

Story #214 (Tape #6, Summer 1970)

Narrator: Hacı Gönen, 66, gentleman farmer

Location: Yukarı Kise Köy  
Güvem nahiye  
Kızılcahamam kaza  
Ankara vilayet

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Mola Ahmet's Attempts to Serve as Imam

A man by the name of Mola Ahmet went to Eskipazar [where Camlıdere men get magic water]. He stopped for the night at a village called Ekşi [or Eğşi Ören. He was put up at the village oda.

The peasants said, "Welcome, Mola Ahmet. Welcome, Mola Ahmet. We have searched for you in the sky but found you on earth! What a pleasure to find you here. We shall make you talk."

That night he stayed there. He took (ablution) and prayed that night.

During the night, the villagers expressed the desire to have an imam for the month of (Ramazan), which was coming soon. They were talking about this matter and wondering how they could find an imam.

Mola Ahmet said, "When the time comes, I can work as your imam."

The villagers said, "All right, then," and they saw him off in the morning.

After he had finished his business in Eskipazar and was returning home, it was by then quite close to the time of Ramazan. He stopped at the same village. The villagers were expecting him, anyway.

"After all, he is a man of his word. He has come to serve as imam during Ramazan."

But he just could not explain that he had not come to the village for that purpose.

"Hoca, you take care of the evening service," they said to him.

Mola Ahmet took ablution and decided to conduct the evening service. He said, "Let me conduct a "fatigue service--short and simple for the tired" [his own invention].

The congregation lined up and he said the "Allahu ekber" [the first word of service in the mosque]. He then recited the Elham <sup>Dene</sup> in full [prayer].

[End of Side 1, beginning of Side 2 of Tape #6, Summer 1970]

Then he tried to remember as the second prayer "Innatayna," but he could not. Then he turned to the congregation and asked, "What was the word that before Kelkevser?" [in the Innatayna, the last part of the first sentence begins with Kelkevser]

"Innatayna."

Then he managed to conduct the service all right, but at the end he said, "May God never make me an imam It is so difficult."

Well, that month of Ramazan, Mola Ahmet stayed at that village. An aga of that village had been ill. I was called to see the patient. [Here the narrator moves into the first person.] I was quite worried that the man would die, because I did not know how to wash a corpse [ritual washing]. I visited the patient every day, hoping he would not die. My real purpose in visiting the patient was, more than anything else, to see that he was not dead. But people thought they had finally gotten a very good imam because he visited a patient every day.

But at last the patient died all of a sudden. "By God, who will wash the corpse?" I thought. I had had no experience with this sort of thing. I finally asked, "Is there not a woman in the village who washes corpses?"

"There is one."

"Where does she live?"

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"Over there" [pointing].

I went to her house and said, "Sister, you have work today. You know so and so has died?"

"Yes."

"We shall have to wash him, then."

"Hush, hoca. What a shameful thing to say!" [women only wash women]

"What do you mean, shameful?"

"Women are not supposed to wash men."

"Well, I am the imam here. Do you know more about this than I? We shall pull him into the courtyard and not let anyone see what we do. I shall wash the shameful part below the waist, and you will wash the rest. You will have most of the money. Do not mind about the rest of the business."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, of course."

Well, we pulled the man into the courtyard. I said to the woman, "You make the corpse take ablution." [Corpses are required to take the gestures of having ablution taken.]

She did that and washed the upper parts, while I poured water. "Now it is your turn. You wash the shameful parts."

"Sister, did you wash the upper parts correctly?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is enough. Cover him up. There is no need to wash the lower parts."

We covered him up and he was buried in that way [a wealthy aga's body

Well, we got our fees for the work, and then I left that village.