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# Governing from the Grave: Vampire Burials and Social Order in Post-medieval Poland

Tracy K. Betsinger & Amy B. Scott

*Mortuary treatments are ways in which archaeologists can learn about the culture and lifestyle of past societies, in terms of how they view the dead. The dead, however, can continue to play a role in the lives of the living, which may also be reflected in funerary rites and burial treatments. This article explores the social agency of the dead, focusing on the 'vampire burials' of the post-medieval Polish site of Drawsko 1. These burials, identified through their grave goods, provide a unique opportunity to learn how vampire folklore and the deceased 'vampires' influenced the living, most notably as ways to encourage social order, as an explanation for the unknown, and as an economic commitment.*

Funerary practices and mortuary treatments are often indicators of the ideas and beliefs surrounding the community and, more importantly, the role of the deceased within that community (Rakita & Buikstra 2005). Furthermore, such practices and treatments can elucidate information related to how the dead continue to be agents in the lives of their still-living family, friends and community members. Non-normative or deviant burials in the archaeological record are one such practice that is a representation of the bizarre or unusual, as they differ from the normalized burial traditions of a culture (Aspöck 2008; Reynolds 2009). Typically, these burials are rare and while the term 'deviant' generally has a negative connotation, this is not necessarily accurate. Any burial that differs from what is considered typical or 'normal' for a particular culture can be classified as deviant. While some deviant burials do, indeed, suggest the interment of social deviants (Reynolds 2009), other such burials can include those treated differently for both positive and negative reasons (Aspöck 2009). It is important to note that what constitutes a deviant burial is entirely dependent upon the culture from which it originates; in other words what is considered 'normal' and 'deviant' will vary from culture to culture (Aspöck 2009; Pader 1982). Aspöck (2009, 89) suggests that there are '[t]wo types of different treatment [that] can be distinguished': those treated differently based

on sex/age or social role, and those treated differently who '... "lost" their right [to normative burial] because of some circumstance of their life or death' (2009, 86). More specifically, Reynolds (2009) suggests eight causal factors that result in deviant burials: battle, judicial execution, superstition, suicide, homicide, massacre, plague and sacrifice (Reynolds 2009, 38), and that more than one factor can account for any given non-normative burial. Based on this understanding it can be argued that non-normative burials are driven by two factors: 1) the mode of death and 2) the translation of that death into specific mortuary treatments that are heavily influenced by those burying the deceased (Reynolds 2009). It is based on these two factors that the identification and interpretation of deviant burials can be quite difficult, requiring a comparison of these atypical characteristics to those considered 'normal' within a population (Aspöck 2008; 2009). Further, this comparison is not always clearly defined, as any given culture is likely to have multiple ways of treating the dead (Weiss-Krejci 2013); in other words, there are multiple 'normal' burial styles that may obscure the means by which to identify those considered non-normative. Aspöck (2009) argues that, in addition to this expected mortuary variability, post-depositional practices and modifications must be taken into account as well and their influence on the archaeological presentation of non-normative

burials. As the mechanisms that drive the creation of deviant burials continue to evolve culturally and temporally, so too does the study of this unique process. While a social systems approach (see Binford 1972; O'Shea 1984; Saxe 1970; Shay 1985) to non-normative burials contributes to an understanding of the larger social scheme surrounding the burial process, mortuary individualism and agency (see Aspöck 2008; Tsaliki 2008) is the focus of this article. It is with this consideration that we investigate the social agency of 'vampires' (or the 'undead') in terms of three broad functions: social order, explanation for the unknown and economic sacrifice.

### Archaeological site

The Drawsko 1 site is a cemetery located in the small, rural community of Drawsko in northwestern Poland. The settlement is located along the Noteć River and has been continuously occupied since the medieval period (Wyrwa 2004; 2005). Initially excavated in 1929, systematic excavations of the seventeenth- to eighteenth-century cemetery did not begin until 2008 (Wyrwa 2004; 2005). A variety of artefacts have been recovered during excavations that aid in the dating of this cemetery, specifically coins. Approximately 333 well-preserved human skeletal remains have been recovered with excavations on-going as part of a mortuary archaeology field school sanctioned by the Slavia Foundation, Poland. The cemetery is located outside of the village settlement and, to date, no remnants of a church have been found in association (Wyrwa 2005). The cemetery is composed of individual interments, often in wooden coffins, the remains of which (coffin nails, portions of wood, etc.) have been recovered in approximately 40 per cent of the burials. Individuals, for the most part, are buried supine and in an extended position. In general, the graves are placed in an east–west orientation; however, some burials deviate from this Christian alignment (e.g. southwest–northeast, southeast–northwest), which may be a reflection of the seasonal position of the sun and its use for burial positioning (Williams 2008). Additionally, many graves impose onto one another with individual burials overlapping. The somewhat arbitrary organization of the cemetery, as well as some ill-fitting coffins has led some to suggest that this may be an epidemic cemetery, as outbreaks of cholera were known to occur during its use (Wyrwa 2004). However, the large number of remains recovered to date makes it less likely that a small community would have such a large epidemic cemetery. It is more likely that victims of cholera or other epidemics were included in this cemetery, but do not consti-

tute its majority. It is unclear, nonetheless, why there appears to be no church or other settlement structures in association with the cemetery, which is the norm for the period and Christian custom (Blair 2006; Koperkiewicz 2010).

### Historical setting

The post-medieval period of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries in Poland was marked by several major sociopolitical changes, which had long-lasting effects for the country. Beginning in AD 1569, Poland and neighbouring Lithuania formed the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita*) (Davies 1982). During the following century, there were civil and foreign wars affecting the Commonwealth. In addition to warfare, broad devastation and epidemics created a catastrophic effect (Davies 1982). At the close of the sixteenth century, the Catholic Reform was strengthening (Kloczowski 2000). One of the principal ways in which these changes were occurring was through the actions of the bishops, who were focused on the reorganization of their dioceses, the increase of their system of control and inspection, and the improvement of the clergy through better education and more discipline (Kloczowski 2000, 112). One of the most important aspects of this overhaul was the training of the clergy, which was done through Jesuit colleges and, eventually, through seminaries established in each diocese (Kloczowski 2000). This increase in oversight and training ensured that parish priests, even in more remote rural areas, were following Catholic doctrine and were enforcing it in their parishes. As Kloczowski (2000, 112) states, '[a] zealous and responsible parish priest was to reach every single inhabitant of his parish'. This was achieved through the priestly duty of keeping parish records on births, baptisms, marriages and deaths; their involvement in these momentous events made certain that the community members were well acquainted with the local priest and, therefore, the rules of the Church. Moreover, research on parish clergy in Poland demonstrated that priests typically resided in their parishes, which '... guaranteed their continuous functioning ...' (Kloczowski 2000, 109). Collectively, this suggests that while the Reformation was happening on a vast scale, the impacts were felt locally through the administration of parish priests.

This Reformation was in large part a response to the lack of power the Church had in the Commonwealth during the previous centuries. Discussed by Portal (1969), in certain regions of Poland, especially western Pomerania, paganism continued well

after Poland was Christianized approximately in the tenth century, although this continuation of pagan features such as ancestor worship and the belief in vampirism is debated (Urbańczyk 2004). Some suggest that early medieval Christianity was syncretist and incorporated pagan traditions (Urbańczyk 1997). Whether those acquired pagan traditions remained part of Christianity or not is unclear. Roman Catholicism was the largest single religion, but it was by no means the only one, comprising only half of the Commonwealth's population (Davies 1982; Portal 1969). Political shifts accompanied and supported the Catholic Reform during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most notably through specific acts of the Sejm (i.e. parliament), which prohibited the renunciation of Catholicism with a penalty of exile and disallowed non-Catholics from achieving certain positions within the government and society (Kloczowski 2000). This was in striking contrast to the Warsaw Confederation document of AD 1573, which provided religious tolerance and the beginning of religious freedom within the Commonwealth (Kloczowski 2000; Stone 2001; Zamojski 1987). Another outcome of the Reformation involved various religious rites, including baptisms and funerals, which began to take on greater religious emphasis, becoming major spectacles within a community (Kloczowski 2000). Arguably it is the result of this tumultuous Reformation period that pagan beliefs about the undead were able to persist into a predominantly Christian social order, and temper the various mortuary treatments that began to emerge during this time in the Slavic region. In fact, the inclusion of pagan customs alongside Christian funeral rites was generally accepted by the Church as long as the Christian rituals were maintained (Garas 2010). It was based on this integration of these pagan traditions into Christian doctrine that distinct mortuary customs tempered by a belief in evil spirits were able to persist into the post-medieval periods. Most notable, were the burial traditions surrounding the pagan fears of vampirism and the reanimation of the dead (Tsaliki 2001; 2008).

### Vampires and the Slavic belief system

A vampire, based on folkloric belief, can be described as a '... reanimated corpse which returns at night to prey on the living' (Perkowski 1989, 54). The concept of vampires or revenants (i.e. those who return after death) has a long history in the folklore of Slavic populations, beginning as early as the eleventh century (Perkowski 1976); however, the origins of the vampire myth originate even earlier and have been

documented among the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans (Beresford 2008). Among Polish populations, these vampires are considered *żywy trup*, or the 'living dead', and they harass the living in a variety of ways including sucking their blood (Falisi 2013; Koperkiewicz 2010). The belief in vampires is not unique to these populations and is considered a worldwide phenomenon (Barber 1988), with specific local incarnations reflective of the cultures in which their myth is perpetuated. The term, vampire, itself has transitioned through several languages, with its likely origin derived from the Slavic names for revenants: *vampir* and *upir/upyr/upiór* (Barber 1988; Beresford 2008; Koperkiewicz 2010); these terms are also closely associated with the Turkish name for witches: *uber* (Beresford 2008). 'Vampire' has been used to collectively refer to any and all comparable mythological beings throughout Europe as well as from cultures throughout the world (Barber 1988; Beresford 2008), including a wide variety of very different beings. For the purposes of this article, the term 'vampire', is used to refer to the Slavic, and specifically Polish, mythological being that involves a ghost or unclean spirit occupying the deceased's corpse and causing illness and death amongst the living (Koperkiewicz 2010; Máchal 1976). More specifically, we use this term to refer to those *who were at risk of becoming reanimated*, thus at risk of becoming a vampire based on this folklore.

Vampires can be divided into four specific categories: folkloric, psychotic, psychic and literary (Perkowski 1989, 54–7). The first of these, and paramount to this discussion, is considered a supernatural being who is sustained through the belief system of a culture or community, with individual attributes varying depending on the culture in question. This type of vampire has well-defined traits with specific methods to identify, prevent and extinguish them (Perkowski 1976). The folkloric vampire in Slavic mythology is based on the concept that the soul and body are distinct entities, which upon death separate. The soul remains on earth for forty days after death, visiting places that were familiar to it during life. While the majority of souls are considered harmless and friendly, the souls of the 'unclean', those who were marginalized within their communities for presumed devious physical actions (or inactions) or physical appearance, were feared as a threat to the living (Máchal 1976; Tsaliki 2001). Those marginalized include sinners, sorcerers/witches, murderers or suicides. Additionally, those who were not baptized, those conceived during a holy period, and those who were born out of wedlock were considered at risk for becoming vampires (Barber 1988; Falisi 2013; Máchal

1976; Perkowski 1976; Weiss-Krejci 2013). Outsiders or newcomers to a community or those seen as 'others' were also at risk of having discontented souls upon their deaths (Barber 1988). Moreover, those who behaved suspiciously or who did not follow proper religious rules were at increased risk (Falisi 2013). Slavic folklore also suggests that vampires or potential vampires could be identified based on physical appearance, such as a baby having teeth at birth or an individual having a physical disability (Falisi 2013). The belief in a close association between an unclean existence and an unclean soul became the foundation of the Slavic belief that vampirism was the manifestation of these unclean souls in decomposing bodies, which when reanimated, could cause countless problems for the living, including crop failure and disease and death in animals and humans (Perkowski 1976; Tsaliki 2001).

Vampire burials, or more specifically burials of those who are at risk of becoming a vampire, are identified in the archaeological record based on specific features, including grave goods and mutilations of the corpse, which are considered preventative measures to keep a corpse from becoming reanimated (Tsaliki 2008). In particular, special treatments of the corpse were focused on the feet, hands and mouth, as the feet were involved in moving the vampire, the hands enabled the vampire to seize its victims, and the mouth was associated with consumption of blood (Afanašev 1976). Some argue that the degree of corpse or grave alteration reflects the threat level perceived by the living as to the likelihood of the deceased becoming reanimated (Moszyński 1976). In other words, those that were already believed to be a vampire would have more extreme or severe alterations than those at risk of becoming a vampire. This variability is arguably most visible through the inclusion of grave goods (Moszyński 1976).

Apotropaics are grave goods that are 'methods of turning evil away' (Barber 1988, 46) and are included in burials for one of three reasons: 1) to satisfy the deceased so they do not reanimate; 2) to barricade the dead so they are unable to return; or 3) to protect the deceased from evil spirits that may try to enter the corpse (Barber 1988, 47). Poppy seeds, for instance, were included in some burials, as the narcotic effect of the seeds would cause the reanimated corpse to sleep rather than leave the grave (Barber 1988; Moszyński 1976). The inclusion of coins is also thought to have served as a protective charm, preventing evil spirits from disturbing the body (Barber 1988). Sharp instruments were also included in some burials in order to confine the corpse in the grave, whether it was staking the deceased into the coffin or piercing the corpse if it

became too engorged with blood (Barber 1988). One of the most common sharp implements found in such burials is the sickle or scythe. In the Slavic tradition, sickles and scythes were laid onto individuals to prevent their bodies from swelling or to prevent their reanimation (Barber 1988; Janowski & Kurasiński 2010). It was believed that if an individual were reanimated, the sickle or scythe would destroy the physical body when the vampire attempted to rise from the grave. As a result, meticulous placement of these sharp objects over the neck and abdomen was required if the potential vampire was to be successfully barricaded in the grave (Barber 1988; Janowski & Kurasiński 2010).

While deviant burials may be considered an elusive aspect of archaeological research, to date more than 50 examples have been found in various regions of Poland (Garas 2010; Janowski & Kurasiński 2010; Koperkiewicz 2010). These non-normative burials are characterized by both the physical manipulation of the corpse and the inclusion of grave goods. It is based on this Polish prominence of deviant burials that various explanations have been considered to account for the large range of variability seen in these generally medieval burial practices. Outlined by Zoil-Adamikow (as discussed in Koperkiewicz 2010), Polish deviant burials are represented by: atypical positioning of the body (i.e. flexed), manipulations of the corpse (i.e. crushing the body or sealing off the mouth), and differential grave position and location within the cemetery. These patterns, similar to those discussed by Reynolds (2009) represent the breadth of deviant burials in Poland and the influence of Slavic folklore in mortuary customs from the early medieval to the post-medieval period. As Garas (2010) argues, these non-normative burials in Poland represent a blending of both Christian ideologies and pagan traditions that were upheld by many communities likely associated with a fear surrounding death and evil spirits. While Janowski and Kurasiński (2010) believe that these deviant burials, specifically those with a proliferation of grave goods, may simply represent social roles (i.e. a farmer or warrior), they recognize the influence of spiritual belief on these practices and do not discount the possibility that atypical burials may represent the more enigmatic spiritual fears within these Polish communities. Interestingly, while deviant burials have typically been associated with negative interpretations, Koperkiewicz (2010) approaches these Polish examples in a more positive manner, suggesting that those demonstrating atypical burial may indeed represent the pious members of a community, where their final body position reflects humility or repentance. For example, those in a flexed position with hands placed under the chin are in a pose of piety where

**Table 1.** Vampire burials at Drawsko.

Burial number	Age, sex	Apotropaic
Burial 28/2008	35–44 years old, male	Sickle around neck
Burial 29/2008	12–15 years old, undetermined sex	Two stones beneath chin
Burial 24/2009	35–39 years old, female	Sickle around neck
Burial 60/2010	45–49 years old, female	Stone beneath chin, sickle across abdomen
Burial 6/2012	16–19 years old, female	Sickle around neck
Burial 49/2012	30–39 years old, female	Sickle around neck

their final body posture appeases God for any of their sins (Koperkiewicz 2010). Because the typical burial customs of medieval and post-medieval Poland were well-defined by the rules of Christian tradition and expectations of religious observance (Garas 2010), the identification of deviant burials is relatively straightforward. It is the interpretation of these customs then that can be approached from multiple perspectives. While these non-normative mortuary customs are referred to as ‘anti-vampiristic’ in the Polish literature, the motivational forces acting upon the various communities that ascribed this status to the deceased may have varied greatly based on social circumstance, historical events, religious prominence, etc. In short, it is important to ‘not rule out the possibility that part of the so-called “anti-vampiric” practices were not due to fear of the dead, but rather [a] care for them’ (Koperkiewicz 2010, 77). It is based on this Polish literature regarding anti-vampiristic mortuary customs that a more thorough discussion of the motivations behind such practices at the Drawsko 1 site can be discussed.

### Vampire burials at Drawsko

Of the more than 330 human burials recovered from the Drawsko cemetery to date, six of them have been classified as deviant burials based on their context and mortuary treatment (see Table 1; Figs. 1 and 2). These burials all have indications of anti-vampiristic alterations, suggesting that each of the six were at particular risk of becoming a vampire. In five of the deviant burials, a sickle or scythe is included. Two of the individuals have large stones placed beneath their chins, which likely serves as a method to prevent the corpse from being able to open its mouth and chew through burial cloths and/or to break its teeth on them (Barber 1988). There is no indication of secondary disturbances of these graves; these individuals were not disinterred after suspected vampiristic activity. Instead, their unusual burial context was done at the time of interment, indicating that these treatments were aimed at preventing vampirism rather than stopping it once a vampire was believed to be active. The individu-



**Figure 1.** (Colour online) Vampire burial 6/2012 (16–19 year old female). Note the placement of the sickle around the neck and the coin to the right of the cranium.

als include both sexes and a range of ages, suggesting that age and sex were not a primary determinant of potential vampirism. In addition to these burials, approximately one-third of the remaining burials (regardless of age or sex) have apotropaic grave goods, most commonly copper coins, which may have served as a protective mechanism. It is yet unclear why only some individuals have this grave inclusion, as there is no association between coin inclusion and age, sex, pathology or location within the cemetery (Scott & Betsinger 2011; 2012; 2013). These deviant burials are located within the general cemetery population and



**Figure 2.** (Colour online) Vampire burial 60/2010 (45–49 year old female). Note the placement of the stone beneath the chin and the sickle across the abdomen.

do not appear to be segregated in any fashion in terms of geographic placement.

Since some of the risk factors for becoming a revenant are related to biology, such as death from disease (Barber 1988; Weiss-Krejci 2013) or homicide/suicide (Barber 1988) as well as physical deformities (Falas 2013), bioarchaeological examinations of the potential vampires were conducted. Comparison of health indicators, including disease, stress and trauma, between the potential vampires and the rest of population resulted in no significant differences (Betsinger & Scott 2012). The six potential vampires have no evidence of trauma, disease, or physiological or dietary stress, suggesting that there were no biological factors for their risk of becoming vampires, at least based on these skeletal indicators. These results are similar to that of other skeletal analyses of deviant burials (see discussion in Barber 1988); there appear to be no pathological explanations of their non-normative burial. If biology does not explain why these individuals were selected for special anti-vampiristic burial treatments, then it is likely that the

risk of becoming revenants was primarily culturally defined.

It is clear that the treatment of the dead, including those suspected of becoming vampires, provides insight into the role the deceased had as a living person (Rakita & Buikstra 2005) and how the living viewed the dead (Harper 2010). However, these specialized mortuary contexts can do far more in reconstructing the past; they also represent the social agency of the dead, as they continue to influence and impact the living. The deviant burials recovered from the Drawsko 1 cemetery provide a unique opportunity to examine the role the dead continue to play in the lives of community members.

### Social order

One of the primary ways in which the vampires of post-medieval Poland were an agential force is providing an impetus or motivation for maintaining social order. The Catholic Church in Poland and throughout Europe at this time was vested in attracting adherents to the rules and doctrine of the Church. Far from denying beliefs in vampirism, the Church seemed to make no assertion either way, neither confirming nor denying the existence of vampires when it was the subject of much scholarly research and debate, which reached its climax in the eighteenth century (Beresford 2008). The Church, it has been argued, may have had a hidden agenda, which required vampires to remain a plausible entity within their communities; it was to the Church's benefit to contrast the evilness of vampires with the goodness of the Church (Beresford 2008; Koperkiewicz 2010). It created an effective method by which to encourage people to follow the rules of the Church, and thus, of society at large. The vampire became the scapegoat of all things evil and, consequently, was to be avoided at all costs. People did not wish to become such an evil creature; therefore, they were less likely to deviate from the norm or even be accused of suspect behaviours. For example, committing suicide was a known risk factor for becoming a vampire (Máchal 1976; Perkowski 1976); the Church may have used the general fear of becoming a vampire to dissuade individuals from committing such a sin (Beresford 2008).

It has been suggested that the Church created the concept of the vampire in medieval Europe as a 'symbol of evil based on the betrayal of Judas' (Beresford 2008, 44). Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing whether this assertion has any merit, although many parallels have been drawn between aspects of Judas's story and the vampire myth, such as the stake, the cross and the blood. It was not solely

the Catholic Church that may have played a role in perpetuating (or at least not preventing) the vampire myth; the Greek Church is also considered to have taken part in developing the myth within that region of Europe (Beresford 2008). Vampire ‘incidents’ were recorded throughout the medieval period as interest in the concept of revenants increased. Seán Manchester, bishop of the Old Catholic Church, England, and self-proclaimed ‘vampire hunter’ has argued that both the Eastern and Western churches accepted the reality of vampires. *Malleus Maleficarum* (‘Witch Hammer’), written by a Catholic clergyman in the fifteenth century is best known as a treatise on witches and witchcraft; however, it also introduced vampirism as a part of the Devil (Beresford 2008). Christian doctrines reinforced vampires as a ‘creature of the Devil’ and could be used to increase the strength of the Church in society (Beresford 2008, 50).

In examining the ways in which vampires are created, it is clear that many of them have a relationship with Church rules and doctrine. Suicide, discussed above, was against Church law; those who committed suicide were often excluded from being interred in consecrated ground or receiving Christian burial rites (Garas 2010; Koperkiewicz 2010). Additionally, those who were ‘great sinners’, the ‘godless’, which included those of different, non-Christian faiths, and those who practised witchcraft were all considered risks for becoming vampires (Barber 1988) and were all activities or actions that were the antithesis of Christian doctrine. Other risk factors were conception during a holy period or illegitimate birth (Barber 1988), again, reflecting things that went against Church teachings. Lastly, those who didn’t receive proper mortuary treatment, including Christian burial rites were also in jeopardy of becoming vampires (Barber 1988). By perpetuating vampires as the ultimate evil, in league with the Devil, the Church was able to encourage community members to avoid those things that would put themselves or their children at risk for vampirism. The Reformation of the Catholic Church included better training of parish priests as well as more control and oversight by bishops to ensure that Church doctrine was being followed even in the most remote communities (Kloczowski 2000). This suggests that people in rural areas such as Drawsko would have been aware of Church rules and known which actions and in-actions violated them, creating a risk for vampirism.

### Explanations of the unknown

Another way in which the dead, particularly vampires, are an agential force in the lives of the living

is their use in the explanation of the unknown, especially as it relates to disease and death. Prior to the understanding of disease and germ theories, people would have been at a loss to explain why community members were getting sick and dying, especially in the midst of outbreaks in which the death rates would have been considerably higher than the norm and would have included a wider proportion of the population in terms of age and sex. A common human response to such outbreaks of disease is to place blame on someone or something (Hewlett & Hewlett 2008). It has been well documented that during these outbreaks, individuals were exhumed, examined for signs of vampirism, and manipulated to prevent vampiristic activities, preventing further illness and death (Afanašev 1976; Bell 2006). It was believed that vampires caused epidemics; the only way to stop the outbreak was to stop the vampires (Barber 1988). An association between vampirism and infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis, has been established at various sites (e.g. Sledzik & Bellantoni 1994). In these situations, vampires were seen as the scapegoats, not for evil as discussed previously, but for unexplained disease and death among the living.

In a Slavic community such as Drawsko, it would make sense that a disease and deaths from disease would have been attributed to vampires. While the Drawsko cemetery is unlikely to have been an epidemic cemetery, it probably includes victims of disease, including epidemics. In fact, at least one of the coins recovered from the cemetery dates to a known outbreak of cholera (AD 1661). Cholera is a virulent disease in which many individuals would have been affected quickly (WHO 2010). In such situations where community members may feel a total lack of power, fearful of who may get sick or die next, it may have been comforting to some degree to be able to attribute the cause of these events to something concrete, like vampires and vampirism. Interestingly, during the eighteenth century and contemporaneous to the use of the Drawsko 1 cemetery site, there was an increase in documented vampire attacks in Eastern Europe (Barber 1988), and communities were encouraged to take precautionary measures in their burial of the dead. In particular, people may have been especially careful in their use of apotropaics, especially for those considered at greatest risk of becoming a vampire. By being able to take specific actions that they believed would bring an end to disease and death, they may have felt some degree of control in such situations. Of course, their actions were somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy in the case of disease outbreaks due to their lack of understanding of the natural epidemic cycle. After an outbreak is initiated, given enough time,

most of the members of the community will have been exposed and either die, recover or not develop symptoms at all (Hewlett & Hewlett 2008). Eventually, there are not enough new hosts susceptible to the pathogen for the outbreak to be maintained and, thus, the epidemic ends (Hewlett & Hewlett 2008). In seventeenth- to eighteenth-century Poland, it is understandable that people would have attributed the cessation of an outbreak to their prevention of vampirism.

### Economic sacrifice

The inclusion of certain burial goods as apotropaics, most notably the sickle or scythe, also represents a monetary commitment on the part of the living to prevent vampirism and protect themselves, again reflecting the social agency of the dead among the living. Sickles and scythes were harvesting tools; the sickle typically had a longer blade (30–40 cm) than the scythe (less than 30 cm), but a shorter handle (Janowski & Kurasiński 2010). Removing functional agricultural tools from use arguably reflects the seriousness with which the population viewed the threat of vampires to the community.

Recent research examining the inclusion of sickles and scythes in early medieval Polish burials suggests three potential reasons for their use as burial goods: 1) reflection of the deceased's occupation (i.e. farmer); 2) use as a symbolic weapon indicating the deceased was a warrior; and 3) protection from evil spirits, especially as it relates to vampirism (Janowski & Kurasiński 2010). The first two potential explanations, however, are argued to be less likely due to the findings of sickles and scythes with young child burials, who would have been neither actively engaged in agriculture nor as warriors (Janowski & Kurasiński 2010).

The inclusion of copper coins as apotropaics to protect the deceased (Barber 1988) reiterates the monetary commitment to this belief system and reflects the importance of those who have died to surviving family and community members. In other words, it suggests that the dead are not forgotten; they continue to play a role in the lives of the living as shown through the concern for the deceased to be protected. In Drawsko, both the inclusion of sickles with five of the six vampire burials and the proliferation of copper coins throughout the cemetery, suggest the agential power of these specific individuals on the actions of the living. Whether these actions were driven by a fear of vampirism or a care for the deceased, these non-normative burial inclusions suggest that the dead

at Drawsko in part dictate the decisions made by the living community.

### Conclusion

The vampire burials at Drawsko are a rich source of bioarchaeological data from which insight into the agential force of the dead may be gained. In this specific context, the vampires represent a very real danger to the living and, as a result, continually impact the living on several levels. They are used as a way to enforce social and Christian order, to serve as an explanation for unknown disease and death, and as an economic and monetary commitment to the dead. While physically removed from society through the process of death, the vampire and the fear surrounding vampirism provided the means by which these condemned, yet influential individuals were able to govern from the grave.

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