



**‘CULTURE IS OUR WINGS’**

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**‘MYTHS, LEGENDS AND FOLK TALES  
- THE HUMAN VALUES THEY TEACH’**

**THE ROMANIAN MYTHS, LEGENDS AND FOLK  
TALES  
- THE HUMAN VALUES THEY TEACH**

# The Legend of the Dacians' Flag That Had a Wolf Head

Decebal was the bravest and wisest king of our ancestors, the Dacians. When he was a little boy, he was very brave, honest, merciful with the people in suffering and the animals he was looking after.

One day, while he was wandering with his friend Duras in the forest around Sarmisegetusa, he found a wolf cub that was trapped into a precipice. It was small, it could barely open its eyes and when falling, it had broken a leg. It was shivering, it seemed to be about to die. Decebal took it to the fortress, tied its broken leg and offered it shelter. When the wolf had recovered, he grew bigger and stronger than a sheep dog. It was tamed, gentle on the good and hard on the bad. It had grey fur, a thick neck, strong legs and sharp teeth. When angry, all the dogs and people were afraid of its howling. Maybe that was why Decebal called it Şuier (Whine) and taught it how to bring back what he used to hunt in the forest.

Once, when it was winter and there was a lot of snow, Decebal got lost in the forest. He eventually got to a meadow but there he was attacked by a pack of starving wolves. When seeing its siblings Şuier was happy at first. Decebal took out his sword with a curved top in order to defend himself. He called Şuier to be his help. The tamed wolf came down to his legs. The pack of wolves surrounded them. The first wolf that attacked was caught by the sword and killed. The others were also ready to jump.

All of a sudden, Şuier jumped towards them. A real fight started and the snow was thrown everywhere. There were too many wolves which began to tear out Şuier's flesh. Decebal, who had climbed up a beech tree, was piercing them with arrows. Soon, the pack ran away in the forest. The other hunters came quickly. Scorilo, Decebal's father, was astonished by his son's courage. "Dad, Şuier saved me!" said the boy showing him the dead bodies. Then, all of them saw Şuier lying dead in the middle of the four wolves which had made the snow red with their blood. Şuier died looking onto his master's eyes with obedience.

The young man asked a forged master to forge in brass a wolf head, with its mouth open, a head like the one Şuier had. A furrier sewed a sort of bag made of leather, a very long one which was tied to the wolf's head made of brass and put on top of a steel stick, swinging in the wind.

Thus, the Dacians' flag for fight was ready.

# The Legend of the Beautiful Dochia

Decebal, The Dacians ' King, had a sister named Dochia. She was very young, extremely brave that the Emperor Trajan, after having seen her, immediately fell in love with her. He said:

“Dochia, I have seen how bravely you were defending your fortress, Sarmisegethusa! I defeated your brother, Decebal, I conquered Dacia and now that the war is over, I want you to come to Rome with me. You will lead a lavishly carefree life in grandeur in my golden walled palace adorned only with expensive things.”

“You’re too kind, My Lord, said Dochia. I definitely admire you, your bravery and kindness. Forgive me, please, but I won’t go to Rome with you!”

“Why not?”, he asked.

“As you well know I’m Decebal’s sister. He committed suicide in order not to become your prisoner. No matter how beautiful your palace may be, I would still be a poor slave living in it. You know, there are even more beautiful girls than me, here in Dacia. If you wish, marry them to your Roman soldiers in order to have a new nation that inherits our obstinacy and bravery and your greatness. I, for one, refuse to leave, I want to be buried here, in the holy land of Dacia.

Trajan, the Roman Emperor, followed her advice. But, after learning that she had a flock of sheep up to the mountains’ peaks where she became a shepherd, he got furious. Being the mighty emperor, he wanted her to be his trophy displayed in the chariot of triumph. He took some of his loyal soldiers and started searching for her. Days and weeks went by, walking up and down hills and valleys till they finally found her on the peak of Ceahlău mountain. The sheep were grazing on a steep valley caressed by the sun rays, full of grass and white, red and blue flowers.

“Dochia, said Trajan, there is no place for you to hide anymore! You’re coming with me now!”

“No, I am not, My Lord! I would rather be dead than your slave!”

“I don’t mean to harm you, Dochia! You will lead a great life!”

“If you don’t want to harm me, you’d better let me stay here in my country, Dacia!”

“You, obstinate creature! I will take you against your will! I will force you to come with me!”. Having said that he ordered his soldiers to catch her. Then, in utter despair, Dochia raised her hands in prayer and whispered to God:

“Turn me into a mountain rock so that I can forever remain here in my country!”

And indeed, at a blink of an eye, the beautiful Dochia, together with her sheep were turned into stones deeply rooted into the mountain. Trajan was astonished when seeing this. When he came into his senses, he murmured:

“There is nothing I can do! The inhabitants of this land, men and women, are tied up to it just as the stones are part of the mountains! All I can do is listen to her advice and bring here my Roman soldiers to marry these gorgeous Dacian women! “Having said that, he went back to Rome!

One can still see today on Ceahlău Mountain a tall stone, like a shepherd’s stature, surrounded by tens of scattered stones, similar to brown sheep. This is the legend of the beautiful and courageous Dochia with her flock of sheep.

# The Snow and the Snowdrop

When God made everything that there is on earth, the grass, the weeds and the flowers, He made them of different colours. When He made the snow, He said to it:

- You should search for the colour you like, because you are everywhere. Then the snow went to the grass and told it:
- Give me some of your beautiful green colour!

But the grass refused. The snow asked the rose to give it its red bright colour. But the rose refused, too. The snow then asked the blue from the violet and the yellow from the sunflower. Neither of them listened to the snow. Sad and distressed, the snow got to the snowdrop and said, full of sorrow:

- Nobody wants to give me their colour. They all drive me away and mock at me.

The snowdrop, compassionately, felt pity for the snow's fate and said:

- If you like my white colour, I'll share it gladly with you.

The snow accepted the snowdrop's gift. From that moment on, the snow wears the white coat just as the snowdrop. In order to show gratitude to the snowdrop, the snow lets it get its head out of the snow as soon as spring begins.

# The Legend of the March Trinket

A long, long time ago, when the young faced proud sun came down to dance, on a great feast between boys and girls, a plunderous ogre was watching him. The ogre stole the sun from the people of the village and held him in a barred, locked cage. The whole world went sad, birds in the now silent forest forgot how to sing; the river's hum, the girls' chant and children's laughter all melted away in great sadness. No one dared to face the horrible wicked ogre.

But patience isn't eternal. One day, a young brave boy started his quest to save the sun from the wicked ogre's cage. And for this, everyone celebrated him, fathers, mothers, sisters, friends and brothers, all saddened, and they gave him their power to help the boy through his journey. He walked a summer, a whole autumn, even in the harsh winter he still walked until he found the wicked ogre's castle. A battle on life and death ensued between the two. They ruthlessly hit each other spreading sweat and blood on the crystal snow. They were fighting shoulder to shoulder, and they were both heavily wounded. In the end, the brave boy came on top and the wicked ogre melted away in death. Crushing the black walls of his barred cage, the boy set the proud-faced sun free, shooting him up once more into the clear sky.

Nature came to life again and people were celebrating, but... he didn't get to see the spring. The blood of his wounds drained away in little drops, melting the snow. And from the molten snow, white flowers were blooming, waking up from their slumber. Gentleness was wobbling in the petals of the snowdrops, the spring's herald. The last drops of blood and power from the brave boy's arm drained away in the first day of March. And so, the brave boy closed his eyes forever.

Ever since then, girls, in the memory of his courageous act, have been twining two strings together, one red and one white, and they give them to the boys they like. The red one symbolises love for everything that's beautiful, it's the colour of the brave boy's blood that fought the ogre and saved our sun. The white one symbolises happiness, health and the purity of a gentle and fragile snowdrop-the first flower of the spring.

# **The Legend of the Olt and the Mureş**

Once upon a time, on the summit of a mountain there lived a king, inside of a fortress with two towers. And during a summer, the king left for war and never came back.

The queen sent messengers all over the places in order to find her husband and they went looking up for him until the ends of the world but they came back with no success. And the queen had two children that by the time their father left for war they had been playing in sand and now they are grownups, ready to get married. One of them was raised in the tower from the West side and the other one was raised in the tower from the East side. They were both fast in the way of thinking and they were both handsome. One of them was Mureş and the other one was Olt.

And once, they decided to go together to find their father. Their mother burst into tears of joy and sadness when she found out about their decision; there were tears of joy because she had brave boys and there were also tears of sadness because she was scared of not losing them. But she advised them to always stay together like the bulls yoked the plough and always walk on the same path. She blessed them and she let them go and she also told them to never go on separate ways, and they left for the unknown. As soon as they had left their home, they started having contradictions because they were two different powerful minds. The one who raised on the West side followed that path and the one raised on the East side chose to go on that way.



And from that moment, from the mountain summit, their paths drifted apart because Mureş went to the West and Olt decided to go to the East. Olt was brittle and fast and he madly followed the valley towards the clear day while Mureş was dark and quiet as the peaceful night so he followed the West side. But after a while, Mureş started missing his brother's presence and his soul turned sad so this is why he started following the East side to find his sibling. But he never found him and he got lost on that path, with heart full of peacefulness.

But the moment their mother saw that their path drifted apart right after they left their home, she ran to stop their paths, but there was no chance for her to reach them, mostly because they ran in two different directions. And she cried and both of these brothers turned into rivers for an eternity. And since that moment, the brittle and fast Olt has been flowing through rocky countries, falling down on mountains, crashing rocks. And this is why he is known to be sung :

“ The Olt, you cursed river  
You've turned yourself deep and wide;  
'cause you come big and foamed,  
And with blood mixed”

And since that moment, the Mureş river has been flowing on plain side calmly, and confidently, and because of this he is sung this song:

“ The Mureş , Mureş, calm water  
Pass me through foreign countries  
And help me find my peace”

# The Legend of the Argeş Monastery

Neagoe Basarab has once ruled over Muntenia. This prince loved building churches and monasteries. He planned on building a monastery like no other on Argeş's beautiful bank. Neagoe successfully negotiated with the most skilled workers of that time, the famous Master Builder Manole, as he was known, and his team of nine men. He promised them big fortunes and titles if they succeeded in building a monastery more beautiful than one had ever seen; if not they were to be bricked up alive in the foundation.

The workers got on with it. What were they to realise? The wall they were raising during each day, was falling apart during night. And so on they had been working for four days in vain. The ruler, realising that the construction wasn't progressing, threatened them to brick them up alive. The saddest of them all was Manole. He didn't know what to do, pacing around pointlessly.

One day, falling asleep, he dreamt that the wall would keep falling down provided they bricked up the first wife or sister, that would show up the next day to bring them food, inside. While telling his mates about this dream, they all swore to do what they had to do, which was, of course, to bury alive in the construction's walls the first wife or sister that would show up the next day at dawn to bring them food.

The next day, Manole climbed the stairs to see who was coming. When, oh.....what did he see? His own wife was coming carrying food for the workers. Poor Manole started crying and, falling to his knees, he prayed as such:

“ Offer, my Lord, this world,  
A foamy rain  
My beautiful wife to stop;  
To stop her in the valley,  
To make her turn around.”

And, what a miracle ! It started raining from the black heavy clouds, that it flooded the paths. But Manole’s wife did not turn around....

She kept walking. Manole prayed from all of his heart, again, to start a powerful wind, to make his wife go back.

And what a miracle, again! A such powerful wind started to blow that it snatched the trees right from their roots. But his wife kept walking. Pretending to be joking, he said:

“Wait, my beauty,  
Don’t be scared,  
We want to have some fun  
And brick you up inside the walls!”

At first, his wife believed that it was just a joke. But when she realised that the wall was being built around her, she started crying and praying:

“Like us great craftsmen,  
Masons, journeymen,  
There are none on this Earth.  
You should know that we are able  
Anytime to build  
Yet another monastery  
For our redemption  
Even far brighter  
Even far more mesmerizing!”

That got Neagoe thinking and, to make sure that he had the most beautiful monastery of them all, he decided to kill the craftsmen. He had all the scaffolds pulled down in order to leave these men on the rooftop to rot and die. They created an escape for themselves, pairs of wings made of shingles and jumped off the roof into the sky. But the wings were useless, and when they fell, they immediately died. On the spot Manole fell, a spring appeared, having its salted, shallow waters like tears.

# The Legend of Vlad Tepeș's Justice

During the reign of Vlad Tepeș (Vlad the Impaler), a merchant who was travelling throughout our country had someone announce that he had lost a bag containing a thousand ducats. He also promised he would give one hundred ducats to whomever would find the bag and give it back to him. Not after a long time, a good honest Christian, like there were many in Tepeș's time, went to the merchant and told him:

- Young merchant, as I was walking on my way, I found this bag at the crossing of the roads near the fish market. I think it's yours because I heard someone say you lost a bag of money.
- Indeed, it's mine, and I thank you very much for bringing it back.

The merchant began counting the money, thinking about how he could make in such a way that he would not have to pay him the hundred ducats. he promised.

After he had finished counting the money, he put it back in the bag and said to the one who had brought it:

- I counted it, my dear, and I see you've already kept your reward. Instead of a thousand ducats, I've only found nine hundred. You did very well because it was rightfully yours.
- Young merchant, answered the humble man, you are not fair when you say that one hundred ducats is missing from the bag. I didn't even untie it to know the amount of money. I brought it back to you as I found it!
- I've already told you I lost a bag with one thousand ducats. and you brought me only nine hundred.

That's it! The man said nothing, left and went straight to the Lord to complain about what had happened.

- Your Highness, he said, he refused to give me the reward he had promised. I'm not upset about the money, but I feel angry because, he thinks I was dishonest. I was fair and square and it didn't even cross my mind to steal from another man.

The Lord understood the merchant's scam and had him come immediately. After listening to both of them and weighing their stories, he understood the situation. Then, looking straight into the merchant's eyes, he said:

- If you, dear merchant, lost a bag with one thousand ducats and this man found a bag with only nine hundred it means that this bag is not yours. You, Christian, take this bag you found and give it to whomever lost nine hundred ducats.; and you, dear merchant, wait until someone finds a bag with one thousand ducats, as you said you had lost.

# Cuza's Pint

Cuza the ruler used to dress like an ordinary man and he mingled with his subjects to find on his own how they led their lives.

One day, he decided to get rid of his royal clothing and he put on a peasant's clothing, took two pints of sour milk and headed to the fair in Galați to see his people. Well, as you can easily guess, his majesty had already found out that some of the vendors there didn't use the big pint to measure their goods, the one imposed by the law, his law which the people called Cuza's pint. So, he went to the fair in order to sell some milk to a vendor who had a reputation for using the small pint instead of the big pint according to his law, and nobody had any proof.

“Dear vendor, I don't want any money in return”, the peasant haggled, “I just want to give you six pints of my milk in exchange of one pint of your oil.”

“That's fine”, he gladly accepted winking at the peasant.

He took from the counter/table the right pint, Cuza's pint, and measured the milk: there were twenty-four pints. So, he had to give the peasant four pints of oil.

“Please, be kind and use the same measure, the same pint, “insisted the peasant.

“I'm sorry but I can't do that as it is full of milk but I will gladly measure the oil with this one!”, he said while he picked up another pint and put it on the table/counter.

“But this one is smaller”, said the peasant.

“Do you know better than me, you, poor man? A pint is just a pint! End of story!”

Then the peasant took off his clothing, revealing his blue chest plate, with golden epaulettes as only a ruler can have. The Seller remained in shock. He was so shocked that he dropped the pint.

“Tell me, Seller, will you ever use that the small pint?”

“I won't, your majesty, I am begging you for your mercy!”

Cuza the ruler tied the two pints to the seller's neck and had him wander the streets so that the people should know that he scammed them.

“ He should pick up each pint in turn and show to every soul and let them know which pint he will use and which he won't from now on

Accompanied by his majesty's soldiers he had to pick up the small pint and say out loud:

“I will never use this one again!”

And then he raised the big one:

“I will always use this one!”

And like this he got carried through the whole fair and he repeated the words over and over again. And that was enough to put him in his place.



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