

Story 2082 (1966 Tape S21

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Location: Doğla village,
Karacabey kaza,
Bursa Province

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A Poor Shepherd Wins the Daughter of His Ağa¹

A shepherd lad who was a skilled kaval² player fell in love with the daughter of his master, an ağa. After awhile he asked her father for the hand of the girl in marriage.

When he was asked this question, the ağa responded, "I shall give you my daughter on one condition. After my flock has been given salt to lick, you will take it

¹An ağa (English agha) is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. Ağas are often the principal employers of farm workers, and they are often viewed by their employees as being driving, harsh, and abusive. The term ağa is also used in a complimentary way, as an honorific, for a distinguished or just older person than the one using the word. Thus an older brother is called ağa bey (bey being also an honorific) by his younger siblings. Ağa bey may also be used as a deferential term to any male older or more prestigious than the speaker; a taxi driver may refer to his passenger as ağa bey; a salesman may address a customer with the same expression.

²A fipple flute (similar to a flageolet or recorder). It is a favorite folk instrument, and especially so among Turkish shepherds. Each shepherd supposedly has a set of tunes that serve as signals (like bugle calls in the army)

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to the fountain where it is usually watered. But you must prevent the sheep from drinking. You will repeat this three times. If you can accomplish that task, you will be entitled to marry my daughter."

The shepherd accepted these terms. After he had given the sheep salt to lick, he led the flock to the fountain with the magical tunes of his kaval. When they arrived there, the shepherd played another magical tune to prevent the flock from drinking. He repeated this performance twice more, and in that way succeeded in marrying his sweetheart.³

to order the flock to graze, to drink, to gather around the shepherd, and to fold for the night. To those unacquainted with the pastoral life, these tunes may seem magical.

³The above account was narrated by Uysal to accompany the music purported to be the tune played in a suitor test of this kind. Both Uysal's words and the tune were recorded by Turkish Television and Radio (TRT) and kindly sent to ATON and to the Music Department of Texas Tech University.