

Story 774 (1970 Tape 14)

Narrator: Ihsan Altınay

Location: Komyaka village
(formerly Siği until
changed in 1970's),
kaza of Mudanya,
Bursa Province

Date: July 1970

How Some Lazes Passed Safely Through a Cemetery

Once some Laz people were going somewhere late at night in the pitch dark. One of these Lazes named Hasan said, "Oh, Ahmet, I have just hit my head!"

"Against what did you hit it, Hasan?"

"My head hit something."

"Where did you hit it?" When he was trying to see where Hasan had hit his head, Ahmet hit his own head.

"Oh! I hit my head too!"

"Ahmet, why don't you strike a match and see what we hit?"

He struck a match and saw before him a tombstone. Hasan, recite a passage from the Koran.¹ I think that we are in a cemetery.²

¹Literally, the narrator said, "Recite a fatiha." The Fatiha is the opening chapter of the Koran, but it can, by extension, mean any passage from the Koran.

²When Turkish Muslims pass a cemetery they usually pray until they have gone by the place. Reciting a passage from the Koran is the same as praying in this situation. The

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"I do not know how to recite such a passage. You recite one."

"I don't know either. Hey, Mehmet, you recite one."

"I don't know one either."

"Well, in that case," said Ahmet, "let us crawl on all fours, and they (the dead) will think we are animals."³

prayer acts as a charm to protect one against evil spirits.

³Although most Turkish tales about Lazes involve, as this one does, some ethnic slur, there are a few tales that picture them as unusually shrewd or intelligent people.