

Story 1671 (1994 Tape 1

Narrator: Tayfun Demirtürk,
23

Location: Yeşilyuva village,
Acıpayam kaza,
Denizli Province

Date: May 1994

The War Between Lazes¹ and Kayserians²

The Laz people and the Kayseri people once lived in two different countries. At one point in time a war broke out between the Lazes and the Kayserians. The two forces were quite evenly matched, and it seemed that neither side could defeat the other. The two armies continued to face each other on the battlefield, but neither could advance

After a while one of the Kayseri officers thought of a way to reduce the Laz forces. He explained this to the men around him. "We all know that many Laz men are called Temel or Dursun.³ When I shout out the name Temel, all of

¹Laz people are an ethnic minority. The greatest concentration of Lazes live in Rize and Trabzon provinces. In the folk imagination the Lazes are stereotyped as being stupid or very inept, though they are neither.

²Conversely, the residents of Kayseri Province (especially its capital city of Kayseri) are reputedly very clever and shrewd. In folktales they usually cheat or beat opponents in business deals. They are often pitted against Lazes, but this is the first ATON tale in which the conflict involves military action.

³It is indeed true that Temel and Dursun are the best-known male names among the Lazes. Although some other Turks have these names, Temel and Dursun automatically suggest Laz to most Turkish folk audiences.

Story 1671

the Lazes with that name will stand up. Then the rest of you will be able to shoot them." He shouted, "Temel!" as he predicted, a number of Lazes arose and became visible. The Kayserians then shot them. Then he shouted, "Dursun!" and another group of Lazes was shot.

When the Laz commander realized what had happened, he became quite alarmed. Many of his best soldiers had been killed without any loss being suffered by the Kayserian army. "What can we do to retaliate?" he asked his men.

Finally one of the Laz soldiers said, "Everyone knows how much Kayseri people love money. I shall shout across the battlefield, 'I have found some money! Whose is it?' All of the Kayserians will jump up and say, 'It is mine! It is mine!' Then we can shoot them."

It happened just as the Laz soldier had predicted. He shouted, "I have found some money! Whose is it?"

All of the Kayserians jumped up and shouted back, "It is mine! It is mine!" So many of the Kayserians were killed as a result of this trick that the Laz army was able to defeat them and win the war.