

Story #156 (Tape #1) (Tape--Summer 1970)

Narrator: Halil Tartar, 38, cook
at restaurant of Kahvrci Ahme

Location: Yukarı Çamlı
Güvem Nahiye
Kızılcahamam Kaza
Ankara Vilayet

Date: July 21, 1970

Just Say Hiç

Once there was and once there wasn't, when my mother gave birth to my father while I was playing çelik oynamak*, there was no salt in the house with which to salt my father.** The name of salt used to be hiç [nothing, or never]. My mother sent me to Ankara to get some salt. Ankara was a nineteen hours' walk from us. As I walked along, I kept saying, "Hiç, hiç, hiç," lest I forget my mother's order

On the way I saw a dead dog being dragged along by its leg by some peasants. I kept saying, "Hiç ölmesi [may he or it never die]"

"Hey, you cuckold, get away!" shouted the peasants. "You should say, 'May they all die! May they all die!'" and forgot all about Hiç.

On the way I came to a village where a wealthy man had died. I went among the people there saying, "May they all die! May they all die!" The men gave me a good beating [cartload of beating, literally, meaning a cartload-of-sticks' beating] for this. I asked, "What am I supposed to say?"

"You should say, 'May he rest in peace. May he rest in peace.'"

* Çelik çomak--a game played with 2 sticks. The shorter stick is hit with the longer one and rolled. The player who rolls it farthest wins. Çelik [literally, steel] is the shorter stick; çomak is the longer stick.

**Newborn babies are sprinkled with salt and then washed.

I left that village and kept walking along, saying, "May he rest in peace. May he rest in peace." When I came to another village, where some men were dragging away a dead animal, I said, "May he rest in peace. he rest in peace."

"You beastly fellow," [this expression does not apply to anyone here, the narrator interjected here]. What a thing to say!"

"What am I supposed to say, then?" the young man asked.

"You should say 'Oh, dirty animal. Oh, dirty animal!'"

I went through that village too and at last I reached Ankara, but I had completely forgotten about Hic. After a while I left Ankara and returned to my village where I saw that my mother had let my father decay so badly that he stank. She had buried him in the ashes of the fireplace. I out through the chimney. Running, I reached the top of a mountain where I lay down under a large tree. On a branch overhead I saw a bird which I fired at and shot. My mother escaped through the chimney but I had run out through the door.