

Story #178 (Tape #3, Summer 1970)

Narrator: Ali Şengül of previous tales

Location: Kızılcahamam kaza
Ankara vilayet

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The Long Thoughts of Namık Kemal*

One day Incili Çavuş asked Namık Kemal, "What is the most quickly eaten of foods?"

"Eggs," Namık Kemal answered.

Seven years elapsed and they met again. "How do they taste?" asked Incili Çavuş.

"Salty."

(This is the meaning: Namık Kemal kept thinking about this matter over seven years. So deep a philosopher was he that he would give so much thought to so simple a question.

*There is a curious acquisition of Namık Kemal (Ahmet Kemal) by the folk imagination. In this anecdote and the two that follow, Namık Kemal's name is used, but usually there is no indication that the narrator really knows about his time, place, or works. In #180, he is made to be contemporaneous with Incili Çavuş, an anachronism of several centuries. Namık Kemal (1840-1888) was a leading figure in "Tanzimat School." Among his many writings are 6 plays, 2 novels, a long, polemical poem (Tahribi Harabat), an uncompleted history of the Ottomans, and numerous essays and poems. Editor of a famous political newspaper, Hürriyet, he was imprisoned by both Abdul Aziz and Abdul Hamid II; he died a prisoner held at Rhodes at the early age of 48. The folk use of his name, incorporating it with people and situations that have little relationship to history or biography, provides a perfect example, within relatively recent times, of how legends are often made and continued in the oral tradition.