

Story 1672 (1994 Tape 1

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23

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Two Lazes¹ Praise Their Motherland

Temel and Dursun² did their military service together. They learned many different kinds of things in the army-- even more than they had learned at school. One day their commander was questioning the soldiers about what their motherland meant to them.

"What does your motherland mean to you?" he asked one soldier.

That soldier answered, "It means as much to me as my blood. It is like my blood.

A second soldier answered, "My motherland is as important to me as my own life."

When it was Temel's turn to answer this question, he

¹The Laz people are an ethnic minority who live primarily in extreme northeast Turkey in the provinces of Rize and Trabzon. They are stereotyped as being stupid or very inept, though in fact they are neither. Numerous anecdotes picture their allegedly stupid behavior, but there are also tales told from their point of view which show them as being unusually intelligent and clever.

²Temel and Dursun are the two most common male names among the Lazes who appear in folktales. Although Turks other than Lazes sometimes have these names, they are so closely associated in the folk mind with the Lazes that they are almost synonyms for Laz.

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said, "Sir, my motherland is like my own mother to me."

Dursun did not know at first what response to make. He thought, "Temel is my cousin, and Temel said that his country was to him like his own mother." He then answered the commander by saying, "Sir, my country is to me like my own aunt."