

Story 1213 (1990 Tape 8)

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İzmir Province

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Mehmet the Conqueror¹ as Flashy Dresser

I remember an anecdote about Mehmet the Conqueror. You know who Mehmet the Conqueror was--a padişah of the Turks who was a genius. But the event in this story happened while he was still a very young man, before he had become the sultan.

Mehmet liked ornate designs, and he was fond of wearing very colorful clothing. At that time there was a type of trousers made of shiny, glittering cloth. These trousers were called çakşır.² He had a pair of çakşır made for himself, and when they were finished, he put them on and walked about in public wearing them

When his sultan father³ saw him dressed in this fancy garment, he did not approve of it. (You yourself know that to this day most Turkish men avoid wearing bright colors. Most Turkish men are rather grave and serious-minded people.)

¹Sultan Mehmet II was the Turkish sultan who led the capture of Constantinople in 1453 from the Byzantine Empire. He is almost always referred to as Mehmet the Conqueror. He ruled from 1451-1481.

²Çakşır were trousers secured at the waist by several pleats. They were secured at the ankles by being sewn to thin leather boots that were then fashionable.

³Murat II, ruler from 1421-1451.

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When Mehmet's father saw Mehmet wearing his bright new trousers, he looked at them for a minute, and then he said to his son, "Oh,⁴ çakşır! If you wear such glittering things, what will mother be able to wear to distinguish herself?"

⁴The Turkish word used for this exclamation was bre, a contraction of bire, meaning oh! ah! or hey!