

Story 997 (1975 Tape 1

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Location: Aksu village,
Bozüyük kaza,
Bilecik Province

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Bekri Mustafa,¹ School Friend of the Padişah²

Bekri Mustafa had once been a school friend of the padişah, but Bekri turned out to be very different from the padişah and his other classmates. By the time that the others had reached middle age they had all acquired position and property, but Bekri had acquired nothing. The reason for this was known to everyone: he had spent all of his money on alcoholic drinks.

One day Bekri took a boat and rowed out to the center of the Bosphorus,³ where he thought that he would not be seen. There he tried and tried to insert his penis into his own anus

It so happened, however, that the padişah was looking from one of the upper windows of the palace at just that time, and he saw what Bekri was trying to do. Calling a couple of his servants, he ordered them to get Bekri Mustafa and bring him into his presence. When Bekri appeared before him, the padişah said to him, "My old friend, I saw what you

¹Of dubious historicity, Bekri Mustafa was a folk character who became a name for his alcoholism. Any alcoholic may now be referred to as a Bekri Mustafa.

²Many raconteurs who tell tales about Bekri Mustafa place him in the time of Sultad Murad IV (reigned 1623-1640). Murad is not mentioned in the present tale, but he is probably the padişah referred to.

³Many tales about Bekri picture him as a boatman on the Bosphorus centuries before water taxis were eliminated by a bridge.

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were trying to do out there on the Bosphorus. What was the meaning of that?"

"Well, I put my penis into a girl, and she becomes a woman. I put my penis into a man, and he becomes one of your viziers. There seems to be something magic about it, and so I thought that if I could put it into myself, I might become a pasha.⁴

"Stop doing such a foolish thing! If it is a good job that you want, I hereby appoint you muezzin⁵ at Aya Sofya Mosque.⁶

⁴The word pasha refers now simply to a general. In earlier times, however, it referred to the military governor of a province.

⁵The muezzin is the chanter who, standing atop a minaret, calls the faithful to prayer five times a day.

⁶The largest church in Christendom for almost a thousand years, Hagia Sophia (Aya Sofya in Turkish) was converted to a mosque after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. Picturing so scurrilous a character in such a religious role incriminates the ruler who appointed him to it just as much (if not more) than it incriminates Bekri. Audiences laugh at this tale for its outrageousness.