

The Mevlevi Order of America

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During *Shebi Arus* 2009, the celebration of the death of Rumi, a public presentation of the famous Mevlevi *sema*—the rite earning the Mevlevi Sufis the epithet “Whirling Dervishes,” took place in the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco, California. In a press release used to promote the *sema* in diverse media prior to the celebrations, one could read:

The Whirling Dervishes of the Mevlevi Order of America will present the *Sema* Ceremony, honoring the great Sufi Mystic Hz. Mevlana Jelaluddin RUMI. RUMI is widely known in the West as a best-selling poet, whose writings address the timeless subjects of Love, God and Mysticism.

The evening will feature the prayer dancing of the Whirling Dervishes. In their traditional tall felt hats and brilliant white garments, turners whirl in unison, attuning to the music of the heart. The Dervishes turn in one of the world’s most beautiful and stirring sacred rituals, in ecstatic prayerful surrender, to become vessels for bringing blessings to earth.

The Ceremony will be directed by Postneshin Jaleleddin Loras, from Konya, Turkey, founder of the Mevlevi Order of America. The Ceremony will be presented as it has been for over 700 years in an unbroken line of transmission.

Special guests from Turkey will play classical and devotional Turkish music, including master musicians Necati Celik, oud (fretless lute), Timucin Cevikoglu, vocals, and Celalettin Bicer, ney (reed flute).¹

The whirling dervishes in their tall, slender hats with their white garments unfolding as they solemnly turn to the evocative and beautiful tone of the *ney*-flute—as presented in this promotional text—is arguably the most immediate image of Sufism for most Americans. An Internet image search for *Dervish* or *Sufi* presents one with countless photos and drawings of whirling dervishes in Mevlevi garments.² That this image is also reproduced on postcards, t-shirts, covers of innumerable introductory books on Sufism sold in any well-stocked bookstore, and as figurines to bring home from a vacation in Turkey suggests that it is an image invested with predominantly positive connotations.

Thus, it is not a bold conclusion to argue that the Mevlevi Order is projected by one of the most well-known images of Islam and, more specifically, Sufism. Although this could be true, it is not so evident that the history of this Order is well known for common readers, and even less so is the fact that the Order has branches in North America. The aim of the chapter is to briefly account for the history and development of an American branch of the originally Ottoman Turkish Mevlevi Sufi *tariqa*. Further, this chapter will analyze authority and identity formations within the group, in relation to features highlighted in the press-release above, concerning rituals, garments, and conceptualizations of authoritative traditions. The analysis of members' identity constructions and the development of the Order's authority structure is primarily based on my doctoral thesis, *American Dervish. Making Mevlevism in the United States* (2013). However, to prepare the current chapter I reconnected with members of the Order to get new and updated information that partly reveals changes concerning the authority structure of the Order since my fieldwork from 2008 to 2010.

Historical Background

Saying that people in general tend to connect Sufism with whirling dervishes is of course only partly true. Another common association is the poet Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273), to whom Mevlevis trace their origin.

Translated versions of Rumi's lyric poems have been among the most popular poetry on both the European and the American book market since at least the 1990s.³ The literature on Rumi is quite extensive, and I will not reproduce his biography here.⁴

It was not Rumi, however, who founded the Mevlevi *tariqa* or formalized the Mevlevi *sema* ritual. Rather, the Order bearing his name (emanating from Rumi's honorary title *mevlana* "Our Master") originated among his former followers in Ottoman Turkey during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. After Rumi's passing, his disciples, led first by his scribe Husam al-Din Chelebi (d. 1284) and later by his son Sultan Veled (d. 1320), began organizing the *Mevleviye tariqa*, centered in Konya, where Rumi spent his adult life and where he is buried. It was also Sultan Veled who began developing the Mevlevi *sema*, which has made the order known as the Whirling Dervishes, but it took a long time for the complex ritual to be formalized through the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries.⁵

Since Sultan Veled became head of the *tariqa*, a patrilineal leadership has been institutionalized within the family, and Husam al-Din's title *Chelebi*, equivalent to *sir* or *master*, was later used to refer to Rumi's descendants: the Chelebi family.⁶ Under the reign of the first generations of Chelebis, the Order spread widely within the Ottoman Empire, fostered by tight connections to the Ottoman dynasty and elite. In addition, its *tekkes* (lodges) and influence were also limited to the Ottoman realm, which meant that the power of the *tariqa* and the Chelebi family virtually ended with the fall of the Ottomans in the early 1900s.⁷

As is well known, the founder of the Turkish Republic, Kemal Atatürk (d. 1938), was not supportive of Sufism, and in 1925, two years after establishing the modern state of Turkey, he presented a law entitled "Suspension of pious foundations and religious titles, the banning of mystical societies and displays of dervishes and the suspension of hospices and hostels."⁸ The *tekkes* in Turkey were closed down, and all visual expressions of Sufism—such as the display of garments and rituals—were forbidden, together with Sufi terminology and titles. The ban led the Mevlevi leadership to move to Syria, and since then the hierarchical and organizational structure of the *tariqa* has more or less been broken down and, as happened to many other Sufi orders in the modern age, Mevlevis have been forced to develop new forms and expressions to survive. One of the persons most important for the twentieth-century development of Mevlevi Sufism, in Turkey and abroad, was the shaykh Süleyman Dede (d. 1985).

Süleyman Dede—Migration and Modernization

Süleyman Dede was born in Konya in 1908, started his Mevlevi training when he was fifteen, and was initiated into the *tariqa* at about the same time that Atatürk's law was embedded in the Constitution. Between 1926 and 1949, Dede worked in a kitchen outside of the walls of the *tekke*, distributing food to the poor.

When the thirty-first hereditary leader of the *tariqa*, Mehmet Bakir Chelebi, died in 1944, his son Celaluddin Chelebi (d. 1996) was eighteen years old, living in Syria and studying to become an engineer. He declined his hereditary right to lead the Order (which was forbidden to function as before), and in this power vacuum Süleyman Dede was asked to hold a leading position as Shaykh of Konya. It is, however, unclear what degree of authority was invested in him at that time. While some claim that the title Shaykh of Konya came with the authority to initiate shaykhs,⁹ others have it that he did not have the authority to initiate shaykhs and give out *ijazas* (documents of authorization).¹⁰ This led to a situation where some, affiliated with the Chelebi family, have claimed that different branches of Mevlevi Sufism growing from Süleyman Dede's initiations cannot legitimately call themselves Mevlevi.¹¹ Such criticism is of interest in relation to claims of authenticity and legitimacy among such branches of Mevlevi Sufism.

Two years after Atatürk's ban, partly as a result of political changes in Turkey,¹² the Mevlevi were allowed a new role as a "cultural institution," and since the 1950s the Turkish government has permitted the *sema* to be conducted as a folkloric performance. Partly due to the work of Süleyman Dede, the Mevlevi were also allowed to perform the *sema* in public in Konya on the night of *Shebi Arus*.¹³ In 1973 the Turkish government gave the Mevlevi permission to "tour" in Europe and North America in order to celebrate the 700th anniversary of Rumi's death, and such touring groups have continued to perform the *sema* for audiences ever since.¹⁴

His international travels in the 1960s and 1970s have been considered the starting point for Süleyman Dede's inspiration to spread Mevlevi Sufism to Europe and North America.¹⁵ But the interest in Mevlevi rituals also resulted in travels in the other direction, as spiritual seekers from Europe and the North America found their way to Turkey and Konya. Among persons with whom Dede connected in those years were Pierre Elliot (d. 2005), who was leading a so-called Fourth Way school in Claymont, West Virginia, that was inspired by the Armenian mystic George

Ivanovich Gurdjieff (d. 1949).¹⁶ Elliot invited Dede to Claymont, and in 1977 Dede initiated Elliot as a Mevlevi shaykh,¹⁷ and later that same year he also sent his son Jaleleddin Loras (b. 1950) to Claymont. Here Loras came to participate in some of the Gurdjieff practices, but mainly taught the Mevlevi *sema* to participants in the Claymont class. A couple of months later, in February 1979, Dede wrote a letter to Elliot, which in translation reads:

My beloved and respected Pierre Elliot and all my family at Claymont, and my dear son Celaladdin.

I'm very pleased to learn from your letter that you have arrived at Claymont. Inshallah, much abundance, blessings, and many students will come to Claymont this year. The very saintly Hazrati Gurdjieff and Hazrati Bennett whom I had the honor of meeting during his lifetime will rejoice because at the same time my brother Sheikh Pierre Elliot is bringing the way of Mevlana together with the path of Gurdjieff and Bennett. Allah wishes these paths should always be together, and I hope that it will be so. Firstly to Sheikh Pierre, and his wife Bediye Hanim—and to my beloved Khalifa Sheikh Jellaladin and to this year's students and all the residents I send my love. My wife Feriste Hanim and I pray for you, and commend you to Allah's care.

Süleyman Hayati Dede
Sheikh of Konya¹⁸

It is worth noting here how Dede condones a “bringing together” of the Fourth way and Mevlevi teachings, and calls both Pierre Elliot and his son Jaleleddin Loras shaykhs while using the title *Hazrat* for both. Dede gave his son an *ijaza* (here best translated as “authority to teach”) before sending him to the United States in which he is accorded the titles of shaykh and *postneshin* (master of the *sema* ritual), and is bestowed with the authority to function as Süleyman Dede's *khalifa* (deputy and successor). As related above, the degree of authority invested in Süleyman Dede, who passed away in 1985, is contested, and his decision to initiate a number of persons as Mevlevi Shaykhs (which has resulted in more than one American Mevlevi branch) has been criticized.¹⁹

Jelaleddin Loras and the Mevlevi Order of America

Dede's son Jelaleddin Loras was born in a house close to Mevlana Rumi's *türbe* (mausoleum) in Konya, and grew up as a close friend to the current head of the Chelebi family, Faruk Chelebi, and his sister Esin Chelebi. He started his Mevlevi training at the age of five and was initiated as a *semazen* in his early teens, taking part in the above-mentioned "tours" in Europe from the 1960s onward. As we saw above, he was initiated as a Postneshin by his father in 1978 and was sent to the Claymont community in the United States, where he spent about a year teaching the technique of the Turn (the whirling) and the *sema* ritual.

Participants at Claymont naturally took different approaches to the rituals taught at the center. One of the participants, who later became a Mevlevi Order of America member, recalls that "they did not read or talk much about the movements," as these were considered to resonate more with the emotions than the intellect.²⁰ Another Claymont student, Karim, who today is initiated as a Postneshin in the Mevlevi Order of America, recalls, on the contrary, that:

students at Claymont were above all interested in the meaning conveyed in sacred dance, and were continually instructed in the meaning of every movement and the symbolism of every part of the sacred dance garments. The garments are vestments that represent specific spiritual meanings and experiences. Taken as a whole, these meanings and experiences convey what it means to be a Sufi and a Mevlevi.²¹

It seems, however, clear that a mimetic approach was strong among many of the Claymont students, which was played out not only in the way they learned the *sema*, but also in how they made their own Mevlevi garments—by sewing them or using karate outfits or the like—and fashioned their own *sikkes* out of cardboard and felt. It was important not only to *do* the ritual in the right way, but also as far as possible to *look* like a Mevlevi while doing it.²² These are themes that will be developed below.

The mimetic approach to learning the ritual was reinforced by the fact that Jelaleddin Loras could not speak English when he came to Claymont. To learn the *sema*, his students and early followers had to watch what he did carefully and imitate his actions. Most early members who met Loras in the beginning years of the Mevlevi Order of America remember his lack of English as a positive:

The beauty of meeting Jelaleddin as a teacher at that time was that his English was terrible. So, in order to understand what he was saying, you had to listen with your inner ear, you couldn't listen just to his words, because sometimes he couldn't get them out, you know. And to be in a circle, being directed by the teacher . . . and . . . I never took my eyes off him, ever, in the circle.²³

After the course in Claymont, Postneshin Loras was invited to the Bay Area by Shaykh Wali Ali Meyer of the Ruhaniat Sufi Order²⁴ and came to stay and teach in their house Sami Mahal, located in San Rafael, just across the bridge from San Francisco. Here, according to Meyer, Loras more or less functioned as a Ruhaniat teacher, but also began the work of what soon was to become the Mevlevi Order of America.²⁵

By 1981, Loras had gathered a substantial number of followers who had mastered the technique of the Turn and was able to present a public *sema* at Dominican College in San Rafael, California. That same year he also founded the Mevlevi Order of America together with followers from Claymont as well as from the Ruhaniat. From the beginning, the main activities of the Mevlevi Order of America have been the *sema*, but already during his time with the Ruhaniat, the Postneshin also began to create his own *zikrs*, containing elements from existing Turkish *zikrs* and from his own creative process.

After his father's death in 1985, and especially during the time between February of 1989 and *Shebi Arus* of 1991, Postneshin Loras was in Konya.²⁶ After his return, contacts with Turkey appear to have intensified, and the Mevlevi Order of America crystallized more and more into a Sufi Order in its own right. In 1994, members from the group traveled to Turkey for the first time, where they were granted permission to perform the *sema* both in the courtyard of the mausoleum in Konya and in the old *tekke* in Istanbul. In the fall of 1997, they went to Turkey again, and this time they obtained permission to perform inside the mausoleum in Konya and once again in Istanbul. The fact that Loras not only brought his followers to Turkey but had also been able to get permission for them to perform the *sema* in these very significant locations in Mevlevi tradition arguably has a strong legitimizing effect in regard to the authenticity of the Mevlevi Order of America.

Altogether, the 1990s appear to have been a prosperous time for the Mevlevi Order of America for attracting new members, and in 1996 they presented not one, but five, *sema* rituals celebrating *Shebi Arus* between

December 11 and December 17 in Fairfax, California; Ashland, Eugene, and Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington.²⁷ As the locations suggest, the states of Washington and Oregon had become as important for the Mevlevi Order as the San Francisco Bay Area, where the Order was founded.

In 1996, the Head of the Chelebi family, Celaleddin Chelebi died, and his son Faruk inherited leadership of the Mevlevi Foundation in Turkey (as the *tariqa*, or Chelebi family's organization, as it is now called). This probably also had an impact on the relationship between the Chelebi family and the Mevlevi Order of America. In 2002, the Postneshin and a number of his shaykhs went to Switzerland to meet with Faruk Chelebi. What transpired at this meeting, and the significance of it, is not totally clear. According to one of the shaykhs taking part, the meeting was aimed at connecting the Mevlevi Order of America to the Chelebi family,²⁸ whereas another of the shaykhs participating in the meeting understood it as geared to the "reestablishment of good relations, former relations"²⁹ or as a "meeting between old friends."³⁰

Today, the Mevlevi Order of America can best be understood as autonomous in relation to the Chelebi family, even though they maintain good relations. One further example of this is that Faruk's sister, Esin Chelebi, has regularly visited Mevlevi Order of America camps and activities since 2002, and also hosted the Mevlevi Order of America in Istanbul and Konya on numerous occasions. According to one of my interviewees, Esin Chelebi has, however, opposed the initiation of women to be Postneshins in the Mevlevi Order of America.³¹ During the time I did my fieldwork, Esin Chelebi did, however, seem positive toward how women led the *sema*, and how men and women performed the ritual together in the Mevlevi Order of America. Again, this is an example of how relations between the Mevlevi Order of America and the Chelebi family are somewhat unclear and in a state of flux.

Organization

The organizational structure of the Mevlevi Order of America has developed over time and is to some extent still evolving. In 2013, Jeleleddin Loras initiated some of his senior Shaykhs as Postneshins, and after that his own title and position has come to be Makam Postneshin. Table 5.1 shows what the authority and organizational structure of the Order looks like today.³²

Table 5.1. Authority Structure of the Mevlevi Order of America

Makam Postneshin	Head of the order, held by Jelaleddin Loras.
Postneshin	<i>Postneshin</i> (“skin sitter”) refers to the shaykh sitting on the red sheep’s skin, conducting the <i>sema</i> ritual.
Postneshins-in-training	Since 2008, the Postneshin has offered his most devoted senior shaykhs, which have been active for at least twenty years, to train to be initiated as Postneshins.
Board member	The Board consists of a president, vice-president, chairman, treasurer, and secretary.
<i>Semabashi</i>	The <i>Semabashi</i> is the person, or persons, responsible for the annual <i>sema</i> celebrations in December.
<i>Atesh bas</i>	<i>Atesh bas</i> refers to the leader of a Mevlevi Order of America center. This leader hosts classes as well as workshops or retreats.
Shaykh(a)	Being a shaykh(a) in the Mevlevi Order of America primarily means to be an instructor, teach turn classes, lead <i>zikr</i> gatherings, etc.
<i>Semazenbashi</i>	These are experienced shaykhs who are chosen by the Postneshin to help him conduct the <i>sema</i> , direct the <i>semazens</i> , and control the pace of the ritual.
Green <i>alef-lamet</i>	<i>Alef-lamet</i> is the name of the belt that is part of the Mevlevi garments. Wearing a green belt means one is training to become a shaykh.
<i>Semazen</i>	A <i>Semazen</i> is an initiated, due-paying member of the Mevlevi Order of America who has gone through at least nine months to a year of consistent weekly turn practice.
<i>Newniyazs</i>	These are <i>Semazens</i> in training, learning to turn.
<i>Mutrip</i>	These are musicians. They are not necessarily initiated members of the Mevlevi Order of America but might also be shaykhs.*

*Fieldnotes from March 12, 2009.

The initiation of senior shaykhs as postneshins in 2013 can be understood as a result of Loras considering his senior shaykhs experienced enough to take positions as ritual experts and leaders. The initiations also have affected the possibility to practice the *sema* in the United States, as Loras has spent much time in Konya in recent years and also suffers from health problems that make it increasingly difficult for him to travel.

Murids and *Muhibs*: Followers and Friends

Over the years, hundreds of people have been initiated as *semazens* in the Mevlevi Order of America and could be considered *murids*, or followers of Makam Postneshin Jaleddin Loras. Not all of them, however, participate in the Order's activities, and today about 180 members can be said to participate on a more or less regular basis. Others who come less regularly are regarded as *muhibs*—friends.³³ According to my field observations and interviews with members of the Order, the majority of Mevlevi Order of America *murids* can be characterized as Caucasian, middle-class Americans of Christian or Jewish background aged between fifty and seventy years, a few of whom have converted to Islam. Most of the members do not self-identify as Muslims, but rather as spiritual in a more universalist sense.³⁴ The absolute majority of members live in the Northern Pacific region of the United States, but there are also followers in Germany, Israel, and Turkey. A careful estimate suggests that the Mevlevi Order of America attracts more women than men.

Today, there are Mevlevi Order of America centers and/or teaching shaykhs and shaykhas spread throughout the United States, Europe, and Israel. We know of one in Hawaii, three in California, two in Oregon, two in Washington State, one in New York State, one in Virginia, one in Germany, two in Turkey, and one in Israel.³⁵

Garments

As indicated above, the Mevlevi ritual garments play an important role in Mevlevi Order of America members' identity construction, which will be discussed more thoroughly below. In table 5.2 I present the most common items of clothing used in rituals practiced in the group. The garment most associated with Mevlevi Sufism is the vestment worn during the

Table 5.2. Mevlevi Order of America *Sema* Garments

<i>Sikke</i>	The tall and slender felt hat, white	Symbolizes the headstone
<i>Hirka</i>	Long-sleeved cloak, black	Symbolizes the tomb or graveyard
<i>Tennure</i>	Sleeveless frock, white	Symbolizes the shroud
<i>Destigul</i>	Long-sleeved jacket, white	
<i>Tigy bend</i>	A cord used to secure the tenure hidden under the <i>Alef-lamet</i>	
Turn shoes	Soft leather moccasins, white	
<i>Alef-lamet</i>	Belt of blue, yellow, red, black, green, white, or “no color”	Symbolizes the <i>maqam</i> of the <i>nafs</i> , the spiritual state of the wearer’s “self” or “ego”*

*E-mail from Karim, quoting Loras, January 6, 2017. For a discussion on these spiritual states and corresponding colors, see Sorgenfrei, *American Dervish*, 151–152.

Sema ritual performances, a set of clothing that also comes imbued with symbolic meaning for members of the Order.

But there are other items of ritualized costume used in the Order that are primarily worn during *zikr* rituals and other more official gatherings. These are similar to the *sema* garments in carrying traditional value, as they were worn by Mevlevi in Ottoman times. The items (often) worn in *zikr* gatherings are listed in table 5.3.

Table 5.3. Mevlevi Order of America *Zikr* Garments

<i>Tennure</i>	Sleeveless frock
<i>Arakia</i>	A brimless cap
<i>Haydaria</i>	A longer vest in the color chosen by the local Mevlevi Order of America center (often green or brown)
<i>Alef-lamet</i>	Belt
<i>Mest</i>	Soft leather moccasins

As will be analyzed below, the garments may play important roles in Mevlevi Order of America identity and authority formations, as they not only identify the wearer as a Mevlevi, but also signal her or his position within the Order’s spiritual hierarchy and authority structure.

Activities

With the exception of the *Shebi Arus*, certain larger workshops that attract people from different circles, and weekly turning classes—activities of local Mevlevi Order of America groups might differ. Table 5.4 shows an example based primarily on the schedule of the Seattle group in combination with fieldwork observations.³⁶

Table 5.4. Mevlevi Order of America Schedule of Activities

Daily	Every member of the Mevlevi Order of America, as well as <i>Newniyazs</i> , are to do at least eighteen <i>chuks</i> (turns) each day. They are also to advised to do “daily practice and study of <i>Adab</i> (particularly how we eat, pray, and communicate with one another).” The Postneshins-in-training were also to practice <i>salat</i> on a daily basis and to read the <i>Qur’an</i> and Martin Lings’s biography of the Prophet Mohammed.
Weekly	Every week there is a turn class in all of the local circles. In Seattle, this set is as follows: turn class, <i>zikr</i> , turn class, <i>sema</i> class.
Monthly	The circle in Seattle has a monthly <i>sema</i> class. Other groups might have other monthly activities.
Annually	During my time in the field, the schedule of annual events looked like this: February: teachers’ retreat April: Postneshin training program June: summer camp First weekend in October: Mevlevi Order of America camp in the United States Second weekend in October: camp in Germany Third weekend in October: workshop in the United States December 7–17: <i>sema</i> camp, <i>sema</i> tour, and <i>Shebi Arus</i>

In addition to these activities, every Mevlevi Order of America circle has its own extra activities, such as open workshops or public *zikr* gatherings. At such *zikr* gatherings, it is more common for *semazens* to participate, and if Makam Postneshin Loras is present, a number of *muhibs* often show up. The character of the weekly turn classes also varies among circles. All classes focus primarily on the turn and the *sema*, but individual teachers add other elements, such as readings of Rumi's poetry or discussions about spiritual matters (*sohbet*).

Toward a Mevlevi Order of America Understanding of Sufism

Mevlevi Order of America members, especially senior members, are, in my experience, generally well read when it comes to spiritual literature in the broad sense, and many (if not most) have been, or still are, members of a number of diverse religious groups and communities. Many of them value the writings of the Sufi musician and founder of the Inayati Order, Inayat Khan (d. 1927), author of many books on Sufism, Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee (b. 1953), and the American poet Coleman Barks (b. 1937), who more than anyone else has popularized Rumi's poetry in English. What these three individuals have in common is they generally present Sufism as a sort of universal mysticism, not as a specifically Islamic spiritual tradition. There are also Mevlevi Order of America members who have pursued more academic interests in Sufism, influenced by scholars such as Annemarie Schimmel (d. 2003) and William Chittick (b. 1943). Translations of Rumi's poetry in the versions of Reynold A. Nicholson (d. 1945) or Coleman Barks are found on everyone's bookshelves. In 2016 and 2017, Michael Hafiz Bielas, a Mevlevi Order of America Shaykh and Postneshin in Washington State, published the first three volumes of Nicholson's translations of Rumi's *Mathnawi* "updated to a more accessible language."³⁷ These are to be followed by the remaining volumes, and also a volume consisting of commentaries on Rumi's poetry.³⁸

Another source—and for many members the most important for their knowledge of Sufism—is of course the Makam Postneshin Jaleleddin Loras. His *sohbets*, talks on spiritual matters delivered in gatherings (and in some cases written down and distributed among members),³⁹ are usually quite short, lasting between five and ten minutes, though sometimes spanning thirty to sixty minutes (usually for smaller groups of close initiates), and most often based on a few recurring themes, such as:

- Mevlevi Sufism as the path of love and service.
- The people present are among the Beloved of God.
- Everyone carries God in their heart, which is why it is important to keep it clean.

These themes are mostly embroidered with quotes and allusions to the *Qur'an*, the *Sunna*, the *Masnavi*, or other Sufi works. The recurring themes of Loras's *sohbet*s additionally connect to the ideals of *adab*, described as embodying humility, generosity, loving-kindness, grace, spiritual intent, and trust in God—themes that can also be identified within the Mevlevi Order of America's self-presentation on its website:

We are sincere seekers on a perennially modern, and centuries old path into the Divine Mystery. We are concerned with developing ourselves through emotional, intellectual, and physical practices. We respect all traditions which seek to accept the responsibility of humanity to care for each other and our world. We do not condone the use of sacred teachings to justify violence or to further political ends.⁴⁰

The Sufism practiced and preached in the Mevlevi Order of America is generally envisioned as an expression of a universal mysticism that is not exclusive to Islam and which can be summed up as centering on ideals of humility, generosity, and service that aim at cleansing the "heart" through asking for forgiveness and through trust in God until it shines with the Light of God. These metaphors are fairly common in Sufi discourse.⁴¹

These ethical elements generally coalesce under what is called *adab*, which in the Mevlevi Order of America is much talked about as a bridge between ritual practice and spiritual teachings. Historically, *adab* has been related to literature, fine arts, and good or ritualized manners in the broad sense,⁴² and the Sufi *tariqas* have often produced and studied *adab* manuals, which is also true of the Mevlevis. In the Mevlevi Order of America, *adab* is an ethical teaching understood as a thoughtful, sometimes ritualized, way of interacting with one another and especially with individuals at higher degrees of initiation, but also, and ideally, as a practice to internalize and bring into your daily life. As such, it features a pedagogical element aiming at what has been called the habituation of virtues.⁴³ Thus, members of this Order practice in order to embody and spontaneously perform a virtuous Mevlevi way of living in their everyday lives.

A typical way of explaining the transmission of *adab* among my informants, especially among senior Mevlevis, is that it has been learned by listening to *sohbets* and especially by observing the Makam Postneshin, or through absorbing stories about Süleyman Dede. Shakina Reinhertz, one of the most profiled Shaykhas and Postneshins of the Mevlevi Order of America and author of the book *Women Called to the Path of Rumi*, has described the learning of *adab* as follows:

Really, the teaching of *adab* is this modeling of the teacher where you study his behavior and then you think about how [the Makam Postneshin] acts in a certain way, how the Prophet Muhammad acted in a certain way. How would Süleyman Dede handle it? I mean, that becomes what you're doing, as to teach to yourself a broader perspective that isn't just your personal reaction, but that you're doing it in a more thoughtful manner where you see that what you're doing is not because of your individuality but as part of the Mevlevi order.⁴⁴

Again, a pedagogical element is evident through narratives about Mevlevi Order of America authorities such as Rumi, Süleyman Dede, or the Postneshin, who serve as *models of* and *models for* an hagiographical habitus⁴⁵ and thus become ideals of identification.

On Authority and Legitimacy

As discussed above, the Mevlevi Order of America can be considered autonomous in relation to the Chelebi branch. In texts, as well as in discussions, Süleyman Dede and Makam Postneshin Loras are put forward as authorities in questions concerning the Mevlevi Order of America. One example of how Dede's and Loras's authority are claimed can be found in the "Mission Statement" of the Mevlevi Order of America, in which they define their own project. This text is reproduced (in different formulations) on webpages as well as on flyers and other handouts distributed at workshops or public performances. The statement reads as follows:

The Mission of the Mevlevi Order of America is to be a living embodiment of the Mevlevi Way, through sharing the teachings of the great 13th century poet and mystic Jelaluddin Rumi. We offer cultural programs, open workshops, and public

presentations in the spirit of inclusion, equality, unity, and love, under the inspiration of Suleyman Hayati Dede, and the guidance of his son and successor Jeleleddin Loras.⁴⁶

It is worth noting here that no mention of the Chelebi family appears in the text, but only of Rumi and then Süleyman Dede, who is thought of as a transmitter and living embodiment of the essence of Rumi's teachings, that is, the Mevlevi Way. This resembles the quote beginning this chapter introducing the *Sema* performance in San Francisco, in which the authenticity of the ritual and to some degree the legitimacy of the Makam Postneshin was claimed through reference to traditional authority, as the ritual was said to be presented "as it has been for over 700 years in an unbroken line of transmission." In both texts, the Mevlevi Order of America is connected through Loras and Dede directly to Rumi, with no mention of the Chelebi family and their *silsila* (spiritual genealogy).⁴⁷

A Shaykh's Ijaza

Another example of how the Makam Postneshin's, and hence the Mevlevi Order of America's, authority and autonomy in relation to the Chelebis can be found is an *ijaza* from the mid-1990s, in which the Postneshin bestows the title of Shaykh on a member of the Mevlevi Order of America. The document is formulated almost as a contract in nine points and is signed by the Makam Postneshin as well as the new shaykh. The first paragraphs are of special interest here:

In taking hand with the Mevlevi Order of America Postneshin Jelaluddin Loras as spiritual successor to his father, Hazrati Hajji Murshid Suleyman Hayati Loras; and Hazrati Pir Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi; in receiving the *ijaze* (teaching permission) and *destar-al-sharif* (sheikh's turban), I accept the responsibilities of a sheikh(a) as follows:

(1) Postneshin Jelaluddin Loras is ultimately responsible for the vision and form of the Mevlevi Order of America. All decisions regarding the Order's direction are the postneshin's. Sheikh(a)s are committed to unfolding and manifesting this vision under his guidance.

(2) I understand that I may give hand/initiate mureeds in the name of Mevlana, but that only the postneshin may name sheikh(a)s, khalif(a)s, or authorize teachers of the Mevlevi way. Mureeds are to be received and respected as Mevlana's mureeds, and as members of the Order, and not the mureeds of any individual sheikh(a)s.

In this document the Makam Postneshin's authority as head of the Mevlevi Order of America, the newly initiated shaykh, as well as over any of the shaykh's *murids* is formulated. These claims of authority can also be analyzed as expressed in explicit as well as in more implicit ways.

Explicit Claims of Authority

In the *ijaza*, the Makam Postneshin is made "ultimately responsible for the vision and form of the Mevlevi Order of America." He is to make "all decisions regarding the Order's direction," and the initiated Shaykh is to make manifest the Postneshin's vision. It is further stated that "only the Postneshin may name shaykh(a)s, khalif(a)s, or authorize teachers." The Postneshin's superior authority is further expressed by "the taking of hands" (*bayat*), as well as through the title of *Postneshin* and being called "the spiritual successor" of Süleyman Dede. All of these statements can be taken as claims of his authority in the Order. Hence, in bestowing upon someone the authority that comes with being made a shaykh, the Makam Postneshin also strengthens his own authority over her or him as well as over the new shaykh's students. As in the Mission statement, the *ijaza* makes no mention of the Chelebi family but only of Rumi, Süleyman Dede, and Jelaledin Loras. The *ijaza* in this way authorizes the Postneshin and authenticates the Mevlevi Order of America and the initiated Shaykh by connecting them through the founding figure (Rumi) as well as to spiritual transmission through Dede and the Postneshin. Hence these texts can be analyzed as claims of the authenticity or legitimacy of the Mevlevi Order of America, as a Mevlevi branch autonomous in relation to the Chelebi's authority.

Implicit Claims of Authority

The above-quoted paragraphs from the *ijaza* also display a number of more implicit claims of authority connected to Sufi traditions as well as

to symbolic vocabularies or attributes. This is seen through the use of traditional vocabulary in the document, a vocabulary of charismatic value in the American milieu, such as *Hazrati* ("His Holiness"), *Hajji* (a title given to a man who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca), *Murshid* (the title of a Sufi teacher), and also as successor of *Hazrati Pir* ("elder," equivalent of shaykh) *Mevlana* ("our master") Jelaluddin Rumi. The message is further conveyed through traditional Sufi insignia such as the *ijaza* document and the *destar-i sharif* (the Postneshin's turban), expressions that can be understood as relating to traditional as well as charismatic authority.

Through such indications, Mevlevi Order of America members can be seen as being representatives of what Roof has called "spiritual entrepreneurs," taking it upon themselves, in a time and place with a weak religious monopoly and weak regulating institutions, to find, formulate, and honor a past that can help cultivate a collective memory that is meaningful in the present.⁴⁸ The material presented above also suggests that concepts such as tradition, authenticity, and legitimacy are of significance for the value of the "commodities"—rituals, titles, garments, teachings—that constitute the tradition at stake.⁴⁹ This can be further exemplified through an analysis of the use of garments and rituals within the Mevlevi Order of America.

To Dress the Part

The image of the whirling dervish is, as noted previously, an archetype of Sufism in Europe and North America and, as illustrated above, participants in the Gurdijeff group in Claymont, West Virginia, in the late 1970s did their best to look like Mevlevis, such as by donning karate outfits and homemade *sikkes* while turning.⁵⁰ By means of the information that they had seen in pictures and books, they used whatever they had available to try to look as authentic as possible. Later on, through Jelaleddin Loras, they were given the possibility of ordering some of the garments directly from Konya and could sew the rest using patterns Loras had brought from Turkey.⁵¹

These garments play a significant role for new *murids*' identification processes even today. All *semazens* are generally initiated *in*, and to some extent *through*, the garments. They perform the rituals and are identified as Mevlevis by their garments, just as they may internalize and express Mevlevi identity through the garments. They can also have their position within the Mevlevi Order of America identified by other members through

observation of what they wear, as the Order's hierarchy is expressed through small differences in garment details.

For many of my informants, watching a *sema* performance for the first time is an immense moment. Some have told me about extraordinary experiences of, for example, a divine light or an angelic presence, which has had a strong attraction that may have instigated a transformation toward a Mevlevi self-identification.⁵² To imagine oneself whirling fully clothed in a *sema* outfit is arguably a strong incitement for joining a Mevlevi Order of America turn class. One of my interviewees told me how he, after witnessing his first *sema*, searched for "Mevlevi" on the Internet and discovered there was a group called the Mevlevi Order of America offering turn classes in the same part of the Seattle area to which he had just moved. Shortly after, he signed up for his first lessons.⁵³

To begin turn practice, to become a *newniyaz*, also entails establishing a relationship with a teaching shaykh and entering the beginner's rank in the Mevlevi Order of America authority structure. Watching and imitating a shaykh might nurture a budding Mevlevi self-identification. In such a way, an authorization process begins in which the *newniyaz* ideally begins internalizing the Mevlevi Order of America teachings and structures as well. Imitating Mevlevi and Mevlevi Order of America role models—from Rumi via Süleyman Dede to the Makam Postneshin, Shaykhs, and *semazens*—and incorporating ethical and aesthetic features expressed through body techniques and garments as well as through verbal teachings play important roles in *newniyaz* identity formations. The garments are therefore part of a ritualization that also can be seen as an arena for the production of embodied Mevlevi Order of America identities.⁵⁴

The role of garments as a constituent of an embodied Mevlevi Order of America self-identification is noticeable early in turn class. For example, in the Seattle turn class, the Shaykhs leading the class wore their turn shoes (*mest*) in class as the sole clothing item separating them from the rest of the group, as everyone came in their everyday clothes. *Newniyazs* were, however, early on offered the possibility of acquiring their own shoes. Buying a pair of turn shoes can be understood as an expression of further commitment to the group. Putting the soft leather shoes on—as a piece of visible Mevlevi attire—a person begins to look, and may also begin to feel, just a little bit more like a Mevlevi, even when not turning.

Just like ritualized acts, small pieces of ritual vestment may thus set the wearer, as well as the time spent wearing it, apart from everyday life. In a way similar to ritualized behavior, the shoes create a framing, which

sets the moments wearing them apart from the mundane quotidian time surrounding it. By wearing the shoes, then, an individual has taken yet another step toward a stronger Mevlevi identification.

To Walk the Walk

Shaykhs suggest that *newniyazs* as well as *semazens* should practice their turning technique on a daily basis. The most common recommendation is to perform eighteen *chuks* (turns) each day at home, and to perform their kitchen tasks standing on their left leg to practice balance. To ask of initiates that they practice the turn on a daily basis at home can be understood as aiming to achieve at least two effects. First of all, the *sema* is difficult and demanding to master, and therefore everyone needs to train regularly to gain practical ritual knowledge⁵⁵ and ability. Second, initiating daily training can also be comprehended as a strategy of internalization, reminding practitioners of their Mevlevi Order of America identification. Similar to how *adab* is ideally to develop into a rehearsed spontaneity, daily *chuks* aim at a ritualization of daily life as well as to extend members' Mevlevi Order of America identification outside of the weekly classes or other gatherings.

If the turn is to be understood as the smallest constituent and central technique of the repertoire, the ritualized body position called *muhur* (seal) can be analyzed as a recurring, key ritual act and an important part of the framework for all Mevlevi activities. The *muhur* position—standing up straight and/or bowing, right big toe over the left, arms crossed over the chest, right arm over the left—is, ideally, the beginning and end of every Mevlevi activity. Upon entering or leaving a *semahane*, members are to bow in *muhur* at the threshold. Awaiting the Makam Postneshin, they stand in *muhur*. When beginning and ending *sema*, *zikr*, or *sohbet*, they should ideally stand in *muhur*. During rites, they stand in *muhur* between all activities and as a resting position between ritual acts.

As a ritualized act, the *muhur* can thus be understood as aiming at establishing what Catherine Bell calls a privileged contrast⁵⁶ between mundane and Mevlevi activities. It is a “switch,” a transforming ritualized posture that turns off the mundane world while turning on the Mevlevi reality. Bowing in *muhur* at the threshold of the space in which they are to practice or perform the *sema* changes the performer from a student,

carpenter, or priest into a *newniyaz*, *semazen*, or Shaykh, just as the room changes from a living room or theater stage into a *semahane*.

The powerful effect such ritualization can have on my informants is illustrated by the following quote from a member. She describes how she bowed in *muhur* at the threshold the day she was initiated in the Mevlevi Order of America:

[S]omething hit me right away as I bowed in the doorway—it was as though I was leaving my other life behind and entering a new existence. It's hard to put into words and I am still watching the effects of this passage . . .⁵⁷

The *muhur* can also be understood as being the smallest constituent in what Philip Mellor and Chris Shilling have labeled a body pedagogics, seeking to tutor bodies, and to some extent minds, in a particular way.⁵⁸ Through ritualization and ritual training, hierarchical structures, schemes of perception, and ethical dispositions (*adab*) might also be internalized.⁵⁹ Sufism, among my informants, is often connected to sacred biographies of, for example, Rumi or—and this connects directly to the *muhur*—Rumi's cook, the Atesh Bas. In Shakina Reinhertz's book, *Women Called to the Path of Rumi*, the story of the Atesh Bas is narrated as follows:

The title of *atesh bas* comes from the name of a devoted follower of Jelaluddin Rumi who lived in Meran, Turkey and was Mevlana's cook. One evening, unexpectedly, he received word that Rumi was coming and wanted a meal served to his *murids* who were traveling with him. On this night, however, there was not enough wood for the fire, so Atesh Bas put his foot into the dying embers to help catch the flames onto the awaiting logs. When he removed his foot, only his big toe was burnt, which was a sign to him that his faith was not perfect. When Rumi arrived Atesh Bas put his right foot over his left burnt toe so that his sacrifice would not be noticed. When Mevlana saw the position, he understood what had happened. He embraced Atesh Bas before all the dervishes saying, "Few on earth have such a faith as Atesh Bas. In the future, all of our dervishes will bow with one foot placed over the big toe to remind us what faith really means."⁶⁰

The *muhur* posture, being encoded with the story of the Atesh Bas, can be seen in terms of teaching, learning, and expressing an ideal disposition of humility and servanthood, aiming at establishing a Mevlevi habitus. The humility perfected by Atesh Bas is reflected and connected through such narratives to the ritualized posture itself, making those who perform it smaller by folding the arms over the chest, lowering the upper body in front of a person of a more advanced position or a space of awe. The *muhur* in combination with the garments also aims at subduing individual expressions. Thus comprehended, ritualized behavior and garments can be analyzed as developed to enhance Mevlevi Order of America identity and authority, as well as to teach central doctrines such as humility and service in the name of the Mevlevi Way, connected to Mevlevi Order of America *adab*.

Initiation

After at least one year of training in turn class, a *newniyaz* can be initiated into the Mevlevi Order of America, which is done via a ritual in which both garments and ritual competence play significant roles. The initiates might be of different ethnic and religious backgrounds and of different sexes, and the ritual acts might differ, just as the ritual space does, but the items worn are the same. During the ritual, the *newniyazs* receive help getting dressed in the *sema* garments by their teaching shaykhs, and through this process what sociologist Marcell Mauss calls prestigious imitation⁶¹ is perfected, as initiate and shaykh end up being dressed the same way and finally can participate together, ideally on equal terms, in the same ritual.

The key act of the ritual of initiation is when the *newniyaz* are dressed in their white garments, lined up with their *sikkes* in their hands, and the Makam Postneshin walks slowly down the line—while the rest of the group solemnly chants “*Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar*”—kisses their *sikkes*, and puts them on their heads. In these moments, the transformation from *newniyaz* to *semazen*, from aspirant to member, is fulfilled.⁶²

There is thus reciprocity of authorization expressed in the rite of initiation that needs to be taken into consideration. Bowing to the Postneshin, who places the *sikke* on their heads as a visual token of them being initiated as Mevlevi, *newniyaz* are simultaneously authorized as members while affirming the Makam Postneshin’s authority over them. The ritual initiation is therefore a strong act of identification as well as an authority affirmation. Hence, being initiated in the Mevlevi Order of America means the new *murid* both looks like a *semazen* and has mastered the ritual skills of the *semazen*.

The ritual of initiation should, however, as one of my interviewees, a Hawaiian shaykh and Postneshin by the name of Karim, states, be seen as a new beginning rather than as a goal in and of itself. Discussing a first draft of this very chapter, he pointed to the fact that the focus I have chosen, on aesthetic and ritual expressions of authority and identity formation within the Order, runs the risk of making the Mevlevi Order of America appear shallow since he did not recognize such outward expressions of Mevlevi Sufism as the most important tokens of Mevlevi identity formation. In an attempt to find a balance between my focus on garments and rituals, and my interviewees' more spiritual and emotional emphasis, I therefore let Karim have the last word:

Certainly people are attracted to us because of the fame of the whirling dervish image, and certainly there is some ego satisfaction in "looking like a dervish." But that motivation does not last long, and we wait to see if there is a deeper attraction in the student. Our group is quite small because of this: the practice is difficult because it stirs up the contents of our ego and lower nature and forces us to confront what is in there, muddying up our consciousness, the rust on our Heart. Then the real work begins. Are we motivated strongly enough by our desire to find a deeper identity than our ego to struggle with that ego and make it submit? This is the meaning of Islam, to bring our egos into submission to that which is higher in us. This is what forms us as a community. We share this love for a deeper life, and out of this love of a deeper life comes the experience of a deeper truth. When we put on the vestments of Sema or Zikr, we kiss them because they remind us of our intention. This practice of putting on the vestments brings us into the present moment, out of our waking sleep and into a state of readiness to wake up to what is real. This is what brings us together. That is why we love this Mevlevi path.⁶³

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented an overview of the history and development of an American branch of an Ottoman Turkish Mevlevi Sufi *tariqa*, the Mevlevi Order of America. In line with the major subthemes of this volume, I have also analyzed issues dealing specifically with Sufi orders,

authority, and identity construction in the new American context. In doing so, I have primarily focused on instances of ritualization and the use of ritual garments in such processes. I have also indicated how notions of tradition are used—mainly in texts—to argue for the authenticity and legitimacy of the Mevlevi Order of America as a branch of Mevlevi Sufism that is more or less autonomous in relation to the genealogical heritage and authority of the Chelebi family.

My analysis has also traced how members' Mevlevi identification develops through processes of what Marcel Mauss calls "prestigious imitation," in which the Sufi *murid* learns through a mimetic approach—be it of famous images of whirling dervishes, of a teaching Shaykh, or of fellow students. This practice of learning from and imitating individuals of higher initiation within the Order also reflects and supports its authority structure.

Analyzed as such, some elements of the Mevlevi Order of America may be comparable to, say, joining a soccer club or a Tai Chi class. Signing up for a class ideally means that you submit to a teacher's instructions and develop a mimetic relationship in which you as a student look to your teacher for instruction—you try to dribble the ball as they do, to master the postures as they do, or to learn to turn as they do.

Mastering the technique of the *Sema* and being initiated into the *Sema* garments of the Mevlevi Order of America was analyzed as being an important step toward Mevlevi self-identification, but as expressed by one of the shaykhs and Postneshins of the Order this is not, from an emic perspective, seen as the final goal but rather as a beginning of a path toward a deeper Mevlevi identification. The final quotation of the chapter, delivered by Karim, shows that there are different ways to study and comprehend Sufism (or any other religious tradition) and that the result, of course, depends much on the focus of the aspirant. The two approaches presented here—my more anthropological focus and Karim's experiential emic testimony of spiritual struggle—I hope do some justice to the evolving and multifaceted expressions and impressions of the Mevlevi Order of America.

Notes

1. The Portland Middle Eastern Arts Update, December 2, 2008. This chapter builds primarily on my dissertational work on the Mevlevi Order of America, conducted between 2008 and 2010 and published as *American Dervish: Making Mevlevism in the United States of America*.

2. A January 9, 2017, Google image search of “dervish” resulted in twenty-one images of whirling dervishes out of the first twenty-five images to turn up, and a search of “sufi” on the same date yielded eighteen images of whirling dervishes out of the first twenty-five images appearing.

3. Jane Ciabattari, *Why is Rumi the Best-Selling Poet in the US?*

4. For a popular introduction to Rumi, see Annemarie Schimmel, *I Am Wind You Are Fire: The Life and Work of Rumi* or, for a more thorough approach, Franklin Lewis, *Rumi: Past and present, east and west: the life, teaching and poetry of Jalâl al-Din Rumi*.

5. Binbaş, İlker Evrim, “Music and Samâ‘ of the Mavlaviyya in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: Origins, Ritual, Foundation,” 67.

6. Lewis, *Rumi: Past and present*, 434.

7. Lewis, *Rumi: Past and present*, 444.

8. Quoted from Lewis, *Rumi: Past and present*, 465. See also John R. Barnes, “A Short Note on the Dissolution of the Dervish Orders in Turkey,” 33–39; Catharina Raudvere, *The Book and the Roses: Sufi Women, Visibility, and Zikir in Contemporary Istanbul*, 27–28.

9. Lewis, *Rumi: Past and present*, 521; Ibrahim Gamard, *The Leader of all Mevlevis*.

10. Recorded interview with Barihuda Tanrikorur, October 21, 2011.

11. This claim primarily comes from Ibrahim Gamard, a former member of the Mevlevi Order of America, see www.dar-al-masnavi.org/leader-of-mevlevis.html. Accessed Dec. 22, 2016. According to Süleyman Dede’s son Jaleddin Loras—leader of the Mevlevi Order of America—the Chelebi “had complete trust in the authority of Suleyman Hayati Dede, [and] accepted many [sic] of his initiation in America.” E-mail from Karim, quoting Loras, December 6, 2017.

12. See Kudsi Erguner, *Journeys of a Sufi Musician*, 45–50; Raudvere, *The Book and the Roses*, 27ff.

13. When, exactly, this was done for the first time is unclear. In a text posted on his webpage, the above-mentioned Gamard holds that the first public *sema* after the 1925 ban was performed in 1953, www.dar-al-masnavi.org/about-mevlevi-order.html. Accessed Oct. 30, 2012. Schimmel, in *I am Wind, You are Fire*, 195, tells about her personal experiences as a spectator at this “first celebration of Maulana’s anniversary,” but dates it a year later, to 1954. The Turkish musician Kudsi Erguner, however, states that “they started in 1956”; see Erguner, *Journeys of a Sufi Musician*, 45. The last two dates mentioned can be understood as corresponding to the years given in a book on the Order’s history published by the International Mevlana Foundation in which it is stated that what they call the regeneration period began in 1954 (Esin Chelebi [ed.], *Yüzyıllar Boyu Mevlâna ve Mevlevîlik/Mevlana and Mevlevi Order throughout Century*, 262) and that the first *sema* was held in 1956, Chelebi, *Yüzyıllar Boyu Mevlâna ve Mevlevîlik*, 33.

14. Talat Sait Halman and And Metin, *Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi and the Whirling Dervishes*, 73.

15. Shakina Reinhertz, *Women Called to the Path of Rumi—The Way of the Whirling Dervish*, 33; Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalāloddin Rumi*, 369. For an insider's presentation of these first tours, see Erguner, *Journeys of a Sufi Musician*.

16. Gurdjieff was himself interested and influenced by Sufism and has had a great impact on the reception of Sufism in the Western esoteric milieu, See Michael Pittman, *Classical Spirituality in Contemporary America: The Confluence and Contribution of G.I. Gurdjieff and Sufism*.

17. Elliot (undated), www.gurdjieffdominican.com/Pierre_Elliot_biography.html. Accessed Nov. 9, 2016.

18. The Turkish original has a letterhead saying "Hacı Süleyman Hayati Dede," and the letter is signed, in Ottoman Turkish, "Faqr Moulavi/Mevlevi Süleyman Hayati Dede." The first line of greetings is written in English, but Dede wrote the rest in Latinized Turkish. The copy of the original letter is circulated on the Internet. See, for example, gurdjieffdominican.com/jelaluddin_seminar_2005.html. Accessed Nov. 9, 2016.

19. Gamard; for a detailed discussion of this critique see Simon Sorgenfrei, *American Dervish: Making Mevlevism in the United States of America*, 174–180.

20. Interview, October 12, 2009.

21. E-mail, December 17, 2016.

22. See Sorgenfrei, *American Dervish*, 125–127.

23. Recorded interview with Mevlevi Order of America member, October 25, 2008.

24. The Ruhaniat is an offshoot of the Sufi Order International of Inayat Khan, founded by Samuel Lewis (d. 1971) in the early 1970s.

25. Interview with Wali Ali Meyer, December 9, 2009.

26. Dates given by Mevlevi Order of America member in an e-mail January 8, 2013.

27. From Shakina's as well as Hafiz's records of Mevlevi Order of America *semas*, with which I have been presented.

28. Fieldnotes from March 9, 2009.

29. Recorded interview with Hadi, October 8, 2008. In a list of living postneshins in a book edited by Esin Chelebi and published by the International Mevlana Foundation, the Postneshin is mentioned as "Celâldîn Loras—the son of Süleyman Hayâtî Loras, Disciple of Ahmet Bican Kasapoğlu," Chelebi, 263. They also list what is called "Private Non-Governmental Organizations and Groups," and among these the Mevlevi Order of America is listed, Chelebi, 369.

30. E-mail December 6, 2016.

31. Ibid.

32. For an earlier structure see Sorgenfrei, *American Dervish*, 143–144.

33. A *muhib* is a “lover,” or patron, of a specific master or order as well as someone loosely affiliated to an order.

34. For a further discussion see Sorgenfrei, *American Dervish*, 162–172.

35. E-mail from Karim December 17, 2016.

36. According to their webpage: rumiseattle.org/?page_id=26. Accessed Feb. 1, 2016.

37. Jalāl’udīn Rūmī, *The Mathnawī of Jalāl’udīn Rūmī. Spiritual Couplets of Mystical Meaning, Book I*, ed. Michael Bielas (n.p., 2016). Bielas published the first three of the Mathnawī’s six volumes in 2016 and 2017; the remaining volumes were to be published over subsequent years.

38. E-mail from Michael Hafiz Bielas, December 26, 2016.

39. The German group, for example, have collected a number of “Jelalisms”—sayings of Loras that they distribute among members of the Order.

40. www.hayatidede.org/about/our-lineage. Accessed Feb. 1, 2016.

41. See, for example, Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 98–186.

42. For literature on *Adab*, see Barbara D. Metcalf. *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*.

43. Saba Mahmood, “Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual: Disciplines of Salat,” 838.

44. Recorded interview with Shakina, October 22, 2008.

45. Robert Rozenahl. *Islamic Sufism Unbound: Politics and Piety in Twenty-First Century Pakistan*, 41.

46. Found, for example, at rumiseattle.org/?page_id=26.

47. Of the uses of *silṣila* in the Mevlevi Order of America, see Sorgenfrei, *American Dervish*, 193–204.

48. Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*, 177. Roof refers to an unpublished paper by Hervieu-Léger entitled “Modernity, Secularization, and Religious Memory in Western Europe.”

49. Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 222–223.

50. This was also the case with people practicing the *Sema* in Vancouver Canada about the same time; see Sorgenfrei, *American Dervish*, 215.

51. Interview with Mevlevi Order of America member, October 19, 2008.

52. See especially chapter 8, “To get birth—on Ritual Meaning and Experience,” in Sorgenfrei, *American Dervish*.

53. Interview with Mevlevi Order of America member, June 18, 2009.

54. Noel Dyck and Archetti, Eduardo P. *Embodied Identities: Reshaping Social Life through Sport and Dance*, 6

55. Christoph Wulf “Praxis,” in *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, 395–412.

56. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 90f.

57. Personal e-mail from a Mevlevi Order of America member, June 24, 2011.

58. Philip Mellor and Chris Shilling, "Body Pedagogics and the Religious Habitus: A New Direction for the Sociological Study of Religion," 28ff.
59. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 86.
60. Reinhertz, *Women Called to the Path of Rumi*, 107.
61. Mauss, Marcel, "Techniques of the Body," 73.
62. Bruce Lincoln, *Authority: Construction and Corrosion*, 7.
63. E-mail from Karim December 17, 2016.

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Varieties of American Sufism

Islam, Sufi Orders, and
Authority in a Time of Transition

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and

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