

IDEAS ABOUT WEREWOLVES IN THE BELIEF OF THE PEOPLE ABOUT ĐAKOVO

Summary

A deceased person who has not confessed his sin, or did not fulfill his plight before death, wanders around, carrying his coffin cover, in the image which he had before his death. He seeks salvation for his soul and scares people, especially his accomplice in the crime, and people who live in his house, by making noises in the house. When it is noticed that the house is haunted by a deceased person, a priest who will posthumously hear his confession and give him absolution, should be called in. To keep a departed person from harming other people in the house, one no except a priest is allowed to talk to him. A priest stands inside a magic circle which protects him, and a circle is drawn on the floor with chalk. The priest asks: »Every soul praises God, do you praise Him too«? He keeps asking this question until the deceased person comes near and answers: »I would praise him, but I am not deserving«. The priest continues to ask questions about the crime which is the reason for the deceased's haunting, and he has to answer them all sincerely (if it was robbery, he has to disclose the place where stolen things are hidden). If he tries to suppress something, he turns with a howl into an animal — a werewolf. He is doomed to haunt forever in the form of dog or a calf.

A deceased person can also become a werewolf if he is jumped over by a cat while lying on a bier. In connection with this are customs of protecting a departed lying on a bier, and of keeping domestic animals (dogs, cats, hens) out of room where he is lying. When somebody in a house dies, all the animals are immediately tied or locked up.

A grave of a werewolf can be recognised by an opening in earth near the cross, through which the werewolf comes out during night. If the opening is closed with earth, it is always found opened again. Another dependable way to recognize a werewolf's grave is if a horse resists being led over a grave.

When it is certain that a deceased is a werewolf, his grave has to be opened, and a hawthorne stake driven through the coffin and his chest. For this purpose always hawthorne is chosen which grows alone. People say that sometimes blood used to gush out from the coffin, although a person had been buried a long time ago.