



CROSSFIRE

ON SANTA CLAUS/ST NICHOLAS

This year Santa Claus received hard attacks not only by the usual critics of consumerism, but also by authoritative persons and institutions. Newspapers of all the World have reported two news: the debate in the Suriname Parliament (ex Dutch colony) to abolish the Santa Claus feast in the central place of the capital Paramaribo, and the “fatwa” of the Turkish mufti Suleyman Yeniçeri against Santa Claus/Saint Nicholas, being a “not decent person”. Because the two attacks were of very different kind, here we deal only with the “fatwa”.

For the last 20 years we were accustomed to the Turkish requests of the bones of Noel Baba/Santa Claus/Saint Nicholas, considered by our friend Muammer Karabulut (President of the “Santa Claus Peace Council” in Antalya-Demre) an Anatolian Dervish monk. According to him, the Sailors of Bari were not only merchants, but even pirates and thieves. Therefore those bones have to be given back to the Turks.

That St Nicholas was Turk and not Greek has been “demonstrated” in a long “scientific” article by Polat Kaya, who shows how everything is said about him in Greek is a Greek alteration of Turanic expressions (supposed to be the ancient Turkish language before the Greek language existed). Just a quotation from his long article (easy to find it on Internet):

With these decipherments, the Greek name "**AGIOS NIKOLAOS**" reveals itself as the altered, restructured, Hellenized and disguised form of the Turkish expression "**AY GÖZ , AL GÜNEŞ O**" meaning "*it is the Moon-Eye, Red Sun*". Thus, in this form, the old man Santa Claus is a personification of the ancient Turanian Sun-God OGUZ and Moon-God OGUZ and the Sky-God OGUZ all combined in one - but confused by being altered into a broken up format called "Greek" (i.e., "**KIRIK**" in Turkish meaning "*broken*"). The concept of the Sky-God and His eyes being the Sun and the Moon is a very ancient concept belonging to the Turanians, hence, it is personified as an "old-man". **AGIOS NIKOLAOS** is rightfully personified as an old man with "*red*" (i.e., "**AL**" in Turkish) clothes because **NIKOLAOS** represents the "**Red Sun**" (i.e., **AL GÜNEŞ** in Turkish).

With these premises you cannot be surprised if Suleyman Yeniçeri, the zealous mufti of Keşan, has jumped from “philology” into Ethics. Here is the text of his declaration:

“It is not known if Santa Claus really lived. They speak of a place and say he lived there. But it is actually a character invented by the Christian world. Santa Claus enters homes through chimneys and windows, but he would have entered homes through the door if he was a decent person. We enter homes through doors. The Quran tells us to enter homes through doors. Why would he enter through the chimney?”

[The international Press](#) reported the attack against Santa Claus with a smile, and considered that the attack was only against Father Christmas, especially because in some western countries (like Italy) Father Christmas (with no Episcopal dress) is a pure imaginary figure. Some newspapers however wrote that, by attacking Santa Claus (with Episcopal dress), St Nicholas too was under attack, being at the historical origin of Santa Claus. And Yeniçeri knows this, therefore he, together with Santa Claus, included St Nicholas (Aziz

Nicholaos) in his criticism, affirming with no dillydallying that he never existed.



Santa would come through door if he were decent, mufti says

KEŞAN - Doğan News Agency (DHA)



Santa is not real, says mufti Süleyman Yeniçeri. DHA photo

Santa Claus does not exist, the mufti of the northwestern district of Keşan said today, adding that even if he did, he was not of decent character since he entered houses through chimneys instead of doors. **"It is not known if Santa Claus really lived,"** Mufti Süleyman Yeniçeri said. "They speak of a place and say he lived there. But it is actually a character invented by the Christian world." **"Santa Claus enters homes through chimneys and windows,** but he would have entered homes through the door if he was a decent person," Yeniçeri said. "We enter homes through doors. The Quran tells us to enter homes through doors. Why would he enter through the chimney?"

The mufti also said **Saint Nicholas**, whom the Santa Claus person was believed to be based on, was also **a made-up person and a legend.**

'New year' a Christian tradition. Yeniçeri said New year's celebrations had no place in Turkish culture and that such events came from Christianity. "Celebrating an event that originated from Christianity means striving to become like them," Yeniçeri said. "Why would we ever want to live like them? Do they want to become like us?" Yeniçeri said **Christmas was not a Muslim holiday** and said it would be dangerous if one said, "I want to live like a Christian." "If one wants to have fun because others do, we need to look into the notion of entertainment. **One becomes a sinner if entertainment involves drinking wine and alcohol,**" he said.

Out of idle, here is a Turkish report about Noel Baba and Aziz Nicholaos:

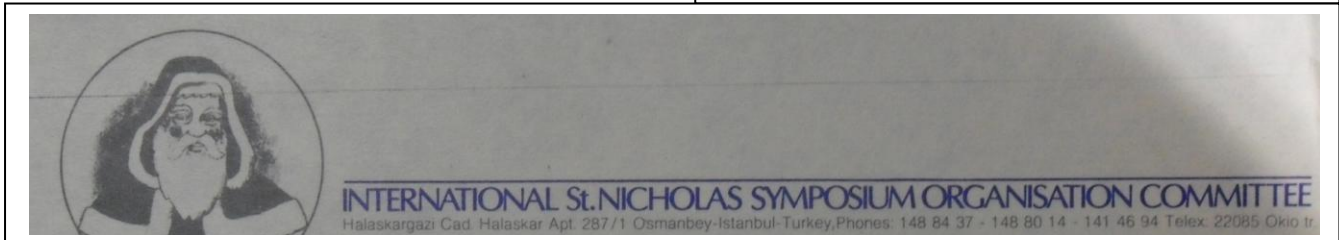
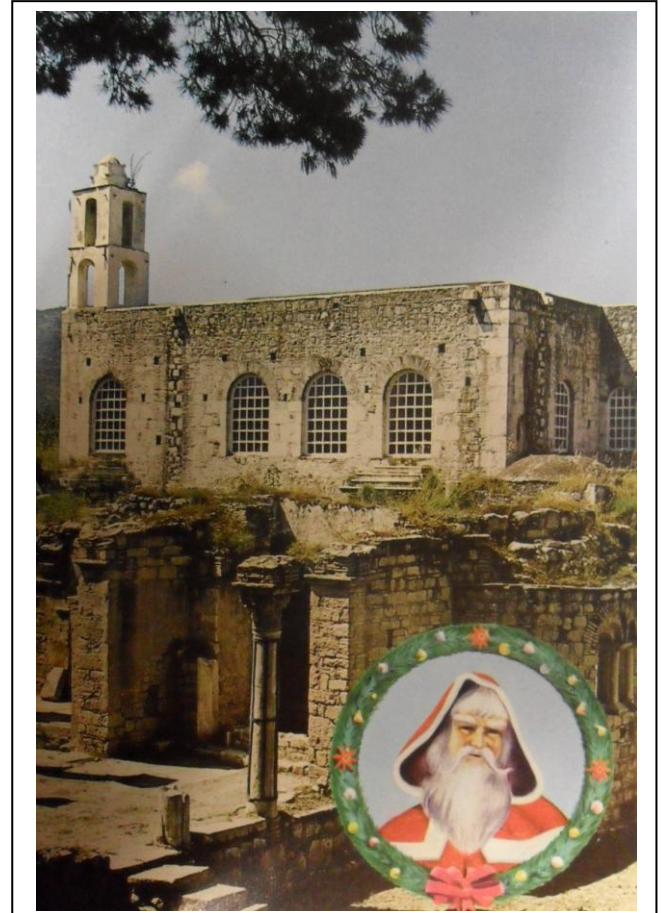
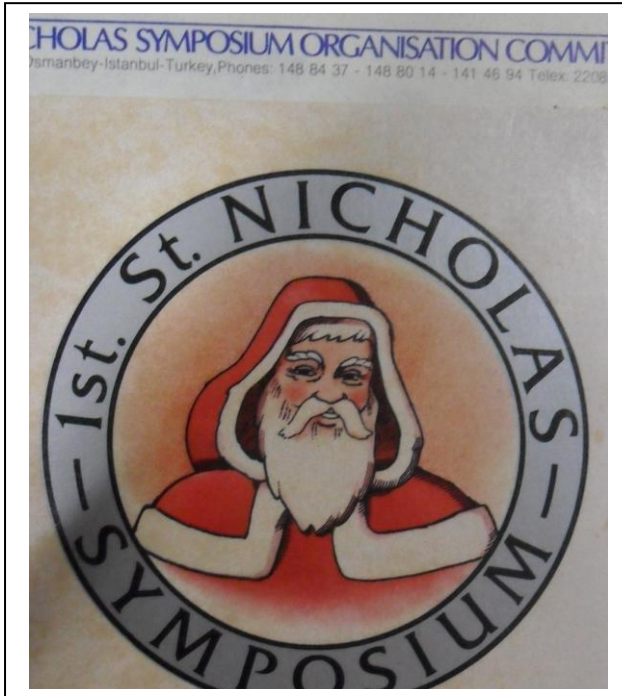


The Turkish television announces the Yeniçeri declaration.



A debate on Yeniçeri “fatwa” against Santa Claus/St Nicholas

To show that in Turkey the connection Noel Baba/Santa Claus/Saint Nicholas is really strong are not necessary many words. It is enough to give a look at these images (very usual in the eighties and nineties when I participated in the St Nicholas Symposiums in Antalya and Demre/Myra, Turkey).



And the Turkish Press is aware of this connection. Here is an example:

Müftünün Noel Baba yorumu

Dürüst biri olsa
KAPIDAN
GİRERDİ



"Dürüst biri olsa kapıdan girerdi"

28.12.2011 11:20

Keşan Müftüsü Süleyman Yeniçeri, "Noel Baba baca ve pencereden giriyor. Dürüst birisi olsa kapıdan girerdi" dedi

Yılbaşı eğlencesinin kültürümüzde bulunmadığı görüşünü savunan Müftü Yeniçeri, 'Kim kime benzemeye çalışırsa, o onlardandır' hadisini hatırlattı. Yılbaşında geçen günlerin muhasebesinin yapılması gerektiğini belirten [Keşan](#) Müftüsü Süleyman Yeniçeri, şunları söyledi: "Hristiyanlık'tan gelen bir etkinliği kutlarsak, onlara benzemeye çalışmış [olur](#)uz. Dolayısıyla onlar gibi bir yaşantı ortaya çıkar. Biz, neden onlar gibi yaşayalım ki? Onlar bizim gibi yaşıyorlar mı? **Biz Noel'i Hristiyan aleminden ithal etmişiz.** Noel, bizim bayramımız değil. Kişi, 'Hristiyan gibi yaşayayım' derse, bu tehlikeli [olur](#). Ama 'Millet eğleniyor, ben de eğleneyim' diyorsa, eğlencenin mahiyetine göre değişir. Eğer içkili, şaraplı eğlence yapılıyorsa, günahkar [olur](#)."

Müftü Süleyman Yeniçeri, '**Noel Baba' diye birisinin olmadığını, Aziz Nicholaos'ın** da uyduruk, bir kişi olduğunu efsane haline geldiğini söyledi. Yeniçeri, şöyle dedi: "Noel baba yaşamış mı, yaşamamış mı belli değil. Bir yer söyleniyor ve orada yaşadığı ifade ediliyor. Ama Hristiyan aleminin çıkardığı bir şahsiyettir. Noel Baba baca ve pencereden giriyor. Ama doğru dürüst birisi olsa kapıdan girerdi. Biz de kapıdan giriliyor. Kuran-ı [Kerim](#)'de; 'Evlere kapıdan girin' diyor. Neden bacadan giriyor ki?"

What happened at this point ?

While for western newspapers the game was over, in Turkey the story went on. Muammer Karabulut, with whom I got acquainted in the eighties and nineties when in Turkey for conferences, has reacted to the mufti declaration. For two decades in fact, the December of every year, he succeeded involving western agencies with the request of « having back » the « stolen » St Nicholas relics from Bari to Turkey. Now Yeniceri's « fatwa » not only stole the centre stage to him and his Santa Claus Peace Council, but undermined all his efforts to give a positive look at Santa Claus in Turkey. Therefore he protested with the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

Here is the Hurriyet's report with the main quotations from the Karabulut's complaint :

Daily News : Directorate launches probe into anti-Santa cleric Hurriyet.com.tr

Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs launched a probe into mufti Süleyman Yeniceri today after he issued comments against St. Nicholas and New Year's celebrations.

"Just as Muslims react to attacks against their religious beliefs, we would like the Directorate to react to Yeniceri's statements and launch an investigation," Santa Claus Peace Council Chairman Muammer Karabulut said in a written statement. Yeniceri, who serves as the mufti of the Thracian province of Edirne's Keşan district, said Dec. 27 that Santa Claus was indecent because he entered homes through chimneys and that St. Nicholas, whom the Santa Claus persona is based upon, was a made-up person. The mufti also said New Year's celebrations were a Christian tradition and that it was dangerous for a Muslim to want to live like a Christian.

Karabulut filed a complaint with the Directorate, asking them to launch an investigation into Yeniceri for his remarks.

"It is the duty of the Directorate to do so [as it would be] an important step to **stop cases of crass ignorance** such as Yeniceri's," Karabulut said. New Year's celebrations have no connection to the Christians' celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, and therefore, had no relation to Santa Claus, Karabulut said in a written statement.

"The mufti is misleading the public by saying, 'Christmas is not our holiday,'" Karabulut said in response to Yeniceri's equation of New Year's and Christmas. "New Year's is not celebrated as a holiday anywhere in the world. **It is purely humane to imitate St. Nicholas' life and dignity in the form of Santa Claus in order to make children happy.** It is neither a religious teaching, nor a sin," he said.

Shall Mr Karabulut's battle have success ? Or the Islamic fundamentalism shall overcome ?



Past December: Celebration of the Orthodox Metropolitan of Myra, **Chrysostomos**, with some monks from the Vatopedi monastery (Mount Athos), in the Church/Museum of St Nicholas.

Several pilgrimages arrived also from the Moscow Patriarchate, as for example the one from Kiev guided by metropolitan **Onufrij** of Černovcy and bishop **Jonas** of Obuchov (here in the photo while receiving the blessing of Patriarch Bartholomew). Another one was guided by **Vikentij**, metropolitan of Taškent, who had been in Bari as well.



A WISH FROM THE ST NICHOLAS NEWS

Let's hope Saint Nicholas will make a gift
to the land where he was born:
the love for peace and brotherhood,
that is not Christian or Islamic, but heritage of all
God's children.