

Story 1747 (1994 Tape 3)

Narrator: Cevdet Uğuz,
veterinarian

Location: Taşkale village,
Karaman (provincial
capital but formerly
kaza merkezi),
Karaman Province

Date: March 1994

Şükrü Saracoğlu¹ and the Hoca²

This story is about Şükrü Saracoğlu, who came from Ödemiş.³ He was quite a distinguished statesman. He played a prominent role in 1920 during the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. Following that, he held several ministerial positions, and in 1940 he became Prime Minister during the presidency of İnönü. Despite his fame and all of his honors, he used to return to his village frequently to visit his boyhood friends and talk with the people there

¹Mehmet Şükrü Saracoğlu--he never used his first name in public--was one of Turkey's most distinguished statesmen during the first half of the 20th century. Born in 1887, he died in 1953. He was Prime Minister, President of the Grand National Assembly, and the holder of several Cabinet positions.

²The hoca was, at the time of this story, a preacher and religious leader. In pre-Republican times a hoca was also a teacher, for in that earlier era education was largely in the hands of the clergy.

³Now a large kaza town in extreme eastern Izmir Province.

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There was at that time in his village a hoca who resembled Nasreddin Hoca in some ways. He looked like Nasreddin Hoca, and he had the same kind of humor and wittiness. One day this hoca found a wristwatch, but that watch had no strap. The hoca therefore went to a shop to buy a leather strap for it. The clerk started to measure his wrist, but the hoca said, "This is called an arm watch, not a wrist watch.⁴ Therefore, I want a strap large enough to fit my arm. I shall wear it on my arm!"

When the village people heard about his comments, they said to each other, "Oh, our hoca has gone mad! He is speaking foolishly!"

This happened at a time when Şükrü Saracoğlu was back visiting his home area. When he was told about the hoca's eccentric behavior, he said, "Invite the hoca to have dinner with us tonight."

⁴In a literal sense, the hoca is correct. What we call a wristwatch is in Turkish kol saati (arm watch), not bilek [wrist] saati [watch].