

*Where do VAMPIRES come from?*



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Ph.D.



# PROF "SQUI" ALUCARD & HIS REGULAR PINT

(Thanks to Peter Schmidt &  
Profs & Pints)

I NEVER  
DRINK...  
*BEER*





# The Usual Suspects: Drakulya/Dracula (historical -> literary)

- Vlad III "Drakulya" "Țepeș"\* of Wallachia (1428/31 – 1476/77)
- Son of Vlad II "Dracul" (Order of the Dragon)
- Model for Ivan the Terrible
- Um, Vlad III wasn't a vampire

\*The Romanian word for "impaler". Pron. "tsepesh"





Vlad the Paler

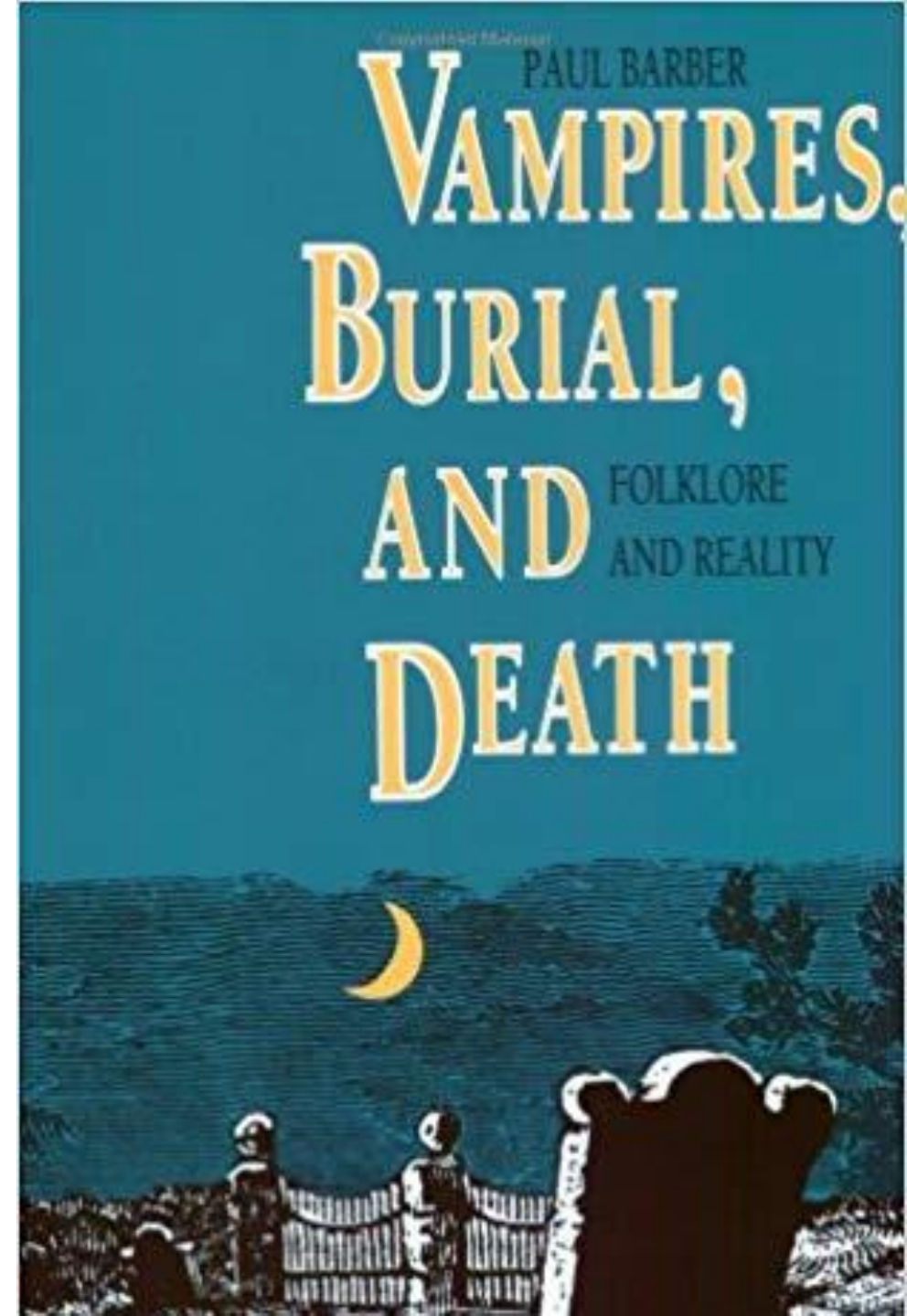
# More Usual Suspects

- Vampire "Epidemics" near Austro-Hungary
  - Those Wacky Serbian Peasants
    - U.d. 1725 Petar Blagojevic (Петар Благојевич)
  - Flückinger, Visum et Repertum (1732)\*
    - U.d. 1732 Arnaut Pavle (Арнаут Павле)
  - Enlightenment vs Endarkenment
    - Dom Augustin Calmet, *The Phantom World* (1746)
    - Maria Theresa vs Recrudescence of Inquisition — G. van Swieten
- Medical Materialist Theories (Barber, et alia)
  - Premature Burial
  - Diseases

\*<http://magiaposthuma.blogspot.com/2008/09/visum-et-repertum.html>

Klaus Hamberger's *Mortuus non mordet: kommentierte Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689–1791*

U.d.: "Un-deceased"





# PREMATURE BURIAL

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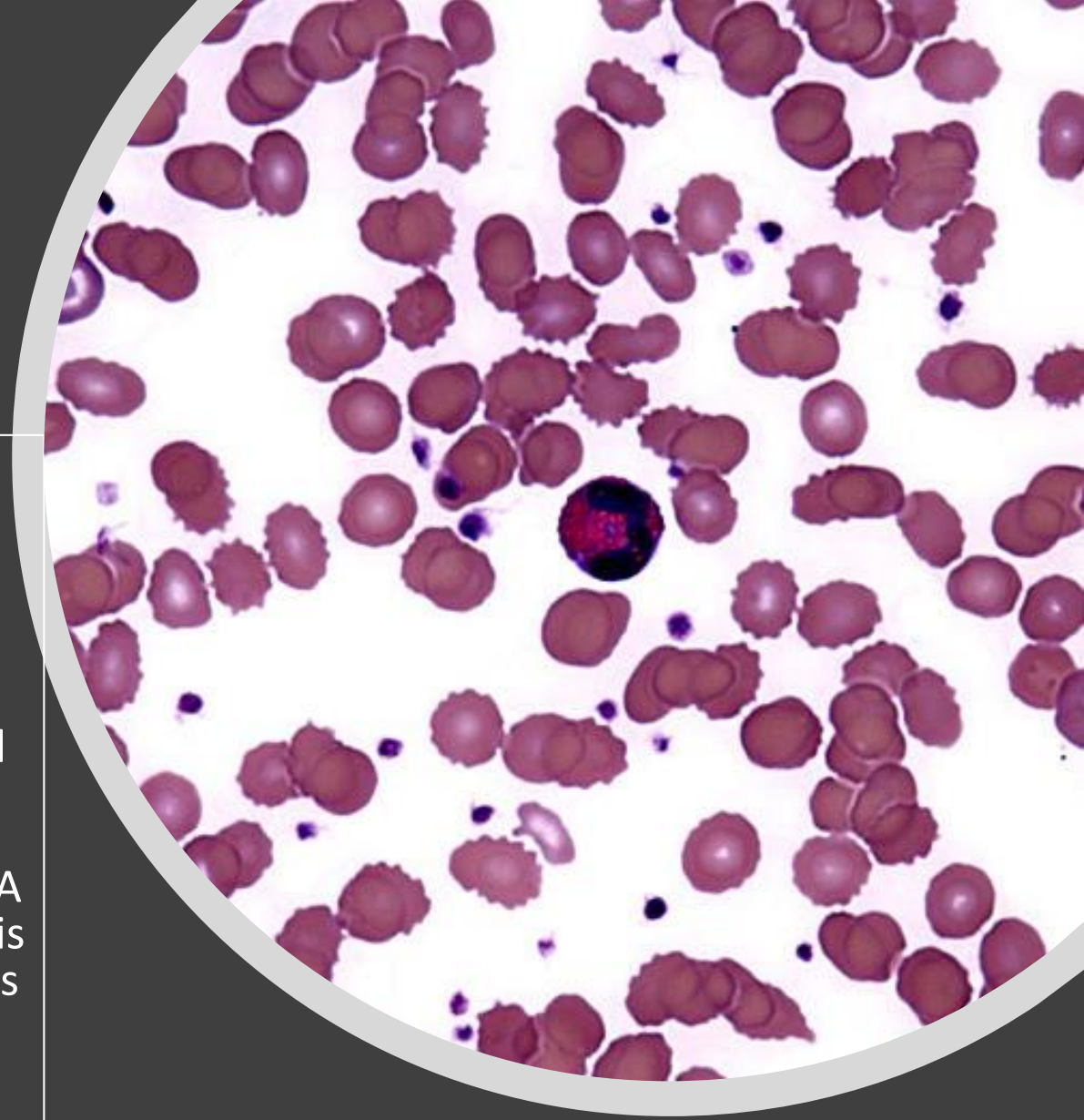


# Unusual Suspects: **DNA**

## Pernicious Anemia

- **The Genetics of Vampires:** There is the possibility that the **vampire evolved from humans, or conversely that humans evolved from them.** They could be a **genetically older form of human that had a higher DNA count from the beginning.** On the other hand, some sort of nondisjunction occurred during meiosis that led to the additional piece of DNA becoming a distinct chromosome. A third possibility is that at some point the human acquired an exogenous piece of DNA from a virus or another source. This piece of DNA could have then become the **vampire DNA.**

<https://popculture.knoji.com/the-science-of-vampires/>



# PORPHYRIA: THE VAMPIRE DISEASE THAT STARTED THE LEGEND



Melanie Ramirez

FOLLOW

*The Vampire Disease, with porphyria as its clinical term, is a set of rare blood disorders. It is the reason for our belief in vampires today. What is not known to many is that it is a disease that caused the suffering of many porphyria patients at a time when they needed love and care most.*

<https://rare-diseases-conditions.knoji.com/porphyria-the-vampire-disease-that-started-the-legend/>

Author Roger Luckhurst, who edited Oxford World's Classic's reprint of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, has researched the conditions which spread the belief in vampires, showing that the myth began to gain popularity in the early 18th Century. "The first mention of the word vampire in the English language is in the 1730s, in newspapers which carry reports from the edge of Europe, of bodies being dug up and looking bloated, and having fresh blood around their mouths. They report that these stories have come from peasants, but they `make them sound very plausible."

<https://www.nytimes.com/1985/05/31/us/rare-disease-proposed-as-cause-for-vampires.html>



# RABIES

Rabies, or hydrophobia, is a **disease** that **causes** people to display several **vampire-like symptoms**, including the desire to bite others. The rabies virus attacks the nervous system and can also **cause** oversensitivity to sunlight and to other visual stimuli, such as mirrors.

“Rabies is **obviously** where we get the link to the werewolf, too,” says Luckhurst. “People were turned feral by this contact with animals. There is a degree of folk wisdom in the werewolf myth, a warning for people not to connect yourself too much to the natural world. You had to remember your humanity.”





# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE





# Who was buried in "vampire graves"?

1500 years old -

Mostly in and around Poland, but also  
Bulgaria, Italy, etc.

- Decapitated
- Hobbled
- Covered with stones
- Stones in the mouth
- Staked through skull or heart

Why?

*This just in (Oct 15 WaPo)...*

## **Archaeologists find 'vampire burial' site of a child feared capable of rising from the dead**

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**10-year-old child who was buried in an  
ancient Roman cemetery in the region  
of Umbria in Italy.**

\*[https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/2018/10/15/archaeologists-find-vampire-burial-site-child-feared-capable-rising-dead/?utm\\_term=.8a41cbc0a9c2](https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/2018/10/15/archaeologists-find-vampire-burial-site-child-feared-capable-rising-dead/?utm_term=.8a41cbc0a9c2)





**Q. What's wrong with those ideas?**

**A. Nothing. Except...**

**The root word "*vampir*" (*вампир*)**

- Is probably around a thousand years old
- Is undoubtedly Slavic, primarily Balkan
  - *NOT TRANSYLVANIA*
  - Evidence in Russia, Poland, etc.
  - ['vampir' borrowed back into Russian from German (XVIII c)]
- Pre-dates first use in Western European languages by 700 years
- Did **not** designate a blood-drinking corpse
  - Is pejorative, but not folkloric (until 1500s Macedonia)
  - Occurs in a religious context/conflict

## A. Nothing. Except...

- Medical materialist theories are based on retrospective projections
  - Barber's book does not cite one Slavic source (does not have the language)
  - Rabies, porphyria, anemia etc. describe symptomatology that don't line up with folkloric phenomenology
  - Ignore a system of belief ("lower demonology") of which the vampire is a small part
  - Bulgarian folklore did have personified diseases (e.g. "nezhit" **НЕЖИТ**)



# A. Nothing. Except...

- Archaeological evidence *does suggest* ritual actions on the corpse
  - Post-mortem attempts to immobilize indicate a belief in “undeadness”
    - Why else do it?
  - “Vampire-like” beings in other cultures: fear of the risen dead is common, ancient
- BUT: There is *no* early linguistic evidence connecting corpse rituals with the notion of “vampire”
  - Hostility/violence against a buried corpse ≠ vampire

# NOW FOR THE TRUTH\*

- Scholars without Slavic languages are limited
  - E.g. Paul Barber's bibliography
  - Tend to not examine evidence before XVIII C ("Magia Posthuma")
- Balkans Folklorists are not concerned with origins
  - Understand mythology, history, religion
- Perkowski's "demon contamination"
  - Witches
  - *Vrkolaci* – "wolf pelt" => werewolf
- "Unquiet dead" – Ancient Slavic folk belief
  - Belief in failed transition to the "other world"



“The first **vampires** may have been individuals who practiced blood sacrifice, despite open hostility to the practice expressed by the early Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Early Slavic writings by Christian apologists exhibit antipathy first toward sacrifice as a vestige of polytheism and paganism, and later toward the dualist heresies that became prevalent in the Balkans.”

*Sacrifice, Scapegoat, Vampire: The Social and Religious Origins of the Bulgarian Folkloric Vampire*  
Bruce A. McClelland. Doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia, 1999



# From Sacrifice to Scapegoats to Outsiders



Performed sacrifices to deities  
Natural view of afterlife  
Circular view of time  
Dionysian practices (Thrace)

Bogomils eschewed Christian rituals  
Held dualist ("Manichaeist") beliefs  
Could not be converted  
Political hostility to Byzantium

Ritual infelicity: unclean  
Life – suicides, drinkers, violent, lustful, etc.

"Unquiet dead" –  
Body buried outside of village  
The soul cannot enter "the other world"  
Revenge upon the living→  
**VAMPIRE AS OUTSIDER**  
**THE ENVIOUS OTHER**

# The Origin of **Vampir**: Earliest evidence

- **Sacrifice**

- Epitomized **paganism** for early and medieval Christians
  - The One True God is not in need of sacrifices performed by men
  - Jesus is the Only Sacrifice
- “Miracle of St. George and the Bulgarians”
  - Boris... turned away from **dark and deceitful and stinking and God-hating sacrifices**
- Contemporary Bulgarian *kurbans*
- XIX and XX C: folkloric images of the vampire as bag of blood (animal skin)

# Earliest evidence: Christians against Sacrifice

- *Oration of St. Gregory the Theologian concerning how the pagans worshipped idols*
  - Dating: Paisievskii MS – XIV C; copy of text from latter half of XI C;
  - Explicit condemnation of *piry* [feasts]
    - “Polluted pagans... conduct sacrifices taught by the Devil”
  - XI C – sacrifice is forbidden; perceived as excuse for *revelry* and *abandonment*
  - “Accursed Dionysus” [Thrace = Bulgaria]
    - Pagans had a more *circular* view of time, versus Christians (more *linear* – end of Time)
    - Dionysus – wine libation, loss of Self



# Earliest written use of 'vampire' (oupir): The *Pop oupir likhij* problem

- A margin note in a religious manuscript signed “Pop oupir likhij”  
(попъ оупыръ лихый)
  - Dated 1047, transcribed into later MS
- **What does it mean??**
  - “*pop*” (cf. “pope”) meant (Orthodox Christian) “priest, clergy”
  - “*likh-*” meant “foreign, estranged, alien” but also: “weak, susceptible”
  - “*oupir*” - ??
    - pir* = drink, related to **BEER** [!] but also: “libation” at initiation
    - e.g. *pirshtestvo* : “feast”
  - “oupir” ← “*vun pir*” “initiated” (in [pagan] sacrifices)

# Proposed Solution to The *Pop oupir likhij* problem

Inference (far from certain!!):

1. *Pop oupir likhij* lapsed by participating in pagan Slavic feasting
2. In 1047, the term *oupir* did not refer to anything *supernatural or demonic*
3. May have been a pejorative term for a “member of a group whose rituals or behavior were offensive to early Orthodox Christians” (in Bulgarian areas)
4. Therefore, the earliest vampires were outsiders – eventually, *excommunicates* (Macedonia XVI C)



**A FEW RELATED ARTIFACTS**

A FEW RELATED ARTIFACTS

# Nezhit ('not living') – personified disease

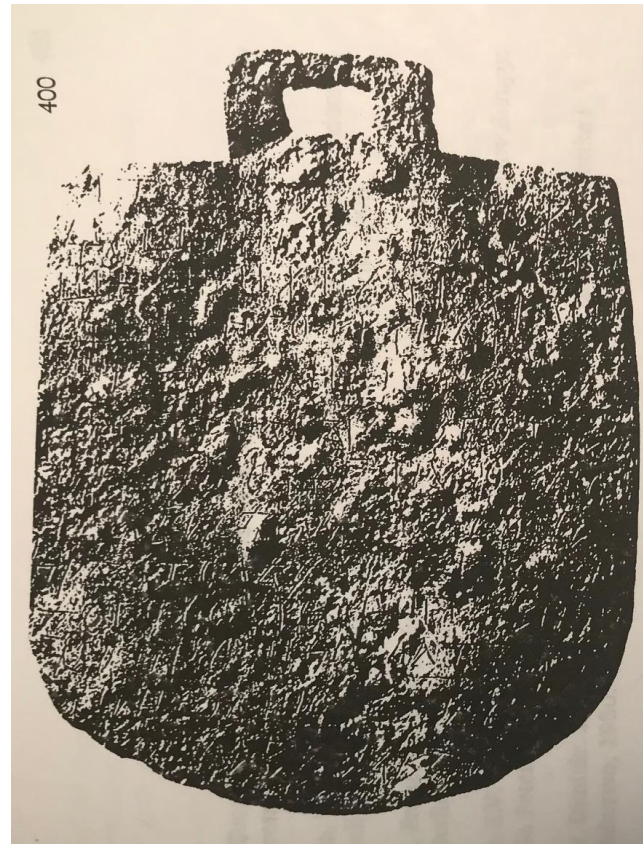
- Curses on amulets in Danube from X C [?]

Jesus encounters *nezhit* face to face. Jesus asks *nezhit* where he is going. “Into man’s head, to suck out his brains, shorten his bones, shed his blood.” Jesus curses *Nezhit*, commands him to go into a deserted mountain and enter the heads of deer and sheep, since they are better able to withstand the pain.

- XVII C. prayer against *nezhit*: “sucks out brains, destroys teeth, breaks jaws, causes deafness and blindness, locks the mouth, blocks the nose, causes continual headaches”; tells Jesus he is going into man “to drink his blood”

- Rene Girard, *The Scapegoat*: demons cannot exist in Jesus’ presence
  - Jesus and the demons of Gerasa (Gadarene Demoniac, Mark 5:1-17)

Bruce McClelland, “Pagans or Heretics? The Scapegoat Process, *Nezhit* and the Bulgarian Folkloric Vampire” In: *Bulgarian Studies at the Dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Bulgarian-American Perspective*. Sofia: Gutenberg, 2000. 132-137



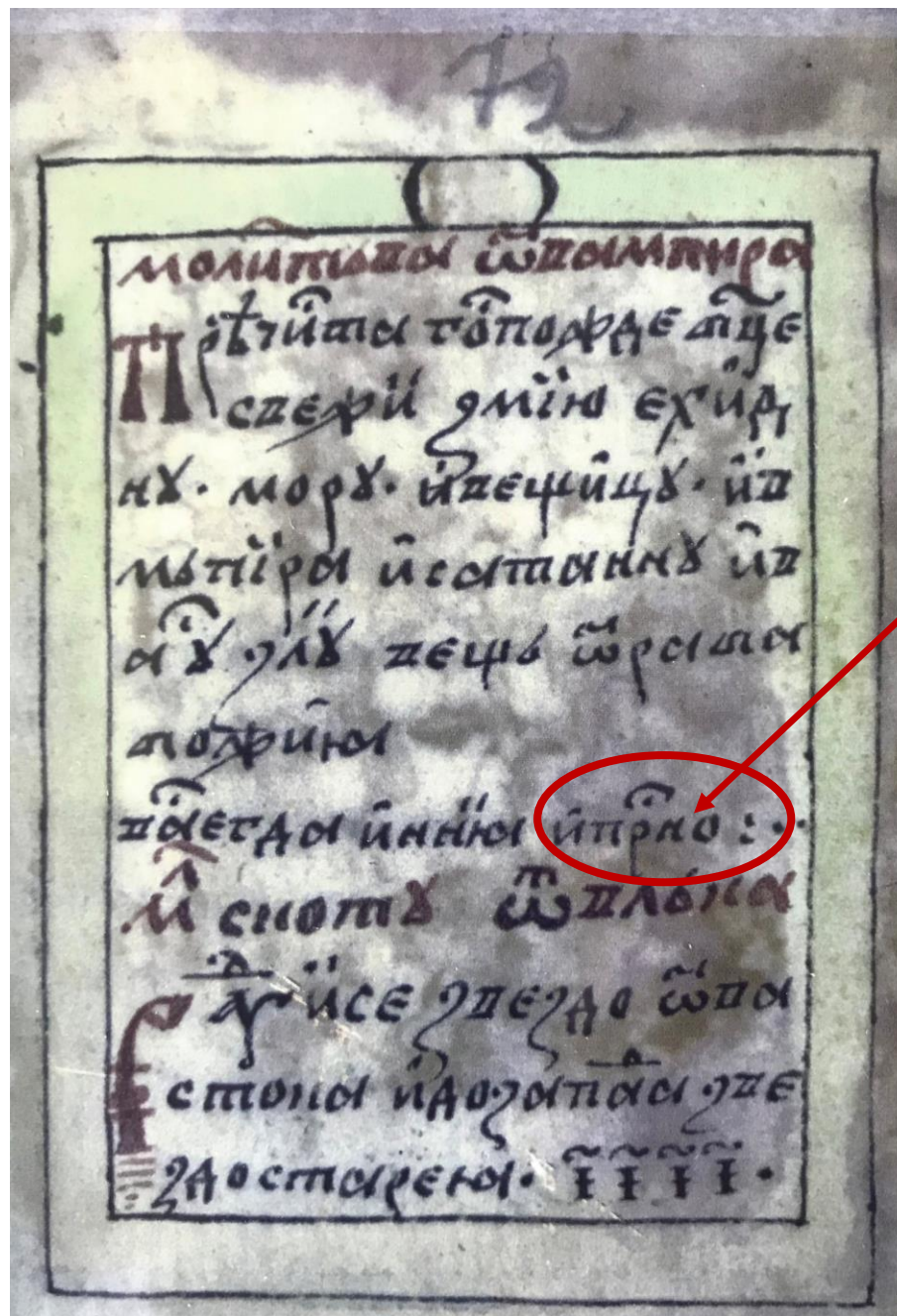
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PRAYER AGAINST NEZHIIT



# Молитва от Вампира

“Prayer against  
the Vampire”



Immaculate lordly  
Mother of God, cleanse  
the venomous serpent,  
death, and the witch and  
the **vampire** and Satan  
and all evil force from thy  
servant of god, now,  
today and always.

# Some Further Reading

Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial and Death*

Rene Girard, *The Scapegoat*

Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice*

Bruce McClelland, *Slayers and Their Vampires*

Jan Perkowski, *Vampire Lore*

Websites:

<http://magiaposthuma.blogspot.com>

<http://thevampirologist.wordpress.com>

# Shameless self-promotion

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The first book to explore the origins  
of the **vampire slayer**

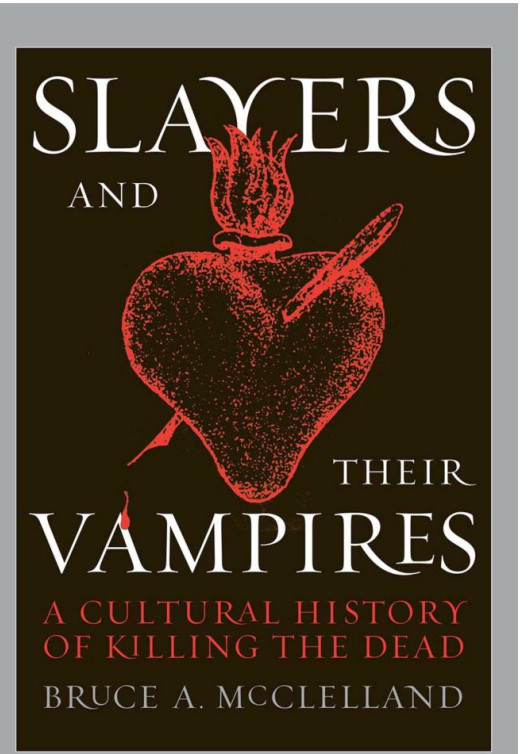
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Slayers and Their Vampires  
*A Cultural History of Killing  
the Dead*

Bruce A. McClelland

Paperback ISBN 9780472069231 /  
\$24.95

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THANK YOU  
DRINK UP  
HAPPY HALLOWEEN!