

Story 2103 (1988 Tape 16)

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Aydın Province

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Accounts About Early Aydın

At one time the central city of the area now known as Aydın Province was a place we know today as Kızılhisar. Later, during the rule of the beys,<sup>1</sup> dominance over the area shifted to a new location. Because the change was initiated by Aydın Bey, the new capital was named Aydın

Aydın Bey had three sons. Ramazan was the oldest, Veysi was the second son, and Cihan was the youngest. In very ancient times--long before the time of the beys--the area where Aydın now stands was under water. But when the water level in this part of the world lowered, it did so by flowing through the Straits of Gibraltar into the Atlantic Ocean. This left whole valleys exposed

<sup>1</sup>In Republican Turkey there are no beys. The term refers to a Turkish aristocrat of Ottoman, Seljuk, and pre-Seljuk times, and goes back to the 8th and 9th centuries --and perhaps earlier. The bey was a landed nobleman, sometimes wealthy and often politically powerful. In the 10th-century Book of Dede Korkut he was a tribal chief or one of his close associates. The Turkish bey was roughly equivalent to a British lord or baron. The term bey is today still used as an honorific after the first name of a distinguished person: Ahmet Bey or Hasan Bey.

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to the sunlight between the mountains. People who had previously lived on the upper slopes of those mountains then began to settle in the valleys. During his reign, Aydın Bey one day summoned his sons and gave them an order to do something which he felt would help one of those valleys to develop. He said, "Each of you should shoot an arrow from that hilltop over there. One of you should shoot a red arrow, another a white arrow, and the third a blue arrow. Each of you should then build a mosque where your arrow lands."

The sons accepted his order. They prepared their bows and arrows and took them to the hilltop. From there each shot a colored arrow into the valley. The oldest brother's arrow landed at a place where Ramazan Pasha mosque is now located, the middle son's arrow struck the earth where Veysi Pasha mosque now stands, and the youngest brother's arrow marked the place where Cihan mosque would soon be built. The oldest son, Ramazan, was disappointed about the spot where his arrow had landed, for in that place there were neither houses nor people. He thought, "If I build a mosque there, who would come daily to worship in it?"

When Aydın Bey became aware of his oldest son's

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dissatisfaction, he said to Ramazan, "Don't worry, my son Time will pass, and the place where your arrow landed will become the center of a city." Encouraged by his father's prediction, Ramazan built a mosque at the designated place. And the prediction of Aydın Bey came true, for the center of present-day Aydın is a neighborhood clustered around Ramazan Pasha mosque

That mosque was used for many years, but by 1886 structure had so weakened that the building collapsed. The people of Aydın decided at once to have it rebuilt, and they began to collect money for that purpose. But money they were able to gather was not enough to meet cost of reconstruction, and so the donors began to seek a wealthy family willing to support their efforts.

At that time there lived a rich man named Hacı<sup>2</sup> Ali Ağa<sup>3</sup> at Söke [38 kilometers southwest of Aydın]. He was,

<sup>2</sup>Hacı is an epithet automatically conferred upon any Muslim who has completed a pilgrimage to Mecca.

<sup>3</sup>An ağa (English agha) is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. They are often the principal employers of farm workers, and they are often viewed by their employees as harsh, driving, and abusive. The term ağa is also used in a complimentary way, as an honorific for a distinguished or just older person than the one using the term. Thus an older brother is called ağa bey by his younger siblings. Ağa bey may be

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in fact, the wealthiest person in Söke. Knowing that Hacı Ali Ağa was the only man in that whole area who was capable of financing repair of the mosque, the donors at Aydın decided to visit him and appeal to him for help. One of the envoys who went to see Hacı Ali Ağa said to him, "Our ağa, we have come from Aydın to request some money to repair the Ramazan Pasha mosque, which collapsed some time ago. All of the money we have been able to collect from residents of Aydın is not sufficient to reconstruct that building."

The ağa asked, "Who are the people from whom you have already received contributions?" The leader of the envoys handed Hacı Ali Ağa a list of the names of the contributors and the amounts of their donations. After examining this list, the ağa said, "Return all of these contributions to their respective donors, and I shall provide whatever amount it costs to rebuild that mosque."

With the financial assistance of the ağa the shattered mosque was completely restored. Ever since that used as a deferential expression to one older or more prestigious than the speaker. A taxi driver may refer to his passenger as ağa bey; a salesman speaking to a male customer may call him ağa bey.

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time at the Friday noon service of that mosque the imam<sup>4</sup> cites the names of its founder and its restorer. "May Allah forgive the sins of Ramazan Pasha, who built this mosque, and may He also forgive the sins of Hacı Ali Ağa, who had it rebuilt."

<sup>4</sup>An imam is the leader of prayer services at a mosque.