

Story 1923 (1992 Tape 3)

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Kırklareli Province

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A Laz¹ Ends Bargaining with Allah

There were once two Lazes who went sailing on the Black Sea in their small boat. Without any warning, a severe storm sprang up.² It grew worse and worse until it broke apart their boat. Each of the Lazes grabbed a plank from the wreckage and clung to it.

Time passed, but no other vessel came along to rescue them. They then began to pray. The wealthier of the two men said, "O my Allah, if I am saved from this storm, I shall give one fourth of my money to the poor." When no one came to their assistance, he said, "O my Allah, save us and I shall give half of my money to the poor."

By this time the two men were becoming tired, and they did not know how much longer they could survive. Then the wealthier Laz

¹The 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 Black Sea coast. 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, much like other people.

²Whether justifiably or not, popular belief claims that the Black Sea is prone to frequent squalls and unpredicted storms. What topographical features or atmospheric conditions account for this turbulence is not explained.

Story 1923

began to pray again. He had just begun to make his plea to Allah when the other Laz placed his hand over his friend's mouth. "Don't continue to bargain with Allah," he said, "for I just saw land."