

Story 830 (1974 Tape 18)

Narrator: Kara Ahmet Durmaz, 65

Location: Tercan, a kaza town
in Erzincan Province

Date: August 12, 1974

The Bleeding Lance of Köroğlu¹

I am about sixty-five.² I know all of the stories about Köroğlu rocks. There are many springs that flow from those rocks

[Uysal: Do you know about the place I am talking about?

Durmaz: Yes, yes, they are the ones you saw from the highway.³

Uysal: That's right.]

¹ Köroğlu--the name means the son of the blind man--was a bandit leader, apparently of the late sixteenth century or early seventeenth century. In legends he is pictured--à la Robin Hood and Jesse James and Rob Roy--as the champion of the poor against the powerful and wealthy. The lengthy cycle of tales about his and his companions' exploits constitutes the raw material of an epic. Most of these legends are sung by Turkish minstrels, who accompany themselves on the saz. Many prose folktales are also told about Köroğlu, but most of these are derived from the sung tales of the minstrels.

² "About sixty-five" may be the closest that the narrator can come to his age. In earlier times the birth of a son was not always reported immediately by a village family. This was a way of keeping him safe from the military draft longer--if only to guarantee that he would be older when drafted, and so more likely to be able to endure the rigors of army life.

³ The spot referred to here is three or four kilometers west of Tercan on the main east-west highway. It is on the

Story 830

One day when I was young we were talking about the Bleeding Lance of Koroğlu and wondering about it. One of the young fellows I was talking with said, "Let us go there and take a look at it for ourselves." So we went there and saw it.

Just in front of the rock cliffs there is a little hill. Once when Koroğlu was engaged in battle, he threw his spear. He must have missed the man he was aiming at, for the lance stuck into that little hill and remained there. There was a spring there from which reddish water flowed, and so they called that lance the Bleeding Lance of Koroğlu.

The shaft of the lance is still sticking out there. You can see it if you go up there. The part sticking out of the ground is about 80 centimeters long.

[Uysal: And it really is Koroğlu's--isn't it?

Durmaz: Yes. There is a hill there, and that is where he threw it. That is what we have always heard, anyway

Uysal: Are there other things told about Koroğlu in connection with that area?

Durmaz: Yes, there are.

Uysal: Are there any marks in the rocks there that are

south side of that highway, directly across the highway from a highway maintenance garage and small campground for motorists.

Story 830

thought to be hoofprints made by his horse?⁴

Durmaz: Well, sir, it is like this. Those who do not understand the truth of the matter think that certain very clear marks there were made by the hoofs of his horse. However much before the time of Köroğlu, during the Christian period here, people used to erect buildings in very high and inaccessible places for protection. They were almost like castles. They built these in the rocks. The marks some people call hoofprints were cut into the rock to serve as stepping places. And so they are really like stairs--not hoofprints at all.]

⁴ This is a leading question by Dr. Uysal. In various places on and around Köroğlu Mountain in Bolu Province, there are marks in the rocks which local people are sure were made by the hero's horse's hoofs. How could a horse hoof make deep and lasting impressions in hard rock? One must first understand that Köroğlu's horse was no ordinary mount but a magic horse with many special abilities. He was named Kırat, meaning Iron-Gray Horse.