

Story 847 (1969 Tape 10)

Narrator: Nuri Genç, 68

Location: Iskenderun, Hatay
Province

Date: 1969

The Immoral Kadı and the Outraged Peasants¹

One day some villagers went to a town to attend the Fri-
noon prayer service at a mosque. When they arrived at
the mosque, they looked up at the minaret and saw there a
15-17 different muezzin² from any that they had ever seen before on
earlier trips to town. As the new muezzin began to chant the
ezan,³ it became apparent that he had a very good voice. They
wondered who this stranger was. "In the name of God, where
did they get him from?" they asked. "He is a very good
muezzin."

In those days the kadı⁴ would often have his office in
mosque, and thus he would be available to give advice or

¹This is a retelling by Nuri Genç of a story that he had
first told us in February, 1962. We have included it in the
collection as a good example of how texts may vary not only
from narrator to narrator but also from time to time with the
same narrator.

²The muezzin summons the Faithful to prayer. He sings
and chants his call.

³The ezan is the call to prayer, a standard summons
used by all muezzins.

⁴The kadı was the judge of pre-Republican Turkey. He
was a judge of religious (Islamic) law.

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give opinions on canonical law.⁵ When the villagers entered the mosque I am telling you about, they went at once to the office of the kadı and said, "By God, Kadı Efendi,⁶ this new muezzin that you have is a very talented man. Where did you find him?"

The kadı said, "May God keep him so! As it happens, this new muezzin is a Jew."

"A Jew?" the peasants asked. "How can that be? How can a Jew recite the ezan from a minaret?"

76⁻¹ "You are uneducated people," said the kadı. "Let me tell you about this. The purpose of chanting the ezan is to call people to prayer. What is important is that the muezzin have a very good voice. Our other muezzin was called up for military service, and so we were looking for a new muezzin. We heard that this man's voice was good. Therefore we hired him for the position, disregarding the fact that he was a Jew. Not only does he perform the ezan very well, but he also does so for a very reasonable fee, and

⁵What in the West is known as canonical law is called seriat law in Moslem lands. Such opinion or advice rendered outside of court was known as a fetva, the term used here.

⁶Efendi is a term of respect. At one time it had considerable prestigious implication and was applied to distinguished men. Its prestigious quality has undergone so much devaluation that today it is used only for servants and children.

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therefore we hired him to work for us. Our mosque is not very well financed, and we cannot afford to hire a muezzin from Istanbul."

The peasants listened carefully to what the kadı said and they pondered upon it for a while. They finally saw that the kadı's explanation made much good sense, and they left the town entirely satisfied.

Some of these same villagers returned the following Friday for the noon prayer service. As they entered the courtyard of the mosque, they saw some casks of wine. Several of the kadı's students were selling bottles of wine drawn from these casks. Several of the peasants shouted, "You rascals! How dare you sell wine in the courtyard of a mosque? Don't you know that you are committing a great sin?"

These peasants then ran to the kadı and asked, "Kadı (Efendi), what is going on here?"

"What is wrong?"

"How can those fellows be permitted to sell wine in courtyard of a mosque?"

"Ah, but we are not drinking that wine

"Still, how can they do such a thing?" the peasants persisted. "Wine is forbidden by our religion."

"Sons, you are illiterate people, and so I shall explain this to you. I understand how you feel about it. This

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mosque owns some vineyards, but we are unable to sell all of the grapes that grow in those vineyards. There is no one to all of those grapes, even when we bring them in here to this town. There is no market for all of them.

"We have many expenses at this mosque. There are the salaries of the imam⁷ and the muezzin. The floors of the mosque must be kept carpeted with suitable rugs. We also have to buy kerosene and drinking water. How could we provide all these things without money? Thinking about this very seriously, we decided to make some wine from the unsold grapes and then sell the wine. Wine sells very well! We use the money from such sales to take care of the needs of mosque. We do not use any of the money for our personal needs. Does this still bother you good Moslems?"

"No, sir, it does not."

"And, by the way, I should add that it is only Christians who drink that wine.

"That is quite appropriate," they agreed.

After receiving this careful explanation, the peasants no longer had any objections to the sale of wine. Soon after the prayer service ended, they started back to their village, just as they had always done

⁷The imam is the mosque official who conducts the prayer services.

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Although these villagers came fairly often to participate in the Friday noon services, it was some time before they had occasion to see the kadı again. But on one of their trips to town they wanted to consult him about a legal matter in their village. When they could not find him at the mosque, they asked an attendant, "Where is the Kadı Efendi?"

"Kadı Efendi went home

"Well, where does he live?"

"Over there," the man said, pointing.

It was at noontime when they went to his house, and the weather was very hot. They knocked on the door of the kadı's house, but there was no response. They stood outside the door and listened for a moment, but they heard no sound from within. When they went to one of the windows and looked inside, however, they saw that the kadı was there, and they were shocked to see that he was involved in a sexual act with a small boy. They rushed back to the door and all started pounding on it, calling loudly, "Kadı! Open the door!"

"Who are those disrespectful rascals knocking on my in that way?" asked the kadı.

"Oh, you disgraceful scoundrel,⁸ you great hypocrite!" they said. "What did we see you doing in there? Is this the way in which kadıs dispense justice?"

⁸The narrator used here the word yezit.

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"Sons, you cause me a great deal of difficulty," said the kadı, "but I shall explain to you what you must have seen through the window. A suit was brought against this boy for allegedly raping a girl. He was brought to trial for that offense. When I looked at him, he seemed very young to me.

father told me that he was too young to be able to rape a girl. In order to determine whether or not this boy was capable of raping a girl, I performed an experiment with him.

that you saw from the window was that experiment."

"May God curse you! Curses upon such a court and upon such a kadı!" With these remarks the peasants left the kadı's and left that town.