

Story 1709 (1993 Tape 6)

Narrator: Remzi Cer

Location: Trabzon, Trabzon Province (at bakery which was a front for arrangement of call-girl appointments)

Date: June 11, 1993

Collected by Jo Ann Conrad

How a Dog Became Imam<sup>1</sup> of a Laz<sup>2</sup> Mosque<sup>3</sup>

Once the Laz residents of a nearby village built a mosque out of cheese. When the mosque had been completed, they tried to decide whom they should have as their imam. They failed, however, to suggest a person who would be satisfactory to a majority of the people of that village. They finally reached an agreement that the person who arrived earliest at the mosque for the sunrise prayer ser-

<sup>1</sup>The imam is the prayer leader for the five daily prayer services at a mosque.

<sup>2</sup>The Laz people are a large ethnic minority located principally in Rize and Trabzon provinces in extreme northeastern Turkey. They are stereotyped in the folk imagination as being stupid or very inept. In fact, they are no different from other people.

<sup>3</sup>Most Laz anecdotes are good-natured and inoffensive to the Laz people. This exception could understandably be considered mean-spirited and objectionable.

Story 1709

vice next day would become the imam.

Almost all of the men in the village started toward the mosque very early the following morning. As they approached the mosque, they saw a dog there eating part of one of the walls. When the dog saw these people, it began to snarl at them viciously, going hrr-r-r! hrr-r-r!

Frightened by this fierce dog, the villagers said, "All right! All right! Since you were the first one to arrive here, you will be our imam!"