A Turkish hoca who had lived in Europe for some time returned to Istanbul where he challenged other hocas to a contest in knowledge of Islam. Not a single hoca he challenged was able to answer the questions that he asked. After this had continued for some time, the padişah was so embarrassed that he asked İncili Cavuş to do something about it.

İncili Cavuş removed his uniform and put on a gown and a turban. Taking a book under his arm, he went to the hoca from Europe and challenged him.

İncili Cavuş [Pearl Sergeant] was supposedly a member of the Corps of Janissaries, the best-trained but eventually the most notorious body of troops in the Ottoman Empire. An elite palace guard, they were so indulged and privileged that they came in time to tyrannize all Istanbul, the Sultan included. While others are obsequious before the sultan, İncili is often daring and bold.

2 A hoca is a Moslem priest.

3 These two garments symbolize the clerical profession.
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"Shall you or I ask the first question?" İncili asked.

"You ask your question first, and I shall answer it," said the other

"All right," said İncili. "Here is my question:

"Huyletin zir zir etin, Huynihu çağır ha?" 4

The hoca from Europe opened up his book and tried to find an answer to this question, but he was unable to find any reference to it. He asked to have the question repeated.

Knowing that his opponent could not answer the question, İncili Çağus repeated it, this time saying it very loudly: "Huyletin zir zir etin, Huynihu çağır ha?"

Again the hoca from Europe searched his book for an answer, and again he found nothing. "I do not know," he finally said.

"Throw him into the sea!" exclaimed İncili.

4 Although most of these words are Turkish, they mean nothing here.
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come here to examine Turkish hocas but he himself knows nothing!"

After the hoca had left, the padisah asked İncili Çavuş, "What was the meaning of that question you asked?"

"Well, the other day I was walking through a wooded area when I came upon some gypsies playing drums and zurnas. Huyletin means drum, and zir zir means zurna. So my question had to do with drums zurnas."

The zurna is a primitive double-reed wind instrument. Drums and zurnas are played at various traditional celebrations and festive occasions. At rural weddings and at circumcision ceremonies they are played many hours per day for several days. More often than not, gypsies are the musicians. Whether İncili or the narrator is trying to represent Gypsy language here or whether the language of İncili's question is all a spoof, we do not know for certain.