

Story #325 Tape 10, Summer 1970

Narrator: Huseyin Kiliç Arslan

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Concept
Justice Among the Early Ottomans

During the period of the ascendancy of the Ottoman Empire, the European states decided to try to discover the real reasons for Turkish superiority, and they sent men to Turkey to discover them. These men decided to visit the Turkish law courts first, for they felt that the courts would be a good index of Turkish administration generally.

At the court they visited, there was being heard a case concerning a field which one man had sold to another. The buyer had found a ^{treasure, buried} pot of gold in the field while plowing. The pot had been caught in the plowshare. He had taken the pot of gold to the man who had sold the field to him and had said to him, "You sold me that field a year ago, but this pot must have been buried in the field before you sold it to me. This belongs to you."

The man who had sold him the field, on the other hand, had said, "No, I cannot accept this pot. I sold that field to you, and everything in, on, and under it belongs to you. I cannot accept it."

"But you must. I am certain that it was buried there before

bought the field from you."

But the seller had argued: "No, no. It is not my property. sold it to you.

To solve this dispute, the two men had decided to take the matter to court. The men from Europe were listening to this case in court.

The judge of the court made the following proposal to solve the dispute: "Let us give one third of the money to the poor as charity. You two divide the remaining two thirds between yourselves

Both sides agreed to this solution, and the case was closed. The Europeans observing this said to one another, "If this is the level of justice in this country, we can understand fully the Turkish state is so powerful.