

Relations between Heterodox Muslims and Christians in Central Rumeli in the First Centuries of the Ottoman Rule According to the Hagiography of Three Muslim Saints*

T. D. Bondarenko

Institute of Balkan Studies and Center of Traceology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,
45, ul. Moskovskaya, Sofia, 1000, Republic of Bulgaria

For citation: Bondarenko T. D. Relations between Heterodox Muslims and Christians in Central Rumeli in the First Centuries of the Ottoman Rule According to the Hagiography of Three Muslim Saints. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Asian and African Studies*, 2024, vol. 16, issue 3, pp. 545–557. <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu13.2024.303>

Understanding the image of Christians in heterodox Muslims' literature allows us to deepen our knowledge of how interaction between representatives of the two religions took place in the first centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans. Based on *vilayetname* of three Muslim saints popular in the Balkans (Sarı Saltık, Othman Baba and Demir Baba), this article explores the image of Christians with whom the dervishes interacted; the changes in the image of Christians; the nature of interactions between heterodox Muslims and Christians. The main categories of Christians with which the Muslim saints interacted were warriors and the ordinary rural and urban population (in the case of Sarı Saltık, representatives of the religious and secular authorities of the Christian world can be added). While Christian warriors are portrayed as enemies, the ordinary population often receives aid from the dervishes, regardless of their religious affiliation. The religion of ordinary people is not always mentioned, but it can be determined by indirect signs such as demography. It can be established that the image of Christians in *vilayetname* was influenced by the political situation related to heterodox Muslims in the contemporary period, their relationship with authorities and dervishes from orders loyal to the state. Gradually, they become the main antagonists of Muslim saints, while the confrontation with Christians loses relevance. Another factor influencing the image of Balkan Christians is the movement of the state border to the west and the turn of Central Rumeli into the hinterland of the Ottoman state.

Keywords: heterodox Islam, dervishes, image of the Other, Islam in the Balkans, Rumelia.

Introduction

The problem of relations between dervishes, traditionally attributed with syncretic religious views and more tolerant attitude towards non-Muslims, and the Christian population in the Balkans increasingly attracts the interest of scholars. Most of them agree that dervishes played an important role in the spread of Islam in Central Rumeli¹. The extent

* This work was supported by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science under the National Research Program “Young Scientists and Postdoctoral Students — 2” approved by DCM 206 / 07.04.2022.

¹ Central Rumeli roughly includes the territories of modern Bulgaria, North Greece, North Macedonia, Eastern Serbia.

of their contribution to Islamization, the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, and their motivations are still a matter of debate, but the idea of importance of dervishes' interactions with Christians in the spread of Islam is a consensus in historiography worldwide [1–5]. The cult of saints in heterodox Islam is considered one of the most important aspects of the dervishes' ability to co-habituate with the local Christian population in the Balkans. Sufi literature enriched with ethnological and archaeological material allows scholars to study the cults of Muslim saints in Central Rumeli, the saints' doctrines and legacy².

In this article, we will address this problem through the lens of the hagiography of Muslim saints known in the Balkans and, in particular, in Central Rumeli — Sarı Saltık, Othman Baba and Demir Baba. These prominent dervishes can provide insight into the attitudes among significant groups of heterodox Muslims in the first centuries of the Ottoman rule. Our goal will be to highlight the main features that characterize the attitude of the dervishes towards Christians and determine the nature of their interaction as described by the *vita*. To achieve this goal, we will analyze legends included in the *vitae* of three saints who lived at different times (from the second half of the 13th century to the first half of the 16th century). Many of these legends were created centuries later (the *vitae* were written between the end of the 15th century and the 17th century), which will also allow us to trace the dynamics of changes in the attitude of heterodox Muslims towards Christians. The problem of relations between heterodox Muslims and Christians can be studied in different contexts and from different perspectives; we will focus on the dervishes' relations with Christians as groups of people and individuals: in our opinion, this perspective would be the most instructive and indicative for the interactions of dervishes with Christians in Central Rumeli during the first centuries of the Ottoman rule.

We will first analyze each of the *vitae* giving brief information about the historical personality of the dervish; the creation of the *velayetname* and description of its contents; the image of the dervish in the perspective of the *velayetname*; analysis of the dervish's interactions with different categories of Christians (authorities, warriors, ordinary residents); a possible explanation of why the dervish's relationship with Christians is presented in this way.

The concept of “image of the Other” plays an important role in such studies. The opposition between “Us” and “the Other” is oftentimes a tool of creating one's own image by giving the image of “the Other” negative traits [7, p.5]. Being expressions of collective memory, Muslim hagiographies were a part of the dervishes' identity formation [8, pp. 351–352]. Thus, some negative characteristics of Christians or episodes of interaction with them are more likely to be a denial of certain qualities within the Muslim community, rather than a reflection of reality. It should be noted that Muslim hagiography as a genre is a highly biased and deliberately distorted biography intended to promote the veneration of a saint [9, p.37]. Thus, many episodes follow certain canons, since their goal is not to reflect reality, but to create a story that conveys a certain moral. The fact that the *vitae* were written down after the death of the saints and often did not reach us in the original version is also a disadvantage. Even though the gradual enrichment of legends about dervishes over the course of their existence is also valuable, often later additions are misleading or manipulative.

² For more detail see: [6].

Saltıknâme

Sarı Saltık is a famous character in Turkish folklore, his cult is present in the Balkans till this day. The reliability of information about Sarı Saltık as a historical personality remains a matter of debate³. The difficulty lies in the fact that none of the written sources mentioning him goes back to the supposed time of his life (the end of the 13th century). The latest research suggests that the dervish was an active missionary in the Danube Delta region after his arrival to Dobruja in 1270–1280s when it was controlled by the Tatars [10, pp. 216–217].

Saltıknâme was written in 1473–1480s by Ebu'l Hayr-ı Rûmî on the order of Prince Cem (1459–1495), son of Sultan Mehmed II (1444–1446, 1451–1481). There is little information about Ebu'l Hayr-ı Rûmî. However, considering that the task was entrusted to him by Prince Cem himself, it appears that he was a well-known person in that time [11, p. 40]. Since Sarı Saltık became a legendary character, the events of *Saltıknâme* unfold not only in the second half of the 13th century when the dervish lived, but also in later times, contemporary to those who continued creating legends about him.

The main source of *Saltıknâme* is the copy stored in Topkapı Palace (16th century). The vita includes legends related to Sarı Saltık's birth and spiritual lineage; his travels, victories on the battlefield and miracles; his passing and miracles after that. Some stories include historical events, such as the conquest of Anatolia and the crossing into Rumelia. Gradually the geography is expanding⁴. However, we will be interested in stories related to the Balkans.

Sarı Saltık's image is the image of a saint dervish-warrior. In *Saltıknâme*, military power is associated with the religious: for example, a Christian prince indirectly confirms it when he comes to the conclusion that if Muslims have so many military victories, then their faith must be true [12, p. 525]. The conquest of Rumelia has sacred significance and many of the dervish's feats are related to the battlefield. However, he is also portrayed as a wise saint. For example, Sarı Saltık knows Christianity quite well. In the Church of St. Sofia in Constantinople he reads a sermon that makes people cry and even poses as a priest and even baptizes some Christians [12, pp. 44–47]. To conclude, Sarı Saltık is portrayed as a saint warrior and missionary.

Most of the Christians Sarı Saltık interacts with in his vita are people of power (political and religious leaders). Sarı Saltık's interactions with the ordinary Christian population are brief and are rather tools of furthering the plot than stand-alone episodes. The concentration of *Saltıknâme* on holders of political and religious power reveals that the dervish's goal is the establishment of the hegemony of Islam as a political doctrine and system that characterizes the rule of the conquerors [13, p. 359]. When people with political or religious authority convert to Islam, their subjects follow them. For example, when a priest converted to Islam, more than 700 people converted too [12, p. 551].

Another category of Christians Sarı Saltık interacts with is warriors. A common plot in Muslim vitae is the conversion of a powerful Christian warrior to Islam, who then becomes a comrade of the dervish who had converted him. This trope is present in *Saltıknâme* too

³ Sarı Saltık's deeds are usually considered within debate about the settlement of Seljuq Turks in the Balkans prior to the Ottoman conquest. Here we shall not deal with this issue.

⁴ Often the geography in *Saltıknâme* is arbitrary. Although we will try to address stories related to Central Rumeli, the analysis of all three hagiographies will draw on relevant episodes from other regions depending on how important geography is to the plot.

[12, p. 35]. It could signify physical and spiritual victory, as well as reflect the reality. In the 14th century the Ottomans had allies of Christian origins, for example, from the Evrenos's and Köse Mihal's families, Byzantine renegades who converted to Islam and cooperated with the Ottomans. According to various calculations, by the beginning — mid 15th century 30–50% of timars belonged to Christians (depending on the region) [14, p. 168]. In one or two generations those Christians became Muslims. Such legends also demonstrate the benefits of conversion. According to the story, after conversion to Islam Ilyas Rumi, the Christian warrior who then became Sarı Saltık's close ally, even became physically stronger [12, p. 35].

The antagonism between the two religions that was relevant in the era of conquest more than ever is the basis of the image of the Christians and the nature of Sarı Saltık's interactions with Christians. Religion is the main political, social and even moral denominator of a person in the vita. That puts the image of Christians into an opposition to the self-image of Muslims and the image of Sarı Saltık as an example of a holy Muslim person. In *Saltıknâme*, even moral qualities of a person are so closely associated with their religion that people who attract Sarı Saltık's attention by possessing certain virtues, he attempts to convert them into Islam. For example, in "Laz's city Nikobad" [12, p. 73] Sarı Saltık notes that people who attended a wedding are beautiful but, to his regret, Christian. After some persuasion by him, most of them decide to become Muslims secretly [12, pp. 73–74]. Political or spiritual authority is considered a virtue that must belong solely to Muslims, too. Sometimes Sarı Saltık's attempts to convert certain people are not needed. For instance, the Pope, the highest figure in the Catholic world, turns out to be a secret Muslim [12, p. 41] as a demonstration that someone of such a high position would have known which religion was "true".

It could be a later addition to the text written for an Ottoman prince, so it is unwise to draw conclusions based on this. However, there is another interesting detail. *Saltıknâme* admits that the decision to convert to Islam is a hard one because it is not only a personal, but also a political and social choice. A group of Christians tells the dervish: "if we leave the faith, we will lose our homeland" [12, p. 74]. Many new converts become Muslims secretly. It can be said with caution that in some of Sarı Saltık's interactions with Christians there is a certain amount of understanding towards them, which also reflects the historical reality of the situation of Christians in the period of conquests.

Despite these details, which may indicate a certain degree of understanding towards Christians, *Saltıknâme* paints a fairly clear picture of the world of the dervish. Sarı Saltık is a conqueror of lands and missionary of Islam. These two directions of the dervish's activity form a vision on which Islam and Christianity are in strong opposition to each other, and religious affiliation is the main denominator of a person. Interacting mostly with people of power, Sarı Saltık attempts to win not only their possessions (lands, authority, etc.) but also their souls, making the conquest a holy Muslim mission first and foremost. The dervish is successful in both aspects of his activity, since a Muslim saint is supposed to be able to establish his dominance in both worldly and otherworldly dimensions. The latter is expressed by the ability to convert "infidels" to Islam.

Othman Baba Velâyetnamesi

Othman Baba was a gazi-dervish who lived in the 15th century. His real name was Hüsâm Şah, and he came to Anatolia from Khorasan and participated in the conquest of Anatolia and the Balkans. Information about his life is mostly based on legends [15,

p. X]. *Otman Baba Velâyetnamesi* was written not long after Othman Baba's passing and contains substantial biographical information. According to the vita, the dervish was born in 1378–1379 and died in 1478. He was mostly active in the Eastern part of the Balkans, more exactly, in modern Bulgarian lands and Western Thrace. Othman Baba was a Rum Abdal, to be more precise, a Kalandari sheikh. The Kalandari, who were a cause of great disturbance⁵, were harshly criticized even by other Sufis who were more moderate [13, p. 83]. Othman Baba played a crucial role in the establishment of Rum Abdals as a distinct group with its specific set of beliefs of practices [17, p. 46]. To this day his cult is popular in the Balkans.

Otman Baba Velâyetnamesi was written by Othman Baba's close disciple Küçük Abdal in 1483–1484. He personally knew Othman Baba and the sentiment of mutual respect between a Sufi master and his disciple, as well as Sufi etiquette are at the basis of the *velâyetname*. The manuscripts available to us belong to a later date (18th–19th centuries).

It should be noted that the author of *Otman Baba Velâyetnamesi* describes the manuscript as *risala*, a popular genre of Arabic and Iranian Muslim literature that consists mainly of philosophical and theological writings [18, pp. 122–123]. The work includes formulations of important doctrinal concepts (such as *velâya* or *kutbü'l-aktab* [15, p. 14]), demonstration of Othman Baba's holiness and greatness in the context of Muslim and, more precisely, Sufi history, and justification of the prevalence of spiritual power over secular. The dervish's rare encounters with Christians are put in the context of these topics highlighted by the author and can hardly be separated from them.

The stories in the sixty-eight chapters of the vita take place partly in Anatolia and mostly in the Balkans, almost all the mentioned places are real (Istanbul, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and others). The vita has characteristics of an adventure story where other characters involved into events described in the vita (the most prominent one being Sultan Mehmed II) mostly serve decorative functions. The events of the vita took place over a period of 76 years. The story begins from Othman Baba's coming to Anatolia with Timur in 1402 and ends with his death in 1478. During his travels he performed miracles in a number of Bulgarian cities and even temporarily lived in Veliko Tarnovo [15, pp. XII–XIII].

In the *velâyetname*, Othman Baba's behavior and his perception by others were typical for such dervishes. They walked half-naked, covered only with woolen cloaks or wrapped in animal skin. Their beliefs were influenced by Shiism and they followed *chahar zarb* — a distinctive ascetic practice that demonstrated their rejection of social norms [6, p. 140]. He is portrayed as a fierce defender of the heterodox Sufi path who proves his holiness, and thus the truth of his faith, to both Christians and Muslims. He is an image of a perfect holy man in the Abdal understanding.

One of the categories of Christians Othman Baba interacts with are foreign warriors. However, some of his gaza feats are presented in a rather symbolic or spiritual way. For example, instead of making Othman Baba a direct participant in Mehmed II's campaign against the Principality of Moldavia (1476), Küçük Abdal depicts a ritual carried out by Othman Baba and his followers in Dobruja seven years before those events. That ritual is equal to “defeating a thousand of infidels each and becoming gazis” [15, p. 115]. And even the capture of Constantinople (1453) does not happen without the spiritual patronage of Othman Baba who declares that the victory will happen before the city is conquered [15, p. 27].

⁵ For more detail see: [16].

Another category of Christians who appear in the *vita* are common people on the Ottoman territory. By the time of Othman Baba's activity, the Balkan territories, conquered during the earlier period, had already been incorporated into the Ottoman state, and battles with Christian forces had moved to the west. This fact can explain the dervish's lenience towards Christians he meets. His actions are aimed at those who are a part of the Muslim world, of which the lands conquered from Christians have already become a part [6, p. 166]. One of the main goals of Othman Baba in his *velayetname* is the establishment of his spiritual dominance. He does not convert people to Islam but he strives for their recognition of his holiness.

If we compare him to Sarı Saltık, the only person of power who interests him is the Sultan. He does not interact with Christian people of authority. Moreover, even the term "infidel" has a broad meaning in the *vita*: "Anyone who is against *velāyā* and the holder of *velāyā* becomes a denier of prophethood, and therefore an infidel"⁶. That makes an infidel anyone who denies Othman Baba's authority. So, this would put Christians who admit Othman Baba's sainthood in a "better position" than Muslims who deny it. However, "infidelity" is not always used in its negative meaning. According to the *velayetname*, infidelity (*küfr*) can be found the Truth (*Hakk*) [15, p. 52]. A poem that concludes an episode about two dervishes who followed the "infidel" path, says: "O Muslim, there is so much infidelity // That very moment the light of faith arises from it [15, p. 52] // Go exchange your robe and cap to wine // Pledge your heart and soul to a Christian son // Remain in his infidelity because the eternity is there // And his monastery is woven from the Light of God in its entirety" [20, p. 140]. That puts sainthood and path to Truth above orthodox notions of religion.

In general, most of the times the religion of the people Othman Baba interacts with is not even mentioned. It is not the decisive factor for the dervish when he communicates with them. The local Christian population is not viewed from a positive or negative point of view. The decisive factor is the attitude towards Othman and his teachings. In this sense, Christians and Muslims are equal to him. Indicative in regard to this is Othman Baba's visit to Tarnovo. People of Tarnovo were happy to see Othman Baba and expressed their great respect. Othman Baba learned about a dervish who committed a great sin in this city, and punished him [15, pp. 74–75]. While the city dwellers express their respect towards Othman Baba, it is a dervish of another branch who becomes the antagonist in the story. The religion of the people who honor Othman Baba in Tarnovo is not indicated. Of course, it can be the Muslim minority, but there is a reason to believe that it is referred to the citizens as a whole, since the dervish demands recognition of his holiness from representatives of all religions, without making distinctions. In the 15th century Tarnovo was a predominately Christian city [21, p. 42]. In the *vita* the author describes constant praises to the dervish by people of Tarnovo who witnessed his miracles and became his followers en masse. This makes us believe that the author implied not only the Muslim minority of the city but all citizens regardless of their religion.

If we compare Sarı Saltık to Othman Baba, such change in the attitude towards Christians may be explained by the fact that during Othman Baba's period the dervishes began to occupy a different position in the Ottoman state compared to earlier times. If Sarı Saltık lived during the heyday of the borderland culture where the gazi dervishes played an im-

⁶ Quoted in: [19, p. 19].

portant role and were at the forefront of the military expansion and the spread of Islam, Othman Baba lived during the era of centralization reforms of Mehmed II, which could not but have an impact on the wandering dervishes' community. Some controlling measures were implemented even during Orhan's (1324–1362) rule (along with awarding dervishes with tax privileges and tekke constructions), including deportations from the Ottoman territory. However, those measures were far from deliberate prosecutions of Abdal dervishes as a whole. Mehmed II, Bayezid II (1481–1512), Selim I (1512–1520), Süleyman I (1520–1566) took a course on the Sunnitization⁷ of the state and imposition of control over heterodox dervishes. While Sunnism was supported as the basis of the religious system, the Abdal dervishes faced persecution [6, p. 139]. These events also caused a conflict in the Sufi circles. Othman Baba disapproves of dervishes who belong to tariqas or obey to the state. In the *velayetname* dervishes are divided into two groups: “insane” (*dîvâne*) and “licit” (*meşru*). Both groups are called “perfect” (*dahi*) [15, p. 14], however, the “insane” ones are superior to those who act within the framework of shari'ah [17, p. 47].

Considering this historical context, it is not surprising that Othman Baba's main rivals were representatives of local authorities, other dervishes, ulemas, and sceptics. In this context, Christians were not the main “Other” category of people. They were still the part of “Others”, however, the focus of the attention in *velayetname* was shifted to other groups that were “othered” by heterodox Muslims.

Demir Baba Velâyetnâmesi

Both the history of *Demir Baba Velâyetnâmesi* and Demir Baba himself require further study. Demir Baba supposedly lived in the middle of the 16th century (born in 1520 or 1530 [24, p. 218]), many events take place during the reign of Sultan Süleyman I. Demir Baba's case is unique because he was born in the Balkans, lived and died in the Balkans. He was a local saint, many of whose deeds took place on the territory of Central Rumeli.

The legends about him were compiled by a local Deliorman Sufi and were written in the language spoken in the region at that time which occasionally causes confusion in the text [25, pp. 5–6]. Probably, there were not many manuscripts of the *velayetname*, since it was written in Ottoman language with excessive use of Arabic and Persian words, so it could be copied only by a fairly narrow circle of more educated Alevi living in the area [26, pp. 406–407]. The exact time of creation of the *velayetname* has not been established, however, notes left in the margins suggest that the legends compiled in the oldest available manuscript (the 19th century) were created before the 18th century. This *velayetname* seems to have a more realistic approach to geography, so we will take that into account.

Demir Baba Velâyetnâmesi describes Demir Baba's birth and upbringing in great detail, connecting him to other prominent saints like Akyazılı Sultan and Othman Baba. The vita talks about his feats against mythological creatures like snakes (in Moscow) and Christian foes (in Buda) and encounters with other dervishes in the Balkans. A number of stories is dedicated to Demir Baba's miracle making in Central Rumeli (Deliorman). We will pay special attention to that kind of stories.

The image of Demir Baba in the *velayetname* reflects characteristics that were typical for Rum Abdal: he is called an insane one (*dîvâne*) [25, p. 103], he is half naked wearing

⁷ For more detail see: [22; 23].

only a shirt, and carries a staff (a typical Abdal image). Moreover, he is a gazi [25, p. 101]. He shares common dervish saint traits with Sarı Saltık and Othman Baba: a warrior and defender of heterodox Muslims. Considering that the *velayetname* contains legends up to the 18th century, and Demir Baba, or the Iron Father, became a folk character influenced by several cultural layers starting with pre-Christian times [27, p. 12], it is hard to determine, whether that sense of his “locality” and traits of a keeper of his lands of sorts with abilities closely tied to nature belonged to his original image. For example, local nature is the reason why Demir Baba founded his tekke in Deliorman [25, p. 131].

Demir Baba’s interactions with Christian warriors happen further to the west from the area that interests us the most. However, we would like to note that episodes of conversions of prominent Christian warriors into Islam can be found in those interactions with Christian warriors that closely follow the same tropes that we see in *Saltıknâme*: followers of a prominent person convert into Islam with them; secret conversion is present as well. During a battle near Buda, Marco, a well-known Christian warrior, and his squad of 40 people all become Muslims. Another Christian warrior, Karaca, recognizes Demir Baba’s superiority but starts crying because his family would be killed if he changes his religion. Marco (who is still referred by his Christian name) advises him to change faith secretly because he has already recognized the authority of the dervish [25, pp. 106–107]. In general, Christian warriors are called “infidels”.

Ordinary people were a part of the story of the battle near Buda too. Unlike the warriors, they are called “reaya”, not “infidels”, which is much more neutral, even when the Christian ruler orders them to capture Demir Baba [25, p. 105]. It can be concluded that for Demir Baba, as he is portrayed by the author of the vita, the religious affiliation of warriors is of great importance. Meanwhile the ordinary Christian population is not designated by any religiously charged terms. His interactions with ordinary people are related to his miracle making. The religious affiliation of people Demir Baba interacts with is not always clear, however, it can be assumed. For example, in Shumen after witnessing a Demir Baba’s miracle one or two thousand of local residents recognize Demir Baba as a saint and organize a celebration in his honor [25, pp. 129–130]. According to a detailed register of the Nikopol sanjak, in 1578 (close to the period of Demir Baba’s life) there were 226 Muslim and 141 Christian households [28, p. 300]. Thus, the people Demir Baba interacts with were more likely Muslim than Christian, or, probably, they are supposed to represent the locals as a whole, regardless of their religious identity.

His next stop is *Hotal Derbendi* which is located in Deliorman [25, p. 131]. “*Derbendi*” means that local people were derventci who were entrusted with the duty of guarding a mountain pass or a dangerous part of a road. According to the late 15th — 16th centuries registers, in derventci villages the population was predominately Christian or mixed (in cases when Christians converted to Islam lived there, too). Large Muslim communities did not develop there and Muslim religious and education centers were not founded [24, p. 154]. This means we can be confident that *Hotal Derbendi*’s local population was largely Christian. There Demir Baba prays for the local believers (*mu’min* [25, p. 131]). So, who are the “believers” Demir Baba prays for? These can be the few local Muslims, and his prayer is an act of support for them. However, it can also be a pray for other dervishes in Deliorman. Regardless of the true meaning of Demir Baba’s prayer in *Hotal Derbendi*, he faces no conflicts with the local Christian population. After visiting this place, he comes to love Deliorman that is described to him by a local as the most pleasant place in the world,

and finds his tekke there [25, p. 131]. It can be considered an indication that dervishes could share territories with Christian population and encounter no conflicts. However, it can also indicate that heterodox dervishes followed the same strategy as Ottoman authorities or Sufis of the established orders favored by the state: foundation of Islamic public buildings, vakf compounds in predominately Christian areas was a targeted process, stimulated by the authorities, since it made it easier for them to establish control over those areas [29, pp. 102–104]. Proximity to Christian population was not less important for such dervishes as Demir Baba because the preaching of Islam always remained their goal, even if in the *velayetname* the activity of converting Christians to Islam may not be in the foreground. Demir Baba's settlement in Deliorman may be seen more as a declaration of his intentions to make it the area of his missionary activity than a sign of already existing "peace" between dervishes and Christians.

The way Demir Baba treats the common population of the Balkans, regardless of their religion, contrasts with his militant attitude towards Christian warrior in the episodes describing his military exploits. Stories about his military feats can be generally described as usage of related genre tropes put in the relevant historical context. This development comes to no surprise considering that during Demir Baba's times heterodox dervishes found themselves in an even more unfortunate position than before.

The general tendency to centralization was not the only reason why the attitude of the Ottoman state changed towards the heterodox dervishes. Dervishes of the Othman Baba branch were accused of the assassination attempt against Bayezid II in Bitola in 1492. Many of those dervishes were sentenced to death, some of them were deported from Thrace to Asia Minor. Based, inter alia, on the data extracted from the *Demir Baba Velâyetnâmesi*, N. Gramatikova suggests that the surviving part outwardly joined the Bektashi order that was supported by the state and recognized the official authority [6, p. 418]. Moreover, the Rum Abdals with their Shiite-influenced beliefs became one of the groups that was the most influenced by the Safavid Shia propaganda in the last quarter of 15th — 16th centuries [30, pp. 140–141]. At the turn of the century the Safavid dynasty arose, threatening the Ottoman dominance in the region. Shah Ismail I (1501–1524), who was also the head of the Safavid dervish order, achieved great influence in Anatolia, Azerbaijan and Iran. Safavid sheykhs and shahs' missionary activity made his ideas spread throughout Anatolia and Rumelia, making the Safavid issue both foreign and domestic [31, pp. 31–33]. The Kizilbash, followers of Safavid leaders who organized multiple uprisings against the Ottoman rule in Anatolia in the 16th century and were present in Eastern Rumelia, were persecuted [31, p. 37]. This deepened the division between heterodox dervishes and the Sufi orders that were "allowed" and even supported by the Ottomans. In his letters to Süleyman I and the Grand Vizier Rustem Pasha, Bali Efendi, a well-known dervish based in Sofia, who was loyal to the Ottoman state, in order to achieve his personal goal, accused his rivals of Kizilbash heresy and advocated for uncompromising struggle against the Kizilbash, who opposed Sunnism [32]. Only in 1555 the Amasya treaty was signed between Süleyman I and Tahmasp I (1524–1576). Even though by the end of the century the Safavid threat faded the Ottomans kept uprooting Kizilbashism [33, p. 3]. Thus, the pressure on the heterodox Dervishes increased; the problem was not only ideological, but also political.

In these circumstances Demir Baba acts as a defender of heterodox dervishes, even though it does not seem to be his main goal (unlike Othman Baba). When Demir Baba arrives in Razgrad, Abdal Ali Koc complains to him about the local kadi who is hanging

Işık (marginal) dervishes and destroying saints' tombs. Even though in the *velayetname* Abdals and Ishiks are described as different dervish groups, Demir Baba decides to defend the Işık dervishes [25, pp. 131–132]. The entire Razgrad episode seems to have been written under the impression of the persecution of heterodox dervishes.

The main groups opposing Demir Baba were Christian warriors and the central authorities. The vita builds his personal cult of a dervish influential in Central Rumeli. Probably, it can be considered one of the reasons for Demir Baba's willingness to co-habituate with people regardless of their religion, while still following dervish sainthood canons that include participation in gaza.

Conclusions

Thus, in the first centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans and in Central Rumeli in particular, the dervishes gradually became part of the local community, co-habituating with Christians in the same space. Muslim hagiographies, even though they do contain factual information on the period of their formation, are also not completely reliable expressions of their time [34, p.94]. They provide valuable information on the image of Christians and the nature of the dervishes' interaction with them, however, to get the full picture of the Muslim-Christian relations, a wide range of sources needs to be studied (books of travels, registers, Ottoman historiography and other sources), including those created by Christians [35].

We can observe a gradual change in the role of Christians as “the Others” in Muslim vitae. For Sarı Saltık, his role of a gazi was the most important. For him, Islam was not only a religious system, but also as a sign of belonging to a certain political and religious community. Therefore, he sought to convert as many political and religious leaders of Christendom as possible to Islam, expecting their subjects to follow the example. In *Saltıknâme* the image of “the Other” is formed mainly by Christian opponents carrying weapons or wielding power. During the era of active territorial expansion, the formation of the Ottoman state, frontier gazis would be encouraged by stories of triumphant victories over their enemy, “the Other”. Moreover, their activity was encouraged by the Ottomans.

Othman Baba is, first of all, the owner of spiritual and temporal power. The establishment and recognition of this power is the focus of his hagiography. The period of centralization of the Ottoman State became a time of change for everyone, including for the dervishes. The image of “the Other” began to shift, making representatives of the administration, dervishes of the established orders not less important enemies than armed Christian troops.

Demir Baba, a dervish who was already born in the Balkans, was not so militant, but was also inspired by the idea of spreading Islam. He interacted more with the ordinary population and often used peaceful methods, such as performing miracles. Demir Baba, who lived during the era of persecution of the dervishes for foreign and domestic political reasons, is more of a local saint. He participates in campaigns against Christian military forces, but the ordinary population of the Balkans is not in opposition to him, regardless of the religion of the people with whom he interacts.

References

1. Köprülü M. F. *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire*. Transl., ed. by G. Leiser. Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992. 155 p.
2. Wittek P. *The rise of the Ottoman Empire*. London, Royal Asiatic Society, 1938. 224 p.

3. Barkan Ö. L. Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler I: İstila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler. *Vakıflar Degrisi*, 1942, no. 2, pp. 279–386. (In Turkish)
4. Vryonis S. *The Decline of Medieval Helenism in Asia Minor*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971. 532 p.
5. Kafadar C. *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London, University of California Press, 1995. 221 p.
6. Gramatikova N. *Neortodoksaliyat islyam v balgarskite zemi. Minalo i savremennost*. Sofia, Gutenberg, 2011. 599 p. (In Bulgarian)
7. Danova N. Predstava za “drugia”. *Predstavata za “drugia” na Balkanite*. Sofia, Prof. Marin Drinov, 1995, pp. 5–9. (In Bulgarian)
8. Hagen G. Heroes and Saints in Anatolian Turkish Literature. *Oriente Moderno*, 2009, vol. 89, no. 2, 2009, pp. 349–361.
9. Trimmingham. J. S. *Sufijskie ordeny v islame*. Moscow; Sofia, 2002. 480 p. (In Russian)
10. Rusev D. Sarı Saltuk and the Nomads in 13th-Century Dobruja: Pre-Ottoman Sources and Realities. *Chronica*, 2023, vol. 21: *Nomads and their Neighbors in the Middle Ages*, pp. 201–246.
11. Akalın S. H. Ebu'l-Hayr-ı Rûmî'nin Saltuk-nâme'si. *Belleten*, 1992, vol. 40, pp. 37–59. (In Turkish)
12. Ebu'l Hayr-ı Rûmî. *Saltıknâme (Saltık Gazi Destanı)*. Cilt I, II, III. Haz. N. Demir, M. D. Edem. Ankara, Destan Yayınevi, 2007. 702 p. (In Turkish)
13. Karamustafa A. T. Islamization through the Lens of the Saltukname. *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia*. Ed. by A. C. S. Peacock, B. De Nicola, S. N. Yıldız. London; New York, Routledge, 2015, pp. 354–359.
14. Inalcık H. Stefan Duşan'dan Osmanlı İmparatorluğuna. XV. Asırda Rumeli'de Hıristiyan Sipahiler ve Menşeleri. *Fatih Devri Üzerine Tedkik ve Vesikalar*, 1954, no. 1, pp. 137–184. (In Turkish)
15. Kılıç F., Bülbül T., Arslan M. *Otman Baba Velâyetnamesi (Tenkitli Metin)*. Ankara, Grafiker Ofset, 2007. 346 p.
16. Ocak A. Y. *Kalenderiler: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Marjinal Sufilik — XIV–XVII*. İstanbul, Yüzyıllar. Timaş Yayınları, 2016. 384 p.
17. Karamustafa A. T. *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200–1550*. Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 1994. 192 p.
18. Aleksiev B. Vremeto vav vilayetnameto na Otman Baba. *Vremeto na Balkanite: Ezik, Istoria, Pamet*. Red. V. Yankova, I. Saraivanova. Shumen, Universitetsko izdatelstvo „Episkop Konstantin Preslavski“, 2014, pp. 122–127. (In Bulgarian)
19. Inalcık H. Dervish and Sultan: An Analysis of the Otman Baba Vilâyetnâmesi. *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society*. Bloomington, Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1993, pp. 19–36.
20. Averyanov Y. A. Lingvokulyturniye osobennosti sozdania obrazov inovertsev (hristian) v “Vilayet-name-i Otman Baba” (XV v.). *Strategii mezhbalkanskoy kommunikatsii: Perevod. Pereskaz. Umolchanie*. Ed.-in-chief I. A. Sedakova, eds M. M. Makartsev, T. V. Civjan. Moscow, Institut slavianovedeniia RAN Publ.; Indrik Publ., 2021, pp. 137–141. (In Russian)
21. Mutafova K. Toposi na gradskoto prostranstvo v osmanskata dokumentatsia ot XVI–XVII vek (na primera na Tarnovo, Nikopol i Vratsa). *Balkanite — ezik, istoria, kultura*, 2015, vol. 4, pp. 39–62. (In Bulgarian)
22. Boykov G. Abdâl-affiliated Convents and “Sunnitizing” Halveti Dervishes in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Rumeli. *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450 — c. 1750. Islamic History and Civilization*, 2020, vol. 177, pp. 308–340.
23. Krstić T. Illuminated by the Light of Islam and the Glory of the Ottoman Self-Narratives of Conversion to Islam in the Age of Confessionalization. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2009, 51/1, pp. 35–63.
24. Antov N. *The Ottoman ‘Wild West’: The Balkan Frontier in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018. 342 p.
25. Kılıç F. Bülbül T. *Demir Baba Velâyetnâmesi (İnceleme–Tenkitli Metin)*. Ankara, Grafiker Yayınları, 2011. 199 p.

26. Gramatikova N. Zhitieto na Demir Baba i sazdavaneto na rakopisi ot heterodoksnite techenia na islyama v Severoiztochna Bulgaria (izvor za kulturnata i religioznata im istoria). *Myusyulmanskata kultura v balgarskite zemi. Izsledvania*. Sast. R. Gradeva, S. Ivanova. Sofia, IMIR, 1998, pp. 400–436. (In Bulgarian)
27. Ilyev B. Legendite za Demir Baba — Zhelezniyat Bashta. *Demir Baba — Zhelezniyat Bashta. Sbornik Legendi i Nauchni Izsledvaniya*. Sast. B. Iliyev, A. Kanev. Sofia, Kulturnoprosvetno druzhestvo „Rodno Ludogorie“, 2005, pp. 12–45. (In Bulgarian)
28. Georgieva G., Sabev O. Muslim Mystical Brotherhoods in the Town of Shumen 17th–19th Centuries. *History of Muslim Culture in Bulgarian Lands*. Sofia, IMIR, 2001, pp. 300–324. (In Bulgarian)
29. Boykov G., Kiprovskia M. Vakafskite Sela i Sgradi v Balgaria prez Osmanskiya Period. *Vakafite v Balgaria*. Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2020, pp. 37–109. (In Bulgarian)
30. Inalcık H. *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300–1600*. Westpost, Praeger, 2001. 272 p.
31. Karakaya-Strump A. Who really were the Kizilbash? A rethinking of the Kizilbash movement in light of new sources and research. *The Safavid World*. London; New York, Routledge, 2021, pp. 37–56.
32. Mikov L. *Sofiyansat Bali Edendi i negovata grobnitsa*. 2010. Available at: http://bulgaristanalperenleri.blogspot.com/2010/05/blog-post_9256.html?m=1. (In Bulgarian)
33. Zarinebaf-Shahr F. Qızilbash “Heresy” and Rebellion in Ottoman Anatolia During the Sixteenth Century. *Anatolia Moderna. Yeni Anadolu*, 1997, no. 7, pp. 1–15.
34. Hagen G. Chaos, Order, Power, Salvation: Heroic Hagiography’s Response to the Ottoman Fifteenth Century. *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, 2014, vol. 1, no. 1–2, pp. 91–109.
35. Gradeva R. Turtsite v balgarskata knizhnina, XV–XVIII vek. *Balkanski identichnosti v balgarskata kultura ot modernata epoha*. Sast. N. Aretov i N. Chernokozhev. 2001, pp. 112–134. Available at: <https://balgarsbgeu/bg/content/b-identichnosti/140-turtzite-v-balgarskata-knizhnina-hv-hviii-v.html>. (In Bulgarian)

Received: March 9, 2024

Accepted: May 27, 2024

Author’s information:

Tatiana D. Bondarenko — Master of History;
<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3247-0050>, t.bond1503@gmail.com

Отношения между неортодоксальными мусульманами и христианами в Центральной Румелии в первые века османского владычества согласно агиографии трех мусульманских святых*

Т. Д. Бондаренко

Институт балканистики с центром по фракологии Болгарской академии наук, Республика Болгария, 1000, София, ул. Московская, 45

Для цитирования: Bondarenko T. D. Relations between Heterodox Muslims and Christians in Central Rumeli in the First Centuries of the Ottoman Rule According to the Hagiography of Three Muslim Saints // Вестник Санкт-Петербургского университета. Востоковедение и африканистика. 2024. Т. 16. Вып. 3. С. 545–557. <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu13.2024.303>

Представление о том, каким был образ христиан в произведениях неортодоксальных мусульман, позволяет углубить понимание того, как осуществлялось взаимодействие между представителями двух религий в первые века османского владычества на Балканах. На материалах *вилайет-наме* трех мусульманских святых, чьи культы обрели по-

* Публикация подготовлена при поддержке Министерства образования и науки Болгарии в рамках Национальной программы «Молодые ученые и постдокторанты — 2», утвержденной ПМС 206 / 07.04.2022.

пулярность на Балканах (Сары Салтыка, Османа Баба и Демира Баба), в данной статье рассматриваются образ христиан, с которыми взаимодействовали дервиши, динамика изменений этого образа, а также характер их взаимодействий. Основными категориями христиан, с которыми взаимодействовали рассматриваемые в работе мусульманские святые, были воины и простое сельское и городское население (в случае с Сары Салтыком также можно отдельно выделить представителей духовной и светской власти христианского мира). В то время как христианские воины неизменно предстают врагами, простое население зачастую получает помощь дервишей вне зависимости от их религиозной принадлежности. Стоит отметить, что религия представителей простого населения указана далеко не всегда, но ее можно определить по косвенным признакам вроде демографических данных упомянутого места действия. Можно установить, что на формирование образа христиан в *вилайет-наме* сильное влияние оказывали политическая ситуация, связанная с неортодоксальными мусульманами в современный им период, а также их взаимоотношения с государством и дервишами из орденов, лояльных власти. Постепенно именно представители власти и других орденов становятся главными антагонистами мусульманских святых, в то время как противостояние с христианами постепенно теряет актуальность. Другим фактором, влияющим на образ балканских христиан в мусульманской агиографии, можно назвать постепенное перемещение границы государства на запад и становление центральной Румелии частью хинтерланда османского государства.

Ключевые слова: неортодоксальный ислам, дервиши, образ другого, ислам на Балканах, Румелия.

Статья поступила в редакцию 9 марта 2024 г.,
рекомендована к печати 27 мая 2024 г.

Контактная информация:

Бондаренко Татьяна Дмитриевна — магистр истории;
<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3247-0050>, t.bond1503@gmail.com