

Story 1946 (1997 Tape 1

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Tamerlane and Nasreddin Hoca's¹ Clothing Bill

It is said Nasreddin Hoca lived during the period of Tamerlane's invasion of Anatolia,² but I do not know for certain whether or not this is true. Anyway, Tamerlane did come to Anatolia, and his arrival there terrified most of the people living there. As he approached, the residents fled before him and found hiding places. When the great conqueror observed this, he announced that he wanted the bravest of all Turks in Anatolia to come and visit him.

Who would that person be? People searched and searched for someone brave enough to enter the presence

¹A hoca is the preacher and religious leader of a community. In the pre-Republican era the hoca was also the community's teacher, for education then was the responsibility of the clergy. Separation of "church" and state in the Republic required that teachers be people with secular rather than religious training. Nasreddin Hoca belonged to the earlier period. For centuries he has been Turkey's most beloved comic folk character.

²Anatolia is the 90 percent of Turkey which lies in Asia--all of Turkey east of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.

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of Tamerlane. They finally decided that Nasreddin Hoca would be the only Turk brave enough to visit Tamerlane, and so it was he who was sent to meet that invader

When Nasreddin Hoca appeared before the great leader, Tamerlane said to him, "I intend to test your courage." The Hoca was taken to a nearby arena, where arrows were shot at him. One of Tamerlane's archers shot an arrow that passed through his coat just beneath his right armpit. It put a hole in the coat but did not even scratch the Hoca's skin. A second arrow went beneath his left armpit in the same way. The archer then shot an arrow which ripped the top of Nasreddin Hoca's turban without touching his scalp. While the bowman was shooting at him in this way, the Hoca remained motionless and silent.

Tamerlane then said to Nasreddin Hoca, "You are not only the bravest person in this area, but you are also one of the bravest men I have ever seen. I am amazed at your courage! But we ruined your coat and your turban, and so I shall give you enough gold to replace them."

Nasreddin Hoca was pleased to receive this gold, but he said, "I also need some additional gold to replace my trousers too."

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Tamerlane replied, "Why should we replace your trousers when it was only your turban and coat that we ruined?"

The Hoca answered, "As a result of your ruining my coat and turban, I ruined my trousers."