

BIBLICAL MOTIFS IN THE LEGENDS ABOUT THE DOOM OF GAVAN'S CASTLES

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The paper cites and analyses legends about Gavan and the doom of his castle. The focus is on the analysis of the written records of the legends published in scientific monographs, papers, journals. The analysis has shown that all of these legends contain motifs of destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah from the Old Testaments and explain the origin of numerous lakes in the territory of both the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This oral tradition is the most prominent in the area of Imotski borderland and Herzegovina where these legends are still recounted. The legends are an integral and an immensely significant part of the Croatian intangible cultural heritage, therefore we should consistently record them in order to preserve them for the future generations.

KEYWORDS:

Croatian intangible cultural heritage, legends, Gavan, the Bible

1. INTRODUCTION

A legend is a type of oral religious narrative whose form resembles a folk-tale. The main characters usually include Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary, holy men and women, martyrs and similar figures. It is distinguished from a folk-tale and hagiography, which recounts the life of saints, by an element of miracle whose purpose is to reward proper behaviour and punish evil behaviour. Miracles in the legends reflect God's will, and they are usually materialised through holy men (Dragić 2017: 165). Even though the legend is closely related to a folk-tale, it is regarded as an independent form in the Croatian literary tradition. Botica stated that legends “differ from a typical structure of a folk-tale because they usually cover religious motifs or carry certain vague individual and collective historical connotations, and they are distinguished by exceptionally numerous fantastic elements. Hence, the legend has made a certain deviation from the folk-tale genre because it is usually impossible to verify fantastic elements by real-life processes, similarly as with the mythemes, and it is deemed to have a lower degree of credibility” (Botica 2013: 446). He added that the legends are not locally marked, and they do not require local reception in order to function. Their performative effect is stronger and more permanent, while their contents usually include philosophical and religious topics (Botica 2013: 446-447). They often have a didactic purpose because, for instance, homilies about the lives of saints and their miracles are intended to provide guidance to people in terms of proper forms of conduct and living. Čubelić claims that unlike fairy-tales which focus on the “narration and artistic pleasure”, legends are vastly distinguished by their “didactic moment” (Čubelić 1963: 27).

The Croatian literary tradition usually recounts the legends about the wealthy and vain Gavan and the doom of his castles. The legends are also about Jesus Christ and St. Peter who walked the Earth, St. George, miraculous powers of holy men and women and miraculous tombs of male and female martyrs, miraculous sacred icons and the destruction of religious buildings (Dragić 2008a: 180). The paper particularly focuses on Biblical motifs appearing in the legends about Gavan and the doom of his castles. This legend entered the folk tradition from the church reading or sermon, and the doom of the castle is a punishment “usually for the spiritual characteristics of its proprietor” (Botica 1995: 64–65). “This story was recorded in the renowned florilegium *Fiore de virtu* as early as in the 14th century. A more voluminous edition from the 15th century also contains the legend about the doom of Gavan's castles” (Dragić 2008b: 449). Dragić believes that these legends could also be referred to as *moralities* (Dragić 2003: 69). The legends about Gavan, which usually explain the origin of

lakes, are predominantly recounted by the Croatian people in the karst areas of the Dinaric Alps, hinterland, Imotski borderland, and Bosnia and Herzegovina; hence they also have an aetiological character. Some of these lakes include Red and Blue Lake in Imotski, Prokljan Lake near Šibenik, Plitvice Lakes, Hutovo Blato marshlands near Trebimlja, Lake Borak near Konjic, Lake Kutu near Neum, Miloš Lake near Hrvace in the vicinity of Sinj, Lake Balaton in Hungary (Dragić 2003: 78) and other similar lakes.

2. METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the legend about Gavan is interdisciplinary and focuses on the study of the written records of the legends published in scientific monographs, papers, journals. These records originated in the territory of the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, usually near the karst lakes and rivers. The examples were subjected to the thematic and motif analysis with the aim to discover Biblical motifs which influenced these legends. Firstly, we conducted a comparative analysis of the collected corpus and then we used the synthesis to draw conclusions. Finally, we listed similarities and differences between the records and the Biblical texts.

3. RESULTS

Two Biblical texts considerably influenced the occurrence of the legends about Gavan. In the Book of Genesis, there is a passage about three mysterious visitors that Abraham saw near his tent and realised that it was Lord in disguise. He invited them into the shade of his tent and offered them food, while they announced to him and his wife Sarah that they would have a son, even though they were both elderly.

“1 The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oak of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot.² Looking up, he saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground,³ he said: ‘Sir, if it please you, do not go on past your servant.⁴ Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest under the tree.⁵ Now that you have come to your servant, let me bring you a little food that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way.’ ‘Very well’, they replied, ‘do as you have said.’

6 Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, ‘Quick, three measures of bran flour! Knead it and make bread.’ 7 He ran to the herd, picked out a tender, choice calf, and gave it to a servant, who quickly prepared it.8 Then he got some curds and milk, as well as the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them, waiting on them under the tree while they ate. 9 ‘Where is your wife Sarah?’ they asked him. ‘There in the tent,’ he replied.10 One of them said, ‘I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son.’ Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, just behind him.11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years, and Sarah had stopped having her menstrual periods.12 So Sarah laughed to herself and said, ‘Now that I am worn out and my husband is old, am I still to have sexual pleasure?’ 13 But the LORD said to Abraham: ‘Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really bear a child, old as I am?’ 14 Is anything too marvellous for the LORD to do? At the appointed time, about this time next year, I will return to you, and Sarah will have a son.’ 15 Sarah lied, saying, ‘I did not laugh,’ because she was afraid. But he said, ‘Yes, you did.’” (Gn 18: 1-15)

At the farewell, Jehovah decided to reveal to Abraham his intention of punishing the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because they completely thrived in grievous sin. Abraham asked the Lord whether He would destroy the city even if there were righteous people in it. He promised Abraham that he would spare it if he found at least ten righteous people.

“16 With Abraham walking with them to see them on their way, the men set out from there and looked down toward Sodom.17 The LORD considered: Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,18 now that he is to become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth are to find blessing in him?19 Indeed, I have singled him out that he may direct his children and his household in the future to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD may put into effect for Abraham the promises he made about him.20So the LORD said: The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave,21 that I must go down to see whether or not their actions are as bad as the cry against them that comes to me. I mean to find out.

22 As the men turned and walked on toward Sodom, Abraham remained standing before the LORD.23 Then Abraham drew near and said: ‘Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked?24 Suppose there were fifty righteous people in the city; would you really sweep away and not spare the place

for the sake of the fifty righteous people within it?²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing, to kill the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike! Far be it from you! Should not the judge of all the world do what is just?' ²⁶ The LORD replied: If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.²⁷ Abraham spoke up again: 'See how I am presuming to speak to my Lord, though I am only dust and ashes! ²⁸ What if there are five less than fifty righteous people? Will you destroy the whole city because of those five?' I will not destroy it, he answered, if I find forty-five there. ²⁹ But Abraham persisted, saying, 'What if only forty are found there?' He replied: I will refrain from doing it for the sake of the forty. ³⁰ Then he said, 'Do not let my Lord be angry if I go on. What if only thirty are found there?' He replied: I will refrain from doing it if I can find thirty there. ³¹ Abraham went on, 'Since I have thus presumed to speak to my Lord, what if there are no more than twenty?' I will not destroy it, he answered, for the sake of the twenty. ³² But he persisted: 'Please, do not let my Lord be angry if I speak up this last time. What if ten are found there?' For the sake of the ten, he replied, I will not destroy it.³³ The LORD departed as soon as he had finished speaking with Abraham, and Abraham returned home.'" (Gn 18: 16-33)

The two angels arrived in Sodom in the evening, and when Lot, who was sitting in the gateway of the city, saw them, he approached them, then bowed with his face to the ground and invited them into his home. They wanted to reject his offer and spend the night in the town square, but Lot insisted so persistently that they eventually accepted his offer. After dinner, Lot's house was surrounded by a raging crowd of men from Sodom who requested from Lot to send them out so that they could have relations with them. Lot tried to protect his guests, but the crowd was persistent. The two angels then pulled Lot into the house and struck these men with blindness. They warned Lot that they would destroy the city, so they ordered him to flee the city with his family.

"¹ The two angels reached Sodom in the evening, as Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he got up to greet them; and bowing down with his face to the ground, ² he said, 'Please, my lords, come aside into your servant's house for the night, and bathe your feet; you can get up early to continue your journey.' But they replied, 'No, we will pass the night in the town square.'
³ He urged them so strongly, however, that they turned aside to his place and entered his house. He prepared a banquet for them, baking unleavened bread,

and they dined. 4 Before they went to bed, the townsmen of Sodom, both young and old—all the people to the last man—surrounded the house. 5 They called to Lot and said to him, ‘Where are the men who came to your house tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have sexual relations with them.’ 6 Lot went out to meet them at the entrance. When he had shut the door behind him, 7 he said, ‘I beg you, my brothers, do not do this wicked thing! 8 I have two daughters who have never had sexual relations with men. Let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you please. But do not do anything to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.’ 9 They replied, ‘Stand back! This man,’ they said, ‘came here as a resident alien, and now he dares to give orders! We will treat you worse than them!’ With that, they pressed hard against Lot, moving in closer to break down the door. 10 But his guests put out their hands, pulled Lot inside with them, and closed the door; 11 they struck the men at the entrance of the house, small and great, with such a blinding light that they were utterly unable to find the doorway. 12 Then the guests said to Lot: ‘Who else belongs to you here? Sons-in-law, your sons, your daughters, all who belong to you in the city—take them away from this place! 13 We are about to destroy this place, for the outcry reaching the LORD against those here is so great that the LORD has sent us to destroy it.’ 14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had contracted marriage with his daughters. ‘Come on, leave this place,’ he told them; ‘the LORD is about to destroy the city.’ But his sons-in-law thought he was joking. 15 As dawn was breaking, the angels urged Lot on, saying, ‘Come on! Take your wife with you and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city.’ 16 When he hesitated, the men, because of the LORD’s compassion for him, seized his hand and the hands of his wife and his two daughters and led them to safety outside the city. 17 As soon as they had brought them outside, they said: ‘Flee for your life! Do not look back or stop anywhere on the Plain. Flee to the hills at once, or you will be swept away.’ 18 ‘Oh, no, my lords!’ Lot replied to them. 19 ‘You have already shown favour to your servant, doing me the great kindness of saving my life. But I cannot flee to the hills, or the disaster will overtake and kill me. 20 Look, this town ahead is near enough to escape to. It is only a small place. Let me flee there—is it not a small place?—to save my life.’ 21 ‘Well, then,’ he replied, ‘I grant you this favor too. I will not overthrow the town you have mentioned. 22 Hurry, escape there! I cannot do anything until you arrive there.’ That is why the town is called Zoar. 23 The sun had risen over the earth when Lot arrived in Zoar, 24 and the LORD rained down sulphur upon Sodom

and Gomorrah, fire from the LORD out of heaven. 25 He overthrew those cities and the whole Plain, together with the inhabitants of the cities and the produce of the soil. 26 But Lot's wife looked back, and she was turned into a pillar of salt. 27 The next morning Abraham hurried to the place where he had stood before the LORD. 28 As he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and the whole region of the Plain, he saw smoke over the land rising like the smoke from a kiln. 29 When God destroyed the cities of the Plain, he remembered Abraham and sent Lot away from the upheaval that occurred when God overthrew the cities where Lot had been living." (Gn 19: 1-29)

The biblical motif about a rich man and a poor beggar Lazarus from Luke's Gospel can be found in the legends about Gavan. Poor beggar Lazarus laid covered with sores at the gate of a reckless rich man who lived in luxury. He longed to eat what fell from the rich man's table, but no one offered it to him. After he died, the angels carried him into Abraham's embrace. The rich man faced an entirely different fate after his death.

"19 'There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. 20 And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. 22 When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and from the nether-world, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. 24 And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' 25 Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. 26 Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.' 27 He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' 29 But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' 30 He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' 31 Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded

if someone should rise from the dead.”” (Lk 16: 19-31)

The legends about Gavan are present in the written sources and oral tradition. Records of the friar Petar Bakula show that there is a swallow-hole Vrbina in the village of Blaževići in Herzegovina where the shepherdess of the rich man Gavan once had a house. She kept sheep at the location of the Lake Velika Krenica, while she kept lambs at the site of the Lake Mala Krenica. God punished the vanity of Gavan's wealthy family by causing the ground to open wide and devour them and all their earthly possessions. The mean mistress contemptuously threw a mere piece of mouldy bread to the poor man, presumed to be Jesus Christ in disguise, only to stomp on it with her foot and toss it towards the poor man. This caused the ground to open wide and devour all of Gavan's earthly possessions. As in the Biblical text about Lazarus where the rich man scorned the poor beggar, Jesus arrived in disguise to witness their sin in person.

“One day, a famished poor man arrived at Gavan's gate. When he invoked God's love, he humbly asked the vain mistress for some food to satiate his hunger. And the mistress, after atrociously insulting the poor unnamed man to scorn him even more, found a piece of stiff mouldy bread crust, stomped on it with her foot and tossed it towards the poor man. On departure, the poor man said to the mistress: He who shows no mercy shall be judged without mercy. Having said that, all of Gavan's earthly possessions at different locations instantaneously collapsed into an infinite abyss opened in the ground. People say that all of Gavan's earthly possessions, including these three locations and the location by the lake in Proložac near Imotski and by Lake Borak, were completely devoured by the abyss. People from Herzegovina tend to recount elaborate fables about Gavan's punishment. I have merely covered the moral of the folk-tale and that, to my mind, is enough. People believe that the poor beggar was Jesus Christ himself.” (Bakula 1970: 165).

Some legends about the doom of Gavan's castles have a developed plot. Such a legend was recorded by the friar Silvestar Kulteša in 1936:

“Once upon a time, there was a rich man Gavan who lived near Imotski. His body resembled that of a man, but his heart and soul were pure evil. Gavan had everything in the world but was devoid of a soul. Gavan had two castles, one more beautiful than the other. Various treasures were harboured in the castles, and many more outside of the castles. Whose field is it? Gavan's. Whose hill is

it? Gavan's. His wealth was abundant beyond count. He kept his money in the rooms, in the attic, and not in the chests.

He kept gold in one room, silver in the other room, and copper in the third room. He kept livestock in seventy-seven places. In all seventy-seven places he had stalls and stables. He had different stalls for large and small livestock. How did Gavan accumulate such wealth? He inherited some of it from his elders, but he gained most of it illicitly. He used fraud, coercion, racketeering to pressurise the city and all villages from Kamenjak to Grude, the wind-bound and the west side of the field and all around the field of Imotski. He had many serfs and servants who were just as callous as he (Gavan) was. He used his serfs to seize other people's properties in court. His serfs would commit perjury to help him win the case. If he loaned you a hundred, in a year you will have to return double. Gavan spent his summers in one castle and winters in the other. He had a wife and a baby boy. Gavan's wife was a living image of him or perhaps even worse than he was, more arrogant. She despised the peasants and chased away beggars.

She caused a lot of heartache to the poor. It was so devastating that God could not bear these cries and tears any more. So, one day, Jesus - mercifully - arrived disguised as a beggar at the gate of Gavan's eastern castle. Gavan was away but his wife was there.

He went to the western castle to weigh and count his money. The Lord knocked on Gavan's door with a stick and said: 'Please, give some food to this beggar! Show kindness to this poor man, may God bless your soul! Show compassion to this hungry man, my mistress, may God be compassionate to your soul!' When Gavan's wife grew tired of him, she presented herself at the door and said to the beggar: 'Get off my doorstep! You lazy vagabonds keep bothering me and my child in my own home!' – 'Please, just give me a piece of bread, God bless your soul!' – the beggar replied. 'I don't need your God when my Gavan is by my side!' – Gavan's wife replied arrogantly.

In order to get rid of the beggar, she called the servant to bring some bread crust, so the servant put it on her slipper and she tossed it to the beggar. She abhorred at the idea of handing it over with her hand to the beggar. 'My mistress, please give me a stalk of cabbage when God blessed you with such an abundance in your garden.' – the beggar asked. Gavan's wife ordered her servant to pick him a stalk of cabbage by the road where the dogs usually relieved themselves. The servant went to the garden but picked a healthy stalk. This servant was a God-fearing man. The beggar took the stalk and went his way. Before he left, he told the servant: 'Many things will happen tonight, but you should have no fear!

Thunders will strike, the ground will tremble, and the lakes will open wide. But you will not be harmed!’ Having said that, the beggar went his way.

The servant was left bemused. The servant believed in God and, for his faith in God and his own soul, he provided fair and honest service to Gavan, yet he did not believe everything the beggar said. Of all Gavan’s possessions, the servant loved Gavan’s child the most. When our Lord - mercifully - parted with the honest servant, he went to see each of Gavan’s shepherds and serfs. He visited all seventy-seven shepherds and serfs, but he only found two with a heart and a soul. Whenever Jesus approached a shepherd or a serf, he would ask for a small donation for his God-blessed journey. And all of them rejected him or denied him except for two men. This is why God punished all of them, except for these two shepherds.

Jesus asked one of these men to give him a lamb. ‘Would you, my friend – Jesus asked the first shepherd – for the love of God, show mercy to a poor man and give up one of your lambs? It has been a while since I ate.’ – ‘My master Gavan – he said to Jesus - gives me only three sheep a year. Each of these three sheep had just one lamb, which is three lambs in total. My children are also naked and barefoot and hungry, but since you are asking for the love of God, I will give up one lamb. I will go get it immediately.’

‘You don’t have to go – Jesus said – If your heart follows your words, the lamb will come by itself!’ And in a few moments, the lamb came out of the stable. The shepherd took the knife, slaughtered the lamb and cut the wool off it. His wife put the water on the stove to boil and placed the meat inside. When the lamb was done, Jesus said: ‘Let us all sit down and feast, but please keep all of lamb’s bones in one place!’ After they ate to satiation, Jesus collected the bones and placed them at the centre of the table. The bones joined together, the lamb came to life and ran off to the stable. Then Jesus said: ‘My friend, God will turn this lamb into thousand sheep!’, and so it happened. When Jesus came to the other Gavan’s honest shepherd, he asked a handful of wool for his God-blessed journey. This one also replied: ‘My friend, since you invoked God’s name, I will not only give you a handful but an entire fleece. I myself am barefoot and my clothes are ragged, and my wife and children are in an even worse condition. I am Gavan’s servant. I don’t need to tell you more! Regardless of that, since you invoked God’s name, please take the entire fleece!’

Jesus took the fleece of wool, made the sign of the cross over it and an entire stack of fleece appeared in front of the house. The beggar disappeared, but the wool remained. Gavan spent the entire day weighing and counting his money,

but he still had not finished. His wealth was infinite. The night fell while he was still counting, so he decided to spend the night in the western castle. While he was busy counting money, he did not even notice what was happening in the castle. Heavy black clouds crept all the way to the ground over the castle. It was dark as a grave. Thunders and lightning struck from Biokovo and Zavelim. The thunders struck and offered Gavan the last chance for conversion and repentance. Oh, but all in vain! Gavan does not believe in God, he believes in money! Thunders and lightning began approaching, fierce winds shook Gavan's castles, yet Gavan only kept staring at his money. Heavy rumbling was heard underground, the ground was starting to shake but Gavan could not part from his money. One strong blow from the earthquake hit the castle, only to be followed by a stronger blow.

When the third – strongest – blow hit, the ground opened wide. The ground devoured all Gavan's castles and his money, together with Gavan and his posse. Thus, Red Lake emerged. Since the walls surrounding the castle were round, the lake assumed a round shape, as well. Castle walls can be made out in the water to this day during bright skies and calm waters. But there is no sight of Gavan. Gavan fell all the way to hell, and his money and castles did not. The same night the eastern castle collapsed together with Gavan's wife. Wind, thunders, lightning and rumbling fiercely frightened Gavan's wife in the eastern castle. She cried for Gavan's help, but to no avail. She summoned the servants, but there were no servants in sight. They were preoccupied with their own fate. Their lives were more important to them than the mistress's life. While Gavan's wife was screaming, crying and groaning, and yet failing to invoke God's name, the beggar from that morning appeared before Gavan's loyal and good servant and told him: 'Take the nosebag hanging from the beam, you will find your entire pay there. And run as far as you can, because this will all collapse soon! It will crumble into abyss! This is a doomed house and a doomed place!'

As soon as he has uttered these words, he vanished. The servant grabbed the nosebag and put it over his shoulder. While he was contemplating which other personal belongings to take, he remembered that Gavan's baby boy was still in the crib. He quickly jumped to the child, took him in his arms and ran. As soon as he has exited the castle, the castle collapsed into the ground together with Gavan's wife. With every step the servant took carrying the child in his arms, the ground behind him disappeared making way for the lake. Thus, Blue Lake known as Imotski Lake or Gavan's Lake emerged. That is why Blue Lake assumed an elongated shape instead of a round one. The servant first ran towards

the field, then westward to his native house, because he was born in Kamenjak. When he arrived in Proložac, he heard a voice from the cloud: 'Drop the child if you want to get out alive!' The servant stopped for a moment and reflected on these words, then dropped the child. As he dropped the child, the ground opened wide and devoured the child. At that moment, a great stream of running water emerged from the ground. Today that site is known as 'Utopišće'. The servant felt sorry for the child and stood there motionless. But again, a voice called him from the cloud: 'Run as far as you can, do not lament for the child! Evil kin should have no spawn!!!'

Slightly above the Church of Virgin Mary in Proložac there are two round and deep lakes. Today they are known as Grbavac Lakes. Some people say that those were the locations of Gavan's two threshing floors. Others say, two haystacks. Regardless of whether they were threshing floors or haystacks, today they are two lakes, two witnesses of how God punishes vanity and greediness. There are two quagmires near Vinjani Donji denoted as Krenice and Udovica. Gavan's winter stables were located both at Krenice and Udovica. The stock is not to blame for having a cruel master. Lakes did not gape wide there on that night, but the whirlpools appeared, and the entire livestock drowned in the water. Both Krenice and Udovica are ill-fated and doomed places. Even today when the water emerges from Krenice, it does a lot of harm. Udovica widowed many women of that place very early in their lives. Truth be told, Udovica is also known as Duovica, perhaps due to ghosts or drowning, or it is merely a pun, who knows.

There are three lakes at the present-day Proložko Blato: Provalija, Krenica and Postranje Lake. Provalija is small, yet deep. Gavan also had a stall and a threshing floor there. In Krenica, there were bundles and boundaries. In Postranje Lake, there were stalls and haystacks. The same night, Provalija gaped wide, Krenica sunk, and Postranje Lake appeared. That horrific night, the ground devoured everything, and the water flooded all of Gavan's possessions. This place is still covered with water. Out of seventy-seven shepherds and serfs, seventy-five shepherds and all serfs died on that horrible night. They died an atrocious death, devoured by the ground, but they were not covered by water as Gavan and Gavan's wife.

God deemed them as with lesser sin. These are dried up lakes today. Of all Gavan's earthly possessions, only the hens survived together with their hen coop. Gavan's hen coop had three attics. There are old walls protruding from the ground between Blue Lake and Red Lake which stand upright. Moss, black-

berry vine and ivy cover these walls, but they still stand strong. People refer to these walls as 'Gavan's hen coop'. The local people constantly recount Gavan's story. Everyone of them knows a piece of the story but rarely does anyone know the whole story!" (Kutleša 1997: 420–423).

Aetiological folk-tales of hydronyms are affiliated with the legend mentioned above: Red (Crljeno) Lake, Blue Lake; whirlpool *Utopišće*; quagmires: *Krenice*, *Udovica* (*Duovica*); lakes: *Provalija*, *Krenica*, *Postranje Lake*; chrematonym *Gavan's hen coop*.

Inspired by legends, Petar Gudelj wrote a legend about *Red lake*.

"Once upon a time, there was a man (Once? One man?) who had no fear of God and did not care about his fellow man. He oppressed man and had no respect for God. His name was Gavan, his castle was in the place of the present-day Red lake. As arrogant, cruel and godless Gavan was, his wife Gavanovica was even worse. His servants: raging dogs. All but one, who was just and merciful. He also had numerous real dogs, more wolves than dogs: released upon poor people and beggars by servants.

God got tired of curses from the poor people and decided to test Gavan one last time. He sent Jesus and Saint Peter, disguised as beggars, to Gavan's home. With all the servants and dogs around them, they barely reached Gavanovica and then started to lament like beggars do: 'If you give to us, God will give to you!' Gavanovica answered in an arrogant manner:

*I don't need your God
When I have my Gavan by my side!*

Then she picked up a bread crust and tossed it with her foot. After receiving nothing but mockery, the beggars asked the servants at least to give them some cow dung and a baking lid, so that they can make bread out of dung and bake it under the baking lid. A just servant took pity on them. Others laughed and made fun of them. They waited for beggars to remove the baking lid so that they can see the beggars' bread. But, the bread moved it on its own. It was white and had a nice smell. Whiter and more fragrant bread had never been baked in Gavan's castle.

After the night fall, God thundered from the sky and split open the ground. The ground devoured Gavan's castle with Gavan, Gavanovica, their children, serv-

ants and dogs inside it. Only the just servant picked up the youngest of Gavan's children and started running towards today's Blato. Wherever he put his foot down, the ground started to open and water came rushing. Thus the lakes around the field came to being. As soon as he reached Blato (still dry), water started to encircle him.

Seeing that there was no way out, already tired, he looked to the sky and cried out: 'God, help me!' At that moment, he heard a voice: 'Drop what you are carrying in your arms!'

The servant dropped the Gavan's child and saved himself. In the spot where the child was dropped, a round lake Krenica appeared" (Gudelj 1996: 22).

In 1884, Josip Eugen Tomić wrote a poem *Red Lake in Imotski*.¹

¹ See: Dragić 1996: 79-81.

“Imota field, how magnificent you are!
 So breath-taking and fertile!
 Being so effusive is a wonderful sight,
 Amidst the hills with all your might
 Naturally basking in your glistening worth,
 Oh, you tiny heaven on earth!
 All around your ample lap
 The magnificent visions of robust hills un-
 wrap.
 And to make you even more enchanting and
 kind,
 A wreath of flowers is intertwined
 Below the village white as snow
 Around your forehead full of glow.
 Glistening as silver perches
 River waters glint like sun-soaked birches
 Running from the mountains with grace
 To give you comfort and warm embrace
 While they soak your golden fields
 And the green pastures and their yields.
 With the plethora of your natural treasure
 You provide a loving home and pleasure
 To children who are blessed by God `s hand
 To live on your sacred land.
 Tripled is the joy of any mother known
 Of any man who gets to call you their own.
 People have been recounting an old folk-tale,
 Whose author has yet to be unveiled,
 That once upon a time, date unknown,
 A master reigned well-known
 A ferocious lord and a nobleman in his right
 Infamous for his great fortune and might.
 At the slopes of a steep hill
 His ivory castles stood still,
 And the infinite field so ample and bright
 And everything else within his sight
 Was his and his alone,

He believed that entire Imota was his own.
 His mistress was so arrogant and vain
 She shared his fortune and his name
 And enjoyed everything they had and more
 Many children and a hope she yearned for
 That their kin expands and thrives
 And their clan infinitely survives.
 There was always company and loyal guests
 In Gavan`s house that never rests.
 His house was a joyous refuge, days on end
 To many lackeys and close friends
 Who sang loud and merry songs together
 All days and all nights like birds of feather.
 But, wait! Any pauper who dares to show up
 Will fall into a deadly trap
 When he steps into this monumental bee-hive
 He will barely get out of there alive.
 Gavan will release his famished hounds
 To dismember this poor man without any
 grounds.
 Every single person in this house had a heart
 of stone
 And they were all callous to the bone:
 Father, mother, even the tiniest child
 All of them were ruthless and wild.
 Any pauper who dares to knock at the gate
 Will experience the same unfortunate fate.
 One day Gavan hosted a feast
 And everyone came, to say the least.
 They sang, ate and drank,
 And celebrated at the highest rank.
 The clamour made the entire castle shake
 As if the walls were hit by a large earthquake.
 Suddenly, a poor beggar appeared in their
 sight
 Like he fell from the skies in broad daylight
 He had three starving children on his side

Trembling and shaking as if they are trying
to hide.
Their faces are bloodless and pale,
And you can see a blatant misery unveil.
All the guests stood shocked to stare
While the host sat in his high chair,
His children uttered with a squeak:
'What do these bums seek?
Filthy vagrants get out of here now
Or the hounds will chase you down!'
As soon as they went around
To get the blood-thirsty hounds,
Gavan's wife stood up in a flash
To defend their acts so evil and brash,
She whispered in the poor man's ear apart
A baby is growing underneath my heart.
After that, the poor old man
Said to Gavan's wife right then:
'My mistress, for the love of God so wide-
spread,
Please give us a piece of bread!
For two whole days in a row, I swear,
We haven't had any food to share.'
When Gavan's wife heard him speak
She burst into laughter with the highest
squeak
And being so arrogant and vain
She reached for a small piece of bread, so
plain,
And put it on her left foot at last:
'Here, old man, eat this fast!'
Humble poor beggar burst into tears in de-
spair
Taking bread from her foot with utmost care,
He kissed the bread and divided it in a heart-
beat
For his three despaired children to eat:

'Here, my children, a gift from God,
May He always be blessed and awed!'
Immediately after that, the poor beggar said:
'My mistress, for the love of God so wide-
spread
Please give us a drop of water first
To quench our unbearable thirst!
God will abundantly reward your every deed
For all you have done to these children in
need.'
Then Gavan's wife burst with a rage,
And broke out into a wild rampage
Towards the poor beggar who stood alone,
And hissed at him in a violent tone:
'I do not need your God as a guide
While I have Gavan by my side!'
An angel disguised as the poor beggar in plain
sight
Turned into an archangel in all his might.
A light showered him from the celestial
dreamland,
And a glistening sword appeared in his hand.
A righteous Judgement has arrived.
Be fearful, oh, you insane crowd!
The angel spoke in a strident voice
'May this castle be doomed without a choice!
Gavan, right here and right now I doom your
life
Together with your children and your wife!
Your glory and your wealth will be erased
And they will disappear without a trace!
Having said that, the angel soared with grace
Carrying the children in his embrace.
Then the heavens turned dark as a grave,
The clouds turned the sky into a cave.
The lightning flashed, the thunders roared
bright.

The ground trembled and gaped wide in plain sight.

The old castle walls shivered,
Everything collapsed, crumbled and echoed
'Please, God, have mercy on our soul!'
Cried Gavan, his wife and the guests before the fall.

In vain! The Judgement Day is here
To make the human arrogance utterly disappear.

Suddenly, the hardened ground gaped wide,
And the belly of the earth engorged inside
All doomed souls in a blink
Together with the ivory castle that would sink
Not a single stone would survive

To keep their memory alive.
Whoever walks to that place
Where Gavan and his castle sunk without a trace

Will find a lake to this date
Frightening, deserted, desolate.
For its bright and shiny rocks,
It was named Red by the local folks.

They know that the embrace of the lake may still hide

A plethora of atrocities deep inside.
Evil-spirited fairies have found their home
Forever and ever in that dome.

And the witches and werewolves unified
Dwell with them in it, side by side.
There, in the deepest and the darkest night hour

If you walk the path with audacity and will-power,
You will hear the fairies scream and squeak
And the werewolves roar and shriek
While the hovering witches make crackling sounds
Resembling the flaming fires on the ground.

You will also hear from the deep holes
The cry of the forsaken souls,
You will hear the children wail in pain
As the furious fairies torture them again and again.

It will send chills down your spine, my man,
So, you better run, run away as far as you can!"

A similar legend was recorded in Klobuk near Ljubuški in 2004. That record, despite the similarity, contains some differences concerning Bakula's legend. In a more recently dated record, Jesus and St. Peter disguised as poor beggars appeared at the gates of Gavan's castle in order to verify whether the rumours about his stinginess were true. They first met a good servant who was willing to help them, but she was unable to do anything without the permission of Gavan and Gavan's wife. She said that she would summon her master and mistress, but also that they should not expect much from them (Dragić 2013:80). Gavan did not even want to come to the gates to see who was looking for him while his wife wanted to see who was bothering them. When she saw the two beggars at her gates, she did everything she could to send them away, but they were persistent in their pleas for some food. They asked for a head of cabbage, and when Gavan's wife, realising it would be difficult to get rid of them otherwise, ordered the servant to go to the garden and pick a single head of cabbage, not a healthy one, but the one half-eaten by the sheep (Dragić 2013: 80). Gavan's wife showed contempt towards God, as well, when Jesus asked her whether she feared God's punishment, to which she replied: I don't need your God when my Gavan is by my side! While they spoke, the servant disobeyed the mistress's order and covertly gave Jesus and St. Peter, a new and large head of cabbage. On departure, they thanked her and went their way, and soon after that, the disaster began: the ground started trembling and rumbling, and it began to rain. No one understood what was suddenly happening (Dragić, 2013: 81). When the servant saw what was happening, she took two children and ran away.

However, no matter how fast she ran, the ground gaped wide beneath her. This is how the legend explains the appearance of the canal connecting Mala and Velika Krenica. As she was running, God spoke to her and told her to leave the boy behind if she wanted to save herself. Mala Krenica is located at the site where she dropped the boy, and when she dumped him, the ground beneath her stopped collapsing, and she and the girl were safe. The Lake of Velika Krenica is located at the site of Gavan's castles, and the locals believe that the lake is haunted and bottomless. The boy who was dropped at the location of Mala Krenica was Gavan's only male heir, and God asked the servant to drop him precisely because he wanted to terminate this evil bloodline. According to the legend, Gavan's stalls and the rest of his large estate which collapsed into the depths of the lakes were located at the site of the lakes of Mala and Velika Vrbina and Red and Blue Lake near Imotski (Dragić 2013: 80–81).

Botica presented a record from the Imotski borderland about the fate of Gavan's castles. He emphasised that there was a large number of oral records on that subject, "but it rarely occurred that the oral reports were transformed into a story whose struc-

tural elements would indicate antiquity” (1995: 65). Red Lake emerged at the site of greedy Gavan’s castle; his greediness is reflected in the fact that he continued to count his money and refused to part from it even at the moment of the imminent doom.

“Once upon a time, there was a rich man Gavan who lived near Imotski. His body resembled that of a man, but his heart and soul were pure evil. Gavan had everything in the world but was devoid of a soul. Gavan had two castles, one more beautiful than the other. He had riches of all sorts in his castles. And he had even more wealth outside of his castles. Whose field is it? Gavan’s! Whose wealth is it? Gavan’s!’ (Insatiable, vain, arrogant, punished at the moment when he was counting his money): ‘dark clouds descended all the way to the ground... Thunders and lightning began approaching, fierce winds shook Gavan’s castles, yet Gavan only kept staring at his money. Rumbling was heard underground and the ground began shaking. But Gavan could not part from his money. One fierce blow caused by the earthquake hit the castle, followed by another one: even stronger. When the third – strongest – blow hit, the ground gaped wide. The ground devoured all Gavan’s castles and his money, together with Gavan and his posse. Thus, Red Lake emerged. Since the walls surrounding the castle were round, the lake assumed the round shape, as well. Castle walls can be made out in the water to this day during bright skies and calm waters. But there is no sight of Gavan...” (Botica 1995: 65).

Another legend recorded by the same author from the area of Rijeka near Dubrovnik recounts the story of a lonely man Gavan to whom God sent two children out of pity to see if he was worthy of His mercy. However, Gavan proved to be a vile man undeserving of mercy, so God punished him by turning him into a reed and by flooding his castles with river water.

“There is a story in Rijeka about Gavan’s castles located on Palata. They were luxurious, filled with riches of all sorts, yet devoid of love. They were completely loveless. An old man Gavan resided there alone with his abundant wealth. Never has a young person’s foot stepped into his castles nor has the cry of a child ever been heard there. One time, when the merciful God passed through Rijeka, he felt sorry for the old man Gavan when he saw him sitting alone at the bench near the window. God then decided to give him an opportunity to prove that he is worthy of mercy. He sent two children at Gavan’s gates. They knocked at the door and asked Gavan to let them in because they had been lost and could

not find their way. Gavan let them in, but he did not offer them any food, instead he forced them to sleep in the stall and planned to make them his servants. Early in the morning, he ordered them to clean up the stall and the yard to make up for his 'good' deed. The children did it quickly and meticulously. However, this was not enough for Gavan, so he closed the gates of the castle and refused to let them leave. He thought that no one from the village had seen the children, and, since he needed young servants, he would keep them there. At that moment, the skies above Gavan's castles turned dark as if the bad weather was approaching. This was God's furious response to Gavan's greed. His breath transformed into winds, and his eyes struck a thunder to burn down Gavan's castles. God turned Gavan into a reed and opened the gates to let the children out. River Rijeka changed its course and flooded the charred castles. This is how those who are strangers to goodness and who disrespect other people's good intentions end up..." (Botica 1995: 66).

In V. Bogišić's collection of manuscripts, Cavtat library, sign, III./6a, Thirteenth story by Ana Matijaševića speaks of Gavan:

"There was a man called Gavan that had a wife who knew neither God nor poor people, and only had faith in the great fortune they possessed. One day, God told his angels, to take gusle, play them in *dudaši* manner and ask of God, in order to test the rich Gavanka. The angels left and went to Gavanka's court. They played gusle in *dudaši* manner and asked of God. Gavanka told them to go with God. She did not give to God, she had God at home, rich Gavan who owned a lot of silver and gold and beautiful pearls, so numerous that she could not eat them if she wanted. The angels left and told God what they heard. He sent them again to ask of God. They went and she told them once more to go with God. She did not give to God, she had God at home, rich Gavan who owned a lot of silver and gold and beautiful pearls, so numerous that she could not eat them if she wanted. The angels returned to God and told Him. He sent them for the third time and they went, but Gavanka chased them away and tossed them some bread. The angels left and on their way met Gavan's cattle and a shepherd following the herd. They asked him of God, but he replied: 'I do not own anything but a single sheep that recently had young and of which owners know nothing.' The angels took it from him and told him to come with them. The shepherd replied that he cannot go with them and leave the cattle unattended because his landlord would kill him. The angels repeated the invitation and told him that cattle would go

on its own. The shepherd agreed and when they climbed a mountain, the angels told him to turn around and take a look at the Gavan's property. Upon turning around, he saw that Gavan's home had collapsed. At the end, the angels told him that if he had not followed them, he would have vanished with Gavan's estate!

Gavanka told them:

Angels go with God.

.....

I have God at home

Rich Gavan

Who owns

A lot of silver and gold

And beautiful pearls.”²

In the legend from Bruška³, Jesus and St. Peter arrived at Gavan's gates disguised as poor beggars to test his mercy. His wife Jelena showed great hostility towards the guests by throwing mouldy bread in front of them. It is the only legend in this paper that mentions Gavan's wife by her name, and not by a name or a moniker derived from Gavan's name. After they met with her, they asked Gavan's servant Stipan for some food and he gave them a lamb as the only thing he got from Gavan in his ten years of service. As Jesus and St. Peter walked away from Gavan's properties, high tidal waves emerged at Lake Vrana and flooded the entire estate and drowned everyone on it, except for Stipan. He tried to save Gavan's child but an angel warned him that he would, too, drown if he did not drop the child. When the water drowned the child, it withdrew.

“In ancient times, Jesus and St. Peter walked the Earth disguised as poor beggars thus testing people's mercy. One day they reached the castle of the rich man Gavan and his wife Jelena. When they entered the gates, they asked for some bread. Jelena gave them some mouldy eight- day old bread, put it on her foot and tossed it towards them: ‘What kind of God do you worship if he cannot feed his servants but sends them instead to my house?’

Then they approached Gavan's servant Stipan and asked him for some food. He replied: ‘I have been serving Gavan for nine years and all I have ever received from him is a lamb, and if I had it here, I would give it to you.’

² See: Dragić 2003: 81.

³ Village in Bukovica. Administratively, a part of Benkovac.

Jesus then told him: 'If your heart follows your words, the lamb will come by itself.'

At that moment, the lamb appeared bleating merrily. Jesus and St. Peter confirmed that Stipan was a loyal and honest servant.

As they were leaving, Jesus waved his hand at Stipan. Great tidal waves emerged at Lake Vrana and flooded Gavan's castles, and Stipan rushed to save Gavan's child; he took him in his lap and started running in front of the massive waves that followed him. At that moment, an angel appeared from the sky and told Stipan:

'Stipan, drop that evil spawn because you will, too, be flooded by the vast sea.'

When Stipan heard it, he dropped the child who was then drowned by the waves, after which the water withdrew.

To this day, you can see the remains of Gavan's castle in Lake Vrana when the water is clear." (Botica 2011: 310).

There is a similar legend about the emergence of the lakes Krenica, Bucelj and Vrbinina in the field of Drinovci. Jesus and St. Peter are the main characters who appeared at the gates of Gavan's castle, asking for some food by invoking God's name. Gavan's vain wife replied that she did not need their God while she had Gavan by her side. She gave them a similar reply when they invoked the names of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. Her daughter-in-law was a better person than she was, so she gave them whatever she had, and they warned her about the imminent punishment and doom that awaits Gavan's superior bloodline. They advised her to take her daughter with her and run away. They even tested the mercy of a shepherd who eventually helped them, so they warned him as well. The motif of child abandonment is present in this legend, as well, because Gavan's daughter-in-law took both children with her but was forced to drop her son so that she could save herself and her daughter.

"The legend says that in ancient times, when Jesus and St. Peter still walked the Earth, the entire field of Drinovci and the surrounding area belonged to the rich man Gavan.

Jesus and St. Peter arrived at Gavan's house and asked his wife for some food by invoking God's name.

She boastfully replied: 'I don't need your God when my Gavan is by my side.'

Then St. Peter invoked Jesus's name, and she replied: 'I don't need your Jesus when I have my son.'

St. Peter repeated his plea by invoking the name of Virgin Mary, and she

replied: 'I don't need your Virgin Mary when I have my daughter' and tossed a piece of bread towards him with her foot.

Gavan's wife had a daughter-in-law who was much more kind-hearted than she was. St. Peter asked her for some food, and she gave him a head of cabbage thrown away in the dust-bin, as she could not give them anything else. Jesus thanked her for her kindness and told her: 'When the water starts flooding all around you, take your daughter and run away.'

Near Gavan's stable, they met Gavan's shepherd and asked him for a little something in God's name.

He replied: 'I cannot give you anything that belongs to Gavan, but I have a stray sheep in my herd, so I will give you this sheep.'

He slaughtered the sheep and cooked it for the beggars.

Jesus thanked the shepherd as they were leaving and said to him: 'Tomorrow you will find a bag in the stable and your entire pay in it. Take the bag and run as fast as you can.'

The next day, water started emerging from the ground. Gavan's daughter-in-law took both children as she felt sorry for her son and started running. As she ran, the water started emerging behind her until she dropped her son, then the water withdrew.

Gavan's castles transformed into Vrbina and his stable into Krenica. Bucelj emerged at the site of the dog kennels. He kept his oxen and horses near Imotski, so this is where Imotski Lake emerged." (Dragić 2003: 71)

Dragić mentioned the legend recorded by Palaversa in the area of Široki Brijeg which recounted a story about Gavan and his ruthless wife who were punished by God, and their servant who was rescued because he offered refuge and food to Jesus and St. Peter:

"In the area of Široki Brijeg, there is a legend about Gavan:

Jesus and St. Peter arrived at the house of a man named Gavan. Gavan lived in the nearby Imotski, there is even a lake where his stables were located.

They approached his wife and asked her: 'Please, give us some food, for the love of God!'

'I don't need your God when my Gavan is by my side.'

Then she kicked a piece of bread with her slipper towards them.

She said: 'Pick them a cabbage in the garden, the one where the dog relieves himself.'

And so it happened. He had a servant. They came to the servant who took care of the sheep; he had only one sheep and slaughtered it to serve it to them for dinner.

Then Jesus said to the servant: 'I will tell you something: all Gavan's earthly possessions will collapse into abyss and the lake will emerge at that spot. But the pay for your good deed will hang on a beam. When the crumbling begins, take the nosebag and you will find your entire earnings there. Then run away,' he said.

But he felt sorry for the baby boy, so he took him along. The ground behind his back started to open wide.

Then a voice told him: 'Drop the child!'

When he dropped the child, the ground stopped crumbling." (Dragić 2003: 72).

In the area of Čitluk, there was a story about Jesus and St. Peter who walked the Earth and reached Gavan's house in Bekija disguised as poor beggars. They only found his wife in the house, so they asked her: "Please, give us some food, for the love of Good! She replied to their plea as follows: I don't need your God when my Gavan is by my side!" (Dragić 2003: 72).

There is a legend in the area of Konjic with aetiological elements explaining the origin of Konjic. It does not mention Gavan by name, but there are similar motifs as in the folk-tales about the doom of Gavan's castles: Jesus travelled the world disguised as a poor beggar; he searched for someone to accommodate him overnight but to no avail. There was only one poor woman with three children who welcomed him into her house - Jesus told her to gather her belongings and run away with her children, as the village would be destroyed. This legend contains a motif of a poor widow who has no food to offer her children let alone to a guest, which is present in the Bible in the Old Testament when the prophet Elijah met the widow from Zarephath (1 Kings 17, 7-16).⁴ The widow in this legend looked back to see what was left of her house like the

⁴ 1 Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab: "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, during these years there shall be no dew or rain except at my word." 2 The word of the LORD came to Elijah: 3 Leave here, go east and hide in the Wadi Cherith, east of the Jordan. 4 You shall drink of the wadi, and I have commanded ravens to feed you there. 5 So he left and did as the LORD had commanded. He left and remained by the Wadi Cherith, east of the Jordan. 6 Ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the wadi. 7 After some time, however, the wadi ran dry, because no rain had fallen in the land. 8 So the word of the LORD came to him: 9 Arise, go to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow there to feed you. 10 He arose and went to Zarephath. When he arrived at the entrance of the city, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called out to her, "Please bring me a small cupful of

wife of Lot (Genesis 19, 26) but she was not punished for that. There is an aetiological motif regarding the origin of the city of Konjic which was named after the widow's horse because it was erected at the site where the horse dug his hoof into the ground three times, as previously announced by Jesus.

This story is recounted in the area of Konjic to this day:

“When Jesus, God praise his soul, walked the Earth, one day he disguised himself as a poor beggar. Thus disguised, he visited various villages and looked for someone to accommodate him overnight but to no avail. After a long trip, he arrived in Borak and entered a poor house where a woman lived with her three children. He asked the woman if she could accommodate him overnight, and she said:

‘I would gladly invite you into my home, but I have no food to give you. I put three droppings under the baking lid to offer them instead of bread.’

So, the Lord came in, God praise his soul, made the sign of the cross over the baking lid and told the woman to check what was under it. The woman lifted the baking lid and found a huge round loaf of bread. Then Jesus told her: ‘Go on and cut the bread and give it to your children for dinner.’

After the meal, he told her to gather her meagre belongings and load them onto her horse. When they left the village, the woman looked back to see her

water to drink.” 11 She left to get it, and he called out after her, “Please bring along a crust of bread.” 12 She said, “As the LORD, your God, lives, I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug. Just now I was collecting a few sticks, to go in and prepare something for myself and my son; when we have eaten it, we shall die.” 13 Elijah said to her, “Do not be afraid. Go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake and bring it to me. Afterwards you can prepare something for yourself and your son. 14 For the LORD, the God of Israel, says: The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day when the LORD sends rain upon the earth.” 15 She left and did as Elijah had said. She had enough to eat for a long time—he and she and her household. 16 The jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD spoken through Elijah. 17 Sometime later the son of the woman, the owner of the house, fell sick, and his sickness grew more severe until he stopped breathing. 18 So she said to Elijah, “Why have you done this to me, man of God? Have you come to me to call attention to my guilt and to kill my son?” 19 Elijah said to her, “Give me your son.” Taking him from her lap, he carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. 20 He called out to the LORD: “LORD, my God, will you afflict even the widow with whom I am staying by killing her son?” 21 Then he stretched himself out upon the child three times and he called out to the LORD: “LORD, my God, let the life breathe return to the body of this child.” 22 The LORD heard the prayer of Elijah; the life breath returned to the child's body and he lived. 23 Taking the child, Elijah carried him down into the house from the upper room and gave him to his mother. Elijah said, “See! Your son is alive.” 24 The woman said to Elijah, “Now indeed I know that you are a man of God, and it is truly the word of the LORD that you speak.” (1 Kgs, 17: 1–24)

house and saw a lake with wool combs floating on the water, and she fearfully went to get them, while Jesus freed the way and told her to collect them from the water. After the woman returned with the wool combs, Jesus told her: ‘Go on now; the place where your horse stops and digs his hoof into the ground three times is the place where you can stay for good.’ And so it happened; this place was named Konjic after the widow’s horse.” (Dragić 2003: 74).

This legend was recorded in 2001; another story about the origin of Konjic was told similarly in a legend from 2012. The legend recounts a tale of an unnamed wealthy town whose inhabitants were corrupted and stingy, located at the site of the present-day Lake Borak, where God sent a holy man instead of Jesus, who was mentioned in the previous legend, to seek shelter overnight. All rich town men denied him refuge and ridiculed him, and he managed to find it in a cottage of a poor widow who had many small, well-behaved and pious children. They shared their meagre meal with him. They offered him shelter, so the next morning instead of on the same night, as mentioned in the previous legend about Konjic, he decided to repay their hospitality by warning them that their town would be punished for the debauchery of its inhabitants. He advised them to gather their belongings, head north-west and follow the river. He told them that they should follow the river until the horse dug his front right hoof deep into the ground. They should inhabit that place with God’s blessing. They did as he told them, leaving the ruins behind. “When they looked back for the last time, they were petrified. The town disappeared into the ground before their eyes, and people’s cries and wailing were heard, while the lake emerged from numerous springs to fill that vast hole. At that moment, the holy man vanished from their sight. Thus, Lake Borak emerged” (Dragić 2013: 88–89). They followed the river Neretva as they were told, and after a few hours of walking, their horse suddenly stopped. They tried to make him move, so the widow told him: “Come on, my horsey, let’s go! However, the horse stood motionless. Suddenly, the horse dug his front right hoof into the ground three times. Then the mother realised that they had reached the place designated by the holy man. At that place, they built a cabin, and that is where Konjic originated from.” (Dragić 2013: 89). The last legend differs from the former one by the fact that the holy man precisely instructed the widow and her children to follow the river Neretva.

In contrast, Jesus, from the previous legend, told them to go as far as the horse stopped and dug his hoof into the ground three times. Also, in the myth, the widow tried to encourage the horse to move by saying “Come on, my little horse, do it!”. This detail was not mentioned in the previous legend, and the hypocorism *konjic* (little horse) which she uses became the name of the place they inhabited, which is presently

known as Konjic.

The legend of the emergence of Hutovo Blato marshlands contains the familiar motifs of a vain rich man Gavan and his equally futile wife. A young family in distress arrived in front of their castle to ask for shelter and some help, but Gavan's wife ruthlessly rejected them. The young woman cursed her after she persistently refused them and showed contempt towards the name of God and the names of the Virgin Mary and the angels the young mother had invoked. The family continued their pursuit for shelter, and Gavan's estate and family collapsed into the ground after a horrific storm. His children tried to save themselves by escaping, but they also fell into the ground. In that place, two lakes emerged which, according to the legend, are named after these children.

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“There is a legend about Gavan who was the governor in a beautiful valley surrounded by greenery. There was greenery of various sorts, abundant water sources, and, with some hard work and endeavour, he led a wonderful life in his castle in the middle of the field (marshlands). His family was large, he had enormous wealth, but he was vain. His wife was no better, either. She did not acknowledge nor help poor people.

Gavan kept livestock and was into hunting and fishing. They had been living for a long time in that beautiful surrounding and wealth. It was as if they lived in a heaven on Earth.

One day, a young family arrived at their gates and asked for an overnight shelter and some help. They were very young: husband, wife and a baby. Gavan's wife, since she had never been deprived of anything, did not even want to talk to them let alone allow them to spend the night there. They were exhausted, and they wanted shelter from the upcoming bad weather, hence they persistently pleaded for shelter, but she rejected them by saying that she had a large family and no room for people like them. The young woman begged her, cried, asked

for mercy and invoked God's name, name of the angels and the Virgin Mary. Gavan's wife scorned her cries and ridiculed her: I don't need your God when my Gavan is by my side! I don't need angels when my sons are by my side! I don't need Virgin Mary when my daughters are by my side!

The woman replied: 'I hope to God you get to experience our troubles, so you can understand our plea!'

After persistently being rejected by Gavan's wife, the family rushed off towards another light, i.e. the source of light which is the present-day Svitava. After they reached the hill, the storm began followed by heavy rain, thunders and floods. All hell broke loose. A beautiful glade where the castle was located simply collapsed into the water. Gavan and his family tried to run away from the marshlands any way they could. Only Gavan's wife remained in the flooded castle. As Gavan ran, he wandered left and right trying to reach the solid ground but wherever he went, the ground collapsed and filled up with water. A meandering river appeared wherever his foot stomped. He ran all the way to the river Krupa where his ill-fate caught up with him. He did not manage to escape because he drowned in the river.

Their children were faster, so they ran as fast as they could without worrying about anyone but themselves. But their fate caught up with them, too. The ground opened wide beneath their feet and they fell into a deep abyss, only to be covered with water.

People say that these places (present-day lakes) were named after Gavan's children: Jelim after Jelena, Desilo after Desa, Škrba after Škrba, Radanovac after Radan. All of these whirlpools are connected with the river or the pond along the path they ran.

The older children left deep waters behind, and younger children left shallow waters behind. According to the legend, this is how the present-day Hutovo Blato marshlands emerged, slightly weird-shaped and irregular.

People tend to say to this day: 'God forbid anyone should suffer Gavan's fate.'" (Dragić 2003: 74–75).

Another legend places Gavan's castles above the field of Knin and describes Gavan as a gluttonous and immoral man, who was bad-tempered and ruthless. The only one worse than him was his wife, and their numerous children were no better, either. This was evident when they hosted a party for Gavan's friends and a poor woman came to their door with seven hungry children and a sick baby in her arms. Gavan ordered his children and they gladly agreed to release the dogs to chase the woman away. They

were stopped by Gavan's pregnant wife who was afraid that the poor woman might curse her. She contemptuously kicked them a piece of bread which they gladly accepted. Then the old woman asked for some water invoking God's name, which made Gavan's wife furious, so she quickly sent them away. When the poor woman climbed the nearby hill, she cursed Gavan's bloodline and his gluttonous company, the castle was flooded. One waterfall at the river Krka appeared for each of poor woman's seven children, and Gavan's treasure became the treasure of the river Krka.

"Once upon a time, there lived a rich man Gavan whose immense treasure expanded above the field of Knin. He lived the life of debauchery and gluttony. He was bad-tempered and ruthless to everyone, especially to the poor. Since he had never been deprived of anything, he never opened his door to the poor, and if he ever did it, it would be to beat them up and chase them away.

He had a wife who was even worse than he was, viler and greedier. She did not believe in God and she had never helped the poor. Gavan had many sons and daughters and he enjoyed spending his time with them because he planned to leave all his fortune to them. They were no better than their parents. They would ridicule the poor and chase them away from the castle gates whenever they dared to ask some bread or water.

One day, Gavan decided to host a luxurious feast for his friends who were as debauched and gluttonous as he was. During the feast, a poor woman knocked on Gavan's door with her seven children, carrying a sick baby in her arms. They were all very thin, dressed in rags and exhausted from a long journey.

When he saw these poor people disturbing him at his castle during the feast, Gavan became furious and ordered his children to release the dogs. Gavan's children gladly obeyed and ran off to release the dogs. However, Gavan's pregnant wife decided to stop them at the last moment. It was not because she felt sorry for the poor woman and her children. Pity was something she had never felt. She was pregnant, and she feared that the poor woman might harm her. She gave her a piece of bread from the opulent table by kicking it with her foot on the floor with contempt and disgust. The poor woman was so happy that she distributed the piece to her hungry children. Then the poor woman humbly asked for some water invoking God's name because they were all thirsty from a long journey.

There was a mill on Gavan's property and she knew that Gavan owned the entire land within sight, so she asked for some of that water. That plea enraged Gavan's wife so much that she waved her hand at the poor woman yelling that there was only one God, her Gavan, and that she did not want to squander her

wealth on ungrateful poor people. The saddened poor woman took her children and left Gavan's castle. When she climbed the nearby hill, she cursed them all.

At that moment, the lightning flashed, the thunders struck, the ground began shaking, and the water emerged from Gavan's mill and flooded his entire property. It flooded his castle, his wife, children and his entire gluttonous company. When they needed the water so much, let them have it in abundance.

Beautiful waterfalls and travertine barriers created the river Krka with seven tributaries, one for each of that poor woman's children. The opulence from the table that contained the feast for all those gluttonous men turned into the opulence of the river Krka. The poor people from the surrounding areas began inhabiting this area thus forming the ancient Scardona and Šibenik. Ever since then, there has been plenty of water for everyone, and the sunken Gavan's castles are still visible under the beautiful waterfalls." (Dragić 2008a: 181–182).

In 1999, Dragić recorded a legend about the origin of Prokljan Lake which recounts a story of how the lake emerged at the site of Gavan's castles when his vain wife refused to give some bread to their shepherds. That is why God punished her and collapsed their entire estate into the ground to make way for the lake (Dragić 2008a: 182).

In the area of Grude, there was a legend that recounts a story of how God saw the evil ways of Gavan and his wife from above, so he sent an angel disguised as a poor man to test their mercy. People told him not to go to their castle as he would not get out of there alive. When he spoke to Gavan's wife, he could see her cruelty and vanity in person. When he pleaded with her to give him some bread by invoking God's name, she replied chanting: *"I don't need your God when I have my Gavan by my side!"* After he witnessed her cruelty in person, the angel assumed his original shape, "and God sent thunders, water and wind to destroy Gavan's castles, together with Gavan and his wife. The ground gaped wide and made way for a large lake. The lake emerged in all places where Gavan owned his properties." As in the previous legends, one of the servants took Gavan's child and started running uphill, but the voice from the sky instructed him to drop the child: "Drop that child! Evil kin should have no spawn!" After the servant dropped the baby, the waters withdrew, and the servant was able to save himself, and Red and Blue Lake emerged at that place as a reminder to people to relinquish their evil ways (Dragić 2013: 82).

The legend recounted in the area of Duvno, same as in the previous legends, tells a story of a punishment that befell Gavan and his wife because they scorned the pleas of Jesus and St. Peter for some bread. That legend differs in the fact that the lakes

did not emerge at the place of the collapse of their castle, but Jesus performed another miracle there. The shepherd who welcomed them into his home and wanted to give them his lamb feared that the mistress would realise that the lamb was missing. Jesus told him not to fear and he ordered Peter to slaughter the lamb, after which they roasted and ate it. They kept all of the lamb's bones and attached them to the lambskin, as Jesus instructed them. After they finished with their meal, Jesus made the sign of the cross over the skin and bones and said: "Get up, my lamb, and run to your flock! "The lamb came to life and it was identical to the lamb they had just eaten (Dragić 2013: 85–86).

In his book *Legends of the Croatian people (Legende puka hrvatskoga)*, Đurić recounted a legend about the origin of Skradin and Prokljan Lake. The legend says that at the bottom of Prokljan Lake, when the water is calm and clear, you can still see the remains of Gavan's castles. The vain wife of Gavan, the owner of the city and the surrounding area, who despised the poor people and "kicked a piece of stale bread to them with her foot" caused the doom of the castles. This is why God punished her by sending a massive tidal wave from the sea which sunk the city. Gavan, his wife and all inhabitants of the city drowned. The only one who survived was their child in their arms of its nanny Liburnijka. When she saw what was happening, she took the child and started running. She carried the child in her arms as she escaped the waters which followed her every step until she was so exhausted that she dropped the child. This is where a bottomless lake emerged. Gavan's shepherd who was watching all of this from the hills descended to the valley and told the young girl: "'Our tyrant is gone, and the child will return when the world becomes good again. We are all alone, where should we go? Come with me and let's build a new city which will not be governed by the likes of Gavan.' They got married and built a new city of Skradin at the estuary of the river Krka" (Đurić 2005: 97).

He also published a legend about the origin of Lake Vrana at the island of Cres recorded in 1951 by the academician Branko Fučić. The legend from Cres recounts that, once upon a time, two Gavan sisters lived at the place of the present-day Lake Vrana, one was rich and the other one was poor. "The rich one had plenty of wealth and lived a lavish and luxurious life in her castle, while the poor one lived a famished life in a small cottage." The poor sister was allowed to enter her sister's castle only when the opulent table ran out of bread. She would then come to make the bread. She would knead it in her sheepskin apron so that the crumbs of dough would stick to the sheep wool. She did it so that she could, upon her return home, remove the dough crumbs from the apron and then mix them with manure to make scones for her children. One day, an old grey-haired man arrived at her door asking for some charity. She told him that she was also poor

and had nothing to give him. He then asked for some white bread she was just making, and she said that there was no bread since she had no ingredients to make it. The old man then told her to lift the baking lid, and when she did it, she found a white wheat loaf. She was so surprised at the sight of the loaf that she gave the old man some bread to eat, after which he asked for a glass of wine. As in the previous case, she told him that there was no wine in her house, so he told her to go check in the cellar. There she found a barrel full of the finest red wine. She brought the wine for the old man, and he said to her: “You say you don’t have it, and I know you do.” Surprised as she was, she was certain that she did not have these things before, so she explained the bread and the wine she found as the act of God’s mercy. This motif, similarly as in the first legend about the origin of Konjic, resembles the fable about the prophet Elijah and the widow from Zarephath. After he ate to satiation and quenched his thirst, the old man went his way. As he was leaving, he warned the poor woman to run away because her sister would be punished for her sins. He specifically emphasised that she should not look back or utter the following words: “my caring sister”, because she would also be doomed. When the old man left, the rumbling began, and the poor sister looked back and cried: “My caring sister!” At that moment, a large pit gaped wide and both Gavan sisters disappeared. The water then flooded the field and the pit and, thus, Lake Vrana emerged. “Swollen water devoured the castle of the callous rich woman, and the fishermen recounted for a long time that their fishnets got stuck in the roofs of the once luxurious castle of the rich Gavan sister” (Đurić 2013: 32).

In the Cetina borderland, people have been recounting the story of the origin of *Miloš Lake* below Krinj. According to the legend, the city of Širingrad where Gavan built his castles was located at the site of this lake. When God cursed Gavan, his castles collapsed into the ground and made way for the lake. There was a dragon in the lake who blackmailed the king of Širingrad to bring him a barren sheep and the most beautiful girl every day. When they gave him the last girl in the city, they were left with the king’s only daughter and the king was forced to hand her over to the dragon. The king left the girl by the lake so that the dragon could take her. However, St. George appeared and slew the dragon with his spear, after which he returned the girl to the king. After that, St. George threw the dragon into the pond, and the pond was later referred to as Smradovo (*Stenchtown*) because of the developing stench:

“I also have to tell you about Miloš Lake and Stipančevo Lake. They are located below Krinj. At the site of the present-day Miloš Lake, there was once the city of Širingrad and the castles of Gavan. These castles of Gavan were later doomed by God, so they collapsed into the lake.

Then a dragon appeared in the lake and forced the king of Širingrad to bring him a barren sheep, you know, the one which cannot bear offspring, and the prettiest young girl every day. If the king refused it, the dragon would devour the king and all people from the city. So, the king was forced to bring him a sheep and a girl every single day.

And when there were no more girls in the city, the king was forced to hand him over his only daughter. He brought her by the lake and left her there for the dragon to take. Suddenly, St. George appeared on his horse with a spear in his hand. He saw this unfortunate girl crying and he decided to save her. When the dragon soared from the lake, St. George stabbed it with his spear.

He told the girl to go back to her father and bring the dragon along, and he later took the dragon to a pond and threw it away, after which the pond developed a stench and was later referred to as Smradovo. After the dragon was slain, you could see Gavan's castles in that lake, numerous snakes, dogs, cats, six-horned oxen. In the summer, the oxen would come to the field of Hrvace and lock horns with the oxen from Hrvace. The rumour has it that some shepherds saw these oxen with their own eyes." (Dragić 2014: 271–278)

This legend contains the motifs of St. George. A legend in verses about St. George who slew the dragon with his spear thus saving Širingrad is mentioned in the *Pleasant conversation (Razgovor ugodni)* of the friar Andrija Kačić Miošić (Dragić 2014:274). There is a folk-tale recounted in Imotski:

"The elders recounted a story of how St. George defended the girls from Širingrad, which is the present-day Imotski. Every night, the king of Širingrad had to bring a girl and a sheep to the dragon, and eventually he had to give up his only daughter. Many people came to witness it. Then St. George appeared and told the girl: 'If you accept my creed and the sign of the cross, I will rescue you from evil.' She agreed. Then he took out his spear and removed the silk leash. The water became blurry and the dragon soared towards the girl. When St. George saw the dragon, he stabbed it with the spear and tied it up with the silk leash. He gave the dragon to the girl to parade it around. They walked through the town with the tied-up dragon, and it brought joy to everyone. This is what our elders told us." (Dragić 2014: 282)

According to legends, village Podhum near Konjic was once situated in the place of today's *Red rocks*. That village collapsed into the ground in a single night. According

to a legend, some man, a traveller, happened to find himself in that village as the sun was going down, so he searched for a place to spend the night. He went through the whole village and only at the end of it was accepted into a small house:

“In that house he found an old woman with three young boys – her grandsons. When the stranger asked the old woman to spend the night in her home, she gladly let him into her house, but told him that she was very poor and had nothing to offer him for dinner.

‘And what is under the baking lid?’ – asked the stranger.

‘Nothing, my son. I have put it on the fireplace to trick hungry children so that they may fall to sleep easier.’ – the old woman responded.

The stranger spent the night in the old woman’s home.

Before they went to sleep, he spent some time talking with the old woman about different topics, asking about that village. At the end, he asked her if she had any property in that village. She answered that she only had lent wool combs to a woman in the village and nothing more.

When the old woman woke up in the morning, the stranger was gone from her home. She got out in front of the house and there was a sight to see. To her great surprise, the whole village was gone, all house razed to the ground. The entire village collapsed into the ground and disappeared. The ground with houses sunk leaving no trace of the houses. Only thing remaining were red ravines – rocks made of earth and rustic, as if they were cut on the bottom side, very high and deep. Today these are called Red rocks – under the summit of Rij connected to Dubac.

The old woman started running around the area that was once village to see if anyone was alive, but she found no trace of human life, not even some ruins or marks of former houses. However, to her great surprise, she stumbled upon her wool combs in the approximate place where the house of the woman she lent her combs to used to be. Seeing that and having found the wool combs which she mentioned to the stranger, she was sure that the disappearance of the village was the work of the stranger who could not find a shelter in any house except for hers.

She realised that was his punishment for villager’s inhospitality towards him, and travellers in general. That mistake had a high cost. The old woman’s ears echoed with words of malice and indignation spoken by her guest during their conversation.

This and such legendary story could have been heard from the elderly inhabit-

ants of village Podhum. They used to say that there was no life in the destroyed and buried village, but that, for several days, it was possible to hear a rooster crowing deep in the underground.” (Dragić 2013: 92–93)

In some legends, daughter was stingy. At the source of present-day Štrka near Čapljina, she lived on a rich estate with her father and mother. The daughter never gave a thing to beggars and that was the reason their estate collapsed into the ground:

“Once upon a time God sent a saint, disguised as a beggar, to ask her for some bread. Being in a good mood, she put a bread crust on her foot and offered it to him off of her leg, as to a dog. The saint came again, and she did the same. He returned for the third time. She then put the bread on her foot and started shaking it and telling him to fetch it, like a dog.

The he told her that he was a saint, and he would destroy her home because of her malice. He told her that it would collapse into the ground, along with her, and that water would run across that place. He also stated that ground would forever be shaking in that spot.

Even today, the ground trembles, and the story still goes that, during moonlight, remains of the castle can be seen.” (Dragić 2013: 93)

According to another legend, village Škrka and town of Jelim collapsed into the ground when Jesus and Saint Peter walked around dressed as beggars. They came to the village Škrka, where they intended to sleep and ask for dinner. In that village they experienced tremendous humiliation from rich people, and hospitality was offered to them only by a poor old woman:

“In order to punish the rich people’s arrogance, they decided to cover the village with water. Thunder, lightning and opening of the sky followed, after which it started raining heavily. Numerous sources opened and water started pouring into village Škrka and Jelim town immersing them completely. Only one servant saved his life, and only because he listened to a voice telling him to drop a child given to him by an especially arrogant lady, known for insulting Jesus and Saint Peter. Even today, on the spot where the servant left the child, there is a deep whirlpool. As he was running towards the tower on Dračevo, thus river Krupa appeared in his footsteps” (Dragić 2013: 93–94).

4. DISCUSSION

All of the legends mentioned above have the same underlying motif of a stingy and vain man named Gavan and his wife, referred to as Gavanica or Gavanuša and even Jelena in one place, who was even worse than he was. The word of their wicked ways came all the way to heaven, so God decided to find out whether the rumours were true or exaggerated. That is why he sent his emissaries, a holy man or an angel, to Gavan's castles to test his mercy. This is analogous with the Biblical visitors who came to see Abraham, then left for Sodom to punish its inhabitants (Genesis 18, 16-33). In other legends, Gavan's castles are visited by Jesus and St. Peter to verify the conduct of Gavan and his family, and in one case the estate is visited by a poor widow with seven small children in search of help. They all arrive disguised as poor people asking for some food, a piece of bread, a head of cabbage or some water to quench their thirst. Gavan's wife usually responds to their pleas by treating them contemptuously or ruthlessly. She gives them mouldy bread which she often throws towards them with her foot or she gives them the worst cabbage in the garden only to get rid of them as soon as possible. The lack of awareness and sensitivity of the poor and needy exhibited by Gavan and his wife reminds us of the fable about a rich man and Lazarus. Poor Lazarus spent his weary days at the gate of the rich man's house, famished and scraping for the leftovers from the opulent table which no one offered to him (Luke 16, 19-31). Besides the evil masters, the visitors in these legends meet kind and humble servants, nannies, shepherds and poor widows. Their treatment of the visitors disguised as poor people is opposite to the evil ways of their masters. They all ignore the orders of their evil masters and help the needy by giving them more quality food than the one intended by Gavan's family. They were also poor themselves. Yet, they shared with other poor people what they had, and they offered them shelter in their humble homes, like Lot who welcomed God's emissaries who came to destroy Sodom; he also protected them from the angry crowd of Sodom (Genesis 19, 1-29). The poor women provided shelter to God's emissaries, but they could not offer them food as they did not have it, but then their guests performed miracles, after which they found an abundance of food and wine where they previously had nothing. This is a motif from the First Book of Kings when the prophet Elijah asks the poor widow from Zarephath to shelter him (1 Kings 17, 7-16). Jesus performed a miracle in the legend when he used the leftovers of the eaten lamb by making a sign of the cross over it, only to revive a lamb identical to the one they had slaughtered and eaten. The evil rich men and their estates were severely doomed in all the legends. The ground trembled, the waters flooded all of Gavan's family and estate, and they sunk to the abyss and the depths of the newly

emerged lakes. The good male and female servants tried to save Gavan's children in some legends, but God allowed them only to save the female child. The voice from above warned them to drop the son of Gavan into the water to eradicate his bloodline. Such utter destruction reminds of the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, which left nothing but smoke rising to the sky. The apocalyptic event was survived only by Lot's family, without the wife who looked back despite the angel's warning (Genesis 19, 26). In some of the analysed legends, the survivors looked back to see what was left of Gavan's estate, but they were not punished for it; instead, they left that place and built new settlements.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysed legends about Gavan were undoubtedly influenced by the Biblical motifs. They were mostly influenced by the text about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah from the Book of Genesis. However, because of the rich people's reckless behaviour towards the suffering of the poor, there is some resemblance with the passage about the poor man Lazarus from Luke's Gospel. These Biblical texts influenced all of the legends analysed in this paper. Also, some legends contain a motif taken from the First Book of Kings where the prophet Elijah from the Old Testament arrived at the door of a poor widow asking for shelter. It can be argued with a high level of certainty that the Biblical texts entered the legends through church readings and sermons. The myth about Gavan has a moral and educational purpose because it instructs people to abstain from Gavan's evil ways. Still, it also has an aetiological meaning because it usually explains the origin of lakes following the destruction of Gavan's estate, and the origin of the cities founded by the survivors. The legends about Gavan are commonly found in both the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, even beyond. However, this oral tradition is the most prominent in the area of Imotski borderland and Herzegovina, where these legends are still recounted. The legends are an integral and immensely significant part of the Croatian intangible cultural heritage. Therefore we should consistently record them to preserve them for future generations.

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BIBLIJSKI MOTIVI U LEGENDAMA O PROPASTI GAVANOVIH DVORA

NIKOLA SUNARA
HELENA DRAGIĆ

SAŽETAK

Rad navodi i analizira legende o Gavanu i propasti njegovih dvora. Naglasak je na analizi zapisa legendi koji su objavljeni u znanstvenim monografijama, znanstvenim radovima i časopisima. Analiza je pokazala da legende o Gavanu sadrže starozavjetni motiv uništenja Sodome i Gomore i objašnjavaju postanak brojnih jezera na teritoriju Republike Hrvatske i Bosne i Hercegovine. Ta usmena tradicija najzastupljenija je na području Imotske krajine i Hercegovine gdje se te legende i danas mogu čuti. Navedene legende sastavni su i vrlo važan dio hrvatske nematerijalne kulturne baštine pa ih je zbog toga važno dosljedno bilježiti kako bismo ih sačuvali za buduće naraštaje.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI:

hrvatska nematerijalna kulturna baština, legende, Gavan, Biblija

