

Story 1431 (1976 Tape 33) Narrator: Unidentified

Location: Sarıyar Dam on  
Sakarya River,  
Beypazarı kaza,  
Ankara Province

Date: June

Mevlana<sup>1</sup> vs Hacı Bektaş Veli<sup>2</sup>

An admirer of Mevlana was too poor to offer this holy man any financial support. In an effort to make some contribution, however, this man stole an ox and took it to the Blessed Mevlana. He said, "O Mevlana, I have no wealth with which I can buy something for you, but I stole this ox for you. It is up to you to decide whether or not you will eat this ox."

"My man, we cannot eat this ox,"<sup>3</sup> said Mevlana. "Take

<sup>1</sup>Mevlana (Jalal al-Din Rumi) was the thirteenth-century founder of the Mevlevi order of dervishes commonly referred to now as the Whirling Dervishes. The Mevlevi center was at Konya.

<sup>2</sup>Hacı Bektaş Veli, Mevlana's contemporary, was the founder of the Bektaşî order of dervishes centered at Kırşehir, some 115 miles from Konya.

<sup>3</sup>His refusal to eat a stolen ox involves the concept of helal vs haram. Helal/Haram relates to Moslem religious concepts. That which is helal is that which is permissible according to canonical law. That which is haram is forbidden. There is no obligation or restriction or penalty for doing or taking whatever is helal, but there will be a penalty on Judgment Day for doing or taking what is forbidden. To accept something from a donor is helal; to take it or steal it is haram. To do anything morally or religiously improper is haram. Dying or endangered people often declare helal anything they have given to or done for another person, so that No.2 will not go to Judgment indebted to another (which is haram unless declared helal by the benefactor).

Story 1431

it to Kırşehir and give it to Hacı Bektaş Veli. He is the only one who might eat this ox."

Doing as Mevlana had directed, the man took the stolen ox to Kırşehir and offered it to Hacı Bektaş Veli. He said, "O Veli, I offered this stolen ox to Mevlana, but he said that he would not eat it. He sent it to you.

"Very well! Slaughter it and put it in the kitchen of my tekke<sup>4</sup>. Mevlana is the kind of anka bird<sup>5</sup> who will not land on stolen property."

The man said, "Let me show you the ox before I slaughter it." He then took Hacı Bektaş Veli to the field where the ox was grazing. When the poor man got back to Konya, he went to Mevlana and said, "O Mevlana, you refused to eat the ox that I brought to you. I took it to Hacı Bektaş Veli, and he had it slaughtered and eaten."

<sup>4</sup>Similar to a monastery, a tekke is the headquarters and dormitory of a dervish or other religious order in Islam.

<sup>5</sup>Giant bird similar to the roc (rukḥ) of Arabian Nights fame. Usually benevolent toward human beings in Turkish folktales, they are also sometimes shown as predators and even scavengers. In two variants of a tale in ATON, they are pictured as carrying off the corpses of fully grown horses.

## Story 1431

"Son, Hacı Bektaş Veli is such a learned man that the blood of one ox<sup>6</sup> will not blur his mind."

<sup>6</sup>Although there was clearly some competition between the two dervish orders, it is very unusual to find it referred to in folktales in what seems here to be snide discourse. If that is indeed the intention of this anecdote, then the reference to Veli's having consumed the blood rather than simply the meat of the ox may be a final thrust. The Moslem method of slaughtering livestock makes every effort to bleed the animals as thoroughly as possible. Moslems overcook meat in order to remove any last coloration of blood left in it.