

The Legend of Goat's Bridge

The *Legend of Goat's Bridge* can trace its origins to the 16th Century and the Ottoman Empire.

According to legend, two brothers, Sinan and Mehmed grazed their goats throughout the valley of the Miljacka River, just east of Sarajevo. They had to cross the river daily and the only path across was a rickety old wooden bridge.



Crossing the river was dangerous as well as time consuming because it required herding the goats across the bridge one at a time.

One day Sinan noticed one of the goats chewing on a strange bush and as Mehmed took a closer look he discovered a small cave hidden behind the bush. Within the cave the brothers discovered buried treasure containing gold, silver, and precious jewels.

The two brothers split the treasure. Mehmed traveled west to Istanbul to study with the great thinkers of the time. Sinan returned to Sarajevo to become a wealthy merchant. They wisely invested in the pursuit of their dreams and they both happily lived their lives as wealthy nobleman.

Eventually Mehmed honored the discovery that forever changed his life and paid tribute by building a beautiful mosque on the banks of the river. To this day, the mosque is still referred to as Goat's Mosque.

Mehmed joined his brother by also paying tribute to the discovery that enabled him to pursue his love of learning. He commissioned a bridge built near the location where the treasure was found.

The bridge was a vital link between the East and West, and it became an important trade route between Sarajevo and Istanbul during the Ottoman Empire.

And now you know the *Legend of Goat's Bridge*.

Kozija Ćuprija

The only bridge dating from the Ottoman period that is still fully intact. It was built in the 16th century on the road that used to lead from Sarajevo to Istanbul and, in centuries past, it was here that Ottoman viziers arriving from Istanbul received their welcome and pilgrims were seen off as they left for pilgrimages. The bridge was made a National Monument of BiH in 2004.

Historical Information—Located on the Bridge

Guiding Questions

Who were the main characters in the story?

What kind of work did they do in the beginning? How about in the end?

What did they discover? How and where did they make this discovery?

How did they memorialize the impact that this discovery had on their lives?

What elements of culture and/or values are depicted within this story?

The Legend—Classroom Activity

The name of the bridge is connected to several variations of the same legend. According to a popular version, two brothers, Sinan and Mehmed were tending their goats and while they were eating grass one of the goats dug up a hidden treasure – a pot full of gold and silver. The brothers split the treasure. One went to Istanbul to study at the great universities of the time while the other brother returned to Sarajevo to become a merchant. Eventually becoming wealthy noblemen, they honored Allah for their good fortune. One built a mosque and the other build a bridge - The Goat's Bridge.

Discussion Questions

What elements were missing from the original story? What was added?

What insights does this activity provide in relation to stories in the oral tradition?

How can stories such as this be used to demonstrate cultural traditions or values?