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**Two Different Religious Approaches in Positioning Women in Modern City: İsmailaęa  
Community and Jarrahi Group<sup>1</sup>**

*Modern Kentte Kadını Konumlandırılmada İki Farklı Dini Yaklaşım: İsmailaęa Cemaati ve  
Cerrahi Grubu*

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<sup>1</sup> This study is prepared by re-forming the relevant parts of the doctoral thesis entitled "Different Forms of Women Religiosity in the Modern City: Istanbul sample", which has been concluded in June 2020.

## Öz

Bu çalışmada, İstanbul Fatih ilçesi merkezli faaliyet gösteren iki dinî grubun modern şehir hayatında kadını konumlandırma biçimi araştırılmıştır. Araştırma konusu gruplardan ilki; Çarşamba semti merkezli grup faaliyetlerini yürüten, kadını sadece geleneksel cinsiyet rolleriyle tanımlamasıyla temayüz eden İsmailağa Cemaati'dir. İkinci grup, grup etkinliklerini Karagümrük semtindeki halk arasında Cerrahî Tekkesi olarak bilinen mekân merkezli devam ettiren, modern kimlikli ve kentli görünüme sahip bir dinî grup özelliği gösteren, Cerrahî Grubu'dur. Çalışmanın amacı; her iki grubun, modern kentteki kadınları ev, eğitim ve çalışma hayatında, şehrin gündelik pratiğine ait mekanlarda ve yaşam alanlarında nasıl konumlandıklarını ortaya koymaktır. Araştırma, aralarındaki mekânsal yakınlığa rağmen kadını birbirinden oldukça farklı konumlandıran iki grubu karşılaştırması yönüyle özgündür. Çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmış; katılımcı gözlem, yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat, her iki gruba ait yazılı kaynakların ve medyadaki materyallerin incelenmesi olmak üzere çoklu veri toplama araçlarına başvurulmuştur. Yirmisi İsmailağa, sekizi Cerrahî Grubu'ndan olmak üzere toplam yirmi sekiz kişiyle yüz yüze görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda; İsmailağa Cemaati'nin kadını "ev merkezli" konumlandırarak ev dışındaki mekânlardan uzak durması gerektiği söyleminin, modern kentteki gündelik yaşam pratiklerine uymadığı ve özellikle gençler nezdinde ev dışı mekânlarda yer almakla ilgili ara çözümler üretildiği bulgulanmıştır. Diğer grupla ilgili bulgumuz da; modern insana mistik bakış ve şehrin karmaşasından kaçış imkanları sunan Cerrahî Tekkesi'nin modern kentli kadınlar için, yaşam biçimleriyle uyumlu din anlayışını bulabildikleri bir sığınak ve manevî ortam işlevi gördüğüdür. Bu yönüyle modern şehirli kadınların bu mekâna yönelimlerinin önümüzdeki süreçte daha da artacağı öngörülebilmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Din Psikolojisi, Kadın Dindarlığı, Modern Kentte Kadın, Dinî Gruplarda Kadın, İsmailağa Cemaati, Cerrahî Grubu.

## Abstract

In this study, the ways of two religious groups' centred in Istanbul's Fatih district of positioning women in the modern city was investigated. The first of the research groups is the Ismailaga Community, which carries out group activities based in the "Çarşamba" district, and is distinguished by defining women only with traditional gender roles. The second is the Jarrahi Group, which is a religious group with a modern identity and urban appearance, which continues its group activities in the Karagümrük district, known as Cerrahî Tekkesi among the people. The purpose of the study is to reveal how both groups position women in the modern city in the home, education and working life, in the places of daily practice in the city and living spaces. A qualitative research method was used in the study, consulting multiple data collection tools including participant observation, semi-structured interview, examination of written sources and materials in media belonging to both groups. Face to face interviews were conducted with a total of twenty eight people, twenty of whom were from the Ismailaga and eight of from Cerrahî Group. It has been found that the Ismailaga Community's discourse of defining women as "home-centered" does not fit daily life in the modern city and intermediate solutions have been produced especially by young people. Cerrahî Tekkesi, which offers modern people a mystical view and an opportunity of escaping from the chaos of the city, functions as a shelter and spiritual environment for modern urban women where they can find a religious understanding compatible with their lifestyles. It can be predicted that the inclination of modern urban women to this space will increase in the coming period.

**Key Words:** Psychology of Religion, Women Religiosity, Women in the Modern City, Women in Religious Groups, Ismailaga Community, Jarrahi Group.

## Introduction

The subject of "women," is one of the main topics determining the approach to public spaces in Muslim societies undergoing modernization. In these societies, matters like women's visibility, behaviours and voice, which are considered moral matters in Islam are central in determining the limits of publicness. Intellectual arguments regarding the visibility of the woman's body take up an important part of discussions surrounding the societal change brought on by modern

lifestyles. Since the roles expected to be taken up by women in predominantly traditional, rural societal structures generally relate to household chores and the care of children, women are defined and positioned in a “home-centred” way. Women in modern urban life, on the other hand, leave the home for many reasons including education and work and are therefore visible in public, social and cultural spaces. This shift in positioning is the result of changes in the roles of women in traditional societal structures.

### **1. Women in Religious Groups**

With the progression of modernization, religious/conservative circles have experienced anxiety and confusion concerning “women,” an increasingly prominent topic in religious discussions. Within religious circles, there are people and groups arguing that preserving the religious and traditional values prevalent in Muslim-Turkish society would only be possible through women returning to their roles placed in traditional lifestyles. However, some people and groups believe devout people can develop a religious outlook and lifestyle that is compatible with modernization and a modern lifestyle, concerning the topic of women. The Ismailağa Community is one of the main religious groups arguing that women’s new roles within modern lifestyles will prevent them from maintaining traditional roles like motherhood, doing household chores, and ensuring the continuation of the family as an institution. It is the leading group promoting this discourse and anxiety through written sources and the media. In this study, the ways both the Ismailağa Community who defines women solely based on their traditional household roles, and the Jarrahi Group who does not oppose the new roles taken on by women in a modern lifestyle and is known to be more popular among educated, working women who adopted a modern style of clothing and living, position women within a modern urban lifestyle. Çarşamba, the centre of the Ismailağa Community’s activities, and Karagümruk, which is where the “Cerrahi Tekkesi” is located, are neighbouring districts in the Fatih area. Both of these groups who, despite their proximity, are distinguished as representatives of two different approaches to women’s religiosity and the way they are positioned in modern cities, have a deeply rooted sect tradition.

Purpose of this study, to reveal the attitudes of both groups towards the participation of women living in the city in the home, education and working life, and the places belonging to the daily practice of the city where the needs of the group members such as shopping, transportation, eating and drinking are met. The aim of the study is to determine how they position women in places and the way women who are members of the group exist in these places. The research is unique and important in terms of comparing two groups that position women quite differently

from each other within the framework of the practices of urban life despite the spatial proximity between them.

The Ismailağa Community, also commonly known as the Mahmut Efendi or Çarşamba Community, is connected to the Halidiye branch of the Naqshbandi Sect and has been formed around Mahmut Ustaosmanoğlu<sup>2</sup> (known within the group as Mahmut Efendi). Historical sources state that the Çarşamba district is named after the residents of the Çarşamba Plain in Samsun, who settled there after the conquest of Istanbul.<sup>3</sup> The community took its name from the Ismailağa Mosque where Mahmut Efendi served as an imam for some time.<sup>4</sup> The Ismailağa Community differs from other religious groups with Naqshbandi origins for various reasons including the way it promotes a single piece of black cloth for women (çarşaf) and shalwars, turbans, and tabards for men, as well as its negative approach to the aspects of a modern lifestyle. Another aspect differentiating this community from other groups is their practice of sending their girls to their own mad-rasas instead of secular and coeducational schools. Members of the community state that while the rule of not attending coeducational and secular schools apply to boys as well, since they are tasked with ensuring the livelihood of their families they are permitted to study at official education institutions.

The Jarrahiyye is the section of the Khalwati Order's Ramazaniyye branch, one of the most well-known sects in the Islamic world, that is related to Nureddin Cerrahi. Nureddin Cerrahi (1661-1721)<sup>5</sup> is known as "Cerrahi" because he was born in Istanbul's Cerrahpaşa district.<sup>6</sup> The place where Nureddin Cerrahi is buried, known as "Cerrahi Tekkesi" by the public and is where the group carries out its activities, nowadays functions under the name "Türk Tasavvuf Musikisini ve Folklorunu Araştırma ve Yaşatma Vakfı." During the time of Muzaffer Ozak (from 1966 to 1985), the most active sheikh of the Republican era, also known as "Sahaflar Şeyhi," Jarrahiyye opened up various dervish lodges (tekke) in Europe and America and expanded to a large social circle.<sup>7</sup> It reached its current margin of disciples after Ozak, in the time of Sefer Dal, who was the head of the tekke (lodge).<sup>8</sup> After the death of Sefer Dal (from 1985 to 1999), who played an active role in

<sup>2</sup> Ismailağa Community leader (sheikh) Mahmut Ustaosmanoğlu whom we visited with women members of the community during the participatory observation process, passed away in June 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Süleyman Faruk Göncüoğlu, *Istanbul'un Kitabı Fatih*, (İstanbul: Fatih Belediye Başkanlığı Kültür Yayınları, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Abdürrezzak Tek, *Tarihi Süreçte Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*. (Bursa: Bursa Akademi, 2017), 334.

<sup>5</sup> Mehmet Cemal Öztürk, "Nureddin Cerrahi", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2007), 33/252-253.

<sup>6</sup> Mustafa Özdamar, *Gönül Cerrahisi Nureddin Cerrahi ve Cerrahiler* (İstanbul: Kırk Kandil Yayınları, 2011), 155.

<sup>7</sup> Tek, *Tarihi Süreçte Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, 353.

<sup>8</sup> Pınar Karaath, *Modernleşen Bir Gelenek: Cerrahilik İstanbul'da Etkinlik Gösteren Halveti-Cerrahi Çevresinin Etnolojik İncelemesi* (Ankara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2006), 52.

the conversion of Western personalities like professor of psychology Robert Frager to Islam and helped the Jarrahis rise in popularity, in 1999,<sup>9</sup> one of his prominent students known for his judicial work, the deceased Efendi (sheikh)<sup>10</sup> Ömer Tuğrul İnançer became the group's sheikh.

In Efe's<sup>11</sup> (2017) classification of Türkiye's religious groups, the Ismailağa Community is considered to continue the form of sects. Efe regards the Jarrahis among the groups that have adapted to modern city life, due to the respectable size of their group of disciples, their published work such as journals and books, and their insistence on not calling themselves a community despite their activities including education through various nonprofits and foundations, art and culture, and social welfare, and existing instead as a sect. The Ismailağa Community, called "the province in the metropolis" by Çakır<sup>12</sup> is a religious group generally known to appeal to middle and lower classes of society and people with a lower level of education. Jarrahis, on the other hand, are known to be preferred by highly educated people, people that adopted a more secular lifestyle, and the elite class. Moreover, it is called "the celebrity sect" due to some famous people association with the group.

### 1.1. The Ismailağa Community's Approach to the Topic of "Women"

In the exegesis book "Ruhu'l Furkan," one of the Ismailağa Community's current religious knowledge sources, which had begun being written by Mahmut Ustaosmanoğlu in his health and continued to be written by a committee of six of the community's most prominent members, led by Ahmet Mahmut Ünlü, known as "Cübbeli Ahmet Hoca" by the public, there are interpretations on Quranic verses containing topics including polygamy, inheritance, witness testimony, and divorce, as to how men are superior to women. Two of these interpretations are:

Men's bodies and brains are heavier than women's. Men's nervous systems are more flawless than women's, and men are more resilient to life's difficulties, whereas women are more open to certain illnesses and malfunctions.<sup>13</sup>

When it comes to creation, intellect, in religious positions like being an imam or judge, and in witness statements, men are superior to women... Women are creatures of lesser intellect and greater desire, so when they possess great wealth they can use it wrongly and cause great corruption. Men, on the other hand, possess complete intellect and willpower and will therefore use the great wealth they come into possession of in beneficial ways.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ömer Yılmaz, *Geçmişten Günümüze Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2. Basım, 2017), 367.

<sup>10</sup> The Jarrahi group leader, Ömer Tuğrul İnançer, whom we interviewed during the research process, passed away in September 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Adem Efe, "Kolektif Dindarlık Türü Olarak Tarikat/Cemaat Dindarlığı" *Journal of Islamic Research*. 28/3 (2017), 295. [http://isamveri.org/pdfdrq/D00064/2017\\_3/2017\\_3\\_EFEA.pdf](http://isamveri.org/pdfdrq/D00064/2017_3/2017_3_EFEA.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Ruşen Çakır, *Ayet ve Slogan. Türkiye'de İslami Oluşumlar*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 11. Basım, 2014), 14.

<sup>13</sup> Mahmut Ustaosmanoğlu, *Ruhu'l Furkan Tefsiri*, (İstanbul: Sirac Kitabevi, 1994), 4/555-556.

<sup>14</sup> Ustaosmanoğlu, *Ruhu'l Furkan*, 4/ 599-600.

When all the reports and explanations in the aforementioned exegesis book are considered, it can be seen that women are positioned as bodily, religiously, and morally inferior to men, as creatures that committed the first sin and drive men, including early prophets, to sin also. Additionally, the community's exegesis book defines women not as self-contained individuals but as dependent on their husbands.<sup>15</sup> In another book of Mahmut Ustaosmanoğlu containing his views on various topics, "Hikmetli Sözcükler," a section has been dedicated to the topic of "women." In this section, there are also the sheikh's statements providing members of the community perspectives on women's place, roles, and position in a modern urban lifestyle. Some of the statements from Ustaosmanoğlu's book are as follows:

A woman should not be out in the streets to be seen by men.

To allow your daughter to be a doctor in this order is to wage war on Allah.

Women should leave schools and official places. None of the 104 books allow such a thing, for women to work. Young girls have no business in middle or high school. The downfall of Bani Israel was because of women. Women's duties are to do household chores, obey their husbands and raise children and soldiers that will be beneficial to the country. These are the duties of women, nothing else. Working, taking care of the household, earning money, these are for men, not women. If he cannot take care of her, why did the man marry a woman?! He is making some girl's life miserable.

A lady cannot take a cab to go somewhere.

Things like shopping, nursing, and the military are not for women.<sup>16</sup>

In his book "Sohbetler," Ustaosmanoğlu<sup>17</sup> includes the following statement: "...Our teachers are all Meryems (virgin Mary). They cannot go to the butcher shop or the bakery, if they do they will no longer be a Meryem. You must understand, a woman cannot go out anywhere, she will lose her value if she does."

It is possible to say that these books referenced, written by the leader of the community, form the religious and intellectual foundation of the Ismailağa Community's approach to positioning women in a modern urban lifestyle.

## 1.2. The Jarrahi Group's Approach to the Topic of "Women"

There is no separate section on the topic of women neither in sheikh Muzaffer Ozak's nor Efendi's books. In an interview conducted with a woman journalist, Efendi touched upon a variety of topics pertaining to women: topics like differences between men and women's nature, women's

<sup>15</sup> Zehra Işık, *Modern Kentte Farklı Kadımlar Farklı Dindarlıklar*, (İstanbul: İz yayıncılık, 2021), 353.

<sup>16</sup> Mahmud Ustaosmanoğlu, *Mahmud Efendi Hazretlerinden Duyulan Hikmetli Sözcükler* (İstanbul: Ahıska Yayınevi, 2018), 257-260.

<sup>17</sup> Mahmud Ustaosmanoğlu, *Sohbetler* (İstanbul: Sirac Kitabevi, 1999), 1/4-5.

motherhood, the privacy of pregnancy and women homicides.<sup>18</sup> In some television programs he participated in, and speeches he made in various cities, he answered questions regarding his views on women working. Emphasizing that his own daughter worked, Efendi said he wished to spare his daughter difficulty, and he viewed working women like his own daughter and wanted to spare them difficulty also. He stated that women do not need to work outside the house, they could work through production in their homes. Using the Prophet Muhammad's daughters as examples, he said that how women work is important and they should not neglect their families for the sake of their careers.

## 2. Method

It is seen that the information about women's position in religious groups and factors that consist women's religiosity remains limited due to the closed form of religious group structures and the difficulty of conducting psycho-social research on women who are members of religious groups. Grounded theory is preferred in the thesis which the article is derived from with reference to the idea that revealing how and in which forms the dynamics of women's religiosity occur in religious groups (e.g. the processes by which the religious group orientation and affiliation of women living in the modern city developed, their religious perceptions and experiences, their way of defining and positioning themselves as a Muslim woman and a member of a religious group in the context of discussions on women after modernization, their approach to current issues related to women) is embedded in the family, social structure and psycho-social processes that these women live in. Because a good theory or explanation must arise from reality, that is, from the data in the field; it should focus on the change and experiential processes experienced by individuals in the variability of life, and the relationship between the way they make sense of events and phenomena and their actions.<sup>19</sup> Embedded theory, known as the method that discovers the theory embedded in systematically collected and analyzed data, is a method that describes and explains the social processes in which human interactions are presented and reflected, the behavioral systems of people and the consequences of these behaviors. Its aim is to understand how people define themselves through their interactions and to examine the patterns and processes that they develop during this understanding effort.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ömer Tuğrul İnançer "Evlenmeden Hamile Kalırım Diyenin Hürriyetine Tükürürüm" (Kübra Par, Röportaj, Görüşme, 14 Aralık 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Christina Goulding, *Grounded theory a practical guide for management, business and market researchers*. (London: Sage. 2002).

<sup>20</sup> John R. Cutcliffe, Methodological Issues in grounded theory. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 31 (2000), 1476-1484.

## 2.1. Data Collection

The qualitative research method was used in the study by consulting multiple data collection tools including participant observation, semi-structured interview, examination of written sources and materials in media belonging to both groups.

The way to understand the feelings, thoughts, individual experiences, and relationships of women who are members of religious groups and to interpret them and make inferences about the form of women religiosity is to be included in the environment in which the participants live during the research process. From the epistemological viewpoint, conducting a qualitative research means being as intimate as possible with the participants in their environment. Only by this way, subjective statements can be matched with personal perspective. The longer the researcher stays in these environments and the more time he spends with the participants, the better he gets to know them and the more he learns about them firsthand.<sup>21</sup>

According to Creswell,<sup>22</sup> there are four types of observation as; full participant, participant as observer, non-participant observer and full observer. The role of a good qualitative observer begins with those that are not participants, then moves on to participants and other types. In the first stage of this study the position of the researcher was non-participant observer, who took part in the study as an outsider, took notes, and did not interact directly with anyone. In the later stage, the researcher evolved into full observer that paid attention to the people being studied and formed a tight bond with them through interactions. Face to face interviews were conducted with a total of twenty-eight women, twenty of whom were from the Ismailağa and eight of from the Jarrahi Group, comparatively with the groups' populations and prevalences. The participants who are members of the Ismailaga Community were reached by snowball sampling technique. This technique, also known as participant-directed sampling, is useful for researchers who work with sensitive topics and hard-to-reach groups. The researcher first meets with a few people who have the characteristics of interest and then reaches other individuals with their guidance.<sup>23</sup> The participants of the Jarrahi Group were determined by the purposeful sampling technique. Purposeful sampling means selecting individuals with certain characteristics in the study.<sup>24</sup> At the beginning of the research process, the researcher met with the then sheikh of the Tekke, Ömer Tuğrul İnançer, and said

<sup>21</sup> John. W. Creswell, *Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri: Beş Yaklaşım Göre Nitel Araştırma ve Araştırma Deseni*, çev. Mesut Bütün-Selçuk Beşir Demir (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 3. Basımdan çeviri, 2018), 146.

<sup>22</sup> Creswell, *Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 166-167.

<sup>23</sup> Bruce L. Berg – Lune, Howard, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, çev. Hasan Aydın (Konya: Eğitim Kitabevi, 8. Basımdan çeviri, 2015), 71.

<sup>24</sup> Berg – Lune, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 71.



that she wanted to interview the female members of the group within the scope of the study. Because the women in the Tekke stated that they could not speak without permission from the sheikh. Tuğrul Efendi directed the researcher to an authorized woman (bacı) in the Tekke, and this woman gave the researcher the names of some dervishes with whom she could interview. The researcher asked why these individuals were chosen by them, “bacı” replied, "Because they are well-spoken dervishes." Although the researcher did not make the selection, the study group in the Tekke was determined by purposive sampling because she had to interview individuals who were chosen because of their certain qualities.

The participant observation process began in November 2014 and ended in April 2016. The Çarşamba district was the centre for observations and meetings that lasted approximately a year and a half, carried out for the aspect of the field research that relates to the women of the Ismailağa Community, and attendance was ensured at the gatherings instructed by women teachers of the group twice a week. The age range of the participants that were members of the Ismailağa Community was 18 – 60. Approximately 70% of participants had received education at the basic level.

The “Türk Tasavvuf Musikisini ve Folklorunu Araştırma ve Yaşatma Vakfı,” located in Karagümrük in Fatih and known as “Cerrahî Tekkesi” among the public, was the centre for the aspect of the study relating to the women of the Jarrahi Group. Attendance was ensured at the thikr and ritual gatherings taking place at the waqf on Monday and Thursday nights, Efendi’s occasional late night gatherings, as well as programs that took place on some holy nights. The age range of the women members participating in the study was 25-58. Five of the participants were university graduates and three of them were high school graduates.

Within the scope of the research, pseudonyms were used to refer to participants in the research group. Since the women Ismailağa Community participants, its mediatic faces and its teachers define themselves as a “community” and confirm this commonly known usage, the term “Ismailağa/Çarşamba Community” was used throughout this research to refer to this group. The Jarrahi women participants emphasized that their group was not a community in the same sense. Efendi warned against using the terms “sect” or “community” to describe this structure. For this reason, with his approval, the term “Jarrahi Group” was preferred in this study.

## 2.2. Research Questions

Women in modern urban life leave the house for reasons like education, work, travel and shopping and are therefore visible in public, social and cultural spaces. As an inevitable result of

women's roles beginning to change within a modern lifestyle and new roles joining their existing roles of motherhood and home-centred duties, women are present in a variety of institutions. The following questions were presented to participants to learn their thoughts on women being present in these institutions and places:

1. What kind of education, at which institutions, do you provide for women in your group?
2. What is your view on women working outside of the house?
3. What is your view on women driving?
4. What is your opinion on women going to mosques and praying there?
5. Do you shop at big shopping centers?

### **2.3. Analysis of Data**

The interviewees were informed about the research, and the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder with the permission of the participants. In accordance with the ethical principle of keeping the identities of the participants confidential, pseudonyms were used in the study. Participants' ages are also written next to their pseudonyms.

The interviews were analysed by the researcher. The coding stages of the systematic pattern from the Embedded Theory; open, axis and selective coding stages were followed. In the open coding phase, categories and subcategories were classified and labeled. In the axis coding phase, the codes were linked together to form a set of propositions, and finally, in the selective coding phase, core categories representing the main phenomenon of the research were determined. There is "çarşaf" as a form of veiling, which has become the symbol of community, at the center of women religiosity in the Ismailağa Community. The core category emerges in the Jarrahi Group is the "tekke". It has been understood that the ties of the Jarrahi women, who have adopted the modern lifestyle, with religion and the religious field in the modern city are spatially provided by the "tekke". The core category that is extrapolated throughout the thesis which explains women's religiosity in the Ismailağa Community is the "çarşaf", which is the primary determinant of women's activities and preferences in the modern city. Whereas at the center of the religiosity of the women of the Jarrahi Group is the "tekke". They gain religious knowledge from "Efendi" (sheikh) in the "tekke" and organise their daily lives according to the religious suggestions and interpretations of the "Efendi".

To ensure reliability in data analysis, a part of the study's raw data was shared with two experts in the field of Psychology of Religion, and it was found that the theming of the experts and the theming of the researcher were consistent to a 90% degree.

### 3. Findings

It is possible to see that the approaches of the two religious groups the study focuses on, to the topics of women's education, women working, being in traffic with the intent of driving, their position in mosques and going to places like shopping centres that became the symbol of modern consumption, were very different.

#### 3.1. Women's Education

##### 3.1.1. The Ismailağa Community: Women Can Only Receive an Education in Madrasas

In the coding process of the answers given to the question "What kind of education, at which institutions do you provide for women in your group?" the concept of coeducation stood out.

All the women participants of the Ismailağa Community stated they did not educate their girls in institutions for formal education because of the practice of coeducation at such institutions. After stating that men and women studying together is prohibited religiously, participants shared that the community allows men to study at formal education institutions because they are responsible for earning the household's livelihood, with the conviction that "necessities make certain things permissible":

Our community opposes women receiving formal education. But it's not because they're against education, it's because of the setting. That's all Efendi says. We don't believe women shouldn't receive education, on the contrary, we think they should be more educated. This is why alternative education is provided at madrasas. They offer school education also, I mean classes in both Islamic and positive knowledge as an alternative, and they receive their diploma through distance learning. It covers everything from surface-level body language to foreign languages. It may not be like the education outside, in schools, but flaws are always expected. It's like Efendi always says: I never say women shouldn't study, but the books they read are useless and confusing, plus there's also the matter of men and women being together. Maybe this doesn't matter when they're children but after a certain age, we couldn't prevent certain things. But they allow men, there's no issue with men receiving education. I guess they believe women are more mahram but give men endless permission (Neşe, 35).

Our community believes women shouldn't receive an education. They find madrasas more important... In Quran classes, for example, male teachers hear your voice, and you will need to interact with them when you can't participate. Our community is against us receiving a diploma through distance learning too. The teachers believe the madrasa should be enough, they say why do you need a worldly diploma? (Esma, 25).

The İsmailağa Community even opposes women studying at Imam-Hatip schools where the classes of girls and boys are separate. There are two main reasons for this. The first is coeducation, the other is the opposition to the idea that the government can give religious education. This is brought up often in the community and we can formulate it as the school-madrasa opposition. The prominent men teachers and women teaching at gatherings, known by the community to be Mahmut Ustaosmanoğlu's representatives, harshly criticize even distance learning and merely receiving diplomas from Imam-Hatip High Schools or Theology Faculties, much less attending these institutions for formal education, and consider doing so opposing Mahmut Efendi. This approach of the teachers stems from Mahmut Efendi's following words from when he could speak: "Girls absolutely cannot attend middle school, high school and university! Don't be ignorant! If you consulted 224,000 of the prophets and searched 104 of the books, this is still not allowed. How could you hand your children, your angel daughters over to places like this? You should hear this again here. The only places girls can go are madrasas for girls. Madrasas for girls, mind you, in which the teachers, principals, and friends are all women, and they have nothing to do with men. A place as safe as this."<sup>25</sup> Ögüt,<sup>26</sup> conducted interviews with parents from the İsmailağa Community in her research. It is seen that the views of the community members regarding the education of their girls and boys are the same as the data in our study.

We observed that, despite warnings the community's clear and harsh opposition, studying from a distance to receive a diploma from Imam-Hatip high schools was common among young women, and asked the young participants why they defied the community to receive this education. Their responses were a manner of self-criticism:

There's a relative opposition in the community to studying outside because there are men teachers there... I absolutely don't view it as a worldly diploma. I realized how much I lacked when I started Imam-Hatip. This is what our community lacks. If I live in the world, I need Turkish, a foreign language, and worldly knowledge. In the madrasa, you abandon these entirely. The girls studying at our madrasa make spelling mistakes, can't write certain rules, make speaking mistakes, these are things they lack, we receive a single dimensional education. You can see this when you go to Imam-Hatip or complete distance learning. Because I needed this, I decided to do distance learning... After the 4 plus 4 rule was implemented the families sending their daughters to Imam-Hatip middle schools are, I think, fifty percent. I personally find this upsetting (Hülya, 24).

Despite the positioning of women in a home-centered way by the community's authorities and the message to only study and teach at their madrasas given to young women, there has been

<sup>25</sup> Ümmetder Mescidi, "Kızlarınızı Okula Gönderip", *Youtube* (18 Haziran 2016), 00:00:15-00:01:07.

<sup>26</sup> Zehra Ögüt, *Sosyolojik Bağlamda İsmailağa Cemaati*. (İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Doktora Tezi, 2022), 211-216.

increased interest in studying Imam-Hatip High Schools and Theology Faculties from a distance. The discourses and practices of the women of the community may differ.

### **3.1.2. The Jarrahi Group: Women and Men Can Receive the Same Education**

All the women participants except one responded that “women should receive the same education as men, coeducation is encouraged”:

Women should receive the same education as men, they should receive it at the same places that men do (Filiz, 51).

I’m normally a conservative person. In that sense, I should be against coeducation. I attended private school, and this is what I observed. When I was in middle school, our school was coed, then they separated girls and boys. Everyone becomes more shameless. Because the way you sit around women is different from how you sit around men, separating them in school can prevent the child’s understanding of shame and humility from developing. I think, until a certain age, schools should be coed. Also women can receive any kind of education (Melisa, 26).

Throughout the field research process, we observed that most of the women who go to the tekke (dervish lodge) had received either university-level education or higher. Additionally, we did not witness Efendi criticizing women attending formal education institutions or engaging in discourse opposing coeducation. Therefore, we can state that the Ismailağa Community and the Jarrahi Group have completely different approaches to women’s education.

## **3.2. Women in the Workforce**

### **3.2.1. The Ismailağa Community: Women Should Not Work Outside of the House**

Most of the Ismailağa Community women that we spoke to within the scope of this study stated that women should not work outside of the house and point to it not being appropriate for women to be in the same environment as men, women’s fragility, their responsibilities inside the house and that women are not responsible for earning a livelihood, as context:

I don’t think women should work; they shouldn't tire themselves because they’re more delicate. They should sit and worship. Working, for men, is worshipping anyway since they’re looking after their wives and children (Serap, 28).

Women shouldn’t work... Because Allah guarantees our livelihood, ... Either her husband will earn it or it will find her in another way, sure you can earn it on your own, but I generally don’t find it appropriate for women to work... Because women are the pillars of their houses, and now women are taking men’s places and that isn’t good. Yes, those who can work will work, that’s not how it used to be but now many choose to work, saying I’m going to have a career, I’m not going to depend on my husband, or take money from him. It’s Allah who ensures our livelihood, and we’re only going to receive as much as He decreed and then die anyway (Sevgi, 40).

While answering the questions, participants drew the most attention to women not being supposed to leave the house and needing to look after their households and families. The main argument surrounding the positioning of women in a home-centered way in city life is the idea that

women will neglect their homes and families when they start working, and the community's general anxiety about this. Additionally, members of the community also stress how in working life outside of the house women interact with men who are not their mahrams and this increases the risk of zina.

The only place the women of the community can work outside of the house is the community's madrasas and courses. Özet<sup>27</sup> states that the network of Quran courses in Çarşamba is both a sign of how the community tries to include the young, upcoming generations into their habitus, and a field of work. Being a madrasa teacher is a future ideal that is presented by the Ismailağa Community as desirable and sacred to young students. According to observations made throughout the study, girls being directed toward this career is concretized by the encouraging and honouring phrase "miss teacher" (hoca hanım) which is how madrasa teachers refer to them. It is clear these encouragements and the community's teachers' urging have a strong effect on the girls. This is true to the extent that women who are teachers in the community define themselves primarily with the role of "teacher," before the roles of "mother"hood and "spouse"hood related to their gender, as Özyağlı<sup>28</sup> also drew attention to.

### 3.2.2. The Jarrahi Group: Women Can Work in Appropriate Jobs and Settings

In the responses given by the Jarrahi Group women about women working outside of the house, the themes of women working jobs suiting their nature, do not surpass their physical strength, and have an appropriate work setting, as well as not neglecting their families, came up:

Women can work as long as the work is reasonable. They can work anywhere they want as long as they're able to do the work. They can't, for example, work a job requiring bodily strength. They cannot do work that's for men. I'd prefer for a woman to work without disrupting her service to her family and children... (Fatma, 58)

As long as women can protect themselves, they should be in the workforce. Is there a reason why they shouldn't?... (Banu, 27).

Some participants emphasized the necessity of women workers in certain sectors, and some brought up respectability and financial freedom:

Is there not going to be a woman police officer, who is going to search us, is a man going to touch us? So, it's clear there can be one. I think there must be a woman police officer and naturally, there is. There may not be women in fields requiring physical strength. We say women cannot work

<sup>27</sup> İrfan Özet, *Fatih Başakşehir: Muhafazakar Mahallede İktidar ve Dönüşen Habitus*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2019), 133.

<sup>28</sup> Fatma Zehra Özyağlı, *Examining The Formation of Women's Identity in a Naqshi Community: The Case of Ismailağa*. (Şehir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2018), 47-48.

construction but in Trabzon women work more than men do. They do heavier work than construction workers. They carry huge sacks of potatoes up steep slopes. Some women do that too (Müge, 25).

Women absolutely should be in the workforce, for themselves, for their financial independence, for their social lives, and for them to feel like a part of life. But of course, there are jobs they cannot do... There must be work they cannot do in terms of physical strength (Filiz, 51).

The women participants of the Ismailağa Community adopt a negative attitude toward women working outside of the house. Some of the community's women babysit, take orders to make homemade products like cake, pastries, and stuffed vine leaves or sell their knitting and embroidery. The only places the women of the community can work outside of the house are the community's madrasas. Women of the Jarrahi Group think women can work jobs suiting their nature and have appropriate environments. Some participants also emphasized that working makes women more respectable in society, free, and that a financially independent woman does not need to depend on her husband. It is known that Jarrahi women mostly accept the new roles they gained in modern life without rejecting traditional roles. They try to create a balance between their personal and work life and state that women should work without neglecting their families. This is compatible with their attitude. Participants emphasizing appropriate jobs and work environments for women can be considered modern city women's effort to shape their work-life according to their values and how they look for and prioritize a work environment carrying their values.

### **3.3. Women Driving**

Traffic is one of the spaces in modern city life in which women gain visibility. With the visibility of women who wear the hijab in public spaces brought on by an increase of them entering the world of education and the workforce, the presence of religious conservative women in traffic increases day by day.

#### **3.3.1 The Ismailağa Community: Driving is for Men, Women Should Not Enter Men's Space**

The women participants who are members of the Ismailağa Community, save for a few exceptions, consider women driving within the context of it being an imposition on men's space, an effort to be like men or to compete with them, and refer to Mahmut Efendi to explain that it is wrong for women to drive:

Efendi has not encouraged driving. Maybe nowadays women see driving as competing with men but this is what Efendi teaches: imagine a carriage, a woman driving is as strange as a woman riding the horse or driving the carriage. Leave driving to men, be a lady and sit in the back. Men should shoulder conflict in traffic, not women. Why are you so eager to do it. The ladyship Efendi teaches is, in a sense, womanhood... I heard he opened the car door for his wife (Ezgi, 32).

If the Prophet came, would he allow his daughter Fatima to drive? They'll say oh, is the daughter of the great prophet driving? This is how they defend this. They say our mother Aisha rode a horse, and today's horse is a car. But Efendi explained it this way: you're ladies, you're so precious, so valuable that you must sit in the back, for example, have you seen someone in a high position driving? They all have private drivers (Yeliz, 56).

As is reflected in the phrase "... women should be women and men should be men..." most participants do not view driving as a necessity brought on by life or something that must be done, but rather as a tendency of women to become more like men. It can be understood that participants view traffic as a space belonging to men and evaluate the matter through the perspective of gender stereotypes. The terms "womanlike" and "mannish" are used to attribute certain characteristics to either men or women. To be womanlike entails staying at home, looking after members of the household, and acting delicate and polite; to be mannish refers to qualities like being competitive outside and in work environments, courageous and independent.<sup>29</sup>

Members of the younger group interviewed approached the topic by centering it around how men and women will be together and interact in traffic but, drawing attention to the problems they and other women face in transportation vehicles, made explanations deeming women driving appropriate:

I want to view women driving in a positive light. Do you know why? I wear a hijab and when I want to go somewhere I ride a minibus, you cannot always take a taxi. All that pushing and shoving, I'm going to be side by side with men, why go through that? I should have a car so I can leave and return comfortably. Our community says don't drive. Its understanding is, a woman's place is her home. But I don't support everything the community does simply because I am a part of it, to be honest. The community's reason for this is so women don't impose too much on men's lives. Our community does not see it appropriate for women to go to the bazaar either, a woman's place is her home, she should stay at home. They don't see it appropriate to interact directly with men. But here's the thing, there are penalties for that now, you cannot harass women or do anything like that (Hülya, 24).

I think women should drive because I have a license. I think women should know how to drive. But Efendi doesn't allow them to. I don't know the particular details but it's probably so women don't have to be exposed to men, and because women are fragile. I had gotten my license because I loved it, loved cars. But I don't drive (Serap, 28).

Upon being asked about this topic on television programs, Cübbeli Ahmet Hoca stated that women driving is permissible in terms of fiqh, and that Mahmut Efendi's discourse on this is shaped by his high sensitivity concerning women not being outside. The teachings of the community's leaders, Cübbeli Ahmet Hoca's views and the opinions shared by the participants show that the foundation of the Ismailağa Community's attitude toward women driving is the defining and positioning of women in a home-centred way. When it comes to women not leaving the house, driving,

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<sup>29</sup> Zehra Dökmen, *Toplumsal Cinsiyet: Sosyal Psikolojik Açıklamalar*, (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2019), 104.



which allows women more freedom outside the house and expands women's mobility and living space by making transportation easier, is something that, in innocent terms, must be avoided.

### **3.3.2 The Jarrahi Group: Women Driving is a Necessity**

Participants who are Jarrahi Group members evaluate women driving from the perspective of security, a reality of the modern city, and taking place in a social life:

I think women driving is good in terms of security (Hale, 33).

It's necessary for active women, I'm not against it. The Prophet says to teach your children how to ride horses, he doesn't say your sons, and again he refers to swimming and archery in general terms (Reyyan, 38).

I believe in this topic, like every other topic, our reference is the Prophet and his wives' lives. Our mothers, the Prophet's wives, went to war with him, and likewise Khadijah did business. Our mother Aisha wrapped the wounds of the wounded during those wars, like a doctor, and rode a camel (Müge, 25).

As something they consider a modern necessity and inevitability, participants referred to the Prophet and his wives while explaining their thoughts on women driving. Jarrahi women viewing women driving today as equivalent to the Prophet's wives riding horses or camels can be interpreted both as updating religious knowledge and trying to explain what is current and real in terms of what is appropriate and sacred.

## **3.4. Women in the Mosque**

### **3.4.1. The Ismailağa Community: Women Make Men Uncomfortable by Going to the Mosque**

As a result of time spent outside the house in city life and women needing to use mosques much more compared to before, women's requests that the places dedicated to them in mosques be improved in terms of space and opportunity, are drawing attention.

Alongside its method of bringing the matter to the public's attention and the aspect of it reflected in visual and social media being questionable, a group of women criticized how the sections of mosques dedicated to women were limited and prevented them from experiencing the mosque's atmosphere and started the "Women at Mosques" movement to raise awareness about the issue for solutions to be found. Many groups including the Ismailağa Community did not support this movement and criticized it.

Throughout the field research process, we have heard the men teachers of the community state that while women can go to the mosque it is discouraged, the best place for women to worship in the time of fitnah, is the innermost corner of their home, many times in their speeches and gatherings. The community's mediatic face, Ahmet Mahmut Ünlü, does not find it appropriate for

women to go to the mosque, especially for Friday prayers, because there is not enough room for men. According to Yılmaz,<sup>30</sup> communities' insistence for women to worship can be considered an extension of the relationship formed between women and the house in traditional Islamism. The places that women belong to much be restricted to private areas and women must prefer, even with the intent of worship, to be at home instead of at the mosque. This attitude of communities, who are the main symbols of the traditional religious understanding when it comes to women, has led to women distancing themselves from mosques and preferring shrines instead. When women were not able to experience sacredness at mosques, they turned to shrines. According to Köse and Ayten,<sup>31</sup> "shrines are, so to speak, women's mosques." The reason visiting shrines forms a large portion of women's religiosity can be better understood with this observation.

All the women that we spoke to in the study agreed women going to the mosque made men, the true owners of the mosque and congregation, uncomfortable and criticized women who go to the mosque wearing clothing that is not modest enough and being seen by men:

According to Efendi, it's not prohibited for women to go to the mosque. What he always says is as long as women protect themselves and it's within the rules of Islam, they go to the mosque, to the Ismailaga Mosque. If you're outside on a Friday and it happened to be time for Friday prayer, you can go, I would go too. To receive the blessings of Friday. For Eid prayer, for example, I wish conditions were right for us to go and receive that enlightenment... Women don't have that kind of obligation, to fill up mosques. It's the men's job to go running to the mosque. Actually, women should not go out at all. I don't like women being outside during prayer times like men, there's no room left for men. Men become uncomfortable because they have to see women when using the same door to go in and out. At nighttime they yell at each other, there're streams of them going in and out, on the roads and streets, I don't like it. There's no need for this. You lose so many things while trying to do a little good. Maybe you're losing so much. These aren't things that Efendi views positively at all (Ezgi, 32).

Actually, it's not preferable. They come to the mosque, the mosque is small anyway, there's only a curtain separating them. The women aren't careful with their clothing. It'd be different if they had separate doors. Nothing about this is virtuou (Nursel, 42).

Women can go to taraweeh. On other occasions, men can go to the mosque and women cannot. There are madrasas where women can pray, or they can pray at home. Generally, it's more appropriate for men to go to the mosque. But if for instance a woman goes somewhere and is not able to return home she can pray in the women's sections of mosques, she can go to a mosque in that case. Of course, normally it's more pious to pray at home (Sevgi, 40).

One of the participants Ezgi, considers women going to the mosque from the perspective of men, with the words "Men become uncomfortable, ... there are streams of them going in and out, on the roads and streets." This approach is confirmed by nearly all the participants and is a

<sup>30</sup> Zehra Yılmaz, *Dişil Dindarlık İslamcı Kadın Hareketinin Dönüşümü*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015), 220.

<sup>31</sup> Ali Köse- Ali Ayten, *Türbeler: Popüler Dindarlığın Durakları*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2010), 318.

manifestation of the community viewing the mosque and the street as men's spaces. Okutan<sup>32</sup> states that for Islamist men, the streets are where masculinity experiences its freedom outside of the house, and the mosque is the place the religious residue can settle. According to Connell,<sup>33</sup> who states that in everything from driving to committing small crimes, the streets belong to men, the streets are "the environment in which there are certain social relations and clear boundaries." The Ismailağa Community's approach limiting women driving and passing through streets while going to the mosque, is a result of it seeing the streets as dominated by men. The community maintaining a rigid traditional attitude in gender roles despite changing life conditions and sociocultural dynamics also contains a sexist division.

### 3.4.2. The Jarrahi Group: Women Should Go to Mosques

Women of the Jarrahi Group, most of whom are educated and working individuals, spend at least as much time outside the house as they do inside it due to educational activities and work. Therefore, women praying when outside of the house and arguments surrounding women's place and position in the mosque, is of great interest to Jarrahi women. All the participants except one stated that women needed to be present at mosques:

They absolutely should. At least, even if maybe they cannot go for every prayer like men do, women should not be pushed to the sidelines of life. They should be at the mosque, they should be at school, and they should be within life. But of course, the way women are viewed must change, if it doesn't it's always women who suffer the consequences. Whether she goes shopping or to school, it's a problem, the way women are viewed must change (Reyyan, 38).

Of course women should go to the mosque. Why shouldn't they?.. For instance, someone pulls the curtain shut and I open it, I say, why are you hiding. She creates the whole thing in her head, he's not looking... In the mosque she's so afraid of men seeing her that she closes the door. I say are you not going to talk to the grocer at the market in a little while anyway! It's not like you're here on the mosque's top floor in your nightgown worrying about men seeing you, you're in your street clothes, covered by your hijab...(Aliye, 56).

It can be seen that as opposed to the members of the Ismailağa Community who define women in a home-centred way and believe the prayers women pray at home instead of in mosques are accepted, in relation to this, Jarrahi women hold the belief that women need to be present in the mosque. Köysüren<sup>34</sup> states that in city life, in which the understanding of the individual stands out, with the level of education and awareness increasing, religious women find the strength to question both traditional and modern profiles of religiosity. As is reflected in the Jarrahi Group's women's views concerning how women must exist in every space, including the mosque, as well as

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<sup>32</sup> Birsan Banu Okutan, *Erillik ve Din*, (İstanbul: Rağbet Yayınları, 2017), 156.

<sup>33</sup> Raewyn. Connell, *Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve İktidar: Toplum, Kişi ve Cinsel Politika*, çev. Cem Soydemir (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2016), 198-199.

<sup>34</sup> Aliye Çınar Köysüren, *Kültürel ve Dini Algıda Toplumsal Cinsiyet*, (İstanbul: Sentez Yayınları, 2016), 73.

Reyyan's statement "... the way women are viewed must change..." their critical approach to the rigid traditional understanding opposing women being present outside of the house, supports Köysüren's assertion.

### 3.5. Women in Shopping Centers

Big shopping centres provide people with the opportunity to shop and satisfy all their needs in their daily lives, from food to clothing to home textiles to stationery, and electronics and cosmetics. With their wide range of products and the entertainment centres, parkours, movie theatres, restaurants and cafes it's home to, big shopping centres are an important symbol of consumption in modern cities. The reason the habitants of cities show such interest in shopping centres is that these centres contain a variety of products pertaining to different fields of consumption, as well as provide opportunities for social activities too. It can be said that particularly women prefer shopping centres to take their children out and let them enjoy themselves without worrying about security.

#### 3.5.1. The Ismailağa Community: I feel Strange in Shopping Centres

Some participants claimed they felt strange at shopping centres wearing the çarşaf and did not see it fitting to be there:

I don't like it at all, there's nothing appealing to me. If I go, I'll go for someone else. I won't go for myself, alone... Why would I go there, am I going to sit there, I feel, I don't know, strange even walking among people in these clothes (çarşaf). I never went to a shopping centre. I pray that I won't have to... (Ezgi, 32).

Shopping in those big shopping centres isn't for us, I see time spent there as a waste... (Yeliz, 50).

Most of the Ismailağa Community's women think it would be wrong for them to be present at shopping centres in their çarşaf, which indicates belonging to the community, and the identity it symbolizes, and do not go to these places. The places where the community's women prefer to shop instead are the shops in the Çarşamba district. Kiswahs that cannot be found anywhere else can be found in these shops. Also, these are shops only women shop and work at, and many do not accept credit cards. Additionally, the Çarşamba Bazaar which is set up every Wednesday, taking up nearly the entire district, sells just about every product that women need, from fruits and vegetables to textile products to house accessories and jewellery, is an essential shopping place for the community's women.

### 3.5.2. The Jarrahi Group: I Go to Shopping Centres

The participants from Jarrahi Group living in a modern urban setting go to big shopping centres, which are one of the city's most important symbols of consumption, and do not see anything wrong with being present at or spending time there.

I do shop from big shopping centres (Banu, 27).

I go to shopping centres a lot (Aliye, 56).

It can be understood that contrary to the Ismailağa Community women, Jarrahi women do not have a negative attitude toward modern places of consumption.

The term “Habitus” refers to the subconscious mechanisms determining the actions, lifestyle, and economic and class position of the individual, and distinguishing them from others.<sup>35</sup> The habitus, which Bourdieu defines as shaping the patterns of living that are the source of the person's behaviours, thoughts, and likes, for the Ismailağa Community women, is their religious group. It is clear that the Ismailağa Community women do not go to big shopping centres for two main reasons: they do not feel comfortable in shopping centres, one of the symbols of modern consumption, wearing the çarşaf, a symbol of religious tradition and the community, and they can access the products they want and need in daily life easily at alternative shops and the Çarşamba Bazaar.

The habitus of the Jarrahi women, most of whom are educated, work outside of the house, and have adopted modern clothing and a modern lifestyle, who have assumed a religiosity centred around mystic love, is their public life outside of the tekke (lodge), along with the religious group they belong to. This belonging does not shape the entirety of Jarrahi women's lives the way it shapes those of the Ismailağa Community women. These women who have a lifestyle in which the religious and the modern is combined, go to shopping centres and use modern consumption tools like credit cards, with ease.

### Conclusion and Discussion

In the Ismailağa Community's sources of religious knowledge and in the discourse of the community's well-known mediatic men members and teachers of both genders instructing at madrasas, women are defined in a “home-centred” way and state that women should not be present in spaces outside of the house except for cases of absolute necessity. Positioning women in a home-centred way brings about a positioning of women encapsulating every aspect of daily life including

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<sup>35</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, (translated by Richard Nice). (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 169-170.

shopping, transportation, education, working and worship. In the community's broadcasts and gatherings, women staying in the house and not participating in the world outside of it unless it is absolutely necessary, is preached. In the community's gatherings that are open to the public, discourse giving the work done in the house a sacred meaning is adopted to strengthen the effect of these admonishments. The idea that women should not be present in spaces outside of the house unless it is absolutely necessary, contains the acceptance that spaces like the streets, transportation vehicles, traffic and even mosques are spaces belonging to men.

Most of the members of the community do not allow their daughters to study at institutions for formal education, believing it is wrong in terms of religion and privacy for women to take classes in a space with even one man in it. The same is true for the workplace if it is outside the house, transportation vehicles, and shopping centres. The acceptance that it is religiously wrong for men and women to be in the same space, the defining of women in a home-centred way, and that the spaces outside of the house belong to men, excludes the women of the community from the social spaces of city life. The discourse that women should not drive due to reasons like interfering with men's space, interacting with men in traffic and causing men to sin, is adopted by the participants and the community's women in general. The community's prominent teachers and most of the study's participants claim that it is not right for women to go to the mosque for reasons like women being visible in the streets in clothes that do not befit proper modesty and that they disturb men, the true owners of the mosque.

As is reflected in Mahmut Efendi's statement "... our teachers are all Meryems..." the community's teachers position the women of the community in a different way than other women and see them as more protected. While the community limits women and the places they go to in multiple ways, it says men can be in these spaces since they are responsible for earning their families' livelihood and do not limit them. The leading figures of the Ismailağa Community that Ögüt<sup>36</sup> interviewed, stated that; women cannot take part in education and work life even if they wear çarşaf, and women should not leave their homes unless necessary. Ögüt's research also confirms that there has been no change in the community's discourse on the position of women in the modern city.

The Jarrahis are known to be made up of men and women with a more intellectual and urban appearance, who dress in a more modern and urban way, and are highly educated and interested in art, particularly music. Most of the women either do not wear the hijab outside of the

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<sup>36</sup> Ögüt, *Sosyolojik Bağlamda İsmailağa Cemaati*, 211-216.

tekke (dervish lodge) or adopted modern ways of wearing it. The sentiment that women should not neglect their house is repeated by Jarrahi women but they are not defined only in a home-centred way. The participants who claim that women should exist in spaces pertaining to the modern city like places for education, work, art, and worship do not see spaces outside of the house as belonging to men. Claiming that there is not actually a clear divide between men and women and that gender is not something that stands out within their tekke (dervish lodge), the participants adopt a space-centred religiosity and define the tekke as the place they form a connection with religion. The women's place in the tekke is on the upper floor and Efendi explains this by saying, "They are on the top floor, they're the crowns on our heads." Both this approach and the way Jarrahi women are accepted in the tekke the way they are in education, work, and daily life, show that the tekke is the sole religious and spiritual space for these modern urban women.

The significant changes and increasing flexibility in the Ismailağa Community's women's approach to positioning women in modern life can be observed especially among the younger generation. Despite the community's authorities opposing it, some women get driving licenses, study distance education at Imam-Hatip High Schools and Theology Faculties, and some go out at night to teach women working in the public to read Quran despite being out at that hour being deemed inappropriate by the community. Therefore we can foresee the community's perspective toward positioning women in a modern city to change more in the future.

The Jarrahi Group, which displays a more space-centred religiosity, takes on an attitude adopting a modern lifestyle in positioning women in a city. It keeps current conditions, needs, and developments in mind while considering topics like women driving, working in a public space and women's education. Additionally, it believes that the way the topic of women is viewed must change holistically. We believe that the Jarrahi Group, with the way it combines the modern with the religious and traditional and its structure that adopts the discourse that women can exist in every area of current life, will continue to be a religious and spiritual centre of attraction for city women.

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