

Story 701 (1981 Tape 1

Narrator: Ali Çiftçi, farmer

Location: Çıkırıkçı village,
kaza of Sarıkaya,
Yozgat Province

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The Teeth of Veysel Karani

It was His Holiness Veysel Karani¹ who identified for us many of the qualities of Mohammed. When he was still very young, living in Yemen, he got permission from his mother to go and visit Mohammed at Mecca. His mother cautioned him before he left, "If he is at home, you may visit him, but if he is in his mescit,² do not bother him."

When he reached Mecca, Veysel Karani went to Mohammed's home and asked, "Where is Mohammed?"

is in his mescit," said his wife.

"Oh-h-h!"

"What is the matter?" the woman asked.

"My mother gave my permission to visit him at his home but not at his mescit. That was her order. Is there here anything belonging to Mohammed that I may look upon?"

"Well, there is one of his teeth, a casualty of the Battle of Uhud.³ You can see it hanging from a thread over there.

¹However much historicity may be in the figure of Veysel Karani, he is clearly a legendary person in this tale.

²A mescit is a small, private mosque within a palace or court yard.

³The Battle of Uhud, at Uhud, was fought in March of 625 between the Meccans and Moslems. Although Moslem losses were greater, it was the Meccans who withdrew from the field. Whether or not Mohammed lost a tooth at Uhud, he was wounded there.

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that his tooth should be hanging there while mine are all safe in my mouth!" exclaimed Veysel Karani. Saying this, he struck his own teeth, one after another, until he had knocked all thirty-two of them out of his mouth. Tying them all to a thread, he hung them alongside Mohammed's tooth. That is how we got our prayer beads.⁴

When Mohammed arrived home, he detected the sacred scent of Veysel. "Who has been here?" he asked.

His wife replied, "You had a visit from Veysel Karani. Before he left his home, his mother had told him, 'You may visit Mohammed if he is at home, but if he is at his mesçit, do not bother him.' When he saw your tooth hanging there, he said, 'While his tooth hangs there should my teeth remain in my mouth?' He knocked out his thirty-two teeth, hung them on a thread there beside yours, and went away

That tooth had been a martyr⁵ at the Battle of Uhud. Instead of a person's becoming a martyr and going directly to heaven,⁶ Mohammed's tooth had been the martyr.

Then Mohammed said, "Glory be to Allah!"⁷

⁴Each of the three divisions of a set of Moslem prayer beads contains thirty-three beads.

⁵Martyr is a literal translation of Ali Bey's word sehit.

⁶A battle in a holy cause is known as cihad (jihad in English). Any Moslem killed in such a battle goes directly to heaven without any interrogation of need for demonstration of Islamic faith.

⁷The narrator uses the term sübhānallāh here.

Veysel Karani said, "Thanks be to Allah!"⁸

Mohammed gave permission to Caliphs Ali, Abu Bekir, Osman⁹ to search for Veysel Karani. "Find him and place him my crown and my coat." (There is a poem which tells all about this. They searched and searched, and at last they found him in the mountains.

[Ahmet Uysal: "Was Veysel Karani a famous saint?"

Ali Çiftçi: "Yes, he was. He used to herd 1,000 camels--they were Caliph Ali's camels--for one akçe¹⁰ a day but give a half akçe to charity. The value of charity is very great!"

Ahmet Uysal: "Where is he buried?"

Narrator: "In the country of Yemen."

Ahmet Uysal: "Do pilgrims ever visit his tomb?"

Narrator: "No, it is too far out of the way."

⁸The narrator uses the words elham dülillah here.

⁹The narrator should have described these three men as subsequently caliphs, for they were not actually caliphs until after the death of Mohammed.

¹⁰An akçe was a small coin worth a third of a para, which was worth 1/40 of a kuruş, which was worth 1/100 of a lira, which in early 1985 was worth 1/5 of a U.S. cent. Obviously an akçe was worth much more than that in the time of the Prophet.