

Story 1173 (1989 Tape 12)

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

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Laz¹ Fear Invaders More When Dead Than When Alive

The Chinese threatened war against Turkey, and the people of Rize were told that the invasion would probably be made through their province.² A large assembly of prominent citizens was held in the capital city of Rize to discuss ways in which to meet this emergency and handle the various problems it would bring them.

After they had canvassed their manpower and resources, they felt confident that they could defeat the invaders on the field of battle. But Temel,³ who was one of the older citizens dis-

¹The 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 tales anecdotes about fools. The frequent success of Lazes who move to İstanbul belies the folk image.

²Although Rize is in far eastern Turkey, there are provinces still farther east through which Chinese invaders would first have to pass before they reached Rize. Such a practical consideration is not really pertinent, however, in a tale that is a fantasy.

³One of the three names (along with Dursun and Hızır) which would probably identify a Laz anecdote even if the word Laz were not present.

cussing the matter, was still troubled about the invasion. He arose and spoke about his concern: "I am not worried about the military part of the invasion. We can slay all of the Chinese. But where in this small province will we find room to bury so many people?"⁴

⁴The humor of this anecdote derives from the impressive and much-discussed demographic statistic which places the Chinese population at more than a billion people.