

Story 1687 (1993 Tape 5)

Narrator: Metin Küser

Location: Trabzon, Trabzon
Province (at bakery
which served as
front for call-girl
appointments)

Date: June 1993

Taped by Jo Ann Conrad

Laz¹ Music Played at Night to Be Heard Next Morning

Late one evening Temel² went to a shop to buy something. By the time he arrived there, however, the shop had been closed for the day. Not to be prevented from getting what he had come for, Temel began cutting the lock off the shop door in order to get inside. While he was doing this, he was observed by a passing bekçi.³ "What are you doing

¹The Laz people constitute a large ethnic minority who live principally in Rize and Trabzon provinces in extreme northeastern Turkey. Lazes are usually stereotyped as being stupid or inept, though they are like other people. To offset this unflattering image, Laz raconteurs often tell stories which picture Lazes as very clever people. This is just one of the many Laz counter-stereotype tales in ATON.

²Temel is the most popular male name among Lazes--even more so in folktales than in real life. For folk audiences Temel is automatically associated with Laz, even though the name is occasionally used by other Turks. Dursun, İdris, and Hızır are also frequently used male names among Lazes.

³The bekçi is an urban night watchman. We have retained the Turkish word bekçi here because this is not a watchman in the usual sense. The bekçis have their own routine--patrolling the streets at night at a short distance apart, constantly signalling their respective whereabouts by blowing their police whistles. Some citizens jokingly

Story 1687

there?" asked the bekçi.

am playing a kemençe,"⁴ answered Temel

"But I don't hear any sound at all," said the bekçi.

"Why is that?"

"Oh, there will be plenty of sound in the morning!"

said Temel.

suggest that frequent whistle-blowing is intended to scare thieves or other miscreants away so that the bekçis will not have to encounter them!

⁴The kemençe looks something like a half-sized violin. Like the violin, it is played with a horsehair bow, but the strings are metal rather than catgut. Because of its early origin, the kemençe is sometimes thought to be the ancestor of the violin.