

Story 1320 1985 Tape 4)

Narrator: Abdullah Yaşın

Location: Fındıcak mahalle of
Yakamusluklar
village, /kaza not
identified/,
Bolu Province

At the tomb of local
saint Karaca Ahmet

Date: January 26, 1985

Saint Karaca Ahmet of Yakamusluklar Village--I

Because I am not very old, I do not know very much about this tomb or about the saint who is buried here. However, I have heard a story, which everyone here seems to know, about Karaca Ahmet's tilling of his field. He was a poor man, and he had only one ox with which to farm his land. People of this village used to see him go to his field with that one ox, and they used to see him return from the field with that one ox. These people kept asking each other, "What other animal does he hitch up in that double yoke with his ox? How does he manage to plow?" One day several of them secretly followed the saint to his field in order to satisfy their curiosity about this.

Every day that Karaca Ahmet went to his field a deer would come up to him, and Karaca Ahmet would hitch up this deer as a teammate with his ox. The two animals worked in the same double yoke for the saint. The people who were secretly observing this waited until the saint returned home, and then they shot that deer.

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Karaca Ahmet was a holy man who could predict the future. He knew that when the people discovered that a deer worked for him, they would be envious^{any?} of this assistance and would kill the deer. Therefore, when he went to his field the following morning and found the dead body of his deer there, he was not surprised. He prayed that a curse be put upon the people responsible for this evil deed. He said, "May this village, whose inhabitants killed my deer, never grow beyond seven households."

Āhmet Uysal: "Has this village now only seven households?"

Abdullah Yaşın: "No, it has fourteen households now,¹ but for a long time--many years--it had only seven households

Village İmam: "The change occurred after the villagers restored the structure of this tomb. It had been damaged, and they restored it. After that, the saint withdrew his curse, and that allowed the village to grow and prosper."⁷

I am actually a descendant of Karaca Ahmet. Back in those very early times he was somehow related to our family. There were numerous events in his life which affected all of us in

¹See Story 1321 for a somewhat different interpretation of this.

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this village. What I am going to tell you next is known to everyone around here.

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Karaca Ahmet often went to Mecca during the night but was back in the village the next morning in time for the first prayer service of the day.² One morning, however, his return trip from Mecca was delayed, and as a result he did not arrive at the village in time for the morning service at the mosque. He was still crossing the sea, but this did not stop him from performing his prayer ritual. He simply spread his prayer rug on the waves and held his prayer service right where he was. As he was praying, some fish rose to the surface and swam in front of him, passing between him and the direction of Mecca that he was facing. He was so annoyed that his prayer service had been violated in this way that he uttered a prohibition against the eating of fish in this village. He said, "Anyone in this village who eats fish will be denied the benefit of my intercession for him with Allah."

That is the reason that mature and reverent people in this village do not eat fish. I do not eat fish, for example,

²In Turkish folklore devout religious figures are frequently credited with the ability to transport themselves great distances at extremely high speeds. Almost always, miraculous transportation takes them to Mecca and back overnight-- a distance of several hundred miles.

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and I never have in my life.

/Ahmet Uysal: "You mentioned to me earlier something about a festival held at this tomb. When is that festival held?"

Abdullah Yaşın: "Such an event does not have any definite date, such as the annual festival held for Tokat Hayrettin.³ I shall tell you about this."⁷

There are various kinds of activities held here at this tomb, but they are not held at specified times. They are held whenever there is a need for them. Sometimes there are ceremonies held here to heal people who are ill or who have some bodily problem. Sometimes there is a ceremony here if someone comes to fulfill a vow to make a sacrifice. If someone was in an accident or in other great danger but was spared from suffering death or a severe injury, that person may make a vow to do something or give something as a token of thanks to Allah.⁴ That person may have promised to sacrifice a ram or an ox, and this kind of religious offering is often made at a shrine like this one. Many people come here for that reason,

³Unfamiliar to us

⁴This kind of commitment to make a votive offering is known in Turkish as an adak.

Adak ?

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but there is no way of knowing when such people may come. Whoever comes for such a purpose usually does not come alone. He usually brings relatives and friends to witness the ceremony and to participate by eating some of the votive offering. Sometimes we have a crowd of 300 to 500 people here. Sometimes we have a crowd of fifty people. Usually there are about fifteen or twenty people involved. At other times there may be as few as three people.

/Ahmet Uysal: "Is there a kitchen here or are there other cooking facilities for people who come here to sacrifice animals?"

Abdullah Yaşın: "Yes. I shall tell you something about that."⁷

There are fireplaces around the outside of the tomb where people may cook sacrificed animals. They may have been the cause of the fire which once nearly destroyed the tomb and required its restoration, but no one seems to know for certain what caused the fire. Visitors who come here often light tall candles to pay their respect to Karaca Ahmet, and some think that the fire was caused by one of these candles' falling over and igniting carpets on the floor inside the tomb. But still others think that the fire was divinely caused to protest the appearance of naked people in the presence of a saint.

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/Ahmet Uysal: "What do you mean by 'naked people'? Do you mean women who have not dressed properly and covered their heads?"

Abdullah Yaşın" "Yes, that is probably what they meant."7