

Story #447 (Tape #2, 1972)

Narrator: Unidentified

Location: Üçhisar köy, Ürgüp kaza,
Province of Nevşehir

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Cabbage-Turban Finds the Thief

There once was a hoca near Ankara who was called Cabbage-Turban.¹ He was called this because he wore a turban as large as a full-grown cabbage.²

One day someone in the area lost a large sum of money to thieves. He went to the hoca and reported this theft. "Can you find my money for me?" he asked.³

"Let me make a plan for this problem, and with that plan I shall try to locate your money," said the hoca. Then he sent the man away.

The hoca had a large fire built in the fireplace, and he and his friends sat around the fire talking. The hoca took a walnut and opened the shell a little. Placing a ring in the walnut, he closed the shell again and placed it near the fire. After the walnut became warm, it started to move a little and turn. "Look, Friends," he said. "The walnut is beginning to move. It knows who the thief is, and it will expose that person. If that person returns the stolen money honestly, there will be nothing done about it, but if he does not return the money, then he will suffer."

¹ The Turkish word used here is Kelemkavuk. The size of turbans in the Turkish past varied. There were periods when the large turban was in style and others when a smaller turban was used. Sometimes the size indicated rank.

² Cabbages in Turkey often grow to more than two feet in diameter.

³ The exact wording of this question is not clear.

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The thief had heard that the hoca was trying to recover the money. He had come quietly to the hoca's house and was listening by the chimney to learn what the hoca was doing.⁴ After he heard what the hoca said about the walnut, he decided to confess his theft. That night he went to the hoca's house and said, "For the sake of Allah, please do not reveal me. I shall kiss your hands and your feet. Here, take this money and say nothing."

In this way the hoca located the stolen money. Afterwards he told everyone not to believe in such things as a [magic] walnut, saying that he had solved the problem entirely by reason.

⁴ The chimneys of Turkish rural dwellings are often large, containing both a fireplace and an oven. Eavesdroppers in Turkish tales often gather information by listening at chimneys.