

Story 1502 (1973 Tape 11

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Location: Kargıcak village,
Silifke kaza,
İçel Province

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A Chilling Practice of the Yürüks¹

There was a Yürük whose wife was just about to give birth to a child. The Yürük went to the tent where this event was to take place. As soon as the baby dropped into this world, the Yürük took the baby and dipped it into cold water.

This was reported to a judge near the area of the Yürük encampment, and the judge was curious about this practice. He called the Yürük to his home and asked him, "What is this all about? Why did you dip a newborn baby in cold water?"

"We have this custom of chilling a child as soon as it arrives in this world. This makes it capable of enduring the cold weather it experiences for the rest of its life."

The judge thought about this for a while after that, and he finally decided that this might be a good practice for all people to adopt. A short while after that, the judge's wife gave birth to a child. Like the Yürük, the judge took the

¹Yürüks (or Yörüks) constitute the only year-round migratory group in modern Turkey. These nomadic tent dwellers summer in the Taurus mountains, where pasturage for their huge flocks of livestock is cheap, and they winter along the Mediterranean coast. Living outdoors all year long, they endure many severities of weather.

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newborn infant and immediately dipped it into cold water. Unfortunately, the child died as a result of this treatment.

The judge was furious about what had happened. He summoned the Yürük to his presence. The Yürük knew very well why he had been called, but when he arrived, he asked, "What is it that you want of me, judge efendi?"²

The judge did not even respond to him. Instead, he said to his aides, "Hang that man!"

"First listen to what I have to say," said the Yürük
"Do you see me?"

"Yes, I do."

"Have you seen my wife?"

"Yes, I have."

"Then you know that we are Yürüks, and you know that a child born to us is also a Yürük. Just as we survived the chilling custom, so too our child survived it. But you are not a Yürük, and so your child could not survive it

"Get out of here!" shouted the judge

The Yürük was actually quite a clever man. By saying what he did, he escaped any responsibility for the death of the judge's child.

²A mild honorific, comparable to Sir, it usually follows a first name: Hasan Efendi. At one time it was used to show respect to distinguished people, but it has become so devaluated in the twentieth century that it now is used only for servants and children.