

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Esin Çelebi Bayru*

Every book has a background story, like this one.

Back in 2002, the first time I had participated in Selçuk University 10<sup>th</sup> National Mevlânâ Congress with a paper titled “My Father Celâleddin Bâkır Çelebi”. My professors Emine Yeniterzi and Nuri Şimşekler had encouraged me a lot for that.

A few years ago, we were in a symposium in Izmir. As we went out during a break, at one point in our chat, I mentioned a memory, and Professor Mehmet Demirci asked: “Çelebi, I wonder if you are writing these...” I said, “Honestly, I am a bit lazy when it comes to writing. Not to mention the fast pace of my life. Time flies, and there’s no time to write.”

Professor said: “Cemâlnur, please designate one of your students. These memories must be written. This is oral history and these anecdotes need to be recorded.”

It was in another symposium that I also heard similar comments from Professor Cihan Okuyucu. I thought I should say “*Eyvallah!*”, which means “*All right, agreed!*” This is how I embarked upon the adventure of writing this book.

First, I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to my professors Emine Yeniterzi, Nuri Şimşekler, also Cemâlnur *Hanım*, Professor Cihan Okuyucu, and Professor Mehmet Demirci, who inspired the idea of writing this book.

Dilek Güldütuna, with her calmness, was of great help; she worked selflessly. Perhaps the most important of all was that we could record interviews with my mother. This is a major achievement, considering that my mother had never allowed this before.

Belgin Batum, Kerim Güç... You contributed a lot.

Dear Sertap Yar and Can Aydoğmuş, your studies formed the foundation of this book.

I would like to express my gratitudes to all who shaped me into who I am today and a heartfelt thanks to all who contributed to this book. May you give me your blessings for everything you provided.

## FOREWORD

### *Dilek Güldütuna*

This book is a series of conversations with Esin Çelebi Bayru, 22<sup>nd</sup> generation granddaughter of Hz. Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî (Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi). Mrs. Bayru's mother Güzîde Çelebi also participated in some of these conversations. Professor Mehmet Demirci prepared the primary basis of questions for the interviews, which took part mostly in fall 2017 and were completed within a year.

The idea of this book was born in a casual conversation that took place in a symposium gathering.

The memories of the Çelebi family are not merely the story of one of the oldest families in history; it is the history of a culture, an entire tradition. It is a living archive that sheds light on the rapid changes faced by the Sufi culture and Sufi way of life in Turkey, and in particular on the Mevlevî Order, one of the first Sufi orders to emerge in Islam. These valuable anecdotes had to be saved from loss; they needed to be obtained from a credible source and recorded so that they are turned into lasting texts for the benefit of people today.

The interview questions prepared by Professor Mehmet Demirci, as well as the initiative and support of Professor Cemâlînur Sargut formed the starting point of this work. Besides the questions and topics that spontaneously emerged in the course of the interviews, we made use of the records

of the previous interviews performed by Sertap Yar and Can Aydođmuş with Esin Çelebi Bayru.

This book intends to present the memoirs of Esin Çelebi Bayru in chronological order. Mrs. Bayru was born and raised in Aleppo. After spending her childhood years there, she moved to Istanbul, where she spent most of her adult life. At present, she is the vice-chairperson of the International Mevlânâ Foundation. Therefore, this book consists of three chapters: i) Aleppo and childhood years, ii) Istanbul years, a chapter that includes the family's sudden move, iii) establishment of the International Mevlânâ Foundation and its ongoing activities.

We wished to enrich the journey of the reader by supporting the narrative with pictures, hence by including various types of visuals in the book. These are mainly the photographs of the Çelebi family and other people mentioned in the book, the photos demonstrating the Foundation's activities, as well as a number of documents and pictures.

Also, the reader can find a glossary of terms at the end of this book, as the text had to include some terms specific to the Mevlevî and Turkish culture. These particular words are marked in the text in italics.

Although the primary concern was not writing a Mevlevî family history, we believe these interviews will shed light on an essential era from the perspective of the history of Sufism in Turkey and will provide insights into the contemporary form of activities and services of the Mevlevî Order, as well as the progress of the Mevlevî thought and culture throughout the Republican Era. Starting with his son Sultan Veled, Hz. Mevlânâ's lineage had the honor of conveying Mevlânâ's

discipline and thought. The lineage played a central role in basing the Mevlevî Order on strong foundations and in disseminating Hz. Pîr's work to the masses. As an important signifier of Turkish culture, the Mevlevî tradition is regarded as one of the most effective agents in the evolution of Turkish culture and arts. As such, in this book, the reader will hopefully trace the evolution of the Mevlevî Order with its mission from the time of Hz. Mevlânâ till today, also the contemporary form taken by the Mevlevî activity after the abolishment of the Sufi orders with the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

Esin Çelebi, through her memoirs, shares with us her childhood and her first *semâ* education, her life in Istanbul and the relationships of her family with the distinguished names of that era, information about Atatürk's visits to the Dervish Lodge in Konya (known today as the Mevlânâ Museum), the endeavors of her father Celâleddin Bâkır Çelebi as the founder of the foundation, the general stance taken by the foundation since its establishment, the activities carried out for proper communication, correct understanding and conservation of Mevlânâ's thought and discipline, as well as information about the services continuing today. She relays the messages that Hz. Mevlânâ intended to give to humanity.

Esin Çelebi is the vice-chairperson of the International Mevlânâ Foundation, a key institution in conservation of the cultural heritage of Hz. Mevlânâ. She also acts as consultant to the Rumi Research and Implementation Center at Konya University. She is the editor of three published books, namely "From Hz. Mevlânâ's Ocean", featuring the conference and symposium proceedings of her father Celâleddin Bâkır Çelebi, "Mevlânâ and Mevlevî Order Throughout

Centuries”, written by scholars in the field for an in-depth coverage of Mevlevî discipline, etiquette and rules of conduct (*âdap and erkân*), *semâ*, and *semâ* music, “Those Who Reach from Mevlânâ to Mawla”, on the foreign Mevlevîs who live abroad. And she has various published articles and interviews in a number of periodicals.

To communicate the universal thought and discipline of Mevlânâ, his exemplary lifestyle and the Mevlevî culture as a path of spiritual courtesy (*edep*), Esin Çelebi gives public speeches at local and international schools, as well as speaking in local and international TV broadcasts. She received in May 2011 an honorary PhD from the University of Berkeley California Starr King School for The Ministry in the United States, in recognition of her works and contributions in the topic of “World Peace, Justice and Unity”. We hope that one day her writings will be compiled in a book and be published, thereby coming back to us. Those written works include numerous papers, articles, proceedings that were prepared as part of countless conferences on Hz. Mevlânâ and the Mevlevî Order organized both by the Foundation and various other institutions as part of the long-standing services of the Foundation and the family.

Information that we come across in various studies on the Mevlevî Order from the past to today is provided here in firsthand form, and in colloquial, easy to read language. Therefore, we hope that a wider audience can benefit from this book. I would like to thank first of all, my professor Cemâlnur Sargut, who made it possible for me to work on the preparation of this book, to Mrs. Esin Çelebi Bayru, with whom we worked together with pleasure, a lady who beautifully reflects Mevlevî grace and manners, to her mother

Mrs. Güzîde Çelebi, who is 91 as of today, who honored us with her participation in our interviews, and to all our friends who supported us.

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## ALEPPO DAYS

*Can you briefly tell us about your life story?*

I was born on April 2, 1949, in Aleppo, Syria. I went to Istanbul Işık High School, where I completed my primary, secondary and high school education. Then I studied Arabic and Persian Philology at Istanbul University, Faculty of Literature.

I am married to Osman Bayru, a grandchild of *Osman Efendi-Sheikh of the Yenikapı Mevlevî House*. We have two daughters, Azra and Esra, two sons-in-law, Mehmet Kumcuoğlu and Ersev Demiröz, three grandchildren, Nil, Mina and Can Ata.

At present, I serve as the vice-chairperson of the International Mevlânâ Foundation, and also as a consultant to the Rumi Research and Implementation Center at Konya University.

*I understand that you spent your childhood years in Aleppo.*

Between Aleppo and Istanbul, indeed. My grandfather Mehmed Bâkır Çelebi had been appointed as the *Sheikh of the Aleppo Mevlevî House* before the enactment of the Law of Dervish Lodges (*Tekke and Zâviye Law*) that had ordered the abolishment of the Sufi centers in Turkey. My father Celâleddin Bâkır Çelebi was born there. I and three of my siblings were born there, while our youngest sibling was born when we came to Istanbul. At school age, I came to live with my maternal grandmother together with my brother Faruk Hemdem Çelebi. My father, mother, my paternal grandmother

and grandfather are all Turkish, so our home was a Turkish speaking environment. Likewise, our children were raised, and grandchildren are being raised according to the Turkish tradition and culture. We refrain from imposing dos and don'ts on our children regarding the Mevlevî culture. We instead try to demonstrate living examples with our behavior. As our children observe the beauties of this culture, they appreciate it and automatically want to adopt and continue it.

*Can you tell us about the environment in which you were raised?*

I am the eldest of five siblings. Although my brother Faruk Hemdem Çelebi is 21 months younger than me, we regard him as the eldest in the spiritual sense. Besides him, I have three sisters.

Emel Çelebi Gürsoy, Neslipir Çelebi Sayar and Gevher Çelebi. All of us were raised in a very nice setting. My mother and father were cousins, and that turned out to be a great advantage for us. My father was raised in Aleppo and my mother in Istanbul. Although they had met once when they were children, they don't remember that encounter. Later, during a trip to visit his family in Istanbul, my father met my mother and fell in love at first sight; they were both in their 20s.

I am quite happy to say: "I was born to parents who are in love." Although my mother says, "Don't say that, I'm embarrassed", I get a sheer enjoyment from that. It was love at first sight, my parents got married, and we were surrounded by that love and respect at home, it always lasted.

My paternal grandmother was living with us. She was also the aunt of my mother. They were already close and got along

very well. So, we were raised in a peaceful, happy, beautiful setting. This could indeed serve as an example to young people today. We also tried to raise our children in much the same way. Now they are passing it on to their children. Being raised in a peaceful family really has a big impact on how one lives and perceives life.

*The German Orientalist Hellmut Ritter mentions about your paternal grandmother İzzet Hanım that she made Mevlevî clothes for a Mevlevî child who was learning semâ.*

Yes, my grandmother offered great services. Consider that she and her sisters were raised in Aleppo, Syria in Ottoman times. At the time, her father Cherkes Mehmed *Bey* was called “Commandant of Extraordinary”, which is a kind of Governor for Emergency State, a military governor.



**Photograph 3:** Cherkes Mehmed Bey and his children.