

Story 1532 (1992 Tape 1

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of Nevşehir Province

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Nasreddin Hoca's<sup>1</sup> Inverted Tipping of Bath Attendants

One day Nasreddin Hoca went to a public bath, but at that time he was not wearing his newer and cleaner clothes. When the bath attendants observed his shabby appearance, they did not bother themselves about helping. All they did was to show him to his cubicle in the bath. The Hoca sat by himself in his cubicle and washed himself.<sup>2</sup> When he was leaving the bath, however, he gave the tellaks a golden lira, which was a very large tip. The attendants were greatly confused by this generosity, for they had done nothing to help the Hoca.

Time passed, and then one day the Hoca again went to the public bath. This time when the tellaks saw him enter the building, the attendants remembered the large tip he had given them during his previous visit. As a result, they showed him great respect and provided him with every kind of service. They gave him the best cubicle, and they brought him the finest

<sup>1</sup>A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher. Separation of church and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than of religious training. Nasreddin Hoca is Turkey's most popular comic folk character.

<sup>2</sup>In Turkish baths, there are usually available scrubbers and masseurs for those who wish their services. These bath attendants are known as tellaks.

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soap they had. They helped to scrub him, and they made sure that he received a thorough bath. This time as he was leaving the bath, Hoca gave the attendants a very small coin for a tip.

Again the tellaks were confused by his behavior. One of them said to him, "Oh, Hoca, even though we did not serve you very well during your first use of this bath, you gave us a whole golden lira as a tip. Today, however, we served you very well, but you have given us a pittance as tip. What is the meaning of all this? We cannot understand this matter at all."

Nasreddin Hoca explained the situation to the confused tellaks. "Oh, friends, the first time I came to your bath, you gave me no service at all. The tip I have given you today was for the way you treated me then. The tip I gave you then was for the excellent service you provided today!"