

Story 2124 (1988 Tape 16)

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Mehmet the Conqueror¹ Honors

Eyub Ensari² the Defeated

The emperor Mehmet the Second was the Ottoman
tan who captured İstanbul [then Constantinople]. After
that great victory, he was known as Mehmet the Conqueror.

After he had been ruler for some time, Mehmet
Conqueror ordered a restoration of famous historical
sites and the preservation of the graves of great people
He hired scholars to discover those places and people
worthy of being honored. These scholars provided him with
a great amount of historical information. They failed,
however, to locate the grave of Eyub Ensari, the first
Muslim leader to attempt to capture İstanbul. His attempt,

¹Sultan Mehmet II captured Constantinople in 1453. Be-
sides all of the historical data available about him and
his reign, there are also many folktales about this ruler.

²Neither the Encyclopaedia of Islam nor the Turkish
Encyclopaedia has any entry for Eyub Ensari. There are
listings under Eyub and under Ensari, all of them with
dates much later than the supposed time of Eyub Ensari
given in this tale. None of the entries under either
Eyub or Ensari has any mention of an attack or proposed
attack on Constantinople.

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made just forty years after the death of Prophet Mohammed, was unsuccessful.

When the scholars had given up their search for the grave of Eyub Ensari, Mehmet the Conqueror appealed to his former teacher, Akşemseddin, for help. "My hoca,³ you have pointed out the locations of the graves of many other famous men. Can you tell us now where to find the grave of Eyub Ensari?"

Akşemseddin thought for awhile and then said, sultan, let me go and pray to Allah and then go to sleep. Allah may possibly show me in a dream where that great man's grave is located. If so, then I shall return and lead you to that place."

On the following day Akşemseddin returned to the court of Mehmet the Conqueror, where all of the viziers, the advisors, and some special guests had gathered. şemseddin asked the sultan to follow him. Not only the sultan but also all of those present then at the court followed the hoca. As the group walked along, some of the lesser viziers joked among themselves about the folly

³A hoca is the preacher and religious leader of a Muslim community. Before the time of the Republic, hocas were also teachers, for education then was the responsibility of the clergy.

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of this effort to find the grave they sought. One said to the others, "Eyub Ensari's grave has been obscured for so long that there is now no way to locate it."

Another said, "Akşemseddin will be disgraced by the failure of his present effort. He may even lose his head for misleading the sultan."

When they came to a certain point on their route, Akşemseddin stopped and said that there he was going to perform two rekats⁴ of prayer in praise of Allah. He unrolled his prayer rug, placed it on the ground, and proceeded to complete two rekats. But when he had done so, he did not arise. He lay there as if unconscious, and no one was able to rouse him from this condition. When, after several minutes, he did arise, his eyes were so red that they almost seemed to be filled with blood. Sultan Mehmet asked him, "What is the matter, my teacher?"

Akşemseddin did not answer that question at first. He kept pointing at his prayer rug. When finally he did

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 part. At a service during which a dozen or more rekats are required, there is a considerable amount of energy expended.

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speak, he said only, "Dig beneath my prayer rug." Mehmet the Conqueror ordered some of his servants to dig there and half a meter beneath the surface they came upon a tombstone as large as a dining table and inscribed with the name Eyub Ensari. Mehmet the Conqueror ordered his viziers to have commissioned the construction of a mosque and a tomb for Eyub Ensari in the immediate area

Before İstanbul had been captured, the capital of the Ottoman Empire had been Bursa. But for some time Bursa had been overpopulated. Its streets were congested and there was no room to build many more houses. Mehmet the Conqueror issued a firman⁵ which declared that people who moved from Bursa to İstanbul would have new houses built for them at the expense of the imperial treasury. When the sultan had a mosque and a tomb built around the spot which had been Eyub Ensari's grave, that part of the city had few residents. But the immigrants from Bursa settled there, and before long a new ward was added to the city. There are still many people living there who are descendants of the immigrants from Bursa.

Adnan Menderes, a noted prime minister of our time, used to say, "It may be more beneficial to visit the tomb

⁵An imperial decree issued by a sultan.

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of Eyub Ensari than make the pilgrimage Mecca