

Story 1507 (1970 Tape 19)

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of Erzurum Province

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The Story of Bağaçhan

There was once a bey¹ who had a grown son named Bağaçhan. He was a very strong young man. Back in those days, when a grown son was powerful enough to defeat a bull, he was usually considered to be qualified to inherit his father's estate and manage it successfully. One day Bağaçhan told his father that he wished to fight a bull to prove his right to inherit the family property.

After the bey had given his permission for such a combat, a bull was found and a time was set for the event. The struggle between the young man and the wild beast lasted for some time, but Bağaçhan finally succeeded in killing the bull. The young man then went to his father and claimed his right to be given the responsibility of managing the family property

But among the attendants of the bey were several evil counselors who were jealous of Bağaçhan and secretly objected to having Bağaçhan succeed his father. These attendants began gossiping about Bağaçhan and spreading false rumors about his

¹In Ottoman and pre-Ottoman times a bey was an aristocrat, usually a landholder and often wealthy. Beys were often appointed to administrative positions throughout the empire. During the Turkish tribal era, beys were tribal leaders, powerful men responsible only to the khan.

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behavior. They finally reported to the bey that his son was a very immoral person.

At first the bey refused to believe such reports about his son. But as these lies were repeated several times, the bey could no longer ignore them. He called Bağaçhan to his presence and said to him, "There is much gossip about your behavior. It has been reported to me several times that you are a very immoral person." Although Bağaçhan tried to defend himself against such charges, he was unable to convince his father of his innocence. As a result, the bey picked up his bow and arrows and shot Bağaçhan.

Some time later the bey learned the truth about the whole matter and realized that his son had been innocent. But he discovered this too late, for by then Bağaçhan was dead.²

²This is a confused and badly garbled summary of the first legend in the 10th-century oral epic of the Oğuz Turks, The Book of Dede Korkut. The legend is titled "The Story of Buğac Khan, Son of Dirse Khan." The present tale shows marked devolution from its epic original.

This is not the place for a comparison between this truncated tale and the epic episode from which it devolved. See ATON Notes, Volume VIII, for an analysis.