

Story 2111 (1999 Tape 2)

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kaza, Denizli
Province

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A Laz¹ in the Wrong Traffic Lane

Temel² once lived for awhile in England. One of the first purchases he made after arriving there was an automobile. Although he had operated a car in Turkey for several years, driving in England confused him. The steering wheel is on the left side of most cars but on the right side of English cars. In most countries automobiles are driven on the right side of the road, but in England they are driven on the left.

One day Temel was taking a ride on a major highway, but, completely unaware, he was driving on the wrong side

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.

²In tales about the stereotyped Laz as dummer or fool the male characters usually have one or another of five or six very common Laz names. Temel is the name used most often, with Dursun in second place. Thus if either of these names occurs in a folktale, the audience knows at once that it is a Laz story.

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of the road. A police patrol car observed him driving in the right-hand lane, and it immediately broadcast a warning to other motorists: "Please slow down and watch for a person driving in the wrong lane."

This warning was repeated at intervals, and Temel was among those who heard it. Several times oncoming vehicles almost collided with the Laz. Temel exclaimed, "It is not just one person driving in the wrong lane. All of the people on this highway are driving in the wrong lane!"