

Story #609 (1966, Tape #2)

Narrator: Hâmit Dereli, c. 65

Location: Narrator is from Isparta;
taped at Ankara

Date: Summer 1966

#609 Neyzen Tewfik and Water-Whistling at a Party

#609 -- [tune whistled or played on kaval to accompany and encourage drinking of livestock]

One evening Atatürk and some of his friends were having a party at which they were talking and drinking.¹ Some one suggested that Neyzen Tewfik be invited to come and entertain them.

Neyzen Tewfik arrived at the party and started playing upon the kaval.² He played for a while, but no one seemed to be listening to his music. Everyone was talking loudly, and no one was paying a bit of attention to his playing. Neyzen Bey stopped playing then and made this remark: "The fondness of the dissolute for kaval playing is, in my opinion, like the fondness of the donkey for water-whistling."³

¹This sentence is not to be published as it stands. The Atatürk Law forbids publication of any statements defamatory in any way to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Inasmuch as his immoderate drinking was a sensitive matter among his contemporaries, any reference to his drinking is tabu.

²The kaval is often equated with the flute. In most respects, however, it is more like the recorder. It is played by shepherds more than by any other one group. Most kavals are hand-carved.

³Shepherds, cowherds, horse herds, and others who tend farm animals in Turkey have tunes, either whistled or played on the kaval, to direct the activities of their livestock. Whatever other tunes a given herder's repertoire may contain, there is always a melody to encourage the drinking of water when stock is brought to a water trough or to a stream. Many herdsmen will say flatly that their livestock will not drink at all if the water-drinking tune is not played.