

Story 691 (1979, Tape 1

Narrator: Hâmit Akpınar, 35
Location: Kayapa village,
kaza of Illica,
Province of Erzurum
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Bey Börek and Bengi Boz¹

File, Imagination #69

Once there was and once there was not a married couple who had never had any children. One day the man said, "Wife, I am going somewhere today. You cook dinner while I am gone, and I shall return in time to eat it."

He set out on his horse and traveled a good distance. He went little, he went far, he crossed streams and went over mountains,² and at last he reached a place where there was a fountain. Dismounting from his horse, he took his ablutions in this fountain, and then he performed his prayers there. He asked Allah to help him and his wife overcome their sterility.

When this man returned in the evening, he asked his wife,

¹Beyrek was the name of one of the most prominent heroes of the tenth-century Turkic epic, The Book of Dede Korkut. Beyrek appears in several of the epic's twelve chapters, and Chapter III is devoted to him. Very little except the name Börek in this fragment suggests its origin in the epic. Both Beyrek's and Börek's parents were sterile, however, and in each case the sterility was ended after special prayers to Allah. It was the group prayer of all the Oghuz beys which brought Allah's help to Beyrek's parents; it was the prayer of Börek's father that persuaded Allah to allow Börek's mother to become pregnant.

²This formulaic description of travel usually refers in Turkish folktales to much longer trips, trips that required "six months and a summer," as the formulaic expression terminates.

"What have you cooked?"

His wife replied, "I cooked what was available--whatever Allah sent us."

That night when they retired, they found ^{negle} an apple in their bed. They peeled and ate this apple, and they fed the peelings to their horse.³ One of them ate one half of the apple, and the other ate the other half. In time, the woman gave birth to a son, and the horse bore a colt

In time, the boy and the horse had reached an age when they should be named. People suggested such names for the young man as Hasan and other familiar names. But an old man appeared who declared, "I am the one to give them their names. The child shall be called Bey Börek, and the horse shall be called Bengi Boz." ^{Example Gray} = ^{managing child} ^[Idea from fertility not not prepared for boy.] ^{superstition horse}

After Bey Börek had completed his schooling, he fell in love with a girl who was the daughter of his uncle. A marriage between the two was arranged, and then, at the appropriate time, a wedding was held.

One day Bey Börek discovered that his horse, Bengi Boz,

³The confusion of the narrator is apparent in his inclusion of the "apple of fertility" motif (a common element in Turkish folktales) in a tale that already used the prayer method of curing sterility. It would appear to be a mixture of the Beyrek tale in the epic and the folktale of the supernatural which uses magic objects, here a magic apple.

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was crying. He asked it, "Why are you crying?"

"Your mother is trying to poison you. She has put poison in your food."

At mealtime, Bey Börek threw away the food that his mother had given him. When his mother asked him if he had eaten his dinner, he replied, "Yes, mother, I have had my dinner."⁴

⁴The narrator has put together several unrelated motifs from miscellaneous tales that he has heard. These motifs do not add up to a tale. This illogical and inane recital would not be worth preserving if it did not include a possible reference to the Oghuz hero Beyrek.