Story 788 (1970 Tape 15)

Narrator: Mehmet Ece (alias Topal Ahmet), one-legged auto mechanic

Location: Ece is from Erzurum but tale taped at Bursa

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The Kadi Cheats an Honest Traveler

One day a traveler found along the road a piece of tanned leather—a whole hide—which was of the quality used for making shoes. Being an honest man, the traveler took it to the kadi of the nearest town. He said, "Kadi Effendi, I have found this piece of tanned leather. Is this haram or helâl for me? I should like to make some carîks out of it."

"The law concerning this is written in the book as follows:

Imâmi-ha, helâl-ha. Bir gayri-ha haram.

1. The kadi was a judge of Islamic (seriat) law in pre-Republican Turkey.

2. Effendi is a term of respect equivalent to Sir in English.

3. What is haram is forbidden, and use of it will bring Divine retribution. What is helâl is acceptable, religiously legal—approved. Sincere Moslems are very careful to establish the helâl or haram nature of everything they earn, find, or are given.

4. Carîks are sandal-like shoes which were worn by rural Turks until quite recently. They were made from either donkey or camel hide. Since the late 1950's peasants have worn rubber shoes made from melted-down automobile tires.
"I beg your pardon, Efendi, but what does that mean?"

"It means this," said the kadi: "Any piece of leather has been found is _həlāl_ for a kadi or _hoca_ but _haram_ for anyone else.

"Very well, then," said the traveler, "give me only leg parts of the hide with which to make _garıks_, and you can have the body part of the hide for yourself.

"But, son, there is something about that in the book. The book says, _Lemucek velumecik_, which means 'the legs and other parts of an animal hide must not be separated.'"

"But Kadi Efendi, the hide that I found is tanned and _hoca_ (pronounced _hodja_) is a Moslem priest; in pre-Republican times he was also a schoolteacher.

6 This is supposed to be Arabic. The kadi then gives the Turkish equivalent.

7 The kadi is using words deceptively in order to cheat the traveler out of his animal hide. He makes his speech sound very impressive by means of repetition and rhyming. The Turkish text for the sentence preceding this note number reads, _Ayrılmıyacak bacak macak_. The _macak_ is unnecessary and meaningless, but its _-cak_ ending echoes the endings of the other two words.
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commercially ready for use.

"No, son, for there is also written in the margin of this page, 'This is written from the edge of this book.'"  

8When the traveler says that the leather is tanned (mazılı), commercially ready for use (ticaret mali), the kadi responds with repetitive double talk: "There is written in the margin of this page, 'This is written from the edge of this book.'" But he uses yazılı (is written) at the end of his line to rhyme with mazılı (tanned) and ticaret mali (commercially ready) in the traveler's immediately previous speech, and thus he overwhelms with words the poor uneducated man.

It is really quite impossible to get the same effect in English that exists in the Turkish original. Word play and sound effects, such as rhyme, simply do not survive in translation.