

Story 1032 (Transcript of
Yalvaç tape)

Narrator: Mehmet Balcı, 62

Location: Vezirhan village,
attached to city of
Bilecik, Province of
Bilecik

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Collected by Dr. Mehmet Yalvaç

Şaban Geyga and Bela Petra

Some time ago there was an (Albanian) leader named Şaban Geyga who lived in this area with twenty-nine companions. They spent their winters on one mountain and their summers on another mountain, and they were seen only twice a year as they passed back and forth between these two locations

One day as they passed through a certain village, there were some girls drawing water from the fountain at the center of the settlement. When the girls saw this famous leader passing along, all but one of them stood up to show their respect. The girl who did not rise was an infidel.¹ Şaban Geyga was offended by this girl's lack of respect. Riding up to her, he said, "All of the other girls stood up as I passed the fountain, but you did not. Why didn't you?"

"I am wealthy and I am proud, and I saw no need of

¹In the context of Turkish folktales anyone not a Moslem is an infidel.

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rising," said the girl

Şaban Geyga said to his companions, "Friends, capture pale girl. Place her on the horse that has a white spot on its forehead and one white foot. We shall take to the mountain with us and keep her there for a month and a half."

By that time the pale girl, Bela Petra, was frightened. She pleaded, "O rebel leader, O rebel leader,² I beg you not to do this. My father and mother³ are wealthy. I shall give you 300 yellow liras if you will leave me here instead of taking me to the mountain."

Şaban Geyga answered, "Who cares whether your parents are rich? I don't want any of their money. I shall take you to the mountain."

He kept this girl at their mountain camp for a month and a half. At the end of that time Şaban Geyga said to his friends, "Put this girl on the same horse that carried her here. Take her to such-and-such a place near her vil-

²There is no explanation in the tale of the legal or political status of the thirty Albanians beyond the fact that they are referred to here as rebels. Inasmuch as folk raconteurs do not tell tales in a vacuum, it may be assumed that the audience knew a good bit more about Şaban Geyga than we are told here.

³The terms used by the girl for father and mother are tutku and meyka respectively.

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lage and leave her at the side of the road, but do not enter the village." The men assigned to do this did exactly as their leader had ordered. They then returned to the mountain

left at that place along the road, the girl did not go directly home. Instead, she went to the quarters of Murta Pasha⁴ to lodge a complaint against Şaban Geyga and his companions. When she reached Murta Pasha's mansion, she said, "Murta Pasha! Murta Pasha! Why don't you arrest that Şaban Geyga? He and his men live by the power of their rifles. He and his men do not lead ordinary lives but dance the hora.⁵ He held me at his camp for a month and a half and made me dance too. Why don't you capture him?"

After the girl had addressed him in this way, Murta Pasha wrote a letter to Şaban Geyga and had one of his men carry it to the Albanian camp. He said in the letter, "I am awaiting your and your companions' arrival here this evening to make a report to me."

⁴Pasha now means simply general, a high military rank. During the Ottoman era, however, it was used to designate the military governor of a province or of a sizeable area.

⁵The hora is a kind of round dance; but hora can also refer to a noisy party. As it is used in this tale, the word hora may thus refer to a dance or to a life-style.

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When Şaban Geyga received this letter, he said to his companions, "Friends, we have received a summons from Murta Pasha. He wants to see all of us this evening." Strapping on their swords and carrying their rifles, they mounted their horses and rode directly to Murta Pasha's mansion

The guard at the gate said to them, "Entry beyond this point is prohibited!" and he refused to allow them to pass.

Angered by this obstacle, Şaban Geyga said, "Who am I to be deterred by such prohibitions?" Drawing his sword, he asked, "Do you know who I am?" Frightened by this menace, the guard permitted them to enter.

Opening the door, Şaban Geyga and his twenty-nine armed men entered Murta Pasha's private quarters. The pasha was drinking coffee at the time, but the sight of thirty armed men entering the room suddenly startled him and caused him to spill the coffee on the floor. Bela Petra was sitting with Murta Pasha awaiting the arrival of Şaban Geyga.

Şaban Geyga said, "We have come! Why did you send for us?"

Pointing to Bela Petra, the pasha said to Şaban, "A complaint has been lodged against you by this girl."

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Şaban Geyga said, "Hey, girl! Hey, girl You are acting proud again. There will come a time when I shall again capture you!" He said this right in front of Murta Pasha. Then he addressed Murta Pasha, saying, "Ask her why I captured her."

Before Murta Pasha could say anything, Bela Petra said, "I am the guilty one, Murta Pasha. When Şaban Geyga was passing through our village, all of the Turkish girls stood up, but I did not. Because of that he captured me and took me away."

Murta Pasha then asked, "What did he do to you when he took you east to Alaca Mountain?"⁶

The girl answered, "He guarded me day and night. He protected me from his friends."

"What did he give you to eat?"

"Every night he fed me grilled meat."

"Where did he have you sleep?"

The girl said, "I slept on the floor, but it was better than the bed in my father's house."

When Murta Pasha had heard this evidence, he released the rebels and said, "Because you are such an honest and honorable man, you may go and do as you wish."

⁶Alacadağ has not been identified.

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After kissing Murta Pasha's hand,⁷ Şaban Geyga departed Murta Pasha then sent the girl to her father's house accompanied by one of his guards.⁸

⁷A sign of respect and deference.

⁸This brief tale is clearly part of the heroic tradition. It reflects the pride, the sense of honor, and the admiration of physical prowess that are associated with epic literature and the sagas sung about by Turkish minstrels.