

Story 778 (1970 Tape 14)

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Aziz Mahmud Resigns Post of Kadı to Become Dervish

Before telling you some of the legends about Üftade, I should like to say a few things about his student Aziz Mahmud, also kadı of Bursa, who is buried at Üsküdar, Istanbul. He once had to try a case which can be summed up as follows.

week before the Kurban Bayram,¹ Following the termination of the pilgrimage service on Mt. Arafat² and before any of the other pilgrims had departed from Mecca, Mehmet Dede the Cobbler reappeared at Bursa--that is, about ten days from the time he had left--telling friends, family and neighbors here that he had completed the pilgrimage and was now entitled to be called Pilgrim.³ This, of course, seemed

¹Kurban Bayram, or Festival of Sacrifices, begins forty days after the end of Ramazan, the Muslim month of abstinence and self-denial, of fasting every day between sunrise and sunset.

²Among the rituals on Mt. Arafat the best-known to non-Muslims is the stoning of the Devil by every pilgrim.

³One who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca is thereafter honored by having the Hacı (Pilgrim) precede his name. Henceforth he or she is always known and addressed as Hacı Ahmet or Hacı Ayşe or Hacı Somebody.

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impossible to those who heard it, for in the old days people went to Mecca by camel caravan, and usually they did not return home for about six months. People regarded this man's claim of having returned from Mecca in less than ten days a gross lie, and his own family reported to the kadı that its sire (the old cobbler) was misrepresenting the truth in taking the title of Pilgrim. The kadı listened to the evidence provided by the man's wife, and he also listened to the evidence of the defendant, who not only insisted that he had been at Mecca but also stated that he had witnesses who could prove it.

The case was postponed until the other pilgrims from Bursa had returned from Mecca. When they finally got back, they affirmed that they had been with the accused man on Mt. Arafat and that they had slaughtered sheep with him there and stoned the Devil with him there. They proved that the completed pilgrimage of the old cobbler was a fact.

Aziz Mahmud, kadı of Bursa, invited the old cobbler to his office privately and said to him, "There is something strange about this case. You must tell me what it is."

But the old cobbler did not want to reveal anything about it, for he thought Üftade would, by means of his religious insight, understand what was going on, for it was he who had sent the cobbler to Mecca. He was, however,

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required now to tell the truth. When the kadı heard this truth, he put on his embroidered gown, strapped on his sword, mounted his horse, and, taking his groom with him, set out for His Reverence Üftade's residence. That house was divided into two parts, the harem and the selâmlık.⁴ (This is the 500-year-old house where I now live.) But when the kadı was about 200 meters from the house, a rock rolled down from the slope and struck the foot of his horse. The kadı decided to walk the rest of the way, sweeping the surface of the road with his long gown. When he got to the house, he waited a long time there before he was received by His Reverence.

When he was finally received, His Reverence Üftade said to him, "You are a kadı with wealth and authority--your horse, your servants, the power to convict or pardon, while we have nothing but our love of Allah. In other words, we have only our Üftade-hood."⁵

(Üftade was a saint who modernized Muslim religion by clearing it of much of its earlier superstition. He did this in part by introducing new activities into it, among

⁴The harem was the women's quarter; the selâmlık is the men's quarter.

⁵Love of God.

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them music and dance, just as Mevlana⁶ had done.)

After that day Aziz Mahmud resigned his public office and became a follower of His Reverence Üftade, and when he began to serve the tekke⁷ and the Celveti order, he kept himself away from the material things of life. The first task assigned to him by His Reverence Üftade, as part of initiation, was selling liver on the streets of Bursa. purpose of this task was to train him in humility.

(The first days of such an initiation period are considered to be very important by psychologists all over the world.)

Reverence Üftade gave him a pole on which livers were strung and sent him out to sell those livers. On the first that he was engaged in this work he was still wearing embroidered judge's gown. On his way back to the tekke in the evening he was subjected to the jeers and stones of children and women. His Reverence Üftade said to him,

"Never mind. Don't take it too seriously. I have already cursed those people who abused you." (And ever since that

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the descendants of those who threw stones at Aziz Mahmud have fared badly, and their section of Bursa still bears the

⁶Mevlana, whose real name was Jalal ud-Din Rumi (1207-1273), was the founder of the Mevlevi Order, better known as the "Whirling Dervishes."

⁷A tekke is a dervish monastery.

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curse. Torrents often flood the area, and rocks roll down the mountain and damage or destroy houses. And when those houses are repaired or rebuilt, they are struck again by floods and rock slides.)

Aziz Mahmud served His Reverence Üftade for three years. There are several legends about him, too, one of which is this account. One winter morning His Reverence Üftade demanded that Aziz Mahmud bring him some fresh grapes from Çekirge.⁸ When he said that he couldn't do it, His Reverence was very angry, for the order of a sheikh is a sacred thing and has to be carried out. So Aziz Mahmud took a basket and went to Çekirge. Although there was snow on the ground, he found plenty of grapes at Çekirge. On the way back he fell into a snow pit at a place called Beşikçiler. He tried and tried to get out of that pit but he could not do so. Then he heard a voice that sounded like the voice of His Reverence Üftade calling to him, "Mahmud, I have stretched my staff toward you. Take hold of it!" Grasping what looked like a stick before him, Aziz Mahmud could pull himself out of the pit. Once out of the

he looked at what he had in his hand and saw that it was nothing but an ivy branch, although it looked like a

⁸Çekirge is a prominent section of Bursa even to this day.

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stick. No one had seen him come up out of the pit. He then walked back to the tekke and delivered the grapes. From that time onward, Aziz Mahmud's attachment to Üftade was greatly increased. He believed in him completely

During his third year at the tekke he was charged with the responsibility of preparing His Reverence's ablution water.⁹ One morning Aziz Mahmud, former kadı of Bursa, failed to heat the water. He had overslept that morning, and he realized his failure to heat the water as he was getting up. Taking the jug of water, he held it against his breast and said, "Hu, hu!" at it.¹⁰

Later, when he poured water from the jug over Üftade's hands, His Reverence said, "Oh, Mahmud, this water is different from water heated over a wood fire. I am glad you heated it by blowing, 'Hu!' on it." After he had taken his ablutions with this water, Üftade said, "You have now reached religious maturity. You can now take seven steps behind a sultan. The way has now been made clear to you, and you may go to Istanbul." He then gave Aziz Mahmud his certificate and sent him away with his

⁹ Before each of the five daily prayer periods a Muslim carries out ritual ablutions.

¹⁰ This is onomatopoeia for the sound of strong and sudden exhalation of a person's breath.

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He then added Hudayı to his name and was henceforth known as Aziz Mahmud Hudayı. Hudayı signifies one who has given himself to the service of God. He went from Bursa to Mudanya, which he found to be a rather dirty town and its shoreline a stinking place, and so he called the town Murdar Yalı.¹¹ He moved to Istanbul and lived at Üsküdar,¹² but he also spent much time at the Ahmediye.¹³

*Mahmud
Aziz Hudayı*

¹¹Murdar means dirty; yalı means beach or shore. This is an actual folk etymology for the derivation of the place name Mudanya. Mudanya is a seaport on the Sea of Marmara.

¹²A large section of Istanbul on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus.

¹³In this context Ahmediye seems to refer to the complex of buildings surrounding the Sultan Ahmet Mosque ("Blue Mosque").