

# Mevlana And The Effects Of Mevlevism On The West World

H. Mevlâna Ve Mevleviliğin Batı Dünyasındaki Etkileri

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## ABSTRACT

Mevlana has been an important guide for the ages to people who have lived their inner journeys with his wisdom, eternal love for the creator, unconditional surrender, world and beyond vision and tolerance. To love the creature is because of the creator, to see, to hear and to feel the creator in every creature. The basis is Allah, love of Allah. Mevlana has formed by this love, shared the answers he reached, become a light in their inner journeys to mankind, guided them by his teachings, embraced everyone with his wide tolerance and thus became the source of the Mawlawi philosophy. After his death, by those who followed him, the Mawlawi philosophy has been based on a systematic structure with procedures and rules, music and ceremony. If we consider this system as a whole, there are symbolized deep meanings of every movement, every dress that is worn, from the head movements to the footsteps, from the position of the hands to the turns. This philosophy which is the love on its basis, which attracts curiosities, has spread to other lands from tongue to tongue, ear to ear, heart to heart and culture to culture. Western artists 'who came to explore the Ottoman culture with both the personal curiosity and various entrusting by their countries' used important events that will shed light on the history, eastern mysticism, structures, natural beauties, ancient cities, daily life and people in their artworks which were used on lots of important sources. During their travels, they were also greatly influenced by the Sema Rituals, which many of them described the ritual as a relaxing and peaceful ceremony. They also included Mawlawi philosophy to their memoirs, travel books, books, paintings, and much more. Thanks to Western artists and travelers, Mevlâna and Mawlawi have spread all over the world and will continue to be.

**Keywords:** Mevlana, Mawlawi, Western artists, Artwork, Travelogues

## ÖZET

H. Mevlâna, bilgeliği, yaratıcıya duyduğu sonsuz aşkı, koşulsuz teslimiyeti, hoşgörüsü, dünya ve ötesi görüşü ile içsel yolculuklarını yaşayan insanlara çağlar boyu önemli bir kılavuz olmuştur. Yaratılanı sevmek, yaratandan ötürüdür, her yaratılarda yaratana görmek, duymak ve hissetmekten gelir. Esas Allah'tır, Allah sevgisidir. H. Mevlâna, bu sevgiyle yoğrulmuş, ulaştığı cevapları paylaşarak, insanlığa nefis yolculuklarında ışık olmuş, öğretileriyle yol göstermiş, engin hoşgörüsü ile herkesi kucaklamış ve bu sayede Mevlevilik felsefesinin de kaynağı olmuştur. Vefatından sonra ona gönül verenler tarafından Mevlevilik felsefesi, usul ve kaideleri, musiki ve merasimi ile sistematik bir yapıya oturtulmuştur. Bu sistemi bütün olarak ele alacak olursak, baş hareketlerinden ayak duruşlarına, ellerin konumundan dönüş şekline kısacası her hareketin, giyilen her kıyafetin sembolize edilmiş derin anlamları bulunmaktadır. Temelinde sevgi olan, merakları cezbeden bu felsefe, dilden dile, kulaktan kulağa, gönülden gönüle ve kültürden kültüre geçerek başka diyarlara da yayılmıştır. Gerek kişisel meraktan, gerekse ülkeleri tarafından çeşitli görevlendirmelerle keşfe gelen batılı sanatçıların Osmanlı kültürünü, tarihe ışık tutacak önemli olayları, doğu mistisizmini, yapıları, doğal güzellikleri, antik kentleri, gündelik yaşamı ve her tabakaya mensup insanları resmettikleri çalışmaları önemli bir çok kaynakta kullanılmıştır. Seyahatleri sırasında tanık oldukları, bir çoğunun dinlendirici, huzur verici bir merasim olarak tanımladıkları Sema Ayininden de fazlasıyla etkilenmişler, notlarında, seyahatnamelerinde, kitaplarında, resimlerinde ve daha bir çok eserde Mevleviliğe yer vermişlerdir. Batılı sanatçılar ve gezginler sayesinde, Mevlâna ve Mevlevilik, farklı diyarlardan farklı gönüllere de girerek tüm dünyaya yayılmış, günümüzde de yayılmaya devam etmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** H. Mevlâna, Mevlevilik, Batılı sanatçılar, Sanat eseri, Seyahatnameler

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Various beliefs and philosophies brought together people of similar thoughts, uniting people from different societies in a common point. Mawlawi, which is the collaboration of Mevlana, is one of the strongest philosophical and mystical communities in history. The universal message of Mevlâna has been showing its effect in different geographies of the world for centuries, and the philosophy of tolerance is researched and learned. This philosophy has been studied with great admiration and curiosity by being absorbed by people of different faiths.

In the works given in different art branches, we see that Mevlevism is described in different styles. The daily lives of dervishes have become a powerful inspiration, especially for the art of painting. The artists who made works in the form of miniatures and then classical, orientalist or modern styles were also very interested in this theme. Many western famous artists have made researches and studies on Mawlavi and produced works.

Thanks to the Western world's interest in the lifestyle, rituals, traditions and culture of the east, these regions were frequently visited to be explored by travelers and painters. Thus, the riches of the east have become one of the valuable sources where painting art is fed. Although Western travelers watched Mawlavi and whirling ritual in the regions they visited for the first time, by chance or advice, many travelers later visited the Mawlavi houses because they were impressed and wanted to see them again. Another important point is that many non-traveler westerners had met with Mevlana and Mawlavi where by Mesnevi which was translated into English in the 1900s.

Many travelers in various professions such as writers, painters, journalists, diplomats, whose desire to discover with the works they saw increased, necessarily visited Mawlavi houses during their travels. The travelers who are not satisfied with observing and writing Mawlavis' culture and life, have either painted by themselves this mysterious culture they have discovered they painted them with other painters who were with them.

In this study, it was investigated that many dervishes and travelers in the west were subject to their paintings and memories by being influenced by daily life, clothes, traditions and rituals of the dervishes who tried to discipline their delights and stay away from the people of the world.

## **2. MAWLAVI IN THE TRAVELBOOK OF THE WEST TRAVELER**

The art which has been moving on with different views for centuries, has been nurtured by different interpretations of artists that have matured in different cultures and has continued its development. Continuing its structuring by influencing the societies, art has gained folkloric values with the effect of different cultures. During his lifetime, he was known in many Middle Asian countries, especially in Anatolia and in eastern culture. His poems and philosophy were very popular with scholars and traders coming to Seljuk capital Konya, and when they returned to their country, they spread it to their own culture. It is not surprising that the works of Mevlana are liked so much by foreigners. As is the case today, everyone has observed themselves in these works they have read and felt their experience. Another factor is that the language of the works written is Persian. The use of Persian as a common literary language in those regions made it easy to read and understand these works without any difficulty (Çelebi, 2012, s. 5).

Mevlana's philosophy that transcends the continents has left deep marks in the hearts of the western as well as in the east. Considering the differences between the east and the west, westerners who are far from the religion of Islam have examined these messages of Mevlana with a rational mind in line with their own values (Cunz, 2010, s. 55).

The most important factor that enabled Pir to be recognized in the west was the Galata Mawlavi house which was established in 1491 in Istanbul. Western travelers, who visited the Galata Mawlavi house, made the westerners interested in the ideas and thoughts of Mevlâna thanks to the travel books they wrote when they returned to their countries. The travelers who came to Istanbul were taken to the Galata Mawlavi house by their guides and they were watched Ayin-i Şerif. The travelers who chatted with the Sheikh of the Mawlavi house transferred the ideas and works of Mevlâna to their writings with great admiration. Through these travel books we mentioned with the translation of Mevlana poems and works into Latin, German and French westerners' interest in Pir's universal ideas increased exponentially (Çelebi, 2012, s. 5).

The guides who directed the travelers to the Mawlavi houses, aroused curiosity by putting these tekke visits into the minds of the travelers. Historian Janet Ross, in one of her articles, mentioned a

boy named Hasan who accompanied the trip to Cairo and convinced her to see the Mawlavi, who was translating and guiding during this trip (Ross, 1912, p. 110).

Loyson, another traveler, mentioned that the Mawlavi people were very hospitable towards the foreigners who came to watch the whirling rituals, and they welcomed all travelers, and pointed out that the widespread fame of the "Dervish Raksı" was wanted to be seen by foreigners (Loyson, 1905, p. 220).

The vast majority of travelers who watched the Sema ritual mentioned the Mawlavi in their writings with praise. Swedish Claes Ralamb and British Lady Mary Wortley Montagu are among the first to present in the memories and letters of the whirling ritual they watched during their visit to Istanbul. Both travelers described the whirling ritual they watched as aesthetic and beautiful and stated that they enjoyed it very much (Şimşekler 2012, s. 15).

Another traveler Lacroix expressed his feelings as follows; "The religious ceremonies of the Mawlavi are among the precious ones that should not be returned without seeing Istanbul. These dervishes and raks must be seen. Because the travelers leave these Mawlavi house with great surprise" (Lacroix, 1839, pp. 172-173).

Although western travelers state that they are traveling to learn and experience at first, they have actually begun to travel east to find the feeling that they were not yet able to find in their connoised and discolored environment (Huart, 1898, p. 29).

Although religious reasons take the first place among the reasons for travelers traveling to the Ottoman Empire for very different purposes, travels for missionary purposes also have an important place. Except from these, scientific objectives such as diplomatic, military, geographical exploration and biological research follow this order. Regardless of the reason and purpose, these travelers, whose paths pass through the Mawlavi house, have definitely recorded their observations, impressions and thoughts about the places they visit and the Mevlevism they have experienced with writings, engravings and paintings (Duru, 2012, s. 43).

French traveler De La Motraye who visited the Galata Mawlavi house in 1699, added the whirling ritual depicted by William Hogarth as an engraving in addition to his memoirs (De La Motraye, 1727, s. 231).



**Figure 1.** James Jacques Joseph Tissot, "The garden of the dervishes whirling in Cairo", 1899

Western travelers continued to convey their observations about the culture and life of Mawlavi as letters, memoirs and pictures as a result of their travels to the Ottoman Empire. The Mawlavi ritual is very elegant and pleasant compared to some traveler but some travelers also found this ritual is

meaningless. As a result of the common opinion of many travelers traveling to Istanbul between the 17th and 19th centuries, the most familiar community in this period was Mawlavi (Mansel, 1996, s. 36). Dorina Neave, one of the most important writers of the period, stated in her article that Mawlavi and Bektashis were the most well-known among the Sufi based communities he observed in the Ottoman Empire (Neave, 1978, s. 105).

John Price Durbin, a language professor and also a pastor, reported his observations about Galata Mawlavi house Sheikh Kudretullah Dede in Istanbul, where he came during his tour of the Middle East in 1842;

*“A small, soft-headed, green-turbaned and green-robed person sat in a corner that is considered a honorable place. He did not stand up when we entered, but he put his hand on his chest, then on his forehead, pointed out where to sit with his hand, and told them to bring drinks. His understanding, pleasant temperament, and attitude were very satisfying and honoring. The compliment he showed us was different from what he showed to other people visiting while we were sitting” (Durbin, 1845, s. 231).*

It is confirmed by many praiseworthy expressions in the sources that Mawlavi, which started from Konya with the universal ideas and views of Mevlana and spread all over the Ottomans, is a philosophical thought that attracts westerners thanks to its structure that embraces other religions with tolerance. Another expression that will strengthen this view is found in the memories of British Colonel Charles White, who spent three years in Istanbul;

*“In addition to the high personality of the Pera monastery (Galata Mawlavi house), with his tolerant religious view and high-profile personality, Kudretullah Efendi is famous for his considerable abilities as a scholar and antiquities expert” (White, 1846, s. 14).*

The writers of the period associated the hierarchy in Mawlavi with the monastic life in Christianity, they called the Mawlavi houses monastery, the sheikhs as the chief priest of the monastery, and the dervishes were priests and monks (Duru, 2012, s. 45). Considering that raks represents various religious rituals, the first ritual of dancing in Christians took place in the city of Florder in the 13th century (Walsh, 1836, s. 467). Journalist Emilie Losyon stated that she saw a similarity between the “Shaking Quakers” in America, the Tremblers in France, the "Spirit Dance" of the Indians and the dance from the David of Spain (Loyson, 1905, s. 221-222).

Many narratives about the clothes in the memories of travelers, which have all kinds of analogy and depictions, have survived to the present day. The dervishes and sheikhs' cardigans, tennures, hats and other dervish items they used transferred to their readers with their own comments. In the writings of Lady Neave, she described the cardigan made of thick, tobacco-colored fabric as a loose dress (Neave, 1933, s. 105). Romanian-born historian and writer Dimitrie Cantemir mentioned that the tennure, similar to the skirts of French women, is in the form of a round and wide dress from waist to foot (Ekrem, 1987, s. 195). British ambassador's secretary Stuart described the hat as a high circular headdress made of dark lead colored felt (Stuart, 1854, p. 42). British diplomat and historian Paul Rycout, on the other hand, said that the hat was made of camel hair and that it was quite long (Ricaud, 1686, s. 215).

The Sema Ritual, which has attracted the attention of many travelers, and the whirling dervishes with its different colors, are depicted as follows by the poet Aubray De Vere;

*“During this magnificent ceremony, while their turns accelerated, they spread their long and abundant clothes in lead, green and brown color in all directions and spread their arms to each other. His figures resembled the outlines of a pyramid where his pointy caps formed the top. In the perfect order of movements, but more so, the extreme speed they have reached and slightly tilted to their right shoulders, there is something*



*unique in the contrast between the quiet, dull, stricken faces of peace as if they were in a dream” (Vere, 1850, p. 313).*

The common opinion of most travelers was that the Mawlavi people were considered and respected. The Mawlavi, especially respected by the elite, were also protected and guarded by the Sultan (White 1846, s. 514). According to traveler and writer Sir John Gardner Wilkinson, Mawlavi. They showed special respect for Ali. He concluded that Mevlevism is the most important community in the region (Wilkinson, 1843, s. 285). British traveler William George Brown wrote in his writings that the Mawlavis are among the most decent and respected communities (Brown, 1820, s. 121). This great reputation that Mawlavi received by the people and foreign travelers was actually It belongs to Mevlana. This tolerance sea which attracts everyone in line with its ideas, grows exponentially every day.

As well as the life and culture of the Mawlavi, the Mawlavi houses attracted the attention of travelers too many of them mentioned in their memoirs and paintings. In the early 19th century, British folklorist and traveler Lucy Mary Jane Garnett published several books about Turkish folklore, mysticism and life. Garnett, who travels frequently to the Middle East, appealed to a wide audience by British readers who read her books on cultures in this area. In her book “Home Life in Turkey”, the author included Mawlavi houses. She mentioned that the Mawlavi houses have very nice views and some of them are on the water's edge, very suitable places to be subject to the pictures (Garnett, 1909, s. 200). In another book, she mentioned the magnificent serenity of the trees, flowers, flying birds, the fountain in the courtyard, the sounds of the flowing water, and a very favorable environment for a deep retreat (Garnett, 1912, s. 6566).

The architectural features of the Mawlavi houses were also among the subjects frequently mentioned in travelers' writings. In their memoirs, they pointed out that these places are elegant and simple. Garnett, a writer and traveler who has a deep interest in Mawlavi culture, provided some general information about the architectural structures of the Mawlavi house. The most remarkable section in the center of the Mawlavi houses are the semahanes. Other buildings and sections are located around the whirling dervishes (Garnett, 1909, s. 200). Semahane is an elegant building with white painted stone, a roof with a dome and a red tile. There is a low wooden railing that separates the wicker part of the male audience from the square. The gathering of the wooden pillars surrounded the three sides of the Mawlavi house. One of these sections is the Mutrip delegation and the other two are caged and reserved for women and children. In some Mawlavi houses there are died sheik sarcophagi which covered by stylish and expensive fabrics. The sheikhs live in their private apartments and host their guests in the selamlık section of the Mawlavi house (Garnett, 1912, s. 64-65,81-82).

Compared to neighboring structures, the well-kept and improved and beautified situations of the Mawlavi houses are frequently mentioned in the travel books. Especially the Konya Mevlana route is a lodge frequently written by travelers (Duru, 2012, s. 82). The fact that the Mawlavi houses were well-kept and magnificent resulted from the frequent donations of the people who set their hearts on Mawlavi (Grosvenor; 1842, s. 324).

Speaking of the numerous lighting, ostrich eggs and ivory spheres in Konya's travel book, Griffiths pointed out that these materials were treated with great care (Griffiths, 1805, s. 278).

The kitchen of the Mawlavi house is the focal point of the lives of the members of the lodge and the meticulousness, care and order in these sections have been the focus of attention for many travelers. Mrs. Scott-Stevenson having the opportunity to see Konya Lodge admires the rigor and cleanliness he has seen (Scott. Stevenson, 1881, s. 332). In 1913, French writer Pierre Loti and his son had the opportunity to dine there with dervishes and other travelers during their visit to Istanbul Yenikapı Mawlavi house. Loti reported this visit as follows; “It was remarkable that the printing house was clean and well maintained, and its white paint. On the small and near tables, after a meal we had in

china porcelain, a dervish was praying and the other dervishes were listening quietly. They all accompany the prayer by saying “Allah” with a sincere tone by leaning among them all together (Loti ve Viaud 1921, s. 239-241).

On the trips they made to the Ottoman lands, the Mawlawi and the travelers who watched the mysterious life of this community with great curiosity perceived the Sema Ritual as a more elegant and pleasant dance show than the remembrance and rituals of other sects. It is frequently seen in sources that Rufai meetings create a more frightening and unpleasant impression on travelers. On the other hand, Kadiri and Nakşî sects are among the least mentioned sects in travel books (Şirin, 2012, s. 21). Many travelers were not interested in what the rite of whirling meant in Mawlawi, but only included in his writings as a spectacular show. But Carl Vett, who is an extraordinary traveler, has stated that in order to understand this culture and to make sense of the whirling ritual, a true dervish must be made, and that this ritual, which is the way to reach Allah, will be felt and experienced (Vett, 1993, s. 53-54).

Many of the travelers who followed the ritual of sema saw this ritual as dance and even associated it with different performing arts by liking ballet and waltz. Spanish journalist and writer Vicente Blasco Ibanez says he likens whirling dervishes, which form a long line waiting for the whirling ritual, to ballerinas preparing for the stage (Ibanez, 1919, s. 199). Some travelers have also proposed adapting the whirling ritual, ritual music and clothing to the performing arts. The first person to draw attention to this issue is the Swedish writer and feminist Fredrika Bremer. She argued that Mawlawi clothes and ritual would be more effective and beautiful when adapted to their own ballet (Bremer, 1862, s. 293). Journalist and writer Charmes stated that he found the ritual of the whirling very elegant, naive and painting, and that he was unable to understand why foreign composers still did not hold the ballet of the rotating dervishes, and was very surprised. He said that the whirling dervishes believed that they would have a pleasant and exquisite effect in the theater (Charmes, 1883, s. 171). The most important factor of the foreigners who watch the sema ritual, perceive and describe the ritual as a demonstration, is that the theater resembles a theater stage and the audience is accepted into this venue.

The disguise and incomprehensibility of the rituals and costumes of the whirling rituals and whirling dervishes is incompatible with certain features of Islam and western culture. Such differences are also noticed by some travelers' aesthetic tastes and comments. As a matter of fact, even though many travelers do not understand, he spoke about the ritual they watched and the praise and appreciation of Mevlevism in their memories. Although a few British travelers interpreted the Mevlevism and whirling rituals negatively, in another way, John C. Habhouse, who was a close friend of the English poet Lord Byron who traveled with the Ottomans, mentioned Mawlawi with appreciation, considering that they were rational worshipers (Schiffer, 1984, s. 28).

Despite the negative comments, the British traveler and writer Miss Julia Pardoe stated that she was impressed by maintaining her realistic approach after the ritual of the sema in Istanbul and that every religion should be respected;

*“I do not have to defend as Don Quixote, this interesting ritual that I watch. But I can't bear the other followers calling this worship as ridiculous. It is true that this ritual cannot be compared with the mature and high forms of worship of Europe. However, these members of this order make this worship according to their own feelings and thoughts. So we should not blame and criticize them. We have no right to any other thought than to watch and convey respectfully” (Pardoe, 1997, s. 48-49).*

British lawyer and writer Edwin Pears has included in his book "Life of Abdul Hamid", one of the most distinguished books that the spiritual life and true naive life of Islam has been in the Mawlawi in these regions (Pears, 1917, s. 151).

The most important element in Sufism and Mawlavi is “Love”. Mevlana's Sufi source is divine love. He called this love and kneaded with love on this path. Our mother is love, our father is love; We were born from love, we are love. All love is a bridge to divine love. “Love” is the basis of the relationship between creator and beings in Sufism. The way of love is the way to seek absolute beauty. All works of Mevlana who sees love to reach maturity and ripeness, are about love.

Edwin Pears in this impression of divine love;

“Their faith in love is peace in the life of the Mawlavi” expressed in the form (Pears, 1911, s. 301). English writer and journalist G. Frederick Abbott, who understood that the true principle of the Mawlavi belief is love, drew attention to the sincere and peaceful expression of the Mawlavi on their faces and their angel-like appearance. He also saw the Mawlavi more tolerant and mild-tempered than other sects, and said that their philosophical views were more comprehensive (Abbott, 1903, s. 39-40). Understanding that the principle of love is the center of the Mawlavi world, another traveler John P. Brown said that the Mevlevis complimented each other as “let it be love” after eating and drinking something (Brown 1927, s. 257). This is also an important and beautiful proof of how even ordinary situations in life are associated with divine love.

Mawlavi people never see themselves superior to anyone. They endowed their behavior with patience, decency and compassion. They adopted modesty, mildness and philanthropy as their greatest principle. They are distinguished not only in Mawlavi houses but also in the outside world with a deep humility at all. This situation is M.J. Lucy Garnett did not go unnoticed and made the following statements in her book “Turkish Life in Town and Country”; “Outside the Mawlavi house, they walk with bowed and thoughtful expressions. They always use the words “thanks to Allah” (Garnett; 1904, s. 189).

Although western travelers visited the Mawlavi in the regions they visited and watched the whirling ritual for the first time on coincidence or advice, then the vast majority of travelers visited the Mawlavi houses because they were impressed and wanted to see it again. Another important point is that many non-wanderers met Mevlana and Mawlavi together with Mesnevi, which was translated into English in the 1900s. The fact that Australian historian Joseph Von Hammer Purgstall included examples from Mesnevi in his “Persian Literature” is both the first and has contributed to the recognition of Mevlana in the west (Ergin, 2000, s. 315).

### 3. RESULT

Many travelers in various professions such as author, painter, journalist diplomat, whose desire to discover with such works increased, necessarily visited Mawlavi houses in line with their travels. The travelers, who are not satisfied with observing and writing their culture and life, have either painted this mysterious culture they have discovered or have painted it with the painters. It was only those who depicted the Mawlavi they experienced and were influenced by.

These painters are generally painters such as Zonaro, Vanmour, Brindesi, who live in their places of duty.

19th century until the end of the year, many works depicting Mawlavi, such as engravings, paintings, photographs, were given. Already after a while, lodges were closed, and then the Mevlana lodges in Konya was opened as a museum, allowing visitors to visit. In this way, Mevlevism has preserved its meaningful place in cultural life until today.

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