



# Once There Was, Twice There Wasn't: Fifty Turkish Folktales of Nasreddin Hodja

*Michael Shelton*

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"When you look into the eyes of a human being and see a brother or sister rather than an object of condemnation or a chance of profit, then you will know that dawn has come. If you cannot see a brother or sister, you will know that you are still in darkness."--Nasreddin Hodja, "Dawn" The adventures of Nasreddin Hodja are woven into the fabric of the Muslim world from the Kosovars of the Balkans to the Arabs of Northern Africa to the Uyghur of China where they are endlessly quoted and retold as a wellspring of wisdom and humor. The Arabs know him as the clever Joha. To the people of Egypt, he is the prankster Goha. To the people of China, he is the wise Affanti. It is the Turks, however, who proudly claim the extraordinary Nasreddin, the original historical figure behind the legendary folk hero. These fifty colorful Turkish tales celebrate the exploits of the wise Nasreddin Hodja as he rescues friends, humiliates enemies, and transforms folly into fortune with his quick wit and clever tongue. His stories offer an entertaining and insightful window into Muslim culture through one of the region's beloved folk heroes.

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