

Story 823 (1974 Tape 18)

Narrator: Enver Tahsin Pir

Location: Tercan, kaza town in
Erzincan Province

Date: August 12, 1974

Osman Kalkan Comments upon Yastık Village

Osman Efendi¹ once ate so much and indulged himself in every way that he became sick to his stomach from it all.

Around here there are people who are known as Sons of Şah Hüseyin,² though in most places in Turkey they are called simply Alevi. They are partisans of Ali. They are very rich, and they gobble down villages in this area.

One day Osman Efendi went to visit their village

Upon his arrival in that village, the people welcomed him, took his horse, and put it in a stable. Before the largest house in that village there was a man named Hüseyin

¹ Efendi, once a prestigious honorific following men's names, has been so devalued that today it is used only for children or servants.

² Ali, the fourth Caliph, contended that he should have been the first Caliph, and that contention began the major split in Islam that exists yet between Sunnites and Shia or Shi'ites. For his followers everything about Ali has become sacrosanct. The slaughter of his two young sons, Hasan and Hüseyin, has always been the great trauma of Shia faith. The Sons of Hüseyin mentioned here is apparently a local Shia order.

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Bey³ standing. He seemed to be impatient as he waited there for Osman Efendi, and he said to Osman Efendi, "I am pleased that you have come at last so that we can talk together. I haven't had anybody to talk with lately."

Osman Efendi said, "If you could send my horse back to the place from which I borrowed it, I wouldn't mind staying here."

Hüseyin Bey called a servant and said, "Take his horse to its owner in Tercan." The man left at once with the horse.

Osman Efendi remained there in that village for two weeks. He did little but eat and sleep while he was there, after two weeks, he decided to return to his home here in Tercan. When he arrived here, his friends asked, "Where have been?"

"I was at Yastık village."⁴

"What kind of a place is it?"

"Well, it is not much like most other villages. There is a great amount of eating and drinking there, but the place does not belong to Moslems."

³ Bey once meant lord or baron. In more recent times it has come to mean Sir. Adult males are called Ahmet Bey or Mehmet Bey.

⁴ Yastık means pillow or cushion. The name may have metaphoric implications, for life in the village was soft and comforting.

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After a few days, Hüseyin Bey came to visit Osman Efendi here in Tercan. He had heard about the account Osman had given of his village when he had returned to Tercan, and he was upset about the non-Moslem part of the story. He asked Osman Efendi, "What kind of a man are you? You came to us and ate our food, swallowed our drinks, and slept under our roof,⁵ but yet you have told people that we are not Moslems."

"O Brother," said Osman Efendi, "during the whole two-week period I spent at your village, I did not hear the call of the ezan⁶ even once. Do you call a place like that a Moslem village?"

Hüseyin Bey laughed, but he was unable to answer

⁵ The ready and almost overwhelming hospitality of Moslems carries an obligation of gratitude. To speak ill of someone who has provided one with hospitality is a serious offense.

⁶ The ezan is the call to prayer, five times daily, sung and chanted from the minaret of a mosque.