

Story 1318 (1988 Tape 8)

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of Trabzon Province

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The Pardoning of a Laz¹ Criminal

A Black Sea man who lived not very far from here once raped a woman. That Laz was arrested and tried in a court for this offense. At the conclusion of the trial the Laz was convicted and sent to jail.

After a couple of months had passed, the woman who had been raped saw the convicted man in the marketplace. She was greatly upset at the sight of this criminal and she said, "Ugh! What are you doing here? You are supposed to be in jail!"

"Well, I was in jail but there was a general amnesty² and the government pardoned me.

"What are you talking about? What do you mean by saying

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

²This reflects an unusual element of the Turkish criminal code in the mid-twentieth century. When there was a turnover of the ruling power from one political party to another, a

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that the government pardoned you?" You raped me, not the government! How, then, can they pardon you?"

general amnesty was declared and the great majority of prisoners were released. See entry in Notes volume for some more specific details on this practice.