

Story 771 (1970 Tape 14)

Narrator: Zeki Yılmaz

Location: Village of Kumyaka
(formerly Siği until
changed in 1970's),
kaza of Mudanya,
Bursa Province

Date: July 1970

Nasreddin Hoca Estimates Net Worth of Tamerlane¹

One day Tamerlane decided to go to the public bath at Akşehir. When Tamerlane's attendants saw Nasreddin Hoca in that bath, they said, "Tamerlane cannot possibly bathe in the same bath as that dirty lout, Nasreddin Hoca. Let us get that fellow out of there."

"No, no, never mind," said Tamerlane. "I can bathe in the same place he does."

Tamerlane went into the central room and said to Hoca "Selâmünaleyküm."

"Aleykümselâm,"² and welcome to you," answered the Hoca.

The two bathed and talked at length as they were

¹Those who claim some historicity for Nasreddin Hoca place him in various periods of the past, one of which is the era of Tamerlane. Many anecdotes feature exchanges of wit and wisdom between the great conqueror and the clever teacher-preacher, Nasreddin Hoca, who supposedly lived in the Akşehir area.

²The traditional exchange between Muslim strangers: Peace be unto you / And may peace be unto you too.

Story 771

doing so. After a while Tamerlane said to Hoca, "My Hoca, how much gold do you think I am worth?"

Hoca scanned him from top to bottom and then answered, "You may be worth three gold coins."

"How absurd!" said Tamerlane. "Why, my towels here are worth that much."

"Well, as a matter of fact, that is what I was basing my estimate on."³

³Twitting the powerful and fierce Tamerlane with impunity was a risky pastime that the Nasreddin Hoca of folktale fame indulged in frequently. The courage and ingenuity required by this game are qualities admired by Turkish people.