Story 1419 (1989 Tape 7)   Narrator: Memduh Ün

Location: Konya, Konya Province

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A Bektaşi[1] Quip to Excuse Use of Alcohol

There was once a Bektaşi who was drinking alcohol during

Ramazan.[2] He was observed by the police doing this, and as a

result, he was arrested. However, when he took an oath that

he would not drink any more alcohol during the holy season,

he was released.

Some time later the same policemen caught the same

Bektaşi drinking alcohol again. They said to him, "Oh, friend,

you took an oath not to drink any more alcohol during Ramazan.

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[1]Member of a dervish order of that same name, founded by
Hacı Bektaş Veli (d. 1516). The Bektaşi dervishes are often
said to be Shi'ite more than Sunnite. Thus their religious
position is equivocal in predominantly Sunnite Turkey. Through-
out their history they have often been deeply involved in
Turkish politics. They had a serious setback in 1826 when the
Janissary Corps, with which they were allied, was destroyed.
Along with other dervish orders, they were outlawed during the
Kemalist Reforms of the 1920s. It was estimated that there
were still 30,000 Bektaşis in Turkey in 1950.

As a folk type the Bektaşi is cynical in attitude and
frequently irreverent in behavior. The Bektaşi often drinks
alcohol, refuses to fast, scoffs at orthodox Moslem clergymen,
and is critical of the Deity. Despite his outrageousness, he
is enjoyed, perhaps even admired secretly, by Turkish audiences.

[2]Ramazan is the ninth and holy month of the Islamic calen-
dar, the month during which devout Moslems fast completely from
sunrise to sunset. Although alcohol is forbidden for Moslems at
any time, it is triply forbidden during Ramazan, for use of it

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What happened to your oath?"

The Bektaşi responded, "Oh, I am a very poor man, and I drink whatever I can find, whether it is an oath or alcohol "[3]

breaks the fast and also profanes the sacred season.

[3]This anecdote is a <u>nükte</u>, for it ends with a play on words. The Turkish idiom for <u>take</u> <u>an</u> <u>oath</u> is <u>drink</u> <u>an</u> <u>oath</u>.