

Rose Blossoms, Ashura Pudding, and a “Golden Trophy:” Embodied Material Traces of Islamic Mysticism in Ottoman Hungary

Sara Kuehn

To cite this article: Sara Kuehn (2023) Rose Blossoms, Ashura Pudding, and a “Golden Trophy:” Embodied Material Traces of Islamic Mysticism in Ottoman Hungary, *Material Religion*, 19:5, 439-456, DOI: [10.1080/17432200.2023.2285584](https://doi.org/10.1080/17432200.2023.2285584)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17432200.2023.2285584>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 24 Jan 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 122



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

**rose blossoms, ashura
pudding, and a “golden
trophy:” embodied
material traces of islamic
mysticism in ottoman
hungary
sara kuehn**

Sara Kuehn teaches Islamic mysticism and Islamic aesthetics, art and cultural history at the Department of Islamic Theological Studies, University of Vienna, and the Department of Islamic Theology and Religious Education, University of Innsbruck. She works at the interdisciplinary juncture of (art) history, anthropology, theology, and religious and cultural studies. Since 2011, she has been conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Hungary, focusing on Islamic mysticism in the Ottoman period. Her recent and forthcoming publications include several book chapters on visual-material culture and Islamic mysticism, such as "Watching Myself in the Mirror, I Saw 'Ali in My Eyes': On Sufi Visual and Material Practice in the Balkans," in *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World* (2019), 151–173; "Piercing the Skin: Pain as a Form of Piety in Rifa'i Ritual Sensescapes." In *Collectes sensorielles. Recherche-Musée-Art* (2021), 65–102; as well as "The Literal and the Hidden in Some Albanian Bektashi Religious Materialities." In *Beyond Karbala: New Approaches to Shi'i Materiality* (2024), 63–90; and "Sufi Materiality in Islamic Painting." In *Sufi Material Culture* (forthcoming). She is currently writing an ethnography entitled *Vision and Visuality in European Sufism*.
sara.kuehn@univie.ac.at

ABSTRACT

This study examines three of the most iconic sites associated with Islamic mysticism, or Sufism, in Ottoman Hungary. These are three mausoleums located in Buda, Pécs, and Turbék, near Zigetvár. The first two are the final resting places of the Sufi mystics known as Gül Baba and Idris Baba. The third is Sultan Süleyman's mausoleum next to a Sufi dervish lodge, the foundations of which were uncovered during recent excavations. The research sheds light on the (embodied) material practices associated with these sites, as well as their sensory engagement and synaesthetic experiences. The bodies of the spiritual leaders, presented in the first two cases, serve as living sites of mystical experiences, both through self-destructive acts graphically represented on their bodies, and through bodily miracles such as hypercorporeality, multilocality, and dream visions. The third case concerns the body of a secular and a spiritual leader, the temporary burial of his disemboweled and embalmed body in the mausoleum at Turbék, and the tradition that his heart and entrails were kept in a reliquary-like vessel at the site, which interestingly paralleled contemporary Habsburg customs. Building on Thomas Csordas (1990) and Manuel Vásquez (2011), I explore the role of human and non-human "supernatural" actors interacting in these mystical networks, focusing on the role of their embodiment and materiality, their movement and their physically fragmented bodies.

Keywords: sufism, materiality, body-marking, branding, scarification, mortification of the flesh, dream visions, multilocation, hypercorporeality, evisceration, heart burial, relics

Material Religion volume 19, issue 5, pp. 439–456

DOI: [10.1080/17432200.2023.2285584](https://doi.org/10.1080/17432200.2023.2285584)



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

After the Ottoman victory at the Battle of Mohács in 1526, led personally by Sultan Süleyman the Lawgiver (r. 1520–1566), the Ottomans began to gradually conquer parts of Hungary, most notably the city of Buda (Budín in Ottoman) in 1541, resulting in 150 years of Ottoman rule over Hungary. As in other newly conquered parts of the empire, Sufi dervishes, or Muslim mystics, were instrumental in consolidating the newly acquired territory. Their influence in the Ottoman empire was so great that Süleyman's God-given caliphate underwent a "mystical turn" (Yılmaz, 2018). Sources from the 16th and 17th centuries inform us about the close relationship between the Sufi dervish orders and the military in Ottoman Hungary, which went so far that the dervishes not only provided for the spiritual needs of the frontier troops, but also participated in combat. Not only the famous Gül Baba of Buda, but also Idris Baba of Pécs, are said to have taken part in military actions.

The most iconic surviving sites associated with Islamic mysticism in Ottoman Hungary are the mausoleums (*türbe* in Turkish, *turbék* in Hungarian) of the two most famous mystic actors, known as Gül Baba in Buda and Idris Baba in Pécs (Peçuy in Ottoman). Excavations at Turbék, near Zigetvár, recently revealed the foundations of Sultan Süleyman's *türbe* next to a Sufi dervish lodge. All three *loci sacri* continue to attract visitors today. Despite their public prominence, little is known about the early modern socio-religious materialities of these three sites. The present discussion sheds light on Sufi corporeal performances and (embodied) material practices associated with the sites, as well as their sensory engagements and synesthetic experiences. Building on Thomas Csordas (1990) and Manuel Vásquez (2011), the role of human and non-human "supernatural" actors (spirits, saints), interacting in these mystical networks is explored, focusing on the role of their embodiment and materiality, their movement (especially their hypercorporeality, multilocation, long-distance abilities), and their physically fragmented bodies.

Rose Blossoms in Buda

Located on Rózsadomb, or Rose Hill, in the north of Buda, overlooking the city, the octagonal, copper-domed *türbe* is today reached *via* a steep cobblestone road. The topographical landmark and the adjacent dervish *tekke* (Sufi gathering place; destroyed in 1686) are first mentioned by the 16th-century Hungarian district governor Georgius Wernher (1497–1567), who, in his work *De admirandis Hungariae aquis hypomnematium* (1563, 195), traces their foundation to Yahyapaşazade Mehmed Paşa, the *beylerbeyi* (governor general) of Buda from 1543 to 1548. In the middle of the seventeenth century the place was visited by several travelers, among them the Austrian imperial war commissioner Heinrich Ottendorf in 1665 (1943, 85), the English physician Edward Brown in 1669 (1685, 34), followed by two Italians during the reconquest of Hungary (1684–1686), the soldier and

scholar Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli (1658–1730) (1930), and Giovanni Paolo Zenarolla, provost of Shékesfehértúr (1688, 210), all of whom state that the head of the Buda *tekke* was a certain “Ghül Bava or Rose Father;” “Julpapa or Father of the Rose;” respectively “Ghiul baba or Padre Rose.” All use the honorific “baba,” or “father,” which was especially common in dervish circles to refer to a respected spiritual guide, or leader or to address the head of the *tekke*. One of these Fathers of the Rose(s) is said to be buried in this *türbe*, the northernmost Islamic pilgrimage site in the world.

The famous 17th-century Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi (d. 1683), who arrived in Buda in 1663, similarly addresses the head of the *tekke*, as *güllü baba*, or “Little Father of the Roses;” in verses composed in his honor. He provides us with some more information (2002, 244), for instance, that the baba’s participation in numerous military campaigns earned him the title of *gözcü* (spiritual protector or patron) of Buda (2002, 135). Evliya also refers to the lodge as *tekke-i Al-i Aba* (family of the cloak, i.e., belonging to the family of the Prophet) and, as Balázs Sudár notes, seems to use the terms *al-i aba* and Bektaşî Sufi order (that emerged in the sixteenth century) synonymously (2008, 229). Some twenty years later, in 1687, Zenarolla reports that the *tekke* could house up to sixty Sufi dervishes. These, he says, walk around half-naked, enjoy great respect everywhere, and are revered as zealous servants of the Islamic prophet Muhammad (Zenarolla 1688, 210).

An illustration of a visual referent can be found in one of the earliest known Ottoman costume albums, painted by Csöbör Balázs of Szigetvár, a Hungarian in the employ of an Ottoman courtier—more than a hundred years before Zenarolla’s account—in Constantinople in 1570 (Figure 1). The Sufi dervish wears a collarless, short brown vest known as *haydariye*—after Imam ‘Ali, who is known as *al-haydar* (the lion)—the cut of the sleeves representing an ‘*ayn*, the first letter that appears at the beginning of ‘Ali’s name. The *haydariye* is the garment that symbolizes the *jihad al-akbar*, which refers to the internal struggle or spiritual striving against one’s ego, known as *nafs*. This concept emphasizes the personal and spiritual struggle to overcome negative inclinations, temptations, and ego-driven impulses in order to achieve greater self-control and spiritual growth, and is considered a higher form of *jihad* than the external or physical struggle often associated with armed conflict. In contrast to the common practice of grown men sporting beards, the dervish is clean-shaven with traces of a stubbled beard, which associates him with the wandering dervishes. He wears a high white headdress with many folds which, as noted by Claus-Peter Haase (1995, 227), mirrors the style worn by those who supported Kalender Çelebi during the 1527 rebellion in Anatolia depicted in the *Süleymanname* (Book of Süleyman, completed in 1558) (Atıl 1986, fig. 22 (folio 239a)). It is noteworthy that Kalender Çelebi was reputed to be a

FIG 1

Bektaşî dervish who can be identified as a Gül Baba. Painted by Csöbör Balázs of Szigetvár. 1570. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Cod. Guelf. 206 Blank., fol. 22v.



Rose Blossoms, Ashura Pudding, and a “Golden Trophy:” Embodied
Material Traces of Islamic Mysticism in Ottoman Hungary
Sara Kuehn

Volume 19
Issue 5

Material Religion
Article

descendant of Hacı Bektaş Veli, the progenitor of the Bektaşî dervish order. In a Bektaşî context, his earring (*mengüş*) indicates that he is a celibate dervish or baba. His affiliation with the Bektaşî is corroborated by the words “Allah, Muhammad, ‘Ali”—a kind of trinity in Bektaşî doctrine—which can be made out on one of the pages of the open book he carries in his left hand. Balázs’ painting clearly communicates the dervish’s immersion in these words while holding a horn (*luffar*) in his right hand.

A fur pouch (*cild-bend*) attached to his belt (*kemer*) is held together by a white disk that can be compared to the “whitish Stone” that, according to Edward Brown, adorned the belt of the Gül Baba and was “bigger then the palme of my hand which was

a Galactites or Milke-Stone." The dervish's temple and bare arms are covered all over with enigmatic red circles alternating with straight red lines. What do these marks, these materializations on the human body, signify?

The name of the dervish complex, Gül Baba, or Father of the Rose(s), is, as Lajos Fekete has shown, a mystical honorific (1954, 13), an insignia of those who have "attained" (*erenler*; Birge 1937, 261), used in several dervish orders to denote a particular rank of dervish. The dervishes' search for God usually took the form of *zikir*, the communal ritual of remembering and repeating the divine names, the bodily practice of which triggers emotional and corporeal sensations. Their mystical language often resorts to the metaphor of *burning* to describe the ardor of human-divine love caused by the painful process of separation from the divine. It fuels the drive for mystic ecstasy, the burning of the self, the *nafs*—an immaterial matter—in God, leading to the complete annihilation of the self (*fana*). Suspended in a space between the material and the metaphysical, body and soul, is what Seema Golestaneh calls "the devastated site of the corporeal form" that leads to a "metaphysical materiality" (2012, 81).

This mystical conceptualization of the burning of the *nafs* leading to *fana*' is firmly rooted in Sufi thought. The great Sufi poet Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207–1273) speaks of "our journey [i.e. the spiritual path] to the Rose-Garden of Union" and also mentions the thorns of the celestial rose (Nicholson 1898, 11, 121), for it is only through pain and ordeal that a Sufi achieves union with the divine beloved. The esoteric dimension (*batin*) of this painful process is elucidated by another eminent Sufi poet, Farid al-Din 'Attar (1136–1221), in *The Language of the Birds*. He explains:

Whoever has been wounded [by the pain of God's love] must submit to the branding iron [to stop the bleeding]. As long as you don't bear the mark of the brand in your heart, how should anyone cast a glance on you? Display the brand in your heart, because by means of the brand "the people of the heart" recognize "the man"! (*Mantiq al-tair* 37/4, 127, Ritter 2012, 258).

The branding iron refers to cauterizing instruments used in Islamic medical treatments, a widespread and extremely painful practice. The pain was so excruciating that several strong men had to be called in to hold down the patient's limbs. Treatments were performed by placing a red-hot metal tool such as a skewer, awl, or spike on the affected area(s) of the patient's body, which burned the skin. Various types of metal cauterizing devices were therefore used specifically for branding, i.e. cauterization (Ganidagli *et al.* 2004, 165–169). As in the case of medical cauterization, the dervishes left permanent marks on the flesh with their red-hot iron implements, alluding to the ardor of divine love that becomes as "lovely as a rose garden" for the true lover personified in Abraham (Qur'an 21:70; Schimmel 2003, 278). Their scars are transformed into "roses" or *gül*, leading

them to closer communion with the “rose-bush”—Allah himself. Just as Caroline Walker Bynum alludes to the stigmata “as transformations in other sorts of matter—in bleeding hands that are analogous to bleeding wood and bleeding bread” (2015, 329), the burn marks are transsubstantiated into celestial roses, or roses of the divine rose garden. On another level of mystical interpretation, the burn marks serve as a sign or seal of the immolation of self, or *nafs*, indicating that the lover embraces the rose thorn that pricks him, thus embracing the death of the self, the mystical task of self-preservation in favor of an exclusive focus on the divine. In this esoteric (*batin*) exegesis, all material data (external appearances in the material world, *zahir*) are apprehended and can be deciphered by reference to esoteric teachings revealed only to a closed circle of initiates. For the dervish, *gül* thus has the meaning of “glowing rose.” It is remarkable that not only the embodied ritual signs, but also the red-hot iron instruments, with which the dervishes inflicted the wounds themselves, were called *gül*.

This tradition of self-mutilation was a widespread practice in medieval and early modern Sufi orders. The bodies of Sufi mystics from Hungary to India, like the figure depicted by Csöbör Balázs, became the sites of graphically displayed self-mortification. These rituals of bodily pain, performed in moments of spiritual ecstasy to express devotion to God, symbolized the transcendence of the dervishes’ *nafs* from the material world. For the bearers of the *gül*, the physicality of the body itself, its embodiedness (i.e., beingness) as a symbol of the *nafs* or inner temptations, is central to their material culture, over and above certain types of artifacts.

Further insight is provided by a ritual of the Rukai dervishes documented by Ignatius Muradcan Tosunyan (1740–1807), a Constantinople-born Armenian dragoman (interpreter) of the Swedish Embassy and private secretary to Swedish King Gustav III (1771–1792). We can assume that this ritual had some parallels to the rituals that took place in the Gül Baba *tekke* (for a glimpse into the sensescapes of a contemporary such ritual, see Kuehn 2021, 65–102). Tosunyan’s embeddedness in the local milieu gave him the opportunity to penetrate the otherwise inaccessible Ottoman Sufi communities and to attend Sufi rituals. This privileged position allowed him, as Ariel Glucklich points out in *Sacred Pain*, to elucidate the use of pain on an “emic” level (2001, 32). Tosunyan graphically describes the climax of the body-altering ritual when, in ecstatic self-annihilation, practitioners press red-hot irons onto their skin, insert them into their mouths, stab themselves in the flesh with swords, or thrust other weapons (*charb* or *zenğirli şiş*; Frembgén 1999, 150) into their bodies without shedding a drop of blood, in defiance of nature. They reportedly feel no pain because their shaykh, in his role as a living saint, blows on them, touches them with his hands, and recites verses from the Qur’an to heal their wounds (d’Ohsson 1790, 254) (Figure 2):

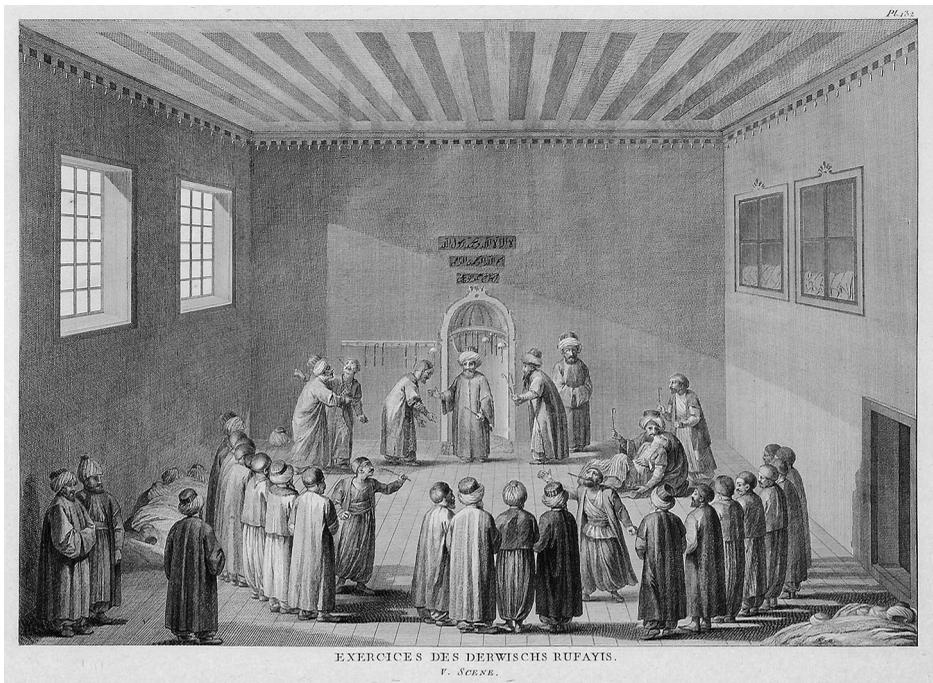


FIG 2

Dervishes in ecstasy burn themselves with red-hot instruments or pierce themselves with swords and have their wounds treated by the shaykh. Unknown painter. Commissioned by Mouradgea d'Ohsson [Ignatius Muradcan Tosunyan]. 1790. Corresponding text: "Exercices des Derwischs Rufayis, 5ième scène" [Exercises of the Rufayis Dervishes, 5th scene].

Thanks to the furies of this holy intoxication, and to the surprising courage of which they make a new merit in the eyes of the divinity, they all support the violence of the pain stoically and even with gaiety. If some among them nonetheless succumb to their sufferings, they throw themselves into the arms of their fellows, but without the least cry or sign of pain.

Before using the metal instruments, all called *gül*, are used, the dervishes devoutly kiss them. This signifies not only devotion to the physical instruments prominently displayed in and next to the *mihrab* (the prayer niche indicating the direction to Mecca), but also that divine agency is attributed to the devices during the ritual. Tosunyan goes on to explain (d'Ohsson 1790, 254):

This is why they give to these red-hot irons, and the other instruments that they use in their mysterious frenzy, the name of *Gul* [*gül*], which signifies rose, wishing thereby to indicate that the usage they make of them is as agreeable to the soul of the *Derwisches* elect [*erenler*], as the odor of that flower would be to the voluptuaries of the age.

Scent—in this case, the pungent odor of red-hot iron, acrid smoke, and the stench of charred flesh—also created a mood conducive to mystical ecstasy. The invocation of the rose and the perceived power of its scent serve as a synesthetic mechanism

to conjure what is perceived as a heavenly fragrance. The material traces left on the participants' bodies during the ritual evoke sensory states and serve as embodied sense memories that, as Robert Orsi has observed, make "the invisible visible" and thus enable the "corporalization of the sacred" (2005, 74).

A special sensory, emotional, and aesthetic intensity can be presumed because this ecstatic context establishes temporal contact with a transcendent realm, an embodied experience that the Sufis call *hal*. Through this spiritual power, practitioners can overcome ordinary bodily limitations, such as the feeling of pain, with the feeling of devotional love. This is possible because the dervishes believe that by burning the bodily passions, that is, by overcoming the vulnerability of the perishable body, pure divine love can be experienced. Triggered by such body modification rituals, neurological processes are activated that also implant esoteric knowledge. The resulting permanent scars, as Pierre Clastres has pointed out in his exploration of the marks resulting from Guayaky Indian initiation ordeals, serve as corporeal mnemonic devices (Clastres 1987, 184).

In this way, the botanical rose was transformed into a mystical symbol known as *jull*, *gul*, or *đul* (Ottoman Turkish, Persian, and Bosnian for "rose," respectively) for burning faith and fiery zeal, used performatively in dervish rituals. The title of Gül Baba is bestowed upon a "baba with a zealous soul," one who glows and burns with longing for God, for whom this ritual of pain is as pleasant as the fragrance of a blooming rose. He can be recognized by his ritualized, self-inflicted burns and linear incisions, which, as in Csöbör Balázs's illustration, are seen as roses bursting into bloom (see also Kuehn forthcoming). The touch and embrace of the red-hot burning iron tool or other weapon thus becomes a "means of access to the divine" (cf. Bynum 1990, 68, n. 51).

As noted above, Muslim ascetics conceptualized this as *jihad* (struggle) against internal enemies. Self-discipline, mortification of the flesh, and the "chosen pain of asceticism is thus the instrument of combat, the weapon used against one's own soul" (Glücklich 2001, 24). However, *jihad* was not only waged against one's own self, but also against external enemies. The importance of the Gül Baba *tekke* for Ottoman soldiers (especially the Janissaries; from the Turkish *yeni ceri*, or "new troops," composed mainly of young Christian boys taken from Balkan families and converted to Islam) is undergirded by the claim of the 17th-century chronicler Ibrahim Peçevi (1574–1649) that Muslim soldiers sacrificed animals (*kurban*) in this *tekke* in 1603 (1866, 141).

The close connection of the mystical jihadists with the military is also illustrated by the members of the *deliler* (literally, mad, fiery) branch of the *akıncı* (literally, raiders), who originated in the Balkans and, like the dervishes, mutilated themselves by piercing their skin and inserting metal instruments and feathers into the wounds. During a visit to the Pasha of Buda, the Habsburg diplomat Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq (1521–1591) describes a group of *deliler* as follows:

When we were just in sight of Buda, by order of the Pasha some of his house hold came to meet us, ... [they] had cut a long line in the skin of their bare heads, which were for the most part shaved, and inserted in the wound an assortment of feathers though dripping with blood they concealed the pain and assumed a gay and cheerful bearing, as if they felt it not. Close before me were some of them on foot, one of whom walked with his bare arms a-kimbo, both of which he had pierced above the elbow with a Prague knife. Another, who went naked to the waist, had stuck a bludge on in two slits he had made in his skin above and below his loins, whence it hung as if from a girdle. A third had fixed a horse's hoof with several nails on the top of his head. But that was old, as the nails had so grown into the flesh, that they were quite immovable.

While the entanglements between the dervishes and the *deliler* need further investigation, it can be assumed that these soldiers were in contact with the dervishes active at the Gül Baba *tekke*. They performed similar forms of body modification as the dervishes, such as piercing, branding, and scarification, and they also felt no pain or endured it with a stoic mien. The resulting permanently embodied sites of visual/visceral memory that mark their bodies are crucially linked to their social and communicative functions, which can be understood as a form of "corporetics (sensory, corporeal aesthetics)," to use a term coined by Christopher Pinney (2009, 193).

Ashura Pudding in Pécs

Ibrahim Peçevi first met Idris Baba in Pécs in 1591, before traveling to Banja Luka, then the capital of the Bosnian province, where he was to meet the Bosnian *beylerbeyi* Hasan Pasha, with whom he was acquainted. In his chronicle, Peçevi refers to the baba as one of the non-human *budela* (literally, "substitute," a particular group within the spiritual hierarchy of mystics; Birge 1937, 119, n. 1). His access to the immaterial realm (*alam al-ghayb*), which is hidden from most people, enabled Idris Baba to have a dream vision of the Ottoman commander. This he transmitted to Peçevi. In Banja Luka, Peçevi informed Hasan Pasha that the baba foresaw that wherever the *beylerbeyi* went, he would be blessed and protected because the saints (*ervah*, *evliya*, and *budela*) would support him, and he would receive additional support "through the mediator of the grace of Allah, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law Ali who, supported by an invisible army, will be with him and his troops" (1866, 125–126). Hasan Pasha believed in the supernatural signs of the non-human actors and their protection ahead of the campaign and sent a rich reward to the baba (1866, 125–126).

Although the pasha's campaign ended in a heavy defeat and Idris Baba's prophecy was not fulfilled, Evliya Çelebi, some seventy years later, nevertheless recounts the baba's many miracles. On a visit to Pécs in June 1663, the traveler, who spent a total of six years in Ottoman Hungary, relates what may be considered the "founding myth" of the baba. According to this,

when Hasan Pasha was besieged by a large Christian army near Petrina in southern Slovenia in 1591, he suddenly received help from Idris Baba, whose figure materialized on the spot. The physical presence of the baba in the midst of the soldiers and his encouraging shouts boosted the morale of the soldiers and contributed significantly to the victory over the enemy troops.

The Ottoman armies were often accompanied by such charismatic dervishes, whose fervent speeches and loud war cries (such as *Allahu, Allahu. Allahu, hu, hu*) spurred the soldiers to heroic deeds (cf. Fischer 2009, 232–233). Here, too, the symbol of the rose is employed allegorically, for just like the invocations recited at the beginning of the Bektāṣi rituals or during animal sacrifices (*kurban*), such battle cries were called *gūlbang* (literally, rose call), with the rose being invoked as a symbol of Allah. The religious authority of the dervishes in the ranks of the troops was associated with their far-reaching abilities, their control over supernatural beings, and their ability to perform miracles beyond the natural order. A woodcut by the Danish draughtsman and painter Melchior Lorck (1527–1583), likely portrays a dervish acting as a field crier, offering a window into the visual culture of the 16th-century battlefield (Figure 3). Lorck, who

FIG 3
Dervish (?) supporting Ottoman troops. Woodcut by Melchior Lorck. 1582. The Turkish Publication. Fischer catalog #107. Corresponding text (1688 edition): “Ein geistlicher Feldschreyer” [a clerical field shouter].



traveled to the Ottoman-Hungarian frontier zone on a diplomatic mission for the emperors Ferdinand I (r. 1521–1564) and Maximilian II (r. 1562–1576), depicts an exhausted-looking holy man whose emaciated, ascetic body is naked except for a loincloth and who is supporting himself with his arms around the necks of two other men (all three rendered with shaved heads except for a pigtail at the back of their heads).

The story goes that after Hasan Pasha's victory over the large Christian army, a search was made for Idris Baba, but he could not be found. It was later discovered that he had miraculously been cooking Ashura pudding in a large cauldron in Pécs to celebrate the Ashura festival, which commemorates the martyrdom of the third Shiite Imam Husain on the battlefield of Karbala in present-day Iraq in 680 CE. To support the positive outcome of the battle, he distributed the (elusive) material benefits of the miracle, which had been transformed into a powerful source of spiritual and physical nourishment, to the populace of Pécs.

As the city of Pécs lay 400 km from the battlefield, it is believed that the baba's bodily miracle occurred through his remarkable long-distance capabilities, enabling him to be physically present in multiple locations simultaneously, transcending the confines of time and space. The baba's hypercorporeality afforded help and protection from afar, a common theme throughout Sufi literature (Bashir 2011, 193). The ability to transcend body boundaries, to translocate the body, underscored the baba's reputation as a miraculous protector. For this reason, after his death, the tomb of the miracle-working baba in Pécs became the destination of pious pilgrimages (Evliya 2002, 119–120).

A Golden Trophy in Zigetvár

Extraordinary (embodied) material practices also took place at Turbék, near the Hungarian border fortress of Zigetvár, 33 km west of Pécs. Since most of the material remains of this site were obliterated after 1699, when a large part of Hungary passed from Turkish to Austrian rule, the significance of the place has survived only in popular memory. Excavations on the top of the Turbék Vineyard near Zigetvár, however, carried out from 2015 to 2017, revealed the foundations of the *türbe* of Sultan Süleyman (r. 1520–1566), who died during the siege of Zigetvár on September 7, 1566.

While the aged sultan died of natural causes in his tent, contemporary accounts eulogize him as a Muslim warrior of the faith (*ghazi*) who died as a martyr (*şehid*) in holy war (*jihad*). Over time, a small Ottoman settlement with a mosque, a dervish lodge and guard barracks grew up around the site where Süleyman died. These building activities proclaimed to the world the significance of this Ottoman Muslim holy site.

After the sultan's demise, either his son and successor, Selim II (r. 1566–1574) (Necipoğlu 2019, 152, n. 88) or his grandson Murad III (r. 1574–1595) (Vatin 2005, 28) erected a memorial

türbe (*meşhed* or *makam*) on the site of the imperial tent. This was the place where the sultan's body had been temporarily buried to keep his death secret for forty-eight days and to ensure the smooth succession of the heir to the throne, Prince Selim, the failure of which could lead to a political-military crisis.

When the body of the sultan was exhumed after this period, certain material aspects of this extraordinary mortuary process had to be taken into account. To counteract the materiality of death, which was characterized by decay, disintegration, and stench, the imperial body was secretly embalmed with musk and amber (methods that collided to varying degrees with Muslim burial customs). Accompanied by the influential Halveti Sufi shaykh Muslihuddin Nüreddinzade (d. 1574) (Fleischer 1992, 58), the body was then transported to Constantinople for final burial (Yelçe 2021). There the sultan was laid to rest in the imperial mausoleum beside the Süleymaniye Mosque, while his heart and intestines—contrary to Muslim custom—are believed to have remained buried on the battlefield opposite Zigetvár Castle. The bodies of Süleyman's predecessors, Murad I (1326–1389) and Mehmed I (1389–1421), are also said to have been eviscerated and their entrails buried on the spot where they died—traditions that, as Nicolas Vatin (2017, 2005, 28) has shown, are probably only persistent later legends.

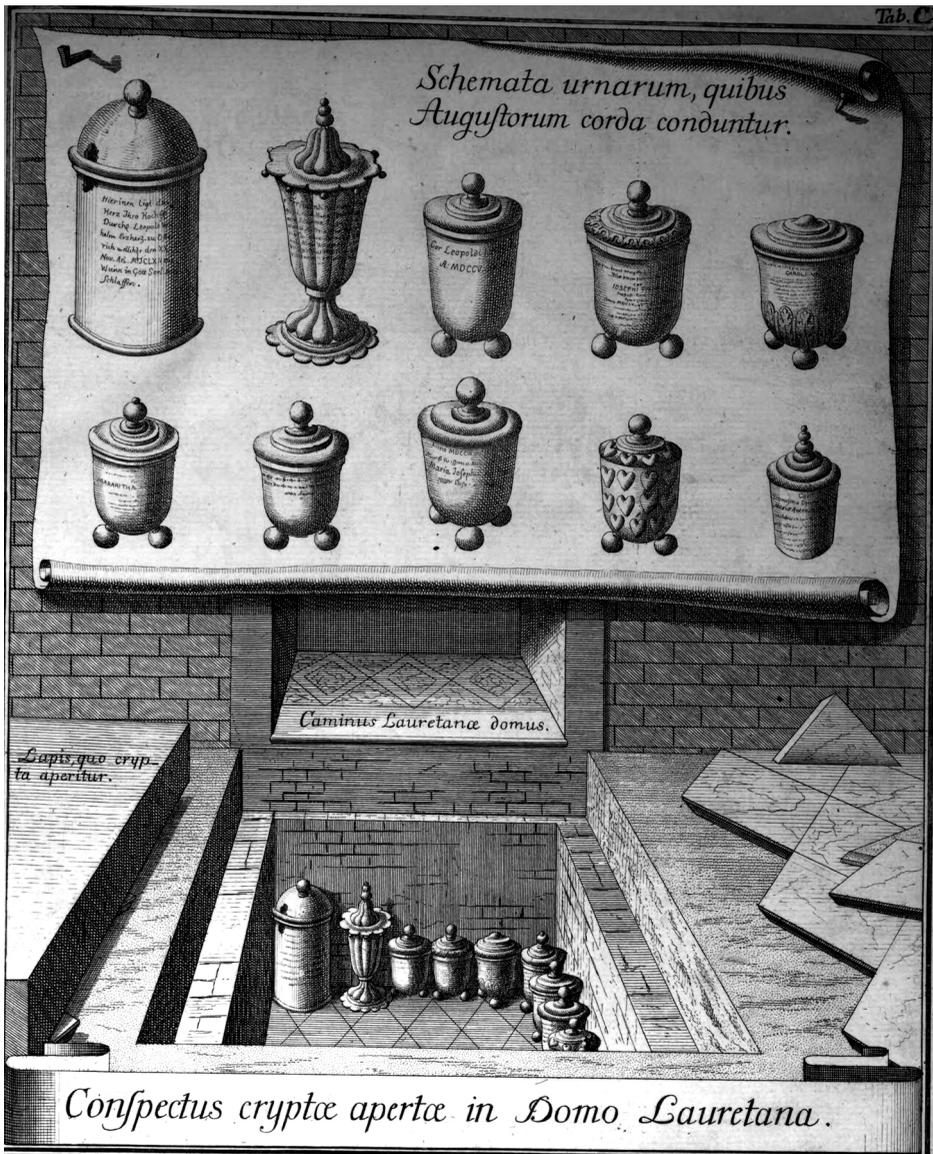
The chronicler Selaniki Mustafa Efendi (d. 1600) reports that at the homage ceremony in Belgrade, when the newly crowned Selim summoned the army, the grand vizier exclaimed, "Life has returned to our dead body!" (Vatin 2017). The grand vizier's "material" metaphor (to use Christopher Tilley's term, 2016) alludes to the bodily revivification of the sultan's office in the course of the precarious transition from the deceased sultan to his successor. The safe passage of this liminal period was of utmost importance, as the healthy body of the sultan ensured the physical and spiritual well-being of the Ottoman empire.

The marble *türbe* of "God's vice-regent on earth" (*khalifat Allah*), as the sultan was called, in Turbék became an important pilgrimage site for Muslims in the Ottoman empire. In the age of Süleyman, this God-given rule was mystified, and the sultan was perceived as a mediator between the divine and the corporeal, the worlds of the seen and the unseen. This required the sultan to be endowed with the qualities of the perfect human being (*insan-i kamil*, *qutb*), who is at the top of the hierarchy of saints, a key concept in Sufi teachings (Yılmaz 2018). Over time, the imperial tomb, guarded by fifty men on the orders of Murad III (Vatin 2005, 28), became the most important religious and cultural center in the region, which the Ottomans believed could not be crossed by the enemy, despite its close proximity to the former Ottoman-Habsburg border in Central Europe.

Ottoman troops also visited Süleyman's *türbe* after arriving in Hungary to pray for his soul and ask for his spiritual assistance in their military conflicts (Vatin 2005, 28). In the mid-1660s, the flamboyant raconteur Evliya Çelebi visited the imperial *türbe* in

Zigetvár shortly after it had been sacked by Hungarian troops in the winter of 1664. In his travelogue, Evliya describes a golden trophy (*altun leğen*) in which Süleyman's heart and other inner organs were buried on a hill with vineyards inside the fortress when his body was provisionally interred in its last camp (Evliya 2003, 17).

The legend of the golden receptacle may have been inspired by contemporary Central European imperial rites current among the Habsburgs of Vienna, who followed the practice of evisceration and separate burial of internal organs and viscera in urns made of precious materials (Figure 4) (Weiss-Krejci 2010,



452

FIG 4

Loreto Vault at the Augustinian Church in Vienna holding the hearts of ten members of the house of Habsburg who died between 1654 and 1740. Drawn and engraved by Salomon Kleiner. After 1740. Herrgott and Gebert 1772. Pl. CX.

119–134). Since it was believed that the whole person was present in each part of the body, the Habsburgs used this practice of dividing the dead body into different parts to express allegiance to more than one place. When Evliya traveled to Vienna in 1665 as part of the Ottoman delegation to sign a peace treaty with the Habsburgs, he may have learned more about this rite, which had been practiced since the Middle Ages.

Evliya's account of the *altun leğen* implies a "sacredness," a *living presence* of the Ottoman sultan's body parts preserved in the golden trophy, which lent a special power to the vessel and its precious contents. Endowed with the contagious *bereket* (spiritual power) of the sultan, who is divine in essence, the sacred imperial object is transformed into a bodily "relic" whose material traces carry the complete presence of the sultan, in accordance with the idea of *pars pro toto*, which states that the part implies the whole. Evliya thus ascribes to the *altun leğen* a "metaphorical agency" that is "like that of [a] human actor," as Bynum argues (2015, 280–284), drawing on thinkers such as Bruno Latour and Alfred Gell. Evliya also reports that the site was so sacred (to the Ottomans) that when Hungarian troops set fire to the complex in 1664, by some miracle they did not destroy the *türbe* (Evliya 2003, 63).

Since Evliya's visit took place long after the Süleyman's death, his account should be seen primarily as a testimony to what was said and believed in his time. It also reveals a strong impulse to transform orally transmitted stories into a tangible object, to materialize the myth, and to perpetuate the memory of the sultan through this material manifestation. At the same time, this record triggered an ongoing discourse about the division of the sultan's body into two parts, the removal of his heart and intestines, and their secret burial at the place of his death, while the eviscerated body was brought back to Constantinople for burial. After the expulsion of the Ottomans, the once thriving Muslim pilgrimage destination, the *türbe*, where Süleyman's heart and entrails are said to be buried, is thought to have been given to the Jesuit order, who dedicated the *türbe* to the Helping Virgin Mary. But to this day, Hungarians and Turks popularly remember the place as the site where the heart of the magnificent Süleyman is buried.

Conclusion

Subscribing to what Csordas calls "a nondualistic paradigm of embodiment" (1990, 12), I have examined three cases of bodily performances and (embodied) material practices in Ottoman Hungary in their entangled contexts. In the search for a direct experience of God, the bodies of the Sufi dervishes presented in the first two cases serve as sites of mystical experience. This could be induced by various forms of rigorous physical discipline, up to and including self-destructive acts graphically depicted on their bodies with "sacred pain" or self-sacrifice, as well as by bodily miracles such as hypercorporeality, multilocation, and dream

visions. In interactions with human and non-human actors, these bodies served both as nodes of networks and as sensescapes, evoking sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and tactile experiences. The third case provides insight into the material culture of Sultan Süleyman II's death (traditionally believed to have been eviscerated and embalmed to counteract material decay and putrefaction) and a reconceptualization of the function of a relic-like material artifact, the golden trophy, bearing the sultan's heart and entrails. Endowed with the divine *bereket* of the sultan, it is *pars pro toto* what makes his absent body alive and present, a corporeal mnemonic device encoded with the qualities of the most perfect human being (*insan-i kamil, qutb*), who in Islamic mysticism embodies the universe in microcosm.

References

- Atil, Esin. 1986. *Süleymanname: The Illustrated History of Süleyman the Magnificent*. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art; New York: H. N. Abrams.
- Bashir, Shahzad. 2011. *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Birge, John Kingsley. 1937. *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. London: Luzac.
- Brown, Edward. 1685. *A Brief Account of Some Travels in Divers Parts of Europe: Viz Hungaria....* London: Printed for Benj. Tooke.
- Bynum, Caroline Walker. 1990. "Material Continuity, Personal Survival, and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion in Its Medieval and Modern Contexts." *History of Religions* 30 (1): 51–85. doi: 10.1086/463214
- Bynum, Caroline Walker. 2015. *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe*. New York: Zone Books.
- Csordas, Thomas J. 1990. "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology." *Ethos* 18 (1): 5–47. doi: 10.1525/eth.1990.18.1.02a00010
- Evlia Çelebi. 2002. *Evlîyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*. Vol. 6. eds. Yücel Dağlı, Seyit Ali Kahraman. Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
- Evlia Çelebi. 2003. *Evlîyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*. Vol. 7. eds. Yücel Dağlı, Seyit Ali Kahraman. Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
- Fekete, Lajos. 1954. "Gül-Baba et le Bektâşi Derkâh de Buda." *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 4: 1–18.
- Fischer, Erik. 2009. *Melchior Lorck. 2: The Turkish publication, 1626 edition: facsimile of a copy in the Royal Library of Copenhagen; wolgerissene und geschnittene Figuren. zu Ross und Fuss, sampt schönen Türckisen Gebäuden, und allerhand was in der Türckey zu sehen ...* Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Vandkunsten.
- Fischer, Erik. 2009. "Melchior Lorck. 3: Catalogue raisonné, 1, the Turkish Publication, transl." *Dan Marmorstein*. Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Vandkunsten.
- Fleischer, Cornell H. 1992. "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Suleyman." In *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps: actes du Colloque de Paris, Galeries nationales du Grand palais, 7–10 mars 1990*, edited by Gilles Veinstein, 159–179. Paris: La Documentation française.
- Frembgen, Jürgen Wasim. 1999. *Kleidung und Ausrüstung islamischer Gottsucher: ein Beitrag zur materiellen Kultur des Derwischwesens*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Ganidagli, Suleyman, Mustafa Cengiz, Sahin Aksoy, and Ayhan Verit. 2004. "Approach to Painful Disorders by Şerefeddin Sabuncuoğlu in the Fifteenth Century Ottoman Period." *Anesthesiology* 100 (1): 165–169. doi: 10.1097/0000542-200401000-00026
- Glücklich, Ariel. 2001. *Sacred Pain: Hurting the Body for the Sake of the Soul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Golestaneh, Seema. 2012. "Listening, Non-Knowledge and the Auditory

- Body: Understanding Sufi Zikr Ritual and Sama as Sites of Aesthetic Experience." In *Saints and Their Pilgrims in Iran and Neighbouring Countries*, edited by Pedram Khosronejad, 61–81. Wantage: Sean Kingston Publishing.
- Haase, Claus-Peter. 1995. "An Ottoman Costume Album in the Library at Wolfenbüttel, Dated Before 1579." In *9th International Congress of Turkish Art: Contributions*, vol. 3, edited by Nurhan Atasoy, 225–233. Ankara: T. C. Kültür Bakanlığı.
- Herrgott, Marquart, and Martin Gebert. 1772. *Monumenta Aug. Domus Austriacae: In Quinque Tomos Divisa. 4. Taphographia Principum Austriae, Pars posterior, Continet Praemisso Singulari, Librum Ultimam, de Urnis Extorum, et Cordium, Auctarium Diplomatum/ad haec usque tempora deduxit Martinus Gerbertus*. Vienna: Austriae: Apud Leopoldum Joannem Kaliwodam.
- Kuehn, Sara. 2021. "Piercing the Skin: Pain as a Form of Piety in Rifa'i Ritual Sensescapes." In *Collectes sensorielles. Recherche-musée-art*, edited by Véronique Dassié, Aude Fanlo, Marie-Luce Gélard, Cyril Isnart and Florent Molle, 65–102. Paris: Éditions Pétra.
- Kuehn, Sara. forthcoming. "Vom Schmerz der Gottesliebe verwundet": Die rosenförmigen Brandmale des Gül Baba." In *Dingliche Gottesliebe. Die Materialität religiöser Emotionen im Christentum, Judentum und Islam*, edited by U. Gleixner. Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek/Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
- Marsigli, Luigi. 1930. *Autobiografia di Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli messa in luce nel secondo centenario della morte di lui dal Comitato Marsiliano*, edited by Emilio Lovarini. Bologna: Istituto delle Scienze ed Arti Liberali.
- Necipoğlu, Gülru. 2019. "The Aesthetics of Empire: Arts, Politics and Commerce in the Construction of Sultan Süleyman's Magnificence." In *The Battle for Central Europe: The siege of Szigetvár and the death of Süleyman the Magnificent and Nicholas Zrínyi (1566)*, edited by Pál Fodor, 115–159. Leiden: Brill.
- Nicholson, Reynold A. 1898. *Selected poems from the Divāni Shamsi Tabriz*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ohsson, Ignatius Mouradgea d'. 1790. [*Ignatius Muradcan Tosunyan*]. *Tableau Général de L'Empire Othoman*, vol. 2. Paris: De l'imprimerie de Monsieur.
- Orsi, Robert. 2005. *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ottendorf, Heinrich. 1665. "Der Weg von Ofen auff Griechisch Weissenburg." In *Vienna. Austrian National Library, Cod. 8481; 1943. Budáról Belgradba 1663-ban: Ottendorff Henrik képes utleírása. Szövegét kiadta, magyarra ford. és bevezetéssel ell. Hermann Egyed*. Pécs: Rényi.
- Peçevi, Ibrahim. 1866. *Tarih-i Pêcevi*, vol. 2. Istanbul: Matba'a-i 'Amira.
- Pinney, Christopher. 2009. *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Ritter, Hellmuth. 2012. *Ocean of the Soul: Men, the World and God in the Stories of Farid al-Din 'Attâr*. Leiden: Brill.
- Schimmel, Annemarie. 2003. "I Take the Dress of the Body": Eros in Sufi Literature and Life." In *Religion and the Body*, edited by Sarah Coakley, 262–288. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Efendi, Selaniki Mustafa. 1989. *Tarih-i Selaniki*. vol. 1, edited by Mehmet İpşirli. Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi.
- Sudár, Balázs. 2008. "Bektaşi Monasteries in Ottoman Hungary (16th–17th Centuries)." In *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 61 (1–2): 227–248. doi: 10.1556/AOrient.61.2008.1-2.19
- Tilley, Christopher. 2016. *Body and Image: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology 2*. London: Routledge.
- Vásquez, Manuel A. 2011. *More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vatin, Nicolas. 2005. "Un türbe sans maître. Note sur la fondation et la destination du türbe de Soliman-le-Magnifique à Szigetvár." *Turcica* 37 (0): 9–42. doi: 10.2143/TURC.37.0.2011699
- Vatin, Nicolas. 2017. "The death of Ottoman Sultans." *Politika*. Online publication <https://www.politika.io/en/notice/the-death-of-ottoman-sultans>.
- Weiss-Krejci, Estella. 2010. "Heart Burial in Medieval and Early Post-Medieval Central Europe." In *Body Parts and Bodies Whole*, edited by Katharina Rebay-Salisbury, Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, Jessica Hughes, 119–134. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

- Wernher, Georg. 1563. *Moscouiter wunderbare Historien ... Warhaftige Beschreibung... Der Wunder Baren Wasseren in Ungaren Verzeichnuss*. Basel: Bey Niclauss Brillinger vnnd Marx Russinger.
- Yelçe, N. Zeynep. 2021. "Where Exactly is the Throne? Locating Sovereignty in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Succession Rituals." In *Power and Ceremony in European History: Rituals, Practices and Representative Bodies since the Late Middle Ages*, edited by Anna Kalinowska, Jonathan Spangler, and Paweł Tyszka, 19–32. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Yılmaz, Hüseyin. 2018. *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Zenarolla, Giovanni Paolo. 1688. *Effetti di guerra e trattati di Leopoldo I imperatore de. Romani sotto l'anno 1687. A depressione del Barbaro Ottomano*. Vienna: Sischowitz.