

D. SOURCES

Excerpt from the *Saltuknāme*: On magic and worship in the four marvelous islands beyond the Indian Ocean

[T411a] ...The storytellers recount the tale of how Server¹ set sail and vanished in the Sea of Umman. They sailed for forty days. They saw many “marvels” (*‘acā’ib*), each one of them was beyond description. They continued until they exited from the Indian Ocean in the direction of Khitay (*Hitā*) and China (*Çin*). They anchored off a city. Seyyid settled in a house. It perturbed him (*gāyet gamm ve gussa çekdi*) to be far away from the province of Umman. He began contemplating and became amazed with himself. Soon sleep took over him and he dreamt. While he was in this hypnagogic state (*vaki’ā ālemin*), a holy old man (*pīr*) appeared and said: “O Server! Do not be weary (*melālet çekme*), there is God’s wisdom (*hikmet*) in all this. There shall not remain a single place which you will not set foot in, neither on the land nor in the sea. [T411b] God Almighty made you a traveller. The purpose of your expedition is to bring these four islands into the path of Islam and convert its people. Pull yourself

1 Server and Seyyid are used interchangeably to refer to Sarı Saltuk.

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together. You have been bestowed with power. Why have you desisted (*fāriğ*) from *gazā*?”

Server awoke, astonished. In the khan there was a merchant who came towards Seyyid and inquired after him. When Seyyid told him [about what he just dreamt] that person said: “Server! On this eastern side of the world there are four islands. They worship strange things (*‘aceb nesne*). One of them is called *Şutāk*. Its people are sorcerers (*sāhīr*). They all worship a lion believing in the fact that the lion is magicproof. In another island they worship a hermaphrodite (*hüsnā*). This [island] is named *‘Acām*. In another one, they worship an effeminate boy [*kız oğlan*, literally ‘a girl-boy’]. This one is called *Gayrān*. Another one is named *Mirāb* where they worship a lovely young handsome boy (*erkek mahbūb oğlan*). They do this because “the Beautiful” is one of God’s attributes and this boy who is bestowed by beauty must be God himself, so they think. As Server heard this he became wrathful and began donning his armor. However, as it had been a long time since he had done this, he was out of practice.

From there, Server got on a ship and headed towards the *Mirāb* Island. When he set foot in their city, he saw that its people gathered and started walking. Server walked with them until they arrived in a desert. They erected a throne in the middle of the desert. A handsome, lovely and charming young man with the sun on his beautiful, sweet face ascended the throne. Like stars in the sky they orbited this sun and sat down around him. They ate and drank, and enjoyed themselves. [T412a] They showered this lovely young man with gifts of silver and gold. Then they lined up in front of him and, God forbid, kowtowed to him. Server did not bow. He was standing. As the people saw him they got to him in no time flat and said: “Why aren’t you kowtowing to our beauty? Are you crazy (*delü*)?” Server replied: “You are the crazy ones! I am not.” That people asked: “Why? What do you say?” Seyyid replied: “O stupid people! The one whom you worship is a boy of humankind, someone who is created as you are. God (*Ta’arr*) is himself the Creator. A creature shall not worship another creature. Worship must be reserved for the *Hālik* (‘Creator’).” Upon hearing these words, the people went to report this to their ruler (*beg*). The *beg* had Seyyid brought to him and said: “Why do you say such things?” Whereupon Seyyid proclaimed the Oneness of God, the prophethood of Muhammad, and to which religion and sect he [Sarı Saltuk] belonged. When the *beg* heard all of this he asked him: “From your words you sound like Saltuk-i Rūmī.” Server replied: “Yes you are right, I am he. I came to guide you towards the [path of] true religion and save you from disbelief and ignorance.” The *beg* then said “welcome” and converted to Islam along with his entire retinue without resistance.

The people who worshiped the girl-boy heard that this group of people had become Muslim believers, and sent an envoy to them and asked: “Why did you abandon your

old religion and obey Saltık instead?” The messenger brought the message and the *beg* asked Seyyid how he would like to respond. Seyyid asked the *beg* to send him there to answer [T412b] this question in person. Then he bid farewell to the *beg* and its people and left with the envoy. He arrived at the place. The people of the island came [to the shore] to receive Seyyid. Server disembarked and greeted the people. They greeted Server in return and took him to the palace where he was received with honor (*izzet*) and shown hospitality. Afterwards, the *beg* asked: “Why do you say that our religion is superstitious (*bātıl*)? Tell us so that we may learn.” Server stood up and began explaining the Islamic religion. He described God Almighty, his attributes and power, the miracles of Muhammad (*Resūl*) and his prophecy, the rightfulness of the old Quran as it is the marker of right over superstition (*furkân-ı azîm*). As the people heard all of this they were filled with admiration. They declared: “Server! We are now your subordinates and accept your religion.” They confessed to the faith and became Muslims. Seyyid taught them about the doctrine, the Islamic clergy and laws.

The people who worshipped the *hüşnâ* heard about this and came to raid and plunder the island. When Seyyid was informed about this he ordered an army to be raised. They embarked for the island by ship and went ashore. The people of the island rose up against them. No words can describe how great a battle it was. Later, Server took his sword and walked directly towards the enemy forces and slaying them one by one. The enemy fled, enfeebled and defeated. [Sarı Saltuk and his army] entered the citadel. The *hüşnâ* whom this people worshipped was named Meydâl. [T413a] Meydâl who saw that his/her army was defeated, girded on and came up against Server and said: “O Saltuk! Why did you come to this place?” You invite these people to [the path of] your invisible God (*Taîrri*). How do you want these people to find this God to request their needs and wishes?” “If you accept Him as your God, He will fulfill all your wishes and will not reject any. The reason why He is hidden is because of His brightness.” Then Meydâl said: “O Server! I am a hermaphrodite. I wish that God Almighty makes me a man by eliminating my womanhood (*Ḥaḳ Te’âlâ beni er eylesün avratlağım gidersün*). Then we will see if your religion is the rightful one. There is no need for us to fight.” Upon this Server said: “*hüşnâ* counts as a woman. I will invoke God to make you a woman and to rid you of your manhood.” They replied: No, thanks. I wish to be a man instead.” Server agreed and invoked God. The person was instantly transformed to a woman. Meydâl saw this and started crying: “We had agreed that I was going to become a man!” “What first came out of my mouth was accepted in the House of God Almighty. Let us hope that your wish is accepted next,” said Server Seyyid. He raised his hands and prayed. The people said “so be it (*âmin*)” and saw that Meydâl started trembling. Then he shook himself off and became a man. When Meydâl realized what happened he threw himself at Server’s feet and confessed

to the religion. The entire population became Muslim and joyfully learnt the rules of their new religion from Seyyid who was living among them.

One day while Server was sitting at home on the night of Wednesday ten chickens and one rooster [T413b] entered from the back door and came inside. They encircled Seyyid. The rooster flew at Seyyid and hit him on the eye just as he was wondering how all these chickens suddenly appeared. Seyyid kicked the rooster back and the rooster died immediately. The chickens started running away in various directions until they disappeared from sight. Seyyid took the rooster and tied it by its foot. He recited *āyete'l-kürsî*² and left on it (*üstüne... okıdı kōdı*). At dawn he saw that a human corpse was laying there tied at the foot. Server understood that this was because of magic (*sibr işidür*) and informed the others. They said: “These people come in many disguises with the sole purpose of harming us. They became enemy to us because we entered your religion.” “I am now setting out for there. Immediately gird on weapons!”, Seyyid ordered. They prepared the ships and landed on the island. And what do they see? A strange tribe was gathered on the shore, some of them were horses, some others lions, some were tigers, and some others leopards, cattle and mules. In the appearance of these various monsters they had the body of a human, feet of a camel, claws of a lion and tail of a horse. With arrows, axes, swords and spears in their hands they were getting ready [for war]. Amazed at the sight of these creatures, Seyyid understood immediately that they were experts in magic and deceit (*cāzūların kāmilleridür mekkārlardur*). “One cannot be too wary of them,” he thought to himself and inscribed *esmā* [the ninety-nine names of God] and *havāşş* [i.e., the magical properties of Koranic verses] on his entire body. He also had his people do the same and marched against them. The enemy could not overcome them and they fled.

Server entered the city and saw that [T414a] the people were ascribed various forms and appearances. Seyyid had an idea, so he ordered for the surah of *en'ām*³ to be recited. [The Muslims] put them to the sword as, one by one, they assumed human form. Overpowered, the magicians changed their forms again and asked for mercy. “No mercy for you, unless you become Muslim!” proclaimed Server and marched against them. As [the sorcerers] cried out, one of them came forward and said: “O Seyyid! I am their chief (*beg*). Why are you killing us?” “You are infidel, deceitful sorcerers. Wherever we find you we kill you,” Seyyid replied, and he took his sword

2 The 255th verse of the 2nd surah of the Quran (al-Bağara), the so-called “throne verse” is usually recited to ward off the evil spirits.

3 *al-an'ām*, aka “the cattle” is the sixth surah of the Quran with 165 verses and addresses to various themes such as fighting polytheism and unbelief, the oneness of God, and also to the story of Ibrahim who calls people to stop worshipping celestial bodies.

and went forward. That *beg* insisted: Server, please show some patience and let us speak. You tell us to become Muslim, however if we join your religion, our magic will come undone (*sibrümüz bātıl olur*). If we cannot practice magic, then we can no longer dwell here, because once a year giant birds, the size of a camel, come to this island. They attack us from the sky and hunt us down like little chicks and slay us. But when we do our magic trick and shift shapes, they cannot come to us. It is because of the fear of these birds that we learn magic and practice it.” “When is the next time the birds are coming?” Seyyid asked. “Forty-five days left,” they replied. Server further said: “If I strike fear in these birds not to come near you, do you promise you stop practicing magic and become Muslim?” “So be it,” they said unanimously.

Seyyid waited patiently until the birds arrived. The birds, which are called “*mürg-i dābbe*” came in a countless and [T414b] incomparable manner and landed on that island and that city, and started attacking its people. Server took out an arrow and shot it at the birds. The arrow hit one of them but did not penetrate its skin. Just when Seyyid was astonished at this, that bird came and grabbed him with its talon and took off. Seyyid fought back, but to no avail. Just when the bird almost killed him, he took out a dagger and stabbed the bird in the eye. The eye came out. The bird threw itself to the ground in pain and started screaming making all sorts of noises. The other birds took off in all directions until they got lost from the sight. A voice was heard from above the sky: “The birds took flight and fled. From now on they will not come to this place. O saint (*velī*) why do you want to bring salvation to this people?”

When the people and Seyyid heard this voice they became struck with admiration and wondered to whom it might have belonged. Seyyid, immersed in thought, looked up into the sky and noticed a silhouette. He drew an arrow and aimed at the silhouette. The silhouette descended from the sky twirling and hitting the ground. They saw that it was a demon (*dīv*) and that it had died from the arrow wound. The people applauded Server’s bravery and prowess. Suddenly, bolts of lightning and flames blazed across the sky. The army of demons covered the sky like a black cloud and soon the battle began. Server fought with the *dīvs* for seven days and seven nights. [T415a] He knocked out three hundred *dīvs*. More *dīvs* descended from the sky, lined up and walked against Server. Seyyid ordered that everybody should throw bottles filled with naphtha (*neft*) and set the enemy on fire. While the *dīvs* were trying to fly away to escape being burned, the people started screaming. Just so you know, *dīvs* are scared of high volumes of noise: pain shoots through their heads, their brains slosh and they drop to the ground, face down. When this happened, the people rushed to them and slayed them one by one, while at the same time they kept playing *tabl* and *kūs* drums, and horns (*nefir*). The *dīvs* fled the scene and dispersed because of all this noise.

“Server now that we know about their disposition we can overpower them,” said the people to Seyyid. They confessed to the religion and became Muslim.

SOURCE: Ebü'l-Hayr-i Rûmî, *Saltuknâme*, ed. F. İz (Cambridge 1986), T411a–T415a; Ebü'l Hayr-i Rûmî, *Saltuk-nâme*, ed. Ş. H. Akalın, 3 vols. (Ankara 1990), vol. III, 60–65.

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