

Story 1743 (1994 Tape 2)

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Laz¹ Wariness of a Word

People who live along the Black Sea coast are known for their hot blood and for their love of firearms.

One day Temel and İdris² met by chance as they were walking along a street. They stood there talking with each other for a while.

Temel said, "Good friend³ İdris, the other day I met a stranger and talked with him briefly. He said, 'You are very sympathetic!'"

¹The word Laz can now refer to any resident of the Turkish Black Sea coast, though originally it referred to an ethnic minority living largely in Rize and Trabzon Provinces, extreme northeast Turkey. Lazes are often thought of as being stupid or inept, though this is only the result of unjustifiable stereotyping.

²Temel is the most popular male name among Lazes in folktales and, to a somewhat lesser degree, in real life. For many Turks the word Temel is almost synonymous with Laz. The name is also used occasionally elsewhere in Turkey.

³The Turkish word ulan is here translated as good friend.

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İdris asked, "Good friend Temel, what does sympathetic⁴ mean?"

Temel answered, "I didn't know what that word meant either, and so just in case it meant something bad, I shot that stranger

⁴Because of the strong French influence on Turkey early in the present century, many educated Turks have at least some acquaintance with the French language. Among the intellectual elite the loan word sympatique is commonly used.