

Zeynep Aydoğan



# Forging Paths of Continuity

Borderline Miracles in the Early *Menākīb-nāme* Literature

13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Centuries

---

THE INSTITUTE FOR MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES  
FOUNDATION OF RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY – HELLAS

Rethymno 2024

Zeynep Aydođan

# Forging Paths of Continuity

Borderline Miracles  
in the Early *Menākıbnāme* Literature,  
13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Centuries



INSTITUTE FOR MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES/FORTH  
RETHYMNO 2024

ISBN 978-618-5896-02-7

© Copyright 2024 by the Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FORTH and Zeynep Aydoğan.

This is an open-access book distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

*Cover image:* Bahram Gur killing the dragon, dated 1371; *Shahnameh* Manuscript, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Hazine 1511, Folio 203 Verso.

A monograph composed within and published by the Research Project GHOST: Geographies and Histories of the Ottoman Supernatural Tradition: Exploring Magic, the Marvelous, and the Strange in Ottoman Mentalities, European Research Council Consolidator Grant 771766.



**European Research Council**  
Established by the European Commission

# Table of Contents

<i>Author's Note</i> . . . . .	5
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	6
Theoretical Framework and Outline of the Study . . . . .	8
Setting the Stage . . . . .	11
(De)mystification of the Caliphate: The Saint Above and Beyond . . . . .	11
Sanctification Process: "Saint-making" . . . . .	13
Saint-making in Anatolia Before the Fifteenth Century . . . . .	14
CHAPTER ONE ❖ <b>Saliva: Sacralization of the Conquest of Rûm</b> . . . . .	18
Transfer of Spiritual Authority . . . . .	23
"Becoming Hızır" . . . . .	28
Saliva, Untamed Mystics and Spiritual Initiation . . . . .	30
CHAPTER TWO ❖ <b>Bones: Islamizing Space</b> . . . . .	36
The Discovery of Battal Gazi's Tomb . . . . .	38
Shrine Visits and Miraculous Encounters . . . . .	44
CHAPTER THREE ❖ <b>Skin: Transformation</b> . . . . .	48
Changing Skin: Shape-shifting . . . . .	49
Dragon in Islamic Mysticism . . . . .	52
Christian Military Saints and Dragon-slaying Legends . . . . .	55
Dragon-slaying in Turkish Warrior Epics . . . . .	60
Bektashization of the Dragon-slaying Legend . . . . .	66
CONCLUSION . . . . .	74
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	77
<i>Primary sources</i> . . . . .	77
<i>Secondary sources</i> . . . . .	79

## *Author's Note*

The present study follows the guideline of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES)*. The Ottoman Turkish proper names and terms are transliterated according to norms of modern Turkish usage. Widely known personalities and commonly used words in modern Turkish are generally transliterated without full diacritics. In order to be consistent with modern Turkish transliteration, I have used “ş” instead of “s”, “ç” instead of “ch” and “c” instead of “j”. The distinction between the letters “ı” and “i” as seen in Turkish usage is also maintained. When a term is universal within the Islamic world, the transliteration generally follows the *IJMES* norms of Arabic transliteration. For the quotations taken from the printed versions of the primary sources, the transcription of the editors and translators is preserved.

## INTRODUCTION

Those abstruse sciences and disputations are (like) the people of Pharaoh: Death is like the water of the Nile.  
Although their brilliance and pomp and show and enchantment drag the people along by the scruff of the neck,  
Know that all (that) is (like) the enchantments of the magicians; know that Death is (like) the rod (of Moses) which became a dragon.  
It made one mouthful of all (their) sorceries. There was a world filled with night: the dawn devoured it.  
The light is not made greater and more by that (act of) devouring; nay, it is just the same as it has (always) been before.<sup>1</sup>

According to the *Dürr-i Meknün*, God's initial act following the construction of His throne (*'arş*) was the creation of a four-headed serpent of proportions so colossal, that even after it had encircled the entire universe seven times, half of its tail remained suspended in the air. Its power is further manifested in its capacity to consume the seven heavens and seven earths with a single divine command, just as effortlessly as a lion devours a fly.<sup>2</sup> The

---

1 Jalal al-Din Rumi, *The Mathnawi of Jalalud'Din Rumi: Containing the Commentary of the First to Sixth Books of the Mathnawi with Indices*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson, Volumes 3–4 (London: The Cambridge University Press, 1925–1940), [1660]. This is related to the perception of dragons as devourers of light. In Sufi thought, being swallowed by a dragon (symbolizing death) is recognized as an affirmation of being a vessel of light. Since dragons are seen as both protectors and dispensers of light, they also represent the promise of eternal life in the light, that is God. Abbas Daneshvari, “The Iconography of the Dragon in the Cult of Saints of Islam”, *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*, ed. Grace Martin Smith and Carl W. Ernst (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1993), p. 24

2 The fifteenth-century Ottoman cosmography *Dürr-i Meknün* (“Hidden Pearls”) was most likely written after 1453 and is generally attributed to Ahmed Bican Yazıcıoğlu (d. after 1466), but there is much debate about its authorship. For more information see, Laban

conceptualization of this serpent, enveloping the entirety of existence and shaking it to the core with each movement, undoubtedly conveys a profound sense of fear—specifically, the fear of existence and the vulnerability inherent to human presence in this world. This fear is paradoxically countered by its antithesis, our fear of non-existence. The serpent and its mythological analogue, the dragon, have been associated with the cyclical renewal of life, mitigating these existential fears through their transformative capacity for regeneration, exemplified by their shedding of skin. Consequently, the symbolic meanings attributed to dragons often oscillate between two liminal states: life and death, magic and wisdom, the seen and unseen realms, and the dichotomy of an inanimate frozen state and that of awakening desire.

Carlo Ginzburg’s conception of a “borderline” denotes objects or figures that occupy an ambiguous position, straddling the threshold between disparate worlds, realms, or states of being. Characterized by their dual affiliations and liminal status, these entities resist categorical classification, existing in a state of ambiguity or in-betweenness. The amnion, associated with the amniotic sac, exemplifies this notion, inhabiting a space between life and death, or birth and non-existence, rendering it a paradigmatic “borderline object”. Similarly, shape-shifting figures such as the Friulian *benandanti* and Slavic werewolves embody the “borderline” condition, precisely due to their ability to traverse between different worlds or states of existence. Ginzburg contends that this “borderline” nature serves as a crucial marker in the transmission of beliefs and experiences, particularly those of the “primary experience of a corporeal character” played a crucial role, as Ginzburg argues.<sup>3</sup>

---

Kaptein, *Dürr-i meknûn*. Kritische Edition mit Kommentar, (Asch: privately published, 2007), pp. 45–47; Carlos Grenier, “Reassessing the Authorship of the *Dürr-i meknûn*”, *Archivum Ottomanicum* 35 (2018): 193–211. There are more than 25 known manuscripts located in different libraries. For the present study, I use Ahmet Demirtaş’s edition, which includes a facsimile of a manuscript from the Süleymaniye Library (Pertevniyal, catalogue number 456) dated 1681. *Dürr-i Mekkûn*, ed. Ahmet Demirtaş (Istanbul: Akademik Kitaplar, 2009), 6b–b.

3 Carlo Ginzburg, “Conjunctive Anomalies: A Reflection on Werewolves”, *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 60 (April 2017), published online April 1, 2017, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://journals.openedition.org/revestudsoc/734>; idem, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches’ Sabbath*, translated by Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), pp. 265–66.

Building on this, I introduce the term “borderline miracles” to describe the phenomena explored in the three chapters of this book, which center on saliva, bones, and skin. These substances occupy a liminal space, straddling the corporeal (the ephemeral) and the eternal (the divine). Substances, such as saliva or hair, are at once part of the body and yet distinct from it as they transcend bodily “boundaries” such as the mouth and skin. They exist in a state of duality, simultaneously part of and distinct from the body. This ambiguity imbues them with a unique significance, susceptible to both benevolent and malevolent applications: they can be employed ritually to bestow blessings, or exploited as instruments of harm, including curses and manipulative witchcraft.<sup>4</sup> Situated at the “margins” of the body, these substances inhabit a “borderline” position, between purity and pollution, magic and sanctity, corporeality and spirituality.<sup>5</sup> This study will demonstrate how the borderline nature of these miracles allows for the creation of timeless connections between holy figures, religious traditions, and geographies.

## Theoretical Framework and Outline of the Study

A corpus of Turkish hagiographies, or *menākıbnāmes*, written between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries constitute the primary sources and the main analytical tools of the study. Based on earlier oral traditions these texts consist of anecdotal accounts highlighting the miraculous feats, or *kerāmet*s, performed by their protagonists.<sup>6</sup>

---

4 Adam Bursi, “Holy Spit and Magic Spells: Religion, Magic and the Body in Late Ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Islam” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2015), p. 40.

5 Mary Douglas, using the concept of “dirt” as “matter out of place”, points out that “bodily refuse” or “bodily dirt” holds a unique power and danger because it blurs the lines and boundaries that differentiate the “pure” from the “polluted”. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 35–36; cited after Bursi, “Holy Spit and Magic Spells”, p. 40.

6 As distinct from a prophetic miracle, “mūcize”, *kerāmet* refers to miraculous acts performed by *evliyā* (friends of God), which are considered as divine favors bestowed by God. Denise Aigle and Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, “Miracle et karama: Une approche comparatiste”, *Miracle et karāma: Hagiographies médiévales comparées*, ed. D. Aigle, (Belgium: Brepols, 2000), pp. 14–15.

The composition of hagiographies is inextricably linked to the formation of communal identities centered on the cult of a specific holy figure. In the case of *menākibnāmes*, belief in the *kerāmets* attributed to a saint fosters collective sentiments that are pivotal in forging social cohesion within a group. The saint’s ability to perform miracles serves as a dual validation: indicating divine selection and validating his followers’ assertion of their social group’s significance. As Şevket Küçük hüseyin astutely observes, “miracles do not cause sanctity but demonstrate its existence” and the saint’s ability to perform miracles “proves his followers’ claim to excellence as a social group”.<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that hagiographies do not necessarily convey the spiritual ideas and claims of the historical figure who has been transformed into a hagiographic subject. Instead, hagiographies reflect the beliefs, values and spiritual needs of the communities that venerate the saint.<sup>8</sup>

In the absence of robust territorial claims, the interplay between the universality of miracles and assertions of sovereignty becomes crucial. The sources examined in this study portray saints as absolute sovereigns, wielding the power to give and take life. Their spiritual leadership was paramount, but their dominion extended beyond the spiritual realm, encompassing both the land and its inhabitants. The physical presence of their body or bodily remains—specifically, their tombs—served as a territorial marker, demarcating the saint’s sovereignty across time. This phenomenon parallels Ernst Kantorowicz’s *The King’s Two Bodies*, where ruler’s body assumes significant social and political weight in the absence of robust infrastructure. Similarly, the saint’s body—akin to the symbolic body of the king—played an essential role in maintaining order and continuity, serving as a physical and spiritual anchor for the community.<sup>9</sup>

In this context, saints navigated a nuanced position between transcendentalism and immanentism, two conceptual frameworks for sanctifying and understanding kingship, as identified by Alan Strathern. Immanentism

---

7 Şevket Küçük hüseyin, “Some Reflections on Hagiology with Reference to the Early Mawlawī-Christian Relations in the Light of the *Manāqib al-ārifin*”, *Al Masāq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* 25, no. 2 (2013): 242.

8 Ibid., p. 243.

9 Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, with a new introduction by Conrad Leyser and a preface by William Chester Jordan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

divinizes kingship, equating rulers with the divine and granting them extraordinary powers to influence the worldly well-being of their subjects. Conversely, transcendentalism posits righteous kingship, where monarchs are regarded as protectors of a system rooted in truth, ethics, and salvation.<sup>10</sup> However, for reasons that will be discussed below, saints bridge these two realms—they uphold spiritual authority and moral order. Simultaneously, they fulfill immanent roles by intervening in the material world to address the immediate needs of their followers. This duality enables saints to fill a critical gap, serving as both spiritual guides and earthly protectors, thereby reinforcing their sovereignty over both time and territory. Their bodies become pivotal vessels, symbolically and physically, for these dual modes of authority.

The first chapter, “Saliva: Sacralization of the Conquest of Rūm”, examines the symbolic significance of saliva as a medium for transmitting wisdom and legitimizing authority, particularly in the context of prophetic authority tied to the conquest of the lands of Rūm, representing the Byzantine Empire. This sacralization of the conquest of Rūm is symbolized by the transfer of the Prophet’s saliva to Battal Gazi, a descendant of Muhammad, as recounted in the *Battāl-nāme*. By tracing their lineage to Battal Gazi, the protagonists of various warrior epics aligned themselves with the Prophet’s sacred mission, thereby legitimizing their own authority.

The second chapter, “Bones: Islamizing Space”, transitions from the living body to the posthumous remains, examining bones as repositories of sanctity. This chapter investigates the significance of the saint’s grave, where bones become the focal point for his reverence, connecting communities to the enduring presence of the saint in the process of Islamizing the sacred space.

Chapter Three explores the miracles associated with aspects of “skin”, particularly its transformative capacities. First, it examines the saint’s ability to change form, specifically metamorphosing into animals, a common motif in hagiographical literature. Second, it looks at the dragon, an important symbol of transformation, that, through its association with the shedding of skin represents the perpetual renewal of life in Islamic mysticism. After

---

<sup>10</sup> Alan Strathern, “Sacred Kingship under King Narai of Ayutthaya: Divinisation and Righteousness”, *Journal of the Siam Society* 107/1 (2019): 50–51.

a brief overview of the mystical symbolism of the dragon, the chapter delves into the motif of dragon-slaying, a pivotal ordeal for the protagonist in several *menākibnāmes*, marking the inception of their transformation towards sainthood. This motif establishes continuity with local Christian military saints and their dragon-slaying legends, illustrating the legend's role as a narrative conduit connecting diverse religious traditions, geographical regions, and holy figures.

## Setting the Stage

### *(De)mystification of the Caliphate: The Saint Above and Beyond*

The Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century had a profound impact on the Turco-Iranian world, marking the end to the caliphate, with the slaying of the caliph in 1258, and disrupting urban centers and political structures across the Islamic world. This upheaval paved the way for the emergence of a new socio-political order, one that fostered complex relationships between religious institutions and networks of Islamic mysticism. Sufi *tariqas* or brotherhoods, played a crucial role in shaping society, operating outside the sphere of official politics and culture. Although these *tariqas* had begun to emerge prior to the Mongol invasions, it was not until the fifteenth century that they gained widespread acceptance as a formal religious institution, eventually dominating the religious landscape.<sup>11</sup>

Traditionally, the caliphate was regarded as a unified political and religious institution, with the caliph serving as the leader of the Muslim ummah (community) and ruler of a human empire. As the successor to the Prophet Muhammad, the caliph's role was to uphold Islamic law and maintain Muslim unity. However, as Marshall Hodgson notes, since the time of the Medina Caliphate, the institution struggled to achieve its ideal of integrating religious and political aspects into a cohesive social order. This led to the emergence of new, mystical interpretations of the caliphate, particularly among the Sufis:

---

<sup>11</sup> Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History*, ed. Edmund Burke III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 184.

The ulama never ceased to think of the ideal unity of Islam in terms of a khalifa, a Caliph ruling a human empire. The Sufis made much of a very different sort of khalifa, the human being who as perfected microcosm is the final end of, and holds limitless sway over, the world of nature and men together. He is a Muslim, and exercises his power largely upon and through Muslims (the Abdal); but there is a recognized place under his care for the believers in every faith however crude, not only peoples of the Book as in the historical Caliphate, but outright pagans. The kings who come and go are but the servants of such a saint, as many beloved anecdotes make clear; no Caliph had such power over his governors as the Sufi shayhks, and especially the supreme shaykh, the Qutb of any given time, had over the earth's rulers.<sup>12</sup>

The political ascendance of Turkic and Mongol tribal groups across the Islamic world altered the dynamics of Sufism. Beginning in the fifteenth century, in the vast region spanning from Anatolia to India, political and mystical notions of rulership began to converge. This synthesis aimed to realize the Islamic ideal of a unified social order, where temporal and spiritual authority merged. To legitimize their rule, tribal leaders sought endorsement from local saints, whose spiritual influence was crucial. Consequently, monarchs adopted the language of devotion associated with saints, while saints assumed leadership roles, governing their communities.

This intersection of politics and mysticism blurred lines; saints began to be described in kingship terminology, with titles such as “emperors” (*shah*) and their shrines referred to as “royal courts” (*dargah*). Their headgear, often considered a symbol of spiritual authority, was likened to “crowns” (*taj*).<sup>13</sup> As Azfar Moin notes, a range of scriptural and mystical concepts in Islamic thought, including the messiah (*mahdi*), the renewer (*mujaddid*), the pole (*qutb*), and the perfect human (*insan-i kamil*), converge with royal notions of divine effulgence (*farr-i izadi*) and the lord of conjunction (*sahib qiran*). These ideas collectively underscore the significance of charismatic human figures believed to possess the authority to establish and maintain a just religio-political order.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Hodgson, *Rethinking World History*, pp. 187–88.

<sup>13</sup> Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 99.

<sup>14</sup> A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 9.

*Sanctification Process: “Saint-making”*

According to Nile Green, attributing the rise of Sufi brotherhoods (*tariqas*) solely to the Mongol destruction of the caliphate in 1258 overlooks the caliphate’s waning relevance for many Muslims. In the absence of a centralized religious authority akin to the Christian Church, *tariqas* offered ordinary Muslims with a conceptual and institutional framework to connect with a contemporary community of believers and a lineage of revered predecessors. By embodying the charisma and teachings of Muhammad through the presence of a living master—a figure one could interact with and pledge allegiance to—the brotherhoods provided a tangible link to the Prophet’s legacy. Additionally, by establishing local shrines for pilgrimage, which were far more accessible than Mecca, the local Sufi convents helped bridge the gaps of time, distance, and culture that separated medieval Muslims from the Prophet’s era and homeland.<sup>15</sup>

Nile Green’s “sanctification process” entails a multi-faceted transformation, encompassing not only a theoretical model of Friendship (*vilāyet*, ‘sainthood’) but also a much fuller apparatus of shrine building, hagiographical writing and pilgrimage making. First, Sufis were recognized as Friends of God (*velī*, pl. *evliyā*) either through personal achievements (preaching, praying, writing) or by inheriting the status within family dynasties. Second, rumors of miracles, often supported by hagiographies, spread through oral traditions, aided by professional guides leading pilgrims to shrines. Third, cult rituals developed, allowing pilgrims to access the saint’s blessing (*baraka*), with rituals varying in scope from local to trans-regional, depending on the shrine’s significance. Finally, financial resources were raised for the construction of mausolea, which by the fifteenth century rivaled those built for courtiers and rulers, becoming central to the cultic practices surrounding the saints. Having access to the three necessary components of “charisma, commemoration and capital”, Sufi brotherhoods functioned as “highly effective institutions for saint-making”.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Green, *Sufism: A Global History*, p. 87.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93.

*Saint-making in Anatolia Before the Fifteenth Century*

One of the most significant impacts of the Mongol invasions, particularly on the cultural history of Anatolia, was the large-scale migrations they set in motion. A vast number of people moved toward the western frontier regions bordering Byzantium, which offered relative safety, opportunities, and a shelter for ethnically and religiously diverse groups. Among these migrants were nomadic tribes in search of new pasturelands, displaced peasants, merchants transporting portable wealth, and intellectuals fleeing urban centers. Additionally, political and religious dissidents, including marginal groups such as antinomian dervishes, sought refuge in this westernmost frontier of the Islamic world.

The administration of the frontier regions and their relationship with the central government during this period remains shrouded in uncertainty. Notably, Turcoman groups inhabiting the marches, outside direct central control—and considering how fragmented and decentralized the Seljuk government itself was, this is debatable—conducted independent operations against the Byzantines. These groups launched raids, seizing booty and capturing prisoners, who were either ransomed or sold for substantial material gain.<sup>17</sup>

Following the decline of Seljuk power, Mongol authorities struggled to assert control over these Turkmen groups especially in western Asia Minor, ultimately meeting with little success. In this power vacuum, nomadic pastoralist bands surrounding urban centers gradually coalesced into autonomous entities, seizing control of these cities and establishing principalities, known as “beyliks”. These *beyliks* fragmented the former Seljuk territories, yet provided relative stability amidst widespread turmoil through a mutually beneficial arrangement: protection in exchange for moderate taxation, contributing to the establishment and consolidation of their rule.<sup>18</sup>

The spiritual guidance of the Turcoman masses in the frontier regions was provided by *babas* or *dedes*. These leaders played a pivotal role in shaping

<sup>17</sup> M. Fuad Köprülü, *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire*, trans. and ed. By Gary Leiser (New York: SUNY Press, 1992), p. 79.

<sup>18</sup> Claude Cahen, *The Formation of Turkey: The Seljukid Sultanate of Rum, Eleventh to Fourteenth Century*, trans. and ed. by P.M. Holt, (Pearson Education, 2001), p. 227.

the religious life of these communities and directing their zeal toward *gaza* or holy war against Byzantium. Contemporary sources offer substantial evidence of the influence these spiritual leaders wielded in managing religious matters within frontier society, thereby establishing a religio-social foundation for the emerging communities in newly conquered lands.<sup>19</sup>

This influence was particularly crucial during this period of political instability and power vacuum in Anatolia, which created an environment conducive to the proliferation of saintly figures. These figures, often combining military and proselytizing endeavors within their charismatic leadership, contributed to the rise of a new form of religious expression, which found an outlet in Sufism. The “fluidity and untidiness” characterized as the main features of Sufism<sup>20</sup> persisted over the next three hundred years until the regional empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, Uzbeks, and Mughals institutionalized certain Sufi paths under strict governmental scrutiny, incorporating them into organized *tariqas*.<sup>21</sup>

This “anarchic” period also fueled messianic expectations, where Muslim holy men and rulers competed to be seen as divine saviors, addressing the needs and concerns of local populations facing daily perils and uncertainties of the time.<sup>22</sup> The *evliyā* (saints) were seen as direct intermediaries to God. They were believed to have the power to solve everyday problems such as healing the sick, multiplying food, providing water sources, and protecting communities from physical dangers, injustices, and corrupt officials. They were also thought to have extraordinary abilities to punish or even eliminate wrongdoers. This perception further emphasizes their role as community

---

19 Rıza Yıldırım, “‘Heresy’ as a Voice of Tribal Protest against Bureaucratic State: The Bek-tashi Case of Seyyid Rustem Gazi in the Ottoman Rumelia”, *Bulgarian Historical Review* 3–4 (2011): 33.

20 Ahmet Karamustafa, “Origins of Anatolian Sufism”, *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman Society*, ed. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005), p. 90.

21 For a concise analysis of the institutionalization of Sufism under the Ottomans, see Derin Terzioğlu, “Sufis in the Age of State-building and Confessionalization”, *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (Milton Park: Abingdon 2012): 86–99.

22 F. Betül Yavuz, “The Making of a Sufi Order Between Heresy and Legitimacy: Bayrami-Malāmī in the Ottoman Empire” (PhD diss., Rice University, 2013), pp. 15–17.

leaders who not only provided spiritual guidance but also actively ensured the well-being and protection of their followers.<sup>23</sup>

These saints played a pivotal role as both founding ancestors and community builders, particularly among Turkic and Mongol tribal groups. The stories and narratives surrounding these saints were instrumental in shaping the identities and social cohesion of these tribes.<sup>24</sup> They were also colonizers, settling in new territories, as demonstrated by Ömer Lütfi Barkan's classic study on the role of dervishes and their convents in the settlement of Anatolia and Rumelia. Barkan showed how these convents, known as *tekkes* and *zâviyes*, often became the focal points around which future villages developed.<sup>25</sup>

The third component of saint-making, “the capital”, came primarily from the landed aristocracy that replaced the Seljukid rule after their defeat by the Mongols at Köseadağ (1243). For them, supporting dervish lodges became a strategic investment. Their patronizing efforts allowed local rulers to extend control over newly acquired lands, partly because dervishes wielded considerable influence over the local population and the Turcoman groups. Endowing a dervish lodge enabled rulers to tie up revenues from these lands as *vakf* (endowments), which served two key purposes: securing a lucrative source of income and avoiding state control.<sup>26</sup> As Ethel Sara Wolper argues, the largest number of these lodges was constructed during this period since appointing family members as officials ensured steady income and control of assets within a family. Another reason rulers preferred to patronize dervish lodges was their lower cost compared to larger institutions such as madrasas

---

23 This perception of holy men responding to social needs is not a new phenomenon, as Peter Brown demonstrated in his classic work, *The Cult of the Saints*. In this study, Brown explores how Christian saints in late antiquity served as intermediaries between God and society, providing not only spiritual guidance but also practical solutions to everyday challenges, thereby fulfilling a crucial social role during times of crisis. Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

24 Green, *Sufism: A Global History*, pp. 100–101.

25 Ömer Lütfi Barkan, “İstilâ Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zâviyeler”, *Vakıflar Dergisi* 2 (1942): 279–304.

26 Ethel Sara Wolper, *Cities and Saints: Sufism and Transformation of Urban Space in Medieval Anatolia* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), pp. 25–27.

or mosques.<sup>27</sup> These lodges also engaged in various activities that connected them to the wider community, such as distributing food and providing shelter to travelers and pilgrims. These services likely contributed to the growing number of visitors and the increasing fame of certain lodges.<sup>28</sup>

Supporting dervish lodges not only extended control over land but also played a vital role in shaping sacred spaces. Writing down the vitae of saints and the stories of their miraculous deeds became crucial for the development of these cultic centers, where the tomb—often the heart of the lodge—attracted pilgrims and generated substantial revenue. Divine communications, such as dreams and visions, often commanded the establishment of institutions at specific sites. The presence of a revered individual’s tomb enhanced the sanctity of the institution, although in some cases, the perceived holiness of those entombed exceeded their reputations during their lifetime. This process was further amplified as later Sufi orders incorporated these figures into their own spiritual hierarchies.<sup>29</sup> The spiritual occupation of a territory, however, first required its physical conquest—a divinely sanctioned mission that began with the sacralization of the lands of Rūm, initiated by the holy saliva of the Prophet Muhammad.

---

<sup>27</sup> Wolper, *Cities and Saints*, p. 27.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>29</sup> John Renard, *Friends of God: Islamic Images of Piety, Commitment, and Servanthood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 176–77.

## Saliva: Sacralization of the Conquest of Rūm

The *Battālnāme*<sup>30</sup> opens with a poignant scene where the Prophet Muhammad sits with his companions, “his blessed back turned to the *mibrāb*”, beset by distress. A prolonged silence from Gabriel has left him without any divine revelation. Seeking solace, Muhammad requests a story from his companions. ‘Abdū’l-Vehhāb, rises, describing the enchanting land of Rūm: a paradise on earth with numerous cities, abundant food, fast-flowing rivers, and hospitable people, marred only by its status as infidel territory.

---

30 The *Battālnāme* constitutes the first cycle of the warrior epic genre in early Anatolian Turkish literature. It is followed chronologically and thematically by two other epics, the *Dānişmendnāme* and the *Saltuknāme*. The *Battālnāme* is the story of Seyyid Battāl, a legendary Arab warrior of the late Umayyad period, whose lore became closely associated with Melitene (Malatya). In the Turkish adaptation, he was transformed into an Abbasid hero, alongside another Umayyad figure, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (‘Abd’ul-Vehhāb in the *Battālnāme*). In this version, al-Battāl becomes a contemporary of the Emir of Melitene, ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd Allah al-Akta’ (d. 249/863). After the conquest of Melitene by Melik Danişmend in 1102, the Danişmendid Turks adopted the stories circulating in the region and incorporated them into their oral tradition linking their heroes to the legendary al-Battāl. In this Turkish retelling, Battāl is Turkicized, given an ‘Alid lineage, and referred to by the name Ca’fer. I. Mélikoff, “al-Battāl” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by H. A. R. Gibb, J. H. Kramers, E. Lévi-Provençal, J. Schacht (Leiden: Brill, 1986): 1103–04. The lore of Seyyid Battal was first patronized by the Seljuk ruler ‘Alā’eddīn Keykubād (r. 1221–37). The earliest manuscript of the *Battālnāme*, however, dates from the fifteenth century. I rely on Yorgos Dedes’ edition of this manuscript (A), which is preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul (catalogue no. 1455). *Battālnāme*, facsimile edited by Şinasi Tekin and Gönül Alpay Tekin with introduction, English translation, Turkish transcription and commentary by Yorgos Dedes (Cambridge, Mass.: Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations of Harvard University, 1996). For an overview of the common features shared by these three epics, see Yorgos Dedes’ discussion in the Introduction to the first volume of the *Battālnāme*, especially pp. 48–51.

Intrigued, Muhammad listens intently. Just then, Gabriel descends from the heavens, bearing a revelation:

Apostle of God, the creator of the world—may His glory be exalted—sends you greetings and says, “My blessed Apostle has taken a liking to Rüm, so I on my part must grant that province to His community. May they pull down its monasteries and set up mosques and madrasas in their places. Two hundred years after your mission is over, a young man shall be born to one of your sons. He will be tall as wheat, and he shall have a handsome face. His name shall be Ca’fer from the town of Malatya. In heroism he shall be the equal of Hamza, but in cunning he shall be better than Umar b. Umayya.<sup>31</sup> He shall march in all directions by himself. He shall learn the Four Books by heart and when he preaches or recites, birds shall come from the skies to listen. He shall be the one to conquer this province of Rüm and shall destroy the churches and build mosques and madrasas in their place. He shall be the one to open Istanbul’s gate and he shall roast the livers of the priests. So let your blessed mind rest in tranquility.”<sup>32</sup>

The conquest of Rüm was legitimized through ideological claims rooted in divine revelation, specifically prophecies regarding Ca’fer (later nicknamed Battal<sup>33</sup>), and his destined conquest of Rüm. Islamic rulers sought validation by tracing their genealogy back to the early Islamic era and the Prophet Muhammad. Claiming kinship ties with the Prophet Muhammad conferred

---

31 The stories about Hamza, the uncle of Muhammad, were very popular among Turks in Anatolia as elsewhere in the region. The protagonists of both the *Battālnāme* and the *Saltuknāme* rode Hamza’s horse ‘Aşkar. Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 63. On *Hamzanāmes* in Turkish literature, see Lütfi Sezen, *Halk Edebiyatında Hamzanâmeler* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1991).

32 All quotations from the *Battālnāme* are from the Yorgos Dedes translation unless stated otherwise. *Battālnāme*, P1<sup>1a</sup>–P1<sup>1b</sup>; pp. 99–100, 335–36.

33 The companion of the hero, Ahmer, gives Ca’fer his nickname or *lākab* Battal. After Ahmer’s conversion to Islam Battal gives Ahmer a Muslim name, Ahmed. Name-giving is an important topos in the Turkic epic tradition; it appears in the *Dānişmendnāme* and the *Saltuknāme* as well. As Yorgos Dedes points out, the name-giving right was in the Book of Dede Korkut reserved for Dede Korkut himself. For more information on name-giving or nicknaming, see Dedes’ note, *Battālnāme*, pp. 619–20.

legitimacy, as seen in the Caliphate’s paramount position, as the Caliph “assumed not only hereditary right but also indirectly a divine right to rule”.<sup>34</sup>

Before Battal embarks on the conquest of Rūm, the *Battālnāme* ensures that its hero does not have a legitimacy deficit by not only postulating divine sanction to Battal’s *gaza*<sup>35</sup> activities in Rūm, but also tracing his lineage to ‘Ali (‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib) through his grandfather. The *Battālnāme* contextualizes this lineage within Islamic history, recounting the Caliphs’ succession and the Umayyad atrocities that drove Battal’s grandfather, also called Ali, from Medina to Malatya. Battal’s legitimacy is further bolstered by a sacred transfer: The Prophet’s saliva, conveyed through ‘Abdü’l-Vehhāb, a companion of the Prophet who, by Divine grace, lived long enough to become a contemporary of Battal. The transfer of saliva is described in vivid detail:

He [Muhammad] stroked ‘Abdü’l-Vehhāb’s head and placed a drop of saliva from His blessed mouth into ‘Abdü’l-Vehhāb’s mouth. ‘Abdü’l-Vehhāb swallowed it, however, it did not go all the way down, but rested in his throat. It did not descend further because it was to be held in trust.<sup>36</sup>

Years later, recognizing the moment to fulfill the trust, ‘Abdü’l-Vehhāb approached Ca’fer to pass on the sacred saliva:

This is the saliva from the blessed mouth of the Apostle of God that I’ve been saving. He gave it to me to hold in trust and told me, “Let this be an important sign that you should entrust to this young man when you find him.” He walked up to Ca’fer and said, “Open your mouth.” Ca’fer opened his mouth and the blessed saliva came out of ‘Abdü’l-Vehhāb’s mouth and entered Ca’fer’s. As soon as Ca’fer swallowed it he acquired perfect knowledge of seventy-two different languages and of the twelve sciences.<sup>37</sup>

---

34 Hakan Karateke, “Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate: A Framework for Historical Analysis”, in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, edited by Hakan T. Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), p. 21.

35 In this study, I use Cemal Kafadar’s definition of *gaza*, which he describes as “irregular raiding activity whose ultimate goal was (or at least the warriors and their supporters could imagine that it was) the expansion of the power of Islam.” Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 80.

36 *Battālnāme*, P<sup>3a</sup>.

37 *Battālnāme*, A27.

In late antiquity, spittle was often associated with both magic and healing practices in various religious traditions, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The use of spit often occupied an ambiguous space where it could be seen as either a sacred act or a form of sorcery, depending on the practitioner and the perception of the audience.<sup>38</sup> In the early Islamic period, Muhammad's saliva was described in hadith and *sīra* literature as having miraculous healing properties, such as curing diseases by mixing his saliva with other substances or applying it directly to wounds. These stories drew parallels to the miracles of Jesus and emphasized Muhammad's prophetic authority.<sup>39</sup> Some scholars accepted the use of Muhammad's saliva in healing rituals as part of his Sunnah, legitimizing it as divine intervention while others were wary of practices resembling sorcery and condemned similar acts by others. The inherent purity of the prophet was crucial, as his spittle was considered blessed and pure, distancing it from the impurities tainted with illicit 'magic' or 'sorcery'.<sup>40</sup>

This theme of spittle's healing properties is also prevalent in Turkish hagiographies, which maintain similar associations. For instance, Koyun Baba is described as blinding those who do not believe in him and then healing them with his saliva.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Kaygusuz Abdal (d. 1444?) is noted for performing Christological miracles such as healing the blind, akin to the miracles attributed to Jesus.<sup>42</sup> The *Vilāyetnâme of Hacı Bektaş* recounts how Hacı

---

38 Adam Bursi demonstrates how early Islamic scholars effectively removed these practices from accusations of sorcery and integrated them into "religiously accepted rituals" by emphasizing their miraculous nature and prophetic context. Bursi, "Holy Spit and Magic Spells."

39 Ibid., pp. 56–57.

40 Ibid., pp. 64–65.

41 *Koyun Baba ve Menākıbı*, ed. Ahmet Taşğın (Konya: Çizgi Yayınevi, 2017), [158a], pp. 293–94. Most of the information we have about Koyun Baba, who is believed to have lived in Osmancık in the fifteenth century, is based on the anonymous work *Vilāyetnâme-i Koyun Baba*, which was probably written in the sixteenth century. Taşğın's edition includes the facsimile of the manuscript (undated) preserved in the National Library of Ankara.

42 *Kaygusuz Abdal Menākıbnâmesi*, ed. Abdurrahman Güzel (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), ff. 22–23, pp. 109–10. Kaygusuz Abdal was born at the end of the fourteenth century as the son of the ruler of Alâiyye (Alanya). His real name was Alâiy Gaybî (Alâeddin Gaybî), and from an early age he became a disciple of Abdal Musa. After establishing his

Bektaş, disguised as an eagle, healed Haydar, the son of Ahmed Yesevî, by placing his saliva on his head, which subsequently caused the hair to grow.<sup>43</sup> The use of spittle is further exemplified by the *teslim taşı*, a 12-pointed star-shaped stone made from a mixture of Hacı Bektaş's spittle and blood, worn by Bektashi dervishes as a symbol of total submission to God.<sup>44</sup> The symbolic significance of holy spittle is also illustrated in a story from the *Vilâyet-nâme*, where Imam Musa al-Rida, the eighth Imam in Twelver Shia Islam, blesses a drink with his saliva, leading Zeynep Hatun to become pregnant after consuming it.<sup>45</sup> In the *Makâlât-ı Seyyid Hârûn*, Seyyid Harun spits on the goods presented to him as a renunciatory act and his spit miraculously turns them into honey and oil.<sup>46</sup>

---

convent in Egypt in 1397–98 and traveling for some years, he returned to Anatolia. He spent the years 1422–1430 in Rumeli and probably died in 1444. Güzel's edition includes the facsimile (undated) from his private library. Güzel, *Kaygusuz Abdal Menâkıbnâmesi*, p. 16.

<sup>43</sup> *Vilâyetnâme*, ed. Hamiye Duran (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2014), 19a. In this study, I am using Duran's edition which includes a facsimile of the manuscript copied in 1625–26 and preserved in the Istanbul Millet Library, Ali Emiri Şer'îye (catalogue no. 1076). The earliest surviving manuscript that includes both verse and prose sections is located in the Hacıbektaş Library (catalogue no. 120), copied in 1624. Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı used this manuscript in his edition, which also includes a facsimile. In Gölpınarlı's (now widely accepted) view, the fact that Bayezid II is mentioned in the text while Balım Sultan is not, suggests that the text was composed between 1481 and 1501, during the reign of Bayezid II. See Gölpınarlı, *Vilâyet-Nâme: Manâkıb-ı Hünkâr Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli* (Istanbul: İnkılab, 1995; originally published in 1958), xxix. Throughout this study, I refer to this source as the *Vilâyetnâme*.

<sup>44</sup> Frederick William Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans*, vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), p. 287, see also note 3; John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London: Luzac & Company, 1937), p. 233.

<sup>45</sup> *Vilâyetnâme*, ed. Duran, 4b–5a.

<sup>46</sup> Abdülkerîm bin Şeyh Mûsâ, *Makâlât-ı Seyyid Hârûn*, ed. Cemal Kurnaz (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1991), 17b. Seyyid Harun (d. 1320) is known as the founder of Seydişehir. What is known about his life is based on the *Makâlât-ı Seyyid Hârûn*, written in 1554–55 by Abdülkerîm b. Şeyh Mûsâ, the ninth generation descendant of his brother, Seyyid Bedreddin. Abdülkerîm b. Şeyh Mûsâ states that he compiled his work based on what he heard from the *pîrs* (masters) and saints, and by translating documents he had collected from Persian into Turkish. (*Makâlât*, f. 2b; p. 22). Kurnaz's edition includes a facsimile of the manuscript (date unknown) preserved in the Manisa Muradiye Library (catalogue number 1390).

In some examples from Turkish heroic and mystical literature, saliva has qualities beyond its healing properties; it is also associated with the transmission of wisdom and spiritual power. As in the example from the *Battāl-nāme* quoted above, saliva is used to transmit wisdom and spiritual power directly from Muhammad, serving as a source of legitimacy for the divinely ordained conquest of Rūm.

## Transfer of Spiritual Authority

Paul Wittek observes that in late antiquity, saliva was believed to confer spiritual power.<sup>47</sup> Robert Dankoff, however, notes that spitting into the mouth was a shamanic initiation practice.<sup>48</sup> This motif is also found in the legends associated with figures such as Arslan Baba, Ahmed Yesevī, Sarı Saltuk, and Barak Baba. According to some accounts, Arslan Baba was one of the Prophet's closest companions. He lived to be 400 years old, while others suggest he reached the age of 700. During one of the Prophet's military campaigns, his companions came to him in hunger and asked for food. The Prophet prayed, and Gabriel brought a plate of dates from Paradise. When one date fell, Gabriel declared:

“This date is the portion of a member of your religious community named Ahmed Yasawī.” Because anything held in trust was naturally to be given to its owner [cf. Koran IV:58], the Prophet proposed to his Companions that one of them undertake this duty. But none of them responded except for Arslan Bābā, who said that by apostolic favor he would be able to undertake this task. The Prophet then put the fallen date into Arslan Bābā's mouth with his own hand and added a bit of his own blessed saliva. A covering immediately formed over the date and the Prophet instructed Arslan Bābā how he would find Ahmed Yasawī and commanded him to devote himself to his education. Arslan Bābā then went to Sairām and, after completing there the task that he had taken upon himself, died the following year.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Paul Wittek, “Yazijioghlu Ali on the Christian Turks of the Dobruja”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 14/3 (1952): 659.

<sup>48</sup> Robert Dankoff, “Baraq and Buraq”, *Central Asiatic Journal* 15/2 (1971): 118.

<sup>49</sup> M. F. Köprülü, *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*, translated, edited and with an introduction by Gary Leiser and Robert Dankoff (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 21.

From a young age, Ahmed was said to have exhibited various signs of divine grace and extraordinary qualities. In his work *Divân-ı Hikmet*, he details the spiritual powers he received throughout his life. Orphaned at the age of seven by the loss of his father, he was raised by his spiritual father, Arslan Baba, and simultaneously guided by the mystical figure Khidr.<sup>50</sup> Al-Khaḍr (Arabic: al-Khaḍr or al-Khidr; Turkish: Hızır) has a controversial status among scholars: some say he is a saint, while others say he is a prophet of Islam. It is believed that he is mentioned in the Qur'an in Sura Al-Kahf (18:66), specifically in an encounter with Moses. Hızır is associated with spiritual guidance, wisdom, and immortality. In various examples in Turkish heroic and hagiographical literature, Hızır acts as a guide and helper to the protagonist, leading him through spiritual and physical challenges.<sup>51</sup>

The *Saltuknâme* synthesizes various traditions around the figure of Hızır, who serves as the narrative link between these traditions. Compiled upon the request of the Ottoman Prince Cem (c. 1480), the *Saltuknâme* is a collection of legends about the vita of the dervish-warrior Sarı Saltuk whose legendary figure is closely associated with the Islamization of the Balkans.<sup>52</sup> The historical figure of Sarı Saltuk is often collocated with the Turco-man settlement in Dobrudja under the Seljuk ruler Izzeddin Keykavus II (d. 1279), who had to flee his country when he lost the struggle for the throne

---

50 Köprülü, *Early Mystics*, p. 20.

51 For a comprehensive study on Khidr, see Patrick Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr: Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Islam* (Beirut: Franz Steiner, 2000).

52 There are two primary editions of the *Saltuknâme* used in this study: The first is a facsimile edition of the Topkapı Palace manuscript, dated 1591, which is the oldest complete work found to date (catalogue number 1612). The second edition, by Şükrü Haluk Akalın, relies primarily on the manuscript in the National Library of Ankara (catalogue number A-2897, date unknown) and supplements the missing parts from the Topkapı Palace manuscript. The facsimile edition of the Topkapı Palace Library (H. 1612) was edited by Fahir İz and published in 7 volumes (Cambridge, Mass.: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1986). Akalın's edition is published in three volumes, with the text transcribed into Latin alphabet. Ebül Hayr-i Rûmî, *Saltuk-nâme*, ed. Şükrü Haluk Akalın, 3 vols. (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1990). In addition, I also reference a third edition by Necati Demir, based on a manuscript preserved in his private library, which includes facsimile and contains the missing folios from the Topkapı Palace manuscript (see footnote 63).

and his brother Rükneddin Kılıçarslan IV came to power.<sup>53</sup> While the book is composed of several layers interwoven together one such layer points to the oral material that had been circulating in the *gazi*-dervish circles of the Balkans as evidenced by the author's own account, Ebū'l-Hayr-i Rūmī, a courtier of Cem, who "wandered around the country" and "compiled all the *menākib* concerning this saint" that he could "learn from the dervishes by consulting them".<sup>54</sup>

In the *Saltuknāme*, Sarı Saltuk's sainthood is conferred by the transfer of saliva, in his case not from the Prophet but from Hızır. In a miraculous meeting where Sarı Saltuk meets Hızır, İlyas (*Hazret-i İlyās peygamber*) is also present, alluding to the pairing of Khidr with the Prophet Elias (Greek Elias, Elijah). This pairing gave rise to the composite figure of Hızır-İlyas, whose cult was extremely popular in Anatolia.<sup>55</sup> Hızır tells Sarı Saltuk, "From now on, have no fear, open your mouth. Şerif [Sarı Saltuk] then opened his mouth. He put the saliva into his mouth. Immediately, Şerif gained such strength and spiritual power that the veil was lifted from his eyes and heart, and all hidden things became manifest."<sup>56</sup> After this, Sarı Saltuk, like Battal, acquired mastery over seventy-two languages and perfect knowledge of the Four Books.

Furthermore, Sarı Saltuk is not only blessed with Hızır's sacred saliva, which grants him sanctity, but he is also entrusted with the prophetic mission of conquering Rüm. The instructions are given to him by none other than Seyyid Battal himself who appears to him in a dream: "The corner of my liver, make a *hurūc*, now. No one shall defeat you. Go to such and such

53 For a detailed account of the events that led to Izzeddin's escape, see Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Sarı Saltuk: Popüler İslam'ın Balkanlar'daki Destani Öncüsü* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2002), pp. 18–28.

54 Ebū'l-Hayr-i Rūmī, *Saltuknāme*, (ed. İz), T617a–b; (ed. Akalın), vol. III, pp. 365–66.

55 For an in-depth analysis of the identity of Khidr within Anatolian cultural context, see Sibel Kocaer, "The Journey of an Ottoman Warrior Dervish: The Hızırname (Book of Khidr) Sources and Reception" (PhD diss., SOAS, University of London, 2015). Specific discussions relevant to this topic can be found on pp. 100–104; for the cult of Khidr in Turco-Islamic beliefs, see Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *İslam-Türk İnançlarında Hızır Yahut Hızır-İlyas Kültü* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1990). More will be said on this figure in the following pages.

56 Ebū'l-Hayr-i Rūmī, *Saltuknāme*, (ed. İz), T21a; (ed. Akalın), vol. I, pp. 33–34.

a cave, and there you will find the horse I rode, my ‘Aşkar, and all the relics of war.”<sup>57</sup>

In pre-modern Islamic sources, the term *hurūc* (meaning ‘coming out’) refers to making a political bid.<sup>58</sup> In the *Dānişmendnâme*, the Book of Melik Danişmend, the founder of the Danişmendid dynasty<sup>59</sup>, the term is used with reference to Seyyid Battal: “...Melik Dānişmend – may peace be upon him – made *hurūc* like Seyyid Battāl.”<sup>60</sup> This connection is not surprising, since the *Dānişmendnâme* begins by associating the Danişmendids with the *gazis* of the *Battāl nâme*, who had withstood the Byzantine counterattacks. In the opening sequence, we find a gathering of Malatya’s most prominent men, sometime after the death of Seyyid Battal. Since little of significance has happened since then, the conversation turns to identifying “good Muslims” who might be willing to take action—namely, to engage in *gaza* warfare against Byzantine “infidels”. This introduction sets the stage for the emergence of the protagonists of the *Dānişmendnâme*: Melik Ahmed (Dānişmend) and Sultān Turasān (a descendant of Emīr ‘Ömer from the *Battāl nâme*), both deemed worthy of this heroic mission.<sup>61</sup> Much like Sarı

<sup>57</sup> *Saltuknâme*, (ed. İz), T4b; (ed. Akalın), vol. I, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, pp. 118–19.

<sup>59</sup> The stories of Melik Danişmend were first written down for the Seljukid Sultan Izzeddin Keykavus II (d. 1279) by a certain Mevlānā ibn ‘Alā around 1244–45. Though this original text has been lost, it was rediscovered in 1360–61 by ‘Ārif ‘Alī, the governor of Tokat. The absence of any mention of the Ottomans suggests that ‘Ārif ‘Alī’s version predates 1392, prior to the Ottoman annexation of Tokat.

Two editions of the *Dānişmendnâme* were consulted for this study. In addition to the French edition by Irène Mélikoff, the primary edition used is the more recent publication by Necati Demir, which also includes a facsimile. Mélikoff’s edition is based on ‘Ārif ‘Alī’s second version and draws from the Paris manuscript, copied in 1577, collated with three of the nine manuscripts available to her. The three manuscripts include the Muallim Cevdet manuscript, housed in the Istanbul Municipality Library (Belediye Kütüphanesi) and copied in 1607, which also forms the basis for the facsimile in Necati Demir’s edition. Irène Mélikoff, *La geste de Melik Dānişmend: Étude critique du Dānişmendnâme*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Adrien Maisonneuve, 1960); *Dānişmend-nâme*, edited by Necati Demir, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 2002).

<sup>60</sup> *Dānişmendnâme*, (ed. Demir), 56a.

<sup>61</sup> Despite the fact that Melik Ahmed is the main character of the narrative, Sultān Turasān holds a higher place in the hierarchy, standing as a symbol for the Seljukid dynastical

Saltuk in the future, Melik Danişmend picks up the mantle of *gaza* where Battal and his companions left off, with the Danişmendids being portrayed as descendants of Battal’s sister, directly linking them to Malatya’s “golden age”.<sup>62</sup>

In a recently discovered manuscript of the *Saltuknâme* by Necati Demir, which contains the missing folios from the first volume, the coming of Sarı Saltuk is foretold by the Prophet Muhammad, who appears in Seyyid Battal’s dream: “My son! There is a person who will come from your descent. His name is Hızır, also known as Sarı Saltuk. He shall enter Rûm and destroy many churches. Thanks to him, this land will be filled with Islam.”<sup>63</sup>

What is particularly striking in this account is that Sarı Saltuk, presented as a descendant of Seyyid Battal, is honored not only with the titles of Seyyid and Şerif—signifying his noble lineage from the Prophet Muhammad<sup>64</sup>—but also with the name Hızır. According to Ceren Çıkmın, who has analyzed this episode, the Prophet’s dream directly affirms the names attributed to Sarı Saltuk, including the interchangeable use of Hızır and Sarı Saltuk.<sup>65</sup>

---

realm under whose patronage the *Dānişmendnâme* was composed. Another connection may be established between this character and a certain Tur Hasan Velî, a dervish-warrior who was granted some land on the slopes of Hasan Dağı near Caesarea (Kayseri). According to Anna Komnene and some crusaders’ accounts, he was ruling in that part of Cappadoce around 1100. Turasân, prefixed with the title Sultân, seems to be a composite character representing both the central Seljukid authority and the dervish-warrior type of the military marches. Mélikoff, *La Geste*, pp. 120–21; Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena*, translated from the Greek by E.R.A. Sewter (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), 14/1: 342.

<sup>62</sup> Dedes, Introduction to *Battalnâme*, p. 12.

<sup>63</sup> This manuscript, dated 1863, was discovered in Gaziantep and is now in the personal library of Necati Demir. Demir published an edition of this manuscript, including a facsimile as an appendix. Necati Demir, *Saltık-nâme* (Ankara: Destan Yayınları, 2007), [ND2], p. 37.

<sup>64</sup> Seyyid (Arabic: “master” or “lord”) is an honorific title, like the title *şerîf*, specifically reserved for members of the Banū Hāşim, the clan of the Prophet Muhammad. This title is especially used for the descendants of Muhammad’s uncles al-‘Abbās and Abū Tālib, as well as ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib through his marriage to Muhammad’s daughter Fātima.

<sup>65</sup> Ceren Çıkmın Sungur, “A Critical Analysis of Sarı Saltuk as a Hero in the Saltık-nâme” (MA Thesis, Central European University, 2020), pp. 98–99.

## “Becoming Hızır”

Sibel Kocaer discusses the concept of “becoming Khidr” as proposed by Stephen Hirtenstein and relates it to the depiction of Khidr and the dervish Muhyiddin in the *Hızırnâme*, a mystical work written in 1476 by Şeyh Mehmed Çelebi (also known as the *Divân-ı Şeyh Mehmed Çelebi* or *Divân-ı Şeyh Muhyiddin*). The text narrates Mehmed Çelebi’s spiritual journey to the heavens, through the figures of Khidr for spiritual guidance and Hacı Bektaş, who is given a warrior identity, mounted on horseback and girded with a sword. In the *Hızırnâme*, the characteristics attributed to Khidr are used interchangeably with those of the perfect men, the friends of God, and the *erenler*, suggesting that they are essentially seen as the same figures. Throughout the narrative, the dervish also describes himself with the same characteristics, indicating that he has become one of them by acquiring esoteric knowledge (*ilm-i ledun*). Thus, according to Kocaer, the journey of the dervish Muhyiddin can also be read as a journey telling of his “becoming Khidr”, which throughout the narrative is taken to be the same as becoming one of the *erenler* or becoming a perfect man (*insan-ı kamil*).<sup>66</sup>

Ibn Arabî’s theory of *velâyet* emphasizes that saints inherit their sanctity from prophets, with each saint embodying the qualities of a specific prophet—whether Ibrâhîmî (Abraham-like), Mûsawî (Moses-like), ‘Îsawî (Jesus-like), or Muḥammadî (Muḥammadan)—through the intermediarity of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>67</sup> This doctrine allowed saints, even those of humble origins, to claim spiritual authority without the need for noble lineage by inheriting the virtues and sanctity of earlier prophets or saints. The concept of *tenâsüh* (metempsychosis), which is a common theme in

<sup>66</sup> Stephen Hirtenstein follows Henri Corbin’s view that Khidr represents a spiritual state where one gains the capacity for direct divine vision and communion. As he puts it, “to become Khidr is to have attained an aptitude for theophanic vision, for the encounter with the Divine Alter Ego, and for the ineffable dialogue which the genius of Ibn ‘Arabî will nonetheless manage to recount.” Kocaer, *The Journey*, pp. 154–55; cf. See Hirtenstein, “The Mantle of Khidr: Mystery, Myth and Meaning According to Muhyiddin Ibn Arabî”, *ARAM* 20 (2008), p. 190; cf. Henri Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabî*, translated by Ralph Manheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 62.

<sup>67</sup> Michel Chodkiewicz, *Le Sceau des saints: Prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d’Ibn ‘Arabî* (Éditions Gallimard, 1986), pp. 96–97.

several *velāyetnāmes*, becomes particularly useful in this context. Otman Baba claimed to embody the Prophets Muhammad, Jesus, Moses, and Adam, as well as the reincarnations of Ali, Hacı Bektaş, and Sarı Saltuk.<sup>68</sup> Abdal Musa was depicted as the reincarnation of Hacı Bektaş. As Zeynep Yürekli puts it, “the Abdals believed that all the saints who held the rank of *ḳutb*, that is, the supreme leader of the Abdals, were one and the same person”.<sup>69</sup>

In the *Vilāyetnāme*, although there is no explicit reference to metempsychosis, Hacı Bektaş is depicted as becoming Hızır after his death. A figure dressed in green and riding a white horse—attributes commonly associated with Hızır, whose original name, al-Khadir, means “the green one”, and who, like Saint George, is often depicted on a white horse—arrives at his funeral. This leads to initial confusion, as he is mistaken for Hızır, but turns out to be Hacı Bektaş himself.<sup>70</sup>

The association of saintly figures such as Hacı Bektaş and Sarı Saltuk with both Hızır and the dragon-slayer Saint George, as will be explored further in the final chapter, is not coincidental. As Sara Kuehn has previously noted, the fusion of the names of Khidr and Ilyas and their connection to Saint George (which will be later linked to Sarı Saltuk) dates back at least the second half of the fourteenth century. In the early 1370s, the former Byzantine Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos (r. 1347–1354), who became a monk after being deposed, noted an alternative name for Saint George in one of his apologetic writings: “The martyr of Christ, George, the one we

68 Küçük Abdal, *Otman Baba Velāyetnāmesi*, edited by Filiz Kılıç, Mustafa Arslan and Tuncay Bülbül (Ankara: 2007), [C21a; C100b; C120b; C124a; C131b; C138b].

69 Zeynep Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire* (Ashgate: 2012), p. 70. The term “Abdals”, which literally means “substitutes”, reflects their role in the spiritual hierarchy. In Ibn Arabi’s thought, each age must have at least 124,000 friends of God, with each one acting as an heir to a specific prophet. To attain true knowledge, individuals must align themselves with the paradigm of human perfection embodied by a prophet. These saints, appointed as divine intermediaries, guide humanity toward a deeper understanding of existence. As Chittick notes, “No one comes to know things as they are without these divinely appointed intermediaries.” William Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabi: Heir to the Prophets* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005), p. 14.

70 *Velāyetnāme*, ed. Duran, 143b–145a.

Christians honor, is also honored by the Muslims, who call him Hetir-Elias [Khidr-Ilyās]”.<sup>71</sup>

## Saliva, Untamed Mystics and Spiritual Initiation

Returning to the theme of holy spittle, another anecdote is found in the *Tevārih-i Āl-i Selçuk* composed by Yazıcızāde ‘Alī and presented to Murad II circa 1423. This work predates the *Saltuknāme* (c. 1480) by over half a century, reflecting an earlier tradition. Also known as *Oğuznāme*, the *Tevārih-i Āl-i Selçuk* was originally intended to be only a translation of Ibn Bībī’s *History of the Rūm Seljuks* and Rashīd al-Dīn’s *History of the Oğuz*. However, the editorial/authorial interventions made by Yazıcızāde ‘Alī, who included some events that were contemporary with his own, have turned this work into a completely different source. An *Oğuznāme* of 65 lines was inserted into the *Tevārih-i Āl-i Selçuk*, which is believed to be based on an original oral source that also gave birth to the *Book of Dede Korkut* (probably written in the second half of the fifteenth century).<sup>72</sup> The name of Sarı Saltuk is mentioned in connection with the Turcoman resettlement in Dobrudja and as a leading figure in the Islamization of this area.

71 Sara Kuehn, “Cyclical Time, Nature Spirits, and Translation Activities: The Transreligious Role of the Meeting of Khidr and Ilyās in the Balkans”, *Inter-religious Practices and Saint Veneration in the Muslim World: Khidr/Khizr from the Middle East to South Asia*, edited by Michel Boivin and Manoël Pénicaud (Routledge, 2024), p. 166; cf. *Patrologiae cursus, Apologia*, vol. 512, cited after Michel Balivet, “Alliance ottomane et controverse avec l’islam: l’empereur Jean VI Cantacuzène, diplomate et théologien (env. 1295–1383)”, *Histoire, archéologies littéraires du monde musulman: mélanges en l’honneur d’André Raymond*, edited by Ghislaine Alleaume, Sylvie Denoix, and Michel Tuchscherer (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 2009), p. 142.

72 The work was composed upon the request of Murād II. I. Mélikoff, “Oghuz-Nāma”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (last accessed on 12 June 2016 <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912-islam\\_SIM\\_6013](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912-islam_SIM_6013)>). For more detailed bibliographical data, see Orhan Şaik Gökyay, *Dede Korkut* (Istanbul: Arkadaş Basımevi, 1938); *Dede Korku Oğuznameleri*, edited by Semih Tezcan and Hendrik Boeschoten, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001).

Yazıcızāde ‘Alī’s account picks up immediately after the final chapter of Ibn Bībī, whose narrative ends with the arrival of Mes‘ūd II (d. 1308) in Rūm and his subsequent journey to the Mongol court, where he is recognized as the ruler of the eastern part of the sultanate (with the western part being assigned to his cousin, Keyhüsrev III). Mes‘ūd II was the eldest son of Izzeddin II (‘Izz-al-Dīn Keykā’ūs), who had accompanied his father into exile in Byzantium and then to the Golden Horde.<sup>73</sup>

To gather information about his brothers who remained in Byzantium and the Turks in Rumeli, Mes‘ūd sends ambassadors to the Basileus Palaiologos—*Fāsilyūs Bilālogos*, to be identified with Michael VIII Palaiologos (d. 1282). The emperor responds that one of his brothers is with him, while the other has been appointed to govern the region (*beylik*) of Karaferia (Βέροια, Veria in Greece). Regarding the Turks in Rumeli, some have joined his brother, while others have stayed in Dobrudja, information which reassures the Sultan.

<sup>73</sup> After the death of Sultan Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev II in 1246, following the defeat of the Seljuks by the Mongol armies at Köseadağ in 1243, the Seljuk throne was divided among the sultan’s three sons; Izzeddin Keykavus II, Rukneddin Kılıçarslan IV, and Alaeddin Keykubad II. After many years of struggle for the throne, Rukneddin finally became the sole sultan of what was left of the Seljuks of Rum. Izzeddin fled to Constantinople and sought refuge in Byzantine territory. The History of George Pachymeres provides much information about the close relationship between the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos and Izzeddin. Born to a Byzantine Greek mother, Izzeddin was received with great respect, was given private guards for his escort, and was allowed to wear red shoes reserved for the emperor. Pachymeres, *Histoire de Constantinople* (Paris, 1673), VI, pp.13–14; cited after Osman Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye* (Istanbul: Turan Neşriyat Yurdu, 1971), pp. 497–98.

As noted in many accounts, at Izzeddin’s request, Michael VIII granted him some territory in Dobrudja, an unpopulated buffer zone between the Byzantine state and the so-called *Deşt-i Kıpçak* of the Tatars. Whether Izzeddin himself emigrated or not is a matter of debate, but many sources indicate that a large number of Turkic tribes from Anatolia were brought to Dobrudja, and among them Sarı Saltuk was said to be one of the leading figures in the process of their resettlement. The emigration of Izzeddin to Dobrudja resulted in his imprisonment and subsequent liberation by the Tatars. According to some sources, this incident took place between 1265–1266 or 1269–1270 after the defeat of Michael VIII by the Tatar army under Noghay Khan, the son of Berke Khan of the Golden Horde. Izzeddin moved to the Crimea, where he married a daughter of Berke Khan and died in exile in 1279 or 1280. After Izzeddin’s death, Mesud reclaimed his father’s position, becoming the last Sultan of Rūm. For more details, see Ocak, *Sarı Saltuk*, pp. 18–36.

As the text continues, the stability persisted, with the Turks in Dobrudja remaining loyal to Sarı Saltuk. However, Mes‘ūd’s brother, who was being held by the emperor, attempted to escape with some Turks, but was captured and imprisoned. The Patriarch, dubbed the “Caliph of the Infidels”, intervened, requesting custody of the prince. The Patriarch baptized the prince, making him a monk, and he served under the authority of the Hagia Sophia. Eventually, Sarı Saltuk sought the prince’s return. Recognizing Sarı Saltuk’s holiness, the Patriarch relinquished custody. The prince reunited with Sarı Saltuk, eventually reverting to Islam and becoming a dervish in his service. The following elaborates on how Sarı Saltuk conferred a new moniker on the prince:

When Sarı Saltuk was a shepherd, Seyyid Mahmud paid him a visit and placed in his mouth a morsel [of food] with some yogurt. This bean-sized morsel stuck to his palate like a piece of cloth [or a gland, *bez*]. Sarı Saltuk felt the urge to vomit and when he did, the morsel fell out. The prince, who had become a dervish in Sarı Saltuk’s company, ate the vomited morsel. Sarı Saltuk caressed him and called him “barağum” (my dog) and sent him to Sultāniye.<sup>74</sup>

The depiction of Sarı Saltuk as a shepherd of humble origins can be linked to his role as the leader of nomadic groups (*göçer il*) and their cattle, guiding them to their “abode” in Dobrudja.<sup>75</sup> According to Paul Wittek, the story is chronologically sound as Mahmud Hayran had died in Akşehir in 1268/9 and Sarı Saltuk could have easily met him and become his disciple before going to Dobrudja in 1261.<sup>76</sup>

The *Saltuknāme* recounts Sarı Saltuk’s visit to Mahmud Hayran, who as his name suggests, is depicted as an ecstatic, mystically intoxicated saint (*hayrān*). The text categorizes three main Sufi paths: 1) the path of intellect (*‘akl*), represented by Fakih Ahmed, Hacı Bektaş, and the Abdals of Rūm; 2) the path of love (*‘aşk*), represented by Mevlana [Celaleddin]; and 3) the path of ecstatic devotion (*cezbe*), represented by Seyyid Mahmud Hayran.

<sup>74</sup> Abdullah Bakır, “Yazıcızâde Ali’nin Selçuk-nâme İsimli Eserinin Edisyon Kritiği: Giriş-Metin-Dizin” (PhD diss., Marmara University, 2008), [A414a-415b], pp. 726–28.

<sup>75</sup> *Tevârih-i Âl-i Selçuk*, ed. Bakır, [A414a], pp. 726–27: “Ve bile varan göçer ilüñ koyunlu ve tavârlularını merhûm Sârû Saltuk Bürke Han hükmiyle göçürüp kurudan girü yurdlarına Dobruca iline getürdi.”

<sup>76</sup> Wittek, “Yazijioghlu Ali”, p. 658.

During Sarı Saltuk's visit, Mahmud Hayran momentarily emerges from his ecstatic state, allowing for a meaningful conversation. Inspired, Sarı Saltuk requests to become Mahmud Hayran's disciple and remain by his side. However, Mahmud Hayran sends him back to engage in *gaza* warfare and make conquests. Before departing, Sarı Saltuk blesses the lake of Akşehir, causing the fish in the lake to multiply. He then makes the water sweet and sanctifies the lake by spitting into it.<sup>77</sup>

The *Vilāyetnāme* of *Hacı Bektaş* also introduces Sarı Saltuk as a shepherd, while it lists Barak Baba among the primary successors of *Hacı Bektaş*. However, the chronological evidence suggests that this is improbable. Instead, as the example above indicates, it is more likely that he was a disciple of Sarı Saltuk. The name "Barak" which translates to "hairless dog" in Kipchak Turkish, was a term of honor given to him by his mentor.<sup>78</sup>

According to Yazıcızāde's account, Paul Wittek identified Barak Baba as the son of Izzeddin II, the Seljuk sultan who had sought refuge in the Byzantine court.<sup>79</sup> As previously mentioned, one of Izzeddin's sons and Mesud's brothers remained with Michael VIII while Izzeddin was forced to leave Byzantine territory. This son, alleged by Wittek to be Barak Baba, was raised by

---

<sup>77</sup> *Saltuknāme*, (ed. İz), T259b–262a; (ed. Akalın), vol. II, pp. 43–46. This section may have been integrated into the text from an oral source, possibly narrated by a Bektashi *baba*. The position of Sarı Saltuk is somewhat ambiguous as if he were incorporated into the story by necessity due to being the protagonist of the book. However, his mention as a disciple of Mahmud Hayran and the detail about the miraculous saliva should not be considered coincidental. Although it is rare, the *Saltuknāme* sometimes reveals the name of its sources. This is the case, for example, with a certain dervish named Baba Perende who tells the conversion story of a sultan in India. "*Ezin cānib bu kitābda bu hikāyetde rāvī olan Baba Perende şöylece rivāyet eydür ki* (Meanwhile Baba Perende, who is one of the storytellers of this book, relates the following)." *Saltuknāme*, (ed. İz), T219b; (ed. Akalın), vol. I, 369. For a detailed analysis of this section in comparison with the *Vilāyetnāme* of *Hacı Bektaş*, see Rıza Yıldırım, *Bektaşiliğin Doğuşu* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2019), pp. 137–76. There is another example where Sarı Saltuk makes the bitter water sweet, "as sweet as sugar", with his saliva. *Saltuknāme*, (ed. İz), T252a; (ed. Akalın), vol. II, pp. 33–34. See footnote 219 below.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Dankoff, "Baraq and Buraq", pp. 117–18.

<sup>79</sup> See footnote 73 above.

the Byzantine patriarch and practiced Christianity until Sarı Saltuk guided him back to Islam.<sup>80</sup>

However, Barak Baba was born in a village near Tokat in central Anatolia, where his father was a farmer. At some point he must have left Sarı Saltuk and traveled to the Ilkhanid court, for sources report Barak Baba's appearance before the Ilkhanid ruler Ghazan Khan (d. 1304) in Tabriz. During a demonstration of his occult powers, he is said to have controlled a tiger (or lion, according to some sources) with a single scream, demonstrating his mastery over nature and thus his holy nature. After that, he gained the trust of both Ghazan and his successor, Öljaitü (or Olcaytu), who seemed to have employed him on several diplomatic missions. In 1307, when the people of Gilan rebelled against Ilkhanid rule, Barak Baba was sent to help restore order. The rebels, who addressed him as the "Shaikh of the Mongols" in the service of "the enemies of the Muslims", butchered him. The surviving followers of Barak Baba collected his remains and took them back to Sultaniye (Soltaniyeh in Iran) for burial.<sup>81</sup>

The *Vilāyetnāme of Hacı Bektaş* seeks to assert and expand the spiritual authority of Hacı Bektaş by incorporating influential figures like Mahmud Hayran, Barak Baba, and Sarı Saltuk under the Bektashi tradition. In a well-known anecdote from the *Vilāyetnāme*, Seyyid Mahmud Hayran confronts Hacı Bektaş while riding a lion and using a snake as a whip. However, he is humbled when Hacı Bektaş comes to greet him riding on a wall. This makes Mahmud Hayran realize his arrogance, as Hacı Bektaş's ability to command inanimate objects and give them life demonstrates his superiority.<sup>82</sup>

As interpreted by Martin van Bruinessen, there is another layer of symbolism in this story. The lion and the snake represent the wilderness and are associated with non-Islamic magic. The wall, on the other hand, represents settled life and civilization.<sup>83</sup> Hacı Bektaş, with his convent of settled dervishes, embodies integration into mainstream Islam, while the "wild" Mahmud Hayran, accompanied by lions and snakes, represents the mystic

<sup>80</sup> Wittek, "Yazijioghlu Ali", pp. 658–59.

<sup>81</sup> H. Algar, "Barāk Bābā", *Encyclopædia Iranica*, III/7, pp. 754–55.

<sup>82</sup> *Vilāyetnāme*, ed. Duran, 72a–b.

<sup>83</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, "Hacı Bektaş, Sultan Sahak, Shah Mina Sahib," *Turcica* 21–23 (1991): 65–66.

who rejects this integration.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, Barak Baba, with his ability to control wild animals, is the embodiment of a more untamed spirituality, aka non-conformist Islam.

According to the *Vilāyetnāme*, Hacı Bektaş grants Mahmud Hayran the territory of Akşehir where he dies in 1268/9, while Barak Baba is granted Balıkesir in the land of Karesi.<sup>85</sup> This emphasizes the spiritual and territorial authority of Hacı Bektaş over Mahmud Hayran and Barak Baba as well as Sarı Saltuk. The connection with Karesi is noteworthy because it might be connected with the resettlement of Turks from Dobrudja in this area. The position of the Seljuk Turks in Dobrudja must have been secured until Noghay Khan was killed in 1299 during whose reign Bulgaria remained as a Tatar protectorate. However when the Bulgarian princes had risen to power, annexing large parts of their territory they emigrated in several waves to the Karesi region around 1300.<sup>86</sup>

The episode in which Hacı Bektaş gives Akşehir to Mahmud Hayran is also significant because it is followed by Hacı Bektaş's visit to Battal's tomb and his meeting with Sarı Saltuk, whom he sends to Kaligra (present-day Kaliakra, then the capital of Dobrudja), where Saltuk encounters a dragon. The next two discussions will follow a similar order, focusing on the saint's tomb and the encounter with the dragon, respectively, corresponding to death and the transformation that begins with it.

<sup>84</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi, "Bektāshis: Report of Current Research" in *Bektāchiyya*, ed. Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein (Istanbul: Isis, 1995), p. 10.

<sup>85</sup> *Vilāyetnāme*, ed. Duran, 73a; 142a.

<sup>86</sup> *Tevārih-i Āl-i Selçuk*, ed. Bakır, [A424b]: "Ve Rüm ilinde Dobruca ilinde turān müsliṁān-lar dahı gavurdan uşanup göçüp Karasi iline geçdiler. (And in the land of Rüm, in the region of Dobrudja, the Muslims, too, grew weary of the infidels and migrated to the land of Karesi)".

## Bones: Islamizing Space

In order to establish a connection with the newly inhabited lands, various methods facilitated what Cemal Kafadar refers to as the “transformation of space into place.”<sup>87</sup> This process involved imbuing meaning into the geography, peoples, rivers, animals, trees, but even more so, legends of the region. In addition to the divinely ordained conquest of the land of Rūm, symbolized by the transfer of saliva as discussed in the previous chapter, another method utilized dream visions of the Prophet Muhammad or other holy figures—often called sultans—who asserted both spiritual and territorial authority granted by divine sanction. For example, Hacı Bektaş would instruct his disciples to establish lodges in specific regions.<sup>88</sup> Hacı Sultan and Koyun Baba are guided by the Prophet in their dreams to the places where they would settle.<sup>89</sup> Seyyid Ali Sultan (also known as Kızıldeli) is instructed by Muhammad to take part in the conquest of Rumeli.<sup>90</sup> His actions and those of his 40 *abdals* are blessed by both Muhammad and Hacı Bektaş, thus combining divine intervention with military conquest. Miracles, such as Seyyid Ali’s roar causing an earthquake to conquer Gallipoli, further serve to sacralize conquest.<sup>91</sup>

87 Cemal Kafadar, “Dutlug Bolsun: Bektaşi Menakıbnamelerinde Tabiat ve Av”, live streamed via Zoom on May 26, 2021, YouTube video, 31:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1BnRLiuX5o>.

88 *Velāyetnâme*, ed. Duran, 125b–127a.

89 Tufan Gündüz, “Hacı Sultan Menakıbı”, *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 55 (2010): 83; *Koyun Baba Menakıbı*, ed. Taşğın, f. 153a, p. 289.

90 *Seyyid Ali Sultan (Kızıldeli) ve Velāyetnâmesi*, edited by Rıza Yıldırım (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2007), p. 162.

91 Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 45–46; Nikolay Antov, *The Ottoman “Wild West”: The Balkan Frontier in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, (Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 65.

According to Nile Green, dreams and visions formed “a means of acquiring knowledge and authority that might alternatively complement or counter that gained through mastery of the textual legacy of tradition”.<sup>92</sup> Notably, the sources examined in this study do not originate from a textual tradition but are products of an oral culture, with the stories being written down much later. As such, dreams and visions take on even greater significance, providing a direct means of communication with the divine. This, in turn, serves to legitimize both political and religious claims.

The presence of new settlers in a particular place was often explained by these dream visions, with the tomb of a holy man marking the territory. These dream visions also played an important role in the discovery of the saint’s tombs. In the context of saints’ tombs and shrines, these sacred spaces served as powerful *lieux de mémoire* where the past and present converged to construct and reinforce sanctity.<sup>93</sup> Cynthia Hahn, in her study “Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints’ Shrines,” emphasizes the primacy of visual experience in fostering faith during this period. Bodily remains, or corporeal relics, were accompanied by contact relics—bits of clothing or other objects that had come into contact with the saint’s body, as well as dust or oil from the saint’s tomb, were physical markers of sanctity and played a crucial role in inspiring faith in the faithful. These shrines provided “more reliable sights” that communicated the saint’s holiness through “a visual rhetoric of sanctity—a rhetoric that condenses the holy past and the sacred present within the particularities of a given space.”<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> Green, *Sufism: Global History*, p. 76

<sup>93</sup> For a concise and detailed analysis of the redefinition of the sacred around saints’ graves in late antiquity, see Peter Brown’s chapter “The Holy and the Grave” in his *The Cult of the Saints*, 1–22. Brown argues that saints’ tombs became focal points where heaven and earth intersected, offering believers tangible connections to the divine. This concept is embodied in the belief that saints were spiritually alive and capable of interceding on behalf of the living. One of the important points Brown makes is the paradoxical nature of saints’ tombs. While these sites were associated with death and decay, they were also seen as sources of divine power and miracles. This duality is evident in the physical handling of relics, which included practices such as the dismemberment and distribution of saints’ bones. Such acts, while seemingly macabre, were believed to make the saints’ presence and intercessory power more accessible to the faithful.

<sup>94</sup> Cynthia Hahn, “Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints’ Shrines”, *Speculum* 72, no. 4 (October 1997): 1079.

The connection between the local communities and saintly shrines was shaped by hagiographical texts, which, as Nile Green observed, helped define identity through time by linking community to territory and linking territory to texts of memory.<sup>95</sup> Saintly and prophetic tombs and shrines are thus “spaces of meaning, memory, and power which inscribe sacred narratives into territory, constituting landmarks that locate local realities into the larger symbolic and moral ordering of the world by Islamic imaginations”.<sup>96</sup> These territorial landmarks of sainthood are linked to imaginary landscapes of dreams and visions, where the presence of the saint could be experienced.<sup>97</sup> It is therefore no coincidence that the hagiographies provide numerous examples of miraculous encounters with prophetic and saintly figures around these shrines through visions and dreams.

## The Discovery of Battal Gazi’s Tomb

During the Ottoman period, stories about the discovery of tombs, particularly those of early Islamic figures, were pervasive. These narratives forged crucial links between individuals and locations, bolstering the territorial and ideological claims of dynasties, religious orders or other entities seeking legitimacy. By connecting these sites to an ancient or Christian past, these narratives reinforced a sense of continuity and helped to consolidate the position of the Ottomans in both a spiritual and a political sense. In her dissertation, “Sanctifying Ottoman Istanbul: The Shrine of Abū Ayyūb al-An-Anṣārī”, Feray Coşkun shows how the “discovery” of the shrine of Abū Ayyūb, a close companion of Muhammad who is believed to have died in Constantinople during the Umayyad campaign in the seventh century, played a key role in the Ottoman appropriation of the city’s Byzantine heritage and the retrospective Islamization of certain sites in Istanbul. Her study

---

<sup>95</sup> Daphna Ephrat, Ethel Sara Wolper, and Paolo G. Pinto, “Introduction: History and Anthropology of Sainthood and Space in Islamic Contexts”, *Saintly Spheres and Islamic Landscapes: Emplacements of Spiritual Power across Time and Place* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), p. 11, cf. Nile Green, *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Kindle Edition, 145–148.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

reveals that the shrine's origins, despite being presented in Islamist and nationalist discourses as a “pure” Islamic site, were deeply rooted in Istanbul's multicultural heritage.<sup>98</sup>

Stories about the “discovery” of sacred burial sites often share common tropes. These narratives sometimes involve physical signs, such as a light rising from a site or the emergence of a healing spring. Other times, the discovery is linked to the spiritual experience of an intermediary figure, who plays a key role in revealing the sacred nature of the site. And in most cases this character is a pious, innocent or a royal figure.<sup>99</sup> As in the account in the *Menākīb-ı Aḳ Şems ed-Dīn* by Emīr Hüseyn Enīsī, analyzed by Feray Coşkun<sup>100</sup>, the discovery of the shrine of Abū Ayyūb was attributed to a Christian monk or priest (*ehl-i riyāzet rubbān*) who saw the Prophet Muhammad in his dream, and thereafter he converted to Islam.<sup>101</sup> The authenticity of the grave of Abū Ayyūb is yet to be confirmed, by a shepherd who noted that his flock avoided the site, linking this phenomenon to animals' instinctive ability to recognize sanctity.<sup>102</sup>

Similar details can be found in the story of the discovery of the tomb of Seyyid Battal Gazi.<sup>103</sup> It begins with a shepherd noticing a mysterious light on a hill while grazing his sheep. The sheep, inexplicably drawn to the spot, remains there all day. Upon hearing this, the local military commander declares the area holy. However, it is a royal figure, Sultan Alaeddin's mother,

<sup>98</sup> Feray Coşkun, “Sanctifying Ottoman Istanbul: The Shrine of Abū Ayyūb al-Anşārī” (PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 2016).

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>100</sup> The *Menākīb-ı Aḳ Şems ed-Dīn* was written in 1569 by Emīr Hüseyn Enīsī, a descendant of Aḳ Şems ed-Dīn. Feray Coşkun examined the three copies located in Hacı Mahmud collection in Süleymaniye Library under no. 4628, no. 4660 and no. 4684.

<sup>101</sup> For a discussion on the trope of the converted priest within the Ottoman context see Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, pp. 68–72.

<sup>102</sup> Coşkun, “Sanctifying Ottoman Istanbul”, pp. 124–25.

<sup>103</sup> This story was previously analyzed by Zeynep Yürekli in *Architecture and Hagiography*, pp. 55–56, based on an edition of Hermann Ethé published in 1871, who used manuscripts of the *Battalnâme* located in Dresden, Leipzig and Vienna (*Die Fabrtzen des Sajjid Batthal: Ein alttürkischer Volks- und Sittenroman*, trans. for the first time by Dr. Hermann Ethé. (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1871). The translations unless otherwise stated are mine.

“Ümm-i Hân” (literally, ‘sultan’s mother’),<sup>104</sup> who identifies the grave after a dream in which Seyyid Battal instructs her to build a tomb over his remains: “O noble lady, I am a descendant of the Prophet who has conquered the empire of Rüm. Finally, I found death at Ƙal’a-i Mesîhiyye (‘Christian castle’)<sup>105</sup> and remained there. Come and build a tomb over me (i.e., over my earthly remains).”<sup>106</sup>

In Islamic tradition, animals are believed to possess a special affinity with the divine, intuitively sensing the sanctity of certain individuals and places, reminding believers of the interconnectedness and hierarchy within divine creation.<sup>107</sup> In the *Vilâyetnâme*, the scent of Hacı Bektaş’s sainthood was literally smelled (*velâyet kobusu*) by the sheep, which led their shepherd, Hacı İbrahim, to recognize Hacı Bektaş’s holy character. Hacı Bektaş blessed the shepherd and gave him land in the Dulkadirli region. Similarly, the *Vilâyetnâme* presents Sarı Saltuk as a shepherd who, through Hacı Bektaş’s gaze, is elevated to the rank of sainthood.<sup>108</sup>

Local legends attribute the discovery of Sarı Saltuk’s grave in Babadağ to Koyun Baba.<sup>109</sup> Saints such as Koyun Baba, Çoban Baba, Piri Baba and Otman Baba, as well as Hacım Sultan (who is depicted herding oxen) and Sarı Saltuk, are all depicted as shepherds.<sup>110</sup> This commonality emphasizes

<sup>104</sup> Zeynep Yürekli identifies Ümm-i Hân as the mother of the Seljuk ruler with ‘Alā’ed-Dîn Kaykubād I (r. 1219–1237). The identity of ‘Alā’eddin’s mother remains uncertain, though it is believed that she was the daughter of the Greek warlord Manuel Maurozomes, who operated in the frontier regions near Iznik (Nicaea). Yürekli in *Architecture and Hagiography*, p. 56.

<sup>105</sup> I rely on Zeynep Yürekli’s identification of this word as Ƙal’a-i Mesîhiyye.

<sup>106</sup> Ethé, *Die Fabrtzen des Sajjid Batthal*, pp. 214–15.

<sup>107</sup> For more on the subject see Devin DeWeese, “Dog Saints and Dog Shrines in Kubrawî Tradition: Notes on a Hagiographical Motif from Khwārazm”, *Miracle et Karāma*, edited by Denise Aigle (Belgium: Brepols, 2000): 459–97.

<sup>108</sup> *Velâyetnâme*, ed. Duran, 34a–35b; 75a.

<sup>109</sup> *Koyun Baba Menākibi*, ed. Taşgın, p. 55; cf. Cornelia Calin Bodea, “Romen Folklorunda Romenler ve Osmanlılar”, *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 6/11 (1999), pp. 109–116. However, such detail is not mentioned in his biography.

<sup>110</sup> This brings to mind Çoban Ata, an important cult figure in Turkic oral epic poetry, who is portrayed as the protector of animals and a source of wisdom for the protagonist. In the *Book of Dede Korkut*, the figure of the shepherd (*çoban*) Karaçuk Çopan is depicted as a powerful character, even stronger than the principal hero in several stories, Salur Ka-

their humble origins, but also their role as protectors and leaders in society.<sup>111</sup> This shepherd-saint archetype held significance, as many of those who joined Otman Baba as his Abdals were indeed shepherds from the Turcoman communities in Dobrudja and the eastern Balkans.<sup>112</sup> Shepherding was thus a reality for many of these followers.

According to Hasluck, the shepherd serves as a symbolic figure representing the ordinary, pious individual closely connected to nature. In the context of “discoveries” of sacred sites, the shepherd’s role complements that of learned men. Hasluck notes that the sequence of events in such discoveries is “psychologically true”—for a simple and devout peasant, any chance combination of circumstances can imbue a commonplace discovery with religious significance. Anything resembling a tomb is often presumed to belong to a buried saint. It then falls to the learned men to assign the saint a name and provide a historical context.<sup>113</sup>

Following her vision, the Sultan’s mother journeyed to the site, using treasury funds to construct a caravanserai and establish a village. Unsatisfied, the Sultan’s mother asked for another vision: “If the vision I saw is truly of divine origin, may it reveal itself to me once again!” Her prayer was answered. Suddenly, a gate opened in the middle of the floor, a bright light shone from it, illuminating the entire room, and a voice called out:

“What you have seen, noble lady, is of divine origin!” The lady stood up, passed through the gate into the interior, descended a seven-step staircase, and saw

---

zan. Behiye Köksel, “Dede Korkut Kitabında Dini-Mitolojik Yardımcı Kahraman Motifi”, *Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 161 (2012), pp. 79–80.

111 The vita of Otman Baba contains hagiological material that articulates a theory of sainthood in which the role of the shepherd (*çoban*) is connected with prophecy (not to mention Judeo-Christian traditions, especially in Christianity where Jesus was referred to as the Good Shepherd). According to the *Vilāyetname-i Otman Baba*, prophecy is manifest and visible, while sainthood is esoteric and hidden, making the saint both a custodian and shepherd of prophecy. Antov, *The Ottoman “Wild West”*, pp. 72–73, cf. Küçük Abdal, *Otman Baba Velāyetnāmesi*, [C37b]: “velāyet nübüvvetiñ çobānı ve nigāhdaşdur.”

112 Halil İnalçık, “Dervish and Sultan: An Analysis of the Otman Baba Vilayetnamesi,” *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*, ed. Grace Martin Smith and Carl W. Ernst (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), p. 215.

113 Coşkun, “Sanctifying Ottoman Istanbul”, p. 125, note 555; cf. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, vol. 2, p. 716.

that the light from above was also illuminating the cave. She noticed that the cave was beautifully decorated, and the scent of musk and amber filled the air. After walking forty steps forward, she reached the bottom of the cave and saw Sultan Seyyid Battāl Gazi sitting there, his body clad in fine armor with a turban on his head and the sword of Dahhāk<sup>114</sup> placed on his knees. The sight was so striking that she fell to her knees and exclaimed: “This must be true!” A voice then spoke again: “The one before you is I, Seyyid Battāl Gazi, the descendant of the Prophet. For ninety years, I have fought countless battles, on land and at sea; I have conquered the lands of Rūm and finally I have found the death of a martyr here. I await the hour when the Prophet’s banner will be carried here again. These items shall serve as a reminder to you,” the voice added. The lady bowed her face to the ground, took these relics, and left the cave. Following this, architects and masons were called in, and a grave was erected. The Sultan’s mother had a similar grave built, as well as a mosque and a monastery, where she brought in scholars and dervishes. The noble lady then organized a grand feast, had the Quran recited several times, and allowed a variety of dishes to be served to everyone... and from that day forward, the place became a famous pilgrimage site. This concludes the story.<sup>115</sup>

The visual details that confirm the authenticity of the divine nature of the vision are striking, providing what Cynthia Hahn describes as a “visual rhetoric of sanctity”. Moreover, the Sultan’s mother is reported to experience direct contact with Seyyid Battal through all her senses, as the vision is not only visually affirmed, but also accompanied by other sensory markers such as the smell of musk and amber. Similarly, in the *Saltuknāme*, for example, after a dream vision of the Prophet Muhammad, Sarı Saltuk wakes up in a room filled with light, the scent of musk, amber and *öd* (agarwood), fully immersing him in a rich sensory context, thereby confirming the “truthfulness” of the vision.<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> In Turkish epic tradition Dahhāk is one of the four sons of Eslem or Keyümers, the son of Adam and ancestor of all sovereigns of the world. While Keyümers’ older sons are ancestor kings of Arabia, Persia and Rūm, Dahhāk is the ancestor of all Turkic sovereigns. Irène Mélikoff, *Abū Muslim, le “porte hache” du Khorassan: dans la tradition épique turco-iranienne* (Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient Adrien Maisonneuve, 1962), p. 43.

<sup>115</sup> Ethé, *Die Fahrten des Sajjid Battal*, pp. 215–17.

<sup>116</sup> *Saltuknāme*, (ed. İz), T540b; (ed. Akalın), vol. III, pp. 255–56.

The *Saltuknâme* also contains a short version of the legend about the discovery of the shrine by a woman and the construction of the mausoleum under her patronage. However, the identification of the patron as the mother of Sultan ‘Ala’eddin is not mentioned. The original discovery of Seyyid Battal’s grave is attributed to Sarı Saltuk, who had a dream in which Battal informed him that he was buried in the exact place where he had slept. Sarı Saltuk marked the spot and placed a gravestone there. Some time later, a woman had a similar dream which prompted her to build a shrine and a convent on the site, “which still stands today (*şimdi ma’mûrdur*)”.<sup>117</sup>

With the original shrine built in the thirteenth century, the place did indeed become an important pilgrimage center. In sixteenth-century sources, the shrine is mentioned as the main gathering spot for the Abdals of Rûm. In Sufi terminology, *abdâl* (literally meaning ‘substitutes’; singular *budalâ*) represents a rank within the hierarchy of saints. However, it specifically refers to a group of renunciatory dervishes native to Anatolia who wandered around the western Anatolian frontiers from at least the fourteenth century. It remains uncertain whether these itinerant dervishes formed a distinct social group before the fifteenth century, when they began to be recognized as such in historical sources. These sources describe them as socially subversive, with a shocking physical appearance—almost naked wearing the skins and horns of animals, with all facial hair shaved off.<sup>118</sup>

In 1522, Vâhidî described this group as wandering dervishes connected to the shrine of Seyyid Gazi, with two fifteenth-century antinomian dervishes, Otman Baba and Şüca’eddin Veli also being mentioned. According to Ahmet Karamustafa, under the formative influence of their master, Otman Baba, the movements of deviant renunciation that crystallized around the figures of Barak Baba, Kaygusuz Abdal, and Sultan Şüca’eddin Veli formed the basic stock from which the more identifiable and distinct Abdals of Rûm emerged

<sup>117</sup> Coşkun, “Sanctifying Ottoman Istanbul”, p. 120; cf. *Saltuknâme*, (ed. İz), T283b; (ed. Akalın), vol. II, p. 74.

<sup>118</sup> Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash/Alevi in Ottoman Anatolia: Sufism, Politics and Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp. 157–59.

at the turn of the sixteenth century.<sup>119</sup> In Vāhidī's text, they introduce themselves as follows:

We come from Rūm, with belts, prayer mats, drums and lamps from the hearth (that is, shrine) of sultan Seyyid Gazi. We are the Abdals of Rūm with bodies covered with burn wounds. We are the servants of Otman Baba carrying the staff of Şüca' [eddin Veli]. We are peaceful loners attached to Seyyid Gazi, who is received well in God's presence.<sup>120</sup>

In the *Menākīb-ı Sultan Şüca'eddin*, Sultan Şüca'eddin's visit to the shrine is mentioned. The shrine is presented as a sacred place where the hidden becomes manifest:

Sultan Şüca' [eddin Veli] came into the presence of Seyyid Gazi Sultan. Whenever he came to Seyyid Gazi Sultan, the door of the shrine would open to the unseen. The Sultan would enter inside, converse with him in an unknown (*bī-niṣān*) language, and sit down with him. The Sultan stayed there for three days.<sup>121</sup>

## Shrine Visits and Miraculous Encounters

The *Vilāyetnāme of Hacı Bektaş* offers a brief account of the discovery of Seyyid Gazi's grave highlighting Hacı Bektaş's pivotal role in authenticating the shrine. According to the *Vilāyetnāme*, it was Sultan 'Ala'eddin's mother who discovered Seyyid Battal's tomb after he appeared to her in a dream. She subsequently built a shrine at the site. However, doubts lingered about the tomb's authenticity until Hacı Bektaş's visit. His confirmation erased all uncertainty, establishing the site as Seyyid Battal's genuine resting place.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Ahmet Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200–1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), p. 102.

<sup>120</sup> Vāhidī's *Menākīb-ı Hıvoca-i Cihān*, pp. 126–39 (fols 41a–53b), 128 (fol. 42b); quoted after Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography*, p. 41; cf. *Menākīb-i Hoca-i Cihan ve Netice-i Can*, edited by Ahmet T. Karamustafa (Cambridge, Mass.: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1993). This is a different kind of *menākīb-nāme* describing in detail different tariqas, and their ways and practices.

<sup>121</sup> Ayşe Yıldız, "Şücaeddin Baba Velayetnamesi", *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 37 (2006), [154/6], p. 58.

<sup>122</sup> *Velāyetnāme*, ed. Duran, 73a–b.

This is followed by the account of the miraculous encounter between Hacı Bektaş and Seyyid Battal, where Hacı Bektaş stood in front of the tomb and greeted Seyyid, emphasizing their common noble lineage as descendants of Muhammad:

“May peace be upon you, great man of our lineage!” A reply came from the grave: “And may peace be upon you, my kinsman, my sun and my moon.” Upon hearing this, Hacı Bektaş turned into an ocean, and the tomb floated on it. Then, the tomb became an ocean, and Hacı Bektaş took the form of a ship. Together, they floated on the ocean.<sup>123</sup>

After his conversation with Seyyid Gazi, Hacı Bektaş returns to Sulucukarahöyük, leaving behind not only his relics—his turban, belt, and shoes—but also a more personal mark. He bites the threshold of the tomb’s door and says, “Bu bizim nişānemüz olsun (‘Let this be our sign’).” According to Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, this anecdote can be interpreted as “retrospectively legitimizing the incorporation of the Hacı Bektaş cult into pre-existing Abdal lore and as validating the nascent Bektashi identity”.<sup>124</sup> She argues that this story is significant not only for establishing a timeless connection between the two saints, but also for elevating Seyyid Battal to a spiritual status on par with Hacı Bektaş. This, in turn, indicates the enduring influence of earlier Abdal figures on the audience for whom the *Velāyetnāme* was originally written.<sup>125</sup>

The *Velāyetnāme of Hacım Sultan* further emphasizes the Bektashi connection to the shrine. It details Hacı Bektaş’s instructions to Hacım Sultan to visit the shrine of Seyyid Gazi (after establishing his monastery in the Germiyan region), and to sacrifice a thousand oxen and distribute the meat to the poor. Upon completion, Hacım Sultan replicates Hacı Bektaş’s gesture, biting the threshold of the tomb. As Zeynep Yürekli notes, “by leaving his personal mark on the shrine”, Hacım Sultan “immortalized his visit.”<sup>126</sup> It is worthy of note that this immortalization was accomplished through a

<sup>123</sup> *Velāyetnāme*, ed. Duran, 74b.

<sup>124</sup> Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash/Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia*, p. 164.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography*, p. 65; cf. *Velāyetnāme*, ed. Duran, 75a; Tufan Gündüz, “Hacı Bektaş Veli’nin Yol Arkadaşı Kolu Açık Hacım Sultan ve Velayetnamesi”, *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırmaları Dergisi* 55 (2010): 92.

corporeal imprint, one that involves the saliva, which is used to establish a connection between the site and the Bektashi authority.

The hagiographers of the *Vilāyetnāme* make a further connection by claiming that seven of Seyyid Gazi’s companions were actually buried in Susuz in the Germiyan region. This is the very place where Hacım Sultan is sent to establish his lodge. However, a formidable obstacle emerges: a dragon terrorizing the area. In a remarkable twist, Hacım Sultan confronts the beast, breathing flames from his own mouth, and reducing the dragon to ashes.<sup>127</sup>

A final point that deserves some attention is the site’s Christian associations, particularly its designation as Kal‘a-i Mesīhiyye (‘Christian Castle’) in the account of the site’s discovery. Despite the popular belief that the shrine of Seyyid Gazi was built on the site of a former Christian basilica, the evidence suggests otherwise. The building was, in fact, an entirely Rum-Seljuk construction.<sup>128</sup>

Adam Bursi discusses a hadith in which the Prophet Muhammad instructs a group of Arabs to convert a church into a mosque using his ablution water. The hadith describes how the Prophet’s ablution water, which would include his saliva, is used to cleanse and repurpose a Christian space for Muslim worship. As Bursi notes, “the story subverts these symbols and redirects them in order to illustrate the supersession of Christianity by Islam.”<sup>129</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> *Velāyetnāme*, ed. Duran, 130b–135b.

<sup>128</sup> Georges Radet, who visited the site in 1893, described the building as an ancient Christian basilica, and Karl Wulzinger later proposed that it consisted of a church added to a late antique mausoleum. The leader of the shrine during Wulzinger’s visit in 1911, Shaykh Şükri, even referred to it as an old monastery. All cited by Zeynep Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography*, p. 84. Colin Imber, drawing on Vryonis’ claim based on a picture of the shrine, also argued that the site belonged to a former Christian basilica. Colin Imber, “The Wandering Dervishes”, *Studies in Ottoman History and Law* (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 1996), p. 138; for a picture of the site, see Vryonis, *Decline*. For the identification of the building as a Rum-Seljuk construction, cf. Semavi Eyice, “İlk Osmanlı Devrinin Dini-İctimai bir Müessesesi, Zaviyeler ve Zaviyeli Camiler,” *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 23 (1962–63): 3–80; Metin Sözen, *Anadolu Medreseleri: Selçuklu ve Beylikler Devri* (Istanbul, 1970), pp. 6–10.

<sup>129</sup> Adam C. Bursi, “Fluid Boundaries: Christian Sacred Space and Islamic Relics in an Early Hadīth”, *Medieval Encounters* 27 (2021): 510.

An Ottoman myth further illustrates this theme, suggesting that Byzantines in the seventh century used mortar containing the Prophet’s saliva, sand from Mecca, and Zamzam water to repair the dome of Hagia Sophia. As noted by Patrick Franke, this story indicates that Hagia Sophia was not exclusively a Christian structure but had already been symbolically Islamized during the time of Muhammad through his saliva, which “functions as a symbolic carrier of sacred energy”.<sup>130</sup>

The phenomenon of retrospective Islamization of sacred sites—as evident in these examples as well as the shrine of Abū Ayyūb al-An-Anṣārī—illustrates the strategic reclamation of cultural heritage. Feray Coşkun’s research highlights how the Ottomans assimilated Istanbul’s Christian legacy into Islamic tradition. This process reinforces a narrative of historical continuity, effectively proclaiming: “we have always been here.” The Islamization of sites often involved symbolic acts, such as the use of the Prophet’s saliva (or Bektashization through the act of biting). These actions not only transformed the religious identity of the sites but also symbolized a claim to sovereignty over territory, linking religious authority to political power and asserting both continuity and dominance.

---

<sup>130</sup> Patrick Franke, “Khidr in Istanbul: Observations on the Symbolic Construction of Sacred Spaces in Traditional Islam,” in *On Archaeology of Sainthood and Local Spirituality in Islam: Past and Present Crossroads of Events and Ideas*, ed. Georg Stauth (Bielefeld: Transcript; Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 2004), pp. 42–44. On this story, see Gülru Necipoğlu, “The Life of an Imperial Monument: Hagia Sophia after Byzantium,” in *Hagia Sophia from the Age of Justinian to the Present*, ed. Robert Mark and Ahmet Ş. Çakmak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 200.

## Skin: Transformation

As Scott Kugle observes, Sufism aims to transcend the superficial, penetrating “beneath the skin” of human existence. Interestingly, the skin—the body’s largest organ—demarcates the self and the other. The etymology of Adam, the primordial human, reveals a profound connection: it derives from the Hebrew word for earth or dust, while in Arabic, it is linked to *adim*, which refers to skin or surface. This linguistic nexus suggests that Adam’s name symbolizes humanity’s material aspect, which can obscure a deeper understanding of the self.<sup>131</sup> For the mystic, penetrating this outer layer, this barrier, is essential to gaining insight into the self and human nature, and this knowledge becomes the foundation for all transformation.

After a brief discussion of the saint’s ability to change skin, or more precisely, to transform into an animal, I will focus on the serpent, or more specifically, the dragon, whose ability to shed its skin is associated with both death and the eternal renewal of life, making the dragon a perfect borderline object.<sup>132</sup> Following a short introduction to the mystical meanings of the dragon, I will examine the motif of dragon-slaying, one of the first ordeals faced by Muslim holy men in several *menākibnāmes*, an essential test on the path to sainthood, from where transformation begins.

---

<sup>131</sup> Scott Kugle, *Sufis and Saints’ Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality, and Sacred Power in Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 1–2.

<sup>132</sup> For the sources under study dragon and serpent can be used interchangeably, as serpents are described as having potential to grow to be dragons. The same conviction also exists in Byzantine hagiographical tradition. Monica White, “The Rise of the Dragon in Middle Byzantine Hagiography”, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 32/2 (2008): 149.

## Changing Skin: Shape-shifting

Shapeshifting is an ancient and enduring motif, appearing in diverse myths and epic poems, such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *Iliad*. This transformative theme persists in modern storytelling, manifesting in various forms of media, including contemporary television series featuring shapeshifters like werewolves. Shapeshifting and the ability to control animals are considered the most significant supernatural powers attributed to the *cādūs* (sorcerers), distinguishing them as masters of the devil’s arts. Such attempts to control nature are seen as a direct challenge to God’s omnipotence.<sup>133</sup> However, shapeshifting is also a feature attributed to Muslim holy men. The motif of saints assuming the forms of various animals, along with their characteristics, is a prevalent theme in *menākibnāme* literature. Well-known examples include Seyyid Battal, Abdal Musa, Sultan Şücaeddin, and Resul Baba transforming into deer, Sarı İsmail and Hacı Tuğrul changing into hawks, or Hacı Bektaş changing into dove. These transformations carry not only allegorical meanings but can also hold ideological significance.

For much of human history, animals have been sources of both fear and admiration, and endowed with great symbolic power. They occupied a respected and ambivalent position, serving as objects of reciprocation in sacrifice and mythology. Many animals surpassed humans in strength, agility and perseverance. This fascination with animals generated fantasies in the human imagination, where humans were ascribed animal qualities. Conversely, in various fables and myths animals were given anthropomorphic attributes—literally and metaphorically—including the ability to speak. Giving animals a voice in these stories was not only a way to bridge the interspecies gap but also a means of overcoming the “uncertainty” in the human-animal relationship, an uncertainty which has weighed on men since, in Jean Baudrillard’s words, “the rupture in their alliance with men, resides in the fact that they do not speak”.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>133</sup> I previously analyzed these figures in my article, “Gāzīs and Cādūs at the Margins: Conversion at the Point of Sword and Enchantment”, *Aca’ib: Occasional Papers on the Ottoman Perceptions of the Supernatural* 1 (2020): 21–48.

<sup>134</sup> Jean Baudrillard, “The Animals: Territory and Metamorphoses,” in *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glasser (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), p. 136.

In the Islamic context, however, animals are not denied speech. According to the Quran (Sura 17/44), it is not that animals cannot speak, but that human ears are not capable of hearing. Islamic textual and intellectual traditions recognize the capacity of animals to experience emotions, to perceive, and to learn. Animals are considered to be creatures with a soul (*nefs*), which, according to some Muslim authors, will resurrect on the Day of Judgement.<sup>135</sup>

The saints' ability to communicate with animals, effectively neutralizing the language barrier, is a sign of their connection to nature, and, by extension, their closeness to the Divine. In the *Velāyetnāme of Hacı Bektaş*, for instance, Sarı İsmail speaks affectionately to an ox.<sup>136</sup> Similarly, Seyyid Battal communicates with animals, as illustrated by the hospitable lion, who offers him mountain berries on a tray balanced on his head—a notable detail, given the lion has no hands. One of Sarı Saltuk's Abdals, Kara Davud, forms a true alliance with a wild boar (*hınzır*). The boar saves Kara Davud from a dragon, and in return, Kara Davud saves the boar from a bear; together they engage in *gaza* warfare.<sup>137</sup> Demir Baba speaks to sheep about to be sacrificed, calming them.<sup>138</sup> Celaleddin Rumi is depicted as giving sermons to dogs (despite them being considered impure animals) and admonishing frogs that interrupted him with their croaking.<sup>139</sup> The examples can be multiplied.

The sanctity of a Muslim holy man is constantly demonstrated through his behavior towards the animals. In addition to protecting them, he establishes order within the animal kingdom, promotes mutual assistance between himself and animals, and restores the lost harmony between man and beast. These recurring miracles serve to reestablish the hierarchy between humans and animals.<sup>140</sup> However, it is the allegorical dimension of animals

<sup>135</sup> Pierre Lory, *La dignité de l'homme face aux anges, aux animaux et aux djinns* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2018), pp. 23–26; 75–78.

<sup>136</sup> *Velāyetnāme*, ed. Duran, 130a.

<sup>137</sup> *Saltuknāme*, (ed. İz), T101a–b; (ed. Akalın), vol. I, pp.162–163.

<sup>138</sup> *Demir Baba Velāyetnāmesi*, edited by Filiz Kılıç and Tuncay Bülbül (Ankara: 2011), p. 142; [D1–72a–b].

<sup>139</sup> Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, “Miracles des saints musulmans et règne animal”, in *Miracle et Karāma*, ed. Denise Aigle (Belgium: Brepols, 2000), p. 580.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 579.

that often prevails. Jahiz’s *Book of Animals* (“*Kitāb al-Hayawān*”), a compendium of medieval Islamic knowledge about animals, does not aim to scientifically study animal species. Its purpose, as noted by Charles Pellat, is the “demonstration of the existence of the Creator through the observation of creation and the glorification of divine wisdom, which has created nothing that is truly useless or harmful.”<sup>141</sup>

While the deer, for instance, is often seen as a spiritual guide and initiator, showing believers the right path, the eagle and the hawk, with their wild nature, are both associated with combat and conquest. A particularly significant anecdote from the *Vilāyetnāme* vividly illustrates this connection. In this story, Hacı Bektaş arrives in Rūm in the form of a dove. However, he is met with opposition from Hacı Tuğrul, who takes the form of a falcon (*toğan*) to prevent the saint’s entry into the territory of the Abdals of Rūm (*Rūm Erenleri*).<sup>142</sup> A similar story can also be found in the *Saltuknāme*, where Toğan Ata, one of the disciples of Fakih Ahmed, transforms into a hawk to prevent Hacı Bektaş (in the form of a dove) from entering Rūm. When Hacı Bektaş asks Toğan Ata why he is disguised in the form of a wild, ferocious animal, “*vaḥṣī yavuz sūreti*”, Toğan Ata’s response is as follows: “This place is called Rūm-ili, its holy men are known to be extremely wild (*Buña Rūm-ili dirler. Buñun erenleri ziyāde vaḥṣī olur dirler*)”<sup>143</sup>

In the aforementioned example from the *Vilāyetnāme*, Hacı Tuğrul is identified as a disciple of Bayezid al-Bistami, the earliest Sufi to ride a lion and use a serpent as a whip, who was considered “the archetype of the intoxicated nonconformist mystic” in contrast to “the settled, sober, and more sharia-oriented varieties”.<sup>144</sup> The fact that Bayezid al-Bistami came to Rūm from Iraq, raises the possibility of a link to the Wafa’i order through an Iraqi connection, as noted by Ayfer Karakaya-Stump.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>141</sup> Charles Pellat, “Hayawān”, *El<sup>2</sup>*, vol. III, pp. 311–313, quoted in Mayeur-Jaouen, “Miracles des saints musulmans”, pp. 577–578.

<sup>142</sup> On a minor note, Tuğrul means gyrfalcon.

<sup>143</sup> *Saltuknāme*, (ed. İz), T260b; (ed. Akalın), vol. II, p. 44. For a detailed analysis of this section, see Yıldırım, *Bektaşiliğin Doğuşu*, pp. 138–155.

<sup>144</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, “Hacı Bektash, Sultan Sahak, Shah Mina Sahib,” pp. 65–66.

<sup>145</sup> Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash/Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia*, p. 160.

Animals convey symbolic meaning, representing an intimate connection to God's creation. The motif of saints commanding and transforming into animals reflects their connection to the Divine through untamed spirituality. This mastery over nature is deeply intertwined with the saint's conquest of his own lower self (*nefs*), through domesticating the animals and finally taming the soul. The culmination of this spiritual journey, and the attainment of saintly status, is often depicted through the motif of dragon-slaying in several *menākıbnāmes*. The dragon, representing the base self, must be defeated for the saint to achieve spiritual transformation.

### Dragon in Islamic Mysticism

In medieval Islamic iconography, the dragon represents a multifaceted symbol, defying simplistic dichotomies. Contrary to its predominantly negative depiction in Western literature as a symbol of sin and evil, the Islamic dragon embodies a nuanced duality, synthesizing attributes of protection and wisdom. A seven-headed dragon, for instance, represents the seven heavenly spheres of the universe and serves as a guardian where the dragon plays a protective and benevolent role.<sup>146</sup> This motif appears in the *Vilāyetnāme of Hacı Bektaş*, the *Saltuknāme* and the Book of Dede Korkut.<sup>147</sup>

The motif of a staff transforming into a seven-headed dragon, as depicted in the *Saltuknāme* and the *Velāyetnāmes* of Hacı Bektaş and Şücaeddin, originates from the story of Moses in the Old Testament, which is repeated in the Quran. In the story, Moses, by God's command, throws his staff, which turns into a serpent during his contest with Pharaoh's magicians, symbolizing divine power and the triumph of good over evil.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, when Sarı Saltuk places his lance (not his staff) on the ground and it transforms into a seven-headed dragon, the infidels mistakenly perceive him as a sorcerer,

<sup>146</sup> For the seven-headed dragon representing the seven heavenly spheres see, Sara Kuehn, *The Dragon in Medieval East Christian and Islamic Art* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 139.

<sup>147</sup> *Velāyetnāme*, ed. Duran, 77a–b. *Saltuknāme*, (ed. İz), T254a; (ed. Akalın), vol. II, p.36; *Dede Korkut Oğuznameleri*, ed. Tezcan and Boeschoten, 141a, p. 180.

<sup>148</sup> The anecdote tells how Sarı İsmail, the second caliph of Hacı Bektaş, threw the staff and it landed in a church in the town of Tavas in the Menteşe region: “The staff appeared to the monk in the form of a dragon”. *Velāyetnāme*, ed. Duran, 128b.

*cādū*, which can be seen as a reference to Pharaoh’s magicians. The text emphasizes, however, that this transformation only occurs when Sarı Saltuk recites the *ism-i ‘azam*, ‘the greatest name of God’, thus emphasizing the divine source of his power.<sup>149</sup>

In the *Velāyetnâme* of Demir Baba, the dragon is portrayed as a speaking being.<sup>150</sup> The dragon’s ability to speak with the power to impart supernatural knowledge of the *mantik al-tayr* (the language of birds) is related to the mystical interpretation of the Quranic verse (Sura 27:16–19) that mentions Solomon understanding the language of birds, which symbolizes understanding the secret language of the soul.<sup>151</sup> In this regard, the dragon is a figure of wisdom and spiritual insight that guides the seeker on their inner journey.

The tenth or eleventh-century magical treatise *Ghayat al-Hakim* cites Plato’s *Great Book of the Laws* as a reference for a fascinating magical phenomenon: the transformation of rods or ropes into serpents. These enchanted serpents allegedly possess the ability to devour anything placed before them. The power of Moses’ serpent-rod is attributed mainly to the inscriptions on it, which contained mystical divine names of God. Similarly, according to legend, Solomon’s ring bore these divine names, granting it the same miraculous power as Moses’ rod.<sup>152</sup> This rod is also linked to a circle symbol believed to have protective properties against evil. In an example from the *Battālnâme*, the protagonist recites the Quran and God’s names, draws a circle, and enters the circle to protect himself from a dragon.<sup>153</sup>

Another point in dragon symbolism is their depiction as guardians of sacred sites, where they are often enchanted or immobilized, symbolizing a connection to the unseen (*al-ghayb*) and serving as spiritual protectors. In the *Saltuknâme*, there is an example in which Sarı Saltuk encounters

<sup>149</sup> *Saltuknâme*, (ed. İz), T254a; (ed. Akalın), vol. II, p.36.

<sup>150</sup> *Demir Baba Velāyetnâmesi*, ed. Kılıç and Bülbül, pp. 92–93; [D1–37a–b]. Demir Baba asks the dragon why it swallowed the man despite having intellect and the ability to speak, implying that such an act does not befit its intelligence: “Yâ mâr bu kadar akluñ var; hem sâhib-i lisânsuñ yâ âdemi niçün yutduñ?”

<sup>151</sup> Kuehn, *The Dragon*, p. 203.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>153</sup> *Battālnâme*, A304–05.

an inanimate (*cemad*) dragon. He cancels out the magic by using a wheel (*çarh*), causing the dragon to collapse to the ground.<sup>154</sup> In another instance, Sarı Saltuk, accompanied by *gazis* and a sheikh knowledgeable in the occult sciences, especially in the *ilm-i tılsimât*, encounters two lions and a dragon guarding a treasure. The sheikh instructs them to dig into the ground, revealing a hole where they see water wheels (*tılsımlı dolap*) turning. When they stop the wheels from turning, the dragon and the lions become motionless.<sup>155</sup> The *dolap*, or wheel is a metaphor for existence in Sufi literature, as exemplified by Yunus Emre’s poem “Dertli Dolap”.<sup>156</sup>

The image of a dragon frozen or turned to stone reflects the Sufi concept of spiritual death and rebirth, in which the mystic overcomes their lower self (*nafs al-ammara*) and achieves higher spiritual awareness (*nafs al-mutma’inna*). The frozen dragon motif, which appears in the *Velâyetnâme* of Koyun Baba<sup>157</sup> and in Celaleddin Rumi (d.1273)’s *Mesnevî*, represents the subjugation of the ego and the mastery of the spiritual self. The serpent’s inaction is connected to the prophetic tradition, “die before you die”, embodying the process of *fanâ’* (self-annihilation) and leading to *bakâ’* (subsistence in God) after the extinction of the lower self.<sup>158</sup>

In a similar vein, mystics riding ferocious creatures such as dragons or lions symbolize their mastery over the carnal self. Iconic figures such as Bayezid al-Bistami, Mahmud Hayran, or Barak Baba are often depicted as having tamed these beasts, symbolizing their absolute control over their base instincts and lower selves. In this allegory, the dragon is not an external enemy, but a representation of the inner struggle and ultimate victory over one’s

<sup>154</sup> *Saltuknâme*, (ed. İz), T83a; (ed. Akalın), vol. I, p. 131.

<sup>155</sup> *Saltuknâme*, (ed. İz), T433b; (ed. Akalın), vol. II, p. 101.

<sup>156</sup> Kaygusuz Abdal also has poems in which he talks to the water wheels. According to Güzel, this indicates that Kaygusuz was a follower of Yunus Emre, *Kaygusuz Abdal Menâkıbnâmesi*, ed. Güzel, ff. 38–39, pp. 126–126; 70.

<sup>157</sup> Koyun Baba strikes the dragon with his staff, turning it to stone, and, as the text notes, “even today, blood and pus still flow from it”. *Koyun Baba ve Menâkıbı*, ed. Taşğın, [162b].

<sup>158</sup> Asghar Gohrab, “Majnun’s Image as a Serpent”, *The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love, and Rhetoric*, edited by J.W. Clinton and K. Talatoff (New York: Palgrave, 2000) pp. 83–95. For more on the hadith “die before dying” see Karamustafa, *God’s Unruly Friends: “The dervish was one who voluntarily chose death and ‘died before dying’.*”, p. 63.

lower self. Al-Bistami uses the metaphor of a serpent shedding its skin to describe the mystical journey of self-knowledge (gnosis). Just as the serpent gains new life by shedding its skin, the mystic sheds the “I” in the process of *fanā’* (annihilation of the self) and undergoes a transformation that leads to eternal life.<sup>159</sup>

The rich allegory of dragon symbolism in Islamic mysticism likely provided fertile ground for Muslims to incorporate local legends of dragon-slayers—figures closely linked to Christian military saints such as Saint George and Saint Theodore—into Turkish hagiographical literature. This narrative convergence not only resonated with new converts, but also enabled Muslims to assert their supremacy and claim religious sites associated with the dragon-slaying legend. At the same time, the mystical symbolism of self-annihilation through the killing of the dragon emphasized both spiritual transformation (and the transformation of the religious space) and the military prowess of warrior-dervishes, setting the stage for the next discussion.

## Christian Military Saints and Dragon-slaying Legends

The iconic image of a horse rider spearing a dragon is a ubiquitous theme in Christian iconography. This motif appears in amuletic images from late antiquity and is also prominent in Byzantine churches, where the figure is often identified as either Saint George or Saint Theodore.<sup>160</sup> From the ninth century onwards, Byzantine hagiographical literature saw a surge in dragon-slaying legends as the vitae of the saints underwent rewriting. During this process, the encounter with the dragon emerged as a pivotal element in the narratives of saintly lives.<sup>161</sup>

The origins of the cult of warrior saints, especially dragon-snake slayers, are often traced back to ancient hero worship and seen as a continuation of it.<sup>162</sup> There is an argument, however, that these warrior saints, as Christian

<sup>159</sup> Kuehn, *The Dragon*, pp. 201–202.

<sup>160</sup> Deniz Sever Georgousakis, “Profane and Sacred in Private: Images and Inscriptions on Late Antique and Middle Byzantine Amulets” *Codex Aquilarensis* 33 (2017): 16.

<sup>161</sup> White, “The Rise of the Dragon”, p. 150.

<sup>162</sup> E. H. Kantorowicz, “Gods in Uniform”, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 105, no. 4 (1961): 390.

martyrs, represent a distinct tradition that differs significantly from hero worship. This perspective suggests that the Christian cult of martyrs, with roots in ancient tomb worship, is so fundamentally different from hero worship that the two cannot be directly related.<sup>163</sup> Nevertheless, the dominant scholarly view tends to link the veneration of saintly dragon-slayers to the cult of ancient heroes, suggesting both genealogical and functional similarities with the Christian veneration of saints and their relics. The popularity of the dragon-slayer theme is attributed to the Byzantine veneration of martyrs, especially those regarded as warrior-slayers of dragons, whose martyrdom was seen as the most perfect imitation of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.<sup>164</sup>

Although the dragon-slaying legends are commonly associated with Saint George, some scholars argue that the origins of this narrative predate this association. They suggest that the legend may have originated with Saint Theodore, the patron saint of Euchaita, near modern-day Çorum in the Amasya region. It is possible that the dragon legend emerged from this region and subsequently became linked to Saint George.<sup>165</sup> Many sacred sites associated with these saints were taken over by mystic figures who converted these sites into Muslim sanctuaries and included them into the cult of Khidr (Hızır), which was venerated also by Christians. Khidr is often associated with Saint George (and sometimes with Saint Theodore) as they ride the same horse and have the dragon legend in common.<sup>166</sup> Saint Theodore of Euchaita is one of the so-called “military” saints famous among soldiers for performing miracles during the Arab–Byzantine confrontations. Saint Theodore and Saint George were believed to answer the prayers of those whose

---

<sup>163</sup> W. Deichmann, *Archeologia chrześcijańska*, Warszawa 1994, p. 54; cited after Justyna Sprutta, “Translations of the Warrior Saints: Dragon-Slayers’ Relics in Byzantium,” *Series Byzantina* 14 (2017): 25.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>165</sup> Hippolyte Delehay, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires* (Paris: A. Picard, 1909), p. 11, 15. The earliest known image of Saint George slaying a dragon dates back to the first quarter of the eleventh century and is located in the church of Saint Barbara in Cappadocia. Christopher Walter, “The Origins of the Cult of Saint George”, *Revue des Études Byzantines* 35 (1995): 295–326.

<sup>166</sup> Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, vol. I, p. 48; Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, “XIII–XIV. Yüzyıllarda Anadolu’da Dini Etkileşimler ve Aya Yorgi (Saint Georges Kültü)”, *Belleten* 214 (1991): 661–71.

relatives were taken captive by Arabs, and to ensure their safe return.<sup>167</sup> The earliest document about the “dragon-slaying” Saint Theodore depicts him as a soldier.<sup>168</sup> He is also believed to have smashed the Arab siege against the city by appearing in front of the gates, just like Celaleddin Rumi who is believed to have prevented the Mongol invasion of Konya in the same manner.<sup>169</sup>

It was at these sacred sites, especially in frontier areas, that the patrons of architecture in medieval Anatolia and the Balkans associated themselves with local Christian beliefs and traditions. The *zâviye* (Sufi lodge) of Elvan Çelebi, for instance, is assumed to be built on the original site of a church devoted to Saint Theodore in Euchaita. Although the original form of the lodge of Elvan Çelebi had been greatly altered due to renovations, some travelers’ accounts confirmed its existence on the basis of the construction of sections from a Byzantine church and other ancient fragments.<sup>170</sup>

These sites, referred to as “ambiguous sanctuaries” by Frederick W. Hasluck, could be claimed by multiple religious groups, often through the

---

167 Speros Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 38. There is also Saint Demetrius on horseback (red rather than white), but his battle is not with a dragon; it is with paganism. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, vol. I, p. 49, fn.2.

168 Delehayé, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*, p. 40; for more on Saint Theodore, see especially Chapter II, pp. 11–43; Christopher Walter, “Theodore: Archetype of Warrior Saint”, *Révue des études byzantines* 57 (1999): 163–210. For the adaptations of Saint George and the dragon-slaying legend in western Christian literature, see Ferdinand Vetter (ed.), *Der heilige Georg des Reinbot von Durne. Mit einer Einleitung über die Legende und das Gedicht* (Halle a.d. Saale: 1896), LXXV.

169 Vryonis, *Decline*, pp. 36–37.

170 Hans Dernschwam who accompanied the Flemish ambassador Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq during a diplomatic mission to appear before Süleyman I (r. 1520–66) expressed his confusion about the building and drew a sketch where he marked the church section and also noted the wooden masjid and the antique fragments engraved in the walls. Semavi Eyice, “Çorum’un Mecidözü’nde Âşık Paşa-oğlu Elvan Çelebi Zâviyesi”, *Türkiyat Mecmuası* XV (1969): 213–14; *Dernschwam’s Tagebuch einer Reise nach Konstantinopel und Kleinasien 1553/55*, edited by F. Babinger (München–Leipzig, 1923): 201–06. See also Ethel Sara Wolper, “Khidr, Elwan Çelebi and the Conversion of Sacred Sanctuaries in Anatolia”, *The Muslim World* 90/3–4 (2000): 313–14.

intermediary of a shared cultic figure.<sup>171</sup> Although these sanctuaries functioned as significant sites for the rapprochement between dervish orders and local Christians, the two groups maintained distinct identities. Instead, each party acknowledged and respected the unique character of the shared saint in question within their respective Islamic or Christian tradition. Tijana Krstić argues that these sites, often contested by both Christians and Muslims, were not evidence of peaceful coexistence but rather reflected strategic appropriation and dominance.<sup>172</sup> According to Krstić, the transformation of these sites into Islamic shrines was less about converting religious identities and more about asserting Islamic authority over formerly Christian spaces. She observes, “What is striking about all cases is the fact that the difference is upheld rather than being dealt away with, the latter supposedly being the key trait of syncretism. Rather than erasing the religious identity of the saint, both Bektashis and Christians maintain it... The only thing undeniably undergoing fusion here was space but not necessarily belief, which makes the phenomenon of ambiguous shrines an instance of Islamization of space rather than people.”<sup>173</sup>

The conversion of the site into a Muslim sanctuary came along with another process, that of the adaptation of the dragon-slaying legend for various Muslim heroic figures. The Flemish ambassador Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq who visited the lodge in the sixteenth century recorded in his *Letters* that the dervishes recounted the stories about a heroic figure named “Chederle (Khidr or Hızır)” who saved a girl from the mouth of a huge dragon, traveled to faraway lands on the quest for the *āb-ı hayāt* (fountain of life; immortality)

---

<sup>171</sup> Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, vol. I, pp. 47–49; vol. II, pp. 564–71.

<sup>172</sup> Tijana Krstić refers to Robert M. Hayden’s concept of “competitive sharing” which should be understood within the framework of local power dynamics rather than as an indication of mutual acceptance or tolerance of the ‘other’ Tijana Krstić, “The Ambiguous Politics of “Ambiguous Sanctuaries”: F. Hasluck and Historiography on Syncretism and Conversion to Islam in 15th- and 16th-century Ottoman Rumeli”, in *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: The Life and Times of F. W. Hasluck*, ed. D. Shankland, vol. 3 (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2013), p. 252; cf. Robert M. Hayden, “Antagonistic Tolerance–Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites in South Asia and the Balkans”, *Current Anthropology* 43, no. 2 (2002): 205.

<sup>173</sup> Krstić, “The Ambiguous Politics”, p. 252.

and was a contemporary of Alexander the Great.<sup>174</sup> Although Busbecq ridiculed the Turks for their lack of a sense of chronology, such an amalgamation of characters and stories can rather be seen as a creative construction resulting from an effort to link local Christian beliefs with Turco-Islamic traditions around the figure of Khidr. Indeed, in popular literature Khidr has been brought in connection with Alexander the Great as his travel companion who attained immortality after drinking from the fountain of life.<sup>175</sup> He is at the same time believed to respond to the prayers of those in distress, much like Saint George and other Christian military saints. The pairing of Khidr with the prophet Elijah (Greek Elias) produced the composite Islamic figure of Khidr-İlyas, whose cult was extremely popular in Anatolia.<sup>176</sup> Finally, sharing the same name in common, Baba İlyas, the grandfather of Elvan Çelebi and the co-perpetrator of the famous Baba'î revolt against the Seljukid government in 1239, also became associated with the dragon-slaying legend, as a result of this meandering local transference.<sup>177</sup>

While “Chederle”, by virtue of his transcending nature, functions as a focal point of connection that has been syncretized with all these figures over time, the dragon-slaying legend provides the narrative link. In her study of visual and textual representations of the dragon slayer, Oya Pancaroğlu shows how this figure plays a special role in forging associations between traditions against the background of complex cultural occurrences in medieval Anatolia. According to Pancaroğlu, “the miracle of dragon slaying became an accessory to the narrative intersection of otherwise unconnected heroic and holy figures.”<sup>178</sup> In this regard, the identification of the Muslim holy men with local legends and Christian saints can be seen as a deliberate effort not

174 [Ogier Ghiselin de] Busbecq, *Türk Mektupları*, trans. Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1939), pp. 76–78.

175 Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, vol. I, pp. 328–33. See also Ocak, “XIII.–XV. Yüzyıllarda Anadolu’da Türk-Hıristiyan Dini Etkileşimler”, pp. 669–70. For a version of this story in the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi, see Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, trans. by Dick Davis (Penguin Books, 2006), pp. 511–13.

176 See footnote 55 above. Kocaer, *The Journey of an Ottoman*, pp. 100–04. For more detailed information, see, Ocak, *İslam-Türk İnançlarında Hızır*.

177 Eyice, “Çorum’un Mecidözü’nde”, pp. 226–28.

178 Oya Pancaroğlu, “The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia.” *Gesta* 43/2 (2004): 157.

only to facilitate the transition to Islam (or so it was hoped), but also to help new settlers adapt to the lands they had recently come to inhabit, or in Krstić's words, to "Islamize the space". Such efforts were also supported by the transference of certain motifs and figures in various examples of Turkish heroic-religious literature, which created a sense of historical continuity and thereby legitimized the saintly status of Muslim holy men. Before proceeding with an analysis of the dragon-slaying motif in Turkish hagiographical literature, it is worthwhile to draw some connections between the warrior epics that share this motif, as they may represent an earlier layer from which similar oral material may have begun to circulate.

### *Dragon-slaying in Turkish Warrior Epics*

Research has demonstrated that the Byzantine epic *Digenis Akritis* and the Turkish warrior epics, notably the *Battālnāme* and the *Dānişmendnāme*, draw heavily from frontier experiences of the Malatya region. A common thread among these works is the recurring motif of dragon slaying.<sup>179</sup> Both Henri Grégoire and Marius Canard published a series of articles examining a number of key historical elements embedded in the Arabic, Byzantine and Turkish epic traditions. Marius Canard argues for the existence of a local legend rooted in Malatya, a certain "geste méliténienne". According to Canard, this epic formed the basis of both the second part of the Arabic epic *Dhāt al-Himma* and the *Battālnāme* into which the eighth-century Arab warrior Abū Muḥammad al-Baṭṭāl is transported in addition to another Umayyad figure 'Abd al-Wahhāb ('Abd'ül-Vehhāb in the *Battālnāme*).<sup>180</sup> According

<sup>179</sup> In the *Digenis Akritis*, Digenis defeats a three-headed dragon who attacks the Girl that he had raped in the previous section. Elizabeth Jeffreys (ed.), *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), GF, Book VI: 1–93. Christopher Livanos offers an analysis of this episode in terms of the sexual symbolism it contains. He discusses whether the beheading of the dragon can be seen as a symbolic gesture representing genital mutilation performed out of guilt because of the rape Digenis had committed in the previous episode. Through a psychoanalytic reading Livanos argues that Digenis' slaying of the dragon (or id) "is symbolic of the hero's self-destructive tendencies." Christopher Livanos, "A Case Study in Byzantine Dragon-Slaying: Digenes and the Serpent", *Oral Tradition* 26/1 (2011): 131.

<sup>180</sup> The full title of the work in its Cairo edition of 1909 that is quoted by Marius Canard is *Sīrat al-amīra Dhāt al-Himma wa-waladibā 'Abd al-Wahhāb wa'l-amīr Abū Muḥammad*

to Henri Grégoire, the local legends circulating around Malatya also gave rise to the Byzantine epic *Digenis Akritis*. The first part of the *Digenis Akritis* relating the story of the hero's father is based on this Arabic original, which Grégoire calls “la geste de l'émir”, which is adapted from the story of 'Umar al-Nu'mān of Edesse—the Emīr of Malatya in the *Battālnāme*— in order to tell the story of 'Umar's son Digenis Akritis<sup>181</sup>, the legendary frontier warrior from the area around the Euphrates.<sup>182</sup>

While it is impossible to retrace the ways in which some stories of the *Sirat Dhāt al-Himma* were transferred into the oral traditions of Malatya, from where the stories of Seyyid Battal started to circulate, one can safely assume that Battal had already become a local hero in the region of Malatya before the arrival of the Danişmendid Turks.<sup>183</sup> The Danişmendids eliminated the tribal elements of the *Dhāt al-Himma* and appropriated the heroic

---

*al-Battāl wa-'Ukba shaykh al-ḍalāl wa-Shūmadris al-muḥtāl*. Marius Canard, “Les principaux personnages du roman de chevalerie arabe Dāt al-Himma wa'l-Battāl.” *Arabica* 8 (Leiden: 1961), p. 158; Canard, “Delhemma: Sayyid Battāl et 'Omar al-No'mān”, *Byzantion* (1937): 186–87; see also Canard, “Un personnage de roman arabo-byzantin”, *Révue Africaine* 73 (1932): 1–14.

**181** While Digenis signifies ‘two-blood’ Akritis means ‘frontiersman’. The remnants of this folk hero make an appearance in the *Battālnāme* as two different characters; Akritis, a Byzantine commander, and its derivative Akratīs, a vizier of the Byzantine emperor, and also in the *Dānişmendnāme* as Aklītīs, the beg of Kurād (?) identified with a village in the region of Artvin by Necati Demir. *Battālnāme*, A176–185; A89, A172; *Dānişmendnāme* (ed. Demir), 200a, passim.

**182** Henri Grégoire, “L'épopée byzantine et ses rapports avec l'épopée turque et l'épopée romane”, in *Autour de l'épopée byzantine* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1975), p. 473. Vassilios Christides, on the other hand, traced the first casting of the tale of 'Umar b. al-Nu'mān into narrative between the seventh and eighth centuries and its adaptation into Greek, *Digenis Akritis*, to the tenth century. Vassilios Christides, “An Arabo-Byzantine Novel: 'Umar b. al-Nu'mān Compared with Digenes Akritis”, *Byzantion* 32 (1962): 549. For a more recent overview of the historical references in the *Digenis Akritis* and literary influences, see Elizabeth Jeffreys' Introduction to *Digenis Akritis*, especially pp. xxx–xli. Jeffreys concludes that both versions (of the *Digenis Akritis*) “reflect a text whose background is predominantly that of the Euphrates valley in the ninth and tenth centuries.”

**183** For more see Dedes' discussion on “Battal as the Local Hero of Malatya and the Danishmendid Turks” in the introduction to *Battālnāme*, vol. I, pp. 9–14. According to Marius Canard, the prototype of the novel would not have come into being before the arrival of the Danişmendids in Malatya early in the twelfth century. Canard, “Delhemma: Sayyid Battāl et 'Omar al-No'mān”: 186.

figures of Malatya into the *Battālnāme* and in doing so associated themselves with the most prominent *gazis* of the past.<sup>184</sup> The Danişmendid efforts to affiliate themselves to a prestigious past is articulated even more directly in the epic devoted to their founder, the *Dānişmendnāme*, where the Danişmendids would also claim lineage to Battal through Battal’s sister as mentioned earlier.<sup>185</sup>

In the *Battālnāme*, during his encounter with the powerful *cādū* (witch-like creature) adversary, Güzendü Cādū, who shoots Battal with a charmed stone in the chest, flames cover Battal and dragons appear from among the flames. When Battal recites the prayer that Khidr had previously taught him, the witchcraft cancels out and dragons disappear.<sup>186</sup>

The only episode of somewhat “supernatural” nature in the *Dānişmendnāme* is the account of Melik Danişmend’s subduing a dragon during the conquest of the monastery of Deryānos (Saint John) inhabited by *sābir* ‘sorcerers’ monks.<sup>187</sup> Melik Danişmend’s encounter with the dragon serves as a pivotal trial, occurring shortly after his political bid (*burūc*). This formidable challenge marks one of his initial ordeals, testing his leadership, courage, and destiny. It is important to note that the term is used with reference to Seyyid Battal: “...Melik Dānişmend – may peace be upon him – made *burūc* like Seyyid Battāl.”<sup>188</sup> The episode features once again Khidr and another figure from the *Battālnāme*, ‘Abd’ül-Vehhāb, who appears in Melik Danişmend’s dream and instructs him to recite the prayer of Khidr—even to have it inscribed [on a magical shirt?]—in order to undo the magic of the monks and overcome the dragon.<sup>189</sup>

<sup>184</sup> Canard, “Delhemma”, p. 187.

<sup>185</sup> Dedes, Introduction to *Battālnāme*, p. 12; cf. *Dānişmendnāme* (ed. Demir), 2b.

<sup>186</sup> *Battālnāme*, A328–29. For more on this example, see Aydoğān, “Gāzīs and Cādūs at the Margins”, p. 29.

<sup>187</sup> It is worthwhile to note that the monastery of Deryānos (Saint John) together with another one that is conquered by Melik Dānişmend in this episode, the monastery of Hāç (*Haç’itun* in Armenian, meaning ‘Home of the Holy Cross’), are identified with two great symbols of the Armenian Church, the Church of Saint John the Baptist and the Church of the Holy Cross, both situated in the region of Sivas. Mélikoff, *La geste*, vol. I, pp. 114–116.

<sup>188</sup> *Dānişmendnāme*, (ed. Demir), 56a.

<sup>189</sup> While a direct reference to a talismanic shirt exists in the verse sections of both Paris

The *Saltuknâme* constitutes the third cycle of the Turkish warrior epics and follows the *Battālnâme* and the *Dānişmendnâme* chronologically, thematically and geographically. As mentioned earlier, the genealogy of Sarı Saltuk, like Danişmend Gazi's, is traced back to Seyyid Battal who appears in Sarı Saltuk's dream and tells him to make *hurûc* after finding his sword and his horse hidden in a cave.<sup>190</sup> Hızır, a revered figure in Islamic mythology, plays a pivotal role in the narrative as the divine intermediary who empowers Sarı Saltuk to perform miracles. These miraculous interventions frequently facilitate the conversion of Christians to Islam, underscoring Hızır's agency in bridging spiritual divides.

The *Saltuknâme* differs most sharply from the other two epics in that Sarı Saltuk is not only portrayed as a zealous warrior for the faith, but also as a Sufi in close relationship with other prominent religious figures of the time, such as Hacı Bektaş, Taptuk Emre (Taptuh or Taptıh Sultan), Karaca Ahmed, Fakih Ahmed, Seyyid Mahmud Hayran and Mevlana Celaleddin. The religiosity of his character comes to light, especially in the account of his *gazas* around the Crimea towards the end of the first volume, but it is only after the account in which he subdues a dragon that Sarı Saltuk acquires a saintly character and begins to perform miracles. The encounter takes place in Dobrudja:

They arrived at a place called Dobrudja. Its ruler named Minās, came forward to greet Şerif [Sarı Saltuk], bringing food and provisions. He said, “Master [Serv-

---

and Leningrad manuscripts, the Muallim Cevdet manuscript used in Demir's edition omits the verse section in question altogether. The verse sections are often attributed to the second compiler-scribe of the *Dānişmendnâme*, 'Ārif 'Alī who discovered the text in 1360–61. According to his own account, 'Ārif 'Alī copied the text from another earlier version (now lost) authored by Mevlānā ibn 'Alā (c. 1244–45) and added the verse sections. According to Helga Anetshofer who has studied these sections, the talismanic shirt reference may reflect pre-Ottoman occult knowledge. The fact that the Muallim Cevdet manuscript which omits the verse sections still hints at the existence of a magical shirt without calling it so supports Anetshofer's thesis. *Dānişmendnâme*, (ed. Demir), 56b: “...Hızır peygamber du'âsın diyre karşı okıyup üfüresin tâ kim ol sihr bâtil ola ve du'âyı üstünüzde bile götürün tâ kim câzûlık size kâr itmeye.”; cf. *Dānişmendnâme*, (ed. Mélikoff), vol. II, p. 76: “...pes evvel bir gömlek yazılmış/yazılınca nice altun ezilmiş...” See also, Helga Anetshofer, “The Hero Dons a Talismanic Shirt for Battle: Magical Objects Aiding the Warrior in a Turkish Epic Romance”, *JNES* 77/2: 175–93.

<sup>190</sup> *Saltuknâme* (ed. İz) T4b; (ed. Akalın) vol. I, p. 5.

er)! Welcome, we also want to join your faith if you can remove the misfortune from us.” Then they arrived at the appointed place and saw a great dragon (*bir ulu ejderhā*). Şerif said, “This requires skill (*buña san’at gerekdür*).”

Sarı Saltuk puts on a display of his “skills”, by killing the dragon with brute force alone (three arrows and a simple sword), without resorting to any divine assistance. Upon witnessing this (non)miracle, the entire population of the place converts to Islam. The transformation does not stop there; the church where the dragon was slain is converted into a *zāviye* (Sufi lodge), which they call “Yılan Tekkesi” (The Snake Lodge). This place is identified with the convent of Sarı Saltuk (Tekye-i Keligra Sultan) located in present-day Kaliakra near Varna (Bulgaria), then the capital of Dobrudja located on a cape extending into the Black Sea.<sup>191</sup>

Then Server [Sarı Saltuk] ordered that the skin of the beast be flayed and stuffed. There was a church there, and they turned it into a *zāviye*. It still stands today. Then Şerif threw his staff and drove it into a stone, where it became stuck, and a stream of water began to flow from the base of the stone... They left the snake there for the sake of name and reputation.<sup>192</sup>

The description of this site as a former Christian sanctuary is not arbitrary and can be better understood in its historical context. Several other shrines dedicated to Sarı Saltuk are sites of mixed worship, also frequented by Christians.<sup>193</sup> The Cape of Keligra, also known as the Cape of Saint Nicholas,

<sup>191</sup> The lodge no longer exists today. The acquisitions and the names of the dervishes are mentioned in sources dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries. The sources indicate that the memory of Sarı Saltuk was alive during that period, as also evidenced by Evliya’s account, who visited the place. This will be discussed further below. Machiel Kiel, “Sarı Saltuk”, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 36, pp. 147–50.

<sup>192</sup> “Pes Server buyurdı, ol canavaruñ derisin soydılar için toldurdılar. Anda bir kilise vardı, anı zāviye ittiler. Şimdi dahı turur ve hem Şerif’asasın attı bir taş a mihlayup battı dibinden bir su çıkup revān oldu...Yılanı anda kodılar ad san için.” Elsewhere in the text: “Dobruc’da Yılan Tekyesi kim Seyid’uñ ejderhā öldürdüğü yirdür (Snake Lodge in Dobrudja is the place where Seyyid killed the dragon)”. *Saltuknâme* (ed. İz) T243b; T278b (ed. Akalın) vol. II, pp. 21–22; p. 68.

<sup>193</sup> In Kaligra and Eski Baba there were probably old churches of Saint Nicolas. For the identification of Sarı Saltuk with the Christian Saint Nicolas, see Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, vol. II, p. 429–434; J. Deny, “Sarı Saltuk et le nom de la ville de Babadaghi,” *Mélanges offerts à M. Émile Picot* (Paris: 1913), vol. II, p. 12; Sara Kuehn, “Mixed Worship: The

holds special significance due to its strong association with Saint Nicholas, the revered patron saint of several Orthodox church-monasteries in the surrounding area.<sup>194</sup>

Frederick W. Hasluck provides some explanation of how these shared sanctuaries function for both Bektashis and Christians. Educated Bektashis, familiar with ideas of pantheism and metempsychosis, easily identify Christian saints with their own, while simple believers rely on stories, such as Sarı Saltık disguising himself as Saint Nicholas, to reconcile the differences.<sup>195</sup> On the other hand, Christians often view Bektashi shrines as occupying sites previously consecrated by Christian tradition, sometimes believing that the buried saint was originally Christian. Political changes may even lead to the official transfer of these shrines to Christianity. Material interests significantly influence these identifications, as both Christian and Bektashi sanctuaries capitalize on the influx of pilgrims, generating substantial revenue. Conversely, devotees seek miraculous healing, spiritual intercession, and divine favor, fostering a mutually beneficial dynamic. The relationship between Bektashism and Christianity in these shared spaces is portrayed as a balance of concessions, with both sides adopting each other's traditions and attracting pilgrims from the opposite faith.<sup>196</sup>

The hanging of the flayed and stuffed dragon at the site might reflect a reality that the narrators/authors of the text may have observed there or elsewhere, where dragon iconography was used for its talismanic power, commonly displayed at buildings, portals of mosques, madrasas and shrines, city gates, and fortresses.<sup>197</sup> Frederick W. Hasluck suggests that the custom

---

Double Cult of Sarı Saltuk and St. Nicholas in the Balkans,” *Religiographies* 1/1 (2022): 63–81.

<sup>194</sup> Kuehn, “Mixed Worship”, p. 71.

<sup>195</sup> Disguise is a common motif in Turkish warrior epic literature, with numerous instances of the Muslim hero in the guise of a monk or priest. These scenes are often accompanied by episodes in which the hero reads passages from the Gospels, causing the “infidels” to become so overwhelmed with emotion that they burst into tears and lose their senses. For examples, see *Battālnāme*, A64, A66–70, A72, A281–282; *Dānişmendnāme* (ed. Demir), 40a, 52b; *Saltuknāme* (ed. İz), T21b–24b; T43b–45b; (ed. Akalın), vol. I, pp. 34–39; 70–72.

<sup>196</sup> Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, vol. II, p. 585.

<sup>197</sup> Daneshvari, “The Iconography of the Dragon”, p. 15.

of hanging arms as protective objects at the gates of cities and fortresses likely contributed to the creation of legends, especially those of warrior saints commemorated with cenotaphs in such locations. The display of items like “giants” (i.e., crocodiles) and “dragons” (crocodiles and whales) heads—used as protective symbols—likely played a role in the formation of dragon-slayer and giant-slayer legends in various places.<sup>198</sup>

The dragon, emerges as a dynamic force in everyday life, possessing the power to transform both spaces and people. Notably, this transformation is a dual process. Sarı Saltuk’s mastery over nature is sealed by the act of creating a spring of water at the place where he killed the dragon. From this point on, Sarı Saltuk performs a parade of miracles: he turns enemies into stone, walks on the water like Jesus, and survives a boiling cauldron unscathed. As a result of these feats, Hızır gives him the wooden sword, the symbol of sainthood.<sup>199</sup>

### *Bektashization of the Dragon-slaying Legend*

Replicating miracles attributed to a saint fosters continuity. The association of the dragon-slaying legend with Sarı Saltuk exemplifies how connections were forged in multiple directions, bridging Islamic and Christian traditions. Through this association, Sarı Saltuk, like Seyyid Battal, became woven into the Bektashi traditions and was mentioned as a reference in several hagiographies.

This study, along with previous research, has highlighted connections between Hacı Bektaş and Seyyid Battal. In the *Vilāyetnāme*, after Hacı Bektaş visits the shrine of Seyyid Battal, he meets Sarı Saltuk who is depicted as a shepherd tending sheep, in contrast to his portrayal as having noble lineage from Muhammad in the *Saltuknāme*.<sup>200</sup> Hacı Bektaş sends Sarı Saltuk

<sup>198</sup> Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, vol. I, p. 231; for the “dragon”’s head in Rhodes, vol. II, pp. 654–55. Another example is the imagery of confronting dragons, as seen at the Talisman Gate of Baghdad—where two dragons are entwined and meet at the top of the composition. Daphne Lange Rosenzweig, “Stalking the Persian Dragon: Chinese Prototypes for the Miniature Representations”, *Kunst des Orients* 12/1–2 (1978–79): 152–53.

<sup>199</sup> *Saltuknāme* (ed. İz), T243b–T249a; (ed. Akalın), vol. II, pp. 21–29.

<sup>200</sup> *Velāyetnāme*, ed. Duran, 130b–135b.

to Kaligra where he is destined to face a dragon. Before his departure, Hacı Bektaş equips him with a wooden sword, seven arrows (one for each head of the seven-headed dragon) a prayer rug that can cross seas. Two dervishes, Ulu Abdal and Kiçi Abdal, also accompany him.

Arriving at the infidel fortress of Kaligra, Sarı Saltuk and his companions, borne across the sea on their prayer rug, find the infidel castle deserted, its inhabitants having fled in terror of the fearsome dragon that lurks within. Sarı Saltuk shoots each of the dragon's seven heads with his arrows, but the creature does not die. Instead, the dragon wraps its tail around Sarı Saltuk and traps him. Desperate, Sarı Saltuk calls out to Hızır for help. At that very moment, Hızır happens to be visiting Hacı Bektaş. When he hears Sarı Saltuk's plea, he immediately comes to his aid. Hızır asks why he did not use the wooden sword. Sarı Saltuk, still a newly anointed saint, admits that he had forgotten about the sword. Then he quickly pulls out the wooden sword and cuts off the seven heads of the dragon, causing so much blood to flow that it forms seven rivers.<sup>201</sup>

The story of Sarı Saltuk's dragon slaying is also mentioned in the *Velāyet-nāme of Otman Baba*, albeit with some alterations. In this version, Hacı Bektaş's intervention revolves around Sarı Saltuk's ordeal in the boiling cauldron, rather than the dragon-slaying episode. During Otman Baba's retreat in the Balkan mountain, a remarkable tale enters his mind: "There is a city called Kiligra on the shore of the Black Sea. Sarı Saltuk, along with Ulu Abdal and Kiçi Abdal, had crossed the sea without a vessel and killed a dragon there using a wooden sword and the power of sainthood." However, there is a fourth story, in which after killing the dragon, Sarı Saltuk's saintly skills are tested in a contest with a monk involving entering a boiling cauldron. The story also appears in the *Saltuknāme*, although in a less detailed and

<sup>201</sup> *Velāyetnāme*, ed. Duran, 75a–78a. A similar anecdote highlights the transformative impact of dragon-slaying legends on local topography, as seen in the story of Koyun Baba. With a strike of his staff, Koyun Baba turns the dragon into stone, and "even today" blood and pus are said to flow from it. *Koyun Baba ve Menākıbı*, ed. Taşğın, [162b]. According to Evliya Çelebi, Koyun Baba's tekke is located on Yılандаğı ("Snake Mountain") near Kayseriyye, again referencing the dragon. *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. III, edited by Zekeriya Kurşun Seyit Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1998), [66b].

shorter version. I will quote the version from the *Velāyetnâme of Otman Baba* for the graphic details it contains:

In the fourth one,<sup>202</sup> Sarı Saltuk asked the ruler whose advice he had been following. Upon hearing that the ruler [Dobra Han] was acting on the instructions of a holy man (*evliyā*) in his court, he requested that the ruler summon him. He then proposed that they both be placed in a boiling cauldron over a fire. Dobra Han liked the idea, so they brought a cauldron, filled it with water and set it over the fire. When the water began to boil, Sarı Saltuk grabbed the monk by his wrists and plunged into the boiling water like he was diving into the sea. When the ruler and all the people present saw this sign (*‘alāmet*) [of miraculous power] they were struck by oddity and bewilderment and all became dizzy and wonder-struck (*‘ibrete ve hayrete varub ser-mest ü hayrān*). The storyteller related the following. At that moment Hünkār Hācı [C80a] Bektaş Velī (God bless his exalted soul<sup>203</sup>) was sitting by the side of a spring. As he was sprinkling water on a piece of marble the holy men asked him why he was doing so. The pole of the poles (*kutb’ul-aktāb*) told them about Sarı Saltuk and his having been put in a boiling cauldron by the infidels. Thus [AG47b] he was sprinkling water to prevent Sarı Saltuk from passing out. Just as the infidel ruler was waiting in wonder, Sarı Saltuk came out from the cauldron in one stroke. Sound and alive, he looked like the wall of Alexander. When those infidels witnessed this sign of sainthood (*velāyet*) they fell at the feet of the mine of sainthood. Seeing that nothing remained of their monk’s body except his boiling bones, they all immediately submitted to the chief of *velāyet* and became his devout servants.<sup>204</sup>

The motif of unscathed emergence from a cauldron is a recurring topos in various *menākıbnāmes*, serving as a trial by fire to authenticate a saint’s divine legitimacy. This miracle often precipitates mass conversions, cementing the

<sup>202</sup> The first three stories are not really told, but only mentioned: 1) Sarı Saltuk’s arrival in Kiligra together with Ulu Abdāl and Kiçi Abdāl after crossing the sea without a ship, 2) His slaying of a dragon (*ejderhā*) there, and 3) His appearance at the shore after being tied to a millstone and thrown into the sea. Küçük Abdal, *Otman Baba Velāyetnāmesi*, [C78b-79a]. The critical edition is based on the manuscripts preserved in the Ankara Cebeci Public Library, MS. 495 (C) and Ankara General Library, MS. 643 (AG).

<sup>203</sup> “*kaddesallāhu sırre’l-a’lā*” is a prayer phrase specifically used for saintly figures after their passing. Süleyman Uludağ, “Kuddise Sırruh,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, vol. 26, 314 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2002).

<sup>204</sup> Küçük Abdal, *Otman Baba Velāyetnāmesi*, [C79b]; [AG47a].

saint's reputation.<sup>205</sup> The origin of this motif has been identified by Devin DeWeese as Central Asian with the oven-pit having various associations, including fire, sacrifice, and the tomb. In his task of converting Uzbek Khan, Baba Tükles follows a “shamanic” approach and enters the fire to be consumed, reflecting a parallel to the symbolic dismemberment of the shaman, which often involves fire and the “cooking” of the shaman in a cauldron, which is a universal feature in narratives recounting shamanic initiation.<sup>206</sup>

Devin DeWeese compares the legends of Sarı Saltuk and Baba Tükles, noting striking similarities between their respective ordeals in fiery cauldrons. He emphasizes that both legends feature a test by fire as part of a conversion narrative. The parallels in the circumstances and details of their ordeals suggest the possibility of direct “influence”, where a narrative developed around one figure might have been borrowed and attached to another. This idea is further supported by Sarı Saltuk's association with the Crimea and the Golden Horde, which overlaps with Baba Tükles' historical context. According to DeWeese, “the links between the Sarı Saltıq tradition and the lands of the Golden Horde suggest the currency of legends recounting religious confrontation and conversion in precisely the region that produced our narrative of Baba Tükles”.<sup>207</sup>

The strong connection between the legend and Sarı Saltuk in this particular region is further substantiated by its inclusion in Evliya Çelebi's renowned travelogue, *Seyahatnâme*, underscoring the narrative's significance and geographic specificity. According to his own account, Evliya spent eight months in Kaliakra in 1641–42 after being shipwrecked on the Black Sea. He and his four slaves were washed ashore near the rocks where the Sarı Saltuk Lodge (Tekye-i Keligra Sultân) was located. The Bektashi dervishes who lived there took care of them. It is therefore very likely that Evliya recorded

---

<sup>205</sup> Elvan Çelebi, *Menâkıbu'l-Kudsıyye fî Menâsibi'l-Ünsıyye*, edited by İsmail E. Erünsal and A. Yaşar Ocağ (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1984), 23b–24b; *Abdal Mūsâ Velâyetnâmesi*, 6a–b, Hacım Sultan, ed. Gündüz, f. 49, p. 92.

<sup>206</sup> Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 232.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

these stories as he heard them from the dervishes.<sup>208</sup> Evliya’s version shares some similar details with those in the *Velāyetnâme of Otman Baba*, particularly in its emphasis placed on Hacı Bektaş’s mediation in helping Sarı Saltuk survive the cauldron test:

On the Anatolian side, in Kırşehir, Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli wiped a rock with his cloth and said, “My Saltık Muhammed<sup>209</sup> is in distress and sweating. May God be his supporter, helper, and protector.” When he did this, salty water flowed from the rock. Even today, the salt of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli originates from that event. Later, they opened the mouth of the cauldron and saw that Saltık Bâý Sultân was soaked in sweat, invoking the name “Ya Hayy<sup>210</sup>”. The accursed monk had turned to ashes, with only his bones and black robe remaining. Upon seeing this, the King of Dobrudja fell at the feet of the sheikh, raised his *şebâdet* finger, and became a devout servant of the Exalted (God) from the depths of his heart. Along with seven thousand of his subjects, he embraced Islam at that moment. They waged wars (*gazās*) and made conquests against those who did not accept Islam.<sup>211</sup>

<sup>208</sup> Helga Anetshofer has previously analyzed this and other stories about Sarı Saltuk in the *Seyahatnâme*, comparing them with the *Saltuknâme* and the *Vilāyetname*. Helga Anetshofer, “Legends of Sarı Saltık in the Seyahatnâme and the Bektashi Oral Tradition”, *Evliyâ Çelebi: Studies and Essays Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of his Birth*, edited by Nuran Tezcan, Semih Tezcan, and Robert Dankoff (Ankara: Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism Publications, 2012), p. 296; cf. *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. III, [266a].

<sup>209</sup> The fact that Evliya introduces Sarı Saltık as “Saltık-bay Muhammed Buhârî” is explained by Anetshofer as an attempt to counter claims that Sarı Saltık was not a true Turk or a saint. According to Anetshofer, Evliya is well aware that Sarı Saltık is revered by Greek and Slavic Christians in the Balkans as a Christian saint referred to as “İsveti Nikola” or “Aya İsveti Nikola” equivalent to Saint Nicholas. In his Greek glossary, Evliya equates İsveti Nikola with the Turkish Sarı Saltık and often mentions them together when discussing Christian holidays or venerated saints. This new identity that Evliya assigns to Sarı Saltık, however, does not appear in the *Saltuknâme*. Anetshofer, “Legends of Sarı Saltık”, pp. 293–94.

<sup>210</sup> “Ya Hayy”, which translates as ‘O Ever-Living One’, is one of the 99 names of Allah. Invoking “Ya Hayy” is a way of calling upon God’s life-giving and sustaining power, protection, and spiritual strength.

<sup>211</sup> *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. III, [266b].

One possible explanation for the emphasis put on Hacı Bektaş' mediation in the story is the existence of a common oral source, probably from the Bektashi dervishes at the convent of Sarı Saltuk in Kaligra. However, given that Otman Baba's hagiography was composed in 1483, around the same time as the *Saltuknâme* (circa 1480), the omission of Hacı Bektaş from the *Saltuknâme's* version raises questions. It is possible that Ebū'l-Hayr-i Rūmī, the author of the *Saltuknâme*, may have intentionally omitted Hacı Bektaş to elevate Sarı Saltuk's stature within the hierarchy of saints. This suggestion is supported by the fact that Ebū'l-Hayr traveled extensively in the region and collected stories from oral sources, which makes it very unlikely that he did not know this version.

Another explanation is offered by Ayfer Karakaya-Stump. She notes that while Vahidi's description of the Abdals omits Hacı Bektaş, Otman Baba's hagiography, written about half a century earlier, confirms the Abdals' veneration of Hacı Bektaş as a true saint (*sāhib-i velāyet*) and as the *kutb* ('pole', chief saint of the age). While the *Velāyetnâme*, the primary repository of the Bektashi tradition, elevates Hacı Bektaş to the unprecedented status of *serçeşme* (the fountainhead) of Ali's esoteric teachings, there is no indication that Hacı Bektaş held an equally exalted position within the Abdal hierarchy.<sup>212</sup> Interestingly, Otman Baba is portrayed in his own hagiography in the same exalted terms as Hacı Bektaş. He is described as the *kutb* (pole) of his time, the embodiment of Divine Truth (*Hakk*), the keeper of the secret mystery (*sırr*) of the four major Prophets—Adam, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad—and as the reincarnation of earlier saints, including Sarı Saltuk and Hacı Bektaş.<sup>213</sup> In a direct reference to metempsychosis, he proclaims that he was the one who killed the dragon as "Sarı Saltuk" and that he has been reborn as Hüsam Şah, his original name.<sup>214</sup>

There is a cauldron story in the *Vilāyetnâme of Hacı Bektaş*; however, it is not associated with Sarı Saltuk but with a certain Can Baba. Interesting

<sup>212</sup> Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbaş/Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia*, p. 164.

<sup>213</sup> Küçük Abdal, *Otman Baba Velāyetnâmesi*, [C21a; C100b; C120b; C124a; C131b; C138b].

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., [C88a–b]: "Bu ejderhâyı... Sarı Saltuk olup ben öldürdüm didi...Uş Sarı Saltuk didükleri benim. Ve bu yatan ziyâret benim ziyâretümdür ki şimdi Hüsam Şâh olup geldüm didi. (This dragon, it was I, Sarı Saltuk, who killed it... I am the one they call Sarı Saltuk. And this shrine belongs to me, as I have now returned in the form of Hüsam Şâh.)"

parallels emerge when we compare this version with those included in Evliya's account, the *Velāyetnāme of Otman Baba*, and the *Saltuknāme*. One of Can Baba's most distinguishing characteristics, much like that of any Orthodox Christian monk depicted in these texts, is his black robe, which earns him the constant reference as "Kara Tonlu Can Baba (Black-robed Can Baba)".<sup>215</sup>

Hacı Bektaş sends Can Baba on a mission to convert the Tatars. However, the story is not set among the Tatars of the Golden Horde in Crimea or Dobrudja, but rather in a completely Anatolian context, specifically in Erzincan, which is described along the frontier with Rūm. Hacı Bektaş's instruction to Can Baba is clear: not to allow their entry into the Land of Rūm unless they convert to Islam.

Can Baba demonstrates his saintly credentials to the Tatars by courageously entering the boiling cauldron alone, deviating from the typical context of this miracle as a contest between two adversaries. Meanwhile, in Sulucakarahöyük, Hacı Bektaş performs a separate miracle, using his blessed hand to unearth a spring from the ground where he sits. As he sprinkles this water on nearby rocks, the water evaporates and "rises like steam or smoke", lending divine support to Can Baba's ordeal. On the fourth day, they open the cauldron and find Can Baba, drenched in sweat, unharmed (*burçak burçak derlemiş oturur*).<sup>216</sup> However, this feat fails to convince Güülü Han, the Khan of the Tatars, who then demands that Can Baba enter the fire directly alongside their most revered monk, to determine which of them is the true saint. When the fourth day arrives, they discover that Can Baba has survived, while nothing remains of the monk except his fingers in Can Baba's palm.

This detail is similarly recounted in the *Saltuknāme* with strikingly similar wording: While Sarı Saltuk emerged soaked in sweat (*burçak burçak derlemişti*), the priest had turned into "pork stew (*toñuz yahnisine dönmiş*)" after boiling in the cauldron. Sarı Saltuk returns to his followers with a small keepsake of the monk, his little finger.<sup>217</sup> This may symbolize the symbolic dismemberment of the shaman, as suggested by Devin DeWeese.

<sup>215</sup> *Velāyetnāme Hacı Bektāş-ı Veli*, ed. Duran, 109a–114a.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 111b.

<sup>217</sup> *Saltuknāme* (ed. İz), T251b; (ed. Akalın), vol. II, p.33.

Another connection the *Vilāyetnâme* adds to the legend of Sarı Saltuk in the account of his fight with the dragon, is his ability to create water, much like Hacı Bektaş, where the recurring themes of fire, sweat and thirst are central. In the *Vilāyetnâme*, after killing the dragon, Sarı Saltuk becomes extremely thirsty (*‘atşān*, derived from *‘ateş*, fire) even though the dragon is not described as breathing fire—perhaps subtly evoking the cauldron’s fire. Sarı Saltuk asks his Abdals to find water to quench his thirst, but to no avail. He then digs “with his blessed hand” where he is resting, and sweet water springs forth, from which he drinks and finds relief.<sup>218</sup>

As mentioned above, this detail is also found in the *Saltuknâme*. At the spot where he slays the dragon, Sarı Saltuk creates a water source, asserting his sanctity and claiming the site by altering its topography. Similarly, after surviving the boiling cauldron, he uses his saliva to make bitter water “sweet as sugar”, thereby sanctifying the site. “Today, the place is known as ‘Baba Pınarı’”. Sarı Saltuk also plants a poplar tree there, “so large that it takes more than ten people to encircle it”. “Known as ‘Baba Kavağı’, the tree still exists and is famous to all visitors and travelers”, the *Saltuknâme* explains.<sup>219</sup> These acts not only symbolize Sarı Saltuk’s mastery over nature (and Christianity) but also claim the territory and mark it as sacred. Through his blessed saliva, Sarı Saltuk imprints his presence on the landscape, both physically and spiritually, transforming “the space into place” and making it a home for Muslims—their *yurt*. The poplar tree and the sweet waters of Baba Pınarı endure as timeless testaments.

<sup>218</sup> *Velāyetnâme Hacı Bektāş-ı Veli*, ed. Duran, 77b. A similar story is related in the account of Hacı Sultan in the *Vilāyetnâme*, where Hacı Sultan, after killing the dragon, digs into the ground with his hand and a spring miraculously emerges, which is then named after the saint: “Hacı Sultan Bunarı” (The Spring of Hacı Sultan). *Velāyetnâme Hacı Bektāş-ı Veli*, ed. Duran, 136a–b.

<sup>219</sup> *Saltuknâme* (ed. İz), T252a; (ed. Akalın), vol. II, pp. 33–34.

## Conclusion

In medieval Anatolia, the emergence of novel group identities frequently occurred around charismatic figures, such as *gazi*-warriors or miracle-working saints, whose cults were fostered through narratives that wove together their extraordinary exploits. This phenomenon resonates with Bruce Lincoln's instrumental perspective on myth as a constitutive force in society.<sup>220</sup> One of Lincoln's central arguments is that society is constructed through sentiments, both of affinity and estrangement, borne from recollections of specific moments of the past that individuals hold dear. Moments of intense conflict can reshape these sentiments and, by extension, the society itself. Certain forms of discourse, such as myth and ritual, are effective tools for evoking and manipulating these sentiments. In the case of *menākīb-nāmes*, beliefs in the *kerāmets* attributed to a saint generate collective sentiments that are pivotal in forging social cohesion within a group.

Tijana Krstić emphasizes the pivotal role of Sufi holy men and Islamic mystical imagery in fostering communities united by common moral, political, and religious values, effectively bridging spiritual and social divides. She describes the emergence of “textual” or interpretive communities, particularly around texts like the *menākīb-nāmes* and guided by preachers and reciters, who acted as cultural mediators in a society that relied heavily on oral transmission of religious knowledge. Their repertoire was deeply influenced by Sufi concepts, language, and figures, whose actions were interpreted according to the socio-religious outlook of specific audiences.<sup>221</sup> The *menākīb-nāmes* offer more than mere collections of motifs; they serve as invaluable historical resources that illuminate how diverse groups interacted with their environments and crafted their collective identities through shared concepts,

---

<sup>220</sup> Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual and Classification* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>221</sup> Tijana Krstić, “The Ambiguous Politics of ‘Ambiguous Sanctuaries’”, p. 255.

beliefs and spiritual aspirations forged through their devotion to a specific saint.<sup>222</sup>

These texts, which emerged in a period of territorial and demographic expansion, contain powerful ideological claims, justifying conquest, colonization and Islamization of space around the vitae of Muslim holy men. Through the transfer of saliva and the formulation of genealogies back to the Prophet of Islam, these texts sought to evoke the legitimacy of worthy ancestors capable of making a political bid. In this context, saliva was a potent carrier of sacred mission of the divinely ordained conquest of Rūm, a mission transmitted through the Prophet Muhammad’s saliva to Battal Gazi, the legendary Arab warrior and prototype of the *gazi*-warrior of the marches and the patron saint of the Abdals of Rūm.

This set the stage for the next chapter: the (re)construction of sacred space, where the saint’s tomb becomes a physical marker of territory, linking the present with the past and providing tangible proof of the occupiers’ presence, reinforcing the narrative that “they had been there before”. The selection of Battal Gazi’s tomb for such a “discovery” is far from coincidental in this context.

Dream visions of the Prophet Muhammad or other revered figures were often invoked to legitimize territorial claims and justify the settlement of new populations, serving as a divine sanction for expansion and establishment of authority. These visions were instrumental in the “discovery” of tombs, especially those attributed to the Prophet’s companions or other significant figures, whose connections to the distant past provided the longevity necessary for “normative” legitimacy—a quality often lacking among Turco-Muslim groups in medieval Anatolia. The narratives around the tombs, supported by hagiographies, played a crucial role in the formation of cultic centers around which new settlements would develop. These centers either supplanted existing sanctuaries or established entirely new ones. As seen in the use of sacred saliva and the veneration of saints’ tombs, the saint’s body becomes a vessel for forging timeless connections between holy figures, spaces, and geographies.

The dragon-slaying legend forged a crucial narrative link, facilitating the synthesis of Islamic and Christian traditions. Islamic mysticism’s rich

---

<sup>222</sup> Küçükhüseyin, “Some Reflections on Hagiology”, p. 243.

allegory of dragon symbolism likely provided fertile ground for Muslims to assimilate local legends of dragon-slayers—figures closely associated with Christian military saints such as Saint George and Saint Theodore—into Turkish hagiographical literature. This narrative convergence not only appealed to new converts, but also allowed Muslims to assert dominance and lay claim to religious sites associated with the dragon-slaying legend: The mystical symbolism of conquering the dragon, which simultaneously represented self-annihilation, emphasized both spiritual transformation and the transformation of the space itself.

Zeynep Yürekli rightly attributes the convergence of the Sufi repertoire with the image of holy warriors to the patronage of Rumeli warlords such as Gazi Mihal and Gazi Evrenos. This fusion can also be understood within the context of the power vacuum in Anatolia, where these holy men were compelled to take on the roles of community leaders and builders. In fulfilling these roles, they assumed both “transcendental” and “immanentist” functions, addressing the spiritual and practical needs of their communities. The narratives created around these figures, which emphasized their partnership with military forces, wielded considerable political influence. These accounts often framed the conquest of Rumeli as the accomplishment of autonomous frontier lords, rather than attributing it to the Ottoman sultan.

While it is evident that the patronizing efforts of the Balkan warlords in Anatolia can indeed be seen as a political statement, as Zeynep Yürekli has previously explored—particularly in relation to the remodeling of the shrines of Seyyid Battal and Hacı Bektaş, connecting the Anatolian gazi tradition with their activities in Rumeli—I believe that Sarı Saltuk played a central role as the link between these regions. The dragon legend, in turn, functions as a narrative conduit, facilitating the assimilation of local traditions and beliefs by Turco-Muslim communities through a complex, multi-layered process of synthesis. At the center of this convergence stands Sarı Saltuk, a pivotal, liminal figure, seamlessly connecting local Christian beliefs, *gazi* legends, and the *velāyetnāme* genre within the cultural landscape of both Anatolia and the Balkans.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### *Primary sources*

- Abdülkerîm bin Şeyh Mûsâ. *Mâkâlât-ı Seyyid Hârûn*. Edited by Cemal Kurnaz. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991.
- Anna Comnena. *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena*, translated from the Greek by E.R.A. Sewter. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969.
- Bakır, Abdullah, ed. *Yazıcızâde Ali'nin Selçuk-nâme İsimli Eserinin Edisyon Kritiği: Giriş-Metin-Dizin*. PhD dissertation, Marmara University, 2008.
- Battâlnâme*. Facsimile edited by Şinasi Tekin and Gönül Alpay Tekin with Introduction, English translation, Turkish transcription and commentary by Yorgos Dedes. 2 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations of Harvard University, 1996.
- Busbecq, [Ogier Ghislain de]. *Türk Mektupları*. Translated by Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1939.
- Dānişmendnâme*. (1) Edited and translated by Irène Mélikoff, in *La geste Melik Dānişmend: Étude critique du Dānişmendnâme*, 2 vols. Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1960. (2) Edited by Necati Demir. 4 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 2002.
- Dede Korkut Kitabı*. (1) Edited by Orhan Şaik Gökyay. İstanbul: Arkadaş Basımevi, 1938. (2) Edited by Muharrem Ergin. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1989. (3) *Dede Korkut Oğuznameleri*. Edited by Semih Tezcan and Hendrik Boeschoten. 2 vols. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001.
- Demirtaş, Ahmet, ed. *Dürr-i Mekkün*. İstanbul: Akademik Kitaplar, 2009.
- Dernschwam, Hans. *Hans Dernschwam's Tagebuch einer Reise nach Konstantinopel und Kleinasien 1553/55*. Edited by F. Babinger. München-Leipzig: 1923.
- Duran, Hamiye, ed. *Velâyetnâme: Hacı Bektaş Veli*. Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2014.
- Ebü'l-Hayr Rümî. *Saltuknâme*. (1) Facsimile edition of Topkapı Palace Library, H. 1612 by Fahir İz. 7 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1986. (2) Edited by Şükrü Halûk Akalın. 3 vols. Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1990. (3) Edited

- by Necati Demir including the facsimile as an appendix. *Saltık-nâme*. Ankara: Destan Yayınları, 2007.
- Elvan Çelebi. *Menâkıbu'l-Kudsiyye Fî Menâsibi'l-Ünsiyye*. Edited by İsmail Erünsal and Ahmet Yaşar Ocak. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995.
- Ethé, Hermann, ed. *Die Fahrten des Saggiid Battthal: Ein alttürkischer Volks- und Sittenroman*. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1871.
- Evlîyâ Çelebi. *Evlîyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*. Edited by Zekerîya Kurşun Seyit Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı. Vol. III. Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1998.
- Ferdowsi, Abolqasem. *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, translated by Dick Davis. Penguin Books, 2006.
- Gölpınarlı, Abdülbaki, ed. *Vilâyet-Nâme: Manâkıb-ı Hünkâr Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli*. Istanbul: İnkılab, 1995; originally published in 1958.
- Gündüz, Tufan, ed. “Hacı Bektaş Veli'nin Yol Arkadaşı Kolu Açık Hacım Sultan ve Velayetnamesi.” *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırmaları Dergisi* 55 (2010): 71–95.
- Güzel, Abdurrahman, ed. *Kaygusuz Abdal (Alâaddin Gaybî) Menâkıbnâmesi*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999.
- Jeffreys, Elizabeth, ed. *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Kaptein, Laban, ed. *Dürr-i meknûn*. Kritische Edition mit Kommentar. Asch: privately published, 2007.
- Karamustafa, Ahmet, ed. *Menakib-i Hoca-i Cihan ve Netice-i Can*. Cambridge, Mass.: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1993.
- Kılıç, Filiz and Tuncay Bülbül, eds. *Demir Baba Velâyetnâmesi*. Ankara: Grafiker Yayınları, 2011.
- Küçük Abdal. *Otman Baba Velâyetnâmesi*. Edited by Filiz Kılıç, Mustafa Arslan and Tuncay Bülbül. Ankara: Grafiker Yayınları, 2007.
- Mélikoff, Irène, ed. *Abû Muslim, le “porte bache” du Khorassan: dans la tradition épique turco-iraniennne*. Paris: Librairie d’Amerique et d’Orient Adrien Maisonneuve, 1962.
- Rumi, Jalal al-Din. *The Mathnawi of Jalalud’Din Rumi: Containing the Commentary of the First to Sixth Books of the Mathnawi with Indices*. Edited by Reynold A. Nicholson. Volumes 3–4. London: The Cambridge University Press, 1925–1940.
- Taşgın, Ahmet, ed. *Koyun Baba ve Menakıbu*. Konya: Çizgi Yayınevi, 2017.
- Yıldırım, Rıza, ed. *Seyyid Ali Sultan (Kızıldeli) ve Velâyetnâmesi*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2007.
- Yıldız, Ayşe, ed. “Şücaeddin Baba Velayetnamesi.” *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 37 (2006): 49–97.

*Secondary sources*

- Aigle, Denise and Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen. “Miracle et karama: Une approche comparatiste.” In *Miracle et karāma: Hagiographies médiévales comparées*, edited by D. Aigle, 13–35. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000.
- Algar, Hamid. “Barāk Bābā.” *Encyclopædia Iranica*. Vol. III, Fasc. 7, 754–55.
- Anetshofer, Helga. “The Hero Dons a Talismanic Shirt for Battle: Magical Objects Aiding the Warrior in a Turkish Epic Romance.” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 77/2 (2018): 175–193.
- Anetshofer, Helga. “Legends of Sarı Saltık in the Seyahatnâme and the Bektashi Oral Tradition.” *Evlîyâ Çelebi: Studies and Essays Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of his Birth*, edited by Nuran Tezcan, Semih Tezcan, and Robert Dankoff. Ankara: Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism Publications, 2012: 292–300.
- Antov, Nikolay. *The Ottoman “Wild West”: The Balkan Frontier in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Aydoğan, Zeynep. “Gāzīs and Cādūs at the Margins: Conversion at the Point of Sword and Enchantment.” *Aca’ib: Occasional Papers on the Ottoman Perceptions of the Supernatural* 1 (2020): 21–48.
- Balivet, Michel. “Alliance ottomane et controverse avec l’islam: l’empereur Jean VI Cantacuzène, diplomate et théologien (env. 1295–1383).” In *Histoire, archéologies littéraires du monde musulman: mélanges en l’honneur d’André Raymond*, edited by Ghislaine Alleaume, Sylvie Denoix, and Michel Tuchscherer, 131–142. Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 2009.
- Barkan, Ömer Lütfi. “İstilâ Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zâviyeler.” *Vakıflar Dergisi* 2 (1942): 279–304.
- Baudrillard, Jean. “The Animals: Territory and Metamorphoses.” In *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glasser, 129–142. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006.
- Birge, John Kingsley. *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. London: Luzac & Company, 1937.
- Brown, Peter. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Bursi, Adam C. “Holy Spit and Magic Spells: Religion, Magic and the Body in Late Ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.” PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 2015.
- Bursi, Adam C. “Fluid Boundaries: Christian Sacred Space and Islamic Relics in an Early Ḥadīth.” *Medieval Encounters* 27 (2021): 487–510.

- Cahen, Claude. *The Formation of Turkey: The Seljukid Sultanate of Rum, Eleventh to Fourteenth Century*. Translated and edited by P. M. Holt. Pearson Education, 2001.
- Calin Bodea, Cornelia. “Romen Folklorunda Romenler ve Osmanlılar.” *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 6/11 (1999): 109–116.
- Canard, Marius. “Les principaux personnages du roman de chevalerie arabe Dāt al-Himma wa’l-Battāl.” *Arabica* 8 (1961): 158–173, reprinted in *Miscellanea Orientalia*. London: Variorum, 1973.
- Canard, Marius. “Un personnage de roman arabo-byzantin.” *Révue Africaine* 73 (1932): 1–14.
- Canard, Marius. “Delhemma: Sayyid Battāl et ‘Omar al-No’mān.” *Byzantion* (1937): 183–188.
- Chittick, William. *Ibn ‘Arabi: Heir to the Prophets*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005.
- Chodkiewicz, Michel. *Le Sceau des saints: Prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d’Ibn ‘Arabi*. Éditions Gallimard, 1986.
- Christides, Vassilios. “An Arabo-byzantin Novel ‘Umar b. al-Numan compared with Digenes Akritas.” *Byzantion* 32 (1962): 549–604.
- Corbin, Henri. *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi*. Translated by Ralph Manheim. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- Coşkun, Feray. “Sanctifying Ottoman Istanbul: The Shrine of Abū Ayyūb al-Anşārī.” PhD dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin, 2016.
- Çıkmış Sungur, Ceren. “A Critical Analysis of Sarı Saltuk as a Hero in the Saltıknâme.” MA Thesis, Central European University, 2020.
- Daneshvari, Abbas. “The Iconography of the Dragon in the Cult of Saints of Islam.” *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*, ed. Grace Martin Smith and Carl W. Ernst. Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1993.
- Dankoff, Robert. “Baraq and Buraq.” In *From Mahmud Kaşgari to Evliya Çelebi*. Istanbul: Isis Press, 2008: 111–125; originally published in *Central Asiatic Journal* 15/2 (1971): 102–17.
- Delehay, Hippolyte. *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*. Paris: A. Picard, 1909.
- Deny, Jean. “Sarı Saltıq et le nom de la ville de Babadaghi.” In *Mélanges offerts à M. Emile Picot*, vol. II: 1–15. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1913.
- DeWeese, Devin. *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.
- DeWeese, Devin. “Dog Saints and Dog Shrines in Kubrawī Tradition: Notes on a Hagiographical Motif from Khwārazm.” In *Miracle et Karāma*, edited by Denise Aigle, 459–497. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000.

- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Praeger, 1966.
- Ephrat, Daphna, Ethel Sara Wolper, and Paolo G. Pinto. "Introduction: History and Anthropology of Sainthood and Space in Islamic Contexts." In *Saintly Spheres and Islamic Landscapes: Emplacements of Spiritual Power across Time and Place*, 1–31. Leiden: Brill, 2021.
- Eyice, Semavi. "İlk Osmanlı Devrinin Dini-İctimai bir Müessesesi, Zaviyeler ve Zaviyeli Camiler." *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 23 (1962–63): 3–80.
- Eyice, Semavi. "Çorum'un Mecidözü'nde Âşık Paşa-oğlu Elvan Çelebi Zâviyesi", *Türkiyat Mecmuası* XV (1969): 211–246.
- Faroqhi, Suraiya. "Bektâşhis: Report of Current Research." In *Bektachiyya: Études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach*, edited by Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein, 9–28. Istanbul: Isis, 1995.
- Franke, Patrick. *Begegnung mit Khidr: Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Islam*. Beirut: Franz Steiner, 2000.
- Franke, Patrick. "Khidr in Istanbul: Observations on the Symbolic Construction of Sacred Spaces in Traditional Islam." In *On Archaeology of Sainthood and Local Spirituality in Islam: Past and Present Crossroads of Events and Ideas*, edited by Georg Stauth, 36–56. Bielefeld: Transcript; Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 2004.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. "Conjunctive Anomalies: A Reflection on Werewolves." *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 60 (April 2017). Published online April 1, 2017. Accessed May 4, 2021. <http://journals.openedition.org/revestudsoc/734>
- Ginzburg, Carlo. *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, translated by Raymond Rosenthal. New York: Pantheon Books, 1991.
- Gohrab, Asghar. "Majnun's Image as a Serpent." In *The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love, and Rhetoric*, edited by J.W. Clinton and K. Talattof, 83–95. New York: Palgrave, 2000.
- Green, Nile. *Sufism: A Global History*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Green, Nile. *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Grégoire, Henri. "Recherches récentes sur l'épopée byzantine." In *Autour de l'épopée byzantine*, 419–39. London: Variorum Reprints, 1975; originally published in *L'Antiquité classique* (in collaboration with Roger Grossens), Louvain: 1932.
- Grégoire, Henri. "L'épopée byzantine et ses rapports." In *Autour de l'épopée byzantine*, 463–93. London: Variorum Reprints, 1975; originally published in *Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques* de l'Académie Royale de Belgique, 5th series, no. 17 (1931).
- Grenier, Carlos. "Reassessing the Authorship of the *Dürr-i meknûn*." *Archivum Ottomanicum* 35 (2018): 193–211.

- Hahn, Cynthia. "Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints' Shrines." *Speculum* 72, no. 4 (October 1997): 1079–1106.
- Hasluck, Frederick William. *Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans*, 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929.
- Hayden, Robert M. "Antagonistic Tolerance—Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites in South Asia and the Balkans." *Current Anthropology* 43, no. 2 (2002): 205–231.
- Hirtenstein, Stephen. "The Mantle of Khidr: Mystery, Myth and Meaning According to Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi." *ARAM* 20 (2008): 189–202.
- Hodgson, Marshall G. S. *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History*. Edited by Edmund Burke III. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Imber, Colin. "The Wandering Dervishes." In *Studies in Ottoman History and Law*, 129–144. Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 1996.
- İnalçık, Halil. "Dervish and Sultan: An Analysis of the Otman Baba Vilayetnamesi." In *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*, edited by Grace Martin Smith and Carl W. Ernst, 19–36. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011.
- Kafadar, Cemal. *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Kafadar, Cemal. "Dutlug Bolsun: Bektaşî Menakıbnamelerinde Tabiat ve Av", live streamed via Zoom on May 26, 2021. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1BnRliuX5o>.
- Kantorowicz, Ernst. *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. With a new introduction by Conrad Leyser and a preface by William Chester Jordan. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957.
- Kantorowicz, Ernst. "Gods in Uniform." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 105 no. 4 (1961): 368–393.
- Karakaya-Stump, Ayfer. *The Kizilbash/Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia: Sufism, Politics and Community*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020.
- Karamustafa, Ahmet. *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200–1550*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994.
- Karamustafa, Ahmet. "Origins of Anatolian Sufism." In *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman Society*, edited by Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, 67–95. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005.
- Karateke, Hakan. "Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate: A Framework for Historical Analysis." In *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, edited by Hakan T. Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski, 13–52. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005.
- Kiel, Machiel. "Sarı Saltuk." *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*. vol. 36, 147–150. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları.

- Kocaer, Sibel. “The Journey of an Ottoman Warrior Dervish: The Hızırname (Book of Khidr) Sources and Reception.” PhD dissertation, SOAS, University of London, 2015.
- Köksel, Behiye. “Dede Korkut Kitabında Dini-Mitolojik Yardımcı Kahraman Motifi.” *Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 161 (2012): 73–88.
- Köprülü, M. Fuad. *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire*, translated and edited by Gary Leiser. New York: SUNY Press, 1992.
- Köprülü, M. Fuad. *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*, translated, edited, and with an introduction by Gary Leiser and Robert Dankoff. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Krstić, Tijana. *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.
- Krstić, Tijana. “The Ambiguous Politics of “Ambiguous Sanctuaries”: F. Hasluck and Historiography on Syncretism and Conversion to Islam in 15th- and 16th-century Ottoman Rumeli.” In *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: The Life and Times of F. W. Hasluck*, edited by D. Shankland, vol. 3. 247–262. Istanbul: Isis Press, 2013.
- Kuehn, Sara. *The Dragon in Medieval East Christian and Islamic Art*. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- Kuehn, Sara. “Mixed Worship: The Double Cult of Sarı Saltuk and St. Nicholas in the Balkans.” *Religiographies* 1, no. 1 (2022): 63–81.
- Kuehn, Sara. “Cyclical Time, Nature Spirits, and Translation Activities: The Trans-religious Role of the Meeting of Khidr and Ilyās in the Balkans.” In *Inter-religious Practices and Saint Veneration in the Muslim World: Khidr/Kbizr from the Middle East to South Asia*, edited by Michel Boivin and Manoël Pénicaud, 163–191. Routledge, 2024.
- Kugle, Scott. *Sufis and Saints’ Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality, and Sacred Power in Islam*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Küçükhüseyin, Şevket. “Some Reflections on Hagiology with Reference to the Early Mawlawī-Christian Relations in the Light of the *Manāqib al-ārifin*.” *Al Masāq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* 25, no. 2 (2013): 240–51.
- Lange Rosenzweig, Daphne. “Stalking the Persian Dragon: Chinese Prototypes for the Miniature Representations.” *Kunst des Orients* 12 no. 1–2 (1978): 150–76.
- Lincoln, Bruce. *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual and Classification*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Livanos, Christopher. “A Case Study in Byzantine Dragon-Slaying: Digenes and the Serpent,” *Oral Tradition* 26/1 (2011): 125–44.
- Lory, Pierre. *La dignité de l’homme face aux anges, aux animaux et aux djinns*. Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 2018.

- Mayeur-Jaouen, Catherine. “Miracles des saints musulmans et règne animal.” In *Miracle et Karāma*, edited by Denise Aigle, 577–606. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000.
- Mélikoff, Irène. “al-Battāl.” In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by H. A. R. Gibb, J. H. Kramers, E. Lévi-Provençal, J. Schacht, 1103–04. Leiden: Brill, 1986.
- Mélikoff, Irène. “Oghuz-Nāma.” In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Accessed on 12 June 2016 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_6013](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_6013).
- Moin, A. Azfar. *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Necipoglu, Gülru. “The Life of an Imperial Monument: Hagia Sophia after Byzantium.” In *Hagia Sophia from the Age of Justinian to the Present*, edited by Robert Mark and Ahmet Ş. Çakmak, 195–225. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar. *İslam-Türk İnançlarında Hızır Yahut Hızır-İlyas Kültü*. Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1990.
- Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar. “XIII-XIV. Yüzyıllarda Anadolu’da Dini Etkileşimler ve Aya Yorgi (Saint Georges Kültü).” *Belleten* 214 (1991): 661–71.
- Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar. *Sarı Saltık: Popüler İslam’ın Balkanlar’daki Destani Öncüsü*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2002.
- Pancaroglu, Oya. “The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia.” *Gesta* 43, no. 2 (2004): 151–64.
- Renard, John. *Friends of God: Islamic Images of Piety, Commitment, and Servanthood*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.
- Sever Georgousakis, Deniz. “Profane and Sacred in Private: Images and Inscriptions on Late Antique and Middle Byzantine Amulets.” *Codex Aquilarensis* 33 (2017): 13–26.
- Sezen, Lütfi. *Halk Edebiyatında Hamzanâmeler*. Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1991.
- Sözen, Metin. *Anadolu Medreseleri: Selçuklu ve Beylikler Devri*. İstanbul: İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi, Mimarlık Tarihi ve Rölöve Kürsüsü, 1970.
- Sprutta, Justyna. “Translations of the Warrior Saints: Dragon-Slayers’ Relics in Byzantium.” *Series Byzantina* 14 (2017): 25–31.
- Strathern, Alan. “Sacred Kingship under King Narai of Ayutthaya: Divinisation and Righteousness.” *Journal of the Siam Society* 107/1 (2019): 49–77.
- Terzioğlu, Derin. “Sufis in the Age of State-building and Confessionalization.” *The Ottoman World*, edited by Christine Woodhead, 86–99. Milton Park: Abingdon 2012.
- Turan, Osman. *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*. İstanbul: Turan Neşriyat Yurdu, 1971.

- Uludağ, Süleyman. “Kuddise Sirruh.” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (DİA), vol. 26, 314. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2002.
- van Bruinessen, Martin. “Hacı Bektâşh, Sultan Sahak, Shah Mina Sahib.” *Turcica* 21–23 (1991): 55–69.
- Vetter, Ferdinand, ed. *Der heilige Georg des Reinbot von Durne. Mit einer Einleitung über die Legende und das Gedicht*. Halle a.d. Saale: 1896.
- Vryonis, Speros. *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.
- Walter, Christopher. “The Origins of the Cult of Saint George.” *Revue des Études Byzantines* 35 (1995): 295–326.
- Walter, Christopher. “Theodore: Archetype of Warrior Saint.” *Révue des études byzantines* 57 (1999): 163–210.
- White, Monica. “The Rise of the Dragon in Middle Byzantine Hagiography.” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 32, no. 2 (2008): 149–167.
- Wittek, Paul. “Yazijioghlu Ali on the Christian Turks of the Dobruja.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 14, no. 3 (1952): 639–668.
- Wolper, Ethel Sara. “Khidr, Elwan Çelebi and the Conversion of Sacred Sanctuaries in Anatolia”, *The Muslim World* 90, no. 3–4 (2000): 302–22.
- Wolper, Ethel Sara. *Cities and Saints: Sufism and Transformation of Urban Space in Medieval Anatolia*, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).
- Yavuz, F. Betül. *The Making of a Sufi Order Between Heresy and Legitimacy: Bayrami-Malâmis in the Ottoman Empire*. PhD dissertation, Rice University, 2013.
- Yıldırım, Rıza. “‘Heresy’ as a Voice of Tribal Protest against Bureaucratic State: The Bektashi Case of Seyyid Rustem Gazi in the Ottoman Rumelia.” *Bulgarian Historical Review* 3–4 (2011): 22–46.
- Yıldırım, Rıza. *Bektaşiliğin Doğuşu*. İstanbul: İletişim, 2019.
- Yürekli, Zeynep. *Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire*. Ashgate: 2012.