

Story 1880 (1995 Tape 2)

Narrator: Olcay Serez, 45

Location: Erzurum, capital  
of Erzurum Province

Date: January 1995

A Laz<sup>1</sup> Drives Against Traffic

One day Temel<sup>2</sup> was driving his car on a high-speed, divided highway. He was so absorbed in listening to his new shortwave radio that he did not realize that he was on the wrong side of that divided highway. He was going east on the westbound side.

A police officer observed Temel's dangerous behavior, and so he immediately radioed a warning to the police monitoring traffic on that side of the parkway: "Some crazy person is driving east on the westbound

<sup>1</sup>The word Laz referred originally to an ethnic minority living primarily in Trabzon and Rize provinces, along the extreme eastern part of the Turkish Black Sea coast. More recently the word has come to be applied to any resident of the entire Turkish shoreline of the Black Sea. In the Turkish oral tradition, Laz people are stereotyped as being stupid or inept. This stereotype (like most others) is unjustifiable, for Lazes are, of course, very much like other people.

<sup>2</sup>Temel (like Dursun, İdris, and Hızır) is a name given to so many Laz males that it automatically signals Laz to most Turkish audiences. Because Lazes are stereotyped as being dull witted, the name Temel may, by extension, be applied to any stupid person, whether or not he/she happens to be Laz.

Story 1880

side of the highway. Watch for him, and stop him as soon as possible!"

Hearing this police announcement on his shortwave radio, Temel turned on his transmitter and responded, "There is not just one crazy driver on this highway but a great many. They keep coming directly at me!"