

Story #391 (Tape #3, 1972)

Narrator: Mehmet Bulut, 74

Location: Çarikköy, Uşak merkez kaz
Uşak Province

Date: Apparently December 1971,
though reel labeled 1972;
all part of same field
trip anyway.

Muhiddin Arabi¹ of Damascus

Muhiddin Arabi lived in Damascus, where the people loved money so much that they almost worshipped it as a god. Muhiddin, who disapproved of this mercantile attitude, challenged the inhabitants of Damascus. One evening at prayer time, Muhiddin declared, "What you worship is under my feet!" The people killed him on the grounds that he was desecrating their god.

Before he died, however, he managed to write the following words on the portal of the mosque: "Ş will come and capture Ş. He will find my grave. Then you will realize the truth of my words."

Sultan Selim² was to capture Cairo soon afterwards. When he stopped at Damascus on the way he saw Muhiddin's writing on the

¹See Notes.

²This was Sultan Selim I, dubbed Selim the Grim, having come to the throne by deposing his father and murdering his brothers. He ordered the massacre of 40,000 Shi'ites and defeated the Shi'ite ruler of Persia, Shah Ismail. With superior artillery, he defeated the Mameluke rulers of Syria and Egypt, bringing the Ottoman Empire to its greatest power. By assuming the Caliphate, he made himself and his successors both the political and religious heads of the Empire. He was also, however, a protector of poets and a defender of literature.

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mosque portal. He thought, "S must represent me, Sultan Selim, and Ş must be Şam³." Then he decided to find Muhiddin's tomb. Nobody knew where he was buried. Sultan Selim was told that a certain old man might know where Muhiddin's tomb was. The old man was brought to Selim, but the two could not communicate. The old man did not say anything for three days. During these three days young girls waited on him. Through the girls, Selim found out where Muhiddin's grave was located. The old man told the girls that Muhiddin was buried under a dunghill, a punishment for his sacriligious conduct

Selim gave orders to have the grave uncovered. As the men were digging, a pickax hit something. It was Muhiddin's finger, and it began to bleed. Muhiddin's body was taken out of the pit and buried ceremoniously in a mausoleum. When Selim's men were digging at the spot where Muhiddin had challenged the people of Damascus, they found a large amount of gold. Selim made use of this gold during his conquest of Cairo.

*Confuse,
bleeding*

³The former Turkish name for Damascus was Şam.