

Story 815 (1974 Tape 18)

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Tercan kaza, Erzincan  
Province

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A Bektashi<sup>1</sup> Defines the Sultan's Area of Authority

Once during the time of the Ottoman Empire there was a Bektashi who was an <sup>alcohol-abuse of</sup> alcoholic. He could not spend a single day without having a drink, even though the sultan had issued a stern edict forbidding the use of all alcohol. One day this Bektashi was really desperate for a drink, but he feared being caught consuming alcohol. He decided to go to the cemetery, for he felt that that would be a place where no one would detect his drinking.

The Bektashi took a bottle of raki<sup>2</sup> and some food and went to the cemetery. But it so happened that on that same day the sultan had decided to travel around the city in disguise to see if he could discover anyone drinking. As he

<sup>1</sup> A member of the dervish order founded by Hacı Bektaş Veli (d. 1516). Although the Bektashis were probably the most powerful of the dervish orders, they were often not orthodox Moslems. Among their heretical tendencies was drinking alcoholic beverages.

<sup>2</sup> Raki is an anise-flavored distilled liquor. It can probably now be called the national liquor of Turkey. It is produced by a government monopoly. It is known in Arab countries as arrack.

## Story 815

was passing the cemetery, the sultan said to the vizier who was accompanying him, "My vizier, there is a distorted voice like that of a drunkard coming from the cemetery."

"O my Sultan, that seems unlikely, for your people obey you."

"Nevertheless, you look around in this cemetery to be sure of that.

The vizier started walking through the cemetery when he heard a distorted voice like that of a drunkard talking. It seemed to be coming from a newly dug but still empty grave. This grave was being used by the Bektaşi for his own purposes that day. When the vizier walked to the grave and looked down into it, he saw the Bektaşi there with his rakı and food. He said, "You Bektaşi, you know very well that the sultan has issued an edict prohibiting all drinking of alcohol. Why are you disobeying him?"

The Bektaşi answered, "The sultan's work is in the world. He has no authority to say what goes on in the underworld!"