

Story 2122 (1988 Tape 16)

Narrator: Ragıp Güngör, 75

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Nasreddin Hoca's<sup>1</sup> Unpredictable Rooster

One day Nasreddin Hoca decided to move from Akşehir to Sivrihisar.<sup>2</sup> He thought that the move would be an easy one, for he had only a few possessions: a donkey, several hens, a rooster, and a few small household utensils. He packed his household items in a bag, which he loaded on his donkey. He placed the chickens in a cage and also loaded that on the donkey. He then mounted the donkey himself and set off on his journey to Sivrihisar.

After traveling for several hours, the Hoca realized that the donkey was probably getting tired and that his

<sup>1</sup>A hoca is the preacher and religious leader of a Muslim community. In pre-Republican times a hoca was also a teacher, for education was then the responsibility of the clergy. In the Republic teachers are required to have secular rather than religious training, and so they should not be confused with hocas, but occasionally, for purely sentimental reasons, a teacher or professor is still referred to as hoca. Nasreddin Hoca has long been Turkey's most beloved comic folk character.

<sup>2</sup>There is considerable doubt about the historicity of Nasreddin Hoca, but those who claim that he was a real person often credit him with having been born in the village of Hortu in the kaza of Sivrihisar in Eskişehir Province. (For touristic reasons Hortu was renamed Nasreddin Hoca.) He later supposedly moved to Akşehir (Konya Province),

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chickens were probably getting hungry. Therefore, when they came to a creek, the Hoca decided to stop and rest for awhile. He unloaded his donkey so that it could graze and drink water from the creek. He released his chickens so that they could find food to peck. As soon as they were released, these fowl wandered about in search of seeds and insects.

After he himself had rested for awhile, the Hoca thought that it was time to continue his journey. He wanted to reduce the load carried by his donkey, and so instead of caging the chickens, he decided to have them walk ahead of his donkey where he could keep his eye upon them. After loading his donkey more lightly, the Hoca gathered chickens and started them moving down the road toward Sivrihisar. Then he and his donkey began to follow this small flock. But the chickens and the Hoca were not thinking alike. Before the flock had gone more than a few meters, it began to spread out again and take different directions. The Hoca decided to let the donkey walk on alone while he herded the chickens and kept them moving forward.

where what is reputedly his tombstone still exists. Does even the legend of Nasreddin Hoca credit him with a move back to Hortu?

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Even this procedure did not work very well, for the chickens refused to walk in a straight path. The rooster was the least obedient of all. It ran back and forth, left and right, and the Hoca had to chase it into line several times. This finally angered the Hoca. Picking up a stick, he struck the rooster so hard that the blow killed it. After he had calmed down, the Hoca looked at the rooster and said, "Strange creature! You were the only animal which knew that morning was coming while it was still dark outside. If you were that smart, why was it that you did not know and follow the only road that runs from Akşehir to Sivrihisar?"