

Story 2022 (1998 Tape 1)

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What a Laz¹ Owes His Mother

Temel² used to carry his very old mother on his back wherever she wished to go. Everyone was surprised that he was able to carry her about so often. One day a hoca³ from a mosque saw him doing this and asked Temel, "What is going on here? What happened? Why are you continually carrying your mother here and there upon your back?"

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.

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

³A hoca is the preacher and religious leader of a Muslim community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher. Separation of "church" and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than religious training.

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"I am trying to do my duty to my mother. I am trying to please her. I owe her that service."

The hoca responded, "Well, if you really wish to please your mother and make her happy, you should find a man for her to marry."

Temel was angered by this remark, and he said to the hoca, "Shame on you, hoca! How can you make fun of my mother, who is eighty years old? You .

But before he could utter another word, his mother interrupted, saying, "Hey, hey, my son! Do you think that know more than a hoca?"