

Story #161 (Tape #2, Summer 1970)

Narrator: Hacı Gönen, 66,
gentleman farmer

Location: Yukarı Kise Köyü
Güvem Nahiye
Kızılcahamam
Ankara Vilayet

Date: July 1970

The 1 1/2 Followers of Hacı Bayram Veli

Everyone who knew Hacı Bayram Veli* and his miracles wanted to be a follower of his. In time, the number of his followers reached thousands and even millions. People said to the padişah of that century, "He may put his hand in politics. If he is inclined that way, with all these followers, he may create a problem. You ought to examine him on this matter

Upon this, the padişah sent a letter to Hacı Bayram Veli asking him, "Tell me the exact number of your followers."

On a religious holiday, a tent was erected on the Hergele [mule] Square.** ("It was called Hergele Square because Hergelen [every coming man went through it]," the narrator added.) Many pits were dug, and grindstones were brought. He had knives sharpened, and Hacı Bayram Veli wrapped himself in an apron [a towel, the old man said literally], and he became a butcher. When the slaughtering place was ready, he announced that all his followers should gather and line up in two's and four's. The followers lined up in Hergele Square, as directed.

"Oh, my follower friends. It is a holiday today, and I shall sacrifice you. Those who wish to come first, raise your hands."

*The most important saint buried in Ankara, a friend of Hacı Bektaş Veli; he is buried near the Temple of Augustus.

**The Ankara fire department is there, and also the flea market and Bit-X. It is not a very savory place; old clothes are sold there, and it is a place of cheap hotels.

A man lifted his hand and came forward. He was taken into the tent, where Hacı Bayram Veli slaughtered a sheep, but blood flowed out of the tent. When the followers saw this, they looked at one another. "By God," they said, "he slaughtered the man, cayır, cayır" [sound effect for cutting, burning, or harsh action]. When he finished with the first follower, he came out and asked, "Who is next?" This time a woman came forward. She was taken into the tent and another sheep was slaughtered in her place. When he asked for the third sacrifice, there was no one left in Hergele Square. Then Hacı Bayram Veli wrote under the letter of the padişah, "I have only 1 1/2 *** followers. I hereby inform your majesty, in reply to your majesty's letter, that I have only 1 1/2 followers."

A woman was once rated as only half the worth of a man in Moslem lands.