

Story 1721 (1993 Tape 3)

Narrator: İhsan Işık

Location: Olucak village,  
Suşehri kaza,  
Sivas Province

Date: December 21, 1993

Laz<sup>1</sup> Precaution Against Unknown Word

One day a friend of Temel<sup>2</sup> observed that Temel was very upset about something. He asked, "What happened, Temel?"

I was talking with a man today who described me with an unusual word."

"What did he say?" asked the friend.

"He said that I was a very sympathetic person."

"What does sympathetic mean, Temel?"

<sup>1</sup>Although there is a small ethnic minority of Lazi who live along the Black Sea coast (in the most north-easterly provinces of Giresun, Trabzon, Rize, and Artvin), the term Laz has come to designate any resident of the Turkish shore of the Black Sea, not just the Lazi. Lazes are generally and unjustifiably stereotyped as being stupid or inept.

<sup>2</sup>Temel is a very popular Laz male name. It is almost synonymous with the word Laz. Although the name is sometimes used elsewhere in Turkey, it is for most Turkish audiences associated with the Black Sea Laz.

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"Well, I didn't know, either, and so I killed him--just in case!"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Perhaps also part of the stereotyping, the Laz is also reputedly given to bravado, to testiness about his honor, and to a trigger-happy tendency. While such generalizations about a whole people are properly suspect those made here about the Laz are mentioned in scholarly studies.