

The legends of Bieszczady

In 80s during the archeological works, people came across the grave beside the Orthodox church with the corpse with the head cut off and put beside the legs. The cemetery itself was discovered by accident during the demolition of some buildings which were to be moved to Sanocki heritage park.

On this cemetery over 40 graves were found but this one situated a little aside was the most strange. But at those days it wasn't paid any special attention. Over 20 years later an archeologist **Piotr Kotowicz** worked on this issue as he knew the ethnography of Bieszczady and he was familiarized with the legends of vampires and the way they were buried. He made the research and discovered that the grave comes from VII c. and the dead man was probably the inhabitants of Sanok. But there are some suspicions that the man may have been a criminal who was convicted to death by cutting the head off. But nobody is really sure about it.....

It turned out that there are a lot of ethnographical descriptions of places in Bieszczady where the vampires were. In those notes we can find that even the official representatives of church struggled with them. An example: in Kulaszne near Rzepedź there was a dead who was under suspicion for being a vampire. The whole village gathered on the cemetery under the chairmanship of the local pop to dig out the dead. According to the story the vampire was to laugh derisively. To stop him people thrust a wooden peg into his heart.

Similarly, such funerals took place in Czażyn and Zubeńsk whereas in nonexisting village Jawornik all graves are with the corpses with the heads cut off.

From the human to the vampire.

There were many ways how a human becomes a phantom. The dead was regarded as a vampire when his bones didn't go ossification or when he was red on his face. The redness of the face was explained with the excess of blood which was taken of course from the victims.

A vampire becomes also a child who was cocncepted during the woman's period. The creature was characterized by possessing of two hearts and two souls, one belongs to human and the other one to the devil. When the person died the power over the body was taken by the devil's soul and devil's heart.

One can think that there were only bad vampires but there were also the good ones. For example there was a man who after his death got up from the grave and helped his wife to run the farm.

But certainly the majority of vampires were bad. In Dołżyca lived the vampire which attacked the cattle and when the men tried to stop him he was attacked.

Conquerors of vampires

To prevent the vampire from getting up from the grave people did different things. For example they turned the doorstep and the vampire could not recognize his home. Also on the way fom home to the cemetry there was the poppy seeds scattered. The seeds were to absorb the vampire in such a way that he started to count them and till he finished there was the sunrise.

Another metod was to turn the dead in his grave face down or cut off his head and put beside the legs. People also thrust the wooden pegs in the head and heart of vampire. Sometimes the corpse was thrust in three places: head, heart and legs. The grave was also covered up with the stones to impede getting up from the grave. The most disgusting way was to drink the dead's blood with vodka.

There were also proffesionals who struggle with vampires. The most popular ones were Baczowie from Slovakia. If all the methods failed they were called up. For ex ample they came to Radoszyce because the village was haunted by the ghost of 11 years old girl. Baczowie- two enormous men – arrived to the village during the day but they didn't eat any food and drink any vodka. At the midnight they reached the cemetry, they digged out the grave but it turned out to be empty. Afterwards they saw a girl dancing in the meadow so

they caught her and applied all methods to put the vampire to death and it worked as people from the village never saw her again.