

One day the people of Nasreddin Hoca's village were going to go hunting. Each hunter took along his dog, or his falcon, or his bow ^[weapon] but the Hoca had none of these, and so he took along his pet crow. While they were looking for game, they noticed Hasan Ağa's water buffalo grazing in a pasture nearby. Nasreddin Hoca released his crow which flew away and landed on the back of the buffalo. To the Hoca, this was sufficient reason to conclude that the buffalo was now his, and so he went into the pasture, took the animal by the horn, and led it to his stable.

That evening when Hasan Ağa noticed that his buffalo had not returned, he asked the villagers, "Did any of you see my water buffalo? He has not returned from the pasture this evening."

"We saw the Hoca taking it somewhere," said one of the villagers.

"How could that be?" asked the Ağa. "I did not sell the animal to him."

The Ağa went to Nasreddin Hoca's house and said to him, "Hoca, why did you take my water buffalo?"

The hoca answered, "It was not without good reason that I took your buffalo. Many of us were hunting, some with bows, and some with dogs, and some with falcons. I was hunting with my crow ^{game (hunting)} and when it landed on your buffalo, I said to myself, 'That's my game.' What is wrong with that? I am entitled to it--am I not?"

Hasan Ağa was furious with Hoca, and the next day he went to a kadi and sued the hunter. Before the trial, Hoca secretly visited the kadi

Story #40

and told him that he would bring him some butter and ^{yoghurt} yoghurt made from the buffalo's milk if he would give a verdict in his favor. The kad! agreed to do this, but he warned Hoca, "You will succeed this time, but do not go too far with this sort of behavior. It will get you into trouble."

At the trial, the kad! asked Hoca, "Why did you take away this man's buffalo?"

"Well, isn't hunting permitted by our religion?" asked the Hoca.

"Yes, it is," answered the kad!.

"Well, I have not got a bow, or a dog, or a falcon, and so I went hunting with my crow. When the crow landed on the back of an animal I took it as my fair game

Hearing this evidence, the kad! turned to the plaintiff and said, "As you have just heard, the Hoca had no bow or dog or falcon, and so he took his crow hunting. I am afraid that the Hoca was right. You should have taken better care of your buffalo and not let Hoca's crow settle on its back. It is his by right, and you have no way of getting it back."

Some days later the kad! sent a note to Hoca reminding him that he had promised him some butter and yoghurt made from the milk of the buffalo taken from the Ağa. The Hoca did not want to give him any, but he had made the promise. He took a large ^{pot -- earthenware} earthenware pot and filled it with ^{-- of water buffalo} buffalo dung. Over the top of this he spread a thin layer of butter and took the jar to the kad! the next morning.

"Here is some butter for your breakfast, Kad! Effendi," he said. "I came early so that no one would see me delivering it to you."

The kad!, still in his nightgown, dipped his finger into the butter to take a taste of it and see how good it was. The Hoca warned him, "You will succeed this time, but do not go too far with that sort of behavior. It will get you into trouble."