

Story 2108 (1999 Tape 2)

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The Inescapable People of Çal

In Turkey there are many places which are known in part for the personal qualities of their residents. People living along the Black Sea coast are often thought to be foolish or stupid. So too are residents of Karatepe.¹ There are many humorous anecdotes about people living in both of those places. On the other hand, residents of Kayseri Province are known for their shrewdness, especially in their business endeavors. It seems impossible to get the better of a Kayseri man in any deal. Although not so well known, the people of Çal are sometimes credited with the same kind of cleverness.

A businessman living in the city of Denizli was all too well acquainted with the sharp and crafty tactics of traders from Çal. No matter what venture the Denizli merchant undertook, it would fail because of the

¹Karatepe is a small village in a remote area of north-eastern Adana Province. There is a whole cycle of numskull anecdotes about Karatepe people. See holdings of ATON.

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superior maneuvers of a competitor from Çal. He finally said to himself, "I should move my business to someplace where there are no men from Çal." He asked several of his friends where there was such a place

Finally one of those friends said, "Baghdad is the place to which you should go. In my visits to that city, I have never once seen a person from Çal

Baghdad was quite a distance away, and the Denizli merchant decided that the safest way to travel there would be to join a caravan going that way. He made such an arrangement quite easily, for many businesses at that time used caravan service for their shipping. He packed his stock of merchandise and his personal belongings on several camels and became part of a large caravan headed east. They traveled for days and days until one morning they looked across the [Tigris] river, and there stood Baghdad.

Because the Denizli merchant was excited, anxious, and curious, he hurried ahead of the rest of the caravan and entered Baghdad alone. He asked the first person he saw in that city, "Brother, is there near here a guest house or a caravansary where one can get accommodations

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for the night?"

"Yes. Keep going in the direction you are headed, and you will come to a lodging most suitable for a businessman. About 100 or so meters ahead of you stands the caravansary of Topal [Crippled] Ahmet from Çal.

When the merchant heard this, he was momentarily stunned. When he had gathered his wits again, he asked himself, "If a crippled man from Çal can come all this distance, would there be anyplace in the world that a normal resident of Çal could not reach? It is impossible to escape the people of Çal!"