

Legends Of Sarı Saltık in The Seyahatnâme and The Bektashi Oral Tradition

Sarı Saltık's Identity and Evliyâ Çelebi's Image of Sarı Saltık

Sarı Saltık, the most influential dervish-ghazi in the Islamization of the Balkans, figures prominently in various passages of the *Seyahatnâme*. Especially during his three visits to the Dobruja, Evliyâ shows a keen interest in Sarı Saltık legends. He refers to Sarı Saltık as “one who struggles in the path of God” (*mücâhidün fi sebîlillâh*; II.267a, III.128a) — i.e. one who engages in jihad. Evidently he was fascinated by the legends around Sarı Saltık and believed deeply in his sainthood.

Very few sources refer to the historical Sarı Saltık, who is generally believed to have been active in the Dobruja and the Kipchak Steppe (the Western Steppe of the Golden Horde region) during the second half of the 13th century. Contemporary Seljuk sources in Persian (Ibn Bibi, 1281; al-Aqşarayı 1323) do not even mention that a group of Anatolian Turks together with Sultan ‘Izzaddin Kaykavus II, who had taken refuge with the Byzantines in 1262, migrated to the Dobruja, and certainly not that this migration was headed by a person called Sarı Saltık. However, two contemporary Byzantine histories by Georgios Pachymeres (d. ca. 1310) and Nikephoros Gregoras (d. 1360) confirm the migration. The first historian to mention Sarı Saltık's role in this migration is the Ottoman historian Yazıciöğlü ‘Ali who wrote his *History of the Seljuks (Târih-i âl-i Selçuk)* in the 1430s primarily by translating Ibn Bibi's account into Turkish. But the earliest sources that mention the dervish-saint Sarı Saltık are Kamaluddin Muhammad al-Sarrağ al-Rufâ‘i's Arabic collection of saints' legends, the *Tuffah al-Arwah* (1316), and Ibn Battuta's travelogue, the *Rihla* (1355).⁴³⁷

In contrast with the scarcity of historical sources and reliable data concerning Sarı Saltık, a vast

437 See Leiser 2011. For the Anatolian Seljuk State, events around ‘Izzaddin Kaykavus II, and Sarı Saltık's role see Ocak 2002, 18–37, also Kiel 2000, 254–66. For a description of al-Sarrağ's work and a German translation of the parts concerning “Saltuq at-Turki” see Kiel 2000, 261–66.

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body of oral and written narratives — on his legendary life, his endless wars, his fantastic adventures and miracles — began to emerge from the 15th century onwards. The most important and voluminous of these is the *Saltuknâme*, a large compilation that is the third in a cycle of epic romances on the Islamic conquest of Anatolia and the Balkans after the *Battalname* and *Danişmendname*. The *Saltuknâme* was compiled between 1473 and 1480 by Ebu'l-Hayr Rumi for Cem Sultan and is extant in a (nearly complete) copy of more than 600 folios from the end of the 16th century. The evidence from the *Seyahatnâme* makes it clear that Evliyâ Çelebi did not know this work.⁴³⁸ The Bektashi hagiographies (*Vilayetnâme-i Hacı Bektaş, etc.*), which were also written down in the 15th century, include a few chapters with short versions of four or five Sarı Saltık legends. Sarı Saltık, who by that time had become part of the Bektashi tradition, played a large role in spreading Bektashi beliefs in the Balkans, and today he is still considered one of the greatest saints of the Alevi-Bektashi tradition.

These written examples of Sarı Saltık legends

438 For more information on *Saltuknâme* see Ocak 2002, 5–10. Apart from the Topkapı Library manuscript, which is nearly complete, there are the slightly older Ankara manuscript (Milli Ktp., B64), which comprises only the first half of the complete narrative, and the Bor manuscript (1578), which comprises the second half. For the Istanbul University Library manuscript (1733), which only covers a fraction of the text, and another Ankara manuscript (1576–78), see Smith 1982, 217. Another complete manuscript belonging to Necati Demir was copied in 1863. A Kazan imprint from 1890 and another incomplete manuscript in Sarajevo are also known (Demir-Erdem 2007, 26; Smith 1982, 217). Judging from the number of extant copies, it seems exaggerated when Kiel concludes that Ebu'l-Hayr Rumi's *Saltuknâme* was “widely circulated in the late Middle ages” (Kiel 2002, 266). It did not become a very popular book, probably due to its enormous length, its less entertaining style compared to *Battalname*, and the portrayal of Sarı Saltık as a strict Sunni Muslim. There are a facsimile edition (*Şaltuq-nâme* 1974–84) and two editions in transcription (Akalin 1987–1990; Demir-Erdem 2007) of the Topkapı manuscript. References in this article are to the Akalin edition (*Saltuknâme*, 1987–90).

are based on a rich earlier oral tradition that was later carried on, especially in Bektashi circles, and reached various places in South East Europe as far as Corfu and Albania. It is very likely that Evliyâ's encounter with Sarı Saltık legends also took place through the mediation of Bektashi dervishes in the Dobruja. His primary motive in introducing Sarı Saltık and his legends is to counter those of his contemporaries who doubted that Sarı Saltık really was a Turk and/or a Muslim saint. As he repeatedly states, “Some godless heretics say — God forbid! — that he was a priest named Saltık” (III.111a).

As a result of the Ottoman conquests in the Balkans from the 14th century onwards, many people of different faiths and cultures (especially Orthodox Christians and Sunni Muslims) lived closely together and intermarriage and conversion occurred on a regular basis. The people accepted this situation with more or less tolerance. As part of the same process, Christians and Muslims began to share some of the old religious sites, and this also brought about the identification of some Christian saints with Muslim saints.⁴³⁹ The Sarı Saltık in the *Saltuknâme* certainly regards the Christians as infidels and enemies, but at the same time he spends a good part of his time in monasteries and churches disguised as a Christian monk or saint. He knows the languages, religion and customs of the Christians very well and can even “bring tears to their eyes” by reciting the Bible.⁴⁴⁰

439 F. W. Hasluck (1913/14, 1929) was the first to draw scholarly attention to the syncretistic character of the Sarı Saltık cult in the Balkans, with its combination of Islamic and Christian elements. Anthropologist Robert M. Hayden (2002, 205–06) distinguishes two kinds of tolerance observed at competitively shared sacred sites: positive tolerance, which is “recognizing and respecting beliefs or actions with which one disagrees;” and negative tolerance, which is “premised on a lack of ability of either group to overcome the other.”

440 “Şerif (= Sarı Saltık) ... stepped forward, kissed the *tekur* (the Byzantine lord's hand, and said: ‘My father Calut (a great monk of the Latins) greets you with the prayer that Christ's grace be with you.’ He pulled out a letter and handed it to the *tekur*. The *tekur* took it and read it. Şerif could read and write twelve languages.... Şerif mounted the pulpit and recited the Bible in a loud and pleasant voice. The infidels all wept and were beside themselves.”

Sarı Saltık's identification with Christian saints, and perhaps also some of his activities that were considered heterodox, must have caused discomfort among the Ottoman authorities and ulema in the 16th century. After Süleyman I visited Sarı Saltık's tomb (*türbe*) and lodge (*tekke*) in Babadağ in 1538, he ordered the Shaykhulislam Ebusu'ud Efendi to issue a fatwa concerning Sarı Saltık's sainthood. Ebusu'ud's response is famous: “Sarı Saltık ... is a Christian hermit macerated by excessive fasting” (*Sarı Saltık ... riyazet ile kadid olmuş bir keşişdir*).⁴⁴¹ Although Evliyâ does not mention this fatwa, he is well aware of the fact that Sarı Saltık is revered as a Christian saint of Slavic origin — “İsveti Nikola” or “Aya İsveti Nikola,” i.e. Saint Nicholas⁴⁴² — by Greek and Slavic Christians in the Balkans. In his Greek word list he gives İsveti Nikola as the equivalent of Turkish Sarı Saltık (VI-II.256b); and when he talks about Christian holidays or venerated saints he usually mentions İsveti Nikola and Sarı Saltık conjointly.⁴⁴³

We also learn from Evliyâ that the Ottoman authorities tried by all means to prevent the local Greeks in Patras (Ballibadra, Morea) from visiting the shrine of a saint called Sarı Siddik Baba (i.e. Sarı Saltık?): “The Greek infidels also visit [the shrine] saying, ‘This is Sarı Saltık who is our Saint Nicholas.’ They give offerings to the caretakers of the shrine and visit it. All the magistrates have been absolutely unable to prevent it.” (VIII.262a) Although the name in the

(*Saltuknâme* I.31). Selim Deringil (2000, 555), following Cemal Kafadar (1995), calls this attitude of Sarı Saltık and other epic heroes latitudinarianism and interprets it as empathy with “the other” and Christianity.

441 For the academic debate caused by this fatwa see Ocak 2002, 13, 72–74.

442 *Sveti* means “saint” in the South Slavic languages (Bulgarian, Macedonian, Slovenian, Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian); in these languages Saint Nicholas is known as *Sveti Nikola*. His Greek name is *Ágios Nikólaos*. The form *aya* is based on the Greek feminine form *ágia*.

443 Thus with regard to Istanbul Greeks (Rum, I.175a), Ukraine (V.57a), the cathedral of Iaşi in Moldavia (V.106b), Hungarians (VI.73b, VI.101a), Dubrovnik (VI.151b), Christian soldiers in the Battle of Saint Gotthard (VII.21b), Vienna (VII.61b), Bucharest (VII.101b), German, Polish, Czech etc. soldiers in the Western Steppe (VII.114a).

Saltuknâme is given three times as Sarı Siddik Baba/Sultan, the same legend ascribed to this saint is found in the *Saltuknâme* as well (see below, Plot pattern 5: Sarı Saltık turns the sea into dry land).

Another popular attribution to Sarı Saltık that Evliyâ considers inappropriate is that some call him the patron-saint of the boza-sellers (boza is a beverage made of fermented millet): “The boza-sellers say: ‘Our *pîr* is Sarı Saltık, he is the patron of the boza-sellers’ — God forbid! He was a great saint, a noble descendant of the Prophet” (I.212b). That Sarı Saltık has become associated with boza must be due to their shared connection to the Crimean peninsula. Evliyâ mentions repeatedly that the Saray (Crimean) Tatars drink boza, koumiss (fermented mare’s milk) and mare’s milk instead of water (e.g. VII.169a). Ibn Battuta’s travelogue also confirms that the people of the Western Steppe drank boza in the 14th century.⁴⁴⁴

In the *Seyahatnâme* we also come across Sarı Saltık’s name in a prayer that originates in Bektashi circles and is said for the champions before they engage in oil wrestling. Evliyâ, functioning as the prayer-reciter (*du‘acı*) of wrestling-matches involving Sultan Murad IV, would recite the following prayer:

God, God, great Master,

Lord of the universe and pride of existing things,

Blessings upon the perfect beauty of Muhammad Mustafa.

In Ankara lies Er (i.e. the saint Er Sultan),

In Rum Sarı Saltık puts on trousers.

For the sake of our patron-saint Mahmud Pir Yar-i Veli,

Hand to hand, head to head, chest to chest,

For the sake of ‘Ali the lion of God,

May God prosper you. (I.71b; cf. II.334a)

[Translation from An *Ottoman Traveller*, 44]

With a slight variant (“In Ankara lies Er, In Rum Sarı Saltık knows the friend and puts on trou-

444 Doerfer 1965, no. 788, p. 338.

sers”) this prayer has been recited by the host at wrestling matches in Turkish Thrace (Rumeli) until the 20th century.⁴⁴⁵

To counter those who defame Sarı Saltık as not being a true Turk or saint, Evliyâ gives him a new identity with the fictive name Saltık-bay Muhammed Buhârî (III.111a). This identity is neither found in the *Saltuknâme* nor is it compatible with the Bektashi tradition. By choosing the name Muhammed Buhârî Evliyâ tries to dissociate Sarı Saltık as far as possible from the suspicion of being a Christian and of Balkan origin. The name Muhammed stresses that he is a Sunni Muslim, while the *nisba* Buhârî relates him to Bukhara, thus making his place of origin Transoxania, which Evliyâ considers the homeland of the Turks and the most important place after the Arabian Peninsula where “Muhammedan splendor” shone (IV.241b). In the *Saltuknâme*, in contrast, Sarı Saltık is depicted as a learned Anatolian Turk who is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through both his parents’ lines; and in the *Vilayetnâme* he has the modest identity of a shepherd of Anatolian Turkish origin.⁴⁴⁶

It is noteworthy that both the *Saltuknâme* and the *Seyahatnâme* consider Saltık a non-Turkic name. In the *Saltuknâme* Alyon Rumi, after his defeat and conversion to Islam, gives him the (supposedly Greek?) name Saltık (“in fact, in that language [Saltık] means ‘very strong man’” I.19); and Evliyâ relates that Muhammed Buhârî acquired the name Sarı Saltık after taking over the identity of the Christian priest (or patriarch) Sarı Saltık (= Saint Nicholas) whom he killed in Danzig (Gdańsk, Poland) (I.212b, II.266a, III.111a), and describes him as follows: “He was one who struggled in the path of God; for twenty-one years he pretended to be a Christian monk named Saltık and invited the infidels to embrace the true religion (Islam)” (II.267a). Both works also associate the nickname Sarı (“yellow, blond”) with Saltık’s fair complexion and/or

445 See Kahraman 1989, vol. 1, 76–85.

446 See *Saltuknâme*, I.2–3, and *Saltuknâme*, I.47 (“he is a Turk from Karaman” - *Karavan Türklerindendir*); for the variants *Karavan* ~ *Karaman* see *Saltuknâme*, I.1. Akalın reads *Kırvan* instead. Cf. Ocak 2002, 38–41.

blond hair. Inconsistently with the story about the killing of the priest Sarı Saltık in Danzig, Evliyâ writes that Ahmad Yasawi gave Sarı Saltık the by-name (Sarı) Saltık-bay.⁴⁴⁷ It is interesting to note how Evliyâ uses the name element *bay*. The etymon of *bay*, which is generally seen in the names of Mamluk sultans (Qaytbay, Tumanbay, etc.), is most probably the Turkish word *bay* “rich.” Evliyâ apparently interprets the elements *bay* and *kay* as titles for rulers originating from Khorasan and Transoxania.⁴⁴⁸ In this spirit, he adds the name element *bay* to various personages of the Beylik and Early Ottoman period other than Saltık-bay when he intends to show that they originate from Khorasan, e.g. Koca-bay for Akça Koca (II.242b).⁴⁴⁹

After this survey of Evliyâ’s image of Sarı Saltık, let us turn to the legends of Sarı Saltık found in the *Seyahatnâme* and the written and oral sources that Evliyâ used or claims to have used.

Putative Written Sources

While oral narration is certainly the source for Evliyâ’s hagiographies of Sarı Saltık, he does mention three written sources in his description of Babadağı in the Dobruja (III.127b). All of these, however, are either doubtful or not extant today.

• *The menakıb* (exploits) of Sarı Saltık by “Yazıcıoğlu from Gelibolu, author of the *Muhammediye*.” Although many scholars have taken this at face value, it is obviously due to a confusion

447 “He was called Sarı Saltık because of his fair complexion and reddish blond hair” (*Saltuknâme* I.19). “For a long time he traveled thus under the name Sarı Saltık. And because he was of fair complexion Shaykh Ahmad Yasawi gave him the byname Saltık-bay. But his real name is Muhammed Buhârî.” (II.266a).

448 “They (the ancestors of the Oghuz Turkic dynasties) ... left Mahan in Transoxania ... and settled in Azerbaijan. They also conquered Ahlat, Erzurum, Diyarbekir, Irak and Fars.... They are called Beg, also Bay and Shah.... All these sultans and emirs and kings like the Kays and Bays originated from Balkh, Bukhara, Transoxania and Mahan.” (IV.241b)

449 Cf. also *Karamanoğlu ve Germiyanoglu ve Teke-bayoğlu ve Aydın-bay ve Saruhân-bayoğulları* (I.26a), and Şeyhi-bay Çelebi for the poet and physician Germiyanlı Şeyhi from Germiyan (d. 1431) (IV.257b).

between Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed (d. 855/1451) and his namesake and presumptive brother Yazıcıoğlu ‘Ali, author of the abovementioned *History of the Seljuks* which includes a passage on Sarı Saltık.

• *The Conquests of Khan Toqtamış (Fütûhât-ı Tohtamış Hân)*. Judging from the fact that Evliyâ provides some details on the life of Toqtamış, Khan of the Golden Horde (ruled ca. 1378–95; d. 1406, Western Siberia) — including some incorrect ones such as that he was buried in Ahlat — it is very likely that he saw a source on Toqtamış’s life.⁴⁵⁰ But as of today, it is unclear what work he is referring to by this title.

• *The Saltuknâme or Menakıb-ı Saltık-bay*. Evliyâ ascribes this to (Koca) Ken‘ân Pasha, “the governor of Özü (Ochakov).” According to Evliyâ, this Ken‘ân Pasha was a calligrapher who composed this work in order to silence the unbelievers: “because the deniers spread all sorts of rumors about the saint, defaming him as being a Christian monk named Saltık, and thus fell into sin.” However, neither is Ken‘ân Pasha’s identity certain, nor has such a work been found.⁴⁵¹

Aside from these sources, Evliyâ vaguely mentions “many history books” (*niçe kütüb-i tevârih*) that confirm details of Sarı Saltık’s life, along with “the reliable *menakıb* of Yazıcızade.” Elsewhere he says that the Greeks (or Byzantines, *Urûmlar*) have written truthfully about him (III.111a); and regarding Sarı Siddik Sultan: “Many of his exploits are written down in the Greek (or Byzantine, *Rûm*) histories. According to their account, this saint was Hacı Bektaş’s deputy (*khalife*) during the sultanate of ‘Osman [I]” (VIII.262a). However, we know that none of the Byzantine chronicles mentioned above refers to Sarı Saltık.

450 535 For Toqtamış see Vásáry 2009, 81–85.

451 Cf. Kiel 2000, 253, 273–77; Ocak 2002, 5. For Koca Ken‘ân Pasha also see III.126b. The Ken‘ân Pasha meant here is most probably Koca Ken‘ân Pasha (d. 1651). In the sources, data on his life are confused with those on Admiral (Kapudan) Uzun/Topal Ken‘ân Pasha (d. 1659) (cf. Babinger 2011; Göyünç 2002, 253–54). In 1635 Murad IV bestowed on Koca Ken‘ân Pasha “the *eyalet* (province) of Silistre [alternately called Özü] with all its crown lands” (see Mehmed Halife 1924, 15).

Oral Sources

The longest passage devoted to legends of Sarı Saltık is found in Volume 2 of the *Seyahatnâme*, where Evliyâ describes his eight month stay at Kaliakra Point (Bulgaria) in 1641–42. After being shipwrecked on the Black Sea — breathtakingly recounted by Evliyâ (II.264b–266a)⁴⁵² — he and his four slaves are washed ashore near the rocks where a Sarı Saltık Lodge (called Tekye-i Keligra Sultân) is located. The Bektashi dervishes who live there accommodate the shipwreck victims until their recovery. Mention of the mystical conversations (*cân sohbetleri*) Evliyâ had with the dervishes is directly followed by narratives of Sarı Saltık; this makes it very likely that he is actually noting the versions of the narratives he heard from them (II.266a).⁴⁵³ Shorter versions of the same stories related here recur in other parts of the *Seyahatnâme*: during his later travels, when he visits places associated with Sarı Saltık (Piravadi/Provadia, Bulgaria, III.109b; Babadağ/Babadag, Romania, III.126b); or when he talks about other saints who were contemporaries of Sarı Saltık (Akyazılı Sultan, III.122b).

The only story that is completely different from both the *Saltuknâme* and the *Vilayetnâme* is the one pertaining to Sarı Saltık's origins and emergence (Plot Pattern 1 below). In my opinion, the identity of Muhammed Buhârî Saltık-bay is entirely made up by Evliyâ, without reference to any written or oral source, solely in order to defend Sarı Saltık from the allegations of being a Christian monk. All the other Sarı Saltık legends he recounts are found in the *Saltuknâme*, either identically or in a variant. But since Evliyâ did not have direct knowledge of the *Saltuknâme* as a written source (see above), those legends that correspond to the *Saltuknâme* but are missing in the *Vilayetnâme* are

452 For an English translation see Dankoff and Kim 2010, 47–52.

453 Cf. Hasluck (1929, 429): “The legend of Sari Saltik, set down by Evliya Efendi in the middle of the seventeenth century from particulars retailed to him by the dervishes of Kaliakra (Kilgra) near Varna.” However, Evliyâ does not explicitly say that he was writing down the dervishes' account.

most likely based on oral Bektashi sources. On the other hand, he seems to have learned the story (VI-II.262a, discussed above) that he attributes to Sarı Sıddik Baba, rather than to Sarı Saltık, from locals in the Morea (Peloponnese) and not through Bektashi oral tradition.

In sum, the Sarı Saltık legends recounted in the *Seyahatnâme* correspond closely to those in the *Saltuknâme*, but they must have reached Evliyâ through the filter of Bektashi oral transmission.

Plot pattern 1: Sarı Saltık's origins, Hacı Bektaş's sending him to Rumeli and the wooden sword.

As shown above, the account of Sarı Saltık's origins varies in the three sources (*Saltuknâme*, *Vilayetnâme*, *Seyahatnâme*). In addition, Evliyâ calls Sarı Saltık “Khoja Ahmad Yasawi's deputy (*halife*)” and says that he was sent by Ahmad Yasawi from Khorasan to Anatolia to Hacı Bektaş together with Hacı Bektaş to ‘Osman [I] (I.212b). In the *Vilayetnâme* there is no reference to Ahmad Yasawi; it is Hacı Bektaş who sends Sarı Saltık to Rumeli (Dobruja, etc.).⁴⁵⁴ In the *Saltuknâme*, Hacı Bektaş sends Sarı Saltık to Fakih Ahmed, whereas Mahmud Hayran sends him out for raids or ghaza into foreign (non-Muslim) territories; but the meeting between Hacı Bektaş and Sarı Saltık takes place only after Sarı Saltık has already fought numerous ghazas and converted infidels in Rumeli, on Mt. Qaf, in India, Turkestan and other places and has had epic adventures. It is certainly due to Evliyâ's reliance on Bektashi oral sources that Hacı Bektaş plays such a greater role in the *Seyahatnâme* than in the *Saltuknâme*.⁴⁵⁵ Following Bektashi tradition, Evliyâ recounts that Hacı Bektaş girds Sarı Saltık with a wooden sword to fight: “Hacı Bektaş handed Keligra Sultân (= Sarı Saltık) a wooden sword, a prayer rug, a large drum, a small double drum, a banner, a flag, a tambourine and a small kettle-drum” (II.266a; also see II.267a). In contrast, in the *Saltuknâme* this sword made of date palm wood is

454 *Vilayetnâme* 350–353; Versified *Vilayetnâme* 253–254.

455 *Saltuknâme* II.42–46; *Seyahatnâme* I.212b, II.233b, 266a, III.109b, 122b.

the prophet Muhammad's sword and is brought to Sarı Saltık by Hızır.⁴⁵⁶

Plot pattern 2: Sarı Saltık kills the monk named Sarı Saltık/Saint Nicholas and takes his identity.

In Evliyâ's version, “Muhammed Buhârî” in Danzig kills “a priest named Sarı Saltık (I.212b)” or “a misguided patriarch and priest named İsveti Nikola, meaning Sarı Saltık (II.266a).” He assumes the priest's identity and from his monastery cell converts various peoples to Islam. This story is completely absent from the *Vilayetnâme*, but there are a couple of similar stories in the *Saltuknâme*, where Sarı Saltık visits various monasteries in the guise of a monk and assumes the identity of a famous monk's son (“I am Şem'ün, son of the Serbian monk Rahval” I.35). The closest story in the *Saltuknâme* to Evliyâ's version is when Sarı Saltık kills the monk Nestor: “He put on Nestor's clothes and put his own clothes on Nestor.... He wiped his face with his hands and took on the appearance of Nestor” (III.290). Evliyâ, perhaps relying on Bektashi oral sources, adds details such as the location and the adopting of the name of the slain monk; but his version (I.212b, II.266a, III.111a) can be considered a variant of related stories in the *Saltuknâme*.⁴⁵⁷

Plot pattern 3: Sarı Saltık's hand and foot prints on a rock at Kaliakra Point; he slays a dragon at Kaliakra and makes water flow from a spring.

The story in the *Vilayetnâme* of Sarı Saltık travelling on his prayer rug together with Ulu Abdal

456 See *Vilayetnâme* 350–53; “He girded him with a wooden sword — see the saint! / And he gave him a bow and seven arrows / He gave him a prayer rug and a retinue of two dervishes / To go with him wherever he went” (Versified *Vilayetnâme* 254). “Hızır came to help.... He handed him a sword. It was made from wood, but its nature was like iron. He said: ‘This sword belonged to the prophet, he has given it to you as your lot’” (*Saltuknâme* II.29). For the wooden sword also see *Saltuknâme* I.170–171; II.32; III.177. In *Saltuknâme* Hamza's horse, which Seyyid Battal Gazi also used to ride, and Hamza's arms also become Sarı Saltık's legacy (see Kafadar 1995, 63).

457 For examples in *Saltuknâme* see I.23–24, 28–29, 31–32 (cf. fn. 4), 35–40, 64; III.284–96.

and Kiçi Abdal and landing at Kaliakra is linked to the cauldron story in the *Saltuknâme* (see below). Sarı Saltık's travelling the Danube on top of his prayer rug, or flying in the air, is a common motif in the *Saltuknâme*.⁴⁵⁸ *Seyahatnâme* and *Vilayetnâme* share the story of how Sarı Saltık's hand and foot prints come to be found on a rock at Kaliakra where he killed the dragon. In all three works the prince or king of Dobruja asks him /or Sarı Saltık to kill the dragon. Details lacking in the epic *Saltuknâme* — that the dragon is seven-headed (*ejder-i heftser*, *Seyahatnâme* and *Vilayetnâme*), and that he is about to eat the princesses (*Vilayetnâme*) — are known as elements of folk literature. Afterwards, Sarı Saltık makes water flow from a spring at the spot where he killed the dragon (*Vilayetnâme* and *Saltuknâme*). While the name Kaliakra (Keligra) is not mentioned in the *Saltuknâme* (cf. Keligrad below), it is apparent that Kaliakra is identical with the place in the *Saltuknâme* called Yılan Baba/Yılan Tekyesi after the slaying of the dragon.⁴⁵⁹ The Kaliakra dragon-slaying story recounted by Evliyâ Çelebi in great detail is only one of many such stories in the *Saltuknâme*.⁴⁶⁰

Plot pattern 4: Sarı Saltık proves his sainthood by surviving in a cauldron of boiling water.

This story is absent from the *Vilayetnâme*, but it is a common pattern in narratives ranging from medieval European to Central Asian Persian narratives.⁴⁶¹ Since the story revolves around a cauldron (Turkish *kazan*) Evliyâ relocates it to Kazan

458 See *Vilayetnâme* 353–357; Versified *Vilayetnâme* 254–57. “From time to time he would spread his prayer rug on the River Danube, get on it and travel about, without sinking” (*Saltuknâme* II.59); also see *Saltuknâme* II.210–11.

459 Cf. Ocak 2002, 46–60. *Seyahatnâme* I.212b; II.266a–266b; III.109b; III.110b–111a. *Saltuknâme* II.21–22. *Vilayetnâme* 357–62; Versified *Vilayetnâme* 257–60. For the differences in dragon slaying stories in Iranian epic and folk narratives see Khaleghi-Motlagh/Omidsalar 1987.

460 For other dragon- or serpent-slaying stories in *Saltuknâme* see on Mt. Qaf (I.126), in Ethiopia (I.309–11), in India (I.365–66), on Mt. Nirkab in Rumeli (III.185–86).

461 Cf. DeWeese 1994, 250–51.

Balkanı — lit. “Cauldron Balkans” — which is Kazanlak west of Piravadi (Provadia, Bulgaria). In the *Saltuknâme*, however, the location is Keligrad (= Keligra/Kaliakra) which is named after the monk Keligrad: Sarı Saltık travels on his prayer rug (*nemed*) on the Black Sea together with Büyük Baba, Ortanca Baba and Küçük Baba and lands at Kaliakra (cf. above the version with Ulu Abdal and Kiçi Abdal in the *Vilayetnâme*). In the *Saltuknâme*, a dispute arises when the monk Keligrad makes fun of Saltık’s wooden sword and calls him a witch and a sorcerer, while in the *Seyahatnâme* a monk/priest claims that he himself rather than Sarı Saltık has killed the dragon. In both texts they undergo the ordeal of being boiled in a large cauldron in order to determine which of the two is a true saint. The monk perishes, turning into “pork stew” (*doğuz yahnisi*) in *Saltuknâme* and boiling like “wheat pudding” (*herise*) in *Vilayetnâme*.⁴⁶²

Plot pattern 5: Sarı Saltık turns the sea into dry land.

Evliyâ attributes this legend to Sarı Sıddik Baba/Sultan whose shrine is in the Morea (Peloponnese), but the Morean Christians attribute it to St. Nicholas/Sarı Saltık. In fact the story is encountered in the *Saltuknâme* with almost the same wording. When Christian sailors refuse to ferry Sarı Saltık across the strait, he traverses it on dry land by filling his skirt with sand and throwing it into the sea. In *Saltuknâme* the setting is the strait of Gilaşpol (Gelibolu?), while in *Seyahatnâme* it is the strait of İnebahtı (Návpaktos/Lepanto).⁴⁶³

Plot pattern 6: Sarı Saltık’s death and the multiplication of his coffins

After the dragon slaying, this is the best known of the Sarı Saltık legends. Only the *Vilayetnâme*

prefaces the legend with the story of his visit to Hacı Bektaş’s lodge in Suluca Karahöyük where they slaughter a talking oxen. While staying in Piravadi (Provadia) (*Seyahatnâme*) / Kaliakra (*Vilayetnâme*) / Tuna Baba (Babadag) (*Saltuknâme*) Sarı Saltık feels that death is near. He commands his dervishes / ghazis upon his death to deliver a coffin to each king / prince who arrives to demand his body. The number of the coffins is not made explicit in the *Versified Vilayetnâme*, but in the prose *Vilayetnâme and the Seyahatnâme* it is seven kings who carry away seven coffins to Moscow, Danzig (Poland), Pızoňice (?) (Czech), Yivance (?) (Sweden), Babaeski, a place near Bozav (?) Castle (Moldavia), and Kaliakra. In the *Saltuknâme* twelve coffins are taken to twelve places: Tuna Baba (Babadag), Yılan Baba (i.e. Kaliakra), Edirne, Eski Baba (Babaeski), the Kipchak Steppe (Western Steppe), Wallachia, Moldavia, Russia, Hungary, Poland, Czechia, Andalusia. Sarı Saltık’s body appears to be in each coffin, but the Muslims believe that his true grave is in Babaeski, where “his lamp is still burning” (*Saltuknâme*) / “his lamp has not died out day and night since he was buried” (*Seyahatnâme*). Today several tombs and shrines dedicated to Sarı Saltık dating from the 14th-16th centuries are extant, due to Kalenderi-Bektashi propaganda, mostly in South Eastern Europe — in Corfu, Krujë (Albania), Peć and Gjakova (both Kosovo), and Blagaj (Bosnia-Herzegovina); and in Anatolia — in İznik, Bor/ Niğde, and Diyarbakır.⁴⁶⁴

462 For the story of the talking oxen see *Vilayetnâme* 362–365, *Versified Vilayetnâme* 261–262. For the legend of Sarı Saltık’s death and coffins see *Seyahatnâme* II.266b–267a, III.111a. Pızoňice (?) could be a misspelling for Pardubice in the Czech Republic, which has a monastery since the 13th century; Bozav in Moldavia must be today’s Buzău (Romania), but there is no castle: *Vilayetnâme* 366, *Versified Vilayetnâme* 263. *Saltuknâme* III.297–302, III.333. Also cf. Ocak 2002, 62–62. For Sarı Saltık’s tombs and shrines see Smith 1982, Kiel 2000, 281–83, Ocak 2002, 111–20.

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“Marvels And Wonders” in The *Seyahatnâme*

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Smith, Grace M. “Some Türbes/Maqāms of Sarı Saltuq an Early Anatolian Turkish Ġāzī-Saint.” *Turcica* 14 (1982), 216–25.

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Versified Vilâyetnâme: Bedri Noyan, ed. Hacı Bektaş Veli Manzûm Vilâyetnâmesi. 2nd ed., İstanbul, 1996.

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The *Seyahatnâme* is an extraordinary source for literary and cultural studies, not just because of its gigantic size but also because it includes a wide range of narrative styles and discourses. The volume and variety have led researchers to treat the text in segments and sub-categories. In fact, the narratives are not randomly chosen and fragmentary. They are intentionally selected, fictionalized narratives with an organic connection among themselves and forming a consistent whole. To see how Evliya Çelebi composes his work and generates a firm fictional structure, we have to trace how the polyphonic and polychromatic strands intersect and intertwine, producing new and surprising texts. While we need this kind of holistic reading to analyze formal and contextual structure, Evliya himself draws our attention to some narratives in particular by repeated recourse to certain narrative genres. One such genre, in which literary taste pushes the limits of imagination of both narrator and reader, is that of “marvels and wonders” (*acâib ve garâib*; Arabic ‘*ajâ’ib wa gharâ’ib*).

With the heading “marvels and wonders” Evliya prepares his readers for a different narrative world. This is important for appreciating him as a storyteller and understanding the fictional dimensions of his work. This favored category reflects the ideals and beliefs of his age. Narratives of this kind do not merely satisfy literary taste and cultural curiosity, nor are they completely independent from the larger narrative world of the *Seyahatnâme*. As with other kinds of narratives, to analyze them correctly we must pay attention to the context, what Evliya says before and after them. Following these references is essential for understanding Evliya’s narrative style and the integrity of his fiction.

Some commentators, while accepting the *Seyahatnâme* as a cultural treasure and an extraordinary piece of literature, are ambivalent about the “marvels and wonders” sections, which in their view reflect Evliya’s weak side and his tendency toward excess. Fahir İz, for example, argues that *Müntehabat-ı Evliya Çelebi* — the first publication of Evliya’s work in Turkey [see in this book # 9], a book that especially collected these kinds of stories

— has given the *Seyahatnâme* a bad name: “Even after the first eight volumes of the work had been published, many people, including some scholars, did not believe anything that Evliya related.” (1979, 61) For İz as well,

Sometimes he goes too far and relates a lot of extraordinary events that reflect the beliefs of his age, including saints’ miracles, magical feats, sorceries, prophecies, and stories of supernatural creatures. This weakness has worked against Evliya in that for a long time nothing that he wrote was taken seriously. (61)

Nuran Tezcan argues that the *Seyahatnâme* is “a work formed in the spiral of objective information and fiction.... If we take the scientific criteria used to judge the objective layer and apply them to the work as a whole, we overlook its power as fiction” (2009, 388). Indeed, evaluations based on the distinction between reality and fiction threaten to compromise the literary and cultural value of the work. Also, for the episteme of 17th-century Ottoman society, we cannot argue about such a distinction between reality and fiction, or a distinction between evidence-based knowledge and wisdom, using the critical measures of our own day. As a narrator picking up his story from his social ground, Evliya does not distinguish history, mythology, legend and rumor; so fitting his narratives into sharply defined categories of “reality” and “fiction” is unproductive.

Robert Dankoff suggests that the *Seyahatnâme* is “a huge example on the literary level of [an] Ottoman mentality [that] oscillates between a down-to-earth realism and a love for ‘marvels and wonders’” (2004, 214). This way of looking at the issue is useful in determining both the mentality of the period and the function of the wondrous narrations in the text. Dankoff also points out:

The *Seyahatnâme* is by no means simply a straightforward travel narrative. Rather, the roughly chronological travel account merely provides the armature within which the author does many other things. These other things ... make up the bulk of the work, and so cannot be considered simply as digressions to the travel account. (2005, 72)