

# History of Bansko

There are several legends about who actually founded the town of Bansko. According to one, Bansko was founded by people who lived in Dobarsko, a village in Rila, itself according to a legend founded by the blinded army of Tsar Samuil. Another legend claims that Bansko was founded by an Italian painter by the name of Ciociolino, hence the existence of the name Chucholin in Bansko.

According to another version it was a Slavic tribe called the Peruns, who lived in Pirin and worshiped Perun, that founded the village, which eventually grew into a town. There are a number of ethnographic texts, legends, prayers and oratories, which lend credence to this version of accounts.

The town rose up on its present location around 9th-10th centuries after the formation of the adjacent quarters of Bansko. By the middle of 18th century Bansko became a large and affluent settlement developing crafts and cross Europe trade. The caravans of Bansko traders travelled to Macedonia and central Europe transporting tobacco, poppy seeds and cotton, as well as processed animal skins and precious metal. Bansko's "Golden Age" was in the latter 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century when it reached its economic and cultural peak.

In the mid 19th century the economy of the town slowly declined. According to the resolutions of the Berlin Treaty, Bansko was left within the boundaries of the Turkish Empire, where its partisan inhabitants actively fought in the consequent rebellions - Kresna-Razlog Uprising (1878-1879) and the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising (1903). The town was liberated from the Turkish rule on the 5th October 1912 (the Balkan War).

Bansko is among those Bulgarian towns which it is believed fate had destined to play a pivotal role in the historic development of post modern nation of Bulgaria, most notably during the colossal national upsurge during the revival Periods. Its achievements can't even be diminished by the relentless passage of time.

Their legacy is still evident in the unique dwelling houses of Bansko, bearing tall pinewood gates and carved-wood interior ceilings. This distinctive architecture is also seen in the towns many Greek Orthodox Catholic churches, intricate and skilful painting of exquisitely rendered floral shapes, birds, dragons and other traditional folk motifs were carried out by local iconographers. In these lavishly decorated churches, past and present, is seamlessly interwoven in a way that is instantly recognised as distinctive and original.

Ottoman restrictions specified that Christian churches should never be higher than a man on horseback, ensuring that most nineteenth-century Bulgarian churches were squat structures built slightly underground.