

Story 1430 (1976 Tape 33) Narrator: Arif Sevgin

Location: Hıdırlar village,
Beypazarı kaza,
Ankara Province

Date: June 20, 1976

Tekkeli Mehmet Efe¹

In the early part of this century there were seven very poor brothers in this region. One of them was destined to become known as Tekkeli Mehmet Efe. Two of these brothers worked for farmers, and three of them went to other parts of the country to find jobs. One was a shepherd, and the seventh was Tekkeli Mehmet Efe, who did not have any regular job

There was a robbery in this area, and the brother who was a shepherd was arrested and accused of having committed that robbery. While the police were transporting him to the nearby town of Nallıhan, they kept beating him so severely that he died from his injuries. Tekkeli Mehmet Efe knew that his brother had not committed the crime, and so he went to Nallıhan to file a complaint against the way he had been abused by the police. But the police authorities

¹Efes were reckless, swashbuckling village youths in western Turkey who became outlaws. In most cases they claimed that they were so labeled because they had resisted governmental injustice to the poor. They were popular heroes. Some tried to protect local people from enemy action during the War of Independence during the early 1920s.

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at Nallıhan would not accept his complaint. Instead, they beat Tekkeli Mehmet Efe also.

Greatly angered, Tekkeli Mehmet Efe sold all of his belongings, bought a rifle, and began living in the mountains. He killed any policemen who came within range of his rifle. He robbed the rich and gave his plunder to the poor. He became one of the most famous efes in the country. He continued these activities for more than twenty-five years, and by then he was beginning to grow old

One day when he was some distance from here in İzmir Province, he heard a rumor that the padishah would pardon him if he surrendered himself to the authorities. After thinking about this for a while, Tekkeli Mehmet Efe decided to surrender to the governor of İzmir Province. One morning at sunrise he rode up to the mansion of the governor in the city of İzmir. He was at that time dressed in the fashion of efes of neighboring Aydın Province: a vest, short şalvar², and a fez.³ When the

²Baggy trousers with a very low crotch, they were once the most popular type of pants in Turkey, worn by both men and women. In this last decade of the twentieth century, they are still seen occasionally, though usually in rural areas.

³A hat that is flattopped, looking somewhat like the lower part of a truncated cone. They succeeded the turban as the hat of greatest prestige, but during the Kemalist Reforms of the 1920s, they were outlawed (except for use in religious settings) because of their strong association with Islam. They seemed out of place in a secular state.

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guards stopped him at the mansion door, he said, "Tell the governor that Tekkeli Mehmet Efe has arrived here." When the guards heard that name, they fled in terror.

Mehmet Efe entered the mansion and began looking someone to take him to the governor, but as soon as he mentioned his name, everyone he encountered ran away in fear. Finally one of the guards had enough courage to inform the governor of his notorious visitor. The news startled the governor so much that all he could do was walk around and around in his large office. When Tekkeli Mehmet Efe discovered where the governor was, he walked into his office and announced, "I have come here to surrender myself to your authority." Having said this, he placed his rifle and other weapons on the governor's desk

"If that is the case," said the governor, "then I forgive all of your past offenses." They then ate and drank together, and Tekkeli Mehmet Efe stayed there in the mansion for two or three days. He spent much of that time relating to the governor all of the unusual experiences of his life. At one point, near the end of his stay, Mehmet Efe was requested to strap on his arms again so that the governor could have a picture of him taken. The governor then said,

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"You may take your arms with you when you leave. I trust that you will never again return to the mountains. I can give you a room here, if you wish.

"No, I shall not go back into the mountains, but I do wish to return to my own native region."⁴ This was his native region, and his home was in Emrem Sultan village. Some of his children are still alive, and that is where they live. ■■■

⁴The word used here is memleket, which may mean country or political state, but here and in most other places where it is used it refers to one's home area. Thus, while there is only one political country in Asia Minor, there are hundreds of personal "countries" or memlekets.