

Staking

The best known apotropaic measure, still widely practiced today in the entertainment industry

This is an interpretation of a staked burial. There are numerous examples from various times and places Europe. We are well familiar with staking through the heart, thanks to the numerous vampire movies, and this was practiced in period as well. However, other stake placements were also known. This composite burial illustrates common stake placement: through the heart, shoulders and ankles. Below are some examples, used for this reconstruction.



(this image is from *Time to Slay Vampire Burials* by D. Barrowclough)

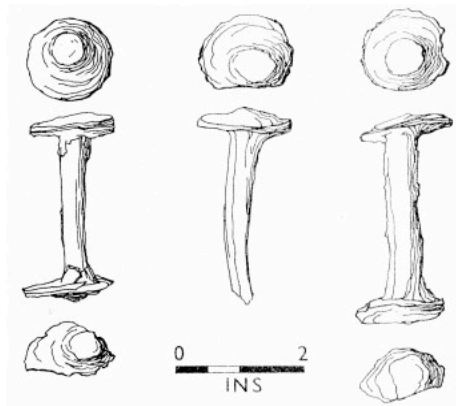
The above is an Ottoman era (18th-19th c.) male skeleton from Lesbos, Greece, buried in a coffin in a city wall, staked through the neck, pelvis, and ankle. The bodies were usually staked through the torso, back, pelvis, and extremities. The earliest staked burial, from 26,000 years BCE was staked through the left pelvis.

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(the image to the left is from the online edition of Irish Mirror, 'Vampire' Skeleton with Stake... article)

This image is from a Bulgarian find, a 13th c. male skeleton, staked through the left chest by spike made out of a ploughshare. Its left leg was removed below the knee, which is another apotropaic measure.



(this image is from *The Dangerous Dead* by M. Beresford)

The stakes were made out of metal or wood. The wooden stakes often did not survive in ground internments. The above image: the iron nails from the Southwell deviant burial, dated to early 6th c., Anglo-Saxon England. Multiple example of surviving wooden stakes come from the bog bodies, where the cold, acidic, low-oxygen water preserves organic materials, such as the wooden stakes found in the 14th c. Bocksten man.

References:

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