

Story 1588 (1987 Tape 3)

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Location: Bilık village,
Devrek kaza,
Zonguldak Province

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Tekerleme¹

Once there was and once there wasn't, when the camels were playing polo in the old bathhouse, when the bath keeper had no water and the woodcutter had no axe, the dog which was walking the street had no collar

If you enter a vineyard, you will be in great trouble. Work can be completed without money, but you cannot buy nuts without money. They married me to a girl, but when I opened the bridal veil, I saw a squash. She looked like a man, and teeth looked like pickaxes, but her waist looked like a frog. The map of the Mediterranean Sea but the gulls of the Black Sea were both in the sediment of the olive oil. Pilav²

¹A tekerleme is a rimed nonsensical jingle that serves as a comic prelude to a folktale. Its ridiculous rimings and its logical incongruities provide humor. But the tekerleme also alerts the audience to the fact that a tale is about to begin, and its witty absurdities arouse audience alertness to the point where it can appreciate the skill of a good raconteur. Only the image of camels playing polo in the public bath is a frequent motif in Turkish tekerlemeler. In other words, this is not one of the more popular tekerlemeler.

²A rice dish containing flecks of meat and sometimes pine nuts and/or currants. It is a staple of Turkish diet.

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and stewed fruit go well together. Before their houses lay heaps of stones, but the black hen flew up into a tree. After that, I passed through the keyhole with a team of horses.

³A tekerleme rarely translates well. It is difficult to reproduce the rime scheme and word play in another language. The Turkish tekerleme is almost always much lighter than this English translation would suggest.