

Story 1175 (1989 Tape 12)

Narrator: Şükrü Velioğlu,  
teaching assistant,  
Ankara College

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

Date: December 17, 1989

16

Anyone May Make One Mistake

Temel<sup>1</sup> was working on a construction job. One day when he went to get his pay at the accounting office, he discovered that his envelope contained 100,000 liras more than there should have been there.<sup>2</sup> Temel said nothing to anyone about this overpayment.

The following month when Temel collected his pay, he discovered that the envelope contained 50,000 liras fewer than there should have been there. As soon as he noticed this short-

<sup>1</sup>Although the word Laz does not occur in it, this anecdote can be recognized as a Laz tale by the name of the protagonist, Temel. In most Laz anecdotes the protagonist is named Temel, Hızır, or Dursun.

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.

<sup>2</sup>This tale is probably of recent vintage, for it was not until the 1980s that inflation had devaluated the lira to the extent that there could be either a 50,000- or 100,000-lira error in a laborer's monthly pay. Beginning in the late 1980s the exchange rate of the lira against the U.S. dollar became so extreme that it required more than 2,000 Turkish liras to equal a dollar.

## Story

age, he went directly to the accounting office to complain about it. When the accountant examined the records carefully, he discovered the overpayment that had been made to Temel the previous month.

"Temel, why did you not report the overpayment last month in the same way you are reporting the underpayment this month?"

"Because I believe that everyone should be permitted to make one mistake without being blamed for it, but if he makes a second mistake, he should be held responsible for it!"