

Story 1035 (1979 Transcript of Narrator: Mehmet Balcı, 62
 tape made by
 Dr. Mehmet Yalvaç) Location: Vezirhan village,
 attached to city
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Ayvaz Contests Köröğlü's¹ Supremacy

When Köröğlü and the Armenian¹⁴¹⁻¹⁴³ first met on horseback,
 they considered themselves enemies. Köröğlü called, "Hey!
 Hey!"

am a Köröğlü who roams the mountains.

crush the head of him whom I confront.

a Köröğlü who roams the mountains.

I crush the head of him whom I confront

The Armenian answered,

You say you are a Köröğlü.

Well, I am an Armenian.

I'll spin your head this way and that;

Like double millstones it will turn.

Köröğlü grew very angry when he heard this. He

¹Köröğlü (his name means Son of the Blind Man) was an outlaw who supposedly robbed the rich to give to the poor. He is sometimes associated with the Celali revolts of the 16th and 17th centuries. This folk hero is the subject of a long cycle of minstrel tales of which this episode is but one.

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shouted, "O Armenian, you infidel and son of an infidel,
I have a fourteen-year-old brother named Ayvaz² ¹⁴²⁻¹⁵² who is a
better man than you are. I shall call him now and have
him cut off your head!"

Oh, come, Ayvaz, from fog-bound Çamlıbel,³ ¹⁴² ⁴⁵⁻⁵²

Oh, come to us from out the bank of fog!

Come save our dignity, our reputation!

Our blood boils like the water of the Danube.

Realizing now that he was in a difficult situation,
the Armenian tried to buy off Ayvaz:

O fast-approaching Ayvaz, heed him not!

A hundred thousand liras I shall give;

I'll give you too my daughter, beautiful.

Heed not, O Ayvaz, what your brother says

When Köroğlu became aware of what was going on, he
sang to Ayvaz:

I tended you when you were but a child,

But may the food I gave you make you blind,

If you bring shame upon your name and mine!

²Ayvaz was not the brother of Köroğlu but a boy whom
he abducted and then adopted.

³Çamlı (with pine tree) + bel (mountain pass), or
Mountain Pass with Pine Tree, was the location of
Köroğlu's stronghold.

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Would you destroy your brother's life
bribes?

Ayvaz now gave answer to the offer that the Armenian
had made:

O infidel, your gold is not for us
If for my horse, it would buy but one shoe.
And if for me, my breast would wear no Cross.
Hear this, O unbelieving infidel!

Saying this, Ayvaz attacked the Armenian and cut off
his head. The sight of this made Koroğlu very happy. He
said, "Live long, my black horse! May you live for a
thousand years. And may you, O Ayvaz, be the third-
ranking pasha⁴ of the land!"

But Ayvaz was not at all pleased by these words of
Koroğlu. Instead, he was angered by them. He said, "You
are as good as killing me to make me but a third-ranking
pasha. I deserve to be ranked even higher than you are.
I killed the Armenian of whom you were afraid!"

"Don't be angry at me," said Koroğlu. "After all
we provided you with the great horse. All you provided

⁴Pasha is the Turkish word for general. In Ottoman
times, however, it suggested even more status, for then
a pasha was often the military governor of a province or
other sizeable area.

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was the sword and the killing blow."

"But you did not fight at all!" protested Ayvaz.

Köroğlu said, "O Ayvaz, if you can ride to the Russian border (near Karaağaç⁵, and return within two hours, I shall leave my throne and everything to you. One as young as you could not achieve that kind of rank in any other way. After you have done that, I shall turn over my government seat to you."⁶

Ayvaz accepted this offer made by Köroğlu. He mounted his horse to ride to Karaağaç and return. But when he reached Karaağaç, he dismounted in order to sleep for a while. It was a mistake for him to do this and leave himself so defenseless, for his older brother had been making war in that area not long before. Köroğlu had terrorized the area so much that when in conflict with its residents, he had never even bothered to draw his sword unless his opponents numbered thirty or more. When his enemies came into Karaağaç and found Ayvaz there asleep, they thought it was Köroğlu himself. They seized him,

⁵Karaağaç is in Bursa Province in the kaza of Karacabey. It is difficult to imagine the Russian border's ever having been there. Is there another Karaağaç?

⁶This is an overstatement. Köroğlu had no government post. He meant the leadership of his outlaw band.

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tied him hand and foot, and took him to the capital city, where the ruler lived.

nr 43 152 At Çamlıbel Köroğlu waited for two hours for Ayvaz's return. Then when Ayvaz did not appear, Köroğlu went to Karaağaç to search for him. But when he reached Karaağaç, he found no one there in the town. Near the edge of town he saw a shepherd, and he called to this man, "Has anything important happened around here?"

The shepherd answered, "Köroğlu came here, but his enemies fell upon him while he was sleeping. They tied him hand and foot and took him to the capital a captive."

Hearing this, Köroğlu said to his horse, "Hey, horse you must take me to the capital city to the palace of the ruler. We have a new duty to perform." Before he left, however, he disguised himself as a dervish and slung his saz⁷ over one shoulder. When he reached the edge of the city, he stopped and looked to his left side and noticed that his saz had been broken on the trip. Looking around, he saw off to the right a saz-maker's shop. With his broken saz in his hand he went to that shop and said to the owner, "May it go easily for you!"⁸ He then said, "Quick,

⁷A three-stringed instrument used by Turkish minstrels and folk poets.

⁸A traditional greeting of encouragement to anyone at work: Kolay gelsin!

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master, repair this saz for me."

The saz-maker said, "Fuck off and get out of here! We are about to have three days of feasting and leisure time, and I cannot bother with your saz right now!"

Hearing these words, Köroğlu grew angry. He said,

Coming down from Çamlıbel

My horse grew tired from the trip.

MY saz was broken on the way.

Hey, master, fix it now for me.

Then taking off the hat he wore as part of his disguise, he revealed his fierce face. He bellowed,

They call me Köroğlu--Be quick!

Repair my broken saz at once.

If not, I'll knock your head right off

Without the aid of slender sword!

When the saz-maker realized that the stranger was Köroğlu, he immediately gave him a new saz. Taking the saz, Köroğlu handed the shop owner a gold piece. "I don't want any money for it," said the shopkeeper.

"Take this money," said Köroğlu, "for I have a task for you. Take me to the place where Ayvaz is held. As we are going along to that place, do not give any hint of who I am by looking to right or left. If you do, yours

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will be the first head I'll cut off!"

As Koroğlu walked through the streets, he heard people along the way talking among themselves. They said, "That Koroğlu has been captured! We'll hang him! We'll slaughter him! He has killed so many men! He has made so many women widows!" Then they cursed him. Koroğlu heard all of this as he was walking along.

When they reached the padişah's house, Koroğlu said to the saz-maker, who was guiding him, "When we enter here, you do the talking. If I speak, I may grow angry and begin cutting off heads." The saz-maker therefore saluted the padişah when they came into his presence. After his greeting had been acknowledged, he said to the padişah, "May you have a pleasant period of feasting!"

Pleased with their behavior, the padişah said, "We are very happy that you have come," and he ordered that chairs be set out for these guests. As Koroğlu sat down, his saz hung from his left side and his sword from his right side. The saz made a "Ding, ding" sound. Hearing this, the padişah said, "What is that, my dervish?"

"That is just one of the things that come forth from my saz which you may not be able to understand," said Koroğlu.

"Well, I shall forgive that," said the king. "In fact,

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you could almost go so far as to kill someone in the marketplace and gain my forgiveness for the act. That is how happy I am that we have at last gotten rid of Köroğlu."

Aside to the saz-maker Köroğlu said, "I received this saz from you. Let us now hear what it will say. Let us have a tune.

It is only now that I've arrived, O Ayvaz.

I learned from the shepherd of your unfortunate lot.

But why was it you they brought to such a place?

Why was it you they brought to such a place?

Ayvaz was imprisoned below the room in which the padişah and his guests were sitting. Listening to the voice that he heard singing above him, Ayvaz said to himself, "It sounds as if my older brother may have arrived. Is it he? I shall listen further

Köroğlu sang again

Into the cauldron go ninety okkas⁹ of rice.

When cooked, can it be eaten by you or me?

For killing but one foe you sought my throne

⁹A unit of weight used in former times, equivalent to 2.8 pounds. The narrator mispronounces it, calling it hokka, a word meaning inkpot.

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fixed upon him. Have one of your deputies kill anyone who refuses to obey your order by looking to right or left.

"You do this job," said the padişah. Although Köroğlu pretended to refuse this assignment, the padişah forced him to accept it. Then, led by the padişah and four of his retainers, the procession moved forward between the rows of soldiers and citizens. As soon as the procession started, Köroğlu took out his forty-man sword and began swinging right and left, killing forty people with each swing. After he had swung it five or ten times more, he had killed all those present except those right around the padişah himself. No one was left except Ayvaz, the padişah, and three ambassadors from abroad.

Grabbing the king by the collar from behind, Köroğlu said, "Oh, infidel, look back!" When the padişah looked back, he saw a terrible situation where blood flowed forth like rivers. Then Köroğlu asked, "O infidel, now who is the greater man, you or I? My name is Köroğlu!" Then he asked the padişah, "Shall I slaughter you or set you free? Which?"

"If you do not slaughter me, I shall promise not to make war upon Turkey again,"¹⁰ said the padişah, and he

¹⁰Quite irrational. Who could this ruler be and why would Köroğlu, an outlaw, care about his offer?

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took an (oath) upon that statement.

"Very well, then, I shall not kill you, but I shall give you punishment. My brother weighed 101 kilos when he left home. We'll weigh him now and see how much he has lost, and we shall hold you accountable for that amount." They weighed Ayvaz and found that he now weighed 99 kilos. Köroğlu then said to the padişah, "If you do not wish to be killed, then you will have to carry Ayvaz from here to Çamlıbel upon your back, and in doing so you will surely lose the same two kilos that he lost in captivity."

The padişah agreed to do this, even though the road to Çamlıbel was almost entirely uphill. Taking Ayvaz upon his back, he did carry him to Çamlıbel. When he grew tired along the way, he was prodded on both buttocks with a sword by Köroğlu. Before he parted with Köroğlu and Ayvaz, padişah said to Köroğlu, "I shall not make war upon you again. You may come to my country and do whatever you wish there."

After the padişah had departed, Köroğlu took Ayvaz to the room from which he ruled his forces at Çamlıbel and said to him, "This is our headquarters. You take over as the highest ranking official here, and I shall be the second highest. This will be your capital."

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said Ayvaz, "please excuse my fault and allow me to kiss your hands and feet. I shall never contest your superiority again."