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## Ancient 'Vampire' Corpses Unearthed by Bulgarian Archaeologists

More than 100 "vampire" corpses have been dug out from graves across Bulgaria during historic excavations, according to the country's archaeologists.

BY [CHRISTINE HSU](#) | JUNE 05, 2012

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More than 100 "vampire" corpses have been dug out from graves across Bulgaria during historic excavations, according to the country's archaeologists.

Bozhidar Dimitrov, head of the National History Museum in the Bulgarian capital, Sofia, said on Tuesday that Bulgarian archaeologists have unearthed two skeletons from the Middle Ages pierced through the chest with iron rods to keep them from turning into the undead.

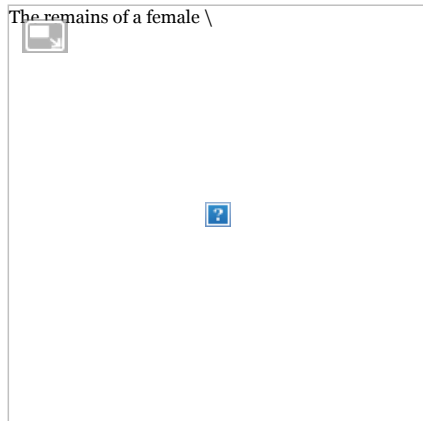


Photo: Reuters/Handout  
The remains of a female "vampire" from 16th-century Venice. Italian researchers believe they have found the remains of a female "vampire" from 16th-century Venice, buried with a brick in her mouth to prevent her feasting on plague victims. Matteo Borrini, a forensic anthropologist from the University of Florence, said the discovery was the first confirmation of a Medieval belief that vampires were behind the spread of epidemics, such as the Black Death.

Dimitrov said that the two "vampire" remains were found last weekend near the Black Sea town of Sozopol.

The tradition of hammering an iron rod through the chest bones and heart of 'evil' people to prevent them from returning after death to feast on the blood of the living was performed up until the beginning of the last century, according to experts.

"These two skeletons stabbed with rods illustrate a practice which was common in some Bulgarian villages up until the first decade of the 20th century," Dimitrov said.

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"The stake was left on their bodies to prevent them rising as vampires after they'd been buried," he added.

Not only were these people stabbed in the chest with an iron or wooden rod before being buried, their bodies were also pinned down into their graves to stop them from leaving at the struck of midnight and terrorizing the living.

"These people were believed to be evil while they were alive, and it was believed that they would become vampires once they are dead, continuing to torment people," Dimitrov said, according to Bulgarian Sega Daily Newspaper.

Dimitrov said that over 100 people whose bodies have been stabbed to prevent them from rising as vampires have been discovered throughout Bulgaria.

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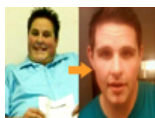
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"I do not know why an ordinary discovery like that became so popular. Perhaps because of the mysteriousness of the word "vampire," Dimitrov added.

Dimitrov said that "vampires" were often aristocrats and clerics.

"The curious thing is that there are no women among them. They were not afraid of witches," he said.

The word "vampire" comes from the original Slavic term "opyrb" or "opir" which later appears as "vipir", "vepir", or "vapir".

During the Middle Ages, many people throughout Bulgaria and other parts of central Europe believed in vampires.

Alcoholics, thieves and murderers were often believed to be likely candidates to become vampires.

Vampires were believed to look completely normal often marrying and fathering children, but at night they would roam the countryside in search for victims to cure their bloodlust.

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