

Story 1084 1988 Dictated)

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Guild Ethics in the Time of Fatih Mehmet¹

After Fatih Sultan Mehmet had conquered İstanbul, he used to disguise himself and visit different groups of people in the city to see what kinds of lives they led. One day he went disguised into a marketplace in order to discover how the tradesmen there behaved.

Fatih Mehmet went into a shop and bought some of his needs there but not all of them. Although he wanted to buy them all there, the shopkeeper asked him not to do so. The shopkeeper said, "The shopkeeper next door has not yet had his first sale of the day."

The padişah went to the second shop to buy the rest of what he needed, but the same thing happened again. The second shopkeeper requested that he buy some of his needs from another merchant farther down the street. So Fatih Mehmet had to go to a third shop.²

¹Constantinople was conquered by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II in 1453. Fatih means Conqueror, and Mehmet II is very often referred to as Fatih Mehmet.

²Although the guild system has long since disappeared in Turkey, there is still a mutual concern for each other among merchants in some areas. In 1970 Ahmet Uysal and Warren Walker were buying several boxes of tea and several boxes of cube sugar to take as gifts to rural raconteurs. It was morning, and businesses were just opening. The merchant into whose shop we first went requested that we buy half our supplies from his friend down the street so that he too would have good luck all that day.

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This story shows that the Guild Societies were interested not only in business but also in the education and welfare of their members. According to the Guild Societies, it was not enough to learn just the craftsmanship of your trade. It was necessary also to learn the ethics of the trade.