

Story 865 (1964 Tape 4)

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How Incili Çavuş¹ Got a Çeşme for Travşun

Incili Çavuş came from the village of Travşun in the nahiye² of Tomarza in the kaza of Develi in the Province of Kayseri. Once while he was in the service of the padişah he asked for permission to go on leave in order to visit his village. Before he left Istanbul, he was called into the presence of the padişah, who asked him, "What do you wish from me, Incili Çavuş?"

"I wish for nothing but your good health, Your Majesty."

The padişah answered, "My good health is something that concerns me. You should wish for something that concerns you."

After the padişah had asked him the same question three

¹Legend has it that Incili Çavuş (the name means Pearl Sergeant) was a member of the elite military organization called the Corps of Janissaries. Like the Corps itself, Incili Çavuş was at once famous and infamous. Sometimes he is pictured as an adviser to the sultan; at other times he is shown as a court fool who dares to satirize the powerful figures around him, including the sultan himself.

²In an area of many small villages a nahiye may be established to handle some of the administrative work that would normally be done by officials of the nearest kaza town. The nahiye will usually be set up in the largest village of a cluster of villages.

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times, Incili Çavuş said, "Your Majesty, I should like to have water brought to my village of Travşun from the stream that starts in a summer pasture³ on the side of Mount Erciyas⁴ and flows toward Develi."

"How much water do you wish to have brought?"

"I should like to have enough water so that it could be carried only in a pipe as big around as the place I came out of when I was born.

"What place did you come out of?"

"You know what I came out of

"Well, then, bring your mother here to be measured by one of the court ladies

"My mother is no longer in this world. She is dead.

"Then how can we measure for the size of the pipe to carry water to your village?"

Holding his head down before the padişah, Incili Çavuş said, "Your majesty, my mother's vagina had to be big enough

³A yayla is a summer pasture in the mountains. This one is called tekir yaylas, the meaning of which is obscure. Tekir can mean either (1) a gray-striped cat or (2) a fish similar to a mullet.

⁴The classical name for Mount Erciyas was Mount Argaeus. It is a lone peak that was produced by a volcanic eruption in what is now the Plain of Kayseri. The geographical details given by the informant are entirely accurate. Both the nahiye and kaza cited lie within the shadow of Mt. Erciyas.

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for my head to pass through, and so you can just measure my head

The padişah thought that this was a good solution to the problem. He measured Incili's head and gave orders that Tavşun should be supplied with so much water that it would take a pipe of that size to carry it. Now the water that runs from the fountain at Tavşun gushes from a hole as big around as a man's head. --I visited this village and saw it when I was an officer of gendarmes⁵ stationed at Develi.

The village owes its whole life to that water supply. There is enough water flowing through that village to run several mills. The village has not only this great supply of water but also a title deed which says that they have the right to have it. For this reason, all of the residents of that village are grateful to Incili Çavuş.

⁵In much of rural Turkey there are no local police forces adequate to the task of maintaining law and order. This task is given to the Ministry of Interior, to which thousands of soldiers are assigned for that purpose. These troops are called gendarmes--a vestige of the turn-of-the-century French influence on Turkey.