

Story #393 (Tape #3, 1972)

Narrator: Mehmet Bulut, 74

Location: Çarıkköy, Uşak merkez kuzu  
Uşak Province

Date: Apparently December 1971,  
but Bulut's tales with  
reels that were collected  
in early 1972.

Mass Conversion to Islam by a Lost Moslem Soldier

At the time of the Moslem conquest (the wars fought by Mohammed and the caliphs against the Christians and non-Moslems) a Moslem soldier was separating from his company. As he was wandering about, he came across a Christian monastery. A congregation was assembled in the monastery, and the priest was at the pulpit, ready to give his sermon. <sup>However, he refused to begin his sermon</sup> and said, "I will not begin unless the outsider stands up and makes his identity known. There is a Moslem among us."

The congregation began looking around to detect the intruder, but they could not decide who he was among them. The priest said, "We promise not to hurt you, Moslem. Stand up." Finally the Moslem soldier stood up.

The priest said, "I am going to ask you three questions. If you can answer them, we shall not hurt you. If you cannot answer them, we shall punish you. This is the first question: There is in (heaven) a certain tree with its branches growing downwards and its roots growing upwards. This is the tuba tree. Does it have a counterpart in this world?"

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"Yes, it does," the Moslem answered. "The sun. Though we see it above us, its light shines downwards."

"You have answered the first question correctly," the priest said. "The second one is this: Does the heavenly river with the twelve branches have its counterpart in our world?"

"Yes, it does," the soldier answered. "It is the human head from which the different nerves branch out."

Then the priest asked the third question, and the soldier answered it also. [The old man telling this tale had forgotten the third question, he said.]

Then the soldier asked the priest, "Tell me. What is the key to heaven?"

The priest began to fidget; nevertheless, he said, "I know the answer to that question, but it would not be befitting a Christian to say it." The curiosity of the congregation <sup>was</sup> aroused, and the priest was urged to answer the question. He said, "The key to heaven is Muhammed."

The congregation said, "If Mohammed is the key to heaven, we want to become his followers." Then the congregation, including the priest, were converted to Islam.