

Story 1245 (1988 Tape 1)

Narrator: Mustafa Aytekin, 26

Location: Derinkuyu, kaza town
in Nevşehir Province

Date: March 27, 1988

Some Lazes Try to Measure the Height of a Minaret

At the end of a hot day, a number of residents of a Black Sea coast village lay in the mosque yard waiting for the evening prayer service to begin.¹ Lying there in the shade, several of them were gazing up at the minaret of the mosque. One of these men said, "The height of that minaret must be equal to the height of thirty men."

Another Laz said, "No, it cannot be that tall. It must be about the height of twenty men."

As the two men argued about this, the rest of those in the mosque yard began taking sides with one or the other of them. After a while someone stood up and said, "Let us stop arguing about this and find out the actual height of the minaret by measuring it." But for some time nobody was able to suggest a way of measuring the mosque.

Then another man said, "Here is a way to measure it. Let us fasten a pole across the top of the minaret. Have a very

¹There are two prayer services late in the day. In the early evening just at sunset there is the fourth prayer of the day, called akşam. Two hours later comes the fifth service, which is named yatsı, the end of the religious day. The service for which the worshipers are here waiting must be akşam, for it is still light outside.

strong man grasp that pole tightly. Then let a second man hang from the first man's ankles. A third should hang from the second man's ankles, a fourth from the third's ankles, and so on until the ground is reached. Then all that we shall have to do is to count the men in that human chain."

After thinking about this idea for a few minutes, the others agreed to try it. A very strong man grasped the pole across the top of the minaret, and others, one after another, began hanging down from the minaret, each holding onto the man above him. But by the time the sixth man was hanging downward, the first man on top was beginning to have difficulty gripping the pole. He shouted to the others, "Just a minute until I can spit on my hands!"