

Story 1170 (1989 Tape 12)

Narrator: Şükrü Velioğlu, teaching assistant at Ankara College

Location: Taped at Ankara, but narrator came originally from Trabzon Province

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Civil Rights of a Goat

Hızır¹ had been working in Germany for some time.² When he was finally granted a vacation, he returned to Turkey and went to his village to visit his family and friends. When his vacation was over and he was about to return to Germany, Hızır decided to take with him a female goat to provide himself with milk.

¹This is a Laz anecdote, although the word Laz does not appear in it. One telltale clue to its being a Laz tale is the name Hızır, one of the three most commonly used Laz names in Turkish folktales; the other names are Temel and Dursun. These are all real names, of course, but they occur with far greater frequency among Laz people than among other Turkish groups. The Laz people constitute one of the larger ethnic minorities in Turkey. Their exact origins are not definitely known. The largest concentrations of Lazes are in extreme northeastern Turkey along the Black Sea coast. Reputedly stupid, they are made fun of in numerous folk anecdotes about fools. The frequent success of Lazes who move to İstanbul belies the folk image.

²Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, great numbers of Turkish workers were employed in several European countries, especially West Germany. The problems that these transplanted people had in adjusting to a strange culture generated a great many comic anecdotes. As in the anecdotes about urbanization, those of international acculturation often feature naive or simpleminded protagonists.

All went well until Hızır and the goat reached the German border, where a Customs official stopped them. He said to Hızır, "It is illegal to take that kind of animal into Germany. No goats are allowed to cross the border."

"But, Sir Customs Official, this animal is not a goat but a dog, and many dogs are permitted to enter Germany."

"How could this animal be a dog, Hızır? It has horns!"

"How this creature wishes to appear is its personal and private concern. It is not anything that we have any right to make judgments about."