(kurul.diyamet.gov.tr, Cevap-Ara: 34). I believe that after their first statement caused eyebrows to raise, they now try to soften their way of saying, although they still continue to state the same thing. I personally think that authorities picked Yoga to act on as a practice that is based on East Asian belief systems because it is highly visible, different and popular in Turkey. However, all these happenings and statements represents a general perspective against spiritual search in “alien” practices and NRMs of all origins.

As we discussed, religious orders and Sufi-based communities also had their own shares of conflict when it comes to relations with authority in Turkey. Firstly, it is clear that Sufism is also criticized by Sunni authorities since its existence. Mainly because of the life style of Sufis and their interpretation of Islam (Atacan, 1999: 24). Besides, there is a huge discussion about esoteric practices and mysticism that is offered in Sufism as it is mentioned previously. Therefore, it is now safe to say that “spiritual search” is not something that is supported or overlooked in Turkey whether it comes from an “exotic” belief or from Sufism. Because of historical position of Turkish Republic on modernization and secularization processes and because of contemporary “Islamic” identity politics, spiritual seeking in Turkey is generally realized more silently and privately by people. Moreover, when we go thorough characteristics of spiritual search and attitudes of seekers, we can see that active spiritual seekers in Turkey also expected to be middle-class, well-educated, professional people who once belong to more “Westernized” and “secularized” or “non-religious” or “nominally religious” parts of the society. It is also expected that most of these people would start such search in their younger ages (before 35). Here, I would like to note that these characteristics seems to be overlap with characteristics of some other groups like worried moderns an followers of NRMs.

What we learned in this section will give me a base while analyzing my findings that I obtained through extensive field works in İstanbul and Konya. Through these discussions on religious orders, Mevleviye and NRMs in Turkey as well as their followers I will be able to frame the very community and individuals who I observed and interviewed with. In the next section, I will be drawing some parallels between these topics while discussing the place of contemporary Mevleviye in Turkey.

### 3.3. CONTEMPORARY MEVLEVIYE AS A PART OF NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN TURKEY

I guess Mevleviye went to the West and came back to us from there again. The way we live Mevleviye indicates this. There is no system or religious order. Only modern individuals who try to follow the words of Rumi.  
We are the pilgrims of this unattended way now.  
(Interview, IM59, 20.06.2017)

#### 3.3.1. Pilgrims of the “Unattended” Way

As I mentioned, Mevleviye’s structural organization is changed after the foundation of the Republic. Once dervish lodges closed, chain of *Çelebis* left Turkey but the line did not broken. Still, this incident, ban on religious orders and actions of secular state seems to create a difficult situation in terms of Mevleviye’s continuation as a living belief.

Today, position of *Makam Çelebisi* is held by Faruk Hemdem Çelebi which is merely a symbolic and spiritual status now (International Mevlana Foundation, Mevlevi Order, retrieved in April 2018). However, existence of this position and him being from the line of Rumi gives him some kind of authority in the community. Especially in terms of protection of cultural heritage, there are many works of Çelebi family. Besides, he is the president of International Mevlana Foundation that is founded by Celaleddin Bakır Çelebi in 1996 in Istanbul. Foundation organizes exhibitions, workshops, conferences, and concerts both in English and Turkish in Konya, Ankara and Istanbul throughout the year about Rumi, Mevleviye, *Sema* and cultural heritages. These activities mostly intended to present the way of Mevlana and his philosophy in its original form. As mentioned, secular state and Kemalist ideals seems to be minded by great-grandchilds of Rumi even today.

I interviewed with Esin Çelebi who is the 22<sup>nd</sup> generation grandchild of Rumi on 22 July 2017 in Konya. When I entered the office of her in International Mevlana Foundation in Konya that is very close to Mevlana Museum, the first thing that draw



my attention was a photograph of Atatürk along with portraits of current and previous Çelebis. Noticing my interest, she introduced the meanings of the combinations of pictures saying that Mevleviye and Kemalist ideals go along really well.



Figure 2. With Esin Çelebi in International Mevlana Foundation in Konya, 2017  
Her discourse was centered on protection, transmission, research and publicity of Rumi's teachings. When we talk about the changes Mevleviye experienced, she stated that Atatürk also said 'We are obliged not to make any exceptions and must close Mevlevi lodges too. Nonetheless, the ideas and teaching of Mevlana will emerge even more powerfully in the future' and this is the case of today (Expert Interview No.2, Konya, 22.07.2017). She also emphasized that Mevlevi did nothing outside of law in any period. About contemporary Mevleviye she said:

The old system does not exist anymore, although there are classes in universities for example, that spiritual school do not exist today. There are

foundations and organizations but we should be careful about them too since some teach the tradition wrongly. Teachings of Rumi, morals and manners of this way and Sema should be thought by trustworthy foundations or else we will see what we complain in the future too, people perform “Sema” in openings and weddings. So, we need to be extra careful today. We can learn many things from books but people want to experience it spiritually. Our foundation now wants to realize “Mevlana Culture Village” project for example for this reason (Expert Interview No.2, Konya, 22.07.2017).

As I observed Çelebi family is respected in Konya as descendants of Rumi among Mevlevis and the family attend public organizations together especially around the time of *Şeb-i Arus*. Also, foundation is included in cultural and academic events that are planned by the state and different academic organizations. However, some Mevlevis who live the belief itself seems to find actions of the foundation not enough and think that it is really hard now to turn back to traditional system while nobody really try to turn back (Interview, KM50, 23.07.2017). Rather than coming together with real Mevlevi people, they seem to be involved with academic studies and groups more. The aim of the foundation is also defined in line with this perspective, “The purpose of the foundation is to conduct researches about the great thinker, scholar and poet Mevlana, his works and thoughts and carry them over to the coming generations all around the world” (International Mevlana Foundation, Home, retrieved in April 2018). Clearly, their actions put descendants of Rumi in a more secular position and so, they mostly represent cultural part of Mevleviye today. Therefore, it is safe to say that spiritual leadership of contemporary Mevleviye is not carried out by Konya Çelebis today like it was before 1925 at least for people who live it.

In addition to the symbolic position of Makam Çelebi, International Mevlana Foundation also has a *postnishin* (Mevlevi sheikh who sits on the red *post* from sheep skin as the leader of ceremony or communion), Nadir (Karnıbüyük) Dede. I interviewed with Nadir Dede in Konya on 22 July 2017 too. He defines his position in the Foundation as being president of Konya arm and has the position of *postnishin* since 2002. He, like some other Mevlevis, criticize themselves for the situation of today. According to him, dereliction and failure to inform people about the way are reasons for Mevleviye’s consumption as a trend and show today. As it is not prayed

in an inn, people should not do Sema in unsuitable places because this hurts the lover (Expert Interview No.3, Konya, 22.07.2017). He also added that:

There is no such thing as *eski* (old), we make it old. In other words, if our experience is a bit more modern, they are starting to feel old. Again I find us, lovers, culpable because we failed to teach the way lately. But I know it is hard to do so as long as there is money for some to gain. Mevleviye is the way of love and tolerance. How one shares love? By teaching it. Today, I agree that there is a growing interest in Mevleviye, so I feel that we are even more responsible to tell the truth and exact statements of Pir (Expert Interview No.3, Konya, 22.07.2017).

Moreover, contemporary Mevleviye's image experiences involvement of two different state institutions since there is still a desire to control religious organizations and movements in Turkey. Also I think the authority wish to display Mevleviye to a cultural heritage rather than a living belief which is in line with modernization's standardizing ways. The first institution is Directorate of Religious Affairs. Their involvement is mostly happens through public gatherings that are performed for visitors and tourists. Officials make statements from time to time regarding Mevleviye while top government officials make speeches in events like Şeb-i Arus emphasizing Rumi's thinker and poet sides instead of the mystic one.

The other institution is the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Mevleviye is often taken as a subject of both culture and tourism. For example, advertisements of Şeb-i Arus is generally assumed by Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism of Konya that works under Governorship of Konya. There are also other groups linked to the ministry that are responsible with 'showing' different parts of Mevleviye. I interviewed with Fahri Özçakıl in Konya on 23.07.2017 after a Sema performace in Mevlana Culture Center. He is an officer who works as an alternate director in Konya Turkish Sufi Music Group that serves under Directorate of Fine Arts of Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In addition to this, he represents the position of *postnishin* in Sema performances of the group. Although the position offered to him by artistic board, he said that in terms of traditional procedures, he had the permission of Faruk Hemdem Çelebi in 2008 (Expert Interview No.4, Konya, 22.07.2017) to act as a postnishin.



Figure 3. With Fahri Özçakıl in Mevlana Culture Center in Konya, 2017

His speech on Mevleviye mostly covered subjects like culture, education and protection of children and young. About Mevleviye's today, he said that being a Mevlevi is only a life style today rather than being a part of a religious order which I think reflected the individualization of contemporary Mevleviye and new type of organizations that are much more flexible. Moreover, he stressed that Rumi was in the way of Koran and Hz. Muhammed and the way of Rumi was accepted in the ultimate level in Ottoman period which was a statement that was in line with the ideals of the current administration I think since President Erdoğan's speech at the beginning of Şeb-i Arus in 2017 also covered similar subject with key words like *kardeşlik* (brotherhood), *birlik* (unity), *milletimiz* (our nation), *dinimiz* (our religion) and Muhammed. Although Özçakıl talked about closing of religious orders positively, he also emphasized that Atatürk visited Rumi's mausoleum every time he is been in Konya (Expert Interview No.4, Konya, 22.07.2017). I thought that he desired to show that Mevleviye was accepted in each period by authority. He also said that "Many religious orders still continue their actions "underground" but since

Mevlevis are really upright people they obliged to the rule and only changed their lives in line with Rumi's teachings." (Expert Interview No.4, Konya, 22.07.2017). This statement is open to discussion since I know there are regular Mevlevi gatherings of different Mevlevi communities both in Konya and Istanbul. On the other hand, religious orders that live religion in the individual level like Mevleviye do not found their lodges like the ones that are ideology centric and this may be the difference that is observed by this statement.

Other than these, main aim of Konya Turkish Sufi Music Group is defined as "to bring order in Şeb-i Arus ceremonies that is done in Konya while increasing national unity, and to answer excessive touristic demand" (guzelsanatlar.gov.tr, Konya Türk Tasavvuf Müziği Topluluğu, Tarihçe, retrieved in April 2018). This is also another explanation that is in line with state's view toward Mevleviye: something to utilize for national unity in some cases and something to gain touristic attention. Sema is taken as more like a performance in occasions organized by the Ministry. Moreover, audience is generally consist of outsiders, although some performers may be Mevlevis. At the end, it is clear that officials or official institutions also are not seen as spiritual authority by actual Mevlevis although they effect representation and perception of Mevleviye immensely.

Then, who the spiritual leader of new Mevlevis? Although we know that Mevleviye is individualized and there is no system of master-disciple now, we also know that most NRMs operate through 'charismatic' leaders. Both new Mevlevis of Konya and Istanbul mentioned their teachers, Dedes and Babas in this sense as the community leaders and as people that they perceive as masters. These people are teachers and sheikhs who lead their 'private' ceremonies and answer their questions. For new Mevlevis in Konya, their leader also act as the head of the organization since the hierarchy is less flexible there than Istanbul. These sheiks are 'sheikhs of people' and so, their positions as leaders, although not obtained traditionally, are still valid and not symbolic in the eyes of people. I visited several 'dervish lodges' in Istanbul and Konya various times of a year. Some formed in private places like homes or privately owned buildings and some built in public places like culture centers and foundations. In all, there were people who organize communions and

lead ceremonies. These people often legitimate their positions through *silsile* (traditional chain of religious order that shows Sufi masters and their disciples as the next master as representors of Rumi's authority). *Silsile* is a line of sheikhs that eventually reaches to prophet (Gölpınarlı, 2006: 189). Tradition accepts two fundamental chains. One goes to Ali which brings Shiite influence to religious orders and one to Ebubekr that brings Sunni influence. Both chains merge with Cunayd from Bagdad and each religious order keep track of their own chains after him, until *silsile* reaches the leader of their religious order. This chain is important for disciples and members of religious orders since they base their education to those great people through these chains although *icazetname* system (master's permission to disciple to be the sheikh of a dervish lodge) is also stopped officially after 1925. The important thing here is perspectives of followers. Like one of my informants from Konya explain:

We started to come to this dervish lodge with the encouragement of Muharrem Baba (current sheikh) who was the disciple of the previous sheikh, then we became a family and even closer than a family. If we could not come here, it hurts us. We understand that Mevleviye is not about Sema here because many reduced Mevleviye to Sema only and created an order nothing more than whirling. But here we felt the presence of Pir himself (Interview, KM21).

These word show that people feel the existence of *silsile* and representation of Rumi's authority in the new organization too because of the existence of charismatic leaders like Muharrem Baba. This is something that might be observed in many NRMs too and often charismatic leaders are accepted as a part of empirical characteristics of NRMs that help to revive these spiritual communities. Similarly, throughout my visits to another Mevlevi lodge in Istanbul, his followers seemed really committed to Hasan Dede (head of the community) and even said he had blessings of various dedes of different orders referring to the continuation of *silsile* (Interview, IF48). However, since there is no tradition of *icazetname* or official trainings of dervishes anymore, it is hard to keep track of dervish lodges. This results with discussions about validity and legitimacy of Mevlevi communities that is bounded to people who call themselves "Mevlevi sheikhs" like Esin Çelebi worried.

At the end, as Celalettin Dede said “We need to pay a price again, think where we did wrong, lay claim to our roots and from there, we need to grow something beautiful.” (Expert Interview No.1, Konya, 23.07.2017). This means that while Mevleviye change, it lost some of its ties with traditions, the system of the order, rituals and *silsile* is damaged so new Mevlevis of today are like pilgrims of an unattended way in this modern world (Interview, IM59) following a doctrine individually. This emphasis on the change of Mevleviye is important in the sense of understanding the position of contemporary Mevleviye in modern Turkey which I will discuss in the next section.

### 3.3.2. Mevleviye is Dead, Long Live Mevlanaism

Mevleviye as a religious order had some traits and rituals beside teachings of Rumi. Kara explains, common traits of religious orders in Islam in a list of five (2006: 156):

1. Zikr
2. Seyru süluk
3. Humane elements
4. Intellectual and spiritual elements
5. Material elements

Zikr is counted as one of the primary elements of Islamic religious orders and it means repeating names of Allah and remembering God while forgetting all the other beings (Kara, 2006: 156). The most known zikr is “*La ilahe illallah*” which is used in ceremonies of many different orders including Mevleviye. As I observed, today, zikr is still a part of Mevlevi rituals that takes place in private places but it was never forced by Rumi. Many other rituals like *Sema* also includes silent zikr.

*Seyru süluk* is also important for any religious order since it means spiritual maturation of disciples. Words of *seyr* and *süluk* means walking and going while they indicate a spiritual journey (Kara, 2006: 156). Gölpınarlı explains that there are several hierarchical positions in Mevleviye (2006: 358). The first one is *muhib*

(lover) imply a person who entered the religious order through accepting and blessing of a sheikh. This process differs in Mevleviye since sheikh accepts people based on logical reasons and not imaginary ones like dreaming (Gölpınarlı, 2006: 358). In Mevleviye, *seyru süluk* was realized in *Asitanes*, which are authorized to give education up to 1001 days (International Mevlana Foundation, Mevlevi Order, retrieved in April 2018) which is peculiar to Mevleviye.

At the beginning of this education *can* (fellow soul, dear), a person who wants to be dervish, would start from *saka postu* (woolfell of sakka) and would sit in the kitchen of Asitane for three days doing nothing but observing dervishes and himself. After three days, if person still wants to join the religious order, he “undress” to wear dervish clothes (Gölpınarlı, 2006: 359). Once dervish clothes are put on, person would start to work for 18 duties from *ayakçı* to *lokmacı* dede. Although duties look like daily life tasks like cleaning and cooking, each duty also works in a way disciplines self and desire in a way. The final test, the cell trial, was eighteen day and after that dervish would become dede himself and could go to another dervish lodge, become the sheikh of a lodge or stay in the same one (Gölpınarlı, 2006: 363).

Today, since there is no place to obtain such education, traditional way of *seyru süluk* does not exist in Mevleviye anymore. This means that being baba, dede and dervish has different meanings today which showed itself in my research too. For example, new Mevlevis prefer to call themselves *muhib* because of the lack of traditional education of religious order. Besides, today, Mevlevis who participate to religious rituals in their closed communities “elect” their next sheikh among dedes of the community once the sheikh they followed passes away, although approval of that previous sheikh is still really important. In addition to this, there are new Mevlevis who do rituals in their own groups without a dede or sheikh with them instead a respected and initiated person may lead the ceremony.

Humane elements imply things that people bring to religious orders like *Pir-Pir-i sani* which means a special state that sheikhs reach through their personality while representing a trait of Sufism (Kara, 2006: 176). For example, Rumi known with “love” and his way represents it better than any other religious order. Other than this, relationship between sheikh and disciple may also be put under this category.



Today, there are still Mevlevi dedes who lead their communities in terms of rituals, communions and advices, however, *teslim olma* (surrendering) and *bağlanma* (committing) have more flexible and up to date meanings in contemporary Mevleviye similar to teacher student relation mostly because members do not live in communions anymore. After all, even in old times, it was believed that a person could find the way without the sheikh too. It was a rule that a dervish who could not find a sheikh should read previous works of Sufism (Kara, 2006: 178) and today, the answer was the same when I asked “What a beginner should do to learn more in Mevleviye?” and people said you should read Masnavi over and over again. So, although some traditions continue, traditional guidance of a sheikh and *seyru süluk* is failed since there is no place to be trained and observe traditional ways of masters.

The most important part of intellectual and spiritual elements of religious orders is the acceptance of esoteric or internal knowledge. For Sufis, “Each verse of Koran has one exoteric meaning and one esoteric meaning” (Kara, 2006: 192) which is an idea that still continues in contemporary Mevleviye. Another important part covers *adab erkan* (codes of conduct) which is a general name for customs, ceremonies and traditions of an order. Codes of conduct is influenced by both Shiite and Sunni traditions. The religious order which complies with codes of conduct the most or the one that has the most ceremonies is Mevleviye (Gölpınarlı, 2006: 358). Mevleviye would hold a ceremony nearly in every occasion. A *muhib*’s arrival, start and end of a dervish’s education, permission that is given to one for sheikhdom or caliphate, reading Masnavi, funerals, journeys and meals would easily be reasons for special ceremonies that include specific movements and prayers. Mevleviye had special prayers for every occasion which are called *gülbank* in Turkish. Throughout my time in field, I observed there are still special prayers for some occasions like before eating, and before and after religious rituals but many of them seems to be died away and although there are still many customs and traditions, it did not appeared to be as much as Gölpınarlı mentions.

Moreover, Mevleviye has its own system of customs and manners that mirrors Rumi’s and Sufism’s ideals. For example, Mevlevi dedes do not refuse things that offered to them but also, cannot want something from people. *Görüşme* (meeting)

is also a really important custom and Mevlevi meet everything they use from doors to spoons by kissing them. They also meet each other by kissing each other's hand which indicates the equality of individuals beside love and respect. Everything from entering to a dervish lodge to eating are defined by customs in Mevleviye. Other than that their manners are extremely polite, considerate and warm-hearted. For example, they watch when eating from public plates to not to touch their spoon's mouth side to food. They talk carefully using soft and affirmative language in daily life like saying 'rest the light' rather than 'switch off the light'. These customs are mostly the ones that I observed in Mevlevi communities but there may even more customs that are still practiced and also, there are surely the ones that are forgotten.

*Sema*, as the oldest ritual of contemporary Mevleviye is also part of these. I think the importance of Sema lies with its symbolic meanings. Every act and object included in this ritual has a different meaning for Mevlevi. *Semahane* (round place where Sema performed) represents whole universe and colors of woolfells symbolizes the spiritual place of dervishes like Sheik (red to symbolize unity with God), enlightened (white) and novice (black). *Semazens* (whirling dervishes) wear tombstone like *sikke*s (Mevlevi head wear) to show that they killed their egos and waistcoats that they take off during ceremony to show they got rid of worldly wishes. Today, Sema starts with *Nat-ı Sherif* that includes praises for prophet and music. *Kudum* (drum) starts first to represent the first command "Be!" and followed by *ney* (reed flute) that symbolizes the divine breath (International Mevlana Foundation, Mevlevi Order, retrieved in April 2018). *Semazens* start ritual their arms crossed in their chests turning to themselves. Then dervishes extend their arms keeping one hand open towards heaven and turn the other to earth representing spiritual position of man, and they pivot on their left foot in an orbit (Lewis, 2014: 410) led by Master Sheikh.

This is the way Sema is thought and it is performed this way during touristic performances today. However in Rumi's times, Sema was not like this. In those times, someone would cook and call everyone, before or after eating, musicians would play instruments and sing poems and people do Sema if they wished at that moment (Gölpınarlı, 2006: 349). This version sounds more like the closed

community rituals I participated in Istanbul and Konya where practice of Sema is mostly about *cezbe* (being pulled to the presence of God) rather than performance. Moreover, although semazens in official performances are all men, today, many sheikhs allow women to practice Sema and as I observed, in some closed communities women and men may whirl together even in their street clothes during zikrs and other religious rituals.

Kara also lists material elements. Dervish lodges as physical places to give education and do rituals, foundations that provide necessary fund for the continuation of life in dervish lodges, special clothes like Mevlevis' wool clothes and a common special language that has unique phrases to be able to explain special attitudes may be counted as material elements of religious orders. For Rumi's followers phrases like *aşk olsun* (let it be love, may you find love, you are welcomed), *eyvallah* (so be it, let it be, yes and no), *göçmek* (passing away), *sır olmak* (disappearance) may be seen as a part of their common language. These and many more phrases like them are still used by Mevlevis in Konya and Istanbul. In terms of physical places, although there are some places that people get together they are mostly buildings of foundations or literally homes of sheikhs, so traditional understanding of dervish lodges is no more. Some bigger foundations still fund themselves through help of visitors and *muhibs* but their expenses are much less today since they do not provide a living for their disciples. As for special clothes, many do not prefer to wear those clothes unless it is a special time like Şeb-i Arus and even then, they only wear some wool vests and semazens may wear special Sema clothes. It is usual to see women without headscarf or even half covers. If they are not covering their heads in their daily lives, they are not expected to wear a headscarf or wear any particular clothes during ceremonies in closed communities.

As it can be seen, Mevleviye as a religious experienced changes together with Turkish society. It lost some parts of it and some parts turned into more flexible practices while the way they organize individualized. Celalettin Dede as an expert says that "When we are talking about Mevleviye, we are actually taking about a religious system. Now, Mevleviye's ritual part is damaged. There is no woolfell of sakka, no 18 duties, or chain of sheikhs. Nearly 90 percent of rituals are over now.

Maybe some important manners and customs, and some Gülbanks beside Sema is still practiced. But there is no religious system to talk about only people who follow Rumi.” He also quoted Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı saying: “Mevleviye died, long live the Mevlanaism (Mevlanailik)” Therefore for him and for me too as a researcher, the thing to be surprised is “even after rituals of 700 years are gone and there is no dervish lodges anymore, Hz. Mevlana continue to stole people’s hearts from east to west. Although there is nothing left, he is still bringing meaning to people’s lives and his teachings are still influencing people.” (Expert Interview No.1, Konya, 23.07.2017).

This change brings me contemporary Mevleviye’s position in modern Turkey. Trying to understand an Islamic religious order as an NRM in their origin country might be confusing at first since they seem to be “not-so-new” here. Especially, since Sufism itself is an ‘alternative’ discourse in the Muslim world locating neo-Sufi movements as NRMs might be problematic (Hermansen, 2006: 31). Here, we need to remark that in the West, researchers perceive Sufi movements as NRMs not only because they are ‘new’ to them (because of the origin) but also since those groups show necessary empirical characteristics like a charismatic leader, new organizational models, intermixed belief systems, unique world-view that is influenced by modernization and new groups of people that they attract (characteristic of converts). If we look closely, various Sufi movements in Turkey are also showing these characteristic like Mevleviye. Genn states that studying Western Sufi movements as NRMs can help “understanding how Sufi traditions change in response to modernity” like changes of view-point regarding women, democracy and tolerance (Genn, 2007: 258). Genn gives the example of the Chishti order and state two important characteristic which are “emphasis on music (Sema)” as a spiritual practice, and order’s “willingness to accept students from non-Muslim backgrounds without first demanding conversion to Islam” (Harris et al., 1992: 124-5; Waseem in De Tassy, 1997: 174 in Genn, 2007: 260). Genn also says that the order become a shelter for people who felt the “cultural tension” there through a new organizational context. If we think about contemporary Mevleviye, this example is not so far from what is happening in Turkey. Another example is given

by Nielsen about Haqqaniya in the West. Nielsen state that they were holding monthly talks that “tend to minimize explicitly Islamic language, preferring the vocabulary of ‘energy’, ‘breathing in light’ and ‘taking in the Divine’, which is more often associated with new religious movements and New Age.” together with public ‘whirling dervish’ performance and musical performances (Nielsen et al., 2006: 106) which is what we discussed while explaining intermixing that NRMs offer in the context of Turkey actually through use of words like *karma* and *Allah* in the same context.

Moreover, the literature of NRMs can be used to understand ‘new’ Sufi movements since their followers also tend to be “white and middle or upper middle class” and “most of the members are from the generation of the late 1960s and 1970s, although there does seem to be a younger cohort now taking an interest, particularly in the hybrid movements” (Hermansen, 2006: 29). And this will be the cohort that I will be discussing in the findings of this study: new Mevlevis.

### **3.4. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

As we discussed, the world today is not heavily secularized, with the exceptions of secularized Western Europe and a secular global intellectual class. Therefore, to be able to explain religion in the modern world we used a perspective that utilizes religious pluralism as opposed to alienating ways of modernization and secularization. This meant a world where many different religious practices exist together in harmony. Which brought the issue of NRMs. As we discussed NRMs may be defined through their (1)conditions of emergence, (2)adaptation periods to new context, (3) new way of organizing, (4)their unique empirical characteristics (5)intermixed practices and beliefs and (6)new converts with certain traits.

In this chapter, while we discuss the religious orders and NRMs in Turkey, we, in fact placed Turkey in the framework that we built in the previous chapter. First of all, I think it is relatively easy to draw parallels between conditions of emergence of NRMs in the West, Turkey’s alienating and anomic transformation through

modernization and secularization starting from 1925. In addition to this, after the Second World War, Turkey also experienced a change in terms of the place of the religion in society. Many attempts for founding political parties that focus on religion and morality may be seen as a sign of ‘dissatisfied people’ and rising ‘spiritual necessities’. This also sounds very familiar when we think about the counter-culture movement and emergence of NRMs after the Second World War in the West.

In terms of adaptation periods to new context, we know that religious orders in Turkey started to change to be able to exist in a direction that is more relevant to today and ‘modern’ so to say, similar to NRMs that emerge in a ‘foreign’ country. In that sense, contemporary Mevleviye that is adapted to modernized and westernized Turkey would be quite similar to neo-Sufi movements that emerged in the West as NRMs since they also adapted to similar changes while becoming more relevant to the Western context like adapting their doctrine to equality demand of women. This also brings new ways of organization that might be considered as a part of NRMs’ uniqueness. In this sense, we already discussed the change Mevleviye experienced becoming more flexible and individualized in terms of its organization.

In that sense, I will be evaluating experience of new Mevlevis through unique empirical characteristics of NRMs and their intermixed practices while analyzing characteristics of new Mevlevis through characteristics of people that are attracted to NRMs in the findings chapter as a continuation of this context.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHOD**

So, the issue is not about Mevleviye being an NRM all along but Mevleviye has changed together with the society. Processes of modernization and secularization triggered the social change dissolving ‘traditional’ values and structures while globalization and individualization brought religious pluralism to the surface. These created a demand for spiritual alternatives in Turkey and like their Western counterparts, spiritual seekers of Turkey also felt dissatisfied with the dominant religion in the society or the religion of the family which lead them to search and lead NRMs to emerge benefiting from tension in the society.

In this atmosphere, contemporary Mevleviye offered answers and became the shelter against anomic and alienating ways of modern life for ‘modern’, middle-class, well-educated and secular minded people of Turkey to articulate spiritual search. Because of them being new in Mevleviye and they being a new group in Mevleviye, I started to call them new Mevlevis.

In this chapter, I will talk about reasons behind the decision of studying new Mevlevis and the way I designed this research to be able to understand characteristics and the experience of them. Other than my role and experience as a researcher, I also tried to offer a glimpse of my thought process through the questions and interviews. At the end, informants’ answers to those questions formed the answers that this study asked at the very beginning.

## **4.1. DESIGNING THE RESEARCH**

Spiritual search means asking the hard questions I think. But you need to ask them in right places if you want to find an answer.  
(Interview, IF25, 25.06.2017)

### **4.1.1. Story of the Research**

Before I start to the study, I needed to understand what kind of methods solve which kind of problems to be able to do an ethnographic study and I wished this to be an ethnographic study because new religious movements (NRMs) are inherently small, new and different organizations. Methods of ethnographic research provides the detailed information researcher needs but also offers an insight that is necessary to understand such groups and organizations. In that sense, doing an ethnographic research let researchers to see the issues and the way of life of the community from their own perspective since the researcher needs to be an observer and a participant at the same time in the community (Bromley, 2007).

As it is mentioned, major aim of this research is to explain the changes that occurred in belief in the level of religious orders in Turkey from the perspective of “new religious movements” and to do this I selected Mevleviye as my case. The main reason behind this choice was my personal affinity and connections I had with the community. Therefore, it was easier for me to gain access to the community. Moreover, Mevlevi I met inspired me to study their community from the perspective of NRMs since they seemed to be carrying some unique and necessary characteristics at that point. Also, I, as a female outsider, was able to reach leaders and various members of different communities inside Mevleviye because of Mevleviye’s relative ‘popularity’ (new people coming in all the time) and ‘modern’ world-view (in terms of women’s place etc.).

I observed two different Mevlevi communities in Istanbul and one in Konya. Since they are in the same social circle, they are all related to each other but in terms of



organization and their leaders they are unconnected. I spent time with members, participated to rituals and communions, and interviewed with experts and “new” followers of Mevleviye who I address as new Mevlevis shortly to indicate their newness in Mevleviye and them being a new kind of group. Istanbul was the first location that come to my mind when I started to design my research because new Mevlevis I met beforehand was mostly from Istanbul. Besides, Istanbul as the biggest metropole of Turkey is clearly bringing different communities and belief systems together. People in Istanbul might be expected to find more options for their “spiritual search” because of the atmosphere that is suitable for the emergence of NRMs in the urban areas.

As it will be detailed in the next section, I spent relatively long time in the field –in and out. I was first introduced to the community in Istanbul in 2015. At that time, my subject was not determined, therefore my observations were due to curiosity. I was not keeping a journal or trying to observe actively. However, everything around me was fairly new and so, interesting to me. Even people’s behaviors and language was different. There was a hierarchy in the group but it was not clear-cut to me. Mostly, it appeared as a more secular teacher-student relation rather than religious I think. But it was clear that teachers were respected in the group, and they were “charismatic” in terms of their effect on the student’s life and their roles during rituals. Even the place they practice (where some of them work as teachers, some of them come as students and some of them just friends) was different than anywhere I know in terms of the way that they intermix different spiritual practices. This is the place where I met many people whom I interviewed for this research. In fact, I would like to describe the place from the viewpoint of one of those people:

The first step brings you to an open space that is used as an office and meeting/chatting area which is heavily decorated with all sorts of different objects. The first thing to see is definitely the *destar* (a type of head wear that Mevlevi Dede wear during ceremonies) and various sized *neys* (reed flutes) in a shelf. Below them, there are figures in yoga poses and even sculptures of Buddha. The room is filled with the smell of incense which is commonly used in yoga practice. When I turned my head, two big walls were covered with two surprisingly different (in terms of context) but interestingly similar (in terms of meaning) paintings that are made from felt. One was a portrait of a famous thinker of East Asian beliefs and master of self-

improvement, Osho, and the other is a very recognizable word for Mevlevi in Farsi, *Ashk* (Love). Moreover, there was a portrait of Atatürk on the shelf. As soon as I stepped in, I knew that this was the place I was looking for (Interview, IF35).

When I decided on my research subject, I was already “accepted” into this community in Istanbul and the existing reference was enough to gain access to various dervish lodges in Istanbul and Konya. Until the end of 2016, I continued to visit this first community in Istanbul and later on, I told them about my research which is met with enthusiasm in the group. After this point, observing the community, their relations, daily activities and behaviors gained a new meaning for me. Now, it was not out of curiosity but I needed to keep things systematically available. Therefore, I started to write field notes at nights whenever I visit or make contact with one of them.

Moreover, I started to participate to rituals and communions while there which was something I hesitated before. Like many other outsiders, I felt “weird” about zikrs and prayers at first but it turned out to be an incredible experience because of the instant feeling of being supported and not being judged. I can say that their private rituals are much more warm and unconstrained than larger public ones I participated in Konya and Istanbul. They decide what to do when they want or feel it. For example, arrival of a guest might result with a zikr easily. I will explain different rituals and practices of different groups in detail in the next chapter.

I can say that, after I started to research, I got even closer with the community. They started to perceive me as one of them because I was with them so often. Trying to teach me rituals and encourage me to participate more, they were really enthusiastic. Besides being enthusiastic about participating to the research, they were really helpful in terms of introducing me to possible informants from different groups in Konya and Istanbul. Many times, they introduced me as a student who is doing a research on Mevleviye to new people, however, throughout my research I felt that many were trying to “convert” me and was determined to see me as a “possible convert” rather than a researcher, especially in Konya, which was fine with me. Many gifted books and various religious accessories were given to me to start praying or simply to keep for “positive energy”. They were actively trying to teach me their ways of

doing things which was really important for me and although they were not vocal about this, they were clearly expecting me to do things they thought the second time we meet -like meeting rituals that two person kiss each other's hands to show respect and indicate equality. My active participation to rituals like zikr and *Sema* as well as my interest to learn more about Mevleviye is welcomed warmly both in dervish lodges of Konya and Istanbul. However, such affinity and closeness created some ethical problems too which I will explain in detail in the next section.

Throughout my participant observation, I tried to understand rituals and relations inside the communities and many times, I had to ask to people around me to be able to understand if that ritual, act or phrase is "traditional", "modern" or coming from another tradition for example. In addition to this, I actively observed everyday life which resulted me spending time with the people from different Mevlevi communities outside of rituals or interviews. I even stayed with a couple who host rituals in their home while I was interviewing with people in Istanbul nearly for a month.

Participants' close connections with Konya and their frequent visits brought me there too. As a result, I was able to observe the community in Konya which was really important because of the city's position as the root of Mevleviye. Konya is the city where *Asitane-i Aliyye* located between the time of Rumi and 1925. As the central one, *Asitane* of Konya was the heart of training of dervishes and home of *Makam Çelebi* who was able to appoint Sheiks in other Mevlevi lodges. Today, although dervish lodges do not operate as they were, Rumi's teachings and culture of Mevleviye is still alive in Konya. Rumi's mausoleum in the heart of the city and *Şeb-i Arus* weeks also contribute to a Mevlevi community's living and growing existence. Mevleviye is not just another alternative in Konya like it is in Istanbul but is one of the most respected beliefs and it is part of the everyday life for many who is part of the community there. But if you ask directions for Rumi's mausoleum to a random person in the street, they may also tell you: "There is a tomb of an important person over there, if it is." So, even though Mevleviye is popular, it is not as central to other people as we think it might be.

My first stay in Konya was relatively short. I stayed there around ten days but I was overwhelmed. There were so many things to observe and listen, all happening at once and all very alien to me. I participated to different rituals, watched and listened. Although I visited Istanbul many times, the atmosphere in Konya was different in terms of actions of new Mevlevis. Mevlevi customs were followed more strictly and people seemed to be more “relaxed” while practicing them like they finally came to home. I also met with new people who I later interviewed.

I had chance to observe group dynamics in its place. While in Konya, people used two craft shops that are owned by other new Mevlevis as their base between visits since they visit many different people and place during Şeb-i Arus. These shops were owned by close friends of “leaders” of the first Istanbul group and they were also in the position of Dede in Mevleviye as new Mevlevis. The similarity between one of these places and the place that is mentioned above was eye opening for me. It is a felt shop where they make and sell various felt products like Mevlevi head wears, vests, and shawls. In this colorful and live place’s different points, one could see felt letterings in Persian about Mevleviye (Ya Hazreti Mevlana) or again a felt portrait of Osho (far eastern spiritual thinker and mystic).

I spent many days sitting there, listening people’s questions to Dede and observing the daily life in the shop besides visiting Rumi, Shams and many other “friends of the heart” who are alive and passed away. They told me to come back anytime and talk with them and so, I was able to establish a relation to visit later on. When I returned to Ankara, I had a clearer vision towards the next steps of the study.

At the beginning of spring, I was able to derive my research questions. I read the international and local literature on NRMs and Mevleviye. Reading about Mevleviye was harder than reading about NRMs because there were many terms and events that are simply unfamiliar to me. Therefore, at my next visit to Konya I started to ask about things that I was curious about like their rituals and Rumi’s approach to spirituality. Participant observation that I did in Konya and Istanbul helped me to work on my interview questions too.

Then, I started to interview with some of my informants in Istanbul who I already observed for many months frequently visiting. I stayed in Istanbul for two months. Throughout this time, I continued to observe and participate while occasionally interviewing. Rituals started to feel more familiar and I was able to chant with them at nights of music easily. I was able ask direct questions to members in the course of daily life and observe daily activities as well as personal relations of the members with each other.

Also, I was hosted by a new Mevlevi couple in Istanbul for a month during this visit which brought a different perspective to my understanding. We were praying after every meal and they were kissing objects before using or wearing them as part of the daily life. Everything had an importance of its own and their minds and life-style felt very soothing as opposed to Istanbul's stressful setting. They were using very positive language towards everything, and every day, incense was burning in the lounge, so much that its warm smell permeated to furnishings. They often practiced Yoga and sometimes I joined them. In addition to this, they host Mevlevi music practices for their group weekly at their basement and sometimes zikr took place of Yoga. There, I was able to observe the process of intermixing of beliefs and legitimization behind it. Also, I was able to see how characteristic of a spiritual seeker and new converts of an NRM combines with the characteristics of new Mevlevis. I benefitted from this experience heavily while analyzing and writing my findings.

After I left Istanbul, I went to Konya again. Observing summer life in Konya was also precious since there were no tourists and Sema shows around the city. While I was there some of the group went to a short tour to visit saints and dervishes in different cities of Anatolia. They were still working and going to their weekly rituals as a part of their ordinary lives. However, everything was slower I think and I felt that this is actually their own pace, and new comers (Mevlevi) and visitors bring the enthusiasm and motion with them in winter months. They even said that they were stocking their crafts (felt, ceramic etc.) in summer to sell in winter to tourists. This time, I also interviewed with people I met before and met with new people that I agreed to interview later.

In September, I already interviewed with more than 20 people including both new Mevlevis and experts. Here, I have to say that selecting informants was not about them personally but I considered things that make one a “good” informant like people who know their culture/tradition and currently involved with it, while remembering events and examples, but speak without checking every word they say and willing to teach their culture (Spradley, 1979: 27).

Around these times, I started to feel ethical dilemmas of being too close with the community which lead me to be more careful with my observations and questions. In December 2017, I visited Konya for the last time in Şeb-i Arus. It felt like a full circle to me: starting and finishing with Şeb-i Arus. Throughout my time there, I heavily participated to zikrs and other rituals. Near the end of this visit, I decided that it is time for me to slowly “disengage” from the community.

Disengaging from the community happened slowly because you cannot simply cut people you spent so much time in one go. Actually, I think that “leaving” is simply never ending. Today, I am still chatting with some of these people on the phone and through social media, and listening their chants at home and I often find myself singing along.

Because of the subjective feelings and the affirmative attitude that is started to emerge in me towards Mevlevi communities, after disengagement, I waited for a time leaving my field notes in a corner of my room and tried to re-focus on my position as a researcher which was harder than I anticipated since my personal relations was not fully over. During this time, I revisited the academic literature instead of looking at my field notes or listening the interviews. Only after I started to feel more distant, I started to analyze my notes and interviews to see existing patterns, and their similarities and differences with the literature. After I developed a vision and consult with my advisor, I started to writing process which was really slow at first but gained a fluidity in time.

#### 4.1.2. Research Calendar

My research is officially started at the third (2016-2017 fall) semester of my Master's degree. After I thought about the subject, I started to read about various methods as well as related previous studies. Normally, the next step would be choosing a field and trying to gain access to the community. In my situation, I was already accepted into the community and the existing reference was enough for me to gain access to different communities in Istanbul and Konya.

In 2016, I continued to visit Istanbul group occasionally who I told about the research. Observing the community, their relations, daily activities and behaviors gained a new meaning for me. But the study only gained a momentum at the end of the year.

I was able to visit Konya in December 2016 for *Şeb-i Arus* with the first community from Istanbul. It was my first ever visit to Konya and I spend ten days there. I participated to different rituals, watched and listened and kept my questions at minimum at first. People there also knew I was a researcher but me being a researcher is disregarded most of the time. As I mentioned, my role in the field seen as a "possible convert" mostly. At that time, it was easy to play such a role because I was not conducting interviews yet and I was observing and listening mostly. At the beginning of the 2017, I started to work on the design of my research.

At the beginning of spring, I was able to derive my research questions. Throughout the spring of 2017, I did literature review for both NRMs and Mevleviye. However there were many gaps in the literature especially in terms of contemporary Mevleviye. So, I started to ask about things that I was curious about in my other visits during this time. I started to work on my interview questions and in May 2017, and I began to do my first interviews in Istanbul with people who I already observed for more than a year frequently visiting.

I stayed in Istanbul from May to July. During this time, I continued to observe, participate and interview. I started to record some of the communions too. Especially, I recorded communions of different groups in Istanbul since it was

harder to arrange long interviews with sheiks/Dedes of those communities. In June, I was hosted by a couple from the first Istanbul group which let me observe daily life of themselves. In July, I visited Konya again to interview with informants I met before. I continued my interviews in different places during the summer of 2017. In September, I returned to Ankara and started the transcription process of recorded interviews.

For the next three months, I occasionally went to field. I interviewed with a few more informants. I sent decrypted versions of their interviews to several informants through email who wished to see finished form of their answers but no one required me to revise already given answers. In December 2017, I visited Konya for the last time for Şeb-i Arus. For more than two weeks, I heavily participated and observed. After this, I started to “disengage” from the community.

After disengagement, I spent time revisiting the academic literature. Then, I started to analyze my notes and interviews to see existing patterns, and their similarities and differences with the literature. I started to the writing process around March 2018.

## **4.2. THE FIELD EXPERIENCE**

You came here, do not you? The fact that you ask these questions to me means that there are questions to ask and answers needs to be heard.  
(Interview, KM49, 21.07.2017)

### **4.2.1. Questions and Interviews**

Before I started to my research, I expected to come across with three different groups of people in the field. First group was people who became Mevlevi later in their life, second was people who born into Mevlevi families and the third one was people who are not Mevlevi. When I was in the field, naturally I discovered some sub-groups and groups I was not expecting to meet like foreign new Mevlevi but my



sample in my head stayed the same, people who start to identify with Mevleviye although they do not have any previous connections to it, new Mevlevis.

After my visits and observations, I started to see that these people were internalizing religion on the basis of individuality and separate their beliefs from established Islam. It is crucial to note that these people use religion and/or spirituality as references in their daily life practices while still living ‘modern’ lives in a secular setting. In my perspective, these people were spiritual seekers who find themselves in Mevleviye, although they had no previous ties. I interviewed with experts in Mevleviye too that include authorities from both new Mevlevis and Mevlevis in general.

During time of interviews, I needed to ensure informants about safety of their personal information. For them to feel more relaxed, I told them that their names will stay hidden, before starting to interview and although some said it is okay for them to be featured, it was not ethical I think. In that sense I tried to balance transparency of the study and privacy of the informants. Therefore, although I used a tape recorder and a photographic apparatus to record people, places and communions, I did not wish to share many of them openly (See Appendices for shared ones). Instead, I decided to use drawings in my field notes and codings in my writings that would help me protect the information that belongs to informants. I kept participants anonym, except “experts” or authority figures who are already known in their social circles. I know that many social scientist use just nick names to keep it more natural, however, I used abbreviations that show city that interview is conducted (I for Istanbul and K for Konya), gender of the informant (F for Female, M for Male and O for Other) and age in number. For example, IF35 would mean a female person from Istanbul who was 35 years old at the time of the interview. It might be argued that this takes away from participants’ individuality or element of being a human but I wanted to keep things efficient while reading just for this writing for scientific purposes. This way reader would not need to guess or go to interviews table to see basic characteristics of an informant who only named ‘Ayşe’.

As it is known, ethnography is a kind of qualitative research which covers detailed depictions. In line with this, ethnographic findings relies on watching, listening,

participating and interviewing without prejudgments. Here, I would like to go over my interview questions and process shortly.

To be clear, there are different types of question that could be used in an ethnographic interview. Spradley's work "The Ethnographic Interview" lists several different types of questions which are grand tour questions, mini tour questions, experience questions, example questions, and native-like questions. Grand tour questions ask people to generalize like asking an informant to describe a day in life. Mini tour questions are generally follow more general questions to gather details about events, objects and actions while experience and example questions focus on understanding the personal experience of the informant. And native-like questions tries to reveal cultural distinctions, meanings and uses of terms (Spradley, 1979: 86). These questions either be unstructured or semi-structured.

In my case, since I was studying new Mevlevis, questions also shaped around their experiences and I tried to reveal their life before and after meeting with Mevleviye. Since I spent time in the field through participant observation before interviews, I was already aware of some patterns like high level of education among new Mevlevis, being in a spiritual search, choosing Mevleviye because of its tolerant and non-judgmental understanding as opposed to pressure of established Islam and the change they experienced after meeting with Mevleviye. In that sense, I knew what to ask in general but often stories and answers of informants lead me to ask some follow-up questions. I actively focused on not to lead participants with my questions, therefore, I tried to keep them very general. Also, I never asked sociological questions that start with "why" for example, instead, I preferred to ask "how" it was for them and I asked for examples from their lives to extend their answers which helped to reach deeper information. A general list of my interview questions can be found in the appendix in detail, however, since I used participants' own words while talking, I end up not using the exact same wordings for everyone.

I started with a general question and first asked informants to "talk about themselves". For me, what they say and what they emphasize was really important, so, the question is constructed to be very general. This way, I learned about their childhoods, parents, families, educations, occupations, friends, world-views and

even their religious and political views. If I felt like some points left untouched at the end of their talk, I would say some key words like “Family?” to fill the gaps. These were important to be able to see the common characteristics of new Mevlevis. However, there was a little problem I faced here, some informants had hard time talking about themselves because Mevleviye and their masters thought them the importance to “kill the ego” and they did not want to “advertise” themselves. Therefore, I sometimes encouraged them to open up with small talks about their daily lives and so.

In addition to this, I asked participants turning points of their lives. Sometimes it would not be necessary because the first question would reveal this too but often I asked this as a separate question to evaluate. We mentioned that meeting with the NRM is often described as a turning point generally by followers of NRMs. Therefore, I wondered if meeting with Mevleviye or experiencing other changes linked to spiritual shifts would be listed as turning points by participants. To my pleasure, nearly all participants said that meeting with Mevleviye or their teacher/master/sheikh was a turning point in their lives at once. They often was able to give examples on this issue to explain why and how.

Then, I asked specifically to learn their self-identification terms although I knew beforehand that they were living as Mevlevis for the most part. To my surprise, many hesitated to call themselves “Mevlevi” openly. The first reason behind this was humbleness and submission. Second, being a Mevlevi is often seen as a big responsibility since there are many things that are expected in terms of codes of conduct and so, many stated that they were afraid of harming the way of Mevleviye by calling themselves proper Mevlevis. Last, there are trainings and a path to be a Mevlevi dervish in traditional sense. Since there is no such education or living life-style in today’s Turkey, they often called themselves “follower of Rumi’s way” or *muhib* (lover) staying loyal to traditions. From that point on, I stick to their terminologies while asking additional questions but they did not seem to hesitate to call themselves Mevlevis if it is not for a direct question about it.

I also asked their meetings with Mevleviye for the first time. This often brought us when and how they started to see themselves as a Mevlevi because often first

meeting did not immediately end up with commitment or membership so to say. Because of this I split the meeting period into two phases during analysis. This question worked really well in fact because frequently, it created a personal history part starting with identifying with Mevleviye. Everyone had a story to tell and it was exiting to hear similarities and differences between these stories. People also told about their own reasons behind choosing Mevleviye and staying in the order until then. Some was very defensive talking about their reasons like I would judge them but some sound relieved with their choice. Here, I was able to catch many similarities between actual people and literature like being in a personal journey and/or spiritual search, being in a stage of tension, living a stressful and “empty” life, feeling of normlessness and not knowing what to look for. Many added stories about how their masters/teachers/sheikhs helped them in a way whether it be about spiritual or material problem. To be sure that I understood correctly, I often summarized their own statements without paraphrasing. This way they would correct me, nod to me or add to my words.

I was not giving special importance to the question about reactions that came from informant’s close social circle to their choice or change. But it turned out to be important because I used the word *tepki* (reaction) in the question and nearly all informants assumed that I was talking about negative reactions immediately. Therefore, they either told me their problematic relations with their friends and families on the issue of entering a religious order or they defensively said something like “no there were no such reactions from my family and friends”. Nearly in all interviews, I had to clarify the question afterwards but I kept it even after several interviews to see if this was a trend. To make it work better, I encouraged them to give examples of different reactions. I added some self-reflexive questions too. For example, I wanted to know their own views on this choice of being a Mevlevi and on the change they experienced in this way, and their own definitions of Mevleviye. There were some stereotyped answers here and it took a bit time for people to really open up about this topic.

I asked “If any, what are the things that you started to do/stopped to do after you met with Mevleviye?” This was one of the more structured questions I had but it

worked really well from the very beginning, therefore, I continued to use it. It made before/after and them/us distinctions that they had very clear. Moreover, it was really easy to see patterns in the answers of participants in terms of changes that they experienced. Although many already told me about new rituals and practices here, I asked what they do in a day in their lives separately. And I am glad that I did because most of the time they included spiritual practices and habits that falls under beliefs other-than-Mevleviye too like meditation and following a vegan or vegetarian diet. If it did not come in the answer, I would add a question about rituals and their meanings separately. I also asked the organization of the community and religious order which sometimes result with some criticism towards Mevleviye. However, often, I had to make words like “organization” clear because of the lack of hierarchy, system, training and formality in today’s Mevleviye, and flexible way of doing things.

Lastly, I asked if they observe any increase in or new interest towards their community or Mevleviye in general and if so, where it can be seen by others too. Most informants went to a distinction that I did not here and separated increase in the interest as “genuine interest” and “interest fed by trends”. Many said that there is an increase in interest that can be observed in Şeb-i Arus that hosts more and more new people every year, best-sellers racks in bookshops, and even in the social media. However, more than the number of new followers, their genuineness is given more importance. Often, people gave their own participation to such community or my interest in this topic as an example to increase in “genuine” interest.

At the very end, after they announced this is all for them and they do not have anything to add, I asked participant about their suggestions for such research and things that felt like left out as a part of ethnographic approach. Some offered new questions to include which I asked to them later and some of them offered book names or thinkers to read. I also asked why they felt like that topic is important to get a better understanding of their perspective. After the interviews, I tried to fulfill their advices as much as I can to be able to understand their perspectives better and to be able to find any possible missing pieces in the research. This was a question that is appreciated the most by the informants and many took time to think on it

seriously. It was a good way to test my methods as a researcher and involve participants' view better I think.

In total, I interviewed with twenty five informants which I showed with a table in the appendices. My shortest interview was forty minutes while the longest was nearly three and a half hours. In addition to this, although I did not put quotas or selectively approached to possible informants, I end up with a group that is relatively balanced in terms of city distributions.

#### **4.2.2. Procedural Comments**

To do an ethnographic study I first, read the international and national literature on NRMs. I have to say that there is plenty of books and articles about NRMs in international sources, however, national literature was not helping much since sources were really limited. There was no field work or research that study religious orders in Turkey as a part of new social movements for example. But I was able to benefit from studies that focus on a specific NRM or spiritual community. I also benefitted from international literature for general characteristics and typologies of NRMs and researches that study Western Sufi movements as NRMs to be able to generate a theoretical framework for this case.

In new religions studies, researchers often show curiosity and even previous involvement with their fields, very much like Nancy Tosh's involvement with the Wicca group. Similarly I was already interested and even involved with the community in Istanbul. For many gaining access to the field can be really hard because in NRMs, religion is a private matter and outsiders are not always welcomed. For example, Scientology is known for its closeness to outside world and academy. For me, gaining access was fairly easy because of my previous acquaintances who introduced me directly to gatekeepers of communities (Dede, sheikh, teacher etc.). But establishing 'sincere' relationships was not that easy since people I was introduced know that I was there to "study" them. This took time but

my previous visits to Şeb-i Arus and Dedes in Konya helped me to show that I am “genuinely” interested which was a concern for some I think.

In line with this, researcher generally embrace a role in the community during ethnographic studies. I believe that my role is seen as a “possible convert” mostly. “Convert” is a frequently used role for this kind of studies (Bromley, 2007: 72). Often, people I talk acted as if I was a disciple or youngling in the community. It was easy to adopt such a role since I was already curious about the history, organization and teachings of Mevleviye. However, maintaining this position got harder in time. Firstly, I had to learn and remember various customs to perform while meeting, listening, eating, entering and leaving a place and in Mevleviye, there are hundreds of things to be mindful of. People were observant of my manners the second time they see me. Also, when I go to rituals and communions, many times they allowed me to be there for me to pray with them since performing rituals like Sema as a show is an existing dislike for Mevlevis. Praying was “weird” for me at first but became more and more fascinating through time. And the one problem with my social role showed itself right here. I started to feel like “one of them”, especially during rituals, which was creating an ethical issue. Near the end, I had to check the objectivity of my opinions and my position as a researcher in the field all the time. I had to balance my participation with more observation so to say because I noticed that my field notes were turning into personal entries that include how I felt during that ritual or how Dede’s one sentence affected me. The tolerant life style and their calmness was very attracting to me personally. It was like I was truly becoming a “possible convert”. I was getting along with other members too and they started to feel like friends at some point. We were participating rituals together, travelling together and eating together. All these were leading to an ethical dilemma for me since I needed to be truly objective but being close with the group creates “expectations” about the end product that may not be satisfied since researcher needs to reveal the good and the bad without thinking about “becoming a target of group hostility for ‘disloyal’ conduct” which is a thing in new religions studies (Bromley, 2007: 72). At the end, I started to increase the alone/personal time before and after I met with the community to write my field notes. As I read, this is an issue many

researchers in new religions studies experience (Bromley, 2007: 73) for example, Tosh continued to see people and practice Wiccan rituals even after her study finished.

When I disengaged from the community and returned back to Ankara I felt like I lost friends and a place that I was truly accepted. Therefore, I did not proceed to the next step right away. I went back to my ordinary life and academy, and waited for some time just reading literature. This way I started to feel like a researcher again, and left the effects of the community and belief behind me before evaluating the observation findings, re-read my field notes and started to write. I already read about many issues like this in new religions studies, therefore, knew what to do and this was also one of the reasons that I did not want to study a community in Ankara where I study and live. I simply wanted to leave Ankara as a “protected space” like James Richardson and his friends did in their research (Bromley, 2007: 75).

At the end, bouncing back after disengaging from the community was not too hard. Doing the field work going in and out was the thing that was helpful here. But I can say that this experience all together had an intimate outcome both in my life and career. I even feel like it might create a personal conflict at some point. However, it is not possible to control the field which separates what we learn in the classroom from what we experience in the field I think.



## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS

Until now, I discussed issues like conditions of emergence, adaptation periods to new contexts and new ways to organize for both NRMs and contemporary Mevleviye and draw some parallels. However, NRMs are still uniquely new forms of religions. We discussed that they are not called new because of their new emergence historically but because of

1. New interpretations, intermixed practices and individual beliefs that are fed by pluralism and individualism.
2. Their unique empirical characteristic like first-generation enthusiasms, the unambiguous clarity and certainty in the belief systems, the urgency of the message, the commitment of life-style, perhaps a charismatic leadership, and, possibly, strong them/us and/or before/after distinctions” (Barker: 1999: 20).
3. The new groups of people that they attract who are “disproportionately white and from the better-educated middle classes” in the West (Barker, 1999: 21) and “relatively young, well educated, idealistically minded, mostly middle class, receptive to religious or spiritual matters” (Arweck, 2006: 30-31) in general.

Therefore, in this chapter I will focus on these three points to be able to form a complete understanding about the position of contemporary Mevleviye as an NRM in society and to understand the experience of new Mevlevis. In this way, I will be able to answer to my research questions too which are “Who are new Mevlevis?”, “How they became new Mevlevis?” and “Why?”

## **5.1. WHO ARE “NEW” MEVLEVIS?**

I am a believer of God and love. I believe love is the key for all the problems that we have. This is what religiosity is about for me. In that sense, I am religious but not religious in its ‘ordinary’ meaning I guess.  
(Interview, KF40, 26.07.2017)

### **5.1.1. Characteristics of New Mevlevis**

“Who are “new” Mevlevis?” This might be the most important question for this research in order to clarify new Mevlevis’ relations with contemporary Mevleviye, spirituality and religion. The answer of this question includes social attributes of new Mevlevis as well as their personal histories.

The term “new” Mevlevi comes from these people being a “new group” in Mevleviye through their characteristics and as spiritual seekers, and them being new in Mevleviye without any previous links to it. In this section, I analyzed common characteristics among new Mevlevis and similarities in their backgrounds.

Before I started the fieldwork, I speculated that base characteristic of new Mevlevis (age, gender, education and occupation) will be important for the analysis of the findings since social attributes seemed to be a common point for the followers of NRMs and new Mevlevis seemed to be sharing some of them. It is crucial to note that there was an observable homogeneity in the field in terms of some characteristics among new Mevlevis like high level of education and a secular background even before interviews.

From the table that I use codes for informants (City of interview (Konya/Istanbul), Gender of informant (Female/Male) and age of informant in number), I would like to discuss each characteristic one by one (See Figure 4).

<b>Informant</b>	<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Level of Education</b>
IF35	Kayseri	Editor	University
IF25	Antalya	Doctor	University
IF36	Istanbul	Software Eng.	University
IF57	Istanbul	Retired	University
IF48	Istanbul	Sales Manager	High School
IM24	Bursa	Doctor	University
IM39	Istanbul	Writer	University
IM49	Erzurum	Teacher	University
IM59	Duzce	Civil Eng.	University
IM60	Erzurum	Yoga Instructor	University
KF40	Istanbul	Artisan	University
KF63	Ankara	Artisan	University
KM21	Konya	Student	University
KM23	Konya	Mechatronics Eng.	University
KM22	Konya	Civil Eng.	University
KM49	Konya	Tourisim Manag.	University
KM50	Konya	Artisan	High School
KM62	Konya	Retired	University
KM41	Kutahya	Artisan	University

Figure 4. Base Characteristics of Informants.

First attribute that is always mentioned in new religions studies is the appeal of NRMs to relatively young people. As we discussed in the Chapter 2, younger people seem to be more prone to clash and question the relevance of existing systems, look for alternatives, flexibility, acceptance etc. and so, “first generation converts” often appear to be younger in NRMs. Here, I will define “younger” roughly as being younger than 35 years old. In line with this, seekers who got older seem to be settled in a specific belief system or community rather than continue to be active spiritual seekers. This actually reflects the picture of Konya during Şeb-i Arus very well since city fills with young people who travel in groups from one dervish lodge to another while older new Mevlevi pray with their Dedes in their own lodges. Dawson states that aging NRMs of 60s and 80s created a shift in the figures showing that there are older people in older NRMs now (2003: 122) which means older NRMs might have an older membership base who came there younger which is the case here. Since we based the emergence of NRMs in Turkish society and the rise of spiritual search to 1960s-1980s period together with the revival of religious orders, “converts being relatively young” does not mean that new Mevlevi are only young converts

currently. However, it indicates that new Mevlevis meet with Mevleviye when they are young generally. “Meeting” do not mean learning the existence of Mevleviye or reading about it for the first time, but it is more about the time they met with a Mevlevi community during their spiritual searches. Although just 7 out of 20 informants were under 35 while interviewing, 70 percent of the all informants stated that they started to identify with Mevleviye while they were under 35 years old while they were acting as highly-active spiritual seekers which is a period in the lives of new Mevlevis that I will discuss at the end of this chapter.

Another visible characteristics of new Mevlevis is being “well-educated”. This term simply means showing high level of education which might correspond to being a university graduate for Turkey. As it can be seen in the table, 18 out of 20 informants are university graduates from various fields of expertize and the rest have at least a high school diploma (See Figure 4) which is still above average for Turkish society since in 2013, only 12 percent of people had any degree in Turkey according to TUIK (Hürriyet, 22.04.2013). Well-educated new Mevlevis indicate that hegemonic understandings of scientism and rationality of modernity opened doors for the softer notions like spirituality (Bridger, 2001: 7) in Turkey which is a common sign for NRMs.

The last common base characteristic that is visible among new Mevlevis is about their social status and occupations. First of all, new Mevlevis appear to be members of middle or upper middle classes mostly. Here, “middle-class” refers to a wide and diverse group of people in society who are employed in sectors like service, health and education. Unlike working class, middle-class members might be selling both their mental and physical labor powers (Giddens, 2013: 358) which helps us to distinguish them. Also, middle-class members use their education and other qualifications to get a job that offers higher cultural and material values compared to manual ones. Although there are no prevalent occupations among new Mevlevis, most of them might be collected under working as a professional. Also, “professional” here refers to people who are highly qualified and so, able to act on their own behalves while working. This goes hand in hand with the level of education most of the time. Therefore, many middle and upper-middle class

occupations can be included in this group. In the field, I met with many managers, teachers, engineers, doctors, yoga instructors etc. beside the informants I interviewed with. The general outlook of the community turned out to be surprisingly homogeneous in terms of social status too. Artisans among new Mevlevis are the only exception to the feature of working as a professional. However, they are still belong to middle classes since these artisans are not craftsman but more of artists who have their own small touristic shops in Konya. According to Goldthorpe's class chart, self-employed small merchants are also considered members of middle-class (Goldthorpe in Giddens, 2013: 351). As a result, all of the informants might be considered as members of middle-class which also suits to my observations of the communities in Istanbul and Konya. This characteristic is the one that turn new Mevlevis to a "new group" in Mevleviye and in religion in fact. However, it does not a coincidence that these characteristics are common among new Mevlevis. It is actually expected that "new" followers of a "new" religious trend, in this case contemporary Mevleviye, show similar patterns with what is seen in global literature. As I mentioned, NRMs attract "limited segments of population" (Enroth, 2005: 21) very much like contemporary Mevleviye. It is clear that a part of NRMs' uniqueness comes from this "new" type of followers. The base characteristics of converts of NRMs are often listed as being,

- Relatively young
- Well-educated
- Professional
- Middle-class

(Barker, 1999: 21)

As a result, it is clear that new Mevlevis are very similar in terms of their base characteristics to whom we may call their global counterparts now I guess, Western converts of NRMs.

These characteristics of new Mevlevis also indicate a change in believing in Turkey through the rise of unique, intermixed forms of belief among middle and upper-middle classes and rise of spiritual search I think. As we discussed, new religions

started to attract middle and upper social classes and brought new options to believing and changed the religious scenery globally and as we can see, locally.

Mentioned characteristics are so obvious that they could be observed by any person who enters a Mevlevi lodge or center today. However, let me tell you the example that made me aware of the situation. In the night of 22th of May, I was returning to where I stay in Istanbul from a Mevlevi communion. Dede of that center designated a couple who are in their late 30s to give me a ride to nearest subway station. They had a black car from a super luxury brand and their appearances were like as if they were in the meeting of a big company instead of a religious communion, full black completed with ties and high heels. They were obviously wealthy and their way of speaking indicated literateness. It was the first time I met them, therefore, as usual, they questioned me about my intentions. When they learned about the research, man immediately started a conversation about their own experience saying “Our families or social circle have no interest in religion. We are actually modern I mean. Before, we had nothing to do with religion either. We were living a normal life that everyone would define as reasonable [laughing] but we experienced some problems and those brought us to Dede. Now, we are in the way of the heart too.” Conflict between reason and “heart” was obvious in his short speech as well as their understanding of “normal” and “modern”. He was the living proof of a change in believing trends in Turkey like many other informants of mine. In just one sentence, he showed me the transition of ‘modern’ people from non-religious background to religious life through tension. After that night, I interviewed with some other members from the same dervish lodge, and I can say that his statement is a summary of what I heard from many other new Mevlevis. In short, it is hard to combine their characteristics with the image of them singing Islamic chants in a dervish lodge kneeling. But this is one of the differences of NRMs. This is a sign of religious pluralism and it is simply working through NRMs in modern society. In this sense, NRMs literature turned out to be more than helpful to understand contemporary Mevleviye. Clearly, Rumi’s approach to spirituality like ‘heart over reason’ and ‘unity of existence’ lead to the creation of a shelter against meaningless life in times of tension for these

people and it became a suitable place for “modern person” to articulate spiritual search.

Aside from the base characteristics, families of new Mevlevi also seem to be playing important roles in their journeys since there are many commonalities regarding their parents and the environment that they are raised.

First of all, nearly all informants used similar terms while defining their parents’ approach to religion. Most used terms were “*aydın*” (enlightened) and “*dindar değil*” (non-religious) with the company of terms like “*laik/seküler*” (secular), “*Atatürkçü*” (Kemalist), “modern” and “*açık fikirli*” (open minded). When I asked them to explain the stated term, they often stated that religion was not that important in their households which means it was not a reference point for daily life. Especially the term enlightened often explained as nominally Muslim and/or secular parents. This can also be seen in religious service attendance of their families too (See Figure 5). Low religious service attendance in the family may be linked to lack of religious capital in the lives of new Mevlevi which is a common attribute for the followers of NRMs.

I grew up in a very democrat and secular family. My father -who was a warden, and a very intellectual, experienced man- was a Kemalist to the last drop of his blood. There were no religious talks in the house. My grandmother was living with us, she was old, she would use a half cover for her head in Anatolian style but I never saw her pray for example. I was extremely free while growing and never been under pressure (Interview, IF57).

These simple words reflect more than one point actually. For example, her grandmother’s “Anatolian style” headscarf is an important symbol that she used to differentiate the belief of her family from ‘Sunni Islamist’ view. Besides growing in a secular and better-educated family, personal freedom and low religious service attendance were also points that she choosed to remark which are all important in terms of her personal history. This trend can be traced in the speeches of many other informants as it can be seen in the table (See Figure 5).

Informant	Parents are...	Low Religious Service Attendance	Open Minded	Better-Educated	Urban Residence
IF35	Religious but enlightened	✓	✓	✓	✓
IF25	Non-religious	✓	✓	✓	✓
IF36	Non-religious	✓	✓	✓	✓
IF57	Secular	✓	✓	✓	✓
IF48	Religious but enlightened	✓	✓	✓	✓
IM24	Non-religious	✓	✓	✓	✓
IM39	Non-religious	✓	✓	✓	✓
IM49	Religious but secular		✓	✓	✓
IM59	Enlightened	✓	✓	✓	✓
IM60	Enlightened	✓	✓	✓	✓
KF40	Non-religious	✓	✓	✓	✓
KF63	Enlightened	✓	✓		✓
KM21	Enlightened		✓	✓	✓
KM23	Religious and conservative		✓	✓	✓
KM22	Conservative	✓	✓	✓	
KM49	Enlightened	✓	✓	✓	✓
KM50	Enlightened	✓	✓		
KM62	Enlightened		✓	✓	✓
KM41	Religious but enlightened	✓	✓		

Figure 5. Characteristics of Parents of New Mevlevis

While forming this table, (apart from the first segment that offer exact phrases of informants) I selectively re-listened the interviews. In line with this, I marked the first section if I heard descriptions like “*annemler namaz kılmazlardı*”, “*biz ne oruç tuttuk ne dua ettik*” etc. and I marked the second if they used notions like “*açık fikirli*”, “*özgür düşünceli*”, “*rahat fikirli*” for their parents. The other two boxes are marked in line with the direct information about their parents’ level of education and their childhood place of residence.

As it can be seen, there are few new Mevlevis who raised by religious parents. However, even when parents were religious, informants felt the need to add a “but” to their sentences most of the time to emphasize that they still raised in more “secular” (Interview, IM49), “enlightened” (Interview, IF35) or “open-minded” (Interview, IF48) families.

It seems like new Mevlevis themselves are also aware of this likeness in their religious backgrounds because time to time some try to explain the reasons behind the phenomena with statements like “It is hard for conservative people to understand



and even, accept this [spiritual approach of Mevleviye] at first. Even though I came from a Kemalist family, in the earlier times, Dede's words were causing me to have terrible shocks." (Interview, IM49). This statement may be seen as a very simple explanation for well-read, middle-class followers of NRMs too since to be able to even think about spiritual search or conversion one needs to be very open-minded which is a mentality that is harder to reach if one raised with traditional and conservative values for example. Smith and Denton also says that people with non-religious, nominally religious and minority backgrounds seems to be more open to be spiritual seekers than conservative Christians in the US.

In line with this, "open-minded" family and friends show itself in new religions studies all the time. For new Mevlevis having open-minded parents means that they were free in their own ways while growing which is stated by all informants in one way or the other. In my opinion, feeling free and supported instead of being pressured is one of the most important similarities of new Melvevis' backgrounds since it is a term that is used even by children of more conservative parents (Interview, KM23). However, I want to make one little note here, according to my observations, family members being open-minded do not always mean strong support of conversion. It is mostly about being raised in a free environment and being able to make individual decisions. This is an observable feature in parents of people who convert to NRMs in the West too. Having arguments about conversion to an NRM with family and friends is not an exceptional story since NRMs often shown as dangerous in the media and the image of religious orders are not so different in Turkey especially among "modern", "secular", "Kemalist" segments of the society.

Another common characteristic of new Mevlevis is having "better-educated" parents. With better-educated, I mean being educated above the average of their generation. Therefore, for younger informants having better-educated parents would mean that their parents are university graduates while for older informants, their parents being teachers or officers could be considered better-educated. Considering this, it can be said that most of the informants raised by better-educated parents (See Figure 5). This point especially seems to be important for new Mevlevis as they

immediately state education level and occupation of their parents when they are asked about their childhoods. Also, in many cases I observed that informants specified their parents being “*kendini geliştirmiş*” (self-developed) people (Interview, IM24) either because they are “*çok okumuş*” (well-read) (Interview, IF48) or “*görmüş geçirmiş*” (experienced) (Interview, IF57). In line with this, many informants signified that they had an intellectual mother and/or father for example. Better-educated parents are considered important in the new religions studies too as we discussed. It is even seen as a predisposing factor to develop a spiritual seeker attitude like Smith and Denton state.

Last but not least, being raised and living in an urban area is also considered important in terms of spiritual search. I already stated that religious pluralism and different belief options find a place for themselves in cities more than rural areas. This might be linked to technology, industrialization, multiculturalism, globalization, and many other factor. As known, the sample of this research is people from Istanbul and Konya. Both has an important place in terms of spiritual options and Mevleviye in Turkey as I already explained. However, in addition to this, I listed the places of birth of the informants for a better view (See Figure 4) and to be exact, only 2 out of 20 informants born or grow up in rural areas and villages of Turkey.

According to Smith and Denton, one’s religious tradition, religious service attendance in the family, worldviews of close friends and family, place of residence and educational backgrounds of parents are important since these seem to effect one’s position regarding religion, spiritual search and conversion (Smith and Denton, 2005: 83-85). To sum up, having;

- Non-religious, nominally religious, minority or non-conservative backgrounds,
- Low religious service attendance in the family,
- Open-minded family members,
- Better-educated parents,
- And urban residence are considered as common in the backgrounds of spiritual seekers and so, followers of NRMs most of the time.

So, it is clear that these common characteristics and personal backgrounds of new Mevlevis link contemporary Mevleviye to other NRMs through the similarities of their followers “middle-class, well-educated, professional, relatively young” people who are children of “better-educated, open-minded, secular/non-religious/nominally religious” parents that “raised them in an urban setting”. Also, these similarities might be indicating the coming of modern religions in Turkey through new ways of believing that intermix different practices.

The one thing that we mentioned but did not discuss here is the commonalities in world-views of new Mevlevis and their families which is quite important since it is a factor that has a huge influence on the spiritual search. In the next section, this will be the center of the discussion.

### **5.1.2. Worldview of New Mevlevis**

When the subject comes to the world-view of new Mevlevis, I think there are two major elements to consider. These are the seeker attitude and social values.

As I explained in Chapter 2, certain social attributes create a suitable base for the emergence of seeker attitude and spiritual search. To remind again, seeker attitude is a term used to explain common world-views of spiritual seekers about religion. Based on national surveys and other studies, belief about trueness of one’s religion, belief about religious particularity, view on proselytization, and view of religious congregations seen as four important parts of “seeker attitude” (Smith and Denton, 2005: 74).

Spiritual seekers often accept the possibility of the existence of more than one truth. We discussed that this is a mentality that is supported by discontents of modernity and rise of post-modern values which leads to rise of NRMs and spiritual search. This openness seems to be an integrated feature for new Mevlevis. Although it seems to be supported through individualism of the modern person and religious pluralism, the idea often explained by new Mevlevis through various teachings of

Rumi like unity of existence and sameness of all beliefs (Interview, IF48), tolerance to other beliefs (Interview, KM22), and love for all. It would not be wrong to say that they believe that “there are countless number of ways that reach to God and they choosed the love” (Interview, IM24). The difference here is given to method rather than the doctrine, so, all religions are perceived as the same and different methods might help people in different ways (Interview, IF48).

Accepting the existence of multiple truths that might be located in different places often feeds the spiritual search and might result with practicing more than one spiritual system at the same time and even intermixing them. Intermixing practices here simply means taking things that seemed to be true to practice while leaving the rest. I think this is strongly related to spiritual seekers mostly being “self-directing” individuals like new Mevlevis. This is an attitude that reflects itself in daily lives of new Mevlevis too. Getting up in the morning to do Yoga and go to a Mevlevi communion at the night, using *mala* (traditional meditation beads) in zikr, using *namaste* (hello and goodbye in Sanskrit the language of Hindu traditions) and *aşk olsun* interchangeably are examples of intermixing I observed while I was living with the Mevlevi couple in Istanbul. And the ordinariness of all these actions show that they do not have strong opinions on religious particularity.

Because their opinions on individualism, religious pluralism or tolerance and plurality of truth are strong, new Mevlevis often find proselytization unfavorable. This attitude shows itself clearly in their reactions to dominance of existing religion in Turkey, and behaviors and policies that effect their life-styles. “I do not believe in Islam as they coerced” is a common sentence that is used frequently by new Mevlevis while talking about place of Mevlevis in today’s Turkey.

This is where common social values of new Mevlevis also showed themselves to me. These commonality in their social values is coming from them being spiritual seekers, Mevlevis, and being from secular segments of Turkish society. ‘Non-materialistic values’ like feminism and humanism are a part of these which were always in the center for NRMs since feminist, humanist and eco-friendly movements were the ones that opened the way for NRMs as I discussed. ‘Progressive values’ might also observed in their attitudes and statements. By progressive I meant values

like freedom and equality. By themselves they are big notions of course, on the other hand, they are terms that are used by new Mevlevis in taken for granted forms, without even thinking about it. But many explained these terms as freedom of life style, speech, and equality and unity of all for example. Other than this, wish to be free and being angry or worried about losing freedom also show themselves in the discourses of many.

I do not mention being a Mevlevi until someone understands. There are many people around me who are from dominant religious belief, even among my kin. I try to be respectful and tolerant but when the subject comes to my belief, I am experiencing some serious and severe arguments about how should I live. I resist to all restrictions as much as I can. I feel like I have to (Interview, IF35).

Strong individualism and liberal tendencies of new Mevlevis together with their concerns regarding their beliefs and lifestyles indicates another link that needs attention. As I discussed, “worried moderns” are also relatively young, well-educated, middle-class and professional people who are children of better-educated parents. It is surprising social attributes of worried moderns and new Mevlevis match this well and I think these two groups might have a relatively big intersection since both groups show similar “worries” towards “Islam” too.

Today, there is a huge pressure, especially about women’s clothing and all. Is something ‘allowable’ or not? I do not want permissions. I drew a clear line here. I do not tolerate them to meddle to my life. Sharia will come such and such... God forbid that (Interview, IF25).

In fact, some new Mevlevis even stated that they perceived secular standpoint of a Dede or a lodge as a positive feature while converting. Portrait of Atatürk (Interview, IF35) or a speech about secularism during a communion (Interview, IM49) might become an element that persuade them to stay in that lodge for example. But while “worried moderns” are modern people who fear from constrains of Islam, new Mevlevis are modern people who believe in Islam but with a difference: “not as it is coerced”. When I first came here, I said to my husband, ‘Let’s leave, this is the religion that we know!’ But I see now, it is different actually.” (Interview, IF36)

This is the key part I think. I already mentioned that Mevleviye being an Islamic path will be important later on in Chapter 3 and the reason was lying in this statement that I heard from new Mevlevis all the time. They do not believe in Islam as it is or as it is presented while still acknowledging Mevleviye as a part of Islam and even as the “real” Islam since Rumi described himself as a servant of Koran (Interview, IF35).

In my opinion, state is using Islam. Sometimes, I see some questions directed to Directorate of Religious Affairs in media and their answers are just horrible. I am not happy as a woman and a mother. And I do not define Islam as the way the state does (Interview, IF57).

We can increase the number of examples. But in short, their position as spiritual seekers seems to be the factor that makes them different among “worried moderns” of Turkey. And even all these “worries” might be a part of the tension that lead these people to seek answers to their problems outside traditional religion I think. And staying out of organized “degenerated” religion is also a part of seeker attitude.

At the end, seeker attitude means that spiritual seekers mostly believe plurality of truths. This makes practicing more than one faith acceptable for them which results with staying away from organized religions. All these are supported by individualization, idea of religious pluralism and progressive values strongly. Even, showing all these characteristics may not make one directly a spiritual seeker but the attitude is often linked to being more prone to spiritual search.

The only thing that left to start spiritual search is the “readiness” to choose “which beliefs from a religious tradition one wants to believe and which beliefs one may disregard” (Smith and Denton, 2005: 75). As a result, the most important feature that separates new Mevlevis from traditional believers and link them to followers of NRMs is their wish to look for truth wherever it can be found since traditional believers would feel dutiful towards their belief in terms of participation to practices and think that their religion is the “truest” (Roof, 2009: 55). The emergence of this position between Muslims and worried moderns with a non-traditional perspective on religion also shows a change in believing tendencies in Turkey I think.

### **5.1.3. Previous Religious Practices and Spiritual Search**

In this part, I will be opening up one last feature of new Mevlevis that is necessary for one person to be seen as a follower of an NRM or spiritual seeker which is “receptiveness to spiritual matters” (Arweck, 2006: 30-31) and so, being willing to experience “other” belief options and the spiritual search itself.

“Spiritual search” is a phenomenon that I was aware of even before my fieldwork. Therefore, it was relatively easy for me to locate it as a phenomenon among new Mevlevis. Spiritual search becomes visible in previous religious practices and discourses of new Mevlevis.

As I discussed, new Mevlevis seem to show spiritual seeker attitude. As a result, their religious practices tend to be substantially active. This means that as “self-directing” individuals they try to find their own spiritual meanings which is different than their historical religious tradition in this case established Sunni Islam in Turkey.

To begin with, we discussed that they mostly raised in secular, nominally religious and non-religious families with their own words. Therefore, their spiritual journeys also start here. For instance, many new Mevlevis seem to be went through a non-religious past. This phase might be expressed as being an atheist for a time “like any other high school student” (Interview, IF25) or not being interested in religion at all (Interview, IF36). Another beginning might be being nominally religious in terms of believing to Islam which means they defined themselves as “Muslim” at some point but never used Islam as a reference point in their lives (Interview, IF35) or they showed a strong secular stance that perceive religion as a cultural aspect rather than belief (Interview, IF57). These examples are quite the summary of various stances of new Mevlevis towards religion before their spiritual search begin.

Generally, some kind of tension triggers spiritual search as I mentioned, however, there is not one but many different subtitles that can be viewed as a reason for coming to Mevleviye which will be discussed in forthcoming parts in detail. Regardless of the reason, tension seems to lead new Mevlevis to ask questions about “existence”, “meaning” and “themselves” and answers often directed them to

religion and all kinds of spiritual paths (Interview, IM24) like many other followers of NRMs.

As we discussed, once one sees the answer of the tension in religion, then the person starts to perceive the quest as a spiritual one and from this point on spiritual search begins. This search might be physical and lead them to travel the world singing in Christian choirs or trying to search for Kaballah (Interview, KM50), visiting Far East to travel from one Buddhist temple to the other (Interview, IF57), going to India for learning Yoga (Interview, IM60) or even moving to Konya to learn more about Mevleviye (Interview, KF63) which are all realized for the sake of “searching”.

On the other hand, spiritual search often leads many seekers to read sacred books or books on religion and spirituality as well as self-development (Interview, KM49), do researches in the Internet about “foreign” practices (Interview, IF48), be interested in “alternative medicine” and “healing” (Interview, IM59), participate to Yoga classes and go to meditation retreats (Interview, IM24) etc. which are visible actions of Western spiritual seekers too (Barker, 1999). In line with what they found, religious practices of now new Mevlevi also seem to change. Their activities during this period, on the other hand, shows the emergence of a new religious field where new mediums are used to believe which is also an indication of a change in believing tendencies in Turkey I think.

At this point, it is safe to say that they became “highly-active seekers” which is quite suitable with their characteristics too. Being highly-active seekers means that they started to search their answers in more than one place, switching from one viewpoint to another (Interview, IF48) and even, practicing more than one belief system at the same time (Interview, IM24). This seems to go on until one finds the answer that satisfy the need to know and in this case, the answers came from Mevleviye for new Mevlevi. The most revealing explanation comes from a new Mevlevi actually:

To give an example from myself, I was a person who jump around like ‘I will do that too. I try this perspective. I do not like this, I do that.’ I always tried to fill that void in my heart. When I found my Dede, the spirituality fed me incredibly, my soul grew. So, I felt like I was complete. All that hustle ended (Interview, IF48).



Although it satisfies their need to know, settling on Mevleviye do not wipe the seeker attitude totally. As I observed, they still act as spiritual seekers believing plurality of truths and intermixing different practices with Mevleviye for example. In my opinion, spiritual search does not end totally but their “spiritual journey type” changes. As I explained in Chapter 2, Roof offers three major types of spiritual journeys in his work. In line with that typology, it can be said that new Mevlevis went from being highly-active seekers to the first type of spiritual journey which is about finding a belief system that feels right and comfortable, answers difficult questions of the seeker, and makes one feel accepted as an individual and supported in terms of spiritual search (Roof, 2009: 57).

Aside from shifting religious practices of new Mevlevis, their self-definitions also offer us a glimpse of their spiritual search. It is crucial to know that all new Mevlevis I interviewed mentioned spiritual search while talking about the period before they met with Mevleviye as *arayış* (search) or sometimes as *manevi arayış* (spiritual search). Therefore, spiritual search is not an odd term for them. In fact, they even use without the need of explaining like “*buraya gelinceye kadar derin bir arayıştaydım*”, “*manevi arayışlar böylece son buluyor*”, “*ruhsal arayış hiç bitmiyor*” Search is a straight notion for them that means only spiritual search and they see spiritual search as a part of their lives and a cause that brought them to Mevleviye (Interview, IM49). So, they cherish it through the doctrine too by saying searching is a part of the *çile* (mortification, suffering period) and only if you search then Rumi lead you to find him.

For new Mevlevis, search starts with “wanting to find” (Interview, KM50) and being “ready to search” (Interview, KM49) but the issue here is the person often do not know what to search for to be able to find (Interview, IF25) which leads them to do *araştırma* (research) literally by reading books or searching the Internet (Interview, IF48), visiting places (Interview, KM50) or talking to people (Interview, IM59) which takes time (Interview, IM24) but it is a part of individual growth and peace (Interview, KF63). The vocalic closeness of *arayış* and *araştırma* also find a reflection in their definitions, so, the search turns into a research and only researchers find (Interview, IM24).

First you need to be interested when the time has come, then roads will open in front of you. Then, you need to do researches because there are many roads and you need to be sincere in this journey. This is the essence of the search. We searched a long time for truths but found a road that would lead us too. After that we only needed to understand. So, this was the issue of searching (Interview, KM49).

At the end, the definition of the term for them appears to be very similar with the one in the literature of NRMs. Previously, I described it as a journey that self-directing people went on to find an individual meaning apart from their previous spiritual traditions in general. This is a path that is incredibly similar to the one I quoted while discussing NRMs which links new Mevlevis to followers of NRMs again.

In addition to simple definitions and explanations of the term, nearly all informants stated that they perceived themselves as seekers consciously at least for a time in their lives. To elaborate that period, they often described an urgent “*arama hissiyati*” (sense of search) (Interview, IF35) or “*huzursuzluk*” (restlessness) (Interview, IF48) that stem from the feelings of “*eksiklik*” (absence), “*yalnızlık*” (loneliness) and “*boşluk*” (emptiness) (Interview, IM49) or downright “*endişe*” (distress) (Interview, KM22). There are many words that are preferred by different informants to explain their experiences but the action and the state that these feelings brought was the same. The search created the research and research lead to a certain path, Mevleviye, at the end. This consciousness about their search and its reasons is a link that tie them to other spiritual seekers regardless of what they found which brings contemporary Mevleviye one step closer to NRMs around the world. This is the state and experience that prepared the emergence of “readiness to search” or “receptiveness to spiritual matters” that lead them to find at the end.

## 5.2. SEARCHING AND FINDING

“Now we are living in such a troubled period as the Turkish society and I think it is impossible for people who are in search in this period to ignore love when they met with it.”  
(Interview, IF57, 21.05.2017)

### 5.2.1. Religious Life and Rituals

Religious life and current beliefs of new Mevlevis is the part that deviates from the global literature of NRMs the most because of the effect of Islam. As I said in the Chapter 3, Mevleviye is a path in Islam and this is accepted by new Mevlevis too. But I also discussed the effect of interpretation and intermixing of beliefs and practices, and that discussion is important to understand current religious identity of new Mevlevis.

From the very beginning, traditional Islam and Sufism had different viewpoints on the interpretation of life style in Koran and meanings of verses. Sufism is criticized by Sunni authorities mostly because of the life style of Sufis and their interpretation of Islam (Atacan, 1999: 24). Esoteric practices and mysticism that is offered in Sufism let religious pluralism and the idea of multiple truths to live, and allowed interpretation and individualism to exist in Mevleviye. And like Gölpınarlı said it allowed people to take a deep breath with its advanced and free way of thinking while offering an unrestricted tolerance (1999: 18). As a result, new Mevlevis of modern world do not worry about identifying with Mevleviye but they emphasize that it is not the same with believing in normative Islam today (Interview, IF36). As I mentioned, they do not believe in Islam “as it is coerced”. On the other hand, it is not so unexpected that spiritual seekers in Turkey to come to a movement that has Islamic origins anyway since in Christian countries spiritual seekers seem to be gravitating towards NRMs of Christian origin mostly instead of “exotic” practices as I discussed in the Chapter 3.

This rising interest is not only towards Mevleviye. There are people who do Yoga, learn Reiki such and such. There is an incredible emptiness that makes people search like crazy. And since Sufism has a place in our culture it is easier for people to reach it (Interview, IM24).

Nevertheless, the effect of normative Islam and the experience of spiritual search leads new Mevlevis to describe themselves as “spiritual” while they talk about their current beliefs. It is discussed that the phrase “spiritual but not religious” is a strong sign of a spiritual seeker around the world and it is used in relevant circles in Turkey frequently. Originally the phrase indicates an individual who is a believer but not

interested in organized religions -including established Islam in Turkey- since they are “degenerated” or “not relevant” anymore which makes them search for their own meanings as self-directing individuals. Although the meaning is quite the same, in Turkey, this phrase is slightly different because of the translation issues. Turkish meaning of “spiritual” as *manevi* or *ruhsal* do not meet the intended meaning most of the time. Therefore, some keep the word (spiritüel) as it is and some say *dindar* (religious) to explain being a “believer” or “worshipper” part of the phrase. The ones who use the word *dindar* generally differ the word from *dinci* (religionist) immediately after they define themselves with that word (Interview, IM59) which seemingly have some negative connotations for them. In fact, this self-differentiation felt like an innuendo towards political Islam in Turkey most of the time since many new Mevlevi also show characteristics of “worried moderns”. They might use these two words –*spiritüel* and *dindar*- interchangeably too. In line with this, they are equalized with being a believer of God and a lover (Interview, KF40). The important thing here, once they are asked for a clarification of the word they used, they make similar explanations like they are their own believers (Interview, KF40) and they do not believe Islam as it is presented (Interview, IF35). And if there are countless ways to find the God, they are in the way of love (Interview, IM24).

Here, I would like to note that defining oneself as a Mevlevi is also different today than the past. When I talk about new Mevlevi and their current beliefs both them and I know that the official system of Mevleviye does not exist anymore, and positions like Dede and Baba are more symbolic compared to the past since there is no active *silsile* or service and suffering periods like it was which is another reason behind my choice of calling these people “new” Mevlevi. In line with this, many of new Mevlevi seem to be careful while they define themselves as a Mevlevi. The most common way to put their position is introducing themselves as *muhib* (lover) which was considered as the beginning position in the order before 1925 or simply as a follower of Rumi. However, they attend religious services regularly and regulate their lives through Mevlevi ideals. Years and respect of their community bring titles like *Mürüt*, *Baba*, *Dede*, *Mürşit* and even, *Kutub* to be used among themselves. I also

observed two other reservations toward using the term Mevlevi. The first one is the responsibility of being a Mevlevi which causes the fear of getting out of the codes of conduct in the future as a Mevlevi (Interview, IM24). The second reason is the inherent humbleness that causes people to see or define themselves as not worthy of the term Mevlevi (Interview, KM62) which is a part of codes of conduct in Mevleviye. However, aside from direct questions like “Are you a Mevlevi?” which causes them to explain their reservations, many seem to be comfortable with calling themselves Mevlevi.

Another part of converting to a new belief is rituals. As we know Mevleviye as a religious order had its own codes and rituals beside teachings. However, contemporary Mevleviye is different than the old one. Beside global changes like modernization, industrialization, urbanization, and individualization local changes like secularization and Westernization changed Mevleviye turning it to contemporary Mevleviye. This process has taken some rituals away from it while added new ones. The biggest changes showed themselves in the organization and rituals (Expert Interview No.1, Konya, 23.07.2017) and today, new Mevlevis follow this new way. Therefore, here, I will focus on rituals that are performed in contemporary Mevleviye.

Zikr is counted as one of the primary elements of Islamic religious orders and it originally means repeating names of Allah and remembering God while forgetting all the other beings (Kara, 2006: 156). Today, zikr is still performed by Mevlevis often coming together in a predetermined night of the week in a specific place like a ‘secret’ dervish lodge, a cultural center or a private place like one’s house or workplace. As a researcher, I had chance to participate in rituals in all these places and I observed that, although the number of people changes and there is no harsh lines that define how to pray (especially because of understanding of *cezbe*) the general outline of the ritual stays the same.

First, all comers enter the room with greeting stance and then they either personally meet Dede who sits on the red woolfell or kneel and kiss the ground before sitting down. There might or might not be communion during this time but when it is time, music starts. Music generally initiated by *neyzen* (reed flute player) with a *taksim*

(partition) but if there is no *neyzen* in the community that night, then *kudum* player starts to play a chant while others sing. One chant follows another. At first, community listens and sometimes go along. Later, one by one people start going back and forth with their upper body, turning their heads to their hearts each time they go forward. Lyrics of chants link to some mantras of zikr. The most known zikr is *la ilahe illallah* (There is no other divinity but God) which is often used as the first mantra which evolves to *illallah*, then to *Allah* and *Hu* during ritual accompanied by strong breaths. Zikr might continue on the knees or people might stand up linking arms according to atmosphere of that night and decision of Dede. In any case, people who are *semazen* in the group might want permission from Dede to start Sema.



Figure 6. A night of zikr in a dervish lodge in Konya, 2017

Sema is one of the oldest living rituals of traditional Mevleviye. As I discussed, originally, every act and object included in this ritual has a different meaning for Mevlevi. However, today it is hard for small Mevlevi communities to have a proper *Semahane* for example, in fact, most of them seem to barely have any open space to perform Sema. Similarly, *semazens* often do not wear traditional *tennure* (traditional outfit of semazens) during these rituals and do Sema in their street clothes. In performances, Semazens start ritual their arms crossed in their chests turning to

themselves. Than dervishes extend their arms keeping one hand open towards heaven and turn the other to earth and they pivot on their left foot in an orbit leading by Master Sheikh. Although the main movements of dervishes is the same, Mevlevis do not follow harsh lines and order in their private rituals that is visible in the ceremonies held by stage performers or governmental authorities as a show. New Mevlevis comment on this difference liken their practice to the ones in Rumi's times when Sema was not regulated (Interview, IM60). In those times, someone would cook and call everyone, before or after eating, musicians would play instruments and sing poems and people do Sema if they wished at that moment (Gölpınarlı, 2006: 349). This version sounds more like the closed community rituals I participated in Istanbul and Konya where practice of Sema is mostly about *cezbe* and *trance* rather than performance. But still losing oneself during ritual is undesirable. Moreover, during these rituals men and women often do *zikr* and Sema together.

Since every detail of the ritual is organized by the Mevlevis of the lodge in these ceremonies, they appear to be much more raw and pure than the touristic stage performances. In these rituals, one might observe what *cezbe* and *trance* are for example since ritual itself is not a show but people who perform Sema, do it spontaneously. As a result, many new Mevlevis learned or try to learn to do Sema (Interview IM24) and play instruments like drum (Interview, IF57) and reed flute (Interview, KM22). Both in Istanbul and Konya, I observed that new Mevlevis practice together for rituals once a week. For example, while I was staying with the Mevlevi couple in Istanbul, every Thursday, their friends would come to their house to practice Mevlevi chants.

Approximately after two to three hours, which means late at night, Dede gives musicians the cue for slowing down –if it did not happen naturally- and when the atmosphere in the lodge calms down, a deep silence takes over and worshippers start to open their eyes or catch their breaths. I want to note that *zikr* is a quite tiring practice. It is not seldom to find oneself soaked with sweat for example. Later, Dede starts to say a *Gülbank* which is similar to this one but might change from place to place and it is quite different than the old ones:

*İnayet-i Yezdan, himmet-i merdan, vakt-i şerifler hayrola, hayırlar fethola, şerler defola. Cemiyetin muradı hasılola, cümlemizin ervahı şadola, demler sefalar müzdad ola. Dem-i Hz. Mevlana, sırr-ı Şems-i Tebrizi, kerem-i İmam-ı Ali, şefaati Muhammediün Nebi. Hu diyelim.*

This roughly translates to: The help of God and saints, let this be a good time, let the good to come and clear off the bad. Wishes of this community would come true, souls of all of us would be happy, pleasures would be constant. Help of Rumi, secret of Shams, favor of Ali, bliss of Muhammed. Let's say *Hu* (Allah).

Community says "Hu" after each name and breathes out a long "Hu" at the end. Dede might add other wishes for the welfare of the country or anything else that is generally in line with the current news which is responded with "Amin" mostly. Also, these wishes make the political position of the lodge quite visible I think since it is common to hear wishes like "May the God protect this country from the people who steal and use the name of God for their own benefit." for example. After prayer, room relaxes visibly, people who still feel the effect of the zikr starts to compose themselves and people start to talk with each other.

Although ceremony ends, duties of people do not finish here. "Service" is a strong understanding among new Mevlevis and starting from the youngest or newest members, they all do what is necessary like clearing floor tables and dishes if the lodge hosted a dinner, cleaning, and giving rides to others who do not have means of transport. As I observed, everyone actively tries to do everything they can for their fellows which strengthens the sense of being a community I think.

The order of things, practices and duration of the ceremony might change in special times like Şeb-i Arus. During Şeb-i Arus, aside from participating to remembrance in the Mevlana Museum, new Mevlevis do not follow touristic activities, the groups I went to Konya with never did at least. They preferred to visit spiritually important individuals whether they are alive or passed on. They may visit people in their work places and houses during day, When Celaledin Bakır Çelebi (previous Çelebi and 21<sup>st</sup> grandson of Rumi) was alive, new Mevlevis visited him too although this tradition do not seem to continue with the current Çelebi. During these visits, visitors



might ask to dervishes for advices and stories and they discuss spiritual matters mostly and at the evening hours, most of them go to dervish lodges. Meanwhile, dervish lodges in Konya becomes too crowded in Şeb-i Arus hosting local and foreign Mevlevis as well as visitors. This often result with local new Mevlevis to take a back seat to give people who comes once a year more space (Interview, IM60). Ceremonies gets longer, rituals become more effusive and one might observe many people in ecstasy more often which is an effect of ‘new’ new Mevlevis who are new comers of Mevleviye and so, very enthusiastic like any other “first generation convert” I think.

There are other religious festivals that Mevlevis recognize but the only special practice that I observed other than visiting people (not necessarily going to Konya of course) is *bayramlaşma* (whishing a merry holiday to each other). To do it, they gather in a circle in greeting position and say “Hu” while bowing to center and then meet with each other. In an ordinary day, Konya visits happens to be calmer. New Mevlevis visit Dede and participate to rituals again but the situation is not that hectic. Moreover, during these more ordinary visits, many new Mevlevis take time to do shopping from their fellow new Mevlevis to buy items like felt vests, a new pair of *mests* (a kind of shoe for Sema), *habbes* (stone accessory) etc.

There is also communion nights that generally do not include zikr or Sema but they are about listening Dede’s stories and advices. People might ask questions about belief, traditions, daily life and even personal problems. In big communions that take place in cultural centers or foundations, questions are conveyed to Dede beforehand in written form and it is normal to see some people taking notes or even record with the permission of Dede. Communion seems to be more free and easy in smaller, more local communities where people just raise their hands to ask their questions. These communions and people’s personal relations with Dede are the only opportunities for new Mevlevis to have a master-disciple relation today since commune life in a dervish lodge is not possible for them anymore. Therefore, they seem to take these nights seriously. That being said, younger new Mevlevis seem to obtain the position of disciple more easily and willingly which leads to a closer

relation with the master or Dede that makes them able to say “I am walking the path that my master showed me.” (Interview, IM24).

Other than these collective events, new Mevlevis also perform some rituals in their day-to-day lives in addition to codes of conduct. The most visible one of these rituals is prayers. New Mevlevis seem to have various *Gülbanks* for different occasions like for farewell or eating, aside from the *Gülbank* used in religious ceremonies. Holding little ceremonies in important situations like arrival of guests, “meeting” with people and objects might also be listed among daily ritual that new Mevlevis practice. Other than these, although it is not a ritual, many new Mevlevis stated that they read “Masnavi” over and over (Interview, IF35), or randomly opening pages while seeking for advice frequently (Interview, KF40). This is a part of intellectual and spiritual elements and reading it over and over comes from the understanding of esoteric knowledge since one may find and understand something new every time they read it.

These rituals and customs appears to be adopted by new Mevlevis enthusiastically. They perform small acts like greeting stance and meeting even when they think there is no one around to see. We now see how these people use religion and/or spirituality as references in their daily life practices while still living modern lives in a secular setting. At this point, new Mevlevis themselves are the indication of ‘modern’ religions I think.

### **5.2.2. Reasons of Search and Conversion for New Mevlevis**

NRMs might attract their followers for different reasons and this difference mostly comes from NRMs’ ideology and world-view. These reasons often linked to needs of people like safety, belonging, need to know. For example, Puttick lists five groups of needs for followers of NRMs. She calls them “survival, safety, esteem, belongingness and love, and self-actualization” in this order and then, regroup them to form two different set of ideals for NRMs which are traditionalism (survival, safety, esteem) and personal development (belongingness and love and self-

actualization) (Puttick, 2003: 242). We discussed needs and reasons of followers of NRMs in previous chapters in detail and from the classical theories on sociology of religion to literature of NRMs we gathered many different reasons and needs that include all these and beyond and later, named them as tension. But the question here is: What are the reasons of new Mevlevis?

During an interview, one of my informants suddenly stopped talking, exhaled slowly and said “There is a sense of searching, a feeling of being stuck, a loneliness in the inner worlds of everyone that lead to a wish to hold a hand, find strength and this creates a mean, to search and find. You may ask me whether if I found what I was looking for in here [Mevlevi lodge], I would say yes, I found it” (Interview, IM49). This statement is the core of all this phenomenon I think, reasons of spiritual search and appeal of NRMs lies right here. Hearing these words from a new Mevlevi is also an indication of position of contemporary Mevleviye as an NRM in Turkey.

In the literature on NRMs, negative feelings and stressful events associated with the beginning of spiritual search is often defined as “tension”. I think, it is a reference to “movement” side of NRMs since the emergence of social movements are also linked to tensions in the society through fast social change, alienation and anomie. The feeling or issue that we describe as tension is prevalent among new Mevlevis too which is quite understandable since we can find examples of similar experiences among spiritual seekers.

For new Mevlevis, I observed several themes that acted as tension. The first theme is sense of normlessness or emptiness versus the wish for purposeful and meaningful life. Terms like *boşluk* (emptiness) are the ones that I heard the most while my informant talk about spiritual search I think.

I started to feel an emptiness inside me when I was in high school and this was when I started to look for something to fill that hole. At first, you do everything shallowly like reading books. But then I found Mevleviye through music and it filled the gaps with meaning (Interview, KM21).

Such tension increases if the person cannot reach the meaning or purpose through existing or thought ways like normative Islam: “The existing system was built on pressure, and its rules were never relevant to my world-view. And I think, people

are just deceiving themselves when they say they are Muslims because they lie and steal. I was truly lost” (Interview, IF25).

Other than meaning, a person might also need the feeling of belonging. The second most mentioned tension was loneliness that is answered with belonging and acceptance.

People’s ideas on how to believe or live were extreme for me. Perceiving things only as black and white, I have always struggled with that mind set. So, I always felt like I do not belong anywhere. For a long time I felt hollow and lonely. But after I came here I said to myself ‘Yes, this is the place I need to be, there are people like me and I am not alone.’ (Interview, IF35).

Clearly, these feelings are strongly linked to being a community and surrounded by people with similar backgrounds which part of community making processes. However, in the feeling of belonging, the effect of Dede seems to be as important as the community.

After I found my Dede, a magical wand touched me. My searches fall into place and that feeling of loneliness disappeared. Even when you are alone physically you always feel the hand of Dede on your shoulder (Interview, IM49).

We were alone in the crowds but we found a family through our Dede, even more than a family (Interview, KM21).

And the last theme is self-development. Self-development is often used together with the term *kemalata ermek* (reaching the spiritual maturity, fullness or perfection) by new Mevlevis and it is not used as much as the others as a reason but it is mentioned by several people persistently. In terms of doctrine, the very purpose of a Mevlevi is to mature and be one with God as I explained in previous chapters. This process seems to be closely related to self-development of NRMs. Since Mevleviye is mostly an individual way and it is about self-development this idea easily finds itself a place. It is quite understandable when we consider the spiritual search period of new Mevlevis.

My questions started with self-development I guess. Read book of Osho and researched Buddhism such and such. But here, I found a *kamil mürşit* (perfect/mature teacher)... and Mevleviye is totally about this maturation and the journey to self (Interview, IF48).

As it can be seen, explanations are linked to doctrine of Mevleviye most of the time which is understandable since values of Mevleviye are acted as the answers to tension in their journeys. And as Gölpınarlı states, Rumi's mysticism is about to mature in a world of *irfan* (comprehension), *tahakkuk* (realization), *aşk* (love) and *cezbe* (ecstatic state of being pulled to presence of God) (1999: 168) and these put people in ease through Sufism's free way of thinking and it consoled them with tolerance and love by offering an eterne unity and manifestation of God (1999: 18).

If we look at the content of these themes, the link between initial reasons of new Mevlevis and values of Mevleviye becomes clearer. So, if these needs find an answer in Mevleviye, this might show us the position of Mevleviye in the literature of NRMs which brings us to typologies that we discussed. The most used typologies in new religions studies include origin, world-view, view on human-God relation and now, ideology of NRMs. In terms of origin, an NRM might be coming or take nourishment from other more established or older belief systems like paganism or Christianity. Then, Wallis' world-accommodating, world-rejecting and world-affirming NRMs might give us an idea about the world-view of NRMs like dualistic-monistic separation that Richardson and his friends created which helps us to position human in NRMs. Lastly, traditionalist values versus personal development may be a guide for us to understand an NRM's ideology. If we try to locate today's Mevleviye under different typologies of NRMs, based on the answers that we discussed, I would say that it is Islamic in origin, dualistic in terms of its views on human-God relation since it separates secular and religious domains, world-accommodating in terms of world-view because it exists on the edge of existing belief in society while trying to develop the individual in a non-materialistic way and focused on personal development in terms of its ideology since it addresses needs like love and belongingness, and self-actualization.

However, the discussion also needs to cover reasons behind tension. Although existence of these feelings like emptiness and loneliness were observable in the discourses of new Mevlevis, we should link those personal experiences to social factors that are behind the tension. In this sense, it seems like actual reasons show themselves as personal problems and feelings at first.

For example, losing a father may seem like a personal experience which might result with feelings of emptiness, fear and loneliness. However, death of a loved one is an experience that may create the religious questions about meaning and existence that would lead to this person to perceive their quest as a spiritual one. And tension itself said to be stemming from “need to know death” and “fear from living a meaningless life” (Interview, IF48). Loneliness in the existing system may also create a tension through feelings like longing for belonging and will to meaning as we saw, but behind these personal feelings the person actually experiencing disenchantment from the established system saying that “mainstream understandings are not relevant for their life style and understanding of life” (Interview, IF35). Similarly, questioning the relevance of God and/or Islam may also bring one to this point (Interview, IF25). In all these examples, tension might be linked to lack of religious capital, disenchantment with “the established” (system and/or traditional religions) and fear from “senseless” world as well as other reasons like “discontinuities” and discontents of modernity and rapid social change.

Even, the modernity and its emphasis on rationality may be the cause for a person to lose any possible “meaning” of life which is supported through faith most of the time. The situation is not much different for new Mevlevis. For example, discontents of modernity like mind body dualism, hard-edged rationality, non-relevant structures in traditional religions can be heard in a statement of a new Mevlevi.

My husband brought me to here [dervish lodge] for the first time after we experienced some health problems. For a long time, there was a conflict between my heart and my mind. First six mounts, although I continued to come, I could not accept this belief or things that are said here about sacred, God and all. I said let’s leave, this is just Islam. But it was not and I am coming here for two years now and it became good for me. I feel healthier and happier (Interview, IF36).

As Celalettin Dede also stated, people who come to Mevleviye do not seem like they had a problem when looking from outside:

They were riding good cars, living in villas, benefiting all technological devices. But these people were lonely and unhappy. Unless one nurture the soul with meaning, that person cannot be happy. For example, look at Europe, first visitors of India and Tibet were mystic people, they were hippies. They were rich kids of Europe, they had everything. But they were

writing about their problems on the walls, travelling alone playing their guitars. This was stemming from dissatisfaction. They wanted to satisfy the other half of their existence. Now, our society started to suffer from this because we broke away from our own place. We live in a totally materialistic world and we are unable to nurture our souls now (Expert Interview No.1, Konya, 23.07.2017).

This explanation is important since it reflects the understanding of Mevleviye, so the current understanding of new Mevlevis too. Now, new Mevlevis “know” that tension is stemming from “material modern life” that do not care about their spirituality (Interview, IM24). Therefore, the solution to the problem is clearly spiritual (Interview, IF57) According to the model of conversion that I explained, a person first experience a tension. Then, the solution appears to be in religion which leads to spiritual search. This part is very similar for new Mevlevis too. And as Dawson states, it is often thought that people are trying to protect themselves from “the anomic and alienating effects of modern life” when they ‘turn to religion’ (2014: 52). So, new Mevlevis came to contemporary Mevleviye.

### **5.2.3. Particularity of Women’s Search in Contemporary Mevleviye**

Religion itself has an important role in the construction of norms in the society which includes gender roles, therefore, woman question is a crucial one for new religions studies. Trying to answer this question through NRMs might help us to understand women’s experience both inside and outside of religious norms. In this way, we may also understand NRMs better since most NRMs use gender and/or position of woman in the movement as a clarifying feature for their ideology since gender is considered as one of the major elements of social stratification most of the time. Moreover, as I mentioned, all religions was once a new religion so, understanding the position of woman in NRMs might help us to envision the answer of woman question in religion for the future.

At first, discussions regarding women in NRMs were revolving around women being overrepresented in NRMs. In time, it became clearer that sex ratios are different among NRMs. This difference as I mentioned might be linked to NRMs

themselves. For example, NRMs that promote self-development seems to be attracting more women than more conservative NRMs (Puttick, 2003). Today, one community may pull more people from one sex but women do not seem to be more prone to join NRMs than men in general. In the case of contemporary Mevleviye, there were as much women as men who participated to rituals and communions in the field. Therefore, I did not observe any striking difference in the sex ratios. However, something else draw my attention that lead me to re-evaluate the woman question in Mevleviye while I was chatting with one of my informants. She said that there is a huge pressure on women in today's Turkey and she "took shelter" in Mevleviye because it was "different" than the rest of the society. When I asked her what she meant by different, she explained the atmosphere in the community by paralleling Mevleviye to a different, freer country where everyone is equal, loving and non-judgmental of other's life styles and world-views (Interview, IF25). This statement is very important for us to understand the woman question in Mevleviye because it gave us the notions of the issue like freedom that are repeated by other informants later on and showed that existing notions like love take on a new significance. In fact, this statement says that she was feeling the pressure of patriarchal society and Islam but being in a Mevlevi community is first, sheltered her against that oppressive world outside like a coat and second, offered her an environment that is not oppressive. This also indicates that values of Mevleviye is more progressive than the mainstream in Turkey.

"Differences of Mevleviye" is one of the questions I directed to my informants since they often brought the issue by saying "difference" or "uniqueness" themselves. In general, love and tolerance are the most repeated notions. But for women, there were more notions to signify and these two terms seemed to have additional meanings for them.

Firstly, women ascribe new meanings to tolerance and love that Mevleviye offer as part of its doctrine in the way of finding God, meaning and purpose. These two terms often meant acceptance, comfort and belonging for new Mevlevis. However, for women love and tolerance also seem to mean "flexibility" (Interview, IF36), being considered "equal" (Interview, IF57), and "freedom" (Interview, IF25). And most



importantly, they put love as oppose to fear and oppression. So, their tension that lead women to spiritual search might be different then men's and it might be linked to oppression and fear that is stemming from patriarchy and controlling presence of Islam which is answered by Mevleviye through love which is not mentioned by any male new Mevlevi: "The difference of the way of Rumi is love. It is not a path of fear or pressure like others but it bares one's soul, lightens, and enthuse person to believe in love and God." (Interview, IF35).

These are also concerns of women all over the world in terms of feminist movements I think. Therefore, it is understandable for these women to attach importance to these values but the interesting part is that they joined to a religious community because of these values. The best explanation is the pure words I think:

I had several turning points in my life. The first one is rising against my father to be able to work when I was 17. Second one is my divorce because when you marry too young you go from the house of father to the house of husband directly. After that, life was a hard fight as a single mother and woman in Turkey. Then the third milestone came along and my new life started through Mevleviye. These incidents freed me from oppressions one by one but oppressors were never people but the system (Interview, IF57).

This statement will bring us to second part because she also explained how Mevleviye freed her. She stated that love pulled her first but she stayed for freedom because "she did not experience any pressure" in the community (Interview, IF57). At first, she was inexperienced and hesitant because she found the idea of covering her head unacceptable. In one of her first visits to a dervish lodge, other members introduced her to Dede who let anyone come in any clothing they want. So, she started to learn zikr and participated to communions. One day, she saw Iranian women in the dervish lodge who were wrapping their heads with several colorful veils and she decided to give it a try which resulted with the protest of Dede himself who said "You are an open woman, you do not need to do anything, be yourself." She said to me that this was the time she started to identify with Mevleviye since this incident showed her that she is in "the right place" that do not work through oppression or fear but utilize freedom, love and tolerance. Not only because the community was freer but also because her attachment to Mevleviye sheltered her against "the ugly world outside". Similarly, after a male informant said women are

more comfortable in the community than the streets, I wanted a clarification, and he explained the atmosphere by saying “Even, one’s thong may come in sight during zikr but it does not matter for Mevlevis there. This is something even “modern” people cannot do sometimes.” (Interview, IM24). At the end, freedom and non-coercion appears as additional notions that women use to define their reasons behind turning to the way of Rumi.

In a sense, this is also a situation of relevance I think. Contemporary Mevleviye and its values turned out to be more relevant to these well-educated, middle class women than normative Islam of Turkey. In fact, characteristics and so, needs of these women are crucial here. For example, according to Puttick, more conservative movements would attract “frightened” women who search for physical safety and ideological familiarity since those movements encourage understandings that are closer to traditional ones (Puttick, 2001). NRMs that offer personal development like contemporary Mevleviye as I discussed would offer an alternative that allows empowerment and freedom of expression. In line with this, it can be said that female new Mevlevis seems to be searching for alternatives to traditional roles through spiritual development and belonging to a similar minded community. This is also a move against the discontents of modern life besides established religions I think.

As a result, it is apparent that women described the appeal of Mevleviye differently. For many spiritual seekers or followers of NRMs, reasons of joining to an NRM are mostly linked to tensions like sense of normlessness, loneliness etc. that are fed by processes like rapid social change or alienation for example. However, women’s stated reasons for joining the community and preferred terms were different than men at some point, although still consistent among themselves. These differences show that women’s experience behind the choice of identifying with Mevleviye also differ from men’s like oppression. Although we may still observe the effect of rapid social changes in the women’s choice of conversion, there are some additional ones that seems to be relevant to only women since not even one male informant mentioned them.

In terms of experience of woman both in and out of Mevleviye, there are two very important themes that attract my notice. The first theme is “resistance”. In fact, it is

used as an umbrella term here and I did not utilize the sociologically discussed version of the notion. It was the word *direnmek* (resist) that I heard from the most of female informants and they used it in different contexts to imply a certain meaning. For example, one said that she resisted to her friends in the past through her Mevlevi identity because her friends were supporting “conservatives” in Turkey (Interview, IF35) while other said she always resist to the established values and understandings of this society, especially the ones that are about life-style and clothing of woman and concepts like “honor” and “chastity” which are not even subjects in Mevleviye (Interview, IF25) and one other stated that she resisted oppressions of society as a single mother alone until she found her community to belong. Since the term resistance is derived from personal experience here and do not imply any organized action, I preferred to apply their own description of the term which is described as their act of “*karşı koymak*” (withstand), “*karşı çıkmak*” (oppose) or “*savaşmak*” (fight) against oppressions by these women.

As I discussed in detail, regardless of their origin or time of emergence, a movement can be considered as “new” in terms of its values that are more relevant to today, maybe more ‘progressive’ and often conflicting with societal norms. NRM is a notion that have an emphasis on plurality which creates a space to criticize and resist to the mainstream cultural and religious values, and practices I think. And from the perspective of new social movements, it is not shocking to hear new Mevlevi describe “resistance” as a reason. The vital part is that only female new Mevlevi used the term to describe their experience and not male ones. At the end, I think that becoming members of NRMs might be a form of resistance to the “mainstream” both spiritually and politically which is considered as a reason to be part of the Mevlevi community by women I interviewed.

Another crucial theme for me is “sisterhood”. Today, this is a soft term that is often utilized by feminist groups to encourage unity and solidarity. It is not a term that I heard directly from new Mevlevi but it was a group dynamic that I observed while I was in the field, and statements like “I especially told my other female friends to come with me” show this understanding to an extent. The sisterhood I observed was about women’s companionship to each other and this companionship becomes

observable in their synergic assistance, respect and concern towards each other's well-being in the community. This assistance and concern might be about one of the member's new small business, health and children or it might mean helping with the share of work in the community. It is hard to reflect the environment much the same but women seem to be hovering around each other as much as they hover around their Dede in any community. It might be even said that women are also forming smaller, unofficial but active all-woman groups inside their communities to chat, help, and even to pursuit ritual related practices like Sema.

In fact, female *semazens* (whirling dervishes) seems to be a crucial issue for contemporary Mevleviye. Traditionally, women would not be allowed to do Sema and even though, women whirled occasionally in the past, they would never perform Sema together with men. Today, master sheiks, whirling dervishes and music groups that perform Sema that are supported by different ministries in Turkey still consist of all men. Therefore, even the images of female semazens may meet with some reaction by people. In fact, one of the communities I visit was in the middle of this discussion because of their female semazen group that had widespread media attention. They were receiving both positive and negative reactions.



Figure 7. Female Semazens of Hasan Dede in their colorful tennures  
(Retrieved from: <https://www.sabah.com.tr/galeri/yasam/kadin-semazenler>)

But more importantly this showed that the very existence of female Sema group might be a reason for a woman to come to Mevleviye or a Mevlevi community (Interview, IF48). She said to me that she was always after self-development but fall into a void that lead her to “search” after she lost her father. Like any spiritual seeker she read books, searched the Internet and these lead her to Mevleviye but her personal participation started with Sema. Going from one Mevlevi community to other, this time she searched for Sema. Once she found the right community for her needs she stayed and started to identify with Mevleviye (Interview, IF48). Beyond the issue of sisterhood, this example leads us to another important topic which is the position of woman in the organization.

Although it was not my intention, many experts raised the topic of place of woman in Mevleviye by themselves. From this attitude, I guessed that it is a question that is frequently asked to them and my guess is confirmed when Nadir Dede said:

We are talking about women because people always ask about this in Turkey. What is the perspective of Mevleviye about women? There is already one perspective. In Masnavi, Rumi says woman is like the creator rather than created. This shows the position of woman in Mevleviye (Expert Interview No.3, Konya, 22.07.2017).

Similarly, another informant narrated his Dede’s views on this issue by saying that they are proud of their Dedes and Dedes of their Dedes since other’s sheikhs were considering women as inferior beings while their Dedes never even joined to that polemic (Interview, KM21). These words of a male new Mevlevi are used to explain the deep-seated respect for woman in Mevleviye that are supported through Melvevi ideals like complementariness of two sexes and unity of all. But for women, place of woman in the community is about being part of decision making processes, rituals and organization (Interview, IF48). This brings us to the discipleship and leadership positions in contemporary Mevleviye.

As I discussed, after dervish lodges closed in 1925, training of new dervishes also hindered together with traditional education, services, duties and so, positions in religious orders. According to my observations, new Mevlevis still offer their services to their lodge and the community. These services are about willingness and means of person therefore, discrimination is not a case. In terms of rituals, there are

more duties to fulfil like musicians and semazens. Both in Istanbul and Konya, man and woman were together during ceremonies of Sema and zikr. Most of the time, men and women performed Sema together or if the room was not big enough they would take turns. Similarly, musicians were people who are talented in music. Some nights an all women group would play, sometimes group would appear to be mixed and sometimes all the musicians in the community were men. These seemed to be decisions that happened in the moment most of the time without much consideration. People who are talented in music played their instruments while semazens started to do Sema when they wished. Even in more crowded and more organized ceremonies, women and men seemed to work as a team. I think there are two points here to highlight which are women's unconstrained reach to training and participation. Women in these communities are free to learn and perform rituals side by side with men which is not the case for many other religious organizations. Patriarchal life style often block women to have power in organizations and disregarded their trainings which result with their exclusion. Therefore, values of Mevlevi communities seem to be more relevant in this sense which seems to be one of the pull factors for women (Interview, IF48). In fact, Mevleviye with its mysticism seems to be providing an alternative discourse in Islam. Similar to this, NRMs are all about developing an alternative to existing dominant perspectives, systems and institutions which effect women's daily experience strongly. In that sense, NRMs might be more open to alternative cultural roles because they can be based on alternatives and instead of traditional authority which might be a reason for these women to decide to be a part of today's Mevleviye.

So, there are not visible differences about the opportunities or duties of female and male disciples but there are also executive duties even in the smallest communities. It is said that opportunity to become a leader and having a word in the decision making process might be a pull factor of NRMs for some women (Puttick, 2003: 240). Women often are unable to reach to leadership positions in traditional religions and even viewed inferior. In Mevleviye, there is no obstacle in front of women to become Baba, Dede and even receive an *icazetname* (permission) to form their own dervish lodge somewhere else (Interview, IM59). In fact, I would like to give the

example of Şirin Ana here. Şirin Ana is mentioned as a Baba of Mevleviye and a very Kemalist person to me for the first time in Konya. She was not head of her own lodge but she and “her daughters” (young women who gather around her) were known by everyone. I understand that her group is actually an all women Mevlevi community when daughters of Şirin Ana came to the lodge where we prayed during Şeb-i Arus, 2017. They were wearing colorful attires and carrying their musical instruments with them. People told me that Şirin Ana has passed away but these young women are still keeping up a tradition of them: traveling from one place to another chanting to share the joy with the leadership of another women among themselves. They stayed a while chanting and singing then leaved to go somewhere else. This was the second time that I came across the evidence of female leadership in contemporary Mevleviye -first being Esin Çelebi herself as granddaughter of Rumi. In theory, women are allowed to be in the leadership positions in Mevleviye, and in fact, there are examples of female sheikhs in the history including the kin of Rumi. However, all the communities that I visited and stayed seemed to have males as their spiritual leaders although more secular executive duties like organization of rituals, fundraising and finance of communities were performed by women mostly. Surely, because *silsile* and the training system is damaged, these positions are mostly symbolic to outsiders and acquired through the respect of the community and the Dede. I witnessed women to be offered red woollfell of sheikh for example which is a move that show the status of that person in the community. At the same time, I talked with a woman who acted as temporary leader of the community in the absence of Dede which is considered as an honor. In my opinion, although there is no obstacle for women to be leaders of a Mevlevi community, the fewness of the number made me think that it may not be as easy as it is reflected.

However, at the end, the appeal of Mevleviye for women lie in freedom and empowerment which is more than what is offered in current values of society. So, it pulls spiritual seekers who resist to existing cultural values of society while also attracts women who are after spiritual growth without sacrificing secular values and professional success of herself (Puttick, 2003: 242). It is clear that Mevleviye’s more flexible perspective and practices about gender is part of its appeal to women. At

the end, spiritual development road that Mevleviye offers is attracting women in general since it let them reach to God without being limited by prohibitions that are set by male authorities.

### **5.3. PATTERNS IN IDENTIFYING WITH MEVLEVIYE**

Once the person gets tired of searching, sits and then, another journey begins.  
Searching is part of the path but you find Rumi when you sit.  
(Interview, KM50, 23.07.2017)

#### **5.3.1. Meeting with Mevleviye**

Meeting with Mevleviye and the master or sheikh generally addressed as “milestones” by new Mevlevis and happens after one starts to search. In addition to this, events and choices that lead to this meeting are also considered as very important points in the course of life since they conduce to salvation (Interview, IM49).

Role of Mevleviye in the lives of new Mevlevis becomes so big that identifying with Mevleviye listed above educational successes (Interview, IF36), marriage and even birth of children while talking about turning points in their lives (Interview, IF57). Since I already included a question about “milestones” in their lives, it was fairly easy to see the importance they gave to this very point of meeting.

Throughout interviews and my daily interactions with new Mevlevis, several patterns in the process of meeting with Mevleviye caught my attention. Visiting Konya (Interview, IF57), moving to Istanbul (Interview, IM24), music (Interview, KM21) and even, art (Interview, KF40) can be counted among these patterns, however, for most of new Mevlevis, books, and other spiritual practices appeared to be the most popular ways for meeting with Mevleviye.



Informant	Friends	Significant Other	The Internet	Books	Art and Music	Visiting Konya	Other Spiritual Paths
IF35		✓	✓	✓			✓
IF25	✓			✓			✓
IF36		✓	✓	✓			
IF57			✓	✓		✓	✓
IF48			✓	✓			✓
IM24	✓			✓			✓
IM39			✓	✓			
IM49	✓			✓			✓
IM59	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
IM60	✓	✓				✓	✓
KF40		✓		✓	✓	✓	
KF63			✓	✓	✓	✓	
KM21	✓				✓		
KM23	✓				✓		
KM22				✓	✓		
KM49	✓			✓		✓	✓
KM50				✓	✓		✓
KM62	✓			✓			✓
KM41		✓				✓	

Figure 8. Ways of Introduction to Mevleviye and Meeting with the Community

The multiplicity of the ways to meet with Mevleviye stem from the two-phased meeting process. New Mevlevis appear to be meeting with Mevleviye as a belief system (introduction) firstly through different means and secondly, they meet with a Mevlevi or the Mevlevi community that they will join (meeting with the community).

The first phase, introduction, often happens through the Internet and/or books which might be two of the most common outlets for spiritual seekers around the world too. In fact, searching for other spiritual paths or for their next spiritual stop in the Internet can be seen as a standard procedure for new Mevlevis due to the embraced place of the Internet in contemporary society (Interview, IF48). However, this is actually a clear sign of the rise of new trend in belief and religious fields in Turkey I think. On the other hand, the effect of books is the most mentioned way to meet with Mevleviye although not with the specific community. When we think about the rise of new age and books on spirituality in Turkey, this becomes more understandable. Today, anyone who walk through best seller or self-help shelves in a book store may see books about Rumi, Shams, Mevleviye and Sufism side by side

with the books related to Osho, Khrishnamurti and Buddha for example. For a person who is already in search they are there to be found (Interview, KF40). Reading books is of course an integral part of search and research including the spiritual one.

Introduction to Mevleviye through art and music is the most unique one I think. This is not a classic way for an NRM to attract people for example. Even then, finding out musical instruments like *kudüm* (drum) and *ney* (reed flute) first (Interview, KM21) might be a bit more expected maybe since rituals of Mevleviye includes these instruments. It is relatively more understandable that musicians to try to find companion to play together or meet other Mevlevi during their training and follow them to their dervish lodges for example. But being introduced to Mevleviye through painting (Interview, KF63) or through felting (Interview, KM50) or through ceramics (Interview, KM41) are truly unique ones among other stories. Therefore, Mevleviye's characteristics might be the reason behind such meetings. Mevleviye as a religious order always encouraged music and arts while educating its disciples since music, Sema and poetry was nested in Rumi's approach to spirituality. Even, Mevlevi lodges might be seen as art centers of their days and their effect on the development of poetry, music and arts in Turkey was always visible (Expert Interview No.1, Konya, 23.07.2017) and this might be the link that we are looking for. Surely, these kind of meetings are still considered in the first phase since these activities only crack the door open for the second phase which is Konya. Konya seems to be acting like a connection point between these artists and Mevlevi community. Their workmanships introduced them to Mevleviye as a belief and this connection brought them to Konya at some point and Konya introduced them to the Mevlevi community. This meeting even made some of them to move Konya from other places like Istanbul (Interview, KF63) or Kütahya (Interview, KM41). If we listen like it is: "We came to Konya for a job in ceramics for the first time. Then, we saw and stayed. We never leaved the side of Rumi again." (Interview, KF40).

Although do not always result with moving, it is clear that "visiting Konya" has some effect on meeting with the Mevlevi community actively (Interview, IF57) which is part of the second phase of the meeting. A visit to Konya often results with

meeting Mevleviye for these spiritual seekers since many new and not new Mevlevis live there while the city is overflowing with advertisements on Rumi and whirling dervishes. Even for me, a total outsider, it was easy to randomly enter to shops that are owned by new Mevlevis who later on also become my informants.

Since new Mevlevis experience a spiritual search period before coming to Mevleviye, the effect of other spiritual paths to meeting with Mevleviye is also quite understandable. Gatherings like Yoga classes and meditation camps often lead now-new Mevlevis to meet with other spiritual seekers who know about or already part of Mevleviye for example (Interview, IF25). This kind of meetings might be considered as a part of second phase since these people eventually lead new Mevlevis to communities that they identify themselves with.

In this sense, meeting with Mevlevi communities through other new Mevlevis is also shows a similar pattern. These people often happens to be friends and significant others (spouse, fiancé, boyfriend or girlfriend). Friends bringing their also spiritual seeker friends to the place where they found the answer is what really happens (Interview, IM24). Most of new Mevlevis might say “My friends knew my search so, they introduce me to Dede.” (Interview, KM49) I think. This seems to be the most systematic way that Mevleviye gain followers because people who once brought by their friends today bringing their friends to meet with the way actively (Interview, IF57). Their efforts sometimes work just like it did for themselves but sometimes those friends leave and continue their searches somewhere else (Interview, IM49). Recruiting new members through existing members is the most traditional way that both NRMs and traditional religions use. By recruiting I do not try to imply existence of conscious strategies for attracting new members here, because I did not observe such efforts in Mevlevi communities even if there was any. But whether there are conscious strategies or not, increasing interest in Mevleviye is a topic that both new Mevlevis and experts agree on (Expert Interview No.5, İstanbul, 14.05.2017).

At the end, we can see that there are many new outlets like “bookstores, self-help groups, retreat centers, alternative medicine, spiritual seminars, workshops on spirituality in businesses and corporations, and now cyberspace” that act as a

medium for those who search for spiritual teachings (Roof, 2009: 60-61). These outlets seems to be serving to new Mevlevis too. Their journeys in this path is an indication of a change in “religious field” as well as trends in believing I think. It seems like religious field expanded to cover new religions as new forms of religions emerge and find themselves a place in society.

### **5.3.2. Deciding to Stay in Contemporary Mevleviye**

NRMs should be able to keep their members after they successfully attract and even convert them to continue to exist. However, gaining the commitment of converts seems to be a problem for most NRMs (Wright, 2007: 189). Here, I wanted to look at the issue from the side of followers and asked “why have these people stayed?” because there are new Mevlevis who are living as Mevlevis for the last 5, 10 or even 20 years while there are also people who just found it among informants. I also tried to understand distinctness of Mevleviye since the average length of membership in NRMs is not very long normally. However, we should also note that I did not meet with any ‘ex’ new Mevlevis so, I cannot discuss reasons of turnover here, if there are any.

Also, we need to mind that there are various types of “memberships” in Mevleviye like in any other NRM. People might be completely “committed” to the movement, some may just come to rituals regularly or people may agree with the ideas of the movement without going in deeply (Barker, 1999: 17). In the case of informants, I specifically talked with people who identify with Mevleviye as Mevlevis, therefore, the information based on interviews are coming mostly from the more committed members who do service in the community and give importance to advices of Dedes as well as codes of conduct or at least people I came across in ceremonies regularly. But I observed the existence of people from last category too in the field although I did not chose to interview with them since their information regarding the context seemed to be weaker.

In terms of new Mevlevis' choice of staying, I think, there are three major explanations. First, they stay because Mevleviye turns out to be the answer of their search. We discussed different spiritual journey types and I also explained the route of new Mevlevis that goes from being highly-active seekers to being believers with non-religious or nominally religious background. This type of journey means more stability. Although intermixing continues to a certain extent, changing paths constantly comes to an end as long as the chosen path meets the needs of the seeker. According to Roof, for this type of journey to be successful, that belief needs to be felt "right" and "comfortable" to make that person feel "accepted" as an individual and "supported" in terms of spiritual search, and people need to be able to ask harder questions (2009: 57-58). These notions might be heard in the explanations of new Mevlevis too when they are asked: "What is the difference of Mevleviye?"

This path accepts people and things as they are, it does not impose anything. You can believe as you want to believe. Yes, there are some modes of conduct and rules but there is no pressure. It is so different from the system that is enforced on us. (Interview, IF35)

It does not restrict you. Our Dede always supports us for us to develop ourselves. So, it became a home to us. (Interview, KM22)

Mevleviye does not judge, it just accepts and supports you in this world with love. (Interview, IM24)

Rumi and Mevlevis are so open to free thinking and this road makes some sense out of everything. Here, there is an explanation and answer to everything. (Interview, KM49)

So, as it can be seen, comfort, acceptance and support as well as offering answers to questions are given a great importance when new Mevlevis talk about their reasons of still being there. More often than these examples, they just use simple Mevlevi terms to explain these feelings and thoughts like tolerance, love, belonging, and unity. The flexibility, acceptance and non-coercion are ideals that reflect themselves in the choices of new Mevlevis who felt uneasy, coerced, lost and lonely before as I mentioned.

This brings us to another explanation which is simply 'good experience'. The experience of membership in an NRM obviously varies from individual to individual and from movement to movement. As Barker also says for some people,

being member of an NRM will be the most imperative matter happened to them because of the answers, acceptance, belonging etc. while for others, this experience might turn into disappointment although it started great at first. We know that not everyone finds what they are looking for in every NRM. And it is not unheard of to feel deluded or misled since there are spiritual seekers who have negative experiences with NRMs (1999: 25). In Mevleviye, at least for the new Mevlevis who are still identifying with Mevleviye, joining Mevleviye is a good experience that is considered as one of the most important things in lives of new Mevlevis, a milestone. For many first generation convert, even finding a path that seem relevant after a long period of searching is often creates enthusiasm and satisfaction towards the belief clearly. But other than this, new Mevlevis appears to be talking about what they learn, their friends in the community, their sheikhs, and rituals with joy. It was surprising for me to see the way people lit up when they enter the dervish lodge. I would always over hear people who say things like “time hanged heavy on my hands till time for communion comes” or “coming here sweeten up my day”. Although it is a simple act, being happy there with their friends and master is a strong reason that makes new Mevlevis come back I think. And surely, this happiness again stems from previously mentioned feelings that ease the previous problems and restlessness of spiritual search itself.

The last explanation is clearly the influence of a charismatic leader. As Barker states, existence of a charismatic leader is one of the characteristics that are widespread among NRMs (1999: 20) and groups or committees are seldom seen at the top of such religious organizations. Charismatic leaders of Mevlevi communities who I met clearly had the authority over doctrine and practices of followers through their advices and codes of conduct, similar to the leaders of other NRMs (Enroth, 2005: 21) although Mevlevi Dedes often showed much softer and more tolerant styles of leadership like Rumi. As I mentioned, Rumi’s teaching method was simple, bare and so, very understandable for people than many other mystics’ (Gölpınarlı, 1999: 168). Ordinary life situations were frequently used to attract listeners and sometimes he would say something unexpected, funny or even rude to wake listeners (Schimmel, 2012: 336-337). These were methods I also observed in personal

approaches of different Dede which created warm atmospheres during communions I think.

We discussed general attributes of a charismatic leader in previous chapters by describing them as extraordinary people who build power through loyalty and allegiance. In Mevleviye, charismatic leadership comes from the authority and wisdom of Rumi himself since sheikhs seen as representors of Rumi as long as they sit on the red woolfell. This means that the person is bounded with Rumi's approach to spirituality as well as Masnavi.

We learned Rumi with the guidance of our Baba, but before our Baba there was Ali Baba and before him there was Nuri Baba. Here, you understand that dervish lodge is not only about praying or Sema but you feel the presence of Rumi in these people.” (Interview, KM21)

As we discussed, for the most NRMs, charismatic leader is actually the founder but in many cases, new leaders who represent the authority of the first founder also needs to be charismatic to be able to keep the community alive. This part was supported through *icazetname* in Mevleviye. This means that a respected Dede gave permission to that person to have disciples. This permission is literally a signed document. However, since the *silsile* has been damaged today, validity of these documents are discussed among Mevlevi communities. In any case, these documents do not hold any official value for the state but it is given importance mostly by the communities and people. The respect of the community is so important that in some communities, successors who designated as the next sheikh by the previous one may not tell this decision and insist on voting. In one of the dervish lodges I visited regularly, the last three leaders had the vote of their communities beside the blessings of their late masters for example. Keeping the more charismatic representors in charge let these lodges stay active even after the previous leader die I think. But it is also an example of institutionalization that came after the loss of charismatic leader.

But the personal charisma of the next leader is mostly coming from being seen as a *mürşit* (teacher, master) by people I think. To be *mürşit* one needs to be a *kamil* person (matured, perfect) in this way. Because “Dede who is in need cannot do favor to people” (Interview, IF48). This is a feature for charismatic leaders in Mevleviye

but it is also observed by Barker in the other NRMs under different titles I think. Many charismatic leader believed to hold a special wisdom and even divine powers in different movements which creates even stronger loyalty and allegiance.

You feel Dede's hand on your shoulder. You do not think Dede's hand as an ordinary human hand of course. There is a human side surely like I perceive him as the father I lost too early. But he is a spiritual father too. You start to think that everything this person say is the truth. It is like you have the chance to sit and speak to Rumi and Muhammed every Thursday (Interview, IM49).

So, charismatic leadership works through belonging and legitimacy for the people who follow them. Together with charismatic leadership, satisfying answers and good experience, Mevleviye seems to be successful in terms of gaining the commitment of its followers. It is sure that what people seek in an NRM may change from member to member but I think, like Enroth says, NRMs are successful because they meet the basic human needs (2005: 14).

#### **5.4. THE EXPERIENCE OF NEW MEVLEVIS**

After they see the change, first, they think you are acting.  
Then, they start to ask the way to be like you.  
(Interview, IF57, 21.05.2017).

##### **5.4.1. The Change of Life and Heart**

When one changes the path in life drastically, this reflects itself in the way of talking, eating, clothing and responding. It creates a "gaze of wonder" and make other people think: What is happening to this person? (Interview, IF57). New customs lead to new habits and so, new behaviors and even decisions. We know that followers of new religions might dress differently, follow a different diet and use a different language. They might refuse to be part of ordinary systems or habits too while creating their norms. In line with this, a certain change show itself in daily lives, personality and social relations of new Mevlevis too. I think, there are several



themes regarding this change that stem from Mevleviye itself and the act of conversion to an NRM.

The first theme can be *adab erkan* (codes of conduct). In Mevleviye, there are codes of conduct that are linked to Islam and Rumi's approach to spirituality to show Sufis that there are some limits to actions and words, even for the inward ones. In this way, the heart always stays aware of the *Sevgili* (Beloved, an attributive for God) (Interview, IM60). This is also explained as "living like a very old person" which means closer to God even while doing the most ordinary actions (Interview, IM24). Modesty, politeness, good intention and overall kind-heartedness may be seen as the core of codes of conduct in Mevleviye (Interview, KM50) and trying to live in line with these naturally changes the way of acting and talking of new Mevlevis in such a way that it is impossible to miss.

For example, "meeting" with objects and people to show respect by kissing them becomes an integral part of life taking place of a simple hello or a kiss on the cheek just like *baş kesmek* (greeting stance) which is a posture that show humbleness, and performed by a person who enters and exits a place, crossing the arms over the chest keeping hands on shoulders, and lowering head to face the heart while right foot goes over to the left toe, so the person is "sealed".

Moreover, new Mevlevis talk in a low voice most of the time and the words they choose to use -even for simplest of actions- seems to be changed from negative to positive (Interview, IM24). Saying *sırlamak* (glazing) or *dinlendirmek* (resting) instead of closing or shutting can be good examples of the terms that are still used today. In addition to changed ones, daily language gains new "Mevlevi" expressions like *Allah derdini arttırsın* (may Allah increase your troubles) that is used to remark the signs of *cezbe* in a person or *kanını içine akıtmak* (shedding his blood to inside) which is used to describe the state of keeping *cezbe* dark. Other than these, the most used expressions are *Hu* (name of God), *aşk* (love) and *eyvallah* (let it be) that seem to have special places in the lives of New Mevlevis. So, new Mevlevis adapt a special new language for themselves once they met with Mevleviye. These terms also lead to and indicate other changes in actions actually that stems from their meanings -unity, love and surrender that are also important themes in Rumi's

approach to spirituality (Interview, KM41). These expressions can be heard in many different forms during a daily dialogue like *aşk olsun* (let it be love), *aşketmek* (hello), *aşk vermek* (welcome), *aşk almak* (thank you as a response to welcome) etc. according to context.

To not go out of codes of conduct, one needs to be constantly aware of their doings except when they are in trance (Interview, IM60). The constant awareness of actions and words brings changes other than new customs to daily life of new Mevlevis. For example, many starts to stay away from alcohol not because it is forbidden but because it shades consciousness that is needed for checking actions and words (Interview, IM24). Even, there are actions they thought they would never do as the “logical” person they were but they end up doing to not go out of codes of conduct (Interview, IM24). Staying away from sexual activity or start to perform ablution after it might be listed among these changes.

However, these codes are not totally the same with the traditional Mevleviye’s rules because new Mevlevis interpret (as self-directing individuals) and intermix (different practices and beliefs) those codes to form a personal meaning and more flexible life styles which creates something that I call “negotiated manners”. This is a tendency that can be observed in followers of NRMs too. As I mentioned, NRMs are new because of their new and intermixed values. Enroth states that followers of NRMs create new formulations for “truth” that is gathered from different sources (2005: 19). New interpretations, intermixed practices and individual beliefs that are fed by pluralism and individualism is what is new. In this case, “drinking in moderation” and “not dressing conservatively” can be examples for negotiated manners for new Mevlevis (Interview, IF57).

Moreover, since new age spiritualities are known with their opposition to “the restrictive” and “the regulatory” (Heelas, 2008: 3) words like forbidden and prohibition have negative connotations among new Mevlevis since it reminds the traditional Islam that is restrictive and regulatory (Interview, IF36). Instead, new Mevlevis turn towards tolerance and love to explain their willingness to follow codes of conduct, for example doing service for others starts to come from the heart (Interview, IF25). After discussing world-view and their unique position as “still

worried but modern followers of Mevleviye”, it is interesting to see how they find their ways in an Islamic religious order through means that are used by followers of NRMs (intermixing and interpreting) to keep their initial characteristics intact (scientific mentality, a level of secularity, proactive and progressive tendencies etc.) while still using belief as a reference point. Another example of negotiated manners would be the usage of pronouns like I and you. Traditionally, these words were not preferred by Mevlevis since they actively try to kill the ego. Although slaying the self or ego is still a followed doctrine among new Mevlevis, they do use pronouns in daily life. In fact, this negotiated manner became a check point for me in the field to distinguish “new” Mevlevis from the people who born into Mevleviye (who are older and considerably less in number) since they introduce themselves as “fakiyr” mostly instead of “I”.

According to Gölpınarlı, Rumi’s mysticism is about maturing in a world of comprehension, realization, love and *cezbe*, and this kind of understanding becomes evident in one’s social and personal life bringing a broad and advanced perspective, an unbounded tolerance that comes from the wish for unity of humankind, and ethics that are meliorative (Gölpınarlı, 1999: 168). In line with this, another theme that changes lives of new Mevlevis is “Rumi’s mysticism” which brings notions like love and tolerance, and *eyvallah*.

A person experiences Mevleviye as a spiritual path both in and out, and this leads to life and heart changes (Interview, KM22). Changes in life and habits are more noticeable and immediate while changes in personality and attitudes are mostly invisible. However this do not make these changes non-existent. The effect of conversion on personality is a topic that is discussed in social sciences but there are different approaches to personality. For example, psychological approaches tends to focus on mental trends and feelings while studying personality. On the other hand, sociological viewpoint focuses on the acquired personality that is effected by social relations. In this sense, thoughts, values and attitudes forms personality. Therefore, observable behavior can be used as a sign of personality. Since I only observed the “after-personality” so to say, self-definitions of new Mevlevis becomes more

important. The crucial point here for me, all informants, without exception, stated that their personality considerably changed after they met with Mevleviye.

First of all, change does not come right after people self-defined themselves as Mevlevis, it is a slow and time consuming process but it happens eventually (Interview, KM41) since it is a conscious change (Interview, IF35). This change summed as character or personality change generally, however, to be able to explain it, new Mevlevis often told stories on how their responses to everyday situations have changed, and how they started to act and think differently.

Let me tell you, 'Eyvallah' alone changed my life. I was an angry and aggressive person in the past. But love and surrender made my life much easier. My reactions to unkind treatments and aggressive statements changed totally. Now, instead of fighting I am able to say "so be it" in the traffic, while hanging out with friends and even talking to myself (Interview, KM41).

This and many other similar expressions indicate that new Mevlevis experienced changes in their reactions, standards of judgement, the ways of thinking and attitudes because of the values of Mevleviye. Emergence of a state of calmness and patience that takes place of anger and restlessness (Interview, IF48), increase in love and tolerance that eliminate previous hate and prejudice (Interview, IM49), a new respectfulness that comes from the idea of unity of existence (Interview, IF57), and being more and more open-minded every day because of Rumi's tolerant viewpoint (Interview, KM21) can be listed among other changes in heart that new Mevlevis experience. Though not directly, such changes also effect social relations of new Mevlevis immensely.

Values like love and *eyvallah* also lead to more visible changes in daily life like getting rid of burdens that limits love (Interview, IM24). These burdens might be old habits, and even other people. There is a wide range of things that are quitted by new Mevlevis after meeting with Mevleviye. Smoking, going to clubbing, drinking, and even masturbation might be given as examples. Although abandoned habits change, explanation of new Mevlevis regarding this change stays very similar. They quitted doing that thing because it was "a burden in front of love" (Interview, KM50) or "shadow over consciousness" (Interview, IM24) or "an obstacle for self-

development” (Interview, IF48). Simply, the things that left behind are titled as “empty” and unnecessary, and that emptiness comes to light when one finds what they were looking for in Mevleviye (Interview, IM49).

Tolerance and love are two values of Mevleviye that open the door for another theme which is “non-violence”. Non-violence is a popular new age idea as much as it is a part of Rumi’s doctrine. Not harming others even with words is a strong understanding in Mevleviye. This leads new Mevlevis to stop harmful actions consciously, however, it goes beyond what Mevleviye intended I think. Changes experienced in the road of non-violence can be varied from not killing bugs anymore (Interview, IF25) to stop eating meat all together (Interview, IM24). Interestingly being vegan or vegetarian after meeting with Mevleviye seems to be a trend among new Mevlevis, although it is not a custom or rule. This is often supported by doctrines of other spiritual systems which brings us to intermixing again. Discourses of new Mevlevis show their perspective about intermixing easily since alongside Rumi and other Sufi dervishes, names like Buddha and Osho also given as references all the time (Interview, KM50). So, it seems to be really the same for them to say ‘Yoga is not practiced but lived’ and ‘Mevleviye means “*hâl*” entirely’ (Interview, IM24) and this perspective leads to negotiated manners through intermixing. To be clear, new Mevlevis may meditate in the morning and go to zikr at night (Interview, IM24) while also becoming vegan for spiritual purposes although Mevleviye do not forbid eating meat for example (Interview, IF25). This is the ordinary way of life for them, however, intermixing and negotiating limits, customs and practices is often regarded as “strange” by people who are outside of the circle maybe because “they think everything needs to be white and black” (Interview, IF35). Here, I can say that Rumi’s approach to spirituality allows such intermixing to happen beside followers’ tendency to intermix and interpret as a part of seeker attitude. This might be one of the reasons behind the attraction of Mevleviye for middle-class, well-educated spiritual seekers of Turkey.

This brings us to another theme that is spiritualization of simple tastes. This is very much about spirituality becoming a reference point while still living in modern world. Although this sounds simple, it is one of the strongest effects that transforms

the daily lives of new Mevlevis. After meeting with Mevleviye life goes to a more “spiritual” path and the effect of this spirituality shows itself in even the smallest things (Interview, IM24). Spiritualization of tastes means that the person starts to change decoration of house or room according to their belief (Interview, IM24) by hanging quotes like *hiç* (nothing) and a portrait of Rumi on the walls (Interview, IM60) or changing their favorite color to “shrine green” (Interview, KF40) for example.

Change in clothing is also a part of this. But this does not mean dressing conservatively, contrary, new Mevlevis appear to dress quite freely to express their spirituality. Spiritualization of clothing is one of the most visible features of new Mevlevis actually. Acquired style sometimes described as “Anatolian” like wearing colorful salwars and linen shirts (Interview, KF40) or dressing “like a Mevlevi” (Interview, IM24) which may include felt vests, *hirka* (dervishes coat) or even wearing symbolic and non-symbolic accessories. Non-symbolic accessories that is used commonly in Mevlevi communities would be jewelry that represent whirling dervishes, Rumi himself, or Persian/Arabic chants which are quite popular in general. However, there are many traditional accessories that are used by new Mevlevis in daily life that carry certain religious meanings like *destar*, *arakiye* and *habbe*. For example, *habbe* is a personal accessory made from stone that sags away from a delicate, 12 cm long silver chain to touch the heart in every step to remind the Beloved to the wearer (Interview, IM60). Traditionally *necef* (a kind of crystal) is used to make *habbe* but today new Mevlevis might choose different stones to “clear aura”, “give positive energy”, “regulate spiritual vibration” and even to match the birthstone of themselves.

Even, wearing more “traditional” clothes in daily life, do not stop one to dye their hair purple, green or red and all can be seen among new Mevlevis of various ages. It might be explained as breaking out from black to be colorful after meeting with Mevleviye (Interview, KF40) or simply, as being free-spirited like many highly-active seekers. There is also the subject of tattoos which is considered haram in Islam. However, there are many new Mevlevis who wear tattoos on visible places. Rumi’s poems, Mevlevi chants and terms like *hiç* and *aşk*, and other spiritual

symbols like *om* of Hinduism seem to be quite common among new Mevlevis which is a cross-reference to intermixing of practices and beliefs again I think.

The last theme is “simplification”. In line with the ideals of Mevleviye, new Mevlevis who enter the Mevlevi circles seem to go for a simpler and more minimal life style. In a way, they go from a more materialistic and “normal” life-style to getting rid of unnecessary details (Interview, IM24). Reducing the number of clothes and belongings while simplifying eating habits and behaviors for writing off every burden (Interview, KF63) is a change they themselves often point out. As a result of this, they claim to be happier and more comfortable than before (Interview, KM41). The reasoning behind this sometimes comes from ideologies like eco-friendliness and humanism (Interview, KF63) while sometimes supported with the idea of Sufi life style (Interview, IM24).

At the end, these changes are important because they manifest the existence of common empirical characteristics of NRMs like first-generation enthusiasm, the commitment to the life-style, and strong them/us and/or before/after distinctions (Barker: 1999: 20) in today’s Mevleviye. Also, negotiated manners of new Mevlevis show seeker attitude even more clearly which is important in terms of understanding the position and experience of new Mevlevis as followers of an NRM and spiritual seekers. Moreover, their new habits and changed tastes also show how religion becomes a reference point in a modern person’s life which is a part of the change that is occurring in believing in Turkey I think.

#### **5.4.2. Change in Social Relations of New Mevlevis**

Themes that are mentioned in the previous section like simplification and spiritualization, also show themselves in social relations of new Mevlevis.

Many new Mevlevis experience spiritualization of the social circle in time after meeting with Mevleviye. This means their social environment shrunk leaving “others” out when they start to make friends in the community. These are also two

steps that are listed in Lofland and Stark's seven step model of conversion. For some, these two steps may only mean starting to make new friends and becoming more extraverted than before (Interview, KM23) or new Mevlevis may simply change their social environment totally even choosing to marry someone from the community (Interview, IM49).

I think, all these are closely related to feeling of belonging. Once the community starts to feel like family, the distinction between them and us also consolidates (Interview, KM22). Such distinction often leads to more dramatic results in social relations when the conversion is completed which brings us to another theme which is simplification.

New Mevlevis often experience a dramatic change in their social environments following the change in their life styles. Although they find it difficult, most of the new Mevlevis state that they ended many of their old friendships (Interview, IM24) and even wrote off some family members (Interview, IF35). This is often expressed as a part of getting rid of burdens and simplification by new Mevlevis. Generally, they justify these partings saying that these people were or would be obstacles in their lives. The core argument seems to be supported by Mevlevi ideas as well as new age discourses like "incompatibility of energies", "self-development", and "realization of what is good and necessary". To summarize, I will give this telling answer as an example:

This path eliminated a lot of people who do not make any contribution to me, and maybe this might sound individualistic but it lead me to eliminate people who were not at the same vibration with me from my life. I had so many friends. I would see ten people a day separately. I can say that ninety percent of them are gone now. It did not happen instantly. But once you got on the road, everything falls into place naturally. And the people who should have been in my life came while the ones who needs to go are gone (Interview, IF35).

Naturally, this change in social relations do not always occur peacefully. "Not being understood" and/or being mocked by friends and family as well as arguments about person's new belief may be seen as other reasons behind the change of social environment.



We had terrible fights with my parents about my belief and all this “religious order” situation. They did not understand my relation with my master or the reason behind my choice of going to zikr instead of traveling like I used to. The commitment and devotion worried them. It was the same when I decided to do yoga, they perceived it as something troubled people do. You cannot persuade one to understand belief (Interview, IM24).

Like NRMs in Europe, religious orders in Turkey also have a bad connotation especially for people who are from secular and ‘modern’ segments of society like families of new Mevlevis. Especially, scandals, news of brain washing in religious orders and news about people who are hurt in religious order centers might lead to worry in friends and families. I even remember reading cases about a family who kidnaped their grown daughter in order to “save” her from religious movements in the US. Although the case here is not that dramatic, external controversy is something to be expected in NRMs.

There are also many new Mevlevis who tried to guide their also searching friend to Mevleviye. But often these attempts failed. One of my informants even said that “There is a friend of mine who wants to come here with me for 7 years. He never came. If it is not your destiny, you cannot find it even it is in front of your eyes I think.” (Interview, IM49). Celalettin Dede explains this situation as “a mistake of trying to share a beautiful diamond with a kid who do not understand its value but trying to persuade others is not useful and only leads to a slap to the face although everyone tries. Heart finds its companions in the road when the owner is ready.” (Expert Interview, No.1, Konya, 23.07.2017). This is a near perfect summary of what new Mevlevis think about the mentioned parting with old friends and having new friends from Mevlevi community.

As Lofland and Stark’s model of conversion states, after seeker built strong relations in the movement and outside relations weaken then it can be said that the conversion is complete. So, through these reactions from their social circles the experience of new Mevlevis come to full circle and their becoming of new Mevlevis completed.

## 5.5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The literature of NRMs and the very notion of spiritual search are proved themselves to be useful in terms of understanding the position of contemporary Mevleviye in modern Turkey and the experience of new Mevlevis since I benefitted from both immensely to be able to understand “Who are new Mevlevis?”, “How they became Mevlevis?” and “Why?”.

In short, I may say that new Mevlevis are a group of spiritual seekers who are mostly middle-class, well-educated with proactive, individualistic tendencies and from secular, non or nominally religious backgrounds with better educated parents.

The way they become Mevlevis is a question with both answers. The first one refers to emergence of NRMs since these are people first experienced some kind of tension and then, they see the solution to this tension in religion which lead them to perceive their quest as a “spiritual search”. When they are ready and in search, they meet with contemporary Mevleviye which is considered as a turning point in their lives. The second answer refers changing religious field and is the more to the point answer. They simply met with Mevleviye in two phases. The first one is meeting with the doctrine, the second is meeting with the community through different mediators.

They came and stayed because Mevleviye became the shelter against anomic and alienating ways of modern life and turned into a place where modern people could articulate the search. It also offered answers, tolerance, belonging, a charismatic leader and a ‘good experience’. This experience also included changes in life style and personality (before/after distinctions) and change of social circle as the last step for the completion of conversion.

At the end, I think that the way of thinking that literature of NRMs lead us a better and easier understanding of the position of contemporary Mevleviye in modern Turkey and experience of its followers.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

Everything has been started with my encounter with people who are in “spiritual search” and see that many realize this search in Mevleviye. This lead to a wonder for the characteristics of these people and reasons behind their choice of Mevleviye. I asked, ‘Who are these people?’, ‘How did they end up here?’ and ‘Why?’. Then I noticed some unique features both in contemporary Mevleviye and its followers which seem to be related with the concept of spiritual search and new religious movements (NRMs). Therefore, to answer these questions I benefitted from the notion of spiritual search and literature of NRMs. I benefitted from various studies on spiritual search because the phenomenon was visible in the field from the very beginning and people were acknowledging it by saying they are in an *arayış* (search). The concept of spiritual search naturally lead to NRMs because spiritual search is one of the predisposing conditions that create the ‘demand’ for NRMs in society and spiritual seekers are known to realize this search in NRMs rather than established religions. After I started to read the literature I became aware of other similarities between NRMs and the experience of my informants who are, in fact, identifying with Mevleviye.

Every religion starts as a new religion and there are fundamental and functional similarities among all religions as we discussed. They address to the same questions and problems while functioning to satisfy needs of people that are linked to the problem of theodicy, need to know, loneliness and even death. They all attract people who wish to sooth their fears and/or curiosity. So, what was making NRMs different? The thing that makes things different is the society I think. Through modernization and its processes, we observed the rise of religious pluralism

interlaced with social change and the dissolving of 'traditional' values and structures in somewhat consistent and uniform Western world. These created a demand so-to-say for alternatives to fulfil spiritual needs that could not be satisfied by the dominant religion in the society or the religion of the family. Thus, people went on a spiritual quest to find new answer in new religions.

Things did not unfold much differently in Turkey. We placed Turkey in the framework that we built. First of all, I think it is relatively easy to draw parallels between conditions of emergence of NRMs in the West, Turkey's alienating and anomic transformation through modernization and secularization starting from 1925. After the Second World War, Turkey also experienced a change in terms of place of the religion in society. Many attempts for founding political parties that focus on religion and morality may be seen as a sign of 'dissatisfied people' and rising 'spiritual necessities'. This will also sound very familiar if we think about the counter-culture movement and emergence of NRMs after the Second World War in the West. In terms of adaptation periods to new context, we know that religious orders in Turkey started to change to be able to exist in a direction that is more relevant to today and 'modern' so to say, similar to NRMs that emerged in a country other than their country of origin. In that sense, contemporary Mevleviye that is adapted to modernized and westernized Turkey would be quite similar to neo-Sufi movements that emerged in the West as NRMs since they also adapted to similar changes while becoming more relevant to the Western context like adapting their doctrine to equality demand of women. This also brings new ways of organization that might be considered as a part of NRMs' uniqueness.

There were similarities but as Mardin states, religious orders in Turkey or around the world are often not approached as a part of new social movements. In Turkey, researches that are interested with neo-Sufi movements seems to be dealing with biographic stories of charismatic leaders and saints (Mardin, 2011: 59-60). Therefore, I thought contemporary Mevleviye as an NRM in Turkey. In line with this, first, I discussed the historical context that lead Mevleviye to transform to contemporary Mevleviye, a version of itself that is closer to an NRM in terms of organization and its followers. To do this, I handled the issue of religious orders,

conditions of emergence of NRMs and development of spiritual search in modern Turkey separately in hopes of showing the contextual similarity between them. At the end, I discussed contemporary Mevleviye itself through its change and neo-Sufi movements of West as NRMs utilizing their (1)conditions of emergence, (2)adaptation periods to new context, (3)new way of organizing.

We saw that in Turkey, processes of modernization and secularization triggered the social change dissolving of ‘traditional’ values and structures while globalization and individualization brought religious pluralism to the surface. These created a demand for spiritual alternatives in Turkey and like their Western counterparts, spiritual seekers of Turkey also felt dissatisfied with the dominant religion in the society or the religion of the family which lead them to search and lead NRMs emerge benefiting from tension in the society. In this atmosphere, contemporary Mevleviye offered answers and became the shelter against anomic and alienating ways of modern life for ‘modern’, middle-class, well-educated and secular minded people of Turkey to articulate spiritual search. Because of them being new in Mevleviye and they being a new group in Mevleviye, I started to call them new Mevlevis.

To understand contemporary Mevleviye’s position in Turkey I lastly utilized empirical characteristics of NRMs and to be able to discuss experience of new Mevlevis I looked at their intermixed practices and beliefs while analyzing their characteristics through characteristics of people that are attracted to NRMs. The findings at the end showed the similarity between followers of NRMs and new followers in terms of both experience and characteristics. Therefore, I think that ‘modern’ religious orders in Turkey might be understood through the literature of NRMs like it is in the global literature and like we did with contemporary Mevleviye.

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## APPENDICES

### A: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

List of Informants:

Date of Interview	Informant	Place of Birth	Occupation	Level of Education	Marital Status	Becoming Mevlevi
20.05.17	IM60	Erzurum	Yoga Ins.	University	Divorced	2002
21.05.17	IF57	Istanbul	Retired	University	Divorced	2002
22.05.17	IF48	Istanbul	Sales Mng.	High Sch.	Married	2011
22.05.17	IM49	Erzurum	Teacher	University	Married	1993
24.05.17	IF35	Kayseri	Editor	University	Married	2009
20.06.17	IM59	Duzce	Civil Eng.	University	Divorced	2002
25.06.17	IF25	Antalya	Doctor	University	Single	2011
25.06.17	IM24	Bursa	Doctor	University	Single	2010
27.06.17	IF36	Istanbul	Software En.	University	Married	2014
27.06.17	IM39	Istanbul	Writer	University	Married	2014
21.07.17	KM49	Konya	Tourisim	University	Married	1985
22.07.17	KF63	Ankara	Artisan	University	Widow	2010
22.07.17	KM62	Konya	Retired	University	Married	1990
23.07.17	KM50	Konya	Artisan	High Sch.	Married	1992
24.07.17	KM21	Konya	Student	University	Single	2011
24.07.17	KM23	Konya	Mechatronic	University	Single	2011
25.07.17	KM22	Konya	Civil Eng.	University	Single	2012

26.07.17	KF40	Istanbul	Artisan	University	Married	1997
26.07.17	KM41	Kutahya	Artisan	University	Married	1997

List of Expert Interviews:

<b>Date of Interview</b>	<b>Interview No.</b>	<b>Name of Expert</b>	<b>Place of Interview</b>	<b>Information</b>
23.07.2017	1	Celalettin Berberoğlu	Konya	Artisan, <i>semazen</i> and a well-known Dede in Mevleviye
22.07.2017	2	Esin Çelebi Bayru	Konya	The 22nd generation grandchild of Rumi, International Mevlana Foundation President
22.07.2017	3	Nadir Karnıbüyük	Konya	<i>Postnishin</i> of the International Mevlana Foundation and president of its Konya arm
21.07.2017	4	Fahri Özçakıl	Konya	Alternate Director of Konya Turkish Sufi Music Group and <i>postnishin</i> of the <i>Sema</i> group.
14.05.2017	5	Nazmi Aziz	Istanbul	Leader of his own new Mevlevi community, new Mevlevi and a respected intellectual.

## B: GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

### Questions for Informants (Example):

1. Bana biraz kendinizden bahsedebilir misiniz?
2. Geriye dönüp baktığınız zaman hayatınızda dönüm noktası diyebileceğiniz zaman ve durumlar nelerdir?
3. Kendinizi, inancınızı nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz?
4. Mevlevilik ile ilk tanışmanız nasıl oldu?
5. Aşağı yukarı hangi noktada kendinizi Mevlevilik yolunun içinde düşünmeye başladınız?
6. Yakın sosyal çevrenizden gelen tepkiler nasıl oldu? Peki, sizin bu duruma bakışınız nedir?
7. Siz kendiniz Mevleviliği nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz?
8. Gündelik hayatınızda neler yaptığınızı anlatabilir misiniz?
9. Mevlevilik ile tanışmadan öncesine göre yeni yapmaya başladığınız şeyler oldu mu? Öncesine göre yapmayı bıraktığınız şeyler var ise neler?
10. Topluluğunuz nasıl işliyor?
11. Mevleviliğin günlük, haftalık, yıllık etkinlikleri nelerdir? Hangi kısımlarında siz katılım gösteriyorsunuz?
12. Şimdi ilerlediğiniz yolu benzeri inanç sistemlerinden ayıran özellikleri nedir?
13. Toplumda bu yola dair yeterli ya da doğru bilgi var mı?
14. Peki, yeni tanıştığınız insanlardan nasıl tepkiler geliyor?
15. Topluluğunuzda yenilerin artışını gözlemliyor musunuz?
16. Bu araştırma yapılırken şunu da sorsaydın dediğiniz bir şey var mı?
17. Eksik kaldığını düşündüğünüz eklemek istediğiniz bir şey var mı?

### Interview Questions for Experts (Example):

1. Bana kendinizden bahseder misiniz?



2. Yoldaki (Mevlevilik) konumunuz nedir? Bu konuma ne zaman ve nasıl geldiniz?
3. Sizinle görüşmemin nedeni Mevlevilik, bana kısaca dünü ve bugününden bahseder misiniz?
4. Geçmişten bugüne Mevlevilik içinde değişimler yaşandı mı? Ne tür değişimler?
5. Siz Mevleviliği nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz?
6. Mevleviliğin günlük, haftalık ya da yıllık inanç etkinlikleri: ziyaretler, dualar vs. nelerdir?
7. Mevleviliği diğer benzeri inanç topluluklarından ayıran temel özellikleri nedir sizce?
8. Sizce toplum Mevlevilik hakkında yeterli bilgiye sahip mi?
9. Sizce toplumun Mevlevilikle ilgili bir görüşü var mı?
10. Sizce Mevleviliğe doğru yeni bir ilgi var mı toplumda? Evet ise, bunun izlerini nerelerde görebiliriz? Nedeninin ne olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?
11. (EVET ise) Bu yeni ilgi Mevleviler arasında nasıl karşılanıyor? Ve/veya siz nasıl karşılıyorsunuz?
12. (EVET ise) Bu yeni ilgi Mevleviliği nasıl etkiliyor?
13. Mevlevilik konusunda bilgi sahibi olabilmem için bana ne tavsiye edersiniz?
14. Bu araştırma yapılırken şunu da sorsaydın dediğiniz bir şey var mı?

## C: ETİK KURUL ONAYI

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ  
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
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05 Mayıs 2017

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Yrd. Doç. Dr. Besim Can ZIRH ;

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız yüksek lisans öğrencisi Hande GÜR' ün "*Maneviyat Bağlamında Öteki: Türkiye de doğu spiritüalizmi*" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek gerekli onay 2017-SOS-076 protokol numarası ile 15.05.2017 – 30.12.2017 tarihleri arasında geçerli olmak üzere verilmiştir.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN

Başkan V

Prof. Dr. Ayhan SOL

Üye

Prof. Dr. Ayhan Gürbüz DEMİR

Üye

Doç. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI

Üye

Doç. Dr. Zana ÇITAK

Üye

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Pinar KAYGAN

Üye

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Emre SELÇUK

Üye

## D: CURRICULUM VITAE

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name: Gür, Hande  
Nationality: Turkish (TC)  
Date and Place of Birth: 13 January 1992, Bursa  
Marital Status: Single  
Phone: +90 505 290 44 66  
e-mail: hande.gur@metu.edu.tr

### EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
BS	METU, Sociology	2015
Assoc. Buss.	Anadolu University, HR	2016
High School	Tan Anadolu High School, Bursa	2010

### WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	Place	Enrollment
January 2015-Present	Yoga Dergisi	Editor
June 2016-Nov 2016	St.Thomas Uni., Soc.	Research Assistant
April 2015-Sep 2016	KısaKaya Boulder Evi	Yoga Instructor
Feb 2015-May2015	Dr. E.M. Craciun	Transcriber, translator
Nov 2014-April 2015	St.Thomas Uni., Soc.	Research Assistant
Nov 2013-Feb 2015	Yoga Şala	Asst. Yoga Instructor

### FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Advanced English, Intermediate Ottoman Turkish, Elementary Persian

### CERTIFICATES AND AWARDS

Year	Place	
2016	METU	Graduate Courses Performance Award
2013	Yoga Alliance	RYS-500 Teacher Training
2011	Yoga Alliance	RYS-200 Teacher Training

### HOBBIES

Reading, Yoga, Scuba, Rock Climbing

## E: TÜRKÇE ÖZET / TURKISH SUMMARY

Türkiye’de tarikatlar üzerine pek çok tartışma yürütülse de bu alanda yeterli sayıda saha çalışması yoktur. Ayrıca Türkiye’de ve dünyanın geri kalanında tarikatlar çoğunlukla yeni sosyal hareketlerin bir parçası olarak görülmemektedir. Türkiye’de yeni Sufi hareketlerle ilgilenen çalışmaların büyük bir kısmı ise karizmatik liderler ve erenlerin hayat hikayeleriyle ilgileniyor gibi görünmektedir (Mardin, 2011: 59-60). Bununla birlikte ben bu çalışma boyunca günümüz Mevleviliğine yeni sosyal hareketlerin de bir parçası olan “yeni dini hareketler” penceresinden yaklaştım. Böylece günümüz Mevleviliğindeki “yeniliği” ve “yeni” Mevlevilerin deneyimlerini anlama fırsatı buldum. Bu noktada yeni dini hareketler literatürü Türkiye’de, dinde tarikatlar düzeyinde gerçekleşen değişimleri anlamakta çok yardımcı oldu -ki bu da çalışmanın ana amacıdır denilebilir.

Burada günümüz Mevleviliği olarak bahsettiğim oluşum bir tarikattan günümüzün bireysel spiritüel yoluna dönüşen Mevleviliktir. Temeline baktığımızda Mevlevilik aslında bir Sufi ve şair olan Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi’nin göçüşünün ardından, 13. Yüzyılda Anadolu’da bir tarikat olarak kurulmuştur. O günden beri insanların manevi hayatlarında önemli ve devamlı bir etkisi olmuşsa da varlığı süresince pek çok değişim yaşamıştır. Türkiye’de, 1925’te tekke ve zaviyelerin kapatılması, 1950’lerde dinin toplumsal ve siyasal alana geri dönüşü ve 1970’ler ile 1980’lerde yeni dini hareketlerin ortaya çıkışı Mevleviliği bir tarikatten bugünkü bireysel manevi yol haline dönüştüren etkenler arasında sayılabilir.

Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmada “yeni” Mevleviler olarak anılan kişiler de bu hareketin yeni takipçileridir. Bu kişiler Mevlevilik ile eski ya da ailevi bir bağları veya tanışıklıkları olmamasına rağmen yetişkinlik dönemlerinde kendi istekleri ile Mevlevilik yolunu takip etmeye karar vermiş kişilerdir.

Bu etnografik çalışmanın bir parçası olarak ben de 2017 yılı boyunca “yeni Mevleviler” olarak adlandırdığım görüşmecilerimle birlikte yedim, ibadet ettim ve

hatta yaşadım. Bu tezde onların deneyimlerini, hislerini ve yaşamlarından bir kesiti de aktarmaya çalıştım.

### **Çalışmanın Tasviri**

Bu çalışmanın arkasındaki fikir benim kişisel deneyimlerimden kaynaklanmaktadır. Bir yoga eğitmeni olarak hem sınıfta ve hem de dışarıda “manevi arayışta” olduğunu söyleyen birçok insan ile karşılaşma fırsatım oldu. Bu “arayış” benim için yabancı bir kavram olmasa da pek çok kişinin arayışlarını Mevlevilik gibi Sufi tarikatlarında gerçekleştirdiğini görmek bir açılım noktası haline geldi. Araştırmam da bu açılım üzerinden şekillendi. Bu sebeple, çalışmanın ilk araştırma sorusunu arayışlarını Mevlevilikte gerçekleştiren bu “yeni Mevleviler kimdir?” olarak belirledim. Bu sorunun cevabı üzerinden yeni Mevleviler arasındaki benzerlik ve farklılıklar kadar günümüz Mevleviliğini de anlama şansı bulacağımı düşündüm. Haliyle “Yeni Mevleviler nasıl Mevlevi oldu?” ve “Neden Mevleviliği seçtiler?” soruları da ilk soruyu takip etti. Sonuç olarak bu üç sorunun birlikte araştırılması günümüz Mevleviliğinin yeni dini hareketler literatüründen anlaşılabilir bir portresini çizdi.

Vaka olarak Mevleviliği seçmem ise arayışlarını Mevlevilik bünyesinde sürdüren birkaç kişiyi önceden tanıyordum dolayısıydı. Bu şekilde topluluğun içine kabul edilmem daha kolay hale geldi. Etnografik bir araştırma olarak bu çalışma, topluluk üyeleri ile uzun bir süre geçirmemi gerektirdiğinden, kabul edilme noktası benim için oldukça önemliydi. Yeni dini hareketler özleri itibarıyla (çoğunlukla) küçük, yeni ve farklı gruplar olduklarından en iyi etnografik bir çalışma ile anlaşılabilirliklerini düşündüm. Çünkü etnografik araştırmanın sunduğu yöntemler ihtiyacım olan detaylı bilgiyi sağladığı gibi bu oluşumları çalışmak için gereken kavrayışın da önünü açtı. Bu bağlamda etnografik bir çalışma, bir araştırmacı olarak beni hem katılımcı hem de gözlemci konumlarına yönlendirdiğinden durumları ve yaşam şeklini topluluğun kendi bakış açısından görme fırsatı buldum. Etnografik bir çalışma yapabilmek adına 2017 yılı boyunca İstanbul ve Konya’da toplam üç topluluk ile zaman geçirdim. Topluluklardaki bireylerle birlikte yedim, içtim, ibadet ettim ve hatta birlikte yaşadım. Çalışmanın ilk yarısında katılımcı gözlem tekniğiyle topladığım bilgileri ikinci yarısında toplamda 25 kişi (20 bilgilendirici ve 5 uzman

kişi) ile yaptığım derinlemesine görüşmeler ile destekledim. Bu görüşmelerde sorduğum sorular da araştırma sorularının cevaplanmasına yönelikti. Araştırmanın bulgularını ise yeni dini hareketler literatürü üzerinden inceleyip yorumladım.

### **Çalışmanın Teorik ve Bağlamsal Arka Planı**

Çalışmaya başlamadan önce günümüz Mevleviliğinin toplumdaki konumunu ve onun takipçilerinin deneyimlerini anlayabilmek için yeni dini hareketler literatürü, manevi arayış kavramı ve Mevleviliğin geleneksel sistemi ile tarihini inceledim. Bu inceleme sonucunda oluşturduğum teorik çerçeve bize dinlerin temel ve işlevsel benzerlikleri ile yeni dini hareketlerin “yeniliğini” gösterdi.

Yeni dini hareketler terimindeki “yeni” sıfatı, bu hareketlerin tarihsel yeniliği (hem Batı ülkelerinde hem de sosyal bilimler literatüründe İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasında ortaya çıkmaya başlamaları) sebebi ile değil de hareketlerin ortak şekilde gösterdikleri yeni veya farklı özellikler nedeni ile kullanılmaktadır. Bu özelliklerin en önemlileri, yeni dini hareketlerin esnek organizasyon biçimleri, çeşitli öğretileri ve pratikleri iç içe geçirme şekilleri ve kendilerine çektikleri “yeni” gruplar (görece genç, iyi eğitilmiş, orta sınıf, manevi konularda bilgisiz fakat ilgili kişiler) olarak sayılabilir (Arweck, 2006: 30-31). Bu özelliklerin önemleri ise yeni dini hareketleri “geleneksel” tarikatlardan ayıran özellikler olmalarından gelmektedir.

Elbette bu topluluklarda görülebilen benzer ve farklı deneyimsel nitelikler de vardır. Benzerlikler arasında ilk-kuşak coşkusu, hayat biçimine bağlılık, karizmatik bir liderin varlığı, onlar/biz ve öncesi/sonrası ayrımları sayılabilir (Barker, 1999: 20). Farklılıklar ise gelenekselcilik ve kişisel gelişim olarak ayrılabilen hareketin ideolojisinden (Puttick, 2003: 242), dünya ile uyumlu, dünyayı reddeden ve dünyayı olumlayan hareketler olmak üzere ayrılan dünya görüşünden (Wallis, 2003: 36-58) ve geleneğin kökeninden (İslam, Hristiyanlık, Uzak Asya ya da paganlık gibi) kaynaklanıyor olabilir.

Yeni dini hareketlerin toplumlarda ortaya çıkış biçimleri de toplumdaki bir değişim ve yeniliği yansıtmaktadır. Bu bağlamda modernleşme ve onun sekülerleşme, şehirleşme vb. süreçleri vasıtası ile oldukça istikrarlı ve tek-biçimli olan Batı dünyasında, sosyal değişimle iç içe geçmiş dini çoğulculuğun yükselişini ve

geleneksel deęer ile yapıların çözünmünü gözlemlemekteyiz. Bu deęişimin kendisi ve deęişimin hızı toplumda kuralcı ve geleneksel din tarafından desteklenemeyen manevi ihtiyaçları doyuracak alternatifler için bir talep yaratmaktadır. Böylece insanlar yeni dinlerde yeni cevaplar bulmak üzere manevi bir arayışa çıkmışlardır denilebilir.

Yeni dini hareketlerin ortaya çıkışı Türkiye’de de oldukça benzer bir süreç izlemiştir. Bu bağlamda 1925’te tekke ve zaviyelerin kapatılması, 1950’lerde dinin kamusal alana geri dönüşü ile şehirleşmenin getirdiğı hızlı deęişim ve 1970 1980 döneminde yaşanan anomik ve sıkıntılı süreçler, 1980’lerde ortaya çıkan ve 1990’larda güçlenen yeni dini hareketlerin doğuşuna ve düşünce yapılarının topluma yerleşmesine zemin hazırlamıştır. Bu süreç boyunca ortaya çıkan yeni dini hareketler arasında yükselen globalliğin etkisi ile dışarıdan gelen dini akımlar görülebildiğı gibi, dinin yeniden keşfedilmesi yolu ile modern bir biçimde geri dönen Sufi tarikatlar da sayılabilir. Zaten farklı ülkelerde yeni dini hareketler altında incelenen yeni Sufi toplulukların çoğı da coęrafi anlamda ya da tarihsel olarak yeni olmalarından ziyade, yeni bir dini hareket olarak görülebilmek için gerekli olan deneyimsel nitelikleri (yeni bağlamda ortaya çıkış ve adapte olma biçimleri, yeni ve daha esnek bir organizasyon şekilleri, karizmatik liderlerin varlığı, iç içe geçirilmiş pratikler, modern dünyadan etkilenmiş özgün dünya görüşleri ve bünyelerinde barındırdıkları modern eğitilmiş insan kitleleri) barındırdıkları için bu literatür altında incelenmişlerdir.

Sonuç olarak global literatürde yeni dini hareketler (1) ortaya çıkış süreçleri, (2) yeni bağlama uyum sağlama biçimleri, (3) yeni organizasyon şekilleri, (4) iç içe geçirdikleri farklı pratikler, (5) özgün deneyimsel özellikleri ve (6) belli özelliklere sahip yeni takipçileri üzerinden değerlendirilmektedirler. Ben de bu araştırma sonucunda edindiğim bulguları incelerken yeni dini hareketler literatüründen bu alanlarda faydalandım.

## **Bulgular**

Çalışmanın bulgularını analiz etmek için en başta sorduğum araştırma soruları üzerinden ilerledim. İlk sorum da “Peki, yeni Mevleviler kimdir?” oldu. Cevabın ilk

parçası yeni Mevlevilerin ortak sosyal özellikleri üzerineydi. Bu noktada yaptığım saha araştırması ve görüşmeler, yeni Mevlevilerin iyi eğitilmiş, orta sınıf, çoğunlukla profesyonel kişiler olduğunu gösterdi. Bununla birlikte görüştüğüm kişilerin büyük bir kısmı kendilerini Mevlevi olarak tanımlamaya başladıkları dönemde 35 yaşından genç olduklarını belirtti. Bahsettiğim gibi, yeni dini hareketler de toplumun sınırlı bir kesimini çekmektedir (Enroth, 2005: 21) ve görüldüğü gibi günümüz Mevleviliği ile yeni dini hareketlerin çektiği kitle büyük benzerlik göstermektedir.

Sosyal özelliklerinin ötesinde yeni Mevlevilerin aileleri ve yetiştikleri ortamın da birbirine benzediği gözlemlenebilir. Görüşmeler sırasında birçok yeni Mevlevi ailelerini “aydın”, “seküler”, “açık fikirli” ya da “dindar değil” gibi kavramları kullanarak tanımlıyordu. Bu, onların Mevlevilikle tanışmadan önceki hayatlarındaki dini sermayenin eksikliğini açıkladığı gibi, dinin eskiden hayatlarında bir referans noktası olmadığını da söylemektedir. Bununla birlikte, yeni Mevlevilerin çoğunun ebeveynleri dönemine göre iyi eğitilmiş ve kendileri de hayatlarının büyük bir kısmını şehirde geçirmiş. Yeni Mevlevilerin arka planlarındaki bu benzerlik aslında onları (manevi arayışa daha meyilli kişilerin gösterdiği) “arayan tutumuna” getiren özellikler bütünüdür bir göstergesidir.

Sosyal özellikler ve kişisel arka planda görülen bu ortaklıklar günümüz Mevleviliğini global yeni dini hareketlere bağlamaktadır. Ayrıca toplumun bu kesiminde görülen manevi arayış Türkiye’de yeni dinlerin yükselişine ve inançta tarikatlar düzeyinde bir değişime işaret etmektedir.

Cevabın ikinci kısmı ise yeni Mevlevilerin dünya görüşünü içermektedir. Mevlevilerin dünya görüşlerinde de bazı ortaklıklar mevcuttur ve bu ortaklıklar “arayan tutumu” denilen olguya ve yeni Mevlevilerin ortak sosyal değerlerine dayanmaktadır.

Arayan tutumu, farklı yerlerde bulunabilecek farklı doğruların varlığına inanma, birden fazla sistemin pratiğini denemiş olma ya da birlikte uygulamaya devam etme ve din değiştirme çabalarına olumsuz yaklaşma olarak özetlenebilir. Bunlar yeni Mevlevilerin de dine yaklaşımlarında görülebilen özellikler olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Daha çok vahdet-i vücud ve hoşgörü gibi kavramlarla beslenen dini çoğulculuk ve



bireycilik anlayışları, ortaya çıkan bu tutumun sebepleri gibi görülmektedir. “İslam’a bize dayatıldığı şekliyle inanmıyorum” birçok defa duyduğum bir ifade haline gelmiştir. Bu da bizi yeni Mevlevilerin ortak değerlerine getirmektedir çünkü yeni Mevleviler hümanistik ve liberal değerlere önem veriyor gibi görünmektedir. Bu da onları kendileri gibi bu değerlere önem veren görece genç, iyi eğitilmiş, profesyonel ve orta sınıf olan bir başka gruba yakınsallaştırmaktadır. Bu grup da “endişeli modernlerdir” (Ağırdır, T24, 21 October 2010). Ama endişeli modernler İslam’ın hayatlarını değiştirmesinden endişelenen modern kimselerken yeni Mevleviler İslam’a derinden inanmaktadır. Fakat bir farkla “dayatılan şekli ile değil”. Zaten organize dinden uzak durmak da arayan tutumunun bir parçası olarak görülebilir.

Yine de tüm bu özellikleri taşımak bir kişiyi doğrudan maneviyat arayan biri yapmaz. Bir kişinin manevi arayışa başlamak için bir isteğe ihtiyacı vardır. Bu da bizi yeni Mevlevilerin manevi arayışına getirmektedir. Bu manevi arayış yeni Mevlevilerin eski dini pratiklerinde ve söylemlerinde görülebilir.

Yeni Mevlevilerin manevi yolculukları çoğunlukla inançlı olmama ya da nominal olarak inançlı olma noktasında başlıyor gibi görünmektedir. Sonrasında yaşanan bir “gerilim” ise manevi arayışı tetiklemekte. Bu gerilimin nedenleri arasında normsuzluk, boşluk hissi, yalnızlık ve kişisel gelişim arzusu sayılabilir. Bu his ve isteklerin Mevlevilikteki karşılığı ise güvenlik, ait olma hissi, sevgi ve kendini gerçekleştirme. Yeni dini hareketler literatürüne göre, yaşanan gerilim (nedeni ne olursa olsun) bireylerin, amaç, neden ve anlam üzerine sorular sormalarına neden olur. Bu durumda sorulan sorular çoğunlukla din tarafından cevaplandırıldığı için bu noktadan sonra yeni Mevlevileri arayışları manevi bir arayışa dönüşmektedir.

Bu arayış, dünyayı gezmelerine neden olan fiziksel bir arayış olabildiği gibi, internet ve kitapları kullanmaya yönlendiren bir araştırma da olabilir. Bir noktada yeni Mevleviler global benzerleri gibi “oldukça aktif arayan” kimselere dönüşmektedirler. Bu da hayatlarının bir döneminde farklı inanç sistemlerini denediler veya araştırdılar demektir. Bu dönem yeni Mevlevilerin kendi söylemlerinde de rahatlıkla görülebilmektedir.

Bu sürecin sonunda ise yeni Mevleviler olmalarına sebebiyet veren Mevlevilik ile tanışmaktalar. Mevlevilik ile tanışma iki aşamalı bir durum. İlk aşama kişinin kitaplar, internet, sanat ve müzik gibi yollar ile Mevlevilik bilgisi ile tanışması. Bu ilk uzak tanışmadan sonra, daha ciddi bir araştırma süreci başlıyor. Araştırma sürecinin ardında ise ikinci aşamada yeni Mevleviler diğer manevi yollar, Konya ziyareti, arkadaşları ya da hayatlarındaki diğer önemli kişiler tarafından Mevlevilik yolu ile tanıştırılmaktalar. Bu tanışma temelde, Mevlevi bir kimse ya da bir Mevlevi topluluğu ile tanışmak anlamına gelmekte.

Bu tanışma yöntemleri global literatürde yeni dini hareketlere katılımın gerçekleşme yöntemleri olarak da gözlemlenebilmektedir. Dolayısı ile yeni Mevlevilerin nasıl Mevlevi oldukları sorusunun cevabı aslında Mevleviliği yeni dini hareketlere biraz daha yaklaştırmaktadır. Birçok yeni dini hareket takipçisi gibi yeni Mevleviler de bu tanışmayı hayatlarında bir dönüm noktası olarak nitelemektedir. Aynı zamanda, bu süreç Türkiye’de dini alanda “kitapçılar, inziva merkezleri, yardımlaşma grupları, spirüel seminerler ve şimdi de internet” gibi yeni yolların yükselişe geçtiğinin bir göstergesidir (Roof, 2009: 60-61). Yeni Mevlevilerin manevi yolculukları da dini alanın değişimine işaret etmektedir.

Fakat bu noktada kadınlar ve erkekler arasında bir takım farklılıklar ortaya çıkmakta. Her ne kadar topluluk içinde kadın erkek oranları aşağı yukarı aynı görünse de kadınların manevi arayışlarının sebebi ve Mevleviliği seçme sebepleri erkeklerinki ile aynı değil. Kadınlar Mevleviliğin onlara “dışarıdaki baskıcı dünyaya karşı” bir “kalkan” sunuyor olabilir. Çünkü Mevlevilik hoşgörüsü ve sevgi anlayışı ile dışarıdaki baskı ile yürüyen düzenin yanında özgür bir alan sunmakta. Bu noktada Mevlevilik iyi eğitilmiş ve orta sınıf olan bu kadınlar için normatif İslam’a kıyasla çok daha güncel ve anlamlı bir pratik sunmakta. Bununla birlikte, kadın yeni Mevleviler manevi gelişim ve benzer düşünen bir topluluğa ait olma yolu ile geleneksel kadın rollerine alternatif arıyor olabilirler. Bu durumda Mevlevilik içinde kadınların dini eğitim ve ayinlere katılım konusunda kısıtlanmamaları da oldukça etkili.

Yeni Mevlevilerin Mevleviliği bulması ve katılması bizi Mevlevilikte kalmaları konusuna getirmekte. Normalde yeni takipçileri tutmak yeni dini hareketler

açısından büyük bir sorun teşkil eder. Bu nedenle bu kişilerin manevi arayış içinde olan bireyler olarak neden Mevleviliği seçtikleri konusu oldukça önemli. Bu noktada arayan tutumunun Mevleviliği seçtiklerinde yok olmadığını fakat bu kişilerin manevi arayış türünün değiştiğini söyleyebiliriz. Bu kişiler oldukça aktif arayanlardan memnun takipçilere dönüşmüş gibi görünmekte. Bunun olabilmesi için Roof, kişinin inanç sisteminde kendini rahat ve kabul görmüş hissetmesi gerektiğini söylüyor. Ayrıca kişi manevi arayış açısından desteklenmiş hissetmeli ve en zor sorularını dahi bu toplulukta sorabilmeli (Roof, 2009: 57-58). Bu araştırma sonucunda yeni Mevlevilerin Mevlevilikte kalmalarında bu nedenlerin önemli bir etkisi olduğu söylenebilir. Bu nedenlerin yanı sıra Mevlevilik bünyesinde yaşadıkları iyi deneyimin ve karizmatik liderlerin etkisinin de yadsınamaz olduğunu belirtmek gerek.

Bu noktada, yeni Mevlevilerin Mevlevilik ile tanıştıktan sonraki deneyimleri önem kazanmakta. Yeni dini hareketlerin takipçisi olan insanların sık sık farklı diyetleri takip ettiğini, farklı giyinebildiklerini, hatta farklı konuşabildiklerini bilinen bir durum. Bu doğrultuda, yeni Mevlevilerin de günlük hayatlarında, sosyal ilişkilerinde hatta kişiliklerinde bazı değişimler gözlemlenebilmekte. Mevleviliğin getirdiği adap erkan kuralları, hoşgörü, sevgi ve şiddetsizlik, beğenilerin spiritüelleşmesi ve sadeleşme yaşanan değişimlerin arkasındaki bazı temalar olarak ortaya konulabilir.

Alçak gönüllülük, kibarlık, iyi niyet ve genel olarak iyi kalplilik Mevleviliğin adap erkan kurallarının kalbindeki eylemlerdir. Bu kuralların çizgisinde yaşamaya çalışmak da doğal olarak kişilerin günlük hayatlarında ve davranışlarında değişimlere yol açmaktadır. Yine de yeni Mevleviler için kurallar kesin ya da baskıcı değil daha esnek ve gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır. Bu da benim “müzakere edilmiş tutumlar” dediğim bir duruma yol açmaktadır. Ölçülü bir biçimde içmek ya da Sünni İslam kurallarına göre örtünmemek bu tutumlar arasında sayılabilir. Mevleviliğin esnek ve hoşgörülü yaklaşımı bu tutumların bünyesinde yaşamasına izin vermekte gibi görünüyor ki bu da Türkiye’deki iyi eğitilmiş, orta sınıf manevi arayıcıları çekmesinin arkasındaki neden olabilir.

Sevgi anlayışı ve onun getirdiği şiddetsizlik ise oldukça enteresan bir iç içe geçirme pratiğine sebep olmakta. Yeni Mevleviler arasında bu anlayıştan beslenen birçok vejetaryen ve vegan var örneğin. Mevlevilik böyle bir pratik gerektirmese de yeniçağ fikirlerinden beslenen bu tutum kimi yeni Mevleviler arasında kendine bir yer bulmuş denilebilir.

Beğenilerin spiritüelleşmesi ise yeni Mevlevilerin deneyimlerini etkileyen bir başka tema. Bu durum en sevdiğin rengin artık türbe yeşili olması ya da ev dekorasyonunu Mevlevi sembolleri ile tamamlamak gibi daha basit değişimlerden, gündelik hayatta ruhani anlamda daha sembolik giysi ve aksesuarlar kullanmaya kadar pek çok şeyi kapsayabilir. Bu durum aslında inancın bu kişilerin hayatlarında bir referans noktası olmaya başladığını göstermektedir. Fakat burada da müzakere edilmiş tutumlar devreye girmekte yani kişi kalbinin üzerine, her vurduğunda Allah'ı hatırlatacak bir aksesuar olan habbeyi taktığı gibi, vücuduna Allah gibi manevi değerlerini yansıtan bir dövme de yaptırabilir.

En son tema ise sadeleşme. Burada sadeleşme daha minimal ve sade bir hayat yaşamayı anlatan bir terim. Bu bağlamda, kişiler ihtiyaç duymadıkları nesnelere, tutumlardan ve hatta kişilerden dahi kurtuluyor olabilir. Arkasındaki anlam ise Sufi hayat tarzı ile desteklendiği gibi minimalizm, doğa dostu olmak gibi yeniçağ düşünceleri ile de güçlendirilmekte.

Bu tür, gündelik hayat ve alışkanlıklarda yaşanan değişimler gözlemlenmesi daha kolay olan değişimlerdir. Fakat her ne kadar görünmez olsa da, yeni Mevlevilerin hayatında yaşanan bir diğer değişim de kişilikte yaşanan dönüşümdür. Görüşme yaptığım tüm yeni Mevlevilerin kişiliklerinde yaşanan değişimlerden bahsetmesi bu noktayı benim için oldukça önemli hale getirmekte. Bu değişimler basitçe daha hoşgörülü, sakin, stressiz, sevgi dolu, ayırım yapmayan ve dikkatli kişiler haline gelmek olarak sayılabilir.

Burada sayılan temaların birkaçı, kendini yeni Mevlevileri sosyal ilişkilerinde de göstermekte. Örneğin, sosyal çevrenin spiritüelleşmesi global literatürde de karşılığı olan bir kavram. Bu, yeni takipçinin yeni dini harekete katılmasının ardından başlayan süreçte, dışarıdaki arkadaşlarının azalmasını ve topluluk içinden

arkadaşların daha önem kazanmasını betimleyen bir terim. Bu durum yeni Mevlevilerin hayatlarında ve söylemlerinde de gözlemlenebilmekte.

Birçok yeni Mevlevi eski arkadaşlıklarından hatta aile bağlarından bazılarını kestiklerini söyleyerek sosyal hayatlarında yaşanan sadeleşmeyi de vurguladı. Bu sadeleşmenin nedenini de bu kişilerin onları anlamaması, inançları konusunda tartışmaların yaşanması ile hisleri ya da düşüncelerinin hafife alınması olarak ifade ettiler. Bu durum Mevlevilik üzerinden (“geleceği olan gelir” gibi teslimiyetçi düşünceler ile) ya da (enerjilerimiz uyuşmuyordu gibi) daha yeniçağ düşünceleri üzerinden desteklenebiliyor. Özellikle tarikatlar, yeni Mevlevilerin ailelerinin de dahil olduğu toplumun modern ve/veya seküler kesimlerince şüpheyile karşılaştıklarından bu noktada problemler yaşanabiliyor.

Sonuç olarak bu değişimler de yeni dini hareketlerin ortak deneyimsel özelliklerinin (ilk kuşak coşkusu, yaşam tarzına bağlılık, güçlü öncesi/sonrası, onlar/biz ayrımı vs.) günümüz Mevleviliğindeki varlığını göstermektedir. Ayrıca, yeni alışkanlıkların ortaya çıkışı ve beğenilerde yaşanan değişimler dinin modern bireyin hayatında referans noktasına dönüşümünü de göstermekte. Bu da bence Türkiye’de tarikatlar düzeyinde inançta yaşanan bir değişimin işaretçisi olabilir.

### **Sonuç**

Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma, manevi arayışta olan ve bu arayışı Mevlevilikte gerçekleştiren kişiler ile karşılaşmam ile başladı. Bu karşılaşma beni bu insanlar kim, neden buradalar ve buraya nasıl geldiler gibi sorular sormaya itti. Bu çalışma boyunca manevi arayış kavramını kullanarak ve yeni dini hareketler literatüründen aldığım yardımla bu soruları yanıtlamaya çalıştım. Bu şekilde günümüz Mevleviliğinin toplumdaki yerini sorguladığım gibi yeni Mevlevilerin deneyimlerini de anlamaya çalıştım.

Bulgular hem deneyim hem de özellikleri yönünden yeni dini hareketler ile günümüz Mevleviliği arasındaki benzerliği ortaya koydu. Yeni Mevlevileri de yeni bir dini hareketin takipçileri olarak görmemizi sağladı. Bu şekilde aslında Türkiye’de tarikatlar düzeyinde inançta yaşanan bir değişimi ve Türkiye’de dini alanın dönüşümünü gözleme şansını bulduk. Bu sebeple Türkiye’de modern

tarikatların ve onların takipçilerinin yeni dini hareketler literatüründen bakarak anlaşılabilirliğini düşünüyorum. Ayrıca bu bakışın günümüz Mevleviliğini ve yeni Mevlevileri daha iyi anlamak konusunda oldukça yardımcı olduğuna inanıyorum.

Sonuç itibarıyla, İstanbul ve Konya'daki yeni Mevleviler ile yapılan ve yeni dini hareketler literatürü üzerinden Türkiye'de günümüz Mevleviliğinin yerini anlamak adına yapılmış olan bu çalışma, global yeni dini hareketler literatürüne katkı sağladığı gibi Türkiye'deki ve dünyadaki tarikatları yeni sosyal hareketlerin bir parçası olarak görececek, gelecek çalışmalara da bir kapı aralayabilir.

Bunun ötesinde, bu çalışmanın özellikle iki alanda ilerletilebileceğini düşünüyorum. Bunlardan ilki sahada varlıklarını gözlemlediğim yabancı yeni Mevleviler üzerine yapılacak bir çalışma. Çünkü yabancı yeni Mevlevilerin varlığı farklı ülkelerde de benzer, kaynağını İslam'dan alan yeni dini hareketlerin varlığına işaret ediyor. Bu durumu konu alan bir çalışma bir anlamda bu tezin global alanyazınındaki tamamlayıcısı olabilir. İkincisi ise, yine bu çalışma sırasında varlıklarının farkına vardığım Türkiye'de ortaya çıkmış fakat kaynağını İslam'dan almayan diğer yeni dini hareketleri içeren bir çalışma. Bu tür bir çalışma da Türkiye'deki yeni dini hareketler literatürüne katkı sağlayacağı gibi Türkiye'de dini alanda yaşanan değişimleri daha iyi anlamamızı da sağlayacaktır diye düşünüyorum.

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