

Story 1044 (1973 Tape 6)

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How ¹⁰⁷⁻¹²⁰ Keloğlan¹ Stole ^{All} Köroğlu's² Horse,
~~and~~ Kirat, for Hasan Pasha³

Once there was and once there was not a boy who was a keloğlan. This keloğlan was very poor, and sometimes he would think, "My God, how good my situation was once, but look at me now." As he was thinking in this manner one day, he heard a town crier making an announcement for Hasan Bey.⁴

Hasan Bey had the following announcement made: "Whoever will steal and bring to me Köroğlu's horse will be made my vizier from now until the end of the world."

¹The word keloğlan means bald boy, but the baldness is not the normal baldness which accompanies old age. It is caused by a ringworm infestation of the scalp. If a person is a keloğlan, the word may be capitalized and made to serve as a proper name. Both real-life and folktale keloğlans are often poor.

²Köroğlu was a legendary outlaw who supposedly robbed the rich in order to help the poor. He is often associated with the Celali Revolts of the 16th and 17th centuries.

³Pasha now means simply general. In the early Ottoman era it referred to the military governor of a province or some other large area.

⁴Bey referred to an aristocrat and meant roughly lord.

Story

When Keloğlan heard that announcement, he thought, "Oh, here is the opportunity that I sought but could not find before now!"

No one else dared volunteer to undertake this task. Everyone said, "Who could ever steal a horse from Köroğlu?"

Taking his head under his arm,⁵ Keloğlan went to Hasan Pasha and said, "I shall bring to you the horse that you wish to have."

He then went to Köroğlu's house⁶ and sat outside the front door. When Köroğlu noticed him there, he asked Keloğlan, "What is the matter?"

"I am in a very bad situation. For the sake of God take care of me."

"Very well," said Köroğlu, and he took him inside the house. He had the boy washed and his clothes cleaned. Then he directed his men, "Show him a room where he can eat, drink, and sleep. This is all for the sake of charity."

But Keloğlan objected to what Köroğlu said about charity. He said, "No, sir! Thank you very much, but I do not deserve a room. I can sleep in the horse stable. I shall stay there,

Turkish equivalent of risking his neck.

⁶Köroğlu lived in a fortified mountain home called Çamlıbel, but the name is not used here.

Story 1044

but give me some work to do so that I can earn the bread that I eat."

right," said Köroğlu. Then, turning to one of his men, he said, "Give him a horse to take care of.

They gave Keloğlu a horse to take care of, but that horse was not very well and not very strong. Keloğlu realized this, and so every night he would get up again after he had gone to bed and collect all of the barley that had been placed before all of the other horses. This he gave to the horse he had been assigned to tend, and as a result that horse grew stronger and healthier than all of the others.

Köroğlu used to wander through the stables, saying nothing but observing the condition of all the horses. When Keloğlu's horse became the most attractive horse there, the other grooms grew jealous. They said among themselves, "He had the worst horse in the stables, but now it has come to be the best. Let us do something about this!"

Köroğlu overheard their conversation, for he was a clever man. Going to Keloğlu, he said, "Keloğlu, don't let the other grooms know about this, but here is some money with which you can feed the whole group. Buy a lamb,

Story 1044

cook it for them, and give them plenty to eat and drink."

When Keloğlan had the food prepared, he took the other grooms out into a field. There he gave them plenty to eat and drink. They drank so much, however, that they all passed out and lay asleep on the ground. The moment that the grooms passed out, Keloğlan called, "Ayvaz! Ayvaz!"⁷ but Ayvaz did not answer, for he too had drunk too much. "Oh here is another opportunity I sought but could not find!" said Keloğlan. Reaching into Ayvaz's pocket, he took from it the key to the stable. Going back to the stable, he placed the key in the lock but he was unable to open the door with it. Although he was disappointed, Keloğlan said to himself, "Oh, well, how will Hasan Pasha know one good horse from another good horse? I shall take him Durat instead of (Kirat)."⁸ Mounting Durat, he rode for some distance on it.

When Ayvaz and the grooms came to themselves again, they saw no sign of Keloğlan anywhere. Ayvaz felt in his

⁷The son of an İstanbul butcher, Ayvaz was kidnapped by Koroğlu and subsequently adopted as his son. Ayvaz became a powerful warrior.

⁸Kirat was a horse with supernatural powers. He appears in most sections of the Koroğlu cycle. Kirat means gray horse. The gray or white horse is extremely important in the Middle Eastern (especially the Turkish) oral tradition. At least as far back as the 9th century Turkish heroes have ridden gray or white horses.

Story 1044

pocket and discovered that his keys were missing. He shouted, "Alas! The keys are gone Kırat has probably been stolen!" Running to the stable, they found the key still sticking in the lock. "Oh, he was unable to open it, and so Kırat is still here." Then, not seeing Durat anywhere, he said, "But where is Durat?"

When Ayvaz went to Koroğlu, that leader saw that he upset about something. He asked, "Ayvaz, has something happened? Why are you so thoughtful?"

"That keloğlan whom you admired and showed so much charity to has run off with Durat. He tried to take Kırat could not open the lock on his stable door."

"Come now!" said Koroğlu. "That's nothing to worry about. Go back to your regular work."

But Ayvaz was still upset, and he said, "You made so much of Keloğlan See now what he has done to us!"

"Go back to your work," Koroğlu repeated. No matter he said, it had no effect on Ayvaz, and this made Koroğlu himself thoughtful. After a few moments, he ordered, "Bring Kırat to me!"

Mounting Kırat, Koroğlu galloped away. Whenever he rode that horse, Koroğlu used to stir up a huge cloud of dust behind him. Keloğlan, seeing that cloud of dust, said

Story 1044

to himself, "Köröğlu is coming! What am I to do? He will me!" As he fled, he saw a mill nearby. Riding to the mill, he said to the mill, "Köröğlu is coming, and he may kill us. You have a wife and children. Give me your clothes, and then go to your house and hide inside. Let him kill me if he is going to kill anybody." Keloğlu put on the miller's clothes and smeared some flour on his face, and while he was doing this, the miller ran to his house and hid.

When Köröğlu rode up, he called, "~~Miller!~~ Miller! There was a keloğlu who just came here. Where is he?" When Keloğlu pointed to the house, Köröğlu ran over there and shouted very loudly, "Come out! Come out!"

The miller was terrified. He came running out of the house and said, "Believe me! I didn't take too much!"⁹

"What are you talking about?" asked Köröğlu. "I am not concerned about that. Aren't you a keloğlu?"

"No, I am not. He gave me his clothes and then put on mine. Then he ordered me to get into my house."

Köröğlu returned to the mill, but by the time he got there, he saw Keloğlu riding back and forth on Kırat.

⁹Millers have traditionally been thought of as cheats who stealthily took more of the grain (as their charge for grinding the rest) than they were really entitled to.

Story

Keloğlan shouted to him, "Köröğlü, I have made a promise which I hope you will understand."

"What is it?"

"I have a promise which I have to keep, but I shall return your horse with my own hands."

"Don't do it, Keloğlan! Don't be stubborn!"¹⁰

"Köröğlü, depend upon me! Take my word for it!" No matter what Köröğlü said, Keloğlan gave no heed to it. Instead, he spurred the horse and rode off.

Köröğlü now mounted Durat. He could have stopped Kırat if he had tried hard enough. Kırat was flying through the air, but Keloğlan did not know that Durat, though younger, could also fly. Köröğlü decided, however, not to catch Kırat. He called out, "Hey, fellow! I have stretched my arm a distance great enough to catch you. But I shall not do so, for Kırat has his pride, too. I shall not let anyone say that Durat caught Kırat!"

Keloğlan ordered Kırat to fly even faster, and they passed out of that place. Köröğlü tried to track Keloğlan by riding along on the ground beneath Kırat, and he did so for a while until they got into the mountains. But then how

¹⁰In the Turkish oral tradition the keloğlan, as well as any normally bald person, is thought to be stubborn. Several tales in ATON feature the keloğlan's stubbornness.

Story

could he find Keloğlan and Kırat? Can a bird be compared to a human being? He dismounted and walked for some distance. Seeing how useless this was, Koroğlu took off the saddle and carried it on his own back

In the meantime Ayvaz had been pacing back and forth, watching to see whether or not Koroğlu was returning.

"Where has Koroğlu been all this time? he asked himself. Seeing a peddler come along in the distance, he called to Koroğlu's wife, "Nigâr, come out, for a peddler is coming. It is the first peddler who has passed this way in seven years. You can probably buy some cheap jewelry from him.

"Yes, I shall. You are right. A peddler has not come this way for seven years."

But when they looked more closely, they saw that the approaching person was not a peddler with a pack on his back. It was Koroğlu leading a horse by its bridle and carrying its saddle upon his own back.

Koroğlu arrived and sat down on the doorstep. "Ayvaz, go bring me a cup of coffee. I am very upset." Ayvaz did not move, but he observed that Kırat had gone and Durat was there now in his place. Koroğlu spoke to him again. He said, "My son, don't act this way. Get me my coffee. I am feeling depressed

Story 1044

Ayvaz went and laid out all of the cups. He placed the coffeepot on the fire to boil, and stood nearby waiting for it to be finished. A few minutes later Köroğlu said once more, "My son, bring me my coffee. I feel depressed." Then Ayvaz poured the coffee and took it to him.

Köroğlu drank his coffee and wondered, "What am I going to do? My horse is gone, but that is not all that bothers me. That horse is as rare as a World Beauty,¹¹ but this problem includes more than the horse." He lay awake all night thinking about this. In the morning he said, "Son, Ayvaz, bring me my dervish costume and my false beard / He had seven different costumes, narrator interpolates. / Prepare everything, including my pen and my pen case.

Putting on his dervish outfit and his beard, Köroğlu started walking down the road. After some time he saw a farmer plowing in a field. Going to this farmer, he said "My son, do you have a piece of bread you can give me? I am not in very good condition."¹²

¹¹An extremely beautiful girl has traditionally been called "The Most Beautiful Girl in the World." In more recent times she has often been called simply "A World Beauty.

¹²Dervishes are traditionally poor and mendicant. Köroğlu is not hungry, but he uses this ploy as a means of engaging the farmer in conversation.

Story 1044

"Don't bother me now!" said the farmer. "I want to finished with this plowing so that I can go and take a look at K  ro  lu's horse. A kelo  lan has stolen that horse and brought it to Hasan Pasha.

"Does that horse belong to K  ro  lu or to Hasan Pasha?"

"It belongs to Hasan Pasha! After all, who is that K  ro  lu?"

"Oh, is that so? My son, I feel sorry for you. You are probably anxious to go, but you have this plowing to

Why don't you go and get dressed for the occasion and leave me to finish your plowing for you?

After the (farmer) had left the field, K  ro  lu plowed for a few minutes and then led the oxen out onto the road and began traveling along slowly with them.

Very soon he was overtaken by a lame man who was limping along as fast as he could. K  ro  lu asked this man, "What is the matter, my son? Where are you going in such a hurry?"

"Don't ask me, father! A kelo  lan has stolen K  ro  lu's horse and brought it to Hasan Pasha. I am not going to see Hasan Pasha. I am going because I am embarrassed for K  ro  lu." Having said this, the lame man began to cry.

"Son, is that horse suitable for Hasan Pasha or for

Story 1044

Köroğlu?"

"It is not at all suitable for Hasan Pasha. It is Köroğlu's horse

"All right, son," said Köroğlu, "these oxen are yours. I give them to you freely. Accept me tonight as your guest, and then tomorrow spread the word that a dervish, a hoca,¹³ has come to the village. Say that this hoca can cure nesses, can give peace to people with troubled minds, can restore the insane to sanity. Do this, and do not worry about anything else

In the morning the lame man went to Hasan Pasha and said, "Hasan Pasha, the grooms have given your new horse food and water, but it won't eat or drink. All the horse does is urinate on the ground and stamp its feet. The grooms have become afraid of it

"Well, what is to be done?"

"A very wise hoca has come to the village. He is able to cure all kinds of illnesses," said the lame man.

"Bring that man here." When the lame man returned with Köroğlu, Hasan Pasha asked him, "Hoca, can you restore sanity to the insane?"

¹³Although a dervish is not usually a hoca (a preacher, similar to a priest), any member of the religious community may loosely be called hoca.

Story

"Oh, that is my main work."

"Well, if that is your work, restore sanity to this mad horse. Don't let money stand in your way, for I shall pay you as much as you ask for your work," said Hasan Pasha.

Köroğlu took his pen holder and pen out of his pocket and began to write something down. Then he said, "Bring me a cauldron of water." When it had been brought, he recited something to the water, he blew upon it, and he wrote down something about it.¹⁴ He then said, "All right now, don't try to get any closer to the horse. I'll be able to move closer to him by reciting and blowing."

"All right, hoca."

As the hoca moved slowly closer to the horse, they called the keloğlan, who by now had become a vizier.¹⁵ They said, "Come and watch the procedure of the dervish who has turned up here

¹⁴This is here the hocus-pocus of a charlatan. Curing by means of breathing upon a patient is an old Turkish belief. Among the religious frauds outlawed by the Kemalist Reforms was the practice of the "blower" (Turkish üfürükçü). Fortune-tellers often stare into a bowl of water, a device similar to a crystal ball. Hypnotists sometimes have patients or clients focus their gaze upon the water in a bowl. Köroğlu is using a hodgepodge of props.

¹⁵A pasha did not have assistants called viziers. The term here must be an epithet of exaggeration applied to important employees of the pasha.

Story 1044

Keloğlan recognized Koroğlu just as soon as he saw

He remembered the promise that he had made to Koroğlu at the mill, a promise that he would return Kırat to him with his own hands. Keloğlan, therefore, said only, "He is a good hoca."

They opened the stable door, and the horse, which had already grown excited from the scent of Koroğlu, now grew even wilder when it saw him. They shouted a warning: "Beware, hoca It will knock you down!"

"Let it knock me down if it wishes, but you stay away!" said Koroğlu. Then, approaching the horse, he took

its bridle and saddle. "Bring five measures of barley, he said as he groomed the horse as no one else could possibly do. When the barley was brought, Koroğlu said, "Now bring a large quantity of water." In this way he fed his horse well.

"May God bless you, hoca," the observers called. "May we now come near him?"

"No, you don't dare come any closer. I can recite lines to keep him calm, but you do not know how to do that.

I can get him through the door. I'll mount him and ride him back and forth a little, and he will learn from that. Then you will also be able to mount him.

Story 1044

The people who had gathered to watch all this began talking among themselves. One person said, "How is it that the horse has become so calm? That man who is called a hoca must be K  r  Ėlu himself."

But KeloĖlan said quickly, "Who are you to recognize K  r  Ėlu? I stayed with him for seven years, but I don't recognize him now. How can you?"

K  r  Ėlu now mounted the horse, but he mounted it backwards, for he had great confidence now. When he did that, Hasan Pasha called out, "We understand that you are K  r  Ėlu, and so you might as well mount the horse correctly." But K  r  Ėlu could not be influenced by anyone now that he was on his own horse again. Hasan Bey therefore ordered, "Bring out soldiers to surround him, for he may try to get away with the horse."

When the soldiers came out, K  r  Ėlu began singing to the horse:

My life, K  rat! My eyes, K  rat!
Whoever mounts you will be glad.
Your double wings on either side
Lift you till you fly away.

About K  rat: he is six years old.
His head is small; his legs are strong.

Story 1044

His brother bears the Persian shah

Let me see you glitter,¹⁶ my Kirat

"Köroğlu, we realize who you are. We know that the Shah of Persia owns Kirat's brother. Very well! Therefore mount the horse correctly!"

Köroğlu dismounted and remounted. Then he said, "All right Now I shall go somewhere. Try to stop Kirat!" He looked this way and that way, and then the horse began to rise, flying toward the sky.

"Stop him! Stop him!" Hasan Pasha shouted, but it of no use. He could do nothing but gather his soldiers again.

This Hasan Pasha was engaged to be married, and the wedding was soon to start. Köroğlu had heard about this, and so now he asked some boys in the street, "Will Hasan Pasha soon have a wedding?"

"Yes

"From which house will the bride come forth so that the groom can take her?"

After the boys had pointed out the house to him,

¹⁶The word used here is telli--telli Kirat. Telli can mean decorated with gold and silver wire thread. Thus an expensively dressed bride could be called a telli bride. In describing a horse, telli could refer to its glossy coat of hair and its mane

Story 1044

Köroğlu went to it and knocked on its door. When the girl came to the door, Köroğlu said, "For the love of God, give me a piece of bread." When the girl brought the bread, Köroğlu reached for it, saying, "Step a little closer." But when the girl did step toward him, Köroğlu grabbed her by the arm and carried her off.

Some of the people who observed this went to Hasan Pasha and reported, "Hasan Pasha, Hasan Pasha, while you have been worrying about the loss of your horse, your fiancée has also been lost! Your engagement has been broken!"

Hasan Pasha lined up his soldiers in ranks to trap the departing couple on Kırat. He had hocas recite prayers for him and blow their breaths¹⁷ in support of him. This incantation was so strong that it succeeded in blinding the eyes of Kırat.

When Köroğlu and the girl, riding Kırat, came to a creek, the horse was completely confused. The creek seemed like a sea to the horse, and so when it took a step forward to cross it, it quickly took a step back again. Seeing this, Köroğlu talked and sang to the horse:

¹⁷The blowing here is not for those curative purposes described in Footnote 14. It is done to aid Hasan Pasha and harm his enemy.

Story 1044

Downhill you're as fast as a partridge;
 Uphill you're as fast as a rabbit.
 Looking like a new-wed bride,
 Let me see you, glossy Kırat.

Again Kırat took one step forward toward the creek but then stepped back again. No matter what Kōroğlu said to Kırat, the horse refused to cross the creek. "O God, they have somehow blinded the eyes of my horse. Open his eyes again." God heard this prayer and opened the horse's eyes. They now crossed the water and ascended a large rock on the opposite bank.

By now, however, the soldiers were right behind them, and they surrounded the rock. As soon as their prey came down from the rock, the troops would easily catch them. But Kōroğlu was undisturbed. He said to the girl, "Look, here comes your former fiancé."

"Yes, I see," said the girl, who was happy that a man like Kōroğlu had stolen her.

"Shall we take his pilav¹⁸ away from him?" asked Kōroğlu.

"No. Instead let us save our lives now."

¹⁸Pilav is a rice dish containing tiny bits of meat and sometimes pine nuts and/or currants.

Story 1044

"What life? What do you have in mind? asked K ro lu.

"Nothing. There is nothing."

"I am a brave man."

"Then what can I say? If you are a brave man, do whatever you will!"

K ro lu now began to sing a threat to Hasan Pasha and his troops:

Thirty-two heroes come forth from the creek

Thirty-two heroes are hard on your heels.

Those who remain will be killed to a man.

Those who now flee may escape with their lives

When Hasan Pasha gave way before the attack of K ro lu's thirty-two companions who had just arrived, K ro lu himself climbed down from the rock, snatched Hasan Pasha's dish of pilav, and delivered it to the girl. After she had eaten her fill, the whole group started out for K ro lu's home.

When Ayvaz first saw the girl with his father, he thought, "Oh-h-h-h, how beautiful!"

Noticing Ayvaz's admiration of the girl, K ro lu began to sing again:

Oh, Ayvaz, I have brought you a sweetheart today.

Unmatched are her beauty and slenderness

Bedecked with two scarves, bejeweled with two

Story 1044

earrings

Here is the sweetheart I brought you today.

you her brother?"¹⁹ asked Ayvaz. "From where have you brought her?"

no--don't speak that way, my son. I understand your feelings, and that was why I sang as I did. I am Koroğlu, a brave man who does not lie. Hasan Pasha stole my horse, and, in return, I stole his family. But she is my sister both in this world and the next. Ayvaz, you are to take her to the creek and leave her there." Then turning to the girl, he said, "I shall return you in the same condition I took you away. This is what I do to a man who steals my Kirat, but I go no farther. For me to behave otherwise would be inappropriate to my dignity."

The girl herself did not want to leave, for she admired Koroğlu greatly, but she had no choice but to go. Koroğlu said again, "If a man steals my horse, I will steal his family."

¹⁹ Ayvaz questions Koroğlu's relationship to the girl. Is it as asexual as a brother-sister relationship?