

# *Who was Nasreddin Hodja?*

These stories are an important part of the folklore of the Turkish people. However, they are not simply made-up folk tales.



Historically, there was, in fact, a person known as Nasreddin Hodja who was born in a small village not far from the city of Eskişehir in west central Turkey. He was reportedly born in 1208 and probably died around 1284. He was buried in a cemetery in the city of Akshehir, also in west central Turkey.

The name Hodja means teacher in Turkish. Originally it referred to a religious teacher, although nowadays it is often used by students as a title of respect for a teacher at the university level. Nasreddin Hodja was a well-educated teacher in religious schools, but he became famous for his wonderful sense of humor.

Since the 13th century, Hodja's stories have been passed down in Turkish-speaking countries in true folk fashion. In the process over the last eight centuries, it is probable that many stories were created by others and attributed to Hodja. Furthermore, they did not stay with the Turkish people. In fact, the stories of Nasreddin Hodja became favorites in every Muslim country and in many countries influenced by Muslim culture. Whatever their sources, these stories are marvelous examples of Turkish humor, and, more than that, they have universal appeal.