

Story 2183 (1999 Tape 14) Narrator: Mustafa Dilek, 61

Location: Bayraklı town,
Karşıyaka kaza,
İzmir Province

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A Laz¹ and an İstanbul Man
Outwit Each Other

Two Lazes went to İstanbul to wander about that and visit all of its interesting scenes. After awhile the first Laz said, "I must find a restroom. Wait right here until I return so that we shall not lose each other."

While the second Laz was waiting for the return of his friend, he admired all of the beautiful automobiles that passed along the street before him. After awhile a dishonest man came along and asked the Laz, "Why are counting the automobiles that pass by? Don't you know that doing so is illegal in this city? How many have counted so far?"

The poor Laz answered, "I have counted 15 so far."

Then you must pay fifteen liras for that violation of the law." In that way he cheated the Laz out of 15

¹The word Laz originally referred to an ethnic minority living along the extreme eastern end of the Turkish Black Sea coast, mainly in Trabzon and Rize provinces. As time has passed, the term has broadened to include all Turkish residents living along the entire Turkish Black Sea coast. The Laz people are stereotyped as being stupid or inept,

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liras.

When the first Laz returned, he asked his friend,
"What have you been doing during my absence?"

"I cheated an İstanbul fool out of 15 liras."

"How did you do that?"

"There is a law here which forbids the counting
of passing automobiles. That fool charged me 15 liras
for having counted 15 automobiles. But I cheated him,
for I had already counted 30 passing vehicles."²

and there are countless jokes and anecdotes that so
picture them. This stereotype, like most others, is
baseless, for Lazes are much like other people.

²This story is a variant of a commonly known tale
about a rustic's being fined for counting the number
of floors in high-rise buildings in İstanbul.