

Story 779 (1970 Tapes 14, 15). Narrator: Dayım Üftadeoğlu

Location: Bursa, Bursa
Province

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Miraculous Feats of Aziz Mahmud,¹ Dervish Follower of Üftade²

There is a story of a dream of Sultan Ahmet³ when he was at war with Austria--that Sultan Ahmet who was our fourteenth padişah, who came to the throne when he was fourteen, and who reigned for fourteen years. Sultan Ahmet had a nightmare which ^{DREAM 15-16} many saints of the day tried to interpret, but none could offer a satisfactory explanation of what happened in the dream or what the dream meant. When someone wondered if the new dervish from Bursa, Aziz Mahmud Hudayı, might be able to interpret the dream, they sent for him. A man went from the palace to his house. When Aziz Mahmud opened the door to this man, he handed the man two envelopes without even asking him what he had come for. Handing the messenger the first envelope, he said, "This one contains a description of the dream of the sultan, and this second one contains the interpretation of that dream."

The messenger took these two envelopes and delivered them

¹After becoming a dervish, he had added to his name Hudayı (given to service of God).

²Bursa saint who founded Celvêti Order in which Aziz Mahmud was trained.

³This was Sultan Ahmet I, who reigned from 1603-1617.

Story 779

to the sultan. On the piece of paper in the first envelope the sultan read an exact description of his dream. It told how in his dream he had fallen flat on his back in his fight with the Austrian king, who was ready to plunge his dagger into Sultan Ahmet's chest. It was at that point that he had wakened.

The paper in the second envelope explained the dream in this way. "The strongest and hardest part of the earth is its crust, and the strongest part of a man is his back. So, the two strongest parts had come together, back to back. This is a combination of forces, and as such they will prevail in the war to be waged against Austria. In the end they will bring victory to the Ottoman army. This is the good news that I present to my sultan. [signed] Aziz Mahmud Hudayi"

Immediately after reading this letter Sultan Ahmet gained great respect for a dervish who could provide such an interpretation. One day the sultan wished to visit Dervish Aziz Mahmud and then bring him to the palace. The sultan disguised himself as a Janissary⁴ and went to Usküdar,⁵ where the dervish

⁴Janissaries formed an elite military corps. They were special troops which were accorded many special privileges. Their abuse of these privileges became so outrageous and dangerous to citizens and sultans alike that the corps was trapped in its barracks and destroyed in 1826. But in Sultan Ahmet's time the corps was still new, still admired.

⁵A large section of Istanbul on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus.

Story 779

was then living.

When Aziz Mahmud opened the door to this man's knock, the man [Sultan Ahmet] said, "I have brought a horse for you. You are supposed to go to the palace at once."

Aziz Mahmud mounted the horse without hesitation, counted its first seven steps as they started away, and then dismounted again. He said, "Your Majesty, my master was His Reverence Uftade, who authorized me to take only seven steps behind the sultan, saying that I was religiously mature enough for that--no more. Therefore, I cannot follow you."⁶ He had known from the beginning that the man was the sultan.

One day after he had moved to the palace, he was among the viziers and other court officials who were sitting on the palace balcony. The sultan came to the balcony with a box in his hand and asked all present, "What is in this box?"

The Şeyhül Islam⁷ of the time said, "There are matches⁸ in it."

"You failed to answer correctly. --Now you, Imam

⁶See Tale 778, near end, for Uftade's command to this effect.

⁷The Şeyhül Islam was the chief religious authority during the Ottoman Empire, when church and state were inextricably entwined.

⁸This is clearly an anachronism, for matches were not invented until 1827.

Story 779

of Bayezid⁹ Mosque, you tell me what is in the box."

"Sir, there is candy in that box

Another said, "There is medicine in it." There were several other answers given, all of them wrong.

Then the sultan turned to Aziz Mahmud and said, "My hoca, please tell now what is in this box."

Aziz Mahmud Hudayı thought for a moment. Then he closed his eyes. He sat there very pale for a few minutes, and then, all of a sudden, he started up and opened his eyes again. "I have been visiting the entire world and the domain of spirits. I found everything in order except for four baby lizards in Your Majesty's garden who were weeping because their mother was missing. I think that there must be a female lizard in that box."

When the sultan heard this, he opened the box at once and revealed its contents: a female lizard. All who witnessed this event were thoroughly amazed. From this the reputation of Aziz Mahmud, dervish follower of Üftade, was quickly spread throughout the country, and he thus became a very distinguished figure in the palace circle. He was first to preach at the dedication of the Sultan Ahmet Mosque [1616].

⁹Built between 1501 and 1505 by Bayezid II, who ruled from 1481 to 1512.

Story 779

On that same day there was a violent earthquake, and the palace shook dangerously. Just as it was about to collapse, Aziz Mahmud saved the building by holding his staff against the ceiling. This is reported in several of the chronicles of that period. On that occasion he was reported to have said, "Those governments which do not rest on the staffs of religious people are doomed to collapse."

[Tape 14 ends here and Tape 15 begins.]

His divine powers kept increasing, and he soon became the greatest scholar and saint of the palace and of all Istanbul. Today his turbe (tomb) and (tekke) [dervish monastery] are open to the public at the Ahmediye¹⁰ in Istanbul.

¹⁰This is the complex of buildings clustered around the Sultan Ahmet Mosque.