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**Common strategy for enhancing the natural and
cultural heritage through legends to promote
its sustainable use within the project "Legends,
a path to more attractive tourist destinations"**

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"Legends, a path to more attractive tourist destination"
ROBG-467

The content of this material does not necessarily represent the official position of the European Union.

1. The purpose of the strategy

The cultural and natural heritage of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area is a strategic factor for sustainable tourism development, with high potential for transformation from conservation objects to development tools. The integrated approach to the protection and capitalization of the natural and cultural heritage can be a solution for increasing the attractiveness of the cross-border area, both for investments and for developing the quality of the living environment, while preserving the regional identity.

This strategy aims to provide an appropriate framework, specific measures and a unitary approach for the sustainable enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area represented by the local legends from Dolj, Olt, Mehedinti and Montana, Vidin and Vratsa districts, with the purpose of improving the tourist attractiveness of the targeted areas.

2. Methods for identifying and collecting local legends for the promotion of natural and cultural heritage

Within the project, one of the relevant activities is to identify and collect local legends from Dolj, Olt, Mehedinti and Montana, Vidin and Vratsa districts.

These local legends must be properly identified and exploited to obtain new tourism products. The identification of these legends must be made both qualitatively and quantitatively, and the legends must be relevant to that area, must be sufficiently sustained by local traditions and to offer the opportunity to capitalize on this as a tourist attraction.

In order to ensure an adequate regional coverage but also to identify the representative legends, with the potential to improve the tourist attractiveness in the area where they come from, it is important to use several methods, both classical and innovative:

a. Office research

The Office research is a natural preliminary step for any field research and is necessary to analyse the legends in the targeted area and the versions that are circulating and to choose the most appropriate legends to be promoted.

The Office research consists of:

- Studying the already existing references about the respective legends found in libraries, published studies, monographs of the localities, articles published on the Internet;
- Making an inventory of the legends from the targeted cross-border area;
- Extracting the relevant information and properly structuring the information so that it forms the basis of the research;

b. Field research

It is a necessary operation to validate and update the information obtained through the office research and focuses on:

- identification of the researchers, specialists or experts who collected and studied the legends in question;
- moving to the areas where the legends circulate and identifying the people who know and transmit these legends;
- establishing meetings with the persons concerned to collect the legends and to obtain relevant information that can be used efficiently from a tourist point of view;
- identification of the locations related to the legends;
- identification of the elements that support the promotion of sustainable tourism (collecting information on available resources, identifying natural elements, caves, rock formations, historical and cultural monuments, memorial houses, castles, mansions, churches);
- commitment / record of the collected information in compliance with their truthfulness;

c. Organization of camps for pupils

Within the project, 4 camps are organized for which 240 pupils and 48 teachers from Romania, Bulgaria from the targeted cross-border area will participate. These camps are a new tourism product made and are a good opportunity to identify and collect local legends to promote the natural and cultural heritage. Thus, within the camps there are activities in which participants

are encouraged to listen but also to tell legends in the areas where they come from. This is another efficient method of identifying and collecting new legends or different versions of them, but also of promoting natural and cultural heritage in the cross-border area.

The collection of information is a very important step, but for the promotion of the natural and cultural heritage, it is also important to interpret them in a way that is attractive to tourists.

3. Ways of promotion and dissemination of the legends identified for promoting the sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage

The communication activities must be guided both by the interest of informing the targeted group and the population in the cross-border area, but also by the obligations that each citizen has regarding the sustainable exploitation and use of the natural and cultural heritage.

Based on these considerations, the identified legends will become "a way for more attractive tourist destinations" if they are promoted as follows:

Ways of promotion and dissemination made within the project	Description	Beneficiaries
Legend camp - new tourist product	<p>Organized for students accompanied by teachers, the camps have a specific theme and activities aimed at promoting and disseminating local legends in the cross-border area with the purpose of stimulating a type of tourism: tourist activities for young people, camps and school trips, trips to heritage objectives.</p> <p>They also play an important role in educating and raising the awareness of young people in the respect and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage.</p>	Students and teachers

<p>Map of legends accompanied by a Presentation Catalogue - new tourist product</p> <p>Printed bilingual product (Romanian-English and Bulgarian - English)</p>	<p>The map is designed and made within the project and includes legends identified in the cross-border area (Dolj, Olt, Mehedinti and Montana, Vidin and Vratsa districts).</p> <p>It is a tourist map that has all the classic elements necessary for identification and orientation but is supplemented with suggestive graphic representations that mark the places / tourist objectives that can be visited that relate to the subjects of the legends.</p> <p>The map has a form suitable for easy use and is in an attractive graphic configuration for tourists, especially for children and young people.</p> <p>The map is accompanied by a catalogue printed in two bilingual versions (Romanian-English and Bulgarian-English), which offers additional details about legends (stories), natural and cultural heritage sites related to legends and the areas where they can be visited.</p> <p>The main objective is to become a tourist product that encourages individual or group tours to visit these areas, as well as organizing trips or camps by school units or other entities involved in tourism promotion.</p>	<p>Students and teachers</p> <p>Travel agencies, other economic operators and cultural institutions in the field that can play a role in promoting the sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage</p> <p>The large audience</p>
<p>Interactive map Product accessible online</p>	<p>The Legend Map also has an interactive digital version optimized for publication on the Internet.</p> <p>This is an efficient means of promoting and disseminating the legends identified and promoting the sustainable use of the natural and cultural heritage on a large scale in the online environment and aims to expand the range of users and implicitly to attract other categories of tourists to the targeted cross-border region.</p>	<p>The large audience user of Communications and Information Technology</p>

<p>Promotional movies</p> <p>Video products broadcast on TV stations with coverage in the cross-border area, multiplied on memory sticks</p>	<p>Within the project are made 6 movies promoting the local legends related to the natural heritage, resources and cultural heritage of the targeted CBC area (Dolj, Olt, Mehedinti - Romania and Vidin, Montana, Vratsa - Bulgaria counties)</p> <p>The movies contain references to the general aspects of the area, with emphasis on the possibilities of developing ecological tourism, by educating the young generation to respect the relevant natural and cultural-historical vestiges. Also, these movies highlight the possibilities of organizing in the area of tourist activities for young people with duration of at least 1 day (trips, hikes) or thematic camps with duration of 3-7 days.</p> <p>The purpose is to increase tourism promotion for the general public in the cross-border area, by disseminating the movies made within the project at relevant TV stations in the targeted cross-border area.</p>	<p>The target groups of the project and other interested actors</p>
<p>Meeting to promote the dissemination of identified legends - Forum</p>	<p>The activity consists in organizing in Romania a thematic forum, with duration of 3 days, in which the key actors relevant to the topics approached by the project participate, to validate and adjust the tourism products created and the common strategy for enhancing the natural and cultural heritage through legends in order to promote its sustainable use.</p> <p>The purpose is to evaluate the legends identified within the project, to identify new legends that could be promoted in the period of sustainability, to enrich the already elaborated map and to formulate and validate the new tourism product - Legends Camp in terms of program and locations for organization.</p>	<p>60 representatives of public, national and local institutions, NGOs and associations working in the field of investigation, preservation and dissemination of cultural and natural heritage, teachers (for example, history teachers, geography teachers, foreign language teachers), key actors interested in the sites of natural and cultural heritage, which are</p>

		sources for the legends (30 from Romania and 30 from Bulgaria) selected from the 6 counties / districts.
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4. Actors involved in promoting and disseminating identified legends

The central actors involved in promoting and disseminating the identified legends are the 2 partners involved in the implementation of the ROBG-467 project: The Leading Partner - Forever for Europe Association and the Project Partner - Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria.

These 2 organizations will be supported for the promotion and dissemination of legends by a series of direct and indirect partners / collaborators:

- contractors within the project;
- the schools participating in the 4 editions of the Legend Camp and the Meeting to promote the legends;
- representatives of the objectives of natural and cultural heritage related to the identified legends;
- travel agencies;
- NGOs with relevant activity in the field;
- volunteers.

5. Entities responsible for the implementation of the strategy

No. crt.	Measures / actions	Results	Responsible	Partners
1	Identification of legends with the potential to become sustainable tourist attractions	At least 30 legends identified	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of	Contractor 1001 Escapes SRL

			North-West Bulgaria	
2	Continuation of the identification of legends, after the completion of the project implementation	At least 6 new legends identified	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria	Volunteers, schools
3	Elaboration of the map of legends, together with the explanatory catalogue	1000 maps + catalogues	Forever for Europe Association	Contractor Anabasis SRL, schools, tourism agencies, NGOs, natural and cultural heritage objectives
4	Developing interactive map with legends	1 interactive common map	Forever for Europe Association	Contractor Anabasis SRL
5	Updating the interactive map with the new legends identified	1 updated interactive common map	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria	-
6	Making a common video production that promotes legends	A video production with 6 chapters	Forever for Europe Association	Contractor Autentic Art SRL
7	Promoting legends through movies by distributing memory sticks	400 memory sticks	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria	Schools, NGOs, tourism agencies, natural and cultural heritage objectives
8	Promoting legends through movies by broadcasting them on televisions	6 movies broadcasted on 6 televisions	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for	Contractor Fly DGV Impex SRL

			Development of North-West Bulgaria	
9	Promoting legends through movies by posting them on the internet	6 movies posted on the internet	Forever for Europe Association	-
10	Promoting legends through movies by making them available to those who want to broadcast them	6 movies made available to those who want to broadcast them	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria	-
11	Organizing 4 editions of the Legend Camp in Bulgaria	4 editions of the Camp of Legends organized	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria	Schools
12	Elaboration of an offer (costs, program) for organizing the Legend Camp after the completion of the project	1 offer elaborated	Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria	Schools
13	Organization of the meeting to promote the legends	A meeting for the promotion of legends organized	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria	Schools, NGOs, objectives of natural and cultural heritage

6. Monitoring methods

No. crt.	Result	Monitoring methods	Responsible
1	At least 30 legends identified	Reports of service reception, project	Forever for Europe Association, Agency

		reports	for Development of North-West Bulgaria
2	At least 6 new legends identified	Sustainability report	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria
3	1000 maps + catalogues	Delivery reports of services, project reports, distribution lists, delivery receipt reports	Forever for Europe Association
4	1 interactive common map	Website: www.danubelegends.eu , Google Analytics	Forever for Europe Association
5	1 updated interactive common map	Website: www.danubelegends.eu , Google Analytics	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria
6	A video production with 6 chapters	Delivery receipt reports of services, project reports	Forever for Europe Association
7	400 memory sticks	Delivery reports of services, project reports, distribution lists, delivery receipt reports	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria
8	6 movies broadcasted on 6 televisions	Delivery reports of services, project reports, media plans	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria
9	6 movies posted on the internet	Website: www.danubelegends.eu , Google Analytics	Forever for Europe Association
10	6 movies made available to those who want to broadcast them	Website: www.danubelegends.eu , Delivery receipt reports	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria

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11	4 editions of the Camp of Legends organized	Delivery reports of services, project reports, attendance lists	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria
12	1 offer elaborated	Sustainability report	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria
13	A meeting for the promotion of legends organized	Delivery reports of services, project reports, attendance list	Forever for Europe Association, Agency for Development of North-West Bulgaria

1. Annex 1 - List of legends identified within the project
2. Annex 2 - Presentation of the legends identified within the project
3. Annex 3 - Graphic representation of the legends identified within the project

**Project Manager,
Valeria LEFERMAN**



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ROMÂNIA

No.	Name of the Legend	Localization of the legend
Mehedinți		
1.	Isverna cave	Isverna
2.	Saint Nicodim Legend	Ponoarele
3.	God's Bridge	Ponoarele
4.	The legend of Strehaia monastery	Strehaia
5.	Ada Kaleh lovers	Orșova
6.	The sphinx on the Danube	Orșova
7.	Old man stone	Gura Văii
8.	Boroancă cave	Dubova
9.	Bottomless lake legend	Negrești
10.	The Danube's Cauldrons	Cazanele Dunării
11.	The legend of Pleșa Palace	Obârșia de Câmp
12.	Hercules columns	Porțile de Fier
13.	The legend of Vodița monastery	Valea Vodiței
Dolj		
14.	Caloianul	Ciupercenii Noi
15.	The man who spoke to God	Maglavit
16.	Madona Dudu (Mulberry) Icon	Craiova
17.	The land of Papură Vodă	Craiova
18.	Brazda lui Novac (Novac's Furrow)	Craiova
19.	The reign of Pazvante Chioru'	Craiova
20.	The legend of Craiovița Lake	Craiova
21.	The silver arrow	Craiova
22.	The legend of Nazat	Băilești
23.	Decebalus's Golden Chariot	Cioroiu Nou
24.	The Terpezița Treasure	Terpezița
25.	Radovan Bride	Radovan
26.	The legend of Andrii Popa	Palilula
Olt		
27.	The spring of Brâncoveni Monastery	Brâncoveni
28.	Iancu Jianu the revolutionary	Caracal
29.	The treasures from Grădiște Hill	Slatina
30.	Ceramics of Vădastra	Vădastra
31.	The chart with stupid people	Caracal
32.	The secret fountain in Sucidava Fortress	Sucidava
33.	The Dew Prince	Corabia

BULGARIA

No.	Name of the Legend	Localization of the legend
Vratsa		
1.	Skaklya waterfall	Vratsa
2.	"The Bloody Rock "- surroundings of Vratsa Town	Vratsa
3.	Kadin Vir	Lilyache
4.	The Legend of the footsteps of Krali Marko and his horse Sharkoliya	Oryahovo
5.	Sitlina Fountain, Strupets village, Roman municipality	Sitlina
6.	"Koshutin Kamak" area	Strupets
7.	Legend of Augusta's Treasure	Kozulduy
Montana		
8.	Ayazmoto spring	Varshets
9.	"Todorini kukli" Peak	Varshets
10.	The legend of Ivancho's Meadow	Varshets
11.	The "Holy Trinity" Monastery in Dobri Dol	Dobri Dol
12.	Stovtsi Peak / Split Stone /	Smolyanovtsi
13.	The legend about the town of Berkovitsa	Berkovitsa
14.	Legend of the Barziya river and village	Barziya
15.	The fountain in the village of Balyuvitsa, Berkovitsa	Balyuvitsa
16.	The mystical village with Samodivas	Stoyanovo
17.	Pyramids of Pishurka village	Pishurka
18.	Momina Mogila Peak	Berkovitsa
Vidin		
19.	Legend about the Magura Cave	Belogradchik
20.	The legend of the rocks in Belogradchik	Belogradchik
21.	Popa's cave (priest) Martin	Belogradchik
22.	The Ethnographic Museum the Cruciform Barrack	Vidin
23.	Baba Vida Fortress	Vidin
24.	Kyupriya Shepherd - Odalisques' Bridge	Vidin

Annex 2 - Presentation of the legends identified within the project

Dolj county

The legend of Nazat (Băilești City, Dolj County)

In 1828, Oltenia was the place where there was a new confrontation between the Russians and the Ottomans. Starting from this event, there appeared a legend about the bravery of three pandour leaders, Solomon, Magheru and Ciupagea, who remained to protect the region. They put themselves under the command and disposition of the generals in the Russian army in order to fight against the Ottomans.

Almost reaching the Danube and wanting to advance to Calafat, they were stopped near Băilești village, where the Ottomans had put up a well-fortified camp. It is said that there were settled 15,000 Turks from Vidin, equipped with powerful artillery. The entire night, the Russians and Romanians made plans so that they would start preparations and fight at daybreak.

After the trumpets started announcing the beginning of the fight, the Ottomans needed only a few minutes to start the counteroffensive. The Ottomans cavalry got out of small clusters of trees on both flanks, taking Russians by surprise. When the Russian General saw the Ottomans' quick approach, he stopped his horse and shouted at the Russian troops the order to retreat: Nazat! Nazat!

Through the noise of the battle, the shout reached the ears of the pandour leader Ciupagea. Pondering over the faith of the fight, he turned towards his pandours and ordered them: "Time has come! The general is shouting at us: To the village! To the village!" And without looking at the great Russian army turning around, the Romanian pandours flung themselves into the middle of the fight, facing the janissaries in the front rows and putting them on the ground. When Pasha saw his soldiers dropping like flies due to the pandours' bravery, he also shouted the order to retreat.

Meanwhile, the Russian General saw the changing faith of the battle and ordered the return of the Russian army on the battlefield, chasing the Ottoman cavalry towards the Danube. Upon returning to their camp, the Russian General called Ciupagea to his tent. With the help of an officer who knew Romanian, he asked the pandour:

- You fought bravely today and changed the faith of the war. But I want to know one thing: when I shouted the order to retreat and shouted Nazat!, did you not understand what I ordered?

- Of course I did! I also transmitted it to my pandours what you ordered in Romanian: To the village (la sat)!

When he heard these words the Russian General started laughing and wondering. He took the Order of Saint Vladimir off his chest, put it on pandour Ciupagea's chest and said:

- Receive this decoration from me! You deserve it for bravery, but also for how you interpreted Nazat! in Romanian!

- Bibliography: Delia Damirescu, "From the legends of the Romanians". Ion Creanga Publishing House, Bucharest, 1990

The Terpezița Treasure

(Terpezița Township, Dolj County)

It is said that near Terpezița Township in Dolj County there is a huge buried treasure, about which villagers had heard from their grandparents and predecessors. They say that there was an Ottoman invasion in Walachia in the 19th century. One Sunday, when the entire youth of the village, boys and girls, gathered in horă¹ on a meadow at the edge of the forest by the village, the Ottomans attacked them. It is said that the Ottomans killed everyone, while some girls who escaped threw themselves in a well in order not to be caught and assaulted.

The Ottomans, who had already robbed several villages in the area, carried with them carts full of bags and chests full of gold and other riches. In order not to carry so much weight on their way to the villages in the north, they decided to bury both the dead and the gold in a common pit. They decided to dig out the treasure at the end of the robbery campaign on their way back to the Ottoman Empire. But the Ottomans gradually died during the fights with Romanians, so that none of them returned to dig out the gold. The treasure remained buried in the same place yet not found by anyone.

Inhabitants of Terpezița Township have heard of this treasure, but they believe that it is cursed. People say that, once a year on the meadow at the edge of the forest by the village, the night after the day the young were killed by the Ottomans, one can hear giggles and music played by fiddlers and observe a great fire, in whose light “money dance” as if in horă. The moment of the carnage on the meadow is recreated yearly, just as 700 years ago. The elderly in the village say that whoever sees the dance of the money dies instantly, unless that person is destined to find the treasure and get rich.

- Bibliography: Cristian Vasilicoiu, "Joaca Banii la Terpezita -Dolj" 15 martie 2004
 - “Legende”, <http://www.dafinoiu.ro/marian/legende.htm>
- “Comoara lui Vlad Tepes, ascunsă la Terpezita (Dolj)?”, 2 octombrie 2010, <https://hartacomorii.blogspot.com/2010/10/comoara-lui-vlas-tepes-ascunsa-la.html>

Radovan Bride

(Radovan Township, Dolj County, Romania)

In Radovan township in Dolj County, there is a forest linked to one of the most well-known and scary urban legends in the area: namely that of the Radovan Bride. The story began in the late 1940s, when the eastern regions in Romania were famine-stricken and faced severe lack of food. Because of the famine, many Moldavians left to seek their fortune and a better life in Oltenia. Among them there was a young girl named Ileana, who had come here in search for work.

Ileana was hired as a maid by a family in Radovan in Dolj County. She stood up immediately in the village due to her extraordinary obedience and diligence, but especially due to her striking beauty. Many men of all ages would court her and make proposals of questionable morality, but Ileana was a girl of irreproachable morality and she did not yield.

It is said that Ileana fell in love with a hard-working boy, a Moldavian as well. The two of them had planned to get married and start a family and, after the wedding, to both go home. But it is said that the master of the house Ileana worked in did not want to let her go and, before her wedding, he disrespected her and got her pregnant. Humiliated and not willing to give birth to an unwanted child, Ileana went to Radovan forest one night and hanged herself from a branch.

¹ Romanian round dance

Throughout the time, many people have claimed that they have seen a ghost dressed in white crossing the path of the passers and cars which drove on the road by the forest. People say that those who stop are taken with her deep in the forest and never return.

The legend of Andrii Popa (Palilula village, Dolj County)

Andrii Popa was one of the most famous haiduks from Oltenia at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. He was one of the haiduks who attacked and destroyed Vidin and Plevna. After the death of Osman Pazvantoglu, Pasha of Vidin, Andrii Popa set off, leading his band to set free dozens of women from Pasha's seraglio, stolen by the Ottomans from Oltenia and turned into odalisques.

When he opened the seraglio's door, Andrii found not only the 50 Walachian women, but also 500 maidens from all the surrounding lands, all of them as beautiful as the moon. Not knowing what to do with them, the haiduk had them all seated in carts to cross the Danube to Walachia, letting the Walachian girls go to their houses, while the rest of the women were made wives to decent men. It is said that some married willingly while others were sold for what the husband would offer: be it a saddle, a gun or a bag full of money. Years after the odalisques had been set free, some of Pasha's soldiers passed from a village to another in search of them and promised them freedom. But the women had already been settled in their own houses, with husbands they loved and children and households, so none of them wanted to return to their native lands.

From Oltenia, Andrii Popa crossed the mountains to Transylvania, leaving there about a hundred odalisques to the men in those villages as their wives.

Before they managed to marry or sell all odalisques, Andrii Popa and his haiduks hid in a small village near Craiova, namely Palilula. The village, which still exists today, was in a valley hidden from curious eyes by a hill surrounded by forests. Thus, no matter what side one looked from, no one could see Palilula village. The legend has it that neither posse, Ottomans nor Germans, when they occupied Craiova in 1916 during the First World War, were able to find this village.

Andrii Popa is said to have lived hidden here for a long time, with some odalisques he kept for himself and his trustworthy haiduks. People say that he only left the den to do what haiduks did or when the wells drained during torrid summers. Water supply has always been a problem in Palilula village because groundwater is at a high depth.

Brazda lui Novac (Novac's Furrow) (Brazda lui Novac Street, Brazda lui Novac neighbourhood, Craiova, Dolj County)

In Craiova City there is a street and a neighbourhood called Brazda lui Novac, which refer to a medieval defence fortification made of soil, at the Northern border of the Roman Empire. The name Brazda lui Novac comes from legends which place its construction in times immemorial.

It is said that a big curse had fallen on people living between the Danube and the Carpathians. Monthly, they had to pay a tribute to a three-headed dragon, "as thick as a 300-gallon barrel", which would get out of a well. The tribute was a child, a young innocent maiden. One day, it was the turn of the most beautiful girl in the land, the king's daughter. That day, the girl sat down near the well the dragon was to come, and while she was sitting there and crying, a young man called Novac passed by. The girl told him about her people's misery, and Novac fought the dragon and defeated it. As a reward, the king offered him his kingdom and his daughter as wife. Out of joy and in order for everyone in the country to know that he killed the dragon, the young man took his sword and drew a furrow throughout

the country, which people called "Brazda lui Novac". Others believe that Novac did not actually kill the dragon, but chased it beyond the mountains, and thus the furrow was the trace left by the dragon's tail on the ground.

In some villages the elderly believe that, in the old days, the Earth was inhabited by Giants, ruled by an emperor called Novac. One day, the Big Men's emperor started ploughing with a big plough, drawn by two big black oxen, but which he drew with his bare hands. The furrow left by it was called Brazda lui Novac. Another version has it that the Giant Novac had drawn the furrow so that would be its burial place when guns and gun powder appeared. Not wanting to be killed by someone on the sly instead of a fair fight, he took a cart drawn by oxen and drew a deep furrow at the end of which he buried himself, covered with soil.

Caloianul (Desa, Ciupercenii Noi, Dolj County)

In Southern Romania, where drought is the most frequent, people still tell the legend of Ioan Cel Frumos (John the Most Handsome), called Caloian, legend which is the basis of a rain summoning ritual.

Once upon a time there lived a widow and his son Ioan in a village. The boy was dreadfully handsome, his voice was as sweet as honey and his eyes as warm as midday sun, so that the earth's animals came to eat from his palm and followed him everywhere without doing him any harm. And the words about his kindness and beauty had spread so much that people had started calling him Caloian, or Ioan cel Frumos as in the Greeks of those times put it.

One of those years, life was very hard because rain had not touched the ground for a long time, the sun was burning in the sky, and its heat was drying everything in its way. One morning, Caloian's mother sent him to look around the village for herbs, tree bark, anything else they could eat or the few animals by their house. The child headed toward the forest but did not return. The sun was up when his mother started looking for him but her despair began to grow as the time was passing and the child was still missing. Soon, all children in the village joined her in her search for Caloian.

Towards the evening, the child's body was found in a dry well at the edge of a field. He had leaned over the stone casin, trying to scrape with the wooden bucket on the muddy bottom of the dry well. The mother descended the well to bring her child to surface and hardly had she taken him out of the wet mud when clean water sprang below her. The earth itself was mourning Caloian.

Brought to the village, the pure child had a proper burial with his mother's wailing alongside the one of the children in the village. The legend has it that as soon as the frail body found its peace in the tomb, the sky as well began to mourn the death of the child with sun-like hair.

Decebalus's Golden Chariot (Cioroiu Nou village, Cioroiashi Township, Dolj County)

Inhabitants of Cioroiu Nou village, Dolj County, are convinced that there is a 2,000 year-old ancient treasure within their village boundaries. For decades, they have discovered old coins, pots and clay statues, items and weapons made of iron and bronze when working the land. This is how the legend of a fabulous thesaurus: the Golden Chariot of Decebalus, the last king of Dacia. Legendary character in the history of Romanian people, Decebalus led the Dacian armies in wars against the Roman Empire. The Dacian king's armies were eventually defeated by the Romans and a part of the country became a province of the Empire. Although he ended up by committing suicide, the defeated king remained in history as a fearsome opponent even for the powerful Roman Empire.

Legend has it that Decebalus had ordered a golden chariot, as proof to attest his status and wealth. During the Second Dacian War, Emperor Trajan's legions crossed the bridge

over the Danube and attacked Decebalus's forces. Abandoned by his allies, attacked and constantly compelled to be defensive, Decebalus withdrew to his fortresses in Orastie Mountains, leaving behind his famous golden chariot with a priceless treasure.

Villagers in Cioroiu Nou claim that they have heard ever since they were little that Decebalus's chariot was buried in their village. According to the legend, the earth crumbled 2,000 years ago and buried it. Decebalus's Golden Chariot is thought to be still buried there, waiting to be brought to light.

Madona Dudu (Mulberry) Icon (Madona Dudu Street, no. 13, Craiova, Dolj County)

It is said that a long time ago, in the place Madona Dudu Cathedral is now, there was a mulberry orchard and, in close proximity to it, a market. An old merchant, after having finished selling his goods at the market, entered the orchard and fell asleep under a mulberry. When he woke up, he saw something shining in the mulberry thicket. Without a second thought, he climbed the tree and found there a beautiful icon of Virgin Mary. He put it in his bag, took it home and hid it in the attic. The following day, the merchant went to the attic to take the icon and go with it to the market, but he did not find it where he had put it. He grew extremely upset as he thought that someone had stolen his icon.

The following day, the merchant went to the market and, after he sold all his goods, went again to the orchard to rest. But there, looking through the branches of the same mulberry, he saw the icon again, looking as if it had not been moved from its place. He climbed quickly, took the icon and put it in the quiver, with the thought of going directly to an innkeeper who was his customer, telling him that he had for sale a very beautiful icon, brought all the way from Jerusalem. Before buying it, the innkeeper asked to see the icon; but it had disappeared when the Jew opened the quiver.

Not long after, the merchant found the icon again in the orchard mulberry. Then, assuming that it was a sign from God, he announced the owner of the orchard, who decided to erect a wooden church which would be a place of worship for Virgin Mary. Since then, the church has the Mulberry Virgin Mary as its patron saint, name which later on Latinized, becoming "Madona Dudu".

Throughout time, the church has been destroyed, set on fire by the Ottomans or affected by earthquakes. Legend has it that only the wonderworking icon of Virgin Mary found by the merchant in the mulberry escaped these disasters. Not even thieves entering the church over the years have managed to steal the icon of Virgin Mary.

The legend of Craiovița Lake (Craiova, Dolj County)

Throughout history, Craiova, just like most cities, has been surrounded by a dense and mysterious aura of a legend. Among the legends which still delight people there is that of the former Bănie Lake, Craiovița Lake, which is dry today.

It is said that a very long time ago, these places were ruled by a strong man named voivod Ioan Caloianu. Although he was rich and had a big beautiful castle, he was unhappy because he had no children. Towards old age, his wife gave him a daughter. The voivod was so happy that, at her birth, he forgot to give the three godmothers their due honours, as it was the custom. They got angry and cast a terrible curse: the girl would live as long as she does not leave the room she was born in. If she gets past the threshold, the city will sink and the girl, alongside all the inhabitants, will die in the depths.

One time, a young handsome emperor falls in love with the girl he spots randomly at the window, the girl doomed by the godmothers to remain in her golden dungeon till her death. He collects and throws the most wonderful bunch of flowers to her window. The maiden receives it, bringing it to her mouth and kissing it, as a sign that she shares his

feelings. But the young emperor cannot make her his wife because of the curse. The maiden's father, voivod Ioan Caloianu, refuses him, but the young emperor is not discouraged. He wins one of the servants in the palace to his side, and tries to kidnap the maiden with her help.

But as soon as they step over the threshold, a terrible whirlwind begins: the rain starts, Jiul floods over the river bed, the ground trembles and the city starts sinking gradually. All people's attempts to save themselves fail. Raging waters fill the houses, drown people and all the other creatures, and cover the towers of the churches. Moans fade away in whirlpools and terrifying waves. The legend has it that, for a moment, one could see the young emperor's silver plume and her lover's white dress in the dark depths, but soon they disappeared as well.

The legend of Nazat (Băilești City, Dolj County)

In 1828, Oltenia was the place where there was a new confrontation between the Russians and the Ottomans. Starting from this event, there appeared a legend about the bravery of three pandour leaders, Solomon, Magheru and Ciupagea, who remained to protect the region. They put themselves under the command and disposition of the generals in the Russian army in order to fight against the Ottomans.

Almost reaching the Danube and wanting to advance to Calafat, they were stopped near Băilești village, where the Ottomans had put up a well-fortified camp. It is said that there were settled 15,000 Turks from Vidin, equipped with powerful artillery. The entire night, the Russians and Romanians made plans so that they would start preparations and fight at daybreak.

After the trumpets started announcing the beginning of the fight, the Ottomans needed only a few minutes to start the counteroffensive. The Ottomans cavalry got out of small clusters of trees on both flanks, taking Russians by surprise. When the Russian General saw the Ottomans' quick approach, he stopped his horse and shouted at the Russian troops the order to retreat: Nazat! Nazat!

Through the noise of the battle, the shout reached the ears of the pandour leader Ciupagea. Pondering over the faith of the fight, he turned towards his pandours and ordered them: "Time has come! The general is shouting at us: To the village! To the village!" And without looking at the great Russian army turning around, the Romanian pandours flung themselves into the middle of the fight, facing the janissaries in the front rows and putting them on the ground. When Pasha saw his soldiers dropping like flies due to the pandours' bravery, he also shouted the order to retreat.

Meanwhile, the Russian General saw the changing faith of the battle and ordered the return of the Russian army on the battlefield, chasing the Ottoman cavalry towards the Danube. Upon returning to their camp, the Russian General called Ciupagea to his tent. With the help of an officer who knew Romanian, he asked the pandour:

- You fought bravely today and changed the faith of the war. But I want to know one thing: when I shouted the order to retreat and shouted Nazat!, did you not understand what I ordered?

- Of course I did! I also transmitted it to my pandours what you ordered in Romanian: To the village (la sat)!

When he heard these words the Russian General started laughing and wondering. He took the Order of Saint Vladimir off his chest, put it on pandour Ciupagea's chest and said:

- Receive this decoration from me! You deserve it for bravery, but also for how you interpreted Nazat! in Romanian!

Mehedinti county

The Danube's Cauldrons

It is said that the entire Danube valley was ruled by a famous quick-tempered emperor in the old days. In his old age, he was offered a son, Tuie, raised by the empress as a kind and just man. His mother was proud of her offspring, the subjects in the court were happy that they would have a kind and just man, only the emperor was grieved that his son had not become as harsh and feared as he was.

When it was the time for Tuie to get married, the emperor sent his subjects to the four winds in search of maidens worthy of his son. But they did not know that Tuie had given his heart to a good and beautiful commoner, whom he secretly married. When he found out the news, the emperor decided to punish Tuie by taking away his right to become an emperor. Shortly after their wedding, the Danubian lands were devastated by a foreign army. The emperor wrote to his son to get ready for the war and, that if he returns victorious from the fight, he will give his son his rights back. Tuie followed his father's order and, saddened that he had to leave his wife, he went to say goodbye to her. He gave her a sapphire ring and told her: "My wife, my ivy, / You'll wear my ring. / When the gold rusts, / You'll know I'm dead." In return, his wife gave him the golden kerchief on her head and told him: "My husband and fir tree, / It will be hard for me, / When the gold melts, / I'll die because I missed you." Keeping these words in mind, Tuie went to the battle in which he was victorious due to the bravery of his soul, the power of his arm and the sharpness of his mind.

His trustworthy advisor came to him on his way home on one of the islands on the Danube. When he saw Tuie, he jumped off his horse to his master's feet and he told him how his father's soldiers entered his house in his absence and killed his soldiers and threw his wife in the waves of the Danube between the two straits. Because of such injustice, not even the water wanted to take her. Waves boiled with bubbles and the entire Danube valley wailed with grief...

Heartbroken, Tuie asked to be shown the place where his wife had died. He took out of his bosom the golden kerchief his wife had given him and saw that only the cotton yarn was left, as the gold had melted as if by magic. The young man had no hope left... Arrived on the Danube shore between the two straits that strangle the Danube, he threw himself in the whirlpool, which he searched with spread fingers until his numb hands came across the shape of his beloved body. After a last kiss, the two lovers disappeared in the troubled water of the heated Danube.

Back on the dark bay, the faithful servant did not stop until he reached the court, where he told the empress everything. Grieved by his son and daughter-in-law's loss, she sent her soldiers to look for them in the Danube waters. Their dead bodies were found at the bottom of the river and then buried with royal pomp. Shortly after, on the grave of the two spouses grew a towering fir tree and a blade of ivy which, hugged, did what the young lovers could not: live their life together!

People on the Danubian lands came yearly to pay homage in the place Tuie and his wife died, where the Danube passes through two clashes of mountains. When they saw the troubled water which seemed to boil like water in a cauldron, they gave the name of the area accordingly, name which remained unchanged to this day: The Danube's Cauldrons.

The legend of Strehaia monastery (Republicii Avenue 128B, Strehaia, Mehedinți County)

Halfway between Craiova and Drobeta Turnu Severin there is a towering centuries-old monastery which smoothly combines a legend, history and religion: Strehaia monastery. The church of the monastery is considered to be unique in Romania, being the only one in the

country with a south-oriented shrine. In Orthodoxy, churches are built with the shrine oriented towards east, where light comes from. Because of this curious orientation of the shrine there are many local legends.

According to a legend, the ruler Michael the Brave built the first church here during the night. Because he could not orient it towards the sun, Michael the Brave built the church wrongly, with the shrine towards south.

Other explanations refer rather to the founders' intention to prevent the church from being destroyed by attackers. During that period, the surroundings were often preyed by Ottomans, who identified Christian churches by their shrine's orientation towards east. Apparently, the orientation towards south of the shrine in Strehaia misled the Ottomans and therefore the church was not robbed or preyed.

There is also a scientific hypothesis whose meaning no one knows and which linked the shrine of Strehaia monastery to the winter solstice. Throughout years, people have observed that on December 22 at 8.30-9.00, the church is split in two equal parts by a sunbeam which enters through the shrine windows.

The truth seems to be connected to the first founders, boyars Craiovești, who built a royal palace and a church in Strehaia in the first half of the 16th century. Thus, the location of the church was determined by a lane connecting it to the royal palace. But it is said that the church was oriented this way because there was not enough space between the royal palace building and the cell.

The legend of Vodița monastery (Vodița monastery, DJ607C, Mehedinți County)

Vodița monastery in Mehedinți County is among the first monasteries with documentary evidence in Walachia, whose building is covered in a legendary aura.

In the 14th century there was born in a Walachian family in Serbia the man who was to become Saint Nicodim, the man who embraced and preached Orthodoxy. One night, God is said to have appeared in his dream and ordered him to build a monastery in a place called "at waterfalls". After this apparition, Nicodim started to look for the place he had seen in his dream. When he reached the Danubian shore he wanted to continue his search but he was not shown any way of crossing the river. God appeared in his dream again and told him what to do. When he woke up, the monk cast his cassock on the water without questioning God's word and it floated over the waves! Making the sign of the cross, Nicodim stepped with one foot on the cassock and with the other one he pushed himself from the shore and left.

This is how waves carried the monk to the other shore, where he got off near the today's Orșova city. Here he discovered a little stream of water and, when he reached a meadow full of flowers and grass, he decided to build there a monastery called Vodița monastery.

After the monk finished laying the foundation of his first monastery on Walachian lands, he went to the nearby hill and planted vine, so that the monks of the monastery have wine for church services. The Saint is also said to have made a pipe of clay tiles so that the grape juice squeezed in the vine can reach from the Hill to the cells' basements. At the first vintage, the grape juice turned into sweet good wine. When the monks who had come by Nicodim's side realised how good the wine was they started tasting it more and more often and drinking it instead of cold water.

The Saint noticed his colleagues' behaviour and did not approve it. One day he caught one of the monks while taking a glass of wine to the mouth in the monastery's basement and punished him by sending him to make another pipe of clay tiles which was to bring water from mountain springs to the monastery. By working hard on the pipe, the monk learnt to remain devoted to spiritual activities. It is said that the spring captured by the monk at Vodița monastery still flows and it is refurbished near Vodița river.

The legend of Pleșa Palace (Obârșia de Câmp village, Obârșia de Câmp Township, Mehedinți County)

In Obârșia de Câmp village in Mehedinți County there is a wonderful and unique architectural monument in the Romanian rural area: Pleșa Palace. The edifice was built at the end of the 19th century in neoclassical style by boyar Gheorghe Pleșa, residing in France at the time.

The construction of the edifice is wrapped in mystery. It is said that, during the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman representative who came to collect the fees and tolls in the area was accommodated by the furrier of the village (boyar-to-be Gheorghe Pleșa's father). During his stay in our regions, the Ottoman would collect dozens of bags full of shining gold from the population. When he saw so much gold, the furrier decided to steal it. One night, when the Ottoman headed to Istanbul, the furrier put his plan into motion: he followed and killed the Ottoman and stole his bags full of gold. Shortly afterward, the furrier is said to have bought big patches of land in the villages Obârșia de Câmp and Cetate.

Gheorghe, one of the furrier's sons, used his father fortune for living expenses and to pay his law studies in France, where he is said to have lived a beautiful love story with a rich French woman. Gheorghe asked her hand in marriage and promised her to build a palace covered in gold for her. Head over heels in love, the young man ordered the construction of a palace on one of the estates he had received from his father. Work on the palace in Obârșia de Câmp started towards the end of the 19th century and he did not compromise when it came to quality. He hired painters from Italy and France; there were marble columns, stairs of sculpted wood, chimneys, Venetian mirrors and a heating system. He raised an imposing fountain in front of the palace to complete the elegant aspect of the entire edifice.

Eventually, all boyar Pleșa's efforts proved to be useless. The French woman refused to marry the boyar when she saw that the palace did not have indoor toilets and the roof was not plated with gold. It is said that boyar Gheorghe Pleșa died at the age of 90 in Paris, unmarried and with no heirs, without ever finding someone to console his soul.

God's Bridge (Ponoarele Township, Mehedinți County)

God's Bridge in Ponoare Township in Mehedinți County, near Baia de Aramă City, is a remarkable natural monument, considered by many as being a wonder of the nature. The 30 m-long bridge in Ponoare is the biggest natural bridge in Romania and the only one in the world open for road traffic, including the heavy-duty one.

It is said that the Devil lived in the cave in Ponoare, where he quietly did his wickedness and outrages and terrorized the locals. One day, tired of the problems the Evil One did, the locals near the cave begged God to get rid of him for them. Listening to their prayer, God made a plan to drive the Devil away. Unexpectedly, God descended to earth, and the Devil, getting scared, entered the cave to hide in the darkness there. God hit the roof of the cave, crashing it over the entrance. The Devil, understanding God's plan, sneaked through the debris towards the back of the cave and escaped through the second exit.

Mad that he was banished from here, the Devil clung with his claws to the hill above it (Dealul Peșterii (Cave Hill)) and scratched all the stones on the other side of the slope. Thus he created the two limestone plains: Câmpul Afroditei and Câmpul Cleopatrei. The Devil is said to have climbed on a rock, which bears its name - Devil's Rock. It is said that, up to the present, the Devil has been watching from the rock over the people who visit the place, but without being able to take his home back.

The sphinx on the Danube (entrance to Cazanele Mari (the Big Cauldrons) from Orșova, Mehedinți County)

It is said that the lands in the Cazanelor Mari region, where the Danube flows through abrupt rocks, were inhabited a long time ago by giants. They would often fight and cast rocks as big as cartwheels to one another. When he discovered that, the giants' emperor ordered them to stop, so that they would not tear down the crystal palaces with rocks. For fear of their emperor's anger, all giants dropped the rocks except from the giant Jap who mocked the emperor's order.

In order to punish him, the giants' emperor ordered his subjects to catch him and fetch him. But things never turn out as planned! Jap was Tuf's nephew, the water's emperor, brother of the earth's emperor. He had watched over Jap and helped him. With his power, the water's emperor turned the giants into statues which can still be seen on Ciucarul Mic Mountain. For his help, Tuf asked his nephew to bring him an earthly maiden as a sacrifice in the morning of every full-moon beginning. On the first full moon occasion, Jap lured two maidens, whom he immediately cast in the Danube waves, but then the earthly maidens heard about the terrible fate they would have and hid wherever they could.

The giant earth's emperor found out about the covenant between Tuf and Jap and he got so angry to hear what his people did. He sent his good advisor, the evening wind, to the maidens to tell them to hide in the crystal palaces of the earth's emperor, where they would be safe.

When he heard about the earth emperor's plans, Jap turned from a giant to a handsome earthly young man and started talking to one of the maidens who was heading to the crystal palace. Jap pretended to offer to accompany the young maiden and guided her to the shore of the Danube, with the thought of offering her as a sacrifice to his uncle Tuf. But the giant earth's emperor had been watching over the women, and when he saw what Jap was doing, he sent after Coșava, the bitter wind, about whom people said that had the soul of a terrifying dragon. When Jap and the maiden stopped on the Danube shore, the bitter wind swooped over the giant. Jap grabbed the maiden with his left hand, while his left one caught on a rock, to stand against the wind. But no matter how hard Coșava blew, Jap would still release neither the maiden nor the rocks. Angered beyond measure, the earth's emperor turned them both, maiden and giant, into statues immediately. Thus, he offered the woman a quick painless death, and Jap the punishment he deserved.

The sphinx on the Danube shore has lasted there for thousands of years, to remind both people and giants never to anger the emperor of the Danubian lands.

Olt county

The chart with stupid people (Caracal Town, Olt County)

In the middle of the 19th century, a legend began to circulate in the area of Caracal town, according to which the chart with stupid people would have overturned here and from here the stupidity would have spread throughout the world. It is said that, in immemorial times, the Earth's wise people would have caught the stupid people, tied them up, and put them into a chart to bring them to trial because they were spreading their stupidity on the Earth. Going up a hill, on the road to Caracal, the chart would overturn after a wheel was broken. The stupid people seized the opportunity and fled where they saw with their eyes. Since then, everyone knows that in Caracal the chart with stupid people overturned.

Some locals say that, in fact, it was a chart that was transporting convicts from Craiova to court in Bucharest. When the chart was overturned, the convicts escaped and were never caught. Others claim that a chart full of flasks was overturned on that hill, but when someone

told the incident, the word “flasks” (“ploști”) was misunderstood, which would have been confused with “stupid people” (“proști”).

In fact, the legend would draw its roots from a real historical event: The Revolution of 1848. On 21 June 1848, in the locality of Islaz, 60 km from Caracal, a large popular assembly was organized where the revolutionary proclamation was read. The Revolutionary Government and part of the crowd left from Islaz to Caracal, after which they went to Craiova, a city chosen as the first capital of the revolutionary from 1848. The leaders of the Revolution went on horseback, while the crowd followed in charts. Reaching the southern barrier of Caracal town, at an intersection on the outskirts of Corabia town, which still exists, the revolutionaries were greeted by the county leader. It is said that just then a wheel broke from the wheel of a chart with revolutionaries, which overturned with all its occupants. Most of the revolution's supporters were simple persons, among the people, who at that time were generically called “the rabble” (prostime) not because they were stupid, but because they generally did not have access to education. By then, the term did not have a pejorative meaning. Over time, either the meaning of the word “the rabble” (prostime) has changed, either there has been confusion between the meaning of the words “the rabble” (prostime) and “stupid people” (proști), or, running from mouth to mouth, the story has become distorted. It is certain that she has come to this day in the version of the “chart with stupid people”, which has given birth to many jokes, but also reasons for annoyance in Caracal.

Ceramics of Vădastra (Vădastra Commune, Olt County)

It is said that in ancient times the lands in the southern part of Olt county were most of them subject to Ottoman raids. In addition to the tribute that the High Gate demanded, it also wanted to be sent to it boys of young age, to grow to thicken the lines of the Sultan's army. So it is that, passing the caravan of Turks through Vădastra in a year, they found at the edge of the village a boy who played with a clay amulet that he had around his neck. The boy was called Stoica and was the son of Țigănilă, the best pottery master in the village. His parents and villagers have long sought him, but it was in vain; Stoica seemed to have been swallowed by the earth.

The years passed and Țigănilă's wife had not stopped to miss her boy. On a feast day, when the whole villagers had gathered at the dance, she stood aside and watched. Suddenly, two men dressed in expensive Turkish clothes appeared on the road, riding two beautiful horses. The two were jewellery merchants and got closer to the place where the women in the village had gathered, to show them the jewellery. As she looked better at the young merchant, by the name of Ali, Țigănilă's wife saw that he was wearing the clay amulet by Vădastra that her Stoica had on the day he disappeared. She waited until the older merchant, Mustafa, entered the round dance and went to Ali, whom she embraced with all her motherly love. It took Ali a moment, after he looked her in the eye, to understand what had happened. And the places seemed familiar to him, too, but he didn't know how. He asked her not to expose him to Mustafa and to think about what to do. Together they have come up with a plan!

The next day, Mustafa and Ali split the jewels and went to other villages to sell their goods, meeting back in Vădastra after 3 days. Ali, however, drowned his horse in the Danube and hid for 10 days in a fishing boat of some of his mother's relatives. After the 3 days since they had separated, Mustafa returned to Vădastra to take Ali and leave for their homes, south of the Danube. But Ali was not there! He waited for him one day, he waited for two days, and only after a week did the villagers convince him that Ali had been attacked by the robbers on the road to steal his jewels and killed him. Terribly distraught, Mustafa went alone to the Ottoman Empire.

The Turkish Ali became again Stoica of Țigănilă, resuming his place in his family. A few years later, Mustafa returned to the village and saw his former apprentice, who turned his back, pretending he didn't see him. The Turk cried after him to stay quiet, that he did not

come to ask for his jewels and the money with which he had gone unseen, but to be ashamed that he had let him go in grief, believing he had been killed.

It is not known what happened to the Turkish jewellery. Legend says that Stoica would have got sick in lungs and would have died poor, unmarried and childless. Locals believe that this fate would have been taken from Mustafa's curse, because Stoica was ungrateful to the Turk.

The treasures from Grădiște Hill (Grădiște Hill, Slatina Town, Olt County)

Near the entrance to the town of Slatina from Craiova, beyond the Olt River, the highest form of natural relief from Slatina rises: Grădiște Hill. With a height of over 600 meters above the ground, the Grădiște Hill has been guarding for thousands of years not only the town, but also its surroundings.

One of the most popular legends about Grădiște Hill says that, over the years, the inhabitants of the area would have buried their treasures and wealth here, for fear of being robbed by thieves or Ottomans. Until the early 1900s, locals often left their homes for fear of Turkish attacks or for fear of epidemics or plagues. Before they left, they buried the most precious jewels on the tops of Grădiștei Hill, hidden in boilers, boiler rooms, pots, jars and jugs. As it was heard that the Turks came, the inhabitants of Slatina buried their money and everything they had dearly and fled through the neighbouring villages or into the mountains. Legend says that after the danger passed, some of them came to look for their fortune, but because they had forgotten where they buried it, they couldn't find it. Others died in the distance, sick or cut off by their enemies, and their treasures remained hidden forever.

Over time, both in Slatina and around the town, true monetary treasures from different historical periods have been discovered.

The Dew Prince (Corabia Town, Sucidava Fortress / Dobrosloveni Commune, Olt County)

It is said that there was once a proud and beautiful young man, owner of large estates and glass palaces near the Danube. While walking on the lands between the shore of Olt River and Loviștei Mountains, he met a beautiful girl, whom he fell in love with. Love rattled his heart so hard that he would come to her house every night, but the young man had written in his fate to never see the sun, because then it would melt like dew! For that reason he was also known as the Dew Prince.

In order to reach his girlfriend more easily, the Prince ordered the Dew Road to be built, a cobbled road from his palaces on the Danube to the beloved house near the mountains. It is said that in order to finish the road as soon as possible, the dew Prince would have oppressed the locals, elders, children and women alike. Nobody got rid of the hard work on the Prince's way, even the pregnant women gave them twice as much work, and for the baby they were carrying in their wombs.

When the road was ready, the Dew Prince went every night to his sweetheart, where he stayed until the dawn of the day. As he heard the first song of the roosters, he climbed into the carriage and made a quick return to the Danube. Legend says that, wishing to avenge the prince's lack of humanity, the people in the village where his lover lived killed all the roosters in one night. When morning came, no noise was heard in the village. The Dew Prince realized too late that the day was approaching and he hurried to his palaces. He whipped his horses as hard as he could, but no matter how fast they ran, he didn't arrive on time. The first rays of the sun came after the crest of a mountain, and the Dew Prince scattered like steam, with all his horses. In that place there was only the daisy shining in the sun like thousands of dew grains.

The secret fountain in Sucidava Fortress (Sucidava Fortress, Corabia Town, Olt County)

On one of the Danube terraces near the town Corabia from Oltenia is the Sucidava Fortress, former economic and military centre of the Geto-Dacian tribe of furriers. The elders

in the area and the employees of the museum that run the fortress today tell that the history of Sucidave was a troubled one, which gave birth to many curiosities and legends.

The most interesting story is that of the Secret Fountain, considered the main attraction of the fortress. The fountain was built in the 6th century by Emperor Justinian, but fell into oblivion for several hundred years. Legend says that by the middle of the 20th century, locals had begun stealing stones and bricks from the fortress area, which they then used to build their own homes. In 1958, one of these people, who came to steal bricks, discovered the well by accident. Because officials did not find funds to restore the well, it was closed again. In 1968, the Sucidava fountain was reopened and researched. The Secret Fountain is considered a unique monument in Roman-Byzantine architecture. It was not excavated vertically, like ordinary wells, but on an inclined plane. A tunnel with steps descends in an inclined plane 26 meters - to the depth of 18 meters, where it captures the waters of an underground spring. Next to this spring, the tunnel ceiling was rebuilt to its original pyramid shape. About this particular feature of the fountain it is said that it gave it resistance to construction, and to the water, through the pyramid effect, special properties, such as purity.

Today, Sucidava Fortress is one of the most important tourist attractions in Olt County. Visitors who walk inside the fortress are invited to descend to the spring, to admire the pyramid-shaped ceiling and to drink a glass of cold, fresh water after making a wish.

Iancu Jianu the revolutionary (Caracal Town, Olt County)

Outlaw, small and revolutionary boyar, Iancu Jianu was a legendary figure in a turbulent period in the history Wallachia. His acts in the service of the people or for the interests of the country have often been considered acts of heroism. An example of courage and cleverness, sacrifice and manliness, Iancu Jianu is one of the most charismatic characters in Oltenia's history. In 1809, the outlaw defeated the Turks in Vidin and in Plevna, escaping Wallachia from the terror of Pazvante Chioru'. After this episode, his life took an unexpected turn. He was caught when he was walking unaccompanied on the streets of Bucharest, sentenced to death, but pardoned after an incident of romantic nature.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the country's ruler badly wanted to stop the robberies that the bands of outlaws had committed and continued to do through Oltenia. The ruler ordered an army commander by the name of Iamandi to arrest Iancu Jianu anyway, either by right fight or by cunning. By cunning, Iancu was captured in 1817, taken to Bucharest in chains and sentenced to death by hanging for "unworthy deeds" of outlaw crime with which he "proved himself in numerous occasions". However, what saved him was the aura of legend with which he had surrounded himself and his charming personality.

According to an old tradition, if a high-ranking lady asked to marry a man sentenced to death, he was pardoned. Legend says that just before Iancu was hanged, a young woman by the name of Sultana, part of the ruler's daughter's suite, invoked the law of the land in force at that time, demanding that the life of the outlaw be spared and given to her as a man. The story was later told by Jianu himself: "While I was climbing the stairs with the hang around my throat, the harlot came and screamed: Stop!"

After almost seeing his death with his eyes, Iancu calmed down for a while, leaving the life of outlaw aside and embracing that of the small boyar...

Montana

Ayazmoto spring is in the yard of the «St. St. Kiril and Metodii» Klisurski Monastery

/ Montana County, Varshets Municipality, on Varshets Road to Berkovitsa /

"St. St. Kiril and Methodii" Klisurski Monastery is 9 km from Berkovitsa and 12 km from Varshets, at the bottom of Todorini Kukli Peak (1785m) located in the Balkan Mountains. In the 17th century, six monks from another monastery settled in the immediate vicinity, with the intention of rehabilitating the monastery. This intention was prevented by the Chiprovsti uprising of 1688, about which we know from history that it was incendiary and bloody ... and a pack of rebellions came here to hide with the six monks. The monks did not say where the rebels left and were burned alive near the monastery. In the place where they were burned, a spring appeared, which proved to have healing qualities. Many people who drank from the waters of the spring were cured of diseases ...

The mystical village with Samodivas - Stoyanovo village, Varshets

/ Montana County, Varshets Municipality, near Stoyanovo Village /

In the Municipality of Varshets, near the village of Stoyanovo, there is a beautiful and strange place <Sopovo>, which, according to legends, is the mythical village of Samodivas (mystical women in the forest), "Zmeykovo". A story says that in the deep caves of Sopovo are the places where the Samodivas live, which, like bears, hibernate. In these caves was raised by Samodivas Krali Marko (popular hero). Their milk made him big and strong. Legend says that in the waters of the Botunya River, which runs through those caves, the Samodivas used to bathe their children. These children had fathers from among humans, all heroes. Occasionally, the Samodivas brought in their caves from Sopovo sick shepards. Through their dances, they establish a connection with their diseases, because the diseases are alive and can be healed by the power of certain rituals. In the summer, when it's dark, the people from Stoyanovo say they still hear the songs of the Samodivas. Beyond the Botunya river, they bathe naked, wash their clothes and stretch them to dry in the moonlight, keeping them from being stolen. Then, they gather on a nearby hill and play barefoot magical hours all night. Samodivas are afraid of sunlight, which is why they hide when the first rays of the sun appear. Sometimes they appear as working women, but most often they block water sources.

"Todorini kukli" Peak

/ Montana County, Varshets Municipality, Western Balkan Mountains, 10 km southwest of Varshets and 6 km northeast of Petrohan Pass /

"Todorini kukli" (Todora's distaff) are a group of 4 rocky peaks in the Western Balkans, the largest being 1785 m high. It is 10 km southwest of Varshets and 6 km northeast of Petrohan Pass. Legend says that many centuries ago in the village of Spanchevtsi lived a very beautiful girl named Todora. On a late autumn day, she summoned a large Gathering in her father's yard. She made a big fire around which the girls and the bachelors from the village were surrounded. The girls sang as they weaved and knitted, and the boys broke nuts and sang along with the virgins on long shepard's pipe and flute. The boys and girls have made a bet to see who will

climb before the song of the roosters on the top of the mountain and put a spear on the highest peaks. None of the boys had the courage. Then Todora decided to climb the mountain alone. The boys and girls were amazed, all who were present at Todora's words were astonished.

She left in the darkness of the night. When she reached the top of the peak, she began to insert the distaff into the small glade. The earth being stony, she knelt down to push the distaff with all her power. When she managed to insert the distaff into the ground, she tried to rise, but an unseen power pulled her apron. Todora tried to pull off her apron and pulled with all her strength, going back and falling into the precipice...

Since then these beautiful peaks are called Todorini kukli.

The legend of Ivancho's Meadow

/ Montana County, Vratsa Municipality, Varshets Town /

The legend tells us: Grandfather Ivan spent most of his time at the sheepfold located in a pine forest near Varshets. With him lived his granddaughter Miglena - an orphan child who remained without her parents when she was a little girl.

In the fresh air and from the fresh milk, under the warm care of her grandfather, the girl grew beautiful, became good and diligent. One day, the Turks knocked on Grandfather Ivan's door. His grandfather and granddaughter kindly welcomed the guests. They gave them fresh milk, treated them well. Then the Turks asked Grandfather Ivan to take through the Koznitsa Mountains to get to Serdika faster.

As he was old and sick, they left with Miglena. The girl rode the horse in front of the line through the steep valleys and led the Turks over the mountain peaks until dark.

Miglena felt more than she saw in the great darkness. She had to jump, so that the people in the column behind her didn't understand what was going on. Without stopping for a moment, the girl lifted her horse and plunged into the precipice. After her, all the Turks fell. Later, in the area where Ivancho's sheepfolds were found, the people named the place "Ivan's Meadow", in honour of the old man, who educated his granddaughter in a spirit of disobedience towards the conquerors and with great love for the oppressed. Every year, thousands of people go to rest in the town of Varshets to visit this wonderful place. They breathe the fresh, fragrant air, listen to the song of the birds and think of those distant and cruel times.

The fountain in the village of Balyuvitsa, Berkovitsa

/ Montana County, Montana Municipality, Balyuvitsa Village /

In Montana County, 13 km from Berkovitsa, is the small village of Balyuvitsa. Near the village, in a place full of mysteries, a sacred and healing water flows. The fountain is small, but with great powers. Its healing waters flowed through this place from the distant past, when, attracted by the idea of discovering gold in the cliffs around the healing water, treasure hunters dug the area in search of precious metals. But they found a much bigger treasure - old books. In 1977, following the earthquake in Vrancea, the well was covered with large fragments of rock. Water has found a way to break the stone. It is said that in time the stones fell apart and the stream began to flow again as if it had never stopped. The sacred water of the spring/water, which is near a sacred place for Christianity/mainly heals the eyes.

The legend about the town of Berkovitsa

/ Montana County, Berkovitsa Town /

About the origin of the name of the city Berkovitsa there were many and different legends and stories. One of the legends explains that the name consists of the combination of the male name Berko and the female name Vitsa. It all happened during the Ottoman rule, when in the settlement near the hill "Kaleto" established a Turkish Ruler. In the village lived a beautiful virgin by the name of Vitsa. The Ruler had the opportunity to see how Vitsa sings and dances, he really liked her and decided to take her in his harem. She refused because she had sworn to her lover Berko. The Ruler ordered Berko and Vitsa to be caught and he would have forgiven them on one condition - Berko should bring Vitsa on his shoulder, with his hands tied, to the peak of Kaleto. The Ruler wanted to make a cruel joke with young lovers. The road was difficult. At every step Berko was stumbling as he fell. Vitsa was sticking to him, she wanted to make her easy as a feather, and he would have wings of an eagle and fly. And the people who accompanied him, crawling with him, shouted: "Still little, Berko, still little, Vitsa". The forest that was near said: "Berko ..., Vitsa ..., Berko and Vitsa ..., Berkovitsa ..."

Berko reached the top of the mountain and knelt down to leave Vitsa. The Ruler made faces. Berko and Vitsa returned with bright faces to worship the Ruler and thank them for their mercy. The Ruler raised his hand to accept the salute and ... sent two bullets in response. Like a wounded hawk and a shot turtle, Berko and Vitsa flew off the steep rock.

The "Kaleto" hill became the standard bearer of the locality, which people then called Berkovitsa. This legend is also known today by the little ones and the big ones".

The "Holy Trinity" Monastery in Dobri Dol

/ Montana County, Lom Municipality, 4 km south of Dobri Dol Village /

The legend of the place says: One of the daughters of the leader of Pleven - Osman Pasha, was blind. Her father tried to heal her in every way. But the years have passed, and he has not succeeded. Then she met an old man, told her his pain, and she said: "You will go down into the valley with big trees near the spring and she will recover. But there you will promise that you will do well if your daughter heals ...".

Said and done. The sad father sent his blind girl to that beautiful place where she was healed, performing a miracle through the power of God and through the prayers of a local monk. Pasha asked what to do to express gratitude and thought. He left two large bags with white coins to build a temple there. Indeed, this has happened. A small wooden chapel was built in the beautiful area, which served many years to the people who came here for healing water...

This happened in the 17th century... This is the legend of the Monastery "Holy Trinity of Dobri Dol". The construction of the first chapel was followed by a long effort to expand the holy place.

Stovtsi Peak / Split Stone /

/ Montana county, the ridge between Smolyanovtsi village, on international road E79 and the Ogosta river valley near Preval village /

The split stone, marked on the topographic maps as "one hundred sheep", is a rock with a height of 95 m, on the ridge between Smolyanovtsi village, on the

international road E79 and the Ogosta river valley, near Prevala village, Montana county. Legend says that once there was a water mill called "Haidushka". There was also a fountain that allowed the animals to grow. Horses, goats and a herd of 100 sheep lived in the beautiful area. Every morning a shepherd would sing to a copper flute. His companion was a black ram with a horn. One morning, as soon as he heard the song of the flute, the ram headed for the shepherd. He was so happy that he knocked the man down and fell after him. Then followed the 100 sheep. Since then, the area has been christened A Hundred of Sheep, and over the years to sound better, it began to be called Stovtsi.

Pyramids of Pishurka village

/ Montana county, Medkovets municipality, Pishurka village /

Pishurka is a village in north-western Bulgaria. It is located in Medkovets municipality, Montana county. The mysterious pyramids were discovered in the village area by a scientist who accidentally saw them while searching for ancient artefacts - clay pots from the copper-stone age. When he looked from a right angle, his assumption was confirmed and he was literally struck by what he saw. Currently, experts are coming to Pishurka to investigate the whole area in detail, as well as to check if they find something exceptional inside the buildings. The population of Pishurka village says that the two pyramids were always there, but no one ever gave them any meaning. It is clear that one pyramid is called the "Pyramid of Dzhodzhen (spearmint)", because on its entire surface aromatic spice grows, and the other is the Pyramid of Pishurka, named after the famous consciousness and poet Krastyo Pishurka, whose name is also given to the village.

Momina Mogila Peak

/ Montana County, southwest of Berkovitsa City /

Momina Mogila (1713 m) is a peak in the western part of the Balkan Mountains, southwest of the town of Berkovitsa. The legend of the peak says: It was an early spring. The shepherds began to bring their sheep and cattle to graze. A gypsy caravan was travelling on the road from Berkovcha (now the town of Berkovitsa) to Piroto. There was also a Bulgarian girl in the caravan, who the Gypsies raised as a child. At night, the gypsy caravan spread its tents on a beautiful meadow above the "Zdravchenitsa" area of the Balkans of the Berkovitsa. The men lit large fires around which a lively joy began. Later in the evening, a gang of outlaws passed by, who joined the Gypsies.

At one point, the one carrying the flag, began to look at the Bulgarian girl, on whose beautiful face the flames were playing. Not long after, the outlaw rose and went to her. He asked her if she had any brothers or sisters, and she replied that she had lost her only brother, who had a birthmark long ago. The outlaw turned out to be her brother.

The brother and sister got into a tight hug after the long-awaited meeting.

They celebrated and danced until the fires went out. Everyone was watching the meeting between the brother and the lost sister, found after so long. Later, he asked the driver for permission to take the girl in the mist. He agreed, with an open heart, but the Gypsies did not give her to him. One after the other they started shouting that she had grown up with them and that the place was where she would live and die. A young Gypsy, in love with the Bulgarian woman, stuck a

knife behind her. Her brother took her in his arms and led her up the ridge. The outlaw's suffering was indescribable, only after he had found his only close person. They buried her with outlaw honours. Since then, this height has been called "Momina Mogila".

Legend of the Barziya river and village

In Dervent village (now Barziya, Berkovitza municipality, Montana county), a girl named Bârza lived. Like any young woman, she listened to the advice of her grandparents who told her to bathe every day in the river that runs through their village, to be thin and beautiful. And indeed, she quickly became a very beautiful girl. And while she was beautiful, so hardworking she was ... She met a boy at the round dance - skilfull, thin and handsome. He didn't miss a sitting or a holiday to be with her, and sometimes he was waiting for her at the well. The two young people really liked each other and fell in love. They promised that they would do the wedding soon, at which people from the two villages would gather. But the beauty of the girl was observed by a rich and old Turk, who wanted to give her to his youngest son. When he asked Bârza and found out who her chosen was, he decided to kill the boy. Two paid killers have done this terrible thing for a handful of gold coins.

The poor boy lay wide-eyed all night, staring up at the sky, regretting his young life and lost love. In the morning the shepherds found him. The girl, Bârza, cried with sadness and pain. Their house turned into a deserted place without her laughter and her joyful songs. No one saw her going to the water.

But she walked every day to the river that passed near the village. She sat for hours on the river's edge, and her tears mingled with the clear waters of the river. They ran along the river telling the sadness of the grieving girl. The beautiful face of Bârza was darkened, the shining stars in her blue eyes faded. She was going to the river and staring out into the darkness, as if looking for something invisible and expensive. There were long periods of time when she remained lost in sweet thoughts and memories. Since then, the river is named after her - Barziya. Later the village was also named in memory of the girl who remained true to her first love and faith.

Vidin

The legend of the rocks in Belogradchik

/ Vidin County, Belogradchik City /

The most widespread legend about the rocks in Belogradchik is the legend of the two remarkable figures - the Monk and the Nun. In the ancient times on the highest peaks of Belogradchik area were two monasteries: for men and women. Among the nuns was one of extraordinary beauty - Sister Vitiniya (Vita). Before, the girl was meeting often a beautiful, tall shepherd, with black eyes and black hair dark like a coal. He played very well the flute. Vita listened to his songs flowing like a swift stream and a great love began to grow in her heart. Her parents sent her to the Monastery of Girls. Days and nights, Vita was crying alone in her dark cell. But one night Vita heard the sad, distant voice of a flute. The music came from somewhere from the top where the men's monastery was. Since then, every night, when the rest of the people were sleeping and resting, Vita

listened to the song of the flute that soothed her soul and thus awaited the sunrise. The two lovers began to secretly meet. A child was born, and the nuns cursed her and drove her out of the monastery. Her lover looked at her and wondered how he could help her. And suddenly a miracle happened: the earth shook, and the nuns' monastery was thrown into a tumultuous whirlwind, burying all those inside. Vitiniya was petrified while she was praying for her child's sake. The fleeing monks were also petrified. Petrified in front of the door of the monastery remained Luca, the lover of Vitiniya.

And today you can see the remains of the collapsed monastery, the petrified monks and, above all, the petrified figures of Luca and Vitiniya - the Monk and the Nun.

Legend about the Magura Cave, Vidin town

/ Vidin County, 18 km northwest of Belogradchik and 1.5 km northwest of Rabisha village/

In the cave lived a dragon, deep in some of the galleries with the largest rooms of the cave. Nobody could get there. In the entrance gallery was a lake so deep that even the bottom could not be seen. Anyone who tried to cross the lake died. They drowned and died. No one saw the dragon, and it did no harm, but quite often from the field, a white cloud rose above the entrance to the cave, rising in a whirlwind, passing through the dense forest and disappearing. Some were saying that the dragon was hiding in this cloud and that he was going to go home.

Valko Goranski's family lived in one of the modest country houses in the area. They had two boys, Petko and Goran and a girl Petra, who was very beautiful. One day Petra went to the field to work. At that moment, a white silver cloud rose from the cave, turned into a deafening globe, which then turned into a terrible whirlwind that moved like a huge monster and approached the fields on which Petra was. With this storm, the girl disappeared from the field. After all this, the shepherds began to speak in the village that they saw Petra upstairs, near the cave, dressed in a beautiful dress standing in front of the dark entrance. People decided that she was enchanted by the dragon. Everyone said she lived with the dragon in the cave. Legend says that, before harvesting, the dragon took from the entire region the finest, cleanest, and largest grains of wheat and made pure white flour, and from the earliest, ripe grapes made a thick wine that could be carried even in a towel.

Baba Vida Fortress, Vidin Town

/ Vidin County, Vidin Town /

Baba Vida, also called the Towers of Baba Vida, is a medieval fortress in Vidin. The name Baba Vida, known today, comes from a popular legend that says as follows:

Long ago two brothers and two sisters lived: Gamzo, Kosta, Kula and Vida. They couldn't live together because they were constantly arguing. One day after a long conversation, they decided to break up and each of them set up a town. The eldest brother, Gamzo, built Gamzigrad, Kosta - Kostolets, Kula - Kula and Vida, which was the smallest but most clever and cunning city, built Vidin town. Thus were created these towns-fortresses, where many people from the surrounding areas settled. Sisters Kula and Vida were much smarter and more cunning than their brothers, and for this reason the new settlers were always coming to their towns,

especially Vidin, and these settlements became larger and more populous. The brothers saw much of their lives and did not care about anything else. Gamzo loved vineyards - he planted on all his lands vineyards and produced the famous wine which is now known as "Gamza".

According to another legend, the two sisters Vida and Kula had no brothers. Vida was very beautiful. Many men wanted her, but she didn't like them. Kula often told her that she had to get married, but Vida was upset about her advice and did not want to argue - she sent her to another area and gave her trusted people to live with her. Thus, Kula became the founder of the town of Kula, and Vida remained in her home.

When she learned that the Turks were approaching the town, she gathered her people and instructed them to build towers to hide the population. And everyone worked: day and night, building towers, which today bear the name of "Babini Vidini Kuli" (kula means tower).

The Ethnographic Museum the Cruciform Barrack, Vidin

/ Vidin County, Vidin Town /

The building of the ethnographic museum "The cruciform Barrack" is located in the oldest part of Vidin town. Legend says: After decades of riots, battles and bloodshed, Kardzhali leader Osman Pazvantoglu has managed to gain the recognition of Sultan Pasha for the Vidin area. In old Sarai, he organized a big holiday and invited the most important people in the town. In the hall, in the centre were two strangers near the Pasha. He presented the guests as French and Polish engineers, tasked with building the new mansion for wineries. Unexpectedly, the Pasha stepped up, took out his scimitar and passed near the tables. He stopped in front of the bishop and pulled the red church robe from his shoulders. Covered with church clothes, drunk, the Pasha danced at a strange pace, which slowly and timidly included all those present. Everyone understood that he mocked the Resurrection of Christ. The next day, the master remained unusually long in his rooms. In old Sarai, rumours have surfaced that "the Pasha is suffering from a terrible disease!" The same afternoon, healers arrived, along with a strangely dressed woman. She was carrying a leather bag and a packet of dried roots and grass. All day the healers remained in the Pasha's bedroom. At dusk, when she left, although exhausted, but still standing, the Pasha entered the room where the two construction engineers worked. Sitting in front of the table he took one of the sketches. He looked at the sheet with contempt, then broke it in half, then tightened the halves and broke them once more. Visibly worried, the foreigners thought that the Pasha was unhappy with their work and they prepared for what is worse. But he took the pieces of paper and slowly arranged them as a puzzle, leaving space between the broken parts - he formed a cross! That was his will! Immediately after the construction began, the Pasha was surprisingly healed! Seen from above, this building was in the shape of a cross. This cross was Osman Pazvantoglu's way of apologizing for the blasphemy brought to the Orthodox God.

Kyupriya Shepherd - Odalisques' Bridge - Vidin

/ Vidin County, Vidin Town /

The Bridge of Kyupriya shepard is located at the old entrance of Vidin town in Dunavtsi town. It is built of stone by Bulgarian masters. It is declared a cultural monument, of which the legend says: it was spring. On the road from Vidin to the

Balkan Mountains there was a beautiful carriage. In the carriage was the Prince of Vidin Pasha Osman Pazvantoglu. In the carriage next to him was his only nineteen-year-old daughter whom he loved so much, because it resembled him not only in the exterior appearance, but she had inherited his severity, disobedience, courage and determination. The storm started. The carriage was approaching Vidin and the minarets of the mosques were beginning to see. They had to cross the river in front of them. But its waters swelled and came out of the river, it was dark, cloudy and flowing with great speed. Their carriage was beginning to sink. The horses were firing huge efforts and the hooves broke. The Pasha was screaming in anger. Aid came, but they failed to do anything. Somewhere the sad notes of a flute were heard. Nearby they saw a young shepherd who was grazing with the sheep. They asked for his help. The shepherd has arrived. He motioned everyone to withdraw. He grabbed the carriage with his strong hands. He pulled the carriage on the opposite bank, took the Pasha safely and invited him to sit down. As a thank you, the Pasha ordered that a bridge be built on this spot. While the bridge was being built, his daughter fell in love with the shepherd. But this beautiful and pure love was observed by all shepherds and bridge builders. Bad people told the Pasha about their love. He frowned in a dark cloud and ordered the shepherd to be killed, and his head to be buried under the bridge. His girlfriend found out, took the trolley he had filled with gold, sat in the carriage and flew on the dusty road. Reaching the abundant waters near the bridge, Sefade pulled the reins of the beautiful horses. They entered as a storm in the water, but they overturned. The place where the horses overturned with the carriage and where the Odalisque drowned is now called Davi Vir and the bridge that the old man made on the river is called the Kadanin Bridge. The years passed, the Pasha died, the bridge that crosses the river that comes from the Tsarpetrovski hills and flows into the Danube, near the old Vidbol village, today everyone calls Cioban Kyupriya, and the bridge on the Kerachitsa river - the Odalisque's bridge.

Popa's cave (priest) Martin

/ Vidin County /

Above Venetsa, near the town of Belogradchik, on the southern side, is the cave "Prăpastia", also called the Popa Martin cave or the thieves' cave. In the bottom of the gallery were found human bones, and in the cave, which is a well about 10 meters deep, were found the bones of four more bodies, which the legend relates to the facts of Popa Martin ... Popa Martin had the most beautiful woman in the village. Once Vidin's Pasha, passing through the village, visited Popa Martin. Popa Martin welcomed him as he came, and the Pasha and his companions departed. Not a week passed and Popa Martin's wife was taken by the soldiers of Vidin's Pasha. It didn't take long and Martin was gone - he left the house, church and liturgy. It was heard that he became an outlaw and went to the Balkan Mountains. He rejected church clothes and instead of the Gospel, took the war rifle, instead of crosses and prayers, used the scimitar. Instead of prayers, the cartridge belts crossed his chest. The gentle and kind priest changed that day. And he set off with his faithful band. The outlaw went through the mountains, crossed paths, found caravans with money going to the treasury, taking back the money of the enslaved people. He attacked the Turks, the criminals and killed those who tortured the people. Popa Martin's glory was passed from mouth to mouth. The wealth taken by him and his loyal band carried it and hid it in the inaccessible cave in the Venetsa area.

Together with his band, Popa Martin appeared as a ghost, unknown and untouchable. One day, when valuables and gold were hiding, one of them failed to get out of the cave, he was killed and he fell to the bottom of the narrow gallery. Legend says that the murdered man was Popa Martin. One of his comrades, to become the master of this extraordinary wealth, most likely remained behind Popa Martin and killed him, threw him into the gallery, took the gold and went somewhere to a village where he lived a quiet and modest life. Then he himself told the legend of Popa Martin's cave to remind us of this name even today.

Vratsa

"The Bloody Rock "- surroundings of Vratsa Town

/ Vratsa county, Vratsa town, at the base of Vratsata Pass /

The Bloody Rocks - that's how people called the rocks at the base of the Vratsata Pass.

All this happened in the last days, before the fall of the medieval town of Vratitsa under Ottoman rule. Radan Voivod and his army were the last defenders of the fortress of Vratitsa. They defended the freedom of the people of Vratitsa with their latest forces and without ammunition, while the invaders were becoming more and more aggressive. Radan stared at the black clouds that covered the sky and his heart tightened with sadness. Another thought that broke his heart - he left and left his only daughter at home - Elitsa. She has been without a mother since birth. He raised her with the help of one of his sisters. It was the light and joy of his life. And now that she's grown up, she's become a wonderful girl. The whole town admires her, not only for her beauty, but also for her kindness and skilfull hands. The end of the Bulgarian kingdom had arrived - the Voivod already knew this - the Turkish scimitar was cutting also the most shabby roots of his century-old tree. If Vratitsa fell, there was no one to stop the enslavement. And they will continue to defile their country, to burn and to destroy, to slaughter and to hang. And no one will be spared, young or old. And then he understood, with both the mind and the heart, that he had nothing more to do but seek salvation in death. Radan pulled the sword from the sheath, squeezing Elitsa's trembling hand and led it quickly through the back yard to the rock that rose near the wall of the fortress. They climbed the cliff for the last time to look at their town from above, to say goodbye to everything they loved and then they could seek salvation. First for Elitsa, and then for him. They decided to die as free Bulgarians, in the name of their righteous faith...

The "Bloody rock" - that's how people called the rock at the base of the Vratsata Pass, which absorbed the blood of their last protector Radan Voivod and his daughter Elitsa in those troubled years.

Skaklya waterfall

/ Vratsa county, Vratsa town, 1.5 km south of Vratsa, behind Kaleto hill /

The waterfall is located in one of the most picturesque areas of Mount Vratsa, in centuries-old green forests and among inaccessible rocks. The name of Vrachanska Skaklya is surrounded by a legendary aura. The locals tell a very beautiful story: at the end of the Ottoman rule, during a tiring crossing, the Ottoman army passed the Balkan Mountains at night under the waterfall. In the morning, when the sun's rays

ignited the foamy and shimmering waters that descend on the vertical rocks, astonished by this remarkable beauty, the army leader exclaimed: "Mashala, Skaklya!" The playful water reminded him of one of the women in his harem, who was from the Balkans and named it Skaklya.

Sitlina Fountain, Strupets village, Roman municipality, Vratsa county

/ Vratsa county, Roman municipality, Strupets village /

The Thracian tribes lived peacefully in their villages, enjoying the abundant riches that were given to them by nature and singing joyful songs in the glory of time, but the Romans came and enslaved them. Their stolen wealth did not reach them, but they began to take advantage of why they had better Thracians - their beautiful daughters. Legend says that a Romanian soldier liked the most beautiful virgin in the village. Her name was Sitla. The Roman very much wanted to win the love of Sitla, but she had a boyfriend whom she loved indescribably. His only hope was to seize, kidnap and enslave her boyfriend and send him to gladiator fights and kill him there. The girl began to suffer after her lover. Every evening, she would come to the lake and, vowing revenge, throw stones trying to stop him. The years passed, the lake was filled with stones, but the spring did not dry out. The water was necessary for the Romans, and the hatred from Sitla's heart against them made her to cast and cover the spring of the lake with her body. The clear water as the tear was coming out of the clogged spring, was less and less, and people had to move to another place.

New tribes came to these places and defeated the Romans.

Legend says that Sitla knew she had avenged his lost love and let the water flow into the lake. The water in the lake began to flow again, carrying the tears of love in Sitla's eyes. People have built a fountain in several exits called "Sitla's Fountain".

"Koshutin Kamak" area, Strupets village, Roman municipality, Vratsa county

In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Turks burned down the village of Strupets. They captured and killed the family of the most beautiful girl by the name of Koshuta. With the help of one of her brothers, she ran away and hid in the western part of the hill in Strupets. Unfortunately, the Turks found and killed her brother and wanted to force her to adopt their religion. She ran away, came to a large and very high rock, thrown down and died, but did not deny her faith. Significantly, the descendants named the place, in honour of her heroism, Koshutin kamak (Kushuta's rock)".

Kadin vir, village of Lilyache, mun. Vratsa

/ Vratsa county, Vratsa municipality, Lilyache village /

Kadin vir is the deepest lake in the Lilyache area, Lilyache village, Vratsa municipality. Even our ancestors and their children used this name. Every time I approached Kadin Vir, I heard its waters whispering its legend about the beautiful Kada ... In these lands lived a proud girl, with eyes like cherries, with a good and generous heart. When she started dancing, she was not like a girl, she was like a thin poplar, wind-swept. She was secretly coming to the spring to meet Todor.

Near the spring were the best pastures and Todor grazed his flock there. He was travelling everywhere, but when the sun was setting behind the Milevi rocks, he was in a hurry to meet Kada. Once he got here, the flute sounded and his sweet sound floated around. During this time she was eagerly approaching the path. The flute was silent to leave the two hearts trembling to whisper ... One evening, Kadinka took the wooden pot on her shoulder and headed like a skylark to meet Todor. After her, the Turk also left - if the shepherd delays, he will take her. Mehmed reached out to cover her slim body, but she was scared and ran. The pursuer quickly reached her and reached out again to grab her. She rose quickly - her heart started beating like a trapped bird and she saw black in front of her eyes. With the last powers Kadinka turned to her only rescue - the bottomless lake. And she threw herself into the deep waters of it. Amazed, Mehmed froze on the spot. During this time from the hill there was a sound of talanga. Todor was flocking - hurrying to meet his girlfriend.

But they didn't get to meet again. The cold waters wrapped her warm body and pulled her down to Dalgi Vir and the Toplik River. Above the water she was floating only her handkerchief...

Many years have passed since then, but no one has forgotten the sad story of Kadinka. About her even today the waters whisper... And the lake was named after the girl - Kadin Vir.

The Legend of the footsteps of Krali Marko and his horse Sharkoliya

/ Vratsa County, Vratsa and Oryahovo Municipalities /

His power came from the milk he sucked from the Gyurghya samodiva (mystical woman in the forest), and his mind and cunning were from God.

Shetau Mark, with the Sharkoliya horse, rode all over the enslaved Christian land and by right faith fought and protected Christians from Ottoman invaders.

Marko was walking on our land - traces of his footsteps and of the horse you will find them all the way from the Danube to the Balkans of Vratsa.

Krali Marko and his horse jumped from the Balkans to the highest hill in the west of Oryahovo. He jumped when he heard the cries of the Bulgarians cut off by the scimitar of the bloody unbelievers, who were heard from Oryahovo to Sofia's plain. Marko heard them and went to help. After the strong jump in the stone, the footprint of the horse's hoof remained. This hill was then named by the people Marko Bair.

Legend of Augusta's Treasure

/ Vratsa county, Kozloduy municipality, Harlets village, 1 km in Kaletu area /

In the northern part of the village of Harlets, in the direction of the Danube, there are the remains of the ancient Byzantine fortress "Augusta".

The sun came out, walked and left ... The last rays of the sun illuminated the turbulent waters of the river. Slowly, the darkness creeps in ... With great weight, Grandpa Petko removes his eyes from the golden waves of the river and begins to gather his flock scattered through the meadow. As he summoned his sheep, the old man still felt the joy in his heart and could not help but marvel at this divine world. As his shepherd's rod went and swirled, he suddenly stopped scared by a powerful lightning that seemed to split the earth. And what was that the old man saw: beyond the river, from the ground to the sky a white glow surrounded the city. And without taking his eyes off the light, he

quickly undresses, ties his clothes and enters the water, forgetting the flock of sheep. He crossed the water like a dream and entered through the iron gate in Augusta.

And what he saw before his eyes: at the end of a not very wide corridor, a treasure shone like a sun. He took courage the shepherd, he crossed the hall, he entered the room and he almost screamed in astonishment. It was filled with gold, precious stones and other unseen jewellery. Vases of copper, gold and silver, beautiful and shiny jewellery, and big old coins werw shining on the floor. - It was a dream !?

He opened the clenched fists and from there fall some shiny coins.

He looked up and saw that the white light above Augusta had disappeared.

No, it was not. It was a miracle!
His heart was beating and he ran and told the other shepherds about all the wonders he had seen, about the luck with which he had come to see and see those incredible riches, through the door that opens a thousand years ago.

“Will they believe me?” - Grandpa Petko couldn't stop to wonder, as he crossed the river.

