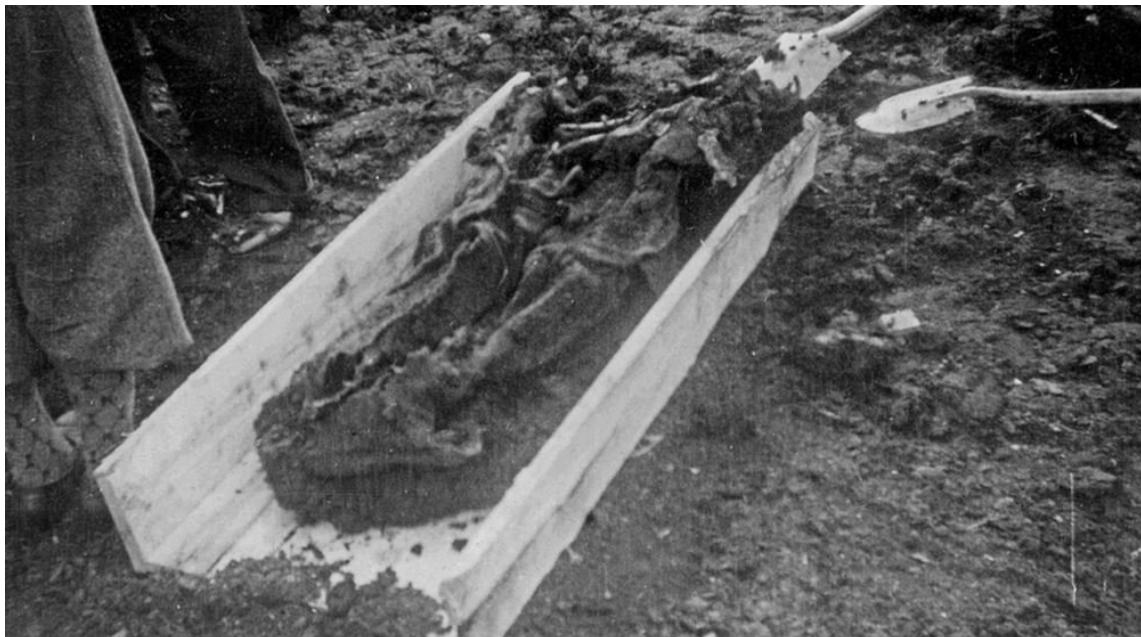


Bocksten Man, a 14th century CE bog body, Denmark

A variation on staking and liminal (*borderline* or *in between*) burial

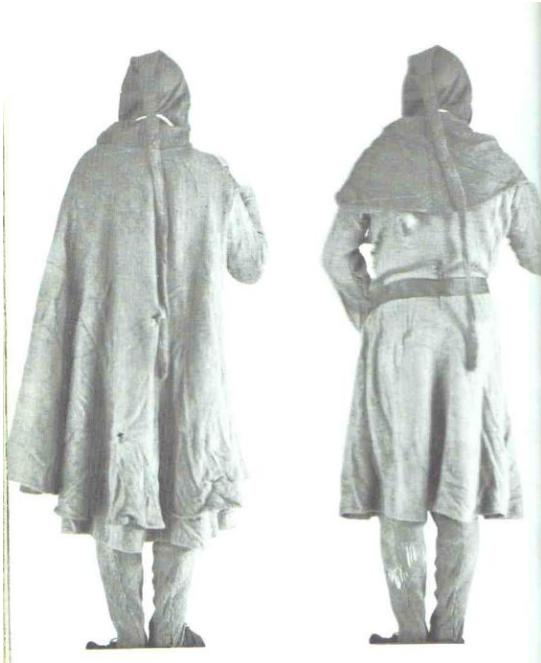
This is the reconstruction of the body of the Bocksten man, murdered and staked face down in a bog in Denmark around 1360 CE. I was not able to find a good image of the entire body *in situ*. The stakes through the side and back may have been purely functional – pinning the body down in the turf, however the stake through the heart was to prevent the man from walking, as was burying him at the “meeting point of four parishes”.



(image from MessageToEagle.com site)

The Bocksten man is one of those rare finds complete with shoes, clothing, and equipment, so most of the images found on the web are reconstructions. This is the only one image of the burial *in situ* I was able to find.

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(image from *The Bog People*, by P.V. Glob, one of the reconstructions of the Bocksten man)

Many bog bodies have apotropaic treatments, which may be a selection bias. Bogs, as liminal places, were ideal places to bury the dangerous dead: they were removed from normal human habitation, were often natural boundaries between human townships, parishes, or other land parcels, and were places considered to be in between earth and water.

The belief of burying potential revenants in bogs, lakes, and rivers, was further fueled by the belief that the revenant cannot cross water, which survives in Eastern Europe to this day.

Employing multiple stakes could be explained by the belief that people who make dangerous dead, especially sorceress and witches float, which is the basis of *iudicium aquae*, or trial of witches by water, attested to in the witch trial records.

Another bog body, found in Denmark in 1839, was body of a woman, pinned to the turf with wooden wickets (crooks) and stakes. What is remarkable, the contemporary weekly paper, *Light Reading for the Danish Public* said of the find: “every countryman will immediately recognize in this corpse the body of someone who when living was regarded as a witch and whom it was intended to prevent from walking again after death. ... Our forefathers believed that so long as the stakes stood the ghost remained pinned to the ground. If the stakes were removes, trouble would start all over again.”

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