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DEAD MEN WALKING: AN OVERVIEW OF BURIAL PRACTICES USED TO PREVENT THE RETURN OF THE DEAD IN THE MIDDLE AGES

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DEDICATION

Before I start, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Lord Angus MacDougal, who unwaveringly supports my research into weird and strange things; to THL Beatrice de Winter, who gave me numerous scholarly articles and news releases on this obscure topic; to Master Fridrikr Tomasson, for expanding my knowledge of the Norse revenants and kindly providing me with the latest version of his Drauginir paper; and to Marek Polcyn of Slavia Project, for graciously letting me use the Drawsko burial pictures and forwarding me his article on sickle burials. CA

INTRODUCTION

We can say with absolute certainty that everyone who ever lived in the SCA's period of study has died, and their bodies tended to be buried or otherwise disposed of in some way. What happened to the dead bodies reflected on their contemporaries' attitudes towards death; afterlife, religious belief or lack thereof, which now provide an interesting insight into their beliefs; and, in some cases, their definition of humanity.

Non-material culture in general, and the death and funerary culture, in particular, are not often researched in the SCA, which emphasizes experimental archaeology and recreating medieval material finds, but I believe it is a worthwhile topic. Attitudes towards the dead profoundly influenced the living and left their marks in the material culture of the time. As we have inherited the vestiges of these beliefs and attitudes and will pass them on, it is important to be aware of their origins and meanings.

For the most part, it was "business as usual." The dead were accorded their rites and the living moved on. However, in a persistent minority of cases, the neat model of "dead and gone" broke down. A portion of the dead was feared as a potential threat to the living. Specifically, throughout Europe, from the fall of the Roman Empire to the late Renaissance and beyond, there was a persistent belief that some dead would come back to harm or kill their survivors. These dead were treated differently, and their burials reflect the preventive measures the living took to decrease the probability of their post-mortem return.

From time to time, archaeologists discover and describe graves distinct in appearance from the then culturally accepted modes of burial, either by location, treatment of the corpse, or grave goods included. In academic writings, these burials are listed as "deviant burials," indicating that these deviate from statistical norms.[1] While these deviations can be due to many factors, a sizable percentage of these burials were designed to prevent the deceased from returning to life and harming the living. The word for something intended to prevent or ward off evil is apotropaic, coined in the late nineteenth century, and derived from the Greek *apotropaios*, meaning "averting evil." In this booklet, the burials where these apotropaic methods were employed will be referred to as

"apotropaic burials." The returning dead themselves had many names, but, in order not to require a glossary for all the terms used for the bothersome undead, the generic term "revenant," meaning "the one coming back," will be used.

Here, I will examine the belief in revenants and most common types of apotropaic burial measures used in Europe roughly from the fall of the Roman Empire to 1600 CE. However, as superstitions and beliefs are a constantly evolving continuum, what is fascinating is not only what these beliefs were, but how they persisted through the centuries and, sometimes, the millennia. Therefore, to illustrate that, I will use examples from outside of the aforementioned timeframe.

I will concentrate on the treatment of the corpse itself and not on the presence of apotropaic grave goods, as these vary greatly between times and cultures and are beyond the scope of this booklet. I will, however, mention items if they were found interacting with a body itself. For example, if a sickle was found in the grave next to the corpse, I will not include it. However, if the body was found with a scythe or sickle across its throat, it will be discussed.

Furthermore, I will concentrate on malevolent revenants, or those who were believed to harm the living. Other, benevolent revenant traditions of Europe, including the fairy tale motif of the grateful dead,[2] surviving remnants of ancestral cults and early shamanistic traditions, or the cults of Christian martyrs and saints, will not be examined at length. I mostly will concentrate on corporeal revenants, rather than incorporeal revenants, such as ghosts and apparitions, and focus on single revenants, rather than group hauntings.

There are numerous medieval examples of revenants and apotropaic burials. This booklet is not intended as a comprehensive overview of all available material, as there is simply too much of it, and new burials are being constantly discovered. Because burial customs varied greatly between times and places, and the burial records are spotty, organizing this paper chronologically or geographically is not feasible. Therefore, I have decided to describe the most common apotropaic treatments of the body and the rationale behind them, and give examples of each type.

Because of the term "deviant burial," there is a perception that those buried with apotropaic measures were social outcasts, strangers, or people with mental or physical disabilities. While the apotropaic

measures were certainly often used on these corpses, not all potential revenants were social outcasts. Sometimes, respected members of the community were buried in a regular cemetery with proper respect and appropriate grave goods, but still treated as potential revenants.[3] Not all deviant burials were apotropaic in nature; sometimes deviation from the norm is due to incidental factors, such as grave robbery or hasty burials because of secrecy or insufficient resources. Perhaps one of the best known unusual burials that came to light recently is that of the newly discovered body of King Richard III. Although he had a known physical deformity and was buried with his hands bound in a too small, shallow grave without a coffin or a shroud, he was not thought of as a revenant. These unusual features of his first burial instead most likely were due to the secrecy surrounding this hasty interment.[4] CA

BRIEF HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The accounts of early European revenants come to us preserved in legends, but they can also be found in lives of saints, ecclesiastical writings, sagas, and chronicles. We are still fascinated with the concept of the reanimated dead, judging by popularity of television shows such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *The Walking Dead*, and numerous interpretations of *Dracula* on screen and stage. However, what is now entertainment to us once was an important part of everyday life in the past.

Due to such media, we are very familiar with dealing with vampires and zombies — our versions of the medieval revenant. All of us can name a few vampire-slaying techniques, such as staking, burning, or decapitation. Many of these were used to deal with the revenants pre-1600 CE. However, these techniques were also frequently employed as prophylactic measures, designed to prevent a suspicious corpse from rising as a revenant and having to hunt it down and destroy it later. When these are used preventatively during the burial, they are called apotropaic measures.[5]

The revenants were a controversial subject in pre-modern times in Europe. They occupied an uncomfortable liminal, or borderline, space between the living and the dead, people and things, humans and demons, and between pagan and Christian beliefs. Fear of the dead was widespread in pre-Christian times. For example, in Rome, the dead required complex funeral rites, propitiations, and mourning customs; otherwise, they would harm the living, causing, among other things, madness, epidemics, and sterility.[6] The introduction of Christianity with its promise of eternal life clashed with the then current perceptions of mortality. After centuries of back and forth ideological warfare came an uncomfortable compromise.

Early Christian theologians, such as the fifth-century CE Augustine and Tertullian, struggled to incorporate contemporary pagan perceptions into newly established Christian theology. Prevailing pagan traditions of the time treated death as a gradual process, allowing for back and forth transitions between the worlds of the living and the dead.[7] However, this was not compatible with the Christian doctrine of the soul. Early Christian writers perceived death as a discrete moment of separation of soul from the body, followed by its rapid transition into a

post-mortem state. The wall between life and death was impenetrable and impermeable. Established by the transgression of original sin in the Garden of Eden, it would only fall after Judgment Day, when the promised Resurrection would occur.[8]

Early Christianity denied the existence of revenants as the return of the dead. Instead, as early as the fifth century, theologians claimed that stories of malevolent revenants were due to demonic possessions of corpses. On the other hand, the Church sanctioned cults of martyrs and saints, with their post-mortem interference with the living, which were approved and supported until the time of the Reformation.[9] However, despite the Church's opposition to the concept of post-mortem return, it was not going anywhere. With time, the Church's position gradually changed. Starting in the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great appropriated the ghost story as a narrative medium to confirm the basic tenets of Christianity. The souls of the dead would reveal themselves to mortals still living to tell them about their rewards in heaven or tortures in hell, and the Church used them successfully as post-mortem testimonials.[10]

Isidore of Seville, in his seventh-century *Etymologies*, a highly influential book that would be quoted for centuries, seems to describe death more as a process, rather than a discrete moment, which was more concordant with pagan traditions. He differentiates between types of death: sharp for a death of a child, untimely for the death of a young person, and timely for the death of an old person.[11] Furthermore, in addition to talking about the body and soul dichotomy, Isidore distinguishes the will (*animus*), the soul (*anima*), and the mind (*mens*). He mentions that it is possible for the soul to exist without the mind and for the will without the soul,[12] and he establishes that it is the will (*animus*) that is responsible for the actions of the body. Therefore, it is theoretically possible for the will to animate the body after the soul has departed, which was compatible with the surviving pagan traditions.[13] Unlike earlier Christian writers who only differentiated the dead from the living, Isidore classifies the dead as buried and unburied, and, even further, along the funeral rites performed, such as interred, buried, cremated, etc. This reflected the surviving contemporary pagan concerns with the proper life, proper death, and proper funerary rites.[14] Those whose *animus* (will) lingered after passing of the *anima* (soul) were at risk of coming back after death.

Even though Isidore's *Etymologies* did theoretically allow for post-mortem return, the official Church position was that the dead cannot

be brought to life, and the only people who were truly resurrected were Jesus himself and the selected few from the Old and New Testaments, such as Lazarus. Even though Isidore's writings were highly influential, the Church considered the apparent resurrections and post-mortem hauntings to be the work of devils that deceived the living. Even devils could not resurrect the dead because this power was reserved only for God.[15]

Later on, Aelfric, Bishop of Eynsham, active in the late-tenth to early eleventh centuries, was of a similar opinion, emphasizing that even though the dead seem to return, it is still the work of the devil.

> Still witches resort to crossroads, and to heathen burial sites with their evil rites, and call upon the devil, and he arrives in the form of the person who lies buried there, as if he had arisen from death; but she cannot achieve that, that a dead person arise by her witchcraft.[16]

This position was firmly entrenched in the Church's writings by the thirteenth century. The possibility of the return of the soul, even for didactic purposes, as used by Augustine in the fifth century, was no longer used, and any potential revenant was automatically considered to be the work of demons.[17] Later on, it went even further. In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante sees in the inferno the souls of still living people who explain to him that they were immediately whisked to hell to undergo eternal torment, and their bodies back on earth are animated by demons, but no one can even tell the difference.[18]

However, Isidore's division between the types of death, and distinction between the soul and will, became very important in determining who is at risk for revenancy, which will be discussed later. As the Church evolved its official positions on the matter, the living insisted they were being bothered by the returning dead. Therefore, they developed an array of methods to deal with anyone who returned as well as preventing who could potentially return, even though the Church frowned on these clearly unchristian practices. CA

WHY EMPLOY APOTROPAIC MEASURES?

Revenants are portrayed as hostile and deadly to the living. These hostilities range from being a public nuisance, such as walking around (because a dead man walking is rather disturbing),[19] stone throwing, riding the roof beams,[20] scaring travelers at night, annoying the living relatives,[21] suffocation (occasionally referred to as "oppression"), nightmares, killing of livestock and servants,[22,23] murder, arson, droughts, and mass epidemics. Furthermore, they can create more revenants, thus exacerbating the problem.[24] Despite many of these dead being physically disabled or social outcasts in life, they are supernaturally strong after death,[25] and even their words have power to kill.[26] Therefore, deploying proper apotropaic measures was prudent, cheap, and served as a sort of an insurance against a potential revenant. It was also easier and safer to do it preventatively at the time of burial, rather than trying to deal with a dangerous walking corpse later.

In his book *Vampires, Burial, and Death*, Paul Barber analyzed surviving revenant beliefs and vampire staking reports. He came to the following conclusion: natural post-mortem processes, including stages of decomposition, unfamiliar to medieval and early modern people, were mistaken for actions of the corpse itself, and attributed some agency to the deceased. Therefore, this was interpreted as the *animus* (will) or *anima* (soul) remaining in the body or returning to the body. As these decomposition processes would stop after the corpse was reduced to skeleton, it was therefore believed that as long as the flesh remained, the body was theoretically capable of action and could become a revenant.[27]

The removal of flesh signifies complete passing to the next stage and rendering the remnants safe to the living.[28] The fleshed corpses were dangerous, the skeletal ones were not. Therefore, some burial practices emerged aimed at reducing/removing flesh, thus speeding up the passing process. These include cremation and excarnation, or removal flesh from bones, by cutting it off, boiling it, or removing it by exposure to animals or elements. While the Egyptian practice of mummification seems to go against this belief, it accomplishes the same thing: it prevents post-mortem changes by forcibly rendering the flesh inert, rather than by completely removing it.[29]

As such, the corpse was inherently dangerous and was seen as a body in transition, active in the process of death. Processes of normal decomposition are mentioned in revenant descriptions, and they were also taken as indicators that the dead would walk. For example, in *Grettir's Saga*, when Glam's body is found, it is described as dark and swollen: "as blue as hell, and as great as a neat."[30] This is very similar to later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century descriptions of East European revenants.[31] The belief that if a body swells and darkens before burial means that the corpse will come back persists very, very late. In fact, it was recorded in Polesye (a geographical and cultural region encompassing the borders of Ukraine, Belarus, and the western part of Russia) as late as the 1980s.[32]

We do not have a complete iconography of death in the Middle Ages, but numerous depictions of the walking dead appear in illuminated manuscripts, commonly in the story of "The Three Living and the Three Dead," and also in the illustrations and frescoes of the Dance Macabre from the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries.

In these images, the dead commonly are depicted not as skeletons but as dead bodies in various stages of decomposition, sometimes in an unwound shroud, sometimes carrying their coffins, and armed with a spear, large arrow, bow, or a scythe. Their physical characteristics, such as rotted and open abdomens, the presence of worms, and, occasionally, dark or reddish-colored flesh, correlate to the descriptions of revenants and to the appearance of decomposing corpses seen on forensic anthropology body farms.[33] CA

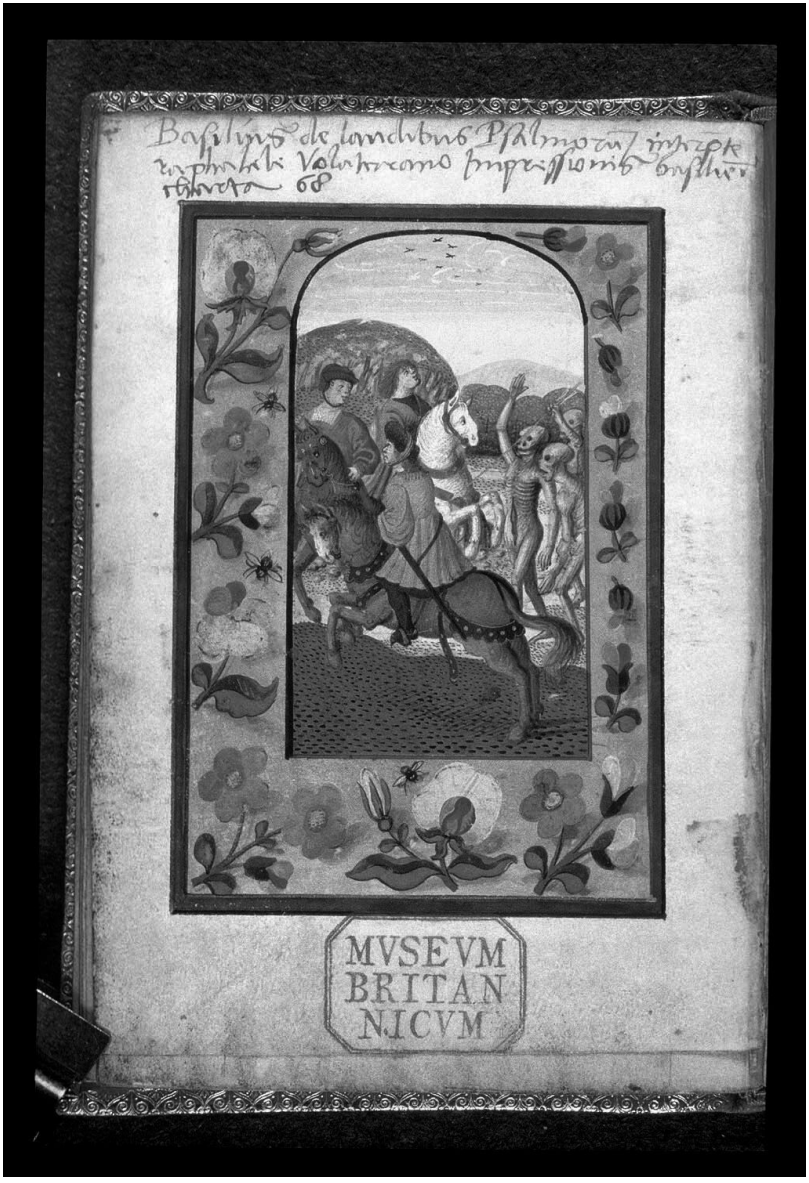


FIGURE 1. The Three Living and the Three Dead" is from the Harley MS 2953, f. 19v at the British Library. It dates to the last quarter of the fifteenth century or the first quarter of the sixteenth century. While sometimes the dead just placidly stand there, these dead attack the three hapless hunters. Note the open abdomen on one of the dead.

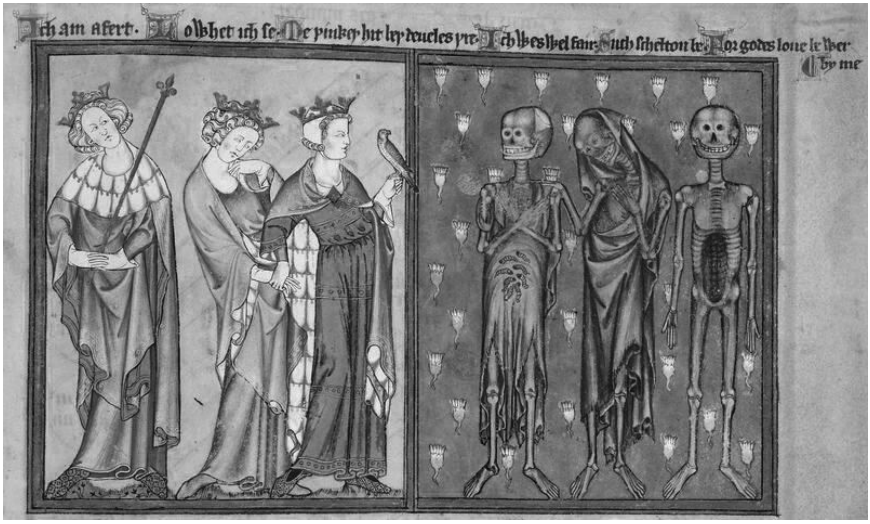


FIGURE 2. In this illustration, from the *De Lisle Psalter*, England, circa 1308 – 1340, the three dead are much more placid, and their composition almost mirrors the living.

FIGURE 3. This anonymous late fifteenth-century German or Flemish artwork is a portrayal of death from the earliest known printed poison label.[34] Note the sunken eyes and the rotten abdomen, with huge snakelike worms protruding from the abdomen and the left thigh. It is not a skeleton. The hourglass and the scythe have survived as attributes of death to modern times. The shroud is unwound. The shroud should be tightly wound and stitched or pinned. If it is not, it can permit the dead to walk.[35]

FIGURE 4. In this example, from the 1512 French Manuscript *Le séjour de deuil pour la mort de Philippe de Commines*, depicting nature and death, death's shroud is also unwound, and the dead body is decomposing, with pieces of flesh missing.

WHERE DO REVENANTS COME FROM?

After examining how the malevolent dead kill and maim the living in the pages of various Books of Hours, and reading about the deaths and epidemics caused by the undead in medieval chronicles, it becomes apparent that the revenant condition was not an exceptional state. Instead, it was a well-known phenomenon. Why was it so common? The prevalent belief was that all people were born with a certain amount of vitality or life force, which could be referred to as will, or vitality, or *animus*, etc. Any corpse with leftover life force, unused during its lifetime, was believed to be at risk for coming back. This could be because its life was interrupted prematurely or because the individual had an unusually large amount to begin with. These extra-powerful people would include witches, wise women, or any people who had contact with the supernatural. Alternatively, the residual life force was not able to leave the body due to improper or absent burial rites, and was stuck. This unused life force was more likely to reanimate the dead if one had led a non-normative life or had a non-normative death, including incomplete or incorrect burial rites. The corpses with more unused life force were considered more dangerous.[36]

Therefore, the criteria for becoming a revenant were very broad. Simplistically, all the dead could be divided into four categories: one could have lived a good life and died a good death, lived a bad life and died a bad death, lived a good life and died a bad death, or lived a bad life and died a good death. Those living a good life and dying a good death were safe from post-mortem wanderings. Anybody else could be at risk.[37]

People who lived a bad life and died a bad death were the most obvious suspects. These included criminals, especially executed criminals, and a lot of burials found with apotropaic measures are from execution cemeteries from early in the timeframe.[38] Sacrificial victims fell into the same category, especially as there is an overlap between criminals and sacrifices. The bad death criterion also includes improper or absent burial rites, which was a known risk factor since the Roman times.[39] Of course, the severity of these risk factors varied between countries and cultures and across centuries.

At risk:

- Murderers,[40] rapists,[41] or criminals of any kind[42] who were executed, murdered, or violently killed.
- Excommunicates[43] (died a bad death, without proper last rites).
- Suicides[44] (suicide was considered a crime, and suicides were often denied standard burial, particularly in England, where staking of suicide victims was not outlawed until 1823).[45]

People who lived a good life but had a bad death:

- Women dying in childbirth.[46]
- Children, especially unbaptized.[47]
- Murder victims.[48]
- Accident victims, victims of unexplained death and people who died in uncertain or odd circumstances would also fall into the bad death category. These include the following:
  - Strangers.[49]
  - Sailors lost at sea.[50]
  - People killed by revenants.[51]

People who lived a bad (non-normative) life, but died a good death:

- Certain monks, who turned to the Church later in life, may have been buried with apotropaic measures as signs of extreme penance for sins committed earlier in their lifetimes.[52]
- Witches and wise women, or any woman who occupied a non-normative place in a social structure.[53]
- Anyone named as sinners in a particular time period/culture – gamblers, traitors, alcoholics, etc.

All people who lived non-normative lives according to that time and culture, such as being "different" regarding sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or behavior, were suspect.

As we can see from the above categories, there were a great many potentially dangerous corpses.

Therefore, to prevent the dead from coming back and wreaking havoc upon the living, they somehow needed to be rendered inert until they

had been reduced to skeletons. The aforementioned methods of rapidly "stabilizing" the corpse, such as mummification, excarnation (removing flesh from bones), and cremation, were often not feasible. Mummification is a prolonged, expensive practice, and was not practiced in Europe, where mummies are the result of accidental, rather than deliberate, processes. Excarnation, either by cutting or boiling flesh from bones, is time-consuming, non-hygienic, and psychologically unpleasant. In Europe, excarnation was used in more exceptional cases, such as for royalty, or for the reasons of public health and hygiene, including transporting the remains of fallen crusaders back to Europe.[54] Slow excarnation by exposure was usually reserved for executed criminals, as it was considered disparaging and demeaning, and having an exposed corpse around was also dangerous to the living. In addition to being a public health hazard, due to its horrible smell and the vermin it attracted, looking at a corpse, especially in the eye, was considered very unlucky and could bring on evil eye, possession, or even death.[55] In the fifteenth-century *The Miracles of John Gualbert*, dedicated to the eleventh-century saint, there is an account of the ghost of a hanged criminal possessing a young man who looked at his body.[56]

Therefore, the measures used to neutralize the potentially bothersome dead needed to be quick, relatively easy, and cheap. Such measures included decapitation, staking, prone burial, mutilation and restraint, and stoning (weighing down with stones). Cremation was also used, although it is not really cheap, could be technically difficult, and was often illegal. Cremation occupies an interesting position in Europe. It was a typical burial method in some cultures.[57] After the introduction of Christianity and a switch to interment, it became an apotropaic measure. Burying in borderline (liminal) or remote, especially watery places, is another apotropaic measure, often used in conjunction with other methods.[58]

Because they were easy and cheap, several apotropaic measures were commonly employed at one time. The methods varied depending on time, place, and local customs. For example, in Anglo-Saxon England, decapitation appeared in the fifth century, prone burials in the sixth-seventh centuries, and stoning from the late-fifth to eighth centuries.[59] Regardless of the methods used, researchers seem to agree that these rites reflected the living's wary attitude towards these dead and were designed to render the suspicious corpses "safe."[60] CA

DECAPITATION

Decapitation was very common and was used in executions as an apotropaic measure and as a method of disposing of revenants. As decapitation works remarkably well on both the living and the dead, and the results look the same, it is difficult to distinguish the original intent since there is significant overlap between apotropaic and judicial decapitation, just as there is significant overlap between executed criminals and potential revenants. The decapitated corpses could be buried with the head in an anatomic position, or have it placed elsewhere, such as by the hip, on top of or between the legs, or buried without the head at all. It is difficult to ascertain the motivation behind the head displacement in each case, although it has been supposed that decapitation and head displacement are effective ways to deal with both potential and actualized revenants.[61] If the decapitation was post-mortem, it further suggests an apotropaic measure. For example, while discussing Anglo-Saxon burials, Reynolds suggests that in early, pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon England, decapitated burials were more likely to be used to prevent the dead from walking than after conversion, although it would be difficult to assign a cause to a specific burial.[62] However, we do have accounts from these times that deal with decapitation as a means of revenant disposal, and many specifically mention displacement of the head.

In an early twelfth-century book on the life of Modwenna, a seventh-century English saint, two bothersome revenants killed almost the entire village of Drakelow until the remaining villagers, with the blessing of the clergy, dug them up.

> They found them intact, but the linen cloths over their faces were stained with blood. They cut off the men's heads and placed them in the graves between their legs, tore out the hearts from their corpses, and covered the bodies with earth again.[63]

Then they burned their hearts. Grettir, from *Grettis Saga*, a fourteenth-century account of eleventh-century events, decapitates Kar, the tomb-dweller: "Grettir then drew his sword *Jokulsnaut*, cut off the head of the howe-dweller and laid it between his thighs." Then Grettir slays the undead shepherd Glam: "drew his short sword, cut off Glam's head and

laid it between his thighs." Glam's body was later burned.[64] It was a wise precaution, as decapitation wasn't always effective. Klaufi, a revenant from the fourteenth-century *Svarfdale Saga*, whose wife arranged his murder, was attacked by her brothers, "decapitated and had his head placed by his feet," but nevertheless walked around causing trouble until he was finally burned.[65]

FIGURE 5. While accounts of decapitated revenants are well known, and there are plenty of decapitations of the living in medieval illuminations, the above is a rare, and maybe the only, plausible depiction of a revenant being decapitated. This is a marginal from folio 108 of the Luttrell Psalter, currently held in the British Library. Here, a naked revenant is being decapitated, and the floating angel to the right is whisking away a soul, presumably the revenant's. There are several unique things about this image, not the least of which is a blue halo surrounding the head of the undead.[66]

Medieval decapitation burials are common, though their frequency varies, depending on time and context. In England, decapitations appear in the fifth century, and become more common in the sixth and seventh centuries.[67] For example, this is the description of the burial 19, from Stockbridge Down, Hampshire, Anglo-Saxon England:

> This was the body of a man who had been decapitated. The body was buried in the supine position, with the left thigh rotated outwards and the left knee semiflexed. The head had been placed between the legs just below the knees. The neck has been cut through at the level of the second cervical vertebra.[68]

Remains of such decapitated burials of apotropaic types are also found in medieval Ireland,[70] and there are many later examples as well.

Interestingly, this mode of burial was considered not only apotropaic, but in some places it also may have been pejorative: an early Norwegian law states that "if the head is severed from the body, and the head is placed between the feet, the wergild shall be doubled."[71] CA

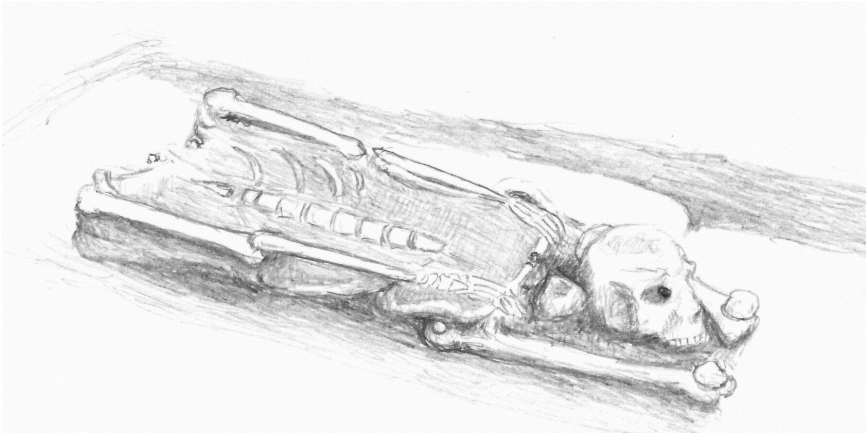


FIGURE 6. The skeleton above is illustrative of an excavation at Gliwice, southern Poland, and dates to the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries.[69] The skeleton adjacent to this one was also decapitated and the head placed between the legs.

PRONE (FACE-DOWN) BURIAL

Prone burials are not limited to execution cemeteries, and can be encountered in consecrated ground. More commonly, these are female burials; some are thought to be burials of witches or wise women, though male burials in this position are also known. It could also be associated with a non-normative position of a woman in the society or a sign of defying social conventions. For example, there is a later eighteenth-century record of two female bards buried in this position.[72] In addition to prone positioning, there may be east-west (head to the east) orientation of the body, as opposed to the west-east orientation common in Christian burials.[73, 74] Occasionally, this type of burial may indicate extreme penance of a sinner, and is sometimes seen in monastic burials. One of the better known examples was King Pepin the Short, the father of Charlemagne, who died in 768 CE and "was buried prone with his face turned to the east on account of sins committed by his father."[75] This burial was due to a Christian notion that the sins of the fathers can be passed down onto their children, and even to the third and fourth generation, according to Exodus 20:5. Pepin was a pious man, known for supporting the church and donating to the Church lands that became the core of the later Papal States, so this post-mortem act of piety was not all that unusual.[76]

Prone burials are chronologically and geographically scattered. In Europe, they are known as early as 26,000 years ago, such as a body from the triple burial in Dolne Vestonice, in the modern Czech Republic,[77] and twelfth- to tenth-century BCE burials from the Frattesina graveyards near Verona, Italy.[78] Prone burials are also known from the Roman period.[79] In England, they are seen from the sixth-seventh centuries.[80] Slightly later examples also come from Ireland.[81] Prone burials are also found in Poland in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries,[82] in several Scandinavian bog bodies as late as the fourteenth century,[83] and they persist into early modern and modern times. This position became associated with revenant burials, so in a much later nineteenth-century book on vampirism, a vampire could be recognized by lying prone in his grave.[84]

The prone position was employed to make it difficult for the spirit to return into the body. There is a sixteenth-century account from a

Bavarian shepherd who had out-of-body experiences and commented it was harder to get back into his body if it was face down.[85] The gaze of a corpse was considered dangerous, causing illness, death or possession. Turning it face down limited its effect.[86, 87, 88] (Another method of neutralizing the evil eye was covering the eyes of a potential revenant with a sack or a blindfold, which can be seen on medieval illuminations of decapitations.) The evil eye was powerful. In *Laxdaela Saga*, outlaw Stigandi had a sack placed over his head prior to his execution as his captors were specifically concerned that he would not look at them.[89] CA

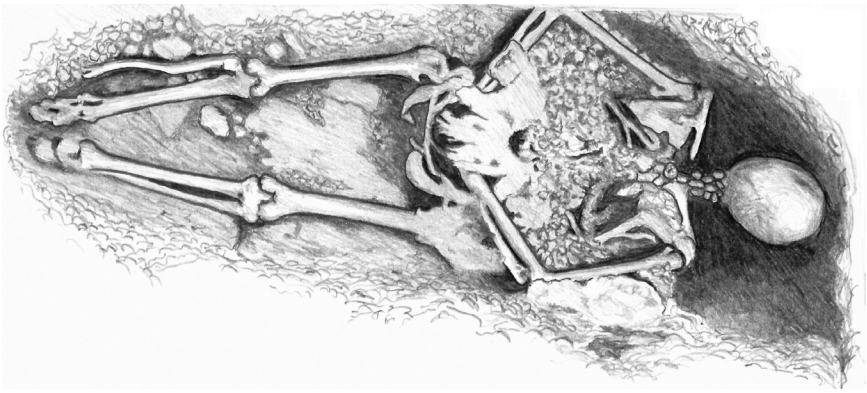


FIGURE 7. This prone burial example is based on an Anglo-Saxon burial from the Guildown excavation in Guildford, Surrey,[90] England. A combination of prone burial and hands tied behind back is not infrequent. Hands tied behind the back are often considered a sign of death by hanging.[91] Combinations or prone burials with other apotropaic measures are relatively common.[92]

LEG MUTILATION/RESTRAINT

Mutilation of the legs to prevent the dead from walking appears to be widespread, though the degree of damage differs. In some Frattesina twelth- to tenth-BCE burials in Italy,[93] as well as in Anglo-Saxon England, the legs were bent backwards and sometimes disarticulated.[94] Broken tibias are seen in Danish bog bodies, which span a 2000-year period, and they go as late as the fourteenth century and into the early modern period.[95] Occasionally, legs or feet are amputated completely, also seen in Anglo-Saxon England.[96] Alternatively, mutilation of the legs may be minimal. In *Oedipus Rex*, by Sophocles, written about 430 BCE, Oedipus, whose name means "swollen foot," was left out in the wilderness to die, with his feet tied together and pierced by a thorn possibly to prevent the exposed infant from walking back as a revenant.[97]

The belief that leg mutilation will prevent the dead from walking persisted very late. In a mid-nineteenth century Russian folklore collection, it was recorded that "a sorcerer can even after death get up at midnight and walk unless they cut his heels and fasten him into the grave with an aspen stake." This measure can be used preemptively or after the supposed revenant started walking.[98]

Occasionally the legs are tied, which serves as a physical restraint designed to prevent the corpse from walking. In some burials, legs crossed at the ankles has been interpreted as previously tied extremities, as the ropes were usually made of organic material and decayed.[99] However, crossed ankles are not an uncommon feature of normative burials, so they should be interpreted cautiously.[100] Tying the extremities could be permanent or temporary. For example, in Polesye, the dead had both their arms and legs tied after death, and then they were "freed" as a part of burial rites. If the legs were not freed, the dead stuck around because they couldn't proceed to the next world.[101] In this case, tying extremities prevented the dead from walking during the dangerous period between death and proper burial.[98]

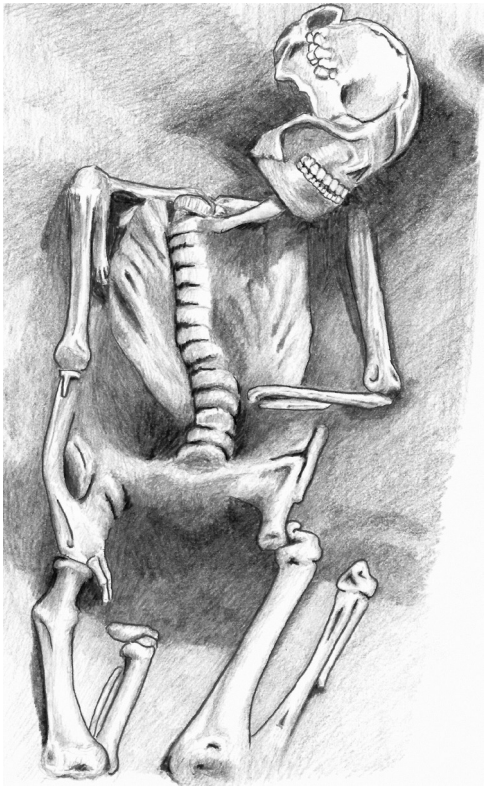


FIGURE 8. This Anglo-Saxon example is based on burial 65, South Acre, Norfolk, England. Here, the legs are bent backwards, and the ankles may have been tied as well. [102]

The mutilation of the skeleton was not limited to legs, and, in some cases, the entire body has been dismembered. This often overlaps with judicial dismemberment (quartering). CA

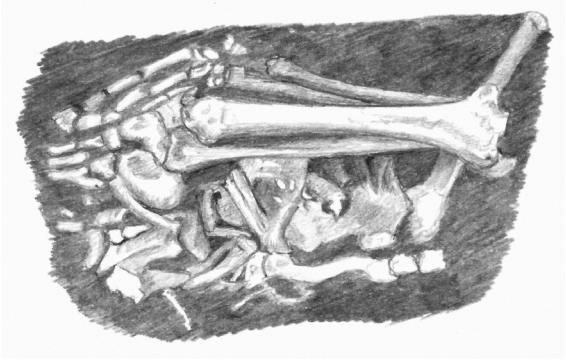


FIGURE 9. This is an example of a quartered male burial from between the sixth to tenth centuries in Owenbristy, Ireland. The head is missing. [103]

COVERING WITH STONES

The placement of stones in graves presented a physical impediment to the dead rising. Bodies weighed down with stones, either across the chest, throat, or entire bodies, or found in graves filled with large rocks, are found throughout Europe.[104,105]

For example, there is a burial from sixth-century Lechlade, England, of a woman buried with grave goods that marked her as a witch or a cunning woman. The grave was carefully made, it was in a regular cemetery, and it was filled with large stones.[106]

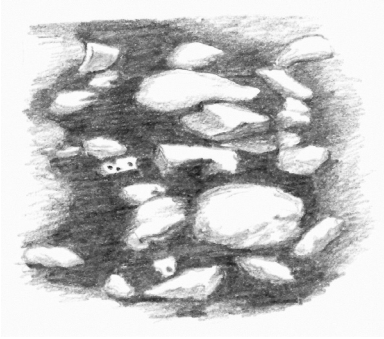


FIGURE 10. This is an example of a grave in Mell, Ireland, nearly completely filled with stones, from the latter part of the first millennium. [107]

Related to the stoning of the body is the custom of placing stones on roadside cairns, which often housed the bodies of the dead travelers found by the side of the road or criminals that were buried in liminal places. While it is still considered good luck to add a stone to the pile, previously, the luck was more literal, as it was definitely lucky not be followed by a murderous revenant as one traveled. Stigandi, the criminal from *Laxðaela Saga*, who was mentioned in the section on prone burials was buried "under a heap of stones."[108] In an early twentieth-century account, a traveler visiting Iceland was advised by his guide to add a stone to a cairn, as Bishop Gwendur had banished a revenant there 600 years ago.[109] Similar precautions were taken with suicides.[110] In Russia, such customs were recorded as late as the nineteenth century:

> There is a strong belief among our villagers that anyone passing the grave of this unfortunate (suicide victim) must throw something on the grave — a rock, a log, or a branch, otherwise the dead will chase them.[111]

The custom of placing small stones on loved ones' graves in some cultures may be a remnant of the same superstition.

Sometimes, other objects, such as branches, are also used, as above, but the stone mounds are better preserved.[112,113]

FIGURE 11. This early-seventeenth century example of stones placed on throat is from the Drawsko cemetery in Poland.[114] It is a bit later than our period of study, but it is a good example of this burial type. Sometimes the stones are placed on the chest or abdomen. In these cases, the weight is more symbolic than literal, but it serves the same function.

Occasionally, the entire grave is filled with small stones or pebbles, especially quartz or flint. These serve a dual function: weighing down the corpse and having a magical apotropaic function.[115]

Below, we have several potential apotropaic measures at once. In addition to the prone burial, we have a body covered with stones, although the presence of multiple smaller light colored stones may indicate magical

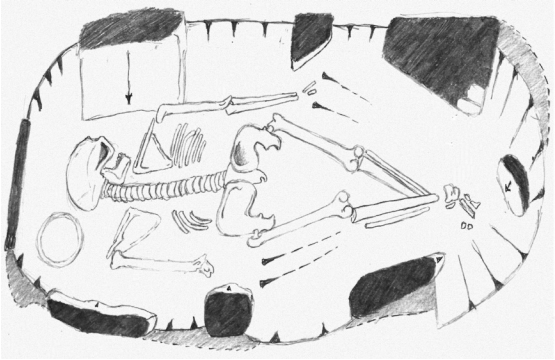


FIGURE 12. The above is an example of a prone burial of a woman found in Barvas, Isle of Lewis (Hebrides, Scotland) in 2001, dating from about the first century. Although it pre-dates our period of study, it features several preventative measures which were used later in the Middle Ages. The body was of a well-muscled young woman, who was tall for her time at five feet, six inches (1.67 meters). "The burial was covered in a cairn of pretty, pale-colored beach pebbles, each no bigger than could be carried in one hand, and each brought from the shoreline, up to a kilometer away."[116]

apotropaics. Her legs are crossed, which may be incidental, but in conjunction with a prone burial, it could indicate tying of the extremities to prevent the dead from walking.[117]

Archaeologists posit that the woman had high social standing or was somehow important in the community, based on the care with which her grave was constructed. This does not contradict use of apotropaic measures, as the lady is described as somewhat unusual for her time, and non-normative life of any kind was a risk factor for revenancy.

Of course, as with anything, context is important. A stone-filled grave or a large cairn is also useful to deter grave robbers and animal scavengers. Although it is a norm in some cultures, the combination with other apotropaic measures makes the apotropaic intent more likely. CA

STONES IN THE CORPSE'S MOUTH

Placement of rocks or bricks in the mouth was believed to prevent the soul from coming back and reanimating the dead, as it was believed that the soul leaves and enters the body through the mouth.[118] A well-known custom of placing a coin in the deceased's mouth, usually interpreted as a fee to the ferryman to cross over to the realm of the dead, may have served the same purpose. For example, placement of coins in the mouths of sixteenth-century Eastern European dead was probably to prevent the soul from coming back, rather than a fee for the ferryman.[119]

Putting a rock in the mouth also prevented the corpse from chewing on its shroud, on itself, or on its buried neighbors, which was believed to cause the death of its family and friends, or to cause epidemics.[120] This belief is even mentioned in *Malleum Maleficarum*, first published in 1467.[121] It was more prevalent in Germany and surrounding countries, and persisted post-1600. In 1679, one Philip Rohr even published a booklet called *Dissertatio Historico-Philosophica de Masticatione Mortuorum*, or, in short, *Chewing Dead*, where he discussed the phenomenon.

> Our Common People attempt to avert the danger of chewing by placing under the chins of the dead a portion of recently excavated earth, lest they perhaps open their mouths and chew on the attached bands... Others, who do not consider this a sufficiently safe measure, before the mouth of the dead is closed, also place a stone and a coin in the mouth, so that in the event that it begins to chew within the grave, it would find the stone and coin and would abstain from chewing. Which fact was witnessed in its time in a multitude of places in Saxonia by Gabriel Rollenhagen: Book IV Mirab. Peregrinat chapter 20, n. 5 in Kornmann.[122]

Rohr goes on to mention several examples of the dead chewing in their graves, dating from the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, mostly affecting women and predominantly happening in plague times.[123] In his 1601 Sermons, Martin Bohm also says that plague victims, especially women, made a "smacking sound" in their graves, and then "the plague increased strongly."[124] CA

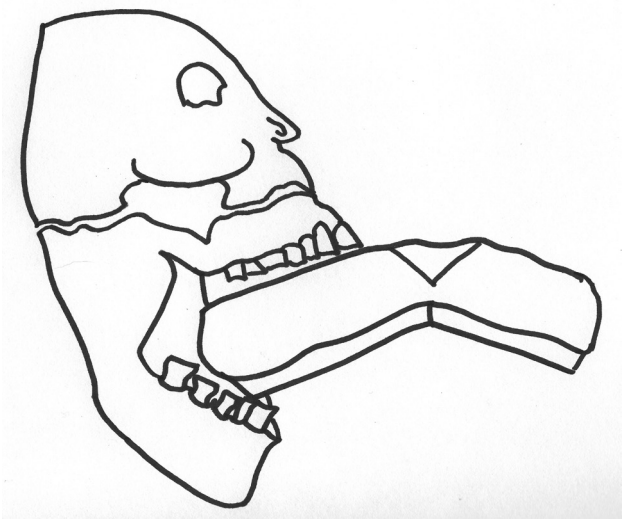


FIGURE 13. This example from the Lazzaretto Nuovo excavation portrays the burial of a woman who died during the 1576 plague outbreak in Venice, Italy. [125]

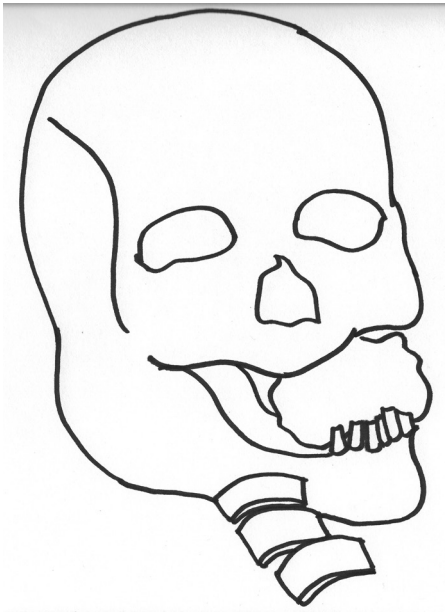
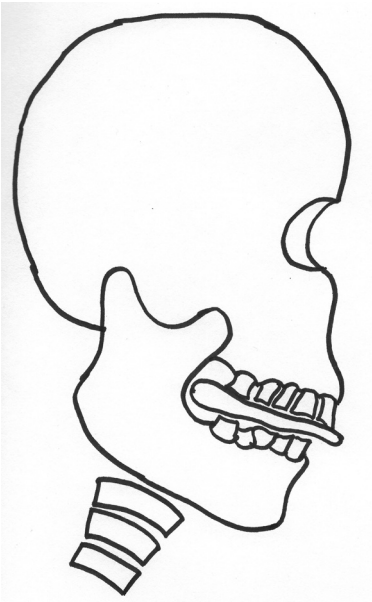
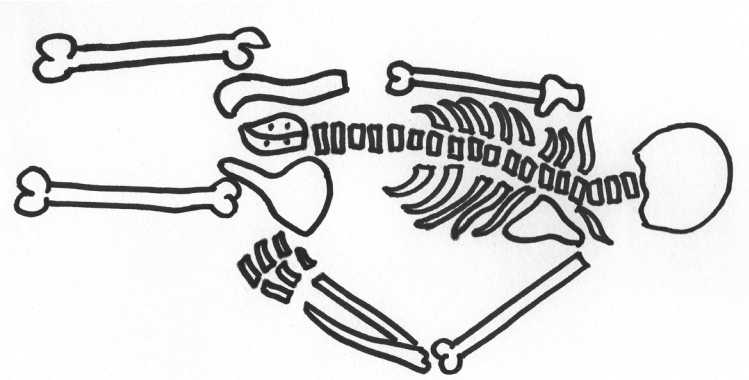


FIGURE14. The above is a male skull with a stone in its mouth from a late sixteenth or early seventeenth- century burial from Northwestern Poland. [126]





FIGURES 15 and 16. These two images are of a male skeleton dating from third or fourth century Roman Britain. He has been buried prone, with a flat stone in his mouth, most likely showing two apotropaic measures used together. Placing the stones in the mouth of the deceased, though later widespread in Europe, was not known in Roman Britain. Therefore, since there was evidence of infection in the facial bones, archaeologists proposed that the man had his tongue amputated and replaced at the time of burial with a flat stone. Romans were known to replace missing body parts at the time of burial. However, as no other tongue replacements are known, we cannot exclude an apotropaic measure, though one does not necessarily preclude another. [127]

STAKING

Staking occurred either with metal or wooden stakes, or with sharp pieces of metal. The body may be staked through limbs or through the heart. There are regional differences. Who was staked, the stake placement, and number and materials of the stakes vary. Burial places also vary greatly. Some are on hard ground, and some are in bogs and rivers, which will be discussed later.

The stakes were made out of metal or wood. The wooden stakes often did not survive in ground interments. Multiple examples of surviving wooden stakes come from the bog bodies, where the cold, acidic, low-oxygen water preserves organic materials. A variant of stakes is wooden wickets used on some bog bodies, which pin them down into the turf, without piercing the body itself.[128] Staking sites vary as well. Thanks to numerous vampire-themed media, we are very familiar with staking through the heart, which was practiced in this booklet's timeframe as well. However, bodies could also be staked through torsos, backs, pelves, and extremities.[129]

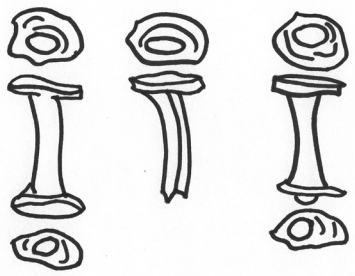


FIGURE 17. These iron nails, dated to early sixth-century Anglo-Saxon England, are from a Southwell, Nottinghamshire, deviant burial.

Staking had several functions. It physically pinned the body to the ground, restraining it. In watery burials, stakes prevented the body from floating up. Staking through the heart was thought to prevent the dead from rising, a well-preserved folklore motif to this day. Staking through the pelvis or the abdomen punctured the body and prevented post-mortem swelling and bloating, which were thought to be risk factors for walking after death.[130] If the staking was through the legs, it served the dual functions of pinning the body down and achieving the leg mutilation discussed above.

Staking is one of the earliest known apotropaic burial measures; it persisted the longest, and was practiced all over Europe. (Incidentally, it remains the most popular method of vampire disposal in modern fiction and cinema. Decapitation seems to be more popular for zombies.) The highly unusual 26,000-BCE triple burial from Dolne Vestonice in Moravia, Czech Republic, is the earliest known staked burial.[131] The left skeleton was staked through the left part of the pelvis. The middle skeleton had multiple congenital deformities suggesting *chondrodysplasia calcificans punctata*, a rare genetic disorder, which resulted in marked physical disabilities. While some sources make it intersex, it was probably a female.[132] The right skeleton was placed in the grave prone.[133]

There are multiple examples from Denmark of bodies buried within bogs, dating to the Iron Age, which were staked to the turf with wooden stakes or wickets.[134]

An early English example is that of a sixth-century Anglo-Saxon male with feet crossed at the ankles and staked to the river shore. Rivers were common places for potential revenant disposal, since they were liminal places between the territories of the living, and also boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead, such as the river Styx from Greek mythology.[135]

Somewhat later, in eleventh-century England, staking was employed specifically in burials of unbaptized children and women who died in childbirth:

> If a very small child dies without baptism, they take the body into a secret place and pierce it through with a rod. They say that if they did not do this, the child would come back and could cause harm to a great many people. If a woman does not manage to give birth to her child and dies in labor, in the very grave both mother and child are pierced with a rod that nails them to the ground.[136]

There are well-known Bulgarian fourteenth-century burials where the bodies were staked through the heart with broken ploughshares.[137]

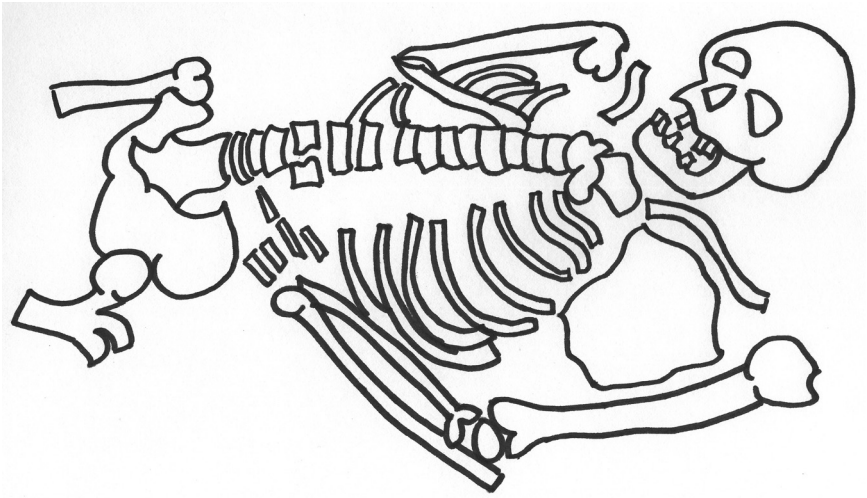


FIGURE 18. In the Bulgarian fourteenth-century so-called "vampire of Sozopol" burial, a body was staked with a broken ploughshare through the left chest. [138]

The Bocksten man, a famous Swedish bog body, was murdered and staked face down with three stakes in a bog around 1360. The stakes through the side and back may have been purely functional. However, in pinning the body down in the turf, the stake through the heart was to prevent the man from walking, as was burying him at the "meeting point of four parishes."[139]

Staking also persisted very late in suicide burials, especially in England, where suicides traditionally were buried at crossroads. The latest documented occurrence of the staked suicide burial at English crossroads occurred in 1823. This practice was outlawed by the *Burial of Suicides Act* of Parliament later that same year.[140] In Eastern Europe, however, it persisted into the early twentieth century.[141] It was also used as a political statement: in 2007, a man drove a three-foot hawthorn stake into the grave of Slobodan Milosevic, a former president of Serbia, implicated in war crimes in the 1990s.[142]

Interestingly, staking could also be used as a temporary measure until the proper burial rites could be performed. In *Gulathing*, a codex of early Norwegian law, there is a provision that if someone dies, but

> ... if the priest is away from home the body shall be interred nevertheless, and when he returns, a stake shall be driven down to the coffin and

> holy water poured down upon it, and the priest shall chant a death mass over it.[143]

In the *Vinland Saga*, a thirteenth-century account of tenth- to eleventh-century colonization of Greenland:

> It had been a custom in Greenland, after Christianity was brought there, to bury men in unconsecrated ground on the farms where they died. An upright stake was placed over a body, and when the priests came afterwards to the place, then was the stake pulled out, consecrated water poured therein, and a funeral service held, though it might be long after the burial.[144] CA

SICKLE BURIALS

Less common burials with sickles — placed across the neck, torso, or pelvis — are known from central and Eastern Europe and are related to staking. It was a known custom to bury the dangerous dead with the sickle across their necks or abdomens, as they would decapitate or cut themselves when they rose from the graves. It is possible that the widespread use of such burials contributed to the period depictions of death as a corpse with a sickle/scythe.[145] The placement of the sickle across the abdomen would cut the body open if it attempted to walk, or puncture it when it started swelling. (Bodies at risk for revenancy are often described as swollen or inflated). Sometimes swelling is considered a cause, and sometimes, an effect of one becoming a revenant. Regardless, prophylactic sickle placement would effectively deflate a body, if it started rising, and thus prevent it from walking after death.

Sickle burials are known from seventh- to tenth-century Slovakia, eleventh-thirteenth century Poland, and fourteenth- to sixteenth-century Germany. Later, early modern burials of this type were found in seventeenth- to eighteenth-century Poland.[146] CA

FIGURE 19. The above is an example of corpse with a sickle or a scythe fragment across its neck, as a variant of staking, from an early seventeenth-century burial from Drawsko, Poland. [147]

FIGURE 20. The image above is also from a seventeenth-century Drawsko, Poland, burial. In addition to the sickle across the pelvis, this female skeleton also has a stone on her neck, and was buried with a coin in her mouth.[148] (Unfortunately, no images of pre-sixteenth-century sickle burials were available to me, so I am using slightly later burials of similar type.)

LIMINAL BURIALS

These would include burials in non-normative locations. Burying outside of consecrated ground,[149] outside of the local district, or far away,[150] or at the borders of geographical of political entities fall into this category. Liminal burial places include the following.

Bogs[151,152]

Tidal margins[153]

> "…every man who dies shall be brought to church and buried in hallowed earth excepting only evildoers, traitors, murderers, truce breakers, thieves, and men who take their own lives. And those whom I have now enumerated shall be buried on the shore where the tide meets the green sod."[154]

Ditches (indicate both the borders of human lands and water/earth border)[155]

Rivers[156,157]

Crossroads

> As discussed above, suicides in England were customarily buried at crossroads. Aelfric of Eynsham refers to witches raising the dead at crossroads at night.[158,159]

Borders of parishes[160]

River banks or river flood zones[161]

> Rivers serving as borders between the realms of the dead and the living is a common motif in folklore of multiple cultures, and can be encountered in modern mythology and different media, such as Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* animated film.

Thresholds[162]

Between heaven and earth

> Elevated burials, or exposure of executed criminals until excarnation by elements and animals, with eventual burial of the resulting skeleton.[163]

Execution cemeteries[164]

Please note that other apotropaic measures were often used in conjunction with liminal burials, and many of the earlier burial examples are from liminal locations. Furthermore, not all liminal burials are apotropaic in nature: intent is important! Some unusual burials are due to hasty body disposal or accidental death, and not motivated by fear of revenants.[165]
CA

CREMATION

Cremation can be employed as a standard burial method which is still practiced widely today, but it was also used to prevent and destroy revenants. Thus, cremation burials therefore do not universally fall into the category of apotropaics and should be taken in context. In Europe, cremation, complete or partial, became widespread in the middle-to-late Bronze Age, and remained the norm for a time. In Rome, inhumation started replacing cremation as a standard from of body disposal in the first- or second-century BCE, and was the norm by about the fourth century and a bit later on the outer edges of the Empire.[166]

However, this early widespread use of cremation may have developed as a custom to prevent revenants. For example, it is still widely practiced in India:

> It has been observed that cultures that cremate tend not to have revenants in corporeal form, but since India has abundant revenants in its folklore, we might suggest that such cultures cremate in order not to have revenants.[167]

Cremation is well documented in our period of study,[168,169] and it is still a standard motif in modern vampire mythology. It can be interpreted as an apotropaic measure in European cultures after the establishment of Christianity because the laws expressly prohibited cremation and provided for punishment of those who would burn the bodies:

> If anyone deceived by the devil shall have believed, after the manner of the pagans, that any man or woman is a witch and eats men, and on this account shall have burned the person, or shall have given the person's flesh to others to eat, or shall have eaten it himself, let him be punished by a capital sentence.
>
> If anyone, in accordance with pagan rites, shall have caused the body of a dead man to be burned and shall have reduced his bones to ashes, let him be punished capitally.[170]

After Christianity was accepted in Europe, cremation was used as a last resort when dealing with revenants, and was not often employed preventatively, as it was time and resource intensive, expensive, illegal, and technically difficult, resulting in partially burned bodies.[171] Often

it was used when other methods failed. Klaufi from *Svarfdale Saga* was cremated after beheading didn't work.[172] In *Laxdaela Saga*, Hrapp is also cremated after Olaf tries unsuccessfully to kill him with a spear.[173] The late sixteenth-century shoemaker of Breslau who committed suicide had to be burned after exhumation, reburial, decapitation, and exposure failed.[174] Cremation did not have to be complete. The seventh-century revenants of Drakelow, discussed earlier, had only their hearts burned.

In William of Newburgh's 1190's *Historia Regnum Anglicanum*, there is an account of a local bishop intervening when the locals tried to burn a revenant, and instead offered to absolve the corpse of its sins, which also worked. That said, William has four revenant accounts in his chronicle, and three other revenants were cremated.[175]

If used outright, cremation could be performed for an especially dangerous corpse. In the *Saga of Erik the Red*, Thorstein, one of the men who died in an epidemic, appears to his wife, Gudrid, and asks for him and his men to be buried in consecrated ground, except for Garth, an unpopular overseer who was the first to die from the disease: "I wish him to be burned on a funeral pile as soon as may be, for he is the cause of all those ghosts which have been among us this winter."[176] *The Saga of Erik the Red* refers to tenth- to eleventh-century events, but for centuries, the first person to die in an epidemic was often blamed for the deaths of others, treated as a revenant, and cremated. In a 1725 account from Serbia, one Peter Plogojowitz, a first victim of a rapid, 24-hour illness, was blamed for subsequent deaths by his fellow villagers, who, "beside themselves with fear," exhumed his body, staked it, and burned it, much to the bewilderment of a German district official who was stationed there and recorded the whole thing.[177] A very similar account from 1732, deals with Arnold Paole, a Serbian soldier, who died by falling off a hay wagon, and then was believed to have caused deaths of many of the villagers, also ends with his cremation.[178] CA

CONCLUSION

While death, burials, and funerary culture are not commonly researched in the Society for Creative Anachronism, I believe it is important to be aware of them. The attitudes of the living towards the dead and the process of the demonization of corpses are fascinating. They are reflected in many aspects of then- contemporary culture, such as in miniatures, paintings, books, frescoes, chronicles, and folklore. The status of the "outsider" or "other," assigned to the revenant in period, is very useful. These dead have created negative spaces around the living, which can sometimes tell us more about their society than the living themselves. Even if we are not always aware of it, we have inherited this culture, which still permeates our lives, although, thankfully, mostly as entertainment. CA

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NOTES

[1] Edeltraud Aspöck, "What Actually Is a Deviant Burial? Comparing German-Language and Anglophone Research on Deviant Burials," In *Deviant Burial in the Archaeological Record* 2008, edited by Eileen M. Murphy (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2008), 17-34.

[2] Gordon Hall Gerould, *The Grateful Dead: the History of a Folk Story* (Folcroft, PA: Folcroft Library Editions, 1973).

[3] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 194.

[4] Catherine J. Ullman, "Richard III: Two Interments," *Tournaments Illuminated*, no. 201 (2017).

[5] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 47-64.

[6] Claude Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead: Ghosts, Ancestors, and the Transparent Veil of the Pagan Mind*, (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2009),12-19.

[7] Nancy Caciola, Afterlives: *The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016) , 43.

[8] Ibid., 39-43.

[9] Ibid., 44-45.

[10] Ibid., 49-51.

[11] Ibid., 56-57.

[12] Stephen A. Barney, et al., ed. and transl., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 231.

[13] Ibid., 243: "In the like manner some people say that the will (animus) and the soul (anima) are the same, even though soul is characteristic of life and while will is characteristic of intention. Whence the philosophers say that life can continue to exist even without the will, and that the soul can endure without the mind (mens)–which is why we use the term 'the mindless.' The mind is so called in that it knows; the will, in that it desires."

[14] Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*, 60.

[15] Stephen A. Barney, et al., ed. and transl., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, 182: "They make use of blood and victims, and often handle the bodies of the dead. Necromancers are those by whose incantations the dead, brought

back to life, seem to prophesy, and to answer what is asked, for necros means "dead" in Greek… The blood of a corpse is applied for the cross-questioning, for demons are said to love blood."

[16] Bill Griffiths, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Magic*, Rev. ed. (Hockwold-cum-Wilton, Norfolk, England: Anglo-Saxon Books, 2003), 33.

[17] Nancy Caciola, Afterlives: T*he Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*.

[18] Ibid., 211.

[19] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, 11-13. A 1591 account of the shoemaker of Breslau who, after he committed suicide, walked after death, made noise, and "oppressed" others. Apotropaic measures performed included initial disinterment, then decapitation, dismemberment of hands and feet, removal of the heart, and eventual cremation.

[20] Tom Ireland- Delfs, "Drauginir: Revenants in Old Icelandic Sagas." Academia.edu, http://www.academia.edu/4661877/Drauginir_Revenants_in_Old_Icelandic_Sagas.

[21] Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, 185.

[22] Ibid., 84-85.

[23] Tom Ireland-Delfs, "Drauginir: Revenants in Old Icelandic Sagas."

[24] Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*. Caciola discusses Thorgunna, a Norse revenant (draugr), who causes creation of two separate bands of revenants, the shepherds and local dweller and drowned sailors that fight amongst each other.

[25] Tom Ireland-Delfs, "Drauginir: Revenants in Old Icelandic Sagas."

[26] Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*, 217. An account of Walter Map, about the evil Welshman who died, came back and called the villagers by name. They would die shortly thereafter. Geoffrey of Burton's episode from the life of St. Modwenna, where Modwenna, by her powerful words alone, caused the deaths of two troublemakers from Stapenhill. They died, but came back, carrying their coffins, in the village of Drakelow. They called the villagers out of their houses crying agite et venite!, causing all but three people in the entire village to die. Their (revenants') heads were cut off, and hearts removed and burned.

[27] Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*.

[28] L.N. Vinogradova and E. E. Levkievskaya, *Narodnaya Demonologiya Polessya (Polessye Folk Demonology)*, Studia Philologica. IV vols., Vol. II (Moscow:

Rukopisnyye Pamyatniki Drevney Rusi), 2012, 368. The belief that the soul does not completely leave the body until the flesh has decayed was recorded in Croatia as late as the 1870s (quoting Berezin's Khorvatiya, Slavoniya, Dalmatiya I Voennaya Granitza, 1879, 414).

[29] Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*.

[30] Eiríkr Magnússon and William Morris, trans., *The Story of Grettir the Strong* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901). "Blue" can also mean "dark," and "neat" is this context refers to the Old English "neat," meaning "beast" or "ox."

[31] Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality,* 41-42.

[32] L.N. Vinogradova and E. E. Levkievskaya, *Narodnaya Demonologiya Polessya (Polessye Folk Demonology)*, 368-369.

[33] Due to the very graphic nature of the images, I decided not to include any in the text. However, you can see them by looking up body farms owned and operated by the University of Tennessee or Texas State University. If you are really curious, the images in this link are similar to the period descriptions and to the illuminated manuscripts: http://www.sliptalk.com/body-farm/.

[34] Ernst and Johanna Lehner, *Devils, Demons and Witchcraft* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1971).

[35] Claude Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead: Ghosts, Ancestors, and the Transparent Veil of the Pagan Mind*. Thorgunna, from Eyrbriggja Saga was buried in unstitched shroud and came back as a revenant.

[36] Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*, 58-62.

[37] Ibid., 232.

[38] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*.

[39] Tom Ireland-Delfs, "Drauginir: Revenants in Old Icelandic Sagas." Hrapp in *Laxdoela Saga* is buried upright in the kitchen doorway, which is highly irregular.

[40] Ibid., Hrapp in *Njal's Saga*.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Robert Bartlett, ed. and trans., *Geoffrey of Burton: Life and Miracles of St Modwenna* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 191-197. The account of two petty criminals who came back after death and depopulated the village of Drakelow.

[43] Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*, 220. A Scottish ex-communicate becomes a revenant in the thirteenth-century Scottish Chronicle of Lanercost.

[44] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, 1-14. The account of the suicide shoemaker of Breslau, dated 1591.

[45] Mark Laskey, "Rites of Desecration: Suicide, Sacrilege and the Crossroads Burial," http://www.cvltnation.com/rites-of-desecration-suicide-sacrilege-and-profane-burial-at-the-crossroads/.

[46] Maura Farrell, "Prone, Stoned, and Losing the Head: Deviant Burials in Early Medieval Ireland in the 5th to 12th Centuries," *Trowel* (2012).

[47] Ibid.

[48] Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*, 219. From the thirteenth-century Historiae Memorabilis by Rudolf von Schlettstadt, where a man named Henry, attacked by several revenants, recognizes one of them as a recently murdered knight.

[49] Maura Farrell, "Prone, Stoned, and Losing the Head: Deviant Burials in Early Medieval Ireland in the 5th to 12th Centuries."

[50] Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*, 213. *Eybriggja Saga*, where a group of lost sailors return as revenants.

[51] Ibid., 213. *Eybriggja Saga*, where the undead shepherd kills Thorir Wood-leg, and he also walks after death.

[52] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 69.

[53] Ibid., 194.

[54] Estella Weiss-Krejci, "Unusual Life, Unusual Death and the Fate of the Corpse: A Case Study from Dynastic Europe," *Deviant Burial in the Archaeological Record* (2008),169-90.

[55] Anne Irene Riisøy, "Deviant Burials: Societal Exclusion of Dead Outlaws in Medieval Norway," (2015).

[56] Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*, 323.

[57] Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla* [in English, translated from Old Norse], Ed. by Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London, 2011), http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Edda-1.pdf, 3.

[58] P. V. Glob, *The Bog People: Iron Age Man Preserved* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969). For example, the body of the Bocksten man

from the 1360s was buried in the bog (watery place), at the border of four parishes (borderline or liminal location), prone and staked down.

[59] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*.

[60] Ibid., 89.

[61] Ibid.,78.

[62] Ibid., 91.

[63] Robert Bartlett, ed. and trans., *Geoffrey of Burton: Life and Miracles of St Modwenna*, 195.

[64] Eiríkr Magnússon and William Morris, trans., *The Story of Grettir the Strong*.

[65] Claude Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead: Ghosts, Ancestors, and the Transparent Veil of the Pagan Mind*, 95-96. Summary of the Icelandic portion of the saga.

[66] Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*, 225.

[67] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 89.

[68] Ibid., 34,168.

[69] Matt Blake, "Pictured: 'Vampire' Graves in Poland Where Skeletons Were Buried with Skulls between Their Legs," *Daily Mail*, July 13, 2015.

[70] Maura Farrell, "Prone, Stoned, and Losing the Head: Deviant Burials in Early Medieval Ireland in the 5th to 12th Centuries."

[71] Anne Irene Riisøy, "Deviant Burials: Societal Exclusion of Dead Outlaws in Medieval Norway," 69, quoting Larson, 1935, The Earliest Norwegian Laws, being the Gulathing Law and the Frostathing Law.

[72] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 69.

[73] Maura Farrell, "Prone, Stoned, and Losing the Head: Deviant Burials in Early Medieval Ireland in the 5th to 12th Centuries."

[74] Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead: Ghosts, Ancestors, and the Transparent Veil of the Pagan Mind*, 23. An account of a 1570 Lower Saxony judgement: a murderer should be brought to crossroads with his head to the east, had his head covered with a straw sack and decapitated.

[75] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 69.

[76] Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. "Pepin III," by Emily Shippett Duckley, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pippin-III.

[77] "Dolni Vestonice Home Page," *Don's Maps*, http://donsmaps.com/dolni.html.

[78] Zoe Devlin and Emma-Jayne Graham, *Death Embodied: Archaeological Approaches to the Treatment of the Corpse* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015).

[79] Ibid., 145.

[80] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 89.

[81] Maura Farrell, "Prone, Stoned, and Losing the Head: Deviant Burials in Early Medieval Ireland in the 5th to 12th Centuries."

[82] Kristina Killgrove, "Healthy 'Vampires' Emerge from Graves in Medieval Polish Cemetery," *Forbes* (1 June 2016), https://www.forbes.com/sites/kristinakillgrove/2016/06/01/healthy-vampires-emerge-from-graves-in-medieval-polish-cemetery/#30bf1de7e432.

[83] P. V. Glob, *The Bog People; Iron Age Man Preserved*, 149-151.

[84] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, 45, quoting W. Mannhardt's Uber Vampyrismus, 270.

[85] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 89.

[86] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, 49.

[87] Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*.

[88] Anne Irene Riisøy, "Deviant Burials: Societal Exclusion of Dead Outlaws in Medieval Norway."

[89] Anonymous, *The Laxdaela Saga*, Trans. by Muriel A. C. Press (London: Temple Classics, 1899): Then they went towards Stigandi, and took counsel between them as to how it should not fare with him as his brother, that he should cast his glance on many things from which evil would befall them. They take now a bag, and draw it over his head. Stigandi woke at that, and made no struggle, for now there were many men to one. The sack had a slit in it, and Stigandi could see out through it the slope on the other side; there the lay of the land was fair, and it was covered with thick grass. But suddenly something like a whirlwind came on, and turned the sward topsy-turvy, so that the grass never grew there again. It is now called Brenna. Then they stoned Stigandi to death, and there he was buried under a heap of stones.

[90] Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 162.

[91] Ibid., 163.

[92] Maura Farrell, "Prone, Stoned, and Losing the Head: Deviant Burials in Early Medieval Ireland in the 5th to 12th Centuries." An Irish female burial, prone, decapitated, and placed in a ditch.

[93] Zoe Devlin and Emma-Jayne Graham, *Death Embodied: Archaeological Approaches to the Treatment of the Corpse*, 145-147.

[94] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 163.

[95] P.V. Glob, *The Bog People: Iron Age Man Preserved*.

[96] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 93-94.

[97] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, 61.

[98] D. K. Zelenin, Nikita Tolstoi, and E. E. Levkievskaya. *Essays on Russian Mythology: People Who Met a Violent Death and Mermaids: Selected Works (Ocherki Russkoy Mifologii: Umershie Neestestvennoi Smertyu I Rusalki: Isbrannyye Trudy)* (Moscow: Indrik, 1995), 62-63.

[99] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 40.

[100] Jane R. Timby, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Empingham II, Rutland* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1996), 18. In this particular cemetery (mostly from the sixth century), crossed ankles are seen in 17% of supine burials and are associated with some prone burials, too.

[101] L.N. Vinogradova and E. E. Levkievskaya, *Narodnaya Demonologiya Polessya (Polessye Folk Demonology)*, 332.

[102] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 163.

[103] Maura Farrell, "Prone, Stoned, and Losing the Head: Deviant Burials in Early Medieval Ireland in the 5th to 12th Centuries."

[104] Matt Blake, "Pictured: 'Vampire' Graves in Poland Where Skeletons Were Buried with Skulls between Their Legs," *Daily Mail*, July 15, 2013.

[105] David Barrowclough, "Time to Slay Vampire Burials? The Archaeological and Historical Evidence for Vampires in Europe." *Academia.edu*, 2014. https://www. academia. edu/8854480/Time_to_Slay_Vampire_Burials_The_Archaeological_and_Historica l_Evidence_for_Vampires_in_Europe.–Title from the Screen.

[106] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 194-195, pertaining to a richly furnished probable burial of a "cunning woman."

[107] Maura Farrell, "Prone, Stoned, and Losing the Head: Deviant Burials in Early Medieval Ireland in the 5th to 12th Centuries."

[108] Anonymous, "The Laxdaela Saga."

[109] Claude Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead: Ghosts, Ancestors, and the Transparent Veil of the Pagan Mind*, 23. Unfortunately, I could not trace this any further to see which specific revenant was banished.

[110] Ibid., 23.

[111] Zelenin, Tolstoi, and Levkievskaya, *Essays on Russian Mythology*, 62-64.

[112] Ibid., 62-65.

[113] Claude Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead: Ghosts, Ancestors, and the Transparent Veil of the Pagan Mind*, 23.

[114] David Barrowclough, "Time to Slay Vampire Burials? The Archaeological and Historical Evidence for Vampires in Europe."

[115] Susan Verberg, "Pin Down Your Dead! Or, How to Protect against Zombies and the Evil Eye," *Æthelmearc Gazette*, January 11, 2017, https://aethelmearcgazette.com/2017/01/11/pin-down-the-dead-or-how-to-protect-against-zombies-and-the-evil-eye/.

[116] "Iron Age Burial Gives Insights into Ancient Islanders," 02/10/2017, http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-38920311.

[117] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*.

[118] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, 47.

[119] Marek Polcyn and Elżbieta Gajda, "Buried with Sickles: Early Modern Interments from Drawsko, Poland," Antiquity 89, no. 348 (2015).

[120] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, 47.

[121] Heinrich Institoris, Jakob Sprenger, and Montague Summers, *Malleus Maleficarum* (New York: B. Blom, 1970).

[122] Montague Summers, *Vampire in Europe*, 1968 ed. (New York: The University Press),179-206, where Summers translates the entirety of Rohr's work.

[123] Ibid., 185.

[124] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, 126.

[125] David Barrowclough, "Time to Slay Vampire Burials? The Archaeological and Historical Evidence for Vampires in Europe."

[126] Ibid.

[127] Dayla Aberge, "Archaeologists Discover Man Whose Tongue Was Replaced by a Stone, " *The Guardian*, January 23, 2017.

[128] P.V. Glob, *The Bog People: Iron Age Man Preserved.*

[129] M. Affleck, "8 Recently Discovered Medieval Vampire Burials," April 4, 2013, http://listverse.com/2013/04/04/8-recently-discovered-medieval-vampire-burials/. The sixth-century Southwell, England, burial skeleton was staked through the heart, shoulders, and ankles; the much later nineteenth-century Turkish skeleton on Lesbos was staked through the neck, pelvis, and ankle.

[130] L.N. Vinogradova and E. E. Levkievskaya, *Narodnaya Demonologiya Polessya (Polessye Folk Demonology)*, 368-369.

[131] Matthew Beresford, "The Dangerous Dead: The Early Medieval Deviant Burial at Southwell, Norringhamshire in a Wider Context," *MBArcheology Local Heritage Series*, no. 3 (2012).

[132] Vincenzo Formicola, Antonella Pontrandolfi, and Jiří Svoboda, "The Upper Paleolithic Triple Burial of Dolní Věstonice: Pathology and Funerary Behavior," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 115, no. 4 (2001).

[133] "Dolni Vestonice Home Page." It contains several images of the burial and several articles on its interpretation, some more plausible than others.

[134] P.V. Glob, *The Bog People; Iron Age Man Preserved.*

[135] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 210.

[136] Claude Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead: Ghosts, Ancestors, and the Transparent Veil of the Pagan Mind*, 38. From the Decret by Burchard of Worms, early eleventh century.

[137] David Barrowclough, "Time to Slay Vampire Burials? The Archaeological and Historical Evidence for Vampires in Europe."

[138] Ibid.

> The Director of Bulgaria's National Museum, Bozhidar Dimitrov, confirmed that the practice of burial with iron spikes run through the chest was common in rural communities until the first decade of the twentieth century "What is more according to Dimitrov, about one hundred such skeletons have been uncovered in Bulgaria…. explanation for the large number of vampire burials was due to the existence of a religious sect that was particularly active in Sozopol and thesurrounding region of Strandzha in Bulgaria. The rituals practiced in the name of Manichean Bogomilism retained many pagan elements, including the peculiar burial practice of staking the heart."

[139] P.V. Glob, *The Bog People; Iron Age Man Preserved*, 149-151.

[140] Laskey, "Rites of Desecration: Suicide, Sacrilege and the Crossroads Burial."

[141] David Barrowclough, "Time to Slay Vampire Burials? The Archaeological and Historical Evidence for Vampires in Europe."

[142] "Man Drives Stake in Grave of Slobodan Milosevic," *Dalje.com*, March 5, 2007, http://arhiva.dalje.com/en-world/man-drives-stake-in-grave-of-slobodan-milosevic/24459.

[143] Laurence Marcellus Larson, *The Earliest Norwegian Laws: Being the Gulathing Law and Frostathing Law* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), 52.

[144] *The Saga of Erik the Red*, Translated by John Sephton, 1880, Icelandic Saga Database. http://sagadb.org/eiriks_saga_rauda.en, chapter 6.

[145] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, 50-51.

[146] Marek Polcyn and Elżbieta Gajda, "Buried with Sickles: Early Modern Interments from Drawsko, Poland," 1373-87.

[147] Lesley A. Gregoricka et al., "Apotropaic Practices and the Undead: A Biogeochemical Assessment of Deviant Burials in Post-Medieval Poland," *PLoS ONE 9*, no. 11 (2014).

[148] Marek Polcyn and Elżbieta Gajda, "Buried with Sickles: Early Modern Interments from Drawsko, Poland."

[149] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 25.

[150] Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*, 213, in *Laxdaela Saga* Hrapp is far away in an attempt to stop him.

[151] Ibid., 237. Twelfth-century account of William of Malmesbury of a man weighed down in a bog to prevent wandering.

[152] P.V. Glob, *The Bog People; Iron Age Man Preserved*.

[153] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*.

[154] Laurence Marcellus Larson, *The Earliest Norwegian Laws: Being the Gulathing Law and Frostathing Law*, 51.

[155] Maura Farrell, "Prone, Stoned, and Losing the Head: Deviant Burials in Early Medieval Ireland in the 5th to 12th Centuries."

[156] Nacny Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*, 237.

[157] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 24. In tenth-century England, witches were punished by drowning or throwing into a river, which took care both of the execution and body disposal of a potential revenant.

[158] Mark Laskey, "Rites of Desecration: Suicide, Sacrilege and the Crossroads Burial."

[159] Bill Griffiths, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 33.

[160] P.V. Glob, *The Bog People; Iron Age Man Preserved*, 149-151.

[161] Maura Farrell, "Prone, Stoned, and Losing the Head: Deviant Burials in Early Medieval Ireland in the 5th to 12th Centuries."

[162] Marianne Hem Eriksen, "Doors to the Dead. The Power of Doorways and Thresholds in Viking Age Scandinavia," *Archaeological Dialogues* 20, no. 2 (2013).

[163] Devlin and Graham, Death Embodied: Archaeological Approaches to the Treatment of the Corpse, 64.

[164] Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*.

[165] Ibid., 38.

[166] Zoe Devlin and Emma-Jayne Graham, Death Embodied: Archaeological Approaches to the Treatment of the Corpse, 21.

[167] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, 168.

[168] Ibid., 10-14. The supposedly 1591 account of the suicide shoemaker of Breslau, who was eventually burned after many post-mortem misadventures.

[169] Tom Ireland-Delfs, "Drauginir: Revenants in Old Icelandic Sagas." The eventual burning of Hrapp finally stops him.

[170] Paul Halsall, "Medieval Sourcebook: Charlemagne: Capitulary for Saxony 775-790," *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, Fordham University, January 1996 https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/carol-saxony.asp, paragraphs 6 and 7.

[171] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*.

[172] Claude Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead: Ghosts, Ancestors, and the Transparent Veil of the Pagan Mind*, 95-96.

[173] Tom Ireland-Delfs, "Drauginir: Revenants in Old Icelandic Sagas."

[174] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, 10, citing J. Grasse's *Sagenbush des preussischen Staats*, Glogau, 1868.

[175] Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*, 218.

[176] *The Saga of Erik the Red*, ch. 6.

[177] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, 6-7.

[178] Ibid., 16-18.