

Story #555 (1974 Tape #12)

Narrator: Esat Söylü, small
business man

Location: Kaza town of Akdağ-
madeni, Province
of Yozgat

Date: August 1974

The Fame of Çello¹

There once appeared at Kayseri a man named Çello who had a muska² which made his body bullet-proof. This was at the time of the First World War. This bandit had a friend named Kara Hasan who rode behind Çello, carrying from his neck a pair of binoculars and hand-grenades with detonators cocked. Çello held in his mouth a long cigarette holder, and he puffed continuously as government troops fired at him. As they fired, their bullets just piled up in front of him.

His main objective was to rob from the rich and give to the poor. He had no other cause in all his undertakings. The government announced that it would reward with 1,000 gold liras any man who would bring in his head. It was the heyday of the Circassians, and four Circassian horsemen decided to shoot him for this reward. They hid beneath a bridge and waited for him to appear.

Someone came and told him that these Circassians were going to shoot him. He rode to the bridge, looked beneath it, and asked the Circassians, "Are you going to shoot me? Here's to you--tak, tak, tak, tak!"³

¹ For brief comments on various Turkish bandits, see Tales Alive in Turkey, by Walker and Uysal, pp. 190-193, 285.

² A muska is a type of amulet. A religious man writes on a slip of paper a passage from the Koran; he breathes upon this and then wraps it in waxed paper or oiled cloth which he then folds into a small triangle. This muska is then suspended from a string worn around the neck. It is often used as a protection from evil eye (nazar).

³ Onomatopoeia for shots.

Story #555

Here are some verses that were composed for him

Everything will be all right if you will just stay put.

For you the palaces and centers are all closed.

You have shot four Circassians with your revolver.

Did you think a man's life worth a hen, Çello?

Girls no longer wear gold in their hair.

Your fame has reached China and Manchuria.

Newspapers have reached the interior of Russia.

You have shaken all of Europe,⁴ Çello.

A regiment left Kayseri while peasants watched. The regimental commander told the peasants not to come too close. Çello was completely indifferent as the troops started firing at him. When a corporal charged at him on horseback, he shot this man off his horse. He fell, saying "Do not get near!" After the regiment attacked, Çello counterattacked, moving to right and left. As he threw grenades at these troops, the soldiers fell back.

When the Russians heard of this, they sent a letter to the Ottoman padişah, inquiring, "How is it possible that an Ottoman padişah cannot arrest one man?" Upon receiving this message, the Ottoman padişah announced that he had forgiven Çello, and that he should come to the palace.

When Çello heard about this Russian letter to the Ottoman padişah, he was upset by this and decided to go to Russia to deal with the

⁴ The narrator does not use the modern word for Europe, Avrupa, but the older term Frençitan--the land of the Franks.

Story #555

Russian (Czar). Hence the lines "Your fame has reached China and Manchuria / Newspapers have reached the interior of Russia / You have shaken all of Europe, Çello." Çello went to Russia and threatened the Czar, and hence those last three lines: "Your fame has reached China and Manchuria / Newspapers have reached the interior of Russia / You have shaken all of Europe." After he returned from Russia, he was never heard of again.