

Story 1114 1966 Tape 5) Narrator: Hacer Ertemli

Location: Bursa

Date: Summer 1966

Village Mehmet and the Friday Stable

There was once a villager named Mehmet who came into this city on a Friday. He heard the ezan¹ being called from the minaret, but he did not know what it meant. Then everyone started taking his ritual ablutions and entering the mosque. Mehmet didn't understand any of this, but he went along with the crowd of people was doing. Inside the mosque everyone was performing namaz,² and Mehmet imitated what they were doing. Then, because Bursa had been captured with swords, the hoca³ took a sword in his hand.⁴ When Mehmet saw this, he rushed out of the mosque, picked up his shoes and put them beneath arm, and then ran all the way back to his village.

He stopped in at the village coffeeshouse,^{1, 2} where someone

¹ The ezan is the call to prayer made from a minaret.

² Namaz is the prayer service

³ At one time a hoca was both a teacher and preacher. After the founding of the Republic, church and state were separated, and the hoca retained only his religious function; teachers were secular. There is some carry-over of the double function of earlier times in the practice of students' calling their professors or teachers hoca.

⁴ In the mimber (minber)--similar to pulpit--is a ceremonial sword now used only for ritual purposes. It has nothing to do with the capture of Bursa.

Story 1114

asked him, "Where have you been, Mehmet? We haven't seen you all day until now."

"Today," said Mehmet, "I went to the city, and there I saw many strange things. I saw a man shouting from a high tower, but I could not understand just what it was that he wanted. People listened to the shouter for a minute or so, and then they all began to wash their hands and faces. After that all went into a huge stable. Well, I followed them into that stable, but I could not understand what their problem was. There was something wrong with them, however, for they began to strike and strike themselves⁵ until they knocked themselves down with their faces on the floor. Then an older man took from its sheath a long sword and held it in his hand. Apparently he was going to kill everyone in that building.

just barely escaped, and I ran all the way back here to the village."

There was an old man in the coffeehouse listening to him tell his adventure. He said, "Now look here, Mehmet! During my long life I have made two such dangerous journeys to the city!"

⁵ Moslem prayers involve much physical exercise--kneeling squatting, lying prone, and rising. Worshipers do not really strike themselves.