

Story 1324 (1981 Tape 3)

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Düzici kaza,
Adana Province

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sity, Elazığ

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A Calamity at the Mosque of Karatepe¹

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At one time in the past the people of Karatepe found that they were frequently bored and drowsy at the afternoon prayer service at the mosque. They therefore went to the mufti² and asked him to cancel their afternoon prayer service.

Annoyed by this request, the mufti asked, "Can a prayer ever be canceled? Of course not! I am going to send an imam³ to your village, and during the prayer service you are to follow his directions, doing whatever he does, repeating whatever he says." The Karatepe men returned to their village with this imam.

At the first prayer service that the imam conducted

¹This isolated village in northeastern Adana Province is legendary for the supposed stupidity of its inhabitants. Their ineptness and misadventures are recounted in scores of Karatepe anecdotes. This negative view of Karatepe people is, of course, a folk stereotype.

²Interpreter of Islamic law and regulator of prayer hours and holy days keyed to the lunar calendar.

³The imam is in charge of the prayer services in a mosque. By following his movements in the highly ritualistic prayer

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he repeated the instructions given to the Karatepe people by the mufti: "You are to do just as I do during the prayer service, and you are to repeat whatever I say." It was an and neglected mosque at Karatepe. It was so neglected that there were not even the usual carpets on the floor. As the imam was leading the congregation through the first rekat,⁴ he pressed his head to the floor. Unfortunately his nose wedged tightly in a crack between two of the floorboards, he was unable to remove it. He called out loudly, "My nose is wedged in the floor!"

Dutifully the congregation repeated his words: "My nose is wedged in the floor!"

"But I mean it! I will take an oath to swear that my nose is really wedged in the floor!"

The congregation responded, "But I mean it! I will take an oath to swear that my nose is wedged in the floor!"

"If you don't believe it, come and see that my nose is

service, the lines of worshipers are able to perform in unison. For an understanding of this tale, it is important to know that the imam at the front of the mosque faces Mecca, as do all other worshipers, and so his back is toward the congregation.

⁴A rekat is a series of physical movements and gestures performed during prayer. The number of rekats performed varies with the particular services of which they are a part. At a service at which a dozen or more rekats are required, there is a considerable amount of energy expended.

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wedged in the floor!"

Of course the crowd again responded as it had been instructed to do by repeating these words exactly.

The imam by then realized that he was in a very awkward situation. No matter how he appealed for help out of his difficulty, the congregation would simply echo what he said instead of helping him extricate his nose. Desperate, he tried to signal his distress by kicking the man who was in the front row of worshipers right behind him. That man and all of the others in the mosque, from the first row to the next to the last row, kicked the men behind them. The men in the last row also gave a kick behind them. Most of them only the air, but several men in the center of the last row kicked a decaying pillar of the building. This pillar fell over, causing the whole roof to collapse