

Story #215 (Tape #6, Summer 1970)

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Kızılcahamam kaza
Ankara vilayet
Date: July 1970

To Tell or Not to Tell the Kadı?

Once there were a husband and a wife. They had some plowing to do. The husband said, "I shall plow that field and come back."

"All right. Go and do it, but let me make some baklava for you."

The man went to the field, plowed a little--five or six furrows--and then his plow caught in something. He found that it was a large pot. He looked inside and found it filled with red gold coins.*

In those days, judges used to be called (kadı). It happened that at that moment a kadı was passing the field.

"Kadı efendi, should I plow this field lengthwise or crosswise?"

The kadı said, "I know nothing about plowing. Plow it any way you like."

As the police station was close, the farmer feared he might be taken there and beaten, and so before the kadı went very far down the road, he called again, "Kadı efendi, kadı efendi. Stop a moment." When the kadı stopped,

*It is impossible to take red literally here, for only in some of its oxides is gold reddish. Peasant narrators often distinguish between gold and the most valuable form of gold, red gold. Accounts of countless treasure hunters in Turkey are filled with references to red gold. It may well be a transference of everyday imagery to the imaginary world. Since most of the coins peasants see are copper, they may unconsciously think in terms of shiny copper, which is reddish.

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the peasant asked, "Kadı efendi, should I sow wheat or barley here?"

The kadı said, "I told you that I know nothing about farming. Sow what you will.

The farmer was still worried that he might be beaten on account of the possession of the gold he had found, and so he called again, "Kadı efendi kadı efendi. Stop a while." [Each time he stops the kadı he plans to tell the kadı of the treasure, but he cannot bring himself to do so. When the kadı stopped, the farmer said, "Kadı efendi, should I sell the white ox and buy a black one?"

The kadı answered crossly, "I told you I understand nothing about farming. Buy whatever ox you wish.

He loaded the pot of gold on his donkey, went home, and hid the pot in the chicken house. When he entered the house, where his wife was sitting, he asked, "Where is the baklava you were to bake for me?"

She said, "You went plowing only a short while ago. How could I make baklava in such a short time?"

"Well, I finished the field

"Poor man, I shall go and get two eggs from the chicken house and fry them for him," she said to herself. When she went for the eggs, she saw something huge in a black sack there. She opened it and saw it was a pot filled to the top with gold. She dug up the floor of the stable, hid the pot there, returned with the eggs, and fried them. She had put a black stone in the sack in place of the pot.

The man was still thinking about the kadı. He said to himself, "He is sure to call me now. I might as well go before he requires me to see him."

He shouldered the sack and went to the kadı's office and knocked tik, tik,

tik [a cautious, polite knock, not tak, tak, tak].

"Come in!"

He entered and said, "I have brought it, kadı efendi."

"What did you bring?"

"Here it is."

The kadı looked and saw nothing but a large black stone in the sack.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Well, my wife said it was 9 kilos and I said it was 10, so I brought it to you."

"All right," the kadı said, "but you ridiculed me yesterday, too," and he ordered his men, "Throw him into the retention house [not a regular jail]."

But the kadı forgot that he had had a man in jail for more than 24 hours, and he said to the clerk, "We had a man in jail." The clerk looked through the window of the jail and heard the farmer talking to himself in this manner.

"It was this tall, this high, and full of red gold coins--filled to the brim. It was not a stone. Where could it have gone?"

The clerk went back to the kadı and reported what the farmer was saying. He had the man called to his presence and asked, "What did you do with the gold?"

"Kadı efendi, I was not talking about gold but about you. I was saying, 'The kadı is this high, his belly this wide [with gestures], his head is this big and his mother's vagina this wide. What I wondered was how he managed to get out of such a narrow place

"Throw him into jail," the kadı ordered.

The man was thrown into jail, and his wife had all the gold for herself to spend