

Story 1654 (1974 Tape 28)      Narrator: İslâm Erdener, in  
40s; farmer and Hak  
Âşığı; resident of  
large Karakalpak  
community

Location: Kümbetli village  
(not part of any  
kaza but attached  
directly to the  
Provincial capital,  
Kars), Province of  
Kars

Date: August 1974

Some Adventures and Songs of Âşık Şenlik

I'd like to be a gardener in this world;  
I'd tend the plants and fruits so tenderly.  
I'd do it for the pleasure of my friends.  
However rich or talented you are,  
Be mindful of the people in your land.<sup>1</sup>

Be kind and just to people who are poor,  
Or you'll on Doomsday pay a penalty.

<sup>1</sup>A Turkish minstrel often begins a performance with something quite unrelated to his main subject. This is usually not a matter of mere sprezzatura but the result of a bardic tendency toward moralizing and didacticism. The fact that Erdener announced himself not simply as âşık but as hak âşık--hak means truth, right, or justice-- underscores the point that he conceives himself to be more than an entertainer. The many long tales and romances of Behçet Mahir (Turkey's greatest raconteur of the twentieth century) are punctuated throughout with moralistic passages.

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If you should be a hunter, stay alert.  
 not asleep while you are in the field,  
 Lest snake should strike you with its fatal sting.

not a pit to trap another man,  
 Or you yourself may sink into its depth.<sup>2</sup>  
 Immoral people often fail as friends  
 Despite their travels through the universe.  
 In trouble you'll discover your true friends.

Now I shall sing a song that was composed by Pervane  
 Hasan<sup>3</sup> about a mother-in-law.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>There is a popular Turkish proverb which says, "If  
 you dig a pit to trap your neighbor, dig it in your own  
 size."

<sup>3</sup>Şenlik was more an epithet than a name. It means  
cheerfulness or public rejoicing. The âşık's real name  
 was Hasan. Born in a village of Çıldır kaza in Kars Prov-  
 ince in 1853, Hasan was destined to become one of the  
 major minstrels of eastern Turkey. He used an Azeri dialect  
 of Ottoman Turkish, which contained more Arabic and Persian  
 words than does modern Turkish. İslâm Erdener was an  
 apprentice of the son of Âşık Şenlik and he uses the same  
 Turkic language. He sometimes sings what he admits to be  
 Şenlik's compositions, but he also echoes whole Şenlik  
 stanzas when he is singing poems and tales supposedly of  
 his own creation. The best guide to an understanding of  
 both Şenlik's and Erdener's language can be found in Orhan  
 Özbek's Âşık Şenlik Deyişmeler. Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası,  
 1969.

<sup>4</sup>Mother-in-law bashing is a popular parlor sport in

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You gave a girl, and she became my wife.  
 Better to have stone than such a wife!  
 Alas, my mother-in-law, my mother-in-law!  
 Alas, my mother-in-law, my mother-in-law!  
 She visits all her neighbors every day,  
 Returning home at night with aching feet  
 She's strong enough to break a pitchfork handle!  
 I cannot say a word, oh, mother-in-law!

after day she slaps my head so hard  
 My battered hat comes down around my ears.  
 may well wonder why I don't escape!  
 I cannot say a word, oh, mother-in-law!

father, better that your sperm were lost  
 mother, better you had empty womb!  
 Better my eyes were blind ere I saw her!  
 my father-in-law, oh, mother-in-law!  
 such abuse I shall not soon forget!  
 The time will come when I shall take revenge.  
 The time will someday come when she will die,  
 I shall daily trample down her grave!

many places. It may be practiced more rigorously in Turkey  
 than in some other lands.

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Now I shall sing some satirical poems from the repertoire of Âşık Şenlik. Before I start, I shall, of course, tell the story behind these verses.

Back in those former times when Âşık Şenlik was alive, he one day went to visit a friend named Ali, who lived in Hoşiret village in the Ardahan kaza of Kars Province. The two had been good friends for a long while. Âşık Şenlik had visited Ali six years earlier, and now he was making his second visit. They ate and drank together, and then they talked a great deal until it was bedtime.

But at the same time there was something else going on that Ali was supposed to be involved in, and that was a wedding that was being celebrated in the home of a neighbor. Ali said to Âşık Şenlik, "We went to the home of that neighbor during the day and drank his coffee. Now they have invited us to join the wedding banquet. I must accept that invitation, for it would be an offense if I failed to go. It is a pleasant coincidence that you are here at this time, for now we can go there together."

Âşık Şenlik answered, "Excuse me, Ali, but please permit me to remain here and get some rest tonight. Don't tell your neighbors that I am here. I shall be sleeping comfortably while you are there

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Ali then took Âşık Şenlik to the room where he was to spend the night. A pallet had been made up as a bed on the floor in the middle of that room. Âşık Şenlik took off his outer garments only, for in those days there were no special nightclothes, and people slept in their underwear. Ali said, "Good night!" to his friend, and soon after that he left the house to attend the wedding dinner.

A few minutes after Âşık Şenlik had retired, he said to himself, "What is happening here? I just barely got under the blanket when something poked me viciously in the armpit. Then it proceeded to strike my foot, my belly, and then my back!" This attack on him continued until the following morning. As I told you before, Âşık Şenlik went to bed in his underwear, and at the time he retired, his underwear was white. When he arose the following morning, however, he found that his white underwear had become red underwear.

A few minutes later, Ali knocked on the bedroom door and then entered. When he looked around inside the room he saw that the pillows were in one corner, the blanket was in another corner, and the sheets, all wrinkled up were somewhere else. He asked, "Did you sleep comfortably Âşık?"

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"Aha! Did I sleep very well?" answered Âşık Şenlik.  
 "Hand me my saz<sup>5</sup>, and I shall tell you in more detail how  
 comfortably I slept last night."

What I shall repeat for you now is a satirical poem  
 about fleas that was sung by Âşık Şenlik. Its verses are  
 in the Muhammes<sup>6</sup> format.

The flea of Hoşiret is so adept,  
 Entering beds with great authority  
 Honoring guests all night until the dawn,  
 Trimming in red the body once so pale.

An army he has, superbly trained in war--  
 All bandits or thieves or executioners--  
 Forcing the mightiest shah to dance about  
 Imposing a violence no man can bear.

<sup>5</sup>Presently the most popular stringed instrument used  
 by Turkish folk poets and folksingers. It is a lutelike,  
 three-stringed instrument. The melody is all played on  
 one string; the other strings are usually not fingered but  
 simply struck lightly by the passing hand holding the pick.  
 Sometimes the result is a chord or near-chord; sometimes  
 the result is closer to the steady drone notes on a bagpipe.

<sup>6</sup>This remark is unconsciously quite ironic. In the  
 Muhammes mode each stanza has five lines, as do the opening  
 three stanzas of this tale. But here where Erdener claims  
 Muhammes verse, the stanzas have only four lines!

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He learned the scorpion's sting from Şahmeran,<sup>7</sup>  
 Like pincers, clamps, and tools of torturers;  
 Stinging the body like a hive of bees,  
 Raging as long as one can move at all.

At that point Ali interrupted and asked Âşık Şenlik,  
 "Don't you have any fleas in your country?"

Âşık Şenlik answered, "I shall tell you about those  
 fleas. Listen." He then sang the following stanzas.

Give thanks that our fleas are endowed with the  
     mercy of God,  
 A trait unknown to fleas of Hoşiret.  
 Yours attack a victim until he is skinned.  
 They rush everywhere, quite unrestrained by rope.  
  
 They pummel and shatter all the people they meet.  
 Fall before them and know a century's curse.  
 Destruction they wreak, and confusion results  
     in its wake.

<sup>7</sup>There is doubt about this word. The narrator says clearly Şahmerdan, which means battering-ram or pile-driver. What can one learn from such devices? Şahmerdan may possibly be a dialectal form or mispronunciation of Şahmeran, the king of snakes and a very wise creature, whether or not he had anything to do with scorpions.

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Shahs shaken from thrones are required to dance  
to their tunes.

Such fleas are more fierce than the forces of  
Azazil.<sup>8</sup>

And are not such fleas the descendants of monkeys  
or apes?

Each one is heavily armed with a mattock and  
spade

Tools they employ in digging the flesh to the bone.

Şenlik this night survived the horde of such  
fleas

To whom should he, in misery, make complaint?

To sultan, to shah, or to owner of a han?<sup>9</sup>

Can any power guard against such fleas?

Unconquerable as all of England's power,

Fearsome as packs of wild and rabid dogs,

They terrify the lion, king of beasts.

What wonder lesser creatures dread their might?

<sup>8</sup>Azazil is one of the many names for Satan.

<sup>9</sup>A great walled compound with courtyard space to shelter all the animals of a caravan and hotel space to accommodate caravan personnel.



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Like catapults, they stone the elephant.  
 Like starling flocks, they peck apart the land.  
 They're loud as drums of Janissary bands;<sup>10</sup>  
 They're lethal as the arms of elite troops.

In rank on rank they come on countless mules,  
 So different from the peaceful caravans.  
 Their wrath and treachery are limitless;  
 Their battleaxes hack incessantly.

During the time of the late Aşık Şenlik there was a rival poet named Aşık Kılıççı Mustafa who came from the Province of Artvin--though I cannot right now remember the name of his village. This poet from Artvin was invited to the wedding celebration of Hacı<sup>11</sup> Beller, the second son of Kurban Ağa<sup>12</sup>, where he was to sing, play the saz, and

<sup>10</sup>The Janissaries were a corps of elite troops founded in early Ottoman times and surviving into the early 19th century. Their musical ensemble (mehter), one of the earliest military marching bands, still exists, partly as a tourist attraction, partly as a patriotic memorial to the greatness of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>11</sup>Hacı means pilgrim and is often an honorific conferred on anyone who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca. It can also be a male first name.

<sup>12</sup>An ağa (English, agha) is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. They

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entertain the guests. (Hacı Beller was living at that time in the village of İğnezor, which was within the kaza of Arpaçay in Kars Province.

This Kılıççı Mustafa had earlier written a letter to Âşık Şenlik but had received no response. He wrote a second letter, but again he received no answer. His third and final letter also remained unanswered. Âşık Şenlik had not answered those letters because he was not home at the time they arrived, and so he never received them. He was at that time traveling in a distant country. The letters were received by Zeliha, mother of Âşık Şenlik, who opened them and read their messages. She was an educated woman. She discovered that those letters were filled with unkind remarks and harsh attacks upon her son. After thinking about these letters for a while, she decided not to give them to her son but to tear them up and throw them away.

However, when Âşık Şenlik returned from his trip, Zeliha

are often the principal employers of farm workers, and they are often viewed by their employees as harsh, driving, and abusive. The term ağa is also used in a complimentary way, as an honorific, for a distinguished or just older person than the one using the term. Thus an older brother is called ağa bey by his younger siblings. Ağa bey may be used as a deferential term to one older or more prestigious than the speaker. A taxi driver may refer to his passenger as ağa bey; a salesman speaking to a male customer may call him ağa bey.

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said to him, "Son, there is an âşık named Kılıççı Mustafa whom I dislike very much. If you do not put that man to shame when you meet him, I shall not cancel your indebtedness to me for my acts of motherhood in your behalf."<sup>13</sup>

It so happened that shortly after that, when Âşık Şenlik was traveling from Çıldır to the city of Kars, he stopped at the village of İğnezor. Hearing the drums and

<sup>13</sup>This remark involves the Moslem religious concept of helâl and haram. Helâl refers to anything that is permitted or for which one is not culpable or blameworthy. What is haram is something forbidden and for which one could be considered guilty and blameworthy. On Judgment Day one will be held accountable for his/her involvement in anything haram. When a person approaches the end of life or expects to be in a life-threatening situation, he may ask all of his friends and relatives to forgive (and thus make helâl) his indebtedness to them for whatever things they have given him or helped him with. If the friends and relatives do not make all his debts helâl, they will remain on his record as haram entries, and he will be punished for them in the afterlife. One of those from whom everyone wants forgiveness of indebtedness is his/her mother. One requests from her a clearance, an absolution, for all the many things that a mother does for a child or gives to a child. This includes one's indebtedness to one's mother for the milk with which she nursed him/her. Whatever indebtedness others might forgive or refuse to forgive, one wants above all to have his/her mother absolve all indebtedness. If one's relations even with his mother have not been made helâl, the sinner will not be able to make a very impressive appearance before the Deity on Judgment Day. Mothers sometimes exploit this situation to compel their offspring to do what they (the mothers) wish. "If you do not do this or that or something else, I shall refuse to make helâl the milk with which I nursed you!" This ultimate threat seldom fails to bring the child into compliance with the mother's wish. --This is the stratagem which Zeliha is here using against Âşık Şenlik.

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pipes being played everywhere, he asked an old man about the celebration that was being held. "Oh, uncle," he asked, there perhaps a wedding going on in this village? If where is it?"

The old man answered, "Hacı Beller, the son of Kurban is being married."

Âşık Şenlik did not at that time have his saz with

(I should have told you before that Âşık Şenlik and Kılıççı Mustafa had never met each other. After a short while, Âşık Şenlik reached the house where the wedding celebration was taking place. There the local ağas were sitting in the places of honor and drinking tea or coffee. Âşık Şenlik began listening to the poet who was performing on the saz. It was none other than Kılıççı Mustafa, who was a very old man. At least seventy years old, he was a very skinny man, with no meat but all bones. His eyes had sunk deep into his head, and his face looked like the face of a goat. Furthermore, he was a köse.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>A köse is a special folk type. He is beardless, and he is often said to have a heart-shaped face and bandy legs. He is always considered to be extremely shrewd and cunning in his dealings with others. Usually he is a very unsympathetic figure, so much so that in many tales he seems to replace the ogre or monster, and hence any stratagem against him is considered fair.

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Âşık Şenlik listened closely to the songs of Kılıççı Mustafa, and he soon realized that they were not very good. In fact, the lines did not seem to be related to each other, and they often made very little sense.

Onion juice I squeezed in light brown eyes  
 Have you seen the oxen fleeing in the fields?  
 The camel climbed the terrace and laid eggs  
 Can you see the manda<sup>15</sup> flying from the stream?

While Kılıççı Mustafa was singing these lines, Ali Ağa, who was in charge of the wedding celebration, spoke to one of the maidservants, saying "Give coffee or tea to our newest guest and show him a place to sit." All of the others nearby turned their heads and looked at this newest guest. They all recognized at once that he was Âşık Şenlik.

Ali Ağa then turned to Âşık Mustafa and said, "You are really a fine âşık, and everyone is pleased with your work. I should like to ask you a question, however, if you will permit me to do so

"Very well. Ask your question," said Âşık Mustafa,

Ali Ağa said, "People everywhere talk about Âşık

<sup>15</sup> A water buffalo

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Şenlik. Do you know that âşık?"

Âşık Mustafa laughed, not in a pleasant way but in a sneering manner. "Don't talk to me about Âşık Şenlik, Ali Ağa. He is qualified to be only a herder of goats, not an âşık." Some people laughed, but Âşık Şenlik overheard what Âşık Mustafa had said.

Ali Ağa said, "Âşık Mustafa, please speak in kinder terms. There is a companion of Âşık Şenlik here. If he returns and reports your words to Âşık Şenlik, it will bring shame upon you." Turning then to Âşık Şenlik, Ağa asked, "Are you from the village of Âşık Şenlik?"

Âşık Şenlik simply answered, "Yes," as if he himself were not Âşık Şenlik.

Ali Ağa asked him another question, "Are you a tative of Âşık Şenlik?"

"No, I am not a relative of his."

Âşık Mustafa then asked him, "If I were to write a note to Âşık Şenlik, would you deliver it to him?"

"Of course," Âşık Şenlik answered.

Âşık Mustafa said, "All right, but the words that I shall write I shall first sing, with saz accompaniment, to an audience here. Then I shall write them down and give them to you."

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Âşık Şenlik listened as Kılıççı began to sing.

I ridiculed the master of this man.

you now take great offense at that?

With pitiless severity I spoke

Do you have strength enough to make a fist?

After hearing these words, Âşık Şenlik said to Âşık Mustafa, "I shall have to report your words to my master. I am a fellow villager of his. I used to sing a little, too, but I was not, of course, as distinguished as you are, even though I was associated with Âşık Şenlik. Because my memory was not as powerful as it needed to be, I could not become a great âşık.<sup>16</sup> When I report your words to Âşık Şenlik, he will undoubtedly say, 'Oh, son, didn't you learn anything from me? Couldn't you have made some effort to respond to Âşık Kılıççı's words instead of merely carrying them to me to answer?' Therefore, Âşık Mustafa, with your permission, I should like to attempt some response to your words."

"Very well! Go ahead, and I shall correct your mistakes," said Âşık Mustafa Kılıççı.

<sup>16</sup>Although not sincere, this demurral is a logical and pertinent observation. Capacious memory is a sine qua non for a Turkish minstrel, for their tales are often very long--sometimes even epic in dimension. A number of minstrel tales in the Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative have

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Âşık Şenlik began to sing.

Âşık, you have fallen into flames!

Have you no breeze to cool the flashing fire

To save you from the heat I'll generate?

Will you not feel a hundred thousand pains?

When Âşık Mustafa Kılıççı heard these excellent lines sung by an apprentice, he said to himself, "What is this? Have I perhaps struck my own knee with my pickaxe instead of striking the stone?"<sup>17</sup> If Âşık Şenlik's stupid apprentice can sing such fine lines, how much more effective must the master himself be?"

Âşık Mustafa recovered his saz and sang this stanza:

Do not attempt to rival me in verse!

My skill would swiftly strike you down in tears

quickly drive you into foreign lands.

What shelter--place of refuge--could you find?<sup>18</sup>

a performance time of two or more hours. The longest (as of 1994), a tale by Behçet Mahir, has a performance time of 10.5 hours.

<sup>17</sup>The American slang equivalent of this question would be, "Have I not perhaps shot myself in the foot?"

<sup>18</sup>This is in the tradition of minstrel contests popular in many lands of the Middle East, Central Asia, and Europe. In Northern Europe they are sometimes known as "capping" contests; in the Mediterranean basin they are sometimes referred to as "stoning" contests. Often, as



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Âşık Şenlik then sang.

I sacrifice myself for learned men  
But feel no obligation to the fools.  
What if my lines go to the zodiac?  
Have you the shoes to follow them that far?

Âşık Mustafa responded.

Your Âşık Şenlik spares not any man.  
His rude remarks respect not even God.  
You cannot paint the truth with just your breath  
Your manda might be indigo, not black!<sup>19</sup>

Âşık Şenlik sang.

Your puny heirs avoid the hardest tasks;  
The smaller dogs cannot attack a wolf  
You have no beard around your nose or mouth  
What kind of name tag hangs around your neck?

Ali Ağa then stood up and said, "Âşık Kılıççı, you  
are well qualified as an âşık. You can respond to him

here, the first minstrel sings a challenging or provocative stanza; his rival must respond with a stanza on the same subject and in the same form. The singers take turns initiating the give and take. Sometimes (as subsequently in this tale), the units may be series of stanzas rather than individual stanzas. There are other refinements in the "capping" or "stoning" contests, but since they are not demonstrated here, we shall not comment on them.

<sup>19</sup>The water buffalo (manda) is, in fact, black.

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very easily. Let us, therefore, permit him to continue with his singing.

Since there was no objection to this, Âşık Şenlik went on with the verses he had been singing.

Oh, âşık, you should think before you speak,  
For I can plunge you into deep distress,  
Dry up your breath, to silence parch your throat.  
Yes, I can counter all the words you sing.

Your status worth a thousand tümen<sup>20</sup> coins  
I can reduce in value to a pul--  
A single leaf amid a grove of oaks  
Yes, I can counter all the words you sing.

I'll leave you lost, confused in alien land  
Where endless wilderness will be your home

<sup>20</sup>A tümen was once a Persian monetary unit worth a golden lira--a very valuable coin. A pul was a tiny coin worth 1/3 of a para. A Turkish para was worth 1/40 of a Turkish kuruş, which, in turn was worth 1/100 of a Turkish lira. Five-, ten-, and 50-kuruş pieces were still in use as late as the early 1960s, but by 1994 devaluation had reduced the Turkish lira to the point where it took 18,000 or more to be equivalent to a U.S. dollar. By then such denominations as akçe, pul, para, and kuruş had ceased to exist except as antiques and collectors' items.

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Roaming about in lonely deserts drear,  
You'll suffer sunbaked skin and brittle bones.

If this upsets you, spectre of a man,  
I'll slow your passage to a creeping crawl.  
I'll change you to a camel lame and old,  
Or elephant fatigued by its own weight.

I can strike you with a gleaming scimitar  
Or simply make you rumpled as old cloth.  
Or can place a shackle on your leg  
And sell you to some shepherd as a slave.

With haltered neck you could in stable dwell.  
I'd daily bring you water and some hay.  
You'd be a member of some donkey drove  
Where you could be the wife of all the males

At last, reduced to merely widow's role,  
Your lot would be a life of bitterness  
You'd spend your time as single aged dame  
Whose latter years were empty as a ring.

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Mustafa then touched his saz but made no rejoinder to Âşık Şenlik's words. Ali Ağa said to him, "Oh, Âşık Mustafa, Âşık Mustafa, why do you fail to respond to such a challenge?"

Âşık Mustafa remained silent, but Âşık Şenlik said, "Oh, Ali Ağa, whoever an âşık is in a foreign country, he cannot help thinking about his family back home. That is the reason why Âşık Mustafa could not answer my lines. Now I shall continue with the second part of my performance, and perhaps by the time that has been completed, he will be able to make some response

If your tongue is still, your voice too weak to work,

Why did you bother to bring your saz today?

You should spell the words and write each letter down.

Seeing the script, perhaps you then could sing.<sup>21</sup>

At first you fail to understand yourself.

And then you censure me with stinging words.

<sup>21</sup>Inasmuch as Turkish minstrels work strictly in the oral tradition, they avoid all use of printed or written texts. This remark is, therefore, one of Âşık Şenlik's most punishing sallies.

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The foolish man who mocks his master's skill  
 Condemns himself to wear the blackest face.<sup>22</sup>

You flounder like a colt untrained and wild,  
 But all you do is raise a cloud of  
 A speckled crow flies over arid wastes;  
 A fat-tailed sheep flees to Circassian lands.<sup>23</sup>

-----+  
 -----+<sup>24</sup>

Your words turn back and slander only you,  
 Making you seem a zenne in a play.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup>This is not a reference to Negroes. From at least as long ago as the 10th century, black has been a disliked and supposedly unlucky color.

<sup>23</sup>A Caucasian people living north of the Black Sea, the Circassians were Christianized in the 6th century; many, however, were Islamicized beginning in the 17th century when hostile Russian pressure drove them to seek refuge in the Ottoman Empire. There are still identifiable communities of these fair-haired, often blue-eyed people in Turkey's northernmost provinces.

<sup>24</sup>These lines are unintelligible.

<sup>25</sup>The word zenne refers to a man who plays a female role in the rural Turkish folk theatre. Women virtually never perform in the rural folk drama, which is, incidentally, often ritualistic.

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If you continue as flirtatious girl,  
 You'll spend your days and nights in countless  
 sins

prance and flit about like mother fox.  
 show less courage than a mountain goose.

Late in the spring your hair all molts away  
 And causes you to shrink from summer's sun.  
 Even in autumn, field mice shun the sun  
 To catch them one must dig into the soil.

No trainer can detect your origin--  
 What kind or breed of dog you really are.  
 You're not a terrier crossbred or pure.  
 You're neither miniature nor greyhound tall.

Many like you beg food at butcher shops;  
 Many like you are mangy, mottled beasts.  
 I'd tie you with the feeble older hounds  
 And feed you daily on the softest mash.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup>The Turkish term used here is yal.

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At that point Ali Ağa interrupted again. He said, "Âşık Mustafa, have you not yet realized that this visiting âşık is a very wise man? Did you detect no hint of this from the respectful way in which we greeted him? This man is not an apprentice of Âşık Şenlik but rather Âşık Şenlik himself. Now that it is your turn to respond, why do you not start singing?"

But then it was Âşık Şenlik who spoke up, not Âşık Mustafa. He said, "Ali Ağa, it is not proper for an âşık to finish his performance without first having identified himself in the words of his song.<sup>27</sup> Please give me permission to terminate my song with the inclusion of my name."

"Very well," replied Ali Ağa. "You may do so."

Alas, you hopelessly dull-witted man,

Not even worth remembering are your words.

It seems to be a universal law

That poverty must serve the will of wealth.

<sup>27</sup> This is the truth and not merely a pretext for continuing his performance. Not only singers incorporate their names in their oral texts, but so too do some non-singing poets and folktale raconteurs. The famous Behçet Mahir, both nonsinging poet and folktale narrator, names himself in several of the tales recorded for ATON.

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Now silence is the best recourse you have;  
 To speak is to destroy your livelihood,  
 If you're the moon, you now are in eclipse;  
 If you're the sun, you fail to shed your light

Do not begin to cry and yowl and scream,  
 As cats in mating season do at night.  
 If you should turn into a scorpion,  
 Into a turtle I'd transform you then.

Though Şenlik is but mortal man, his words  
 Can burn the mountains, causing them to melt.  
 Oh, lizard powerless, would not one word  
 Have force enough to break your slender neck?

In this way Âşık Şenlik concluded his singing and then sat down. Those present drank their tea and talked with each other. Some money was collected for Âşık Şenlik,<sup>28</sup> but he refused to accept it. When the eating and drinking were finished and the conversation had ended, Âşık Şenlik picked up the money and handed it to Âşık Mustafa, saying,

<sup>28</sup>Turkish minstrels traditionally travel from coffee-house to coffeehouse, performing their repertoire of songs and sung tales at each stop. They do not have a contract with any of the coffeehouse proprietors. They earn their money from contributions made by customers.



Story 1654

"Oh, âşık, may you continue to play your saz, earn money in that way, and live long!"

May Allah have mercy upon Âşık Şenlik, and may Allah give a long life to each of you who have been listening to me.