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A GRAIN AGAINST A VAMPIRE? SOME REMARKS ON SO-CALLED ANTI-VAMPIRE PRACTICES IN THE LIGHT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND FOLKLORISTIC-ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA

ABSTRACT

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This paper focuses on a ritual of covering the dead with seeds of plants: poppy and field mustard. This habit is recorded in Slavic folkloristic-ethnographic sources and is considered as a so-called anti-demonic practice. In archaeological literature, this habit is not usually mentioned among the criteria of “atypical” burials, perhaps because physical means of restraining the “dangerous” dead are more straightforward to demonstrate than psychic ones. The paper discusses burials from early medieval cemeteries that contain the aforementioned plant seeds. Due to their fecundity, such seeds are hardly considered countable and for this reason, among others, in folk imagination they were believed to possess apotropaic and magical traits.

Keywords: anti-demonic practices, Slavic folkloristic-ethnographic sources, seeds of poppy and field mustard, atypical burials, early medieval cemeteries, apotropaic traits

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INTRODUCTION

The plant world is inseparably related to the Slavic funeral culture. The presence of plants in rituals preceding the burial and in the course of the very funeral ceremony was indispensable. This served not only the aesthetic needs of the community, but also to care for the post-mortem fate of the deceased. Consecrated herbs or other plant forms were placed in the grave next to the dead. Their properties were used to protect the deceased against unclean forces. The funerary use of plants served to underline the earthly occupation or the social position of the dead. Alternatively, plants were used as apotropaic means against revenants – a use that we will discuss in a more comprehensive manner below.

An abundance of data on associations between plants and rites related to death can be found in historical sources and in 19th and early 20th c. folklore. To a lesser degree, our knowledge is augmented by archaeological discoveries, as the chance of survival of organic materials is rather low. When interpreting the presence of grains, fruits or seeds in medieval or modern period cemeteries, it is not always possible to go beyond generalisations to treat them as part of past funeral rites, a manifestation of a habit of providing the dead with food, which facilitated their passage to, or their existence in the other world.

In this paper, we will first direct our attention to a habit of covering the dead with seeds or depositing seeds next to the deceased. Such a habit is well known in Slavic folklore. It must also be stressed that we will focus on such plants whose seeds are hardly considered countable due to their special fecundity. These are, first of all, poppy (Fig. 4) and field mustard. As we will see, in folk imagination these plants were provided with special apotropaic and magical properties. The range of impact of these plants was supposed to encompass not only the dead. Living members of the community were also able to enjoy positive effects of protection offered by such plants. The use of seeds, which is quite clearly manifested in folkloristic and ethnographic data, is related to a belief in the noxious power of the dead – specifically, their transformation into demonic beings which harm the community, or into phantoms. In literature, these beings are very often, and possibly too hastily, considered together under the common moniker of “vampire” (Barber 1988, 49). Due to obvious reasons, it is not possible to fully discuss this phenomenon in this paper.

We will also discuss issues surrounding the recording of such organic remains in the archaeological record. Although it is known that testimonies of this kind from medieval and modern period cemeteries in the territory of Poland or of other Slavic cultures are very sparse, we still believe that they are worth discussing – even if due to the fact that they are omitted in archaeological debates concerning so-called anti-vampire burials.

THE PROBLEM OF SO-CALLED ANTI-VAMPIRE BURIALS IN THE TERRITORY OF POLAND IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Archaeological literature has suggested numerous different criteria, which – if recorded in a higher number – would allow for the classification of a given burial as belonging to a person who was believed to be able to harm the living after his or her death. The labelling of certain deceased in a given community as those who should be feared may have been due to factors such as an unnatural kind of death (e.g., suicide – cf. Wachcińska 2013; drowning – see e.g., Brzozowska 2009), the existence of a given person on the margin of social life and individual emotional relationships. Association of “the other”—persons who were perceived by the community as diverging from the norm due to traits of their physical appearance or behaviour— with particular funeral rites is obviously a topic of extreme importance. However, it is not possible to discuss it within the framework of this paper (in Polish literature – cf., among others, Stanaszek 2007; Matczak 2014).

One of the main determinants of atypical burials in the case of early medieval necropolises is the location of the grave outside the cemetery or in its peripheries. Other criteria are the arrangement of the dead body in a position which diverged from the general norm (prone or crouched position, or a position resulting from binding the limbs), a different alignment of the skeleton, mechanical damage of the dead body (decapitation or piercing of the head or body with sharp iron or wooden artefacts), immobilisation of the dead using stones, cremation of the body or a grave pit of extraordinary depth (Miśkiewicz 1969, 257; Zoll-Adamikowa 1971, 47-54; Stanaszek 2017, 72-73). Of considerable importance for such identification are findings of physical anthropology and palaeopathology, which allow for characterisation of the appearance of the dead during their lives (Stanaszek 2007; 2016, 55-69). These criteria can be divided into those related to the location and construction of the grave pit and those including manipulations of the bodies leading to their immobilisation through various means: binding, pressing down, nailing to the substratum, and cremation as the most powerful method. Literature on this subject is abundant, and there has recently been an increase in interest in this issue thanks to works of L. Gardęła (2017). This issue was previously successfully explored by Ł. M. Stanaszek (1998; 2007; 2016, worth noting are also works of P. Duma 2010, P. Żydok 2004, A. Falis 2008, L. Gardęła and P. Duma 2013 and L. Gardęła and K. Kajkowski 2013).

Concerning “psychic” means of restraint, which were supposed to disorientate the dead, the following ones should be mentioned: changing the arrangement of the body in the grave, aligning the head in a different direction, burying the individual in prone position, and giving the dead time-consuming tasks which could delay the moment of leaving the grave until the task is completed, e.g., the counting of seeds. Liberating oneself from a net or untying knots could be seen as a similar group of tasks. Such preventive means are known from ethnographic records, while less attention is paid to them in archaeological

research. This is due to the difficulties of recording such phenomena in the course of excavations of cemeteries, or to their oversight.

Archaeological traces of anti-demonic practices with the use of plants

Plant remains are rather sporadically recorded in the course of examinations of cemeteries. However, their discovery always significantly enriches our knowledge of material culture and funeral rites of the past. On the other hand, it is not always possible to identify their proper meaning. Sometimes the context of discovery, knowledge of plant properties and associations with the position of the deceased in the community may be of help, e.g., a concentration of seeds of black henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger* L.) with poisonous and hallucinogenic traits discovered in a female grave (völva) from the Viking Period in Fyrkat in Denmark (Rohde Sloth *et al.* 2012, 31), or fruits of guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus* L.) in a female grave of a “soothsayer” in the Roman Period cemetery in Jartypory in eastern Poland (Andrzejowski 2011).

In early medieval cemeteries from the territory of Poland one frequently finds caryopses of cereals among grave goods. Placing cereal grains in graves is perceived as resurrection symbolism. This practice is also interpreted as an appeal to the dead in order to secure prosperity and fertility for the living (Pawlak 1998, 221, 263; Indycka 2000, 72, 76; Pawlak and Pawlak 2007, 83). However, hazelnuts (Kurasiński and Skóra 2016, 87-88), peas (Indycka 2000, 76), vine stones (Kurasiński and Skóra 2013) and hemp seeds (Pawlak 1998, 263) are also recorded in such graves, among other botanical elements. Some of these finds are known from vessels deposited next to the deceased, while others are parts of necklaces – as beads, or hidden inside kaptorgas. Funeral rites can also be identified in the discovery of a strong concentration of pollens in the grave (cf. Wrzeńska and Wrzeński 1999, 244).

However, the habit of covering the dead with seeds or depositing them directly next to the body is revealed very rarely. Lubień, in Central Poland, is the best-documented example of a medieval necropolis from the territory of Poland where, based on the context of the discovery, it can be inferred that seeds were found in such a place and that they fulfilled a protective function. In this cemetery, the dead were buried between the first quarter of the 11th and the third quarter of the 12th c. (Kurasiński and Skóra 2012, 101).

Archaeobotanical analyses (Michniewicz 2012) revealed that some persons were accompanied by seeds of black mustard (Fig. 2) (*Brassica nigra* L.) (Table 1; a botanical description can be found in Rostafiński and Seidl 1965, 79; Bagiński and Mowszowicz 1966, 54-55; Nowiński 1983, 81; Podbielkowski 1989, 140-141). This species is believed to be an archaeophyte, which can be found across the entire territory of Poland (Lityńska-Zajac 2005, 79). It is difficult to determine whether in the Early Middle Ages field mustard was a cultivated or a wild plant. Its small amount in archaeological finds from this period allows for the as-



Fig. 1. Field poppy (*Papaver rhoeas* L.)
After Rostański and Seidl 1965, Fig. 153

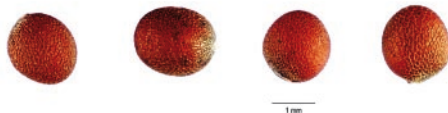


Fig. 2. Black mustard (*Brassica nigra* L.):
1 – plant. After Rostański and Seidl 1965, Fig. 182; 2 – seeds. Photo K. Skóra and Ł. Antosik

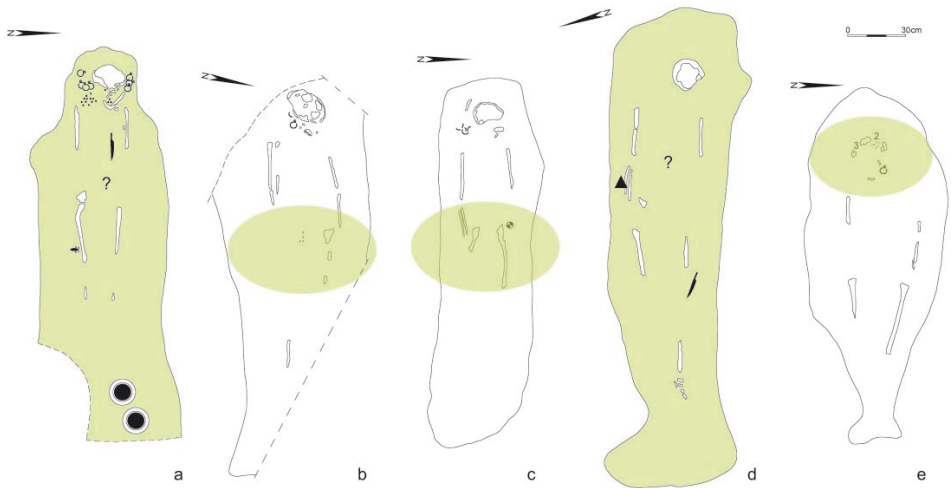


Fig. 3. Cemetery in Lubień. Location of black mustard's seeds in graves: a – Grave 52; b – Grave 60; c – Grave 62; d – Grave 88; e – Grave 114. Drawing E. Wtorkiewicz-Marosik



Fig. 4. Field poppy – hardly countable seeds. Photo K. Skóra

Table 1. Seeds of black mustard discovered in graves in the early medieval cemetery in Lubień

Grave No.	Sex	Age	Number of black mustard seeds	Position in relation to the body	Grave goods
39	Female (?)	<i>Adultus/maturus</i>	227	Near a leather strap	Temple rings, earrings, leather strap with fittings
52	Female	<i>Maturus</i>	148	?	Temple rings, ring, knife, beads, two clay vessels
60	Female	<i>Adultus/maturus</i>	3	Near the pelvis	Temple rings, leather purse, flint chip
62	Female	<i>Juvenis/adultus</i>	7	Near the pelvis	Temple rings, coin
88	Male	<i>Maturus</i>	22	?	Knife
114	Female (?)	<i>Adultus</i>	305	Among cranium bones	Temple rings

sumption that it was gathered rather than cultivated (cf. Twarowska 1983, 220-211, No. 23). M. Lityńska-Zajac and D. Nalepka (2008, 86, Tab. 1), however, classified black mustard into the group of plants that were cultivated in the Middle Ages. In the same graves, remains of common fumitory (*Fumaria officinalis* L.) were found in Grave 62 and those of rabbitfoot clover (*Trifolium arvense* L.) in Grave 52. It proved impossible to determine the species of seeds discovered in several other graves (Graves 3, 11, 79, 97, 104, and 115).

On the basis of the anthropological analysis, it can be said that in most cases black mustard seeds were placed next to the skeletons of women. Their ages encompassed a broad span between *juvenis* and *maturus*. Only in one case were the seeds found in a burial containing the remains of a man (aged 40-45). The number of gathered seeds varies between a few and several hundred. It is worth noting that in the first case we cannot be certain that all of the seeds were noticed in the course of exploration.

With regard to the arrangement of the body and grave goods, these dead do not differ from other burials in Lubień (see Tab. 1; Fig. 3). On the basis of archival documentation of the excavations, it was possible to determine the precise location of the seeds in two burials only. In the first one (Grave 60), they were placed near the pelvis of the dead woman. In the same place, the aforementioned leather purse was also found. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that these seeds were carried at the belt. In the other grave (Grave 114), black mustard seeds were found among the bones of the cranium. In the remaining grave pits, the location of the seeds was not specified. However, the presence of a leather purse next to the pelvis of the woman from Grave 62 may imply that seeds were also stored here in a manner similar to that of the woman from Grave 60. In yet another burial (Grave 39), the seeds were found together with a leather strap, whose function can only be supposed, due to the lack of information concerning its location near the skeleton. It may perhaps have served as a headdress. It is worth noting that although there are examples of occurrence of

the discussed plant species in layers and features from early medieval settlements, e.g., from Ostrów Lednicki, Gniezno, and Kraków, Wawel (Polcyn 1993, 259; Lityńska-Zajac 2005, 308) it has not been thus far discovered in graves other than those from Lubień.

Due to relatively numerous assemblages (but not in all graves) of black mustard seeds in Lubień, it is to a certain degree possible to consider intentions related to a need for securing protection against the dead. On the other hand, the burials discussed above lack traits that would enable them to be classified as so-called anti-vampire burials (as previously described). It is unclear how to assess the location of the graves within the cemetery. Their peripheral position could be seen as an intentional separation of the dead by means of placing their burials at the edge of the necropolis. Of course, the reason for it could be more prosaic – that is, these burials may have originated in the last phase of use of the necropolis, when a habit of depositing black mustard seeds became widespread in the burial rites of the community that used the cemetery. Obviously, the presence of black mustard seeds does not necessarily mean that they were used against the deceased, as there is no evidence for the marginal role of these dead in the local community. As a matter of fact, since these seeds were primarily found in the graves of women, and due to the healing properties of this plant (Skóra and Kurasiński 2009, 304-305), it could be assumed that we are dealing with persons who practiced herbal medicine (Skóra and Kurasiński 2009, 305). On the other hand, it is known that the power of some medicine works in both directions. Thus, these seeds may have not only protected the living against the revenants who assumed a daemonic shape after the death, but they also offered protection against unclean forces for the buried persons, who were not suspected of noxious activity by the community. The seeds protected them in the otherworld and facilitated their journey to the desired reality in the afterlife. Apotropaic practices that were manifested in providing the dead with certain categories of grave goods – including, among others, those symbolising closure – became intensified during epidemics. Actions undertaken by the community were aimed at stopping the disease in the grave. In such cases, therefore, these practices concerned the first persons that died of a given epidemic (e.g., Gregoricka *et al.* 2014).

Both in Poland and in neighbouring regions there occur several species of poppy: opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum* L.), field poppy (*P. rhoeas* L.), pale poppy (*P. argemone* L.), and long-headed poppy (*P. dubium* L.). The first one is a cultivated plant (Fig. 1), while the remaining ones are wild plants (for a botanical description see Rostański and Seidl 1965, 72; Mowszowicz 1986, 124-128; Rutkowski 2018, 171-172). The field poppy and the pale poppy are archaeophytes and were gathered for utilitarian purposes (Twarowska 1983, 224-225, No. 88; Lityńska-Zajac 2005, 67, 233).

Like black mustard seeds, poppy seeds have also been encountered during the excavation of graves. Individual seeds of this plant (*Papaver rhoeas* L.) were found in a sample taken from a plank (grave construction) deposited under a bronze bowl in Burial 17/98 at the cemetery in Dziekanowice, Site 22 (Michniewicz 2000, 226). The poorly preserved skeletal remains therein belonged to a man who died at the age of 25-30 (Wrzesińska

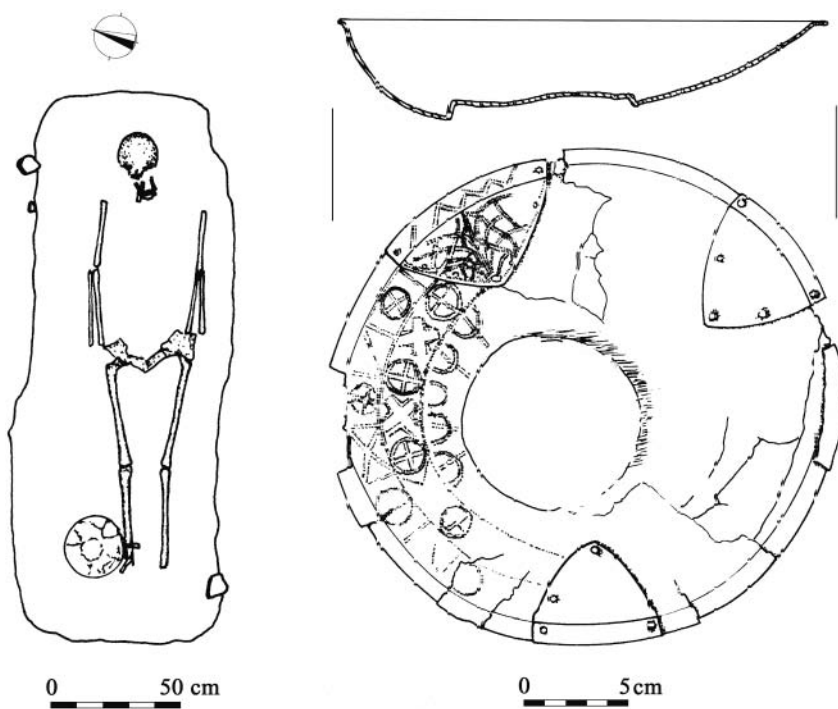


Fig. 5. Grave 17/98 from an Early Medieval cemetery in Dziekanowice, Site 22.
After Wrzesiński 2000, Fig. 1.

2000). The body was deposited in a straight position, with arms along the torso. The only element of post-mortem furnishings was the aforementioned bowl, placed near the right foot (Fig. 5). On this basis one can assume an 11th-12th c. chronology of this grave (Wrzesińska and Wrzesiński 2000; Wrzesiński 2000).

This find can be considered as isolated, as other burials containing poppy are unknown. This is in spite of the fact that remains of various species of this plant come from other kinds of sites. For instance, they were found in layers from the late 13th to the mid-15th c. in Kraków, Main Market Square (Bieniek *et al.* 2006, 206, 218). They were also discovered in the species composition of a sample taken from a clay vessel that was found near one of the islands in Lake Zarnańsko (near the locality of Żółte). This island was part of a settlement complex that developed in the period between the 9th and the 13th c. (this vessel is believed to have been related to ritual practices – Pińska 2010, 151-152). From the 13th c. onward, poppy is known from archaeobotanical finds from Gdańsk (Lepówna 1981, 185, 194; Badura 2010, 171, fig. 5). Individual poppy seeds were identified in cultural layers near early medieval bridge structures in Ostrów Lednicki and in Giecz (Polcyn 2000, 346). They were

also noted at Wawel Hill in Kraków, in Stradów and in Wolin (Lityńska-Zajac 2005, 67, 350-351, with further reading). Seeds of this plant were also found at early medieval sites in other regions of Europe, including Denmark (Rohde Sloth *et al.* 2012, 29, 30-31) and Ukraine (Goncharov 1950, 59), among others. Poppy is also known from palynological materials (Zemanek *et al.* 2009, 218). Clay vessels with food, including those filled with poppy were discovered in strongholds in rampart foundations (e.g., in Gdańsk). These vessels are interpreted as foundation sacrifices (recently Chlastawa 2014, 82).

As in the case of Lubień, the characteristics of the Dziekanowice burial offer no grounds to classify it as an “anti-vampire” burial. The isolated nature of the poppy-seed deposit renders its interpretation difficult. Nonetheless, due to its location, it is possible to assume that ritual practices related to burying the dead were involved. We could be more certain of this if palaeobotanical examinations encompassing a larger space within the grave were to be carried out. Such examinations would enable us to verify whether the poppy seeds were more numerous.

Anti-daemonic world of plants in Slavic folklore

Due to the difficulties involved in the recording and identification of seeds in graves, it is worth consulting folkloristic and ethnographic sources, which provide abundant data concerning the use of plants in old burial rites. With regard to the various possible interpretations, special stress should be given to their comprehensive use in preventive and protective magic. In such cases, they were used as an especially powerful apotropaic medium. A well-established role in this sphere was held by the poppy, as stated in numerous sources of information, which are relevant to issues discussed in this paper.

All known Central European species of poppy played (and still play) a valuable role in herbal medicine, which makes use of all parts of the discussed plant, with special stress on the seeds. The opium poppy and the field poppy were of the greatest economic and cultural significance. Although these plants are used in pharmaceuticals, they are classified as poisonous (Mowszowicz 1982, 136-141; Nowiński 1983, 77-78; Broda and Mowszowicz 1985, 263-266; Żuraw *et al.* 2014, 25-26). In Slavic folk medicine (as well as that of other cultural traditions), they were primarily used as soporific and sedative drugs, which (in various forms) were mainly given to children, but also to persons in advanced age and those suffering from mental diseases (e.g., Gustawicz 1882, 276; Siarkowski 1892, 229-230; Piątkowska 1894, 137; Ochrymowicz 1900, 335; Benkovskiy 1905, 35-36; Moszyński 1967, 217; Paluch 1988, 61, 97, 186-187, 192, 222; 1989, 91-92; Kuźnicka 1992, 114; Kowalski 1998, 305; Ogrodowska 2001, 109, 119-120; Jaguś 2002, 84-85; Usacheva 2004a, 173; Immacolata Macioti 2006, 93; Klepacki 2007, 111-112; Rotter 2007, 157; Szot-Radziszewska 2005, 150; 2007a, 82; 2007b, 93; Szcześniak 2008, 221; Tuszewicki 2015, 351, 359. About other health benefits see Gustawicz 1882, 276, 277; Piątkowska 1894, 141; Paluch

1988, 61, 97, 192, 214; 1989, 92; Jaguś 2002, 79; Immacolata Maciotti 2006, 93, 95; Szot-Radziszewska 2007a, 80, 85; Kujawska *et al.* 2016, 229).

The poppy is considered as one of the most important ritual plants to have been in use, especially in Slavic lands. It owes its popularity, first of all, to its narcotic-stupefacent and painkilling properties, as well as its ability to grow from very numerous and small seeds. This testifies to its high viability and fecundity, which guarantees fertility. Another important factor was its colouration: red flowers with a black centre (Szczęśniak 2008, 220; Łeńska-Bąk 2004, 189; 2010, 256). Apart from the lilac, the poppy belongs to the most frequently mentioned group of plants relating to death, sleep and silence (Kość 2004, 22, see also Ogródowska 2001, 109). This can be explained by the fact that these states demonstrate close relationships, which was expressed in traditional beliefs and patterns of behaviour. Sleep was commonly associated with death and was its symbolic and metonymic reference (for more on this issue see Pokropek 1993; Knapczyk 2002; Profantová 2011). At the same time, the poppy was a plant that was believed to be especially dangerous. If used improperly, it could even cause sudden death (Immacolata Maciotti 2006, 93). The effects caused by the poppy have long been known and utilized, as reflected in medical and philosophical works, as well as in mythology (Sumer, Egypt, Persia, Greece). The aforementioned properties of this plant are responsible for its association with oblivion (connected to sleep and death), as well as with love. The poppy became an inseparable attribute of such gods as Morpheus, Hypnos, and Thanatos. Also depicted with the poppy were the goddesses Venus, Demeter and Aphrodite (Sudnik and Civyan 1981, 309-311; Kuźnicka 1992, 113; Immacolata Maciotti 2006, 93; Kopalinski 2012, 216-217; Koźluk 2013; Fărcaș *et al.* 2015, 196). What is more, this plant also gained importance in Christian symbolism, including its folk version (cf. Kowalski 1998, 303; Kobielus 2006, 131; Rotter 2007, 157; Trojanowska 2008, 316; Jagla 2011, 407; Fărcaș *et al.* 2015, 196).

Due to its hallucinogenic effect, which causes sleep or visions, poppy limits one's ability to exist in the real world, liberating him or her from limitations of the human condition. By means of its mediating function, it is "a peculiar 'catalyser', which enabled one to cross the borders of the otherworld and to get rid of numerous limitations to which mortals are subject in their daily lives and in normal material reality. Taking poppy (with special reference to its preparations) decreases the distance between the reality of the living and the completely different world of the sacrum. The drowsiness and stupefaction evoked by the poppy – an experience of the otherness of existence – mean a transfer to the otherworld, which is a zone of completeness, lack of diversity and opposition" (Kowalski 1998, 302).

Due to the oneiric connotations of the poppy, it was believed to possess the power to induce prophetic states. For this reason, it was used in various procedures aimed at acquiring an insight into the future and having access to afterlife reality (Kowalski 1998, 304). However, of primary importance is the apotropaic role of the poppy and its relation to death. In this context, direct connections between the poppy and the otherworld are

highlighted. As an intermediary that caused sleep and death, it was supposed to have the ability to stave off demons and any other kind of evil (Kowalski 1998, 304). One of the means of protection against plague in Slavic tradition was to sow poppy or flax seed in a narrow stripe around the village. This was to be done by a boy who was an only son (Sznajderman 1994, 38). Naturally occurring poppy (if it was not available, intentionally sown poppy could alternatively be used) was considered one of the most effective means of fighting against unclean forces. It was therefore recommended to scatter wild, consecrated poppy over the household, the threshold of the stable and breeding animals, with special reference to cattle, in order to protect them against machinations of witches (during their life and after their death – Gustawicz 1882, 277; Majewski and Jarecki 1903, 327, 328; Benkovskiy 1905, 34-35; Zyblyuk 2000, 364; Serebryakova 2004, 71; Usacheva 2004a, 170-171; Szcześniak 2008, 221; Krivenko 2015, 473; Vojtovich 2015, 133, 135). In the territory of Belarus, in order to tame the household demon-spirit (*domovoj, domovik*), all corners of the hut were fumigated with poppy wrapped into a foot clout found on the road. Appropriate spells were cast during this act (Agapkina 2011, 30).

In Slavic lands, the poppy was especially valued as anti-demonic agent, and it was very often used in order to protect oneself against the return of unclean souls, with special reference to suicides or persons suspected of vampirism, demonic characters of any kind, as well as against witches and vermin. For the sake of protecting oneself and one's property, poppy that was consecrated during the feast of Our Lady of the Herbs (Assumption of Mary) was scattered in the household. This was done during various feasts, such as Midsummer Night (*Sobótka*), St Lucia's and St John the Baptist's eve, on Christmas Eve or on Maundy Thursday (Paluch 1988, 61; Kowalski 1998, 304; Łeńska-Bąk 2004, 195; Zemanek *et al.* 2009, 221). It was believed that covering the grave with poppy seeds or placing them in the coffin would prevent phantoms, the "walking dead" or any demonic beings from appearing (Biegeleisen 1930, 86; Moszyński 1967, 330; Pełka 1987, 170; Bohdanowicz 1999, 102-103; Tolstaya 2001, 170-171; Sedakova 2004, 51, 95, 189; Usacheva 2004a, 170; Rotter 2007, 157; Wyrwa 2008, 50; Żurek 2012-2013, 341). This was done to the places of rest of witches and sorcerers who were suspected of depriving cows of milk in Eastern Polesia and Transcarpathia (Moszyński 1928, 168; Sudnik and Civyan 1981, 305-306; Kolosova 2009, 268; Uzenyova 2011, 294; see also Sedakova 2004, 66, 96, 189). According to Belarusian tradition, seeds should also be scattered over the graves of mothers (as well as around the house), who would return after death to feed their children (Federowski 1897, 58). In some Slavic lands, when an unbaptised child was buried in the cemetery, the burial took place at night. Poppy seeds were thrown both onto the ground in the place of burial and along the path to it (Sedakova 2004, 189, 209). It was also used in an attempt at putting the dead to sleep forever by filling their mouth with "raw" poppy seeds or by covering the body with them (Pol 1966, 124; Kolosova 2011, 93; Usacheva 2004a, 170). According to other explanations, when the demon wakes up, he must first count all the seeds. Before this can be achieved, however, the rooster will crow, and the demon will be unable to get out

(Kolczyński 2003, 220). In the region of Kielce, if the deceased were suspected of paying visits to his or her relatives, it was necessary to visit the place of burial and fill fissures or cracks in the grave with poppy seeds. The spirit who would attempt at leaving the grave through these openings would thus be forced to collect all the seeds. This would take until midnight, at which point he would lose his “freedom of wandering” (Fischer 1921, 349). Similar actions (and for the same purpose) were undertaken by people in Masuria. In order to render it impossible for the dead to pay visits to the living, the closest relative of the deceased should walk around the grave and fill every visible opening with poppy seeds (Biegeleisen 1930, 84). A habit of throwing the seeds of this plant into the coffin of a person suspected of vampirism can be seen in Kashubia even today. As elsewhere, this action is aimed at preventing the dead from leaving the place of rest, as the deceased would first have to count all the seeds. Sometimes poppy seeds were also scattered over the road to the church and to the cemetery, so that the revenant would have to collect all the seeds (Seefried-Gulkowski 1911, 191; Marzell 1934-1935, 451; Perszon 1999, 170). In Pomerania, in order to neutralise a deceased individual that was born with one tooth and was biting after death (this usually concerned children), poppy seeds were put into the coffin. Each seed counted was believed to bind the dead for another year (Łysiak 2000, 50; Bonowska 2004, 97). A habit of depositing poppy seeds into the coffin was also in use in other regions, among others, in Kociewie (Nadmorski [Łęgowski] 1892, 68-69; Fischer 1921, 349). Reports on similar customs are known from as early as the 16th and 17th c. (Osiński 2003, 66).

Poppy as an anti-demonic and anti-vampire remedy was used especially eagerly in West and East Slavic borderland territories and in former Rus’land. In these regions, poppy seeds were put into the coffins of persons accused of sorcery. The places of rest of such persons, along with clefts in the grave and paths in its vicinity were also covered with poppy seeds, and this act was accompanied with appropriate incantations. This practice was supposed to fulfil an analogous role to the anti-vampire use of aspen stake. In order to secure eternal rest for the dead, and thus peace for the living household members, as well as for the sake of warding off witches, seeds of this plant were also scattered throughout the house and the farmstead (Fischer 1921, 350; Oгородowska 2001, 109; Tolstaya 2001, especially 169-171; Sedakova 2004, 51, 121, 189, 238-239; Szcześniak 2008, 221; Józefów-Czerwińska 2017, 246). In the region of Lublin, in cases in which it was deemed highly probable that the dead would transform into a demonic being, e.g., a ghoul, a prophylactic measure consisted in scattering sand or poppy seeds (by themselves or in a pouch) in the coffin. As in previous examples, this provided the dead with a task (counting seeds), the labour intensity of which prevented the dead from leaving the grave (Kukier 1967, 195; Tymochowicz 2005, 104-105). Alternatively, poppy seeds could be scattered over the grave to the same effect (Baranowski 1981, 62). Sometimes (e.g., in the village of Wola Gułowska), a few ripe poppy heads were put into the coffin (Kukier 1967, 195). Similar practices were in use in the land of Lubawa, where field mustard and rapeseed were used in addition to poppy and sand (Kukier 1965, 447). Poppy seeds were also scattered around the graves as

a means of preventing the dead from transforming into vampires (Vinogradova 1993, 41). The act of scattering consecrated poppy seeds around the household or the grave of a “restless” deceased individual (or directly into the coffin) in Podolia was intended to make the dead collect the seeds and to prevent him or her from paying visits to the living (Serkowska 2003, 197, 199). It is interesting that in the opinion of some observers such a practice was a sin, rendering it impossible for the dead to attend the Last Judgement (Serkowska 2003, 199; see also Gayduchik 2017, 152). In Pokuttya (Ukraine), poppy seeds were thrown into the grave of a stillborn child, who would then have to occupy itself with collecting the grains (Fischer 1921, 350-351; Biegeleisen 1930, 195). Scattering of poppy seeds on the way to and from the cemetery, into the coffin or the grave, as well as pouring them into the mouth of the dead was in use in Subcarpathian areas – Lemkivshchyna, Boikovshchyna (Reinfuss 1984, 30; Ossadnik 1993, 112; 2001, 133; Kosiek 2011, 224; 2012, 33; Vojtovich 2015, 110, 112). In the case of suicides, the body was carried out under the threshold of the house, and after the soil had been taken out, the hollow was filled with poppy seeds. Additionally, seeds of this plant could be mixed with salt and scattered around the house, proceeding from right to left (Ossadnik 2001, 123, 133-134). On the other hand, in those territories of Poland whose beliefs were influenced by Ruthenian culture, poppy seeds or sand were to be put into the pocket of the dead individual that was suspected of demonic activities (Bohdanowicz 1994, 50). Protective rituals using poppy were also broadly undertaken in Polesia. In this region, it was not only recommended to scatter it around the household and the grave (also inside the grave), but also to carry it with oneself in a purse (Gayduchik 2017). As a means of prevention, poppy seeds were to be scattered over the grave in case someone stepped over the dead body. If this practice were neglected, the dead “would walk after death” (Moszyński 1928, 167; Ossendowski 1934, 140).

In some cases, it was necessary to undertake extraordinary measures (in addition to the use of poppy) in order to prevent undesirable visits of certain categories of the dead. In the Polish-Belarusian borderland (in the south-eastern part of the region of Białystok), a case of a burial of a phantom was recorded. In that instance, the head was cut off and placed next to the feet of the dead, and poppy seeds were poured into the grave. This rendered the return of the dead impossible, as he would be unable to count the seeds without the use of his head. Therefore, he could not meet the necessary condition of return (Sienkiewicz and Wasila 2010, 77-78). One of narratives recorded in the Augustów District (village of Jaminy) describes the case of a hanged woman, who was believed to scare the living after her death. She was subsequently decapitated and her eyes were covered with poppy seeds (Drowdwiłło-Batura 2007). Furthermore, there is an ethnographic description from the territory of Ukraine, according to which the phantom was first exhumed for the sake of neutralisation. His head was pierced with a nail and his mouth was filled with poppy seeds. The mouth was then sewn shut with grey threads (Strzetelska-Grynberowa 1899, 433).

Poppy was also made use of in Bohemia, where it was thrown into graves of the drowned, suicides, witches and vampires (Navrátilová 1996, 24; 2004, 310; 2005, 127). In

Slovakia (in the region of Zemplin) poppy seeds and millet were poured into the mouth and nose of the dead who was suspected of vampirism in order to make him suffocate. This rendered it impossible for him to even attend the Last Judgement. Poppy seeds were also scattered on the coffin and into the grave, as well as on the road leading to the cemetery, along which the dead was carried. In the latter case seeds were sometimes mixed with ash. The effectiveness of these practices was increased by the use of white poppy (which must first be consecrated) and black millet (Mjartan 1953, 115, 118, 131).

The use of poppy as anti-vampire agent has generally been interpreted as a procedure intended to distract the attention of the “restless” dead from the earthly world and prevent them from leaving the grave to harm the living (by compelling the deceased to count or collect the grains, or by suffocating them by pouring the seeds into their mouth – see also Barber 1988, 49; Tolstaya 2001, 169; Lecouteux 2007, 89; Gayduchik 2017, 151). K. Mozyński suggested yet another explanation: souls are often imagined as birds, which, if fed on an abundance of poppy seeds, would be prevented from flying from the grave (Mozyński 1967, 330-331, note 4). Various other roles of the poppy in funerary traditions can be seen in Ukrainian folklore. Poppy seeds that were put into a pouch attached to the belt of the interred “crone-midwife”—or was placed on her coffin—were meant to protect her against the souls of the deceased children whom she helped deliver into this tormented world (Sobotka 1879, 259; Zyablyuk 2000, 364). According to another interpretation, poppy seeds put into the coffin of the accoucheuse were meant to be gifts for all the children at whose births she assisted when she meets them in the other world (Kukharenko 2011, 70). A bundle filled with poppy was also deposited into the grave of an old woman who enjoyed numerous grandchildren during her life. These seeds were to be scattered on them when they come to ask for food in the other world (Zyablyuk 2000, 364). They could also be used for playing with the grandchildren (Biegeleisen 1930, 195). Women were sometimes interred with a bundle of poppies or poppy heads, so that they have something to welcome any children who would come and meet them (Fischer 1921, 349).

Collecting poppy was not necessarily an activity that demonic beings were compelled to do. In literature one can find isolated references to the significance of poppy as a culinary preference. Concerning Pokuttya, it was believed that unsalted hominy was among the preferred devilish dishes and poppy was even considered a delicacy (Piotrowicz 1907, 128-129). In this context, a report from the vicinity of Kryvichy in the former district of Wilejka is of interest. There, it was believed that the household of a witch could easily be identified by an abundance of poppy in her garden. This poppy was sown for her by the devil (Kibort 1899, 393).

It is also worth adding that there are reports from Belarus (especially from its western and northern parts), that sorcerers used poppy in order to resist pestering from their devils-assistants, who were seeking an occupation for themselves. In one such story, which comes from the district of Dyarzhinsk in the Minsk region, it was necessary to scatter poppy seeds outside the door, so that devils had to collect them all night, until the morning (this story

was recorded by V. Gayduchik in 2015 from Karolina Chałapuk – born 1934 in the village of Zolorati, Dyarzhinsk District, Minsk Region). Shifting to Lithuania, there was a superstition among the Old Believers that if the agony of a sorcerer lingered on, it was necessary to scatter poppy seeds on the road. This way, the devils would have to collect the grains and would not be able to disturb him on his journey from this world (Novikov 2005, 182-183).

Also worth noting are dishes based on, or containing poppy that were consumed during the cyclical festive time (kutya, beigli, wheel cake, dumplings with poppy, etc.). These dishes were once considered appropriate to consume during times of mourning, such as at wakes and on all souls days (Biegeleisen 1930, 284; Chodorowska 1998, 94; Zyablyuk 2000, 357; Ogradowska 2001, 109; Sedakova 2004, 118, 183; Usacheva 2004a, 173). Such dishes, including kutya, were also brought to the graves of the deceased. In the course of time, this tradition was abandoned, and they were offered to the old poor with a request to pray for the souls of the dead (Pawlak 2014, 35; Tymochowicz 2016, 88; see also Sedakova 2004, 188-189; more on feeding the poor in the context of funeral rites can be found in the work of B. Wałęciuk-Dejneka 2003). The presence of these dishes on the table is a relic of old rites that commemorated the dead. Such rites were held especially around the time of the winter solstice. In fact, preparing and eating such dishes in abundance was considered an archaic treat for ancestors residing in the otherworld (Bohdanowicz 1996, 58; Kowalski 1998, 302-303; Zadrożyńska 2000, 58; Tymochowicz 2005, 108-109; Smykowska 2006, 54; Kardaś 2007, 77; Szcześniak 2008, 221; Motyka and Marcinkowski 2014, 229; on commemorating the dead in the annual ritual cycle, with a focus on feeding and warming their souls see Wojciechowska 2014). As underlined by K. Łeńska-Bąk (2010), poppy never appeared on the menu apart from ritual contexts. Due to its extraordinary soporific and stupeficient properties it was actually indispensable in rites involving the otherworld. “It was perceived as an intermediary, which enabled one to cross borders and contact the world of the sacrum. It was a symbol of the night, silence, oblivion and sleep, and thus it became a perfect medium to enable one to travel to the otherworld. This symbolism was additionally strengthened by the fact that poppy seeds are black. As no other colour, it reflects the extra-human order of the world of the dead – this is the colour of the night, death, destruction and mourning. Due to these properties, the presence of poppy seemed to be indispensable during rites of passage – that is, during the funeral and the eve – when contact with the souls of the dead was indispensable” (Łeńska-Bąk 2010, 255-256).

Herbs consecrated on the day of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, which was known as the feast of Our Lady of the Herbs (15 August), were of special significance. Consecration of herbs and of crops during this feast is first recorded in the 12th c. in the territory of Poland (Kopeć 1998, 394; Bracha 2000, 177). These herbs usually included poppy (especially poppy heads) but sometimes also flowers (e.g., Gustawicz 1882, 202-203; Ogradowska 2001, 119; Zadrożyńska and Braun 2003, 155; Szymanderska 2003, 300, 301; Szot-Radziszewska 2005, 189; Niebrzegowska 2000, 209; Szcześniak 2008, 305; Fitkowski 2011, 8, 18). Plants that were brought to the church on this day “acquired special power and were

of manifold uses. They were used in healing and preventive magic, in agrarian magic and as apotropaic means, which protected people and cattle against harmful impact from those components of the world of inanimate nature that were perceived as having a negative value, and from the direct interference of demonic beings” (Wojciechowska 2000, 112; see also Siarkowski 1892, 229; Piwowarczyk 1988, 137-144; Ogrodowska 2001, 119-120; Szot-Radziszewska 2005, 189-199; Szcześniak 2008, 304-306). Plants were also consecrated at other times of the ritual year, e.g., on the Octave of Corpus Christi or the Pentecost (see below). Once consecrated, bundles of herbs could also be used for preventive purposes. As mentioned above, consecrated poppy seeds were believed to possess special properties.

Also relevant to our topic is the recorded practice of burying the dead with consecrated wreaths. In that case, however, the stress was put on providing the dead themselves with protection. For instance, in the region of Lublin, bouquets or chaplets of consecrated herbs were used as a means to protect the dead against the harmful influence of unclean forces and demons, and to provide the deceased with peace and eternal rest. These chaplets or bouquets were placed directly under the head or put into the pillow, which was filled with shavings of wood (Tymochowicz 2005, 104, 106-108; Szcześniak 2008, 305). Crumbs from the bundle were also put into the bedclothes of the dying to shorten their agony (Ogrodowska 2000, 120, 234). In the Orthodox religious circle, herbs are consecrated on the feast of Our Lady of the Herbs, on the day of the Holy Saviour (an Orthodox counterpart of the Ascension), the Descent of the Holy Spirit and the Corpus Christi. These herbs are then put into the coffin of the dead (into the pillow). Such plants are also used for casting off bewitchments. Furthermore, it is recommended to fumigate or whip oneself with them in case the dead pays visits to one’s family (Serkowska 2003, 192, 197; Sawicka 2007, 102). In Silesia, a pouch with various herbs consecrated during the Pentecost was sometimes placed under the head (Simonides 1988, 139; Turek 1993, 32). Herbs consecrated on the day of Our Lady of the Herbs had apotropaic significance in the folklore of the Polish-Bohemian borderland. A habit of making three crosslets from them and placing them under the legs, back and head of the dead was in use until recently. At present, this custom is practiced in a reduced form, in which only one such crosslet or a small bunch of herbs are put into the grave (Lach 2000, 92).

The other plant that is dealt with in this paper is black mustard (*Brassica nigra* L.). Analogously to the poppy, it demonstrates – if dosed properly – healing properties, which are known both to present-day and old herbalists. These properties were made use of in the healing of various ailments. Examples of such use can be found in Early Christian, medieval and early modern period writings (Skóra and Kurasiński 2009, 304). A belief in the healing power of black mustard survived in the folklore. Grains of this plant were thought to have a painkilling effect, and they were recommended mainly in the case of maladies. Black mustard was also applied in cases of contagious diseases, both as a preventive means and as a medicine to treat an already acquired disease (for more on this issue see Skóra and Kurasiński 2009, 304-305).

An opinion on the role of black mustard as a means of “regulation” of contacts between the world of the living and that of the dead seems to be of special significance to this paper. Such a belief was present in the popular imagination. According to H. Biegeleisen, taking a few grains of black mustard and pepper on an empty stomach was supposed to protect against death (Biegeleisen 1930, 7). As mentioned above, in some parts of Poland, e.g., in the region of Lubawa, seeds of this plant were poured into the coffins of persons who were suspected of harmful post-mortem actions. As with the poppy, the counting of such seeds was a time-consuming task, which rendered it impossible for a potential phantom to leave the place of rest (Kukier 1965, 447). This function of black mustard seeds is known, for example, in the folklore of Southern Slavs (Barber 1988, 49, with further reading). In Macedonian beliefs, throwing black mustard seeds onto the roof of a house was part of “anti-vampire” practices (Abbott 1903, 219).

Eventually, it is worth mentioning other plants which were believed to have analogous properties. For instance, tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare* L.) was among herbs which were placed under one’s head in Orava (Jostowa 1983, 110). A habit of putting a bundle of southernwood (*Artemisia abrotanum* L.) (which was dried and consecrated on the day of Our Lady of the Herbs) into the hand of the dead was recorded in a present-day village in Podhale. This plant was supposed to repel hellfire and the devil. Elderly women are responsible for making sure that this custom is fulfilled (Lehr 1995, 33). Campanulas (*Campanula* sp.), which are also consecrated on the day of Our Lady of the Herbs, can be used for the same magical purpose instead of southernwood (Lehr 1995, 33-34). Yet another plant with supposed magical properties is dwarf everlast or immortelle (*Helichrysum arenarium* L.). In the region of Grodno it is believed that this herb repels evil spirits – both during one’s life and after death, when it is put into the coffin (Szczęśniak 2008, 284). In Pomerania it was believed that while following the coffin of a child born in a caul, it was necessary to scatter seeds of cabbage or peas. As a vampire seeking for prey, such a child would have to pick one grain per year (Łysiak 1996, 158). In order to protect oneself against such dead, it was possible to carry them to the church and to put coal dust or peas into the coffin (Bonowska 2004, 98).

Nuts or pumpkin seeds were also put into the coffins of deceased children. This was done so that they had something to play with or to eat (favourite delicacies) in their new life. This also protected the living against the unwanted return of such children (Biegeleisen 1930, 180; Łeńska-Bąk 2004, 192; 2010, 262). Persons who could transform into phantoms after death were also buried with rapeseed (Kukier 1965, 447). We also have reports stating that garlic was put into the coffin, mouth, nose or ears, and sometimes even the anus of the dead (potential ghouls). Pebbles, peas or wheat grains were also put into bodily orifices (Lecouteux 2007, 89; the use of carrot seeds is also mentioned by Barber 1988, 49). Among the Lemkos, arms and legs of feared dead were bound with stems of blackberry or wreaths of garlic, and garlands of hawthorn were put on their necks (Kosiek 2011, 224). In some Slavic territories it was believed that flax seed had a significance and a power analogous to poppy. Flax seed was scattered over graves of feared dead, and over

houses and roads for magical protection (Sedakova 2004, 51, 95, 112, 121; Usacheva 2004b, 95; see also Falkowski and Pasznyicki 1935, 79). Although flax (and its products, linen and oil) fulfilled a special role in funerary and all souls rites in the territory of Poland, it seems that this habit was not in use on a broader scale (see Dragan 2015). Only J. Bohdanowicz recorded that in Ryczeń people who had arrived from the Eastern Borderlands put a few flax seeds into the coffin of a deceased woman in order to stress her earthly occupation (Bohdanowicz 1999, 102). However, another use of this plant was recorded. In some villages of the borderland between the region of Lublin and Podlachia, blessed candles wrapped with flax fibre were placed into the hands of the dying in case the agony lingered on. Flax seeds were also burnt for this purpose. This was also done in the case of sinners (Kukier 1967, 189). Such fibres were also burnt for healing ailments such as skin diseases and toothache, as well as over a scared child (Paluch 1988, 27; 1989, 88; Ogrodowska 2001, 104).

A separate analysis is required for the funerary use of cereal grains. This is because there was a tradition (mainly in East Slavic lands) of throwing grains under or onto the coffin while the dead was being carried from the house. According to A. Fischer, “the scattering of cereals while the dead body is carried out fulfils (...) the same role as the scattering of poppy seeds; the thing is that one must give a task to the deceased. One must force them to count grains and thus to prevent them from entering the house. Therefore, pouring of cereals could be seen as a rite aimed at protecting oneself against the spirit of the dead.” (Fischer 1921, 253; see also Biegeleisen 1930, 86). From the locality of Alistrati (Greek Macedonia) there is a report that the dead body of a “vampire” was treated with hot oil and pierced with a long blade. Then, after the body had been interred again, the grave was covered with millet. This was intended to secure peace, because “(...) if the vampire came out again, he might waste his time picking up the grains of millet and thus be overtaken by the dawn. For the usual period of their wanderings is from about two hours before midnight until the first crowing of the morning cock” (Abbott 1903, 218-219). Using millet as an anti-vampire medium (e.g., by throwing it onto the grave or body, or by placing it on the bosom of the dead) is also attested to in East Slavic lands and in Bulgaria (Usacheva 2009a, 302). Oat was poured onto the grave (Sedakova 2004, 191), and it was thrown onto the road along which the funeral procession went (this latter tradition can also be found in Ruthenia). This was done by widows after the loss of their husbands, having first broken a new jug (Ralston 1872, 318). This action was to prevent the dead from returning (Usacheva 2004c, 491). In the region of Subcarpathia (the village of Wola Michowa) women poured millet or flax seed onto the road from the house to the cemetery. In order to return, the dead “would have to first pick up the scattered grains (and in the meantime he would cool down)” (Falkowski and Pasznyicki 1935, 79). In South and East Slavic lands, wheat grains were scattered over graves. It was believed that such grains had a protective function against witches, phantoms and vampires (Usacheva 2009b, 375, 376).

On the other hand, this act may have had another meaning, too. According to beliefs in Podlachia, when the host (or hostess) died, the household was exposed to misfortune. This

necessitated special sacrificial rites, including throwing rye under the coffin (Matus 2011, 172). There was also a tradition in this region of placing a candle into a vessel filled with grains beside the dead. This was related to the grain's power of rebirth, in connection with the resurrection of Christ (Matus 2011, 168; see also Józefów-Czerwińska 2017, 246). In the region of Zhytomyr, there is still a tradition of pouring cereal grains onto the coffin by a family member. This is done immediately after the dead leaves the house. This gesture expresses a belief that the dead will come to life again, and the grains themselves stand for a constant transformation of death and life (Nowakowska and Weigl 2003, 281). Moreover, in the village of Prełuki in Subcarpathia, a custom was recorded in which poppy seeds were poured onto the coffin and cereal grains were thrown behind it during the funeral. This was done "so that the dead would not take them to the otherworld, and so that they would yield crops" (Ossadnik 2001, 134). Cereal grains were also occasionally placed into the coffin (Biegeleisen 1930, 179; Kosiek 2011, 224), including, in some instances, when farmers were buried (Bohdanowicz 1999, 102).

Thus, we have seen the symbolic power of cereals and other plants (poppy, peas, nuts) to bring fertility and as apotropaic media (Łeńska-Bąk 2004; Zemanek *et al.* 2009, 220-221). Rites involving these botanicals both protect the earthly order (and prosperity) in the difficult and dangerous moment of death, and express faith in the afterlife and rebirth (cf. Ogrodowska 2001, 270; Andryunina 2011, 75; Józefów-Czerwińska 2017, 246-247).

As a side note, we should also point out the custom of interring the dead with wreaths of other kinds. This tradition existed in many regions, both in countryside and in urban communities. Such wreaths were given exclusively to children and adolescents, who left this world in celibacy due to their premature death. The wreaths were placed on their heads, on their bodies or on coffin lids. The wreaths contained permanent decorative elements, as well as herbs, such as myrtle, rosemary or rue (e.g., Burszta 1967, 184, 191; Krist 1985, 177; Simonides 1988, 137; Bonowska 2003; Petrycka 2003; Tymochowicz 2005, 103; Drażkowska 2007). The elaborate symbolic elements with which these plants are imbued contain numerous references to the reality of the otherworld. These plants are also believed to possess anti-demonic, magical and healing properties (Kowalski 1998, 322-324, 498-502; Szymanderska 2003, 302-303). Thus, although wreathes could protect the dead against demons, they were rather meant to be a symbolic, post-mortem compensation for the lost opportunity to enjoy married life (Bonowska 2003, 126; Petrycka 2003, 25).

It is important to note that researchers of Slavic folklore have shown that in the 19th and the first half of the 20th c. there was a habit of using seeds for anti-demonic purposes – primarily seeds of plants that could easily be acquired in large quantities. In popular understanding, counting such seeds was beyond the intellectual capabilities of an average person, be it due to the abundance of such seeds and the time-consuming nature of such a task, or simply due to limited counting skills. In folk imagination, such plants included poppy above all, but also (to a lesser degree) field mustard. These plants had numerous, tiny seeds, which rendered counting even more difficult. References to other re-

representatives of the local flora are more sporadic. It is also attested to that “restless” dead were given sand grains to count (Barber 1988, 49; see also Bohdanowicz 1999, 103). Poppy seeds could be replaced with sand from the grave pit. This sand was poured into the mouth of the dead (Bohdanowicz 1999, 103).

CONCLUSIONS

The role of seeds and other plant remains in archaeological narratives on so-called anti-vampire burials is either considered marginal or omitted completely, in favour of criteria which are easier to identify in the course of exploration. The information presented in this paper, however, demonstrates the importance of the thorough and accurate exploration of grave pits, including any botanical remains therein. Furthermore, archaeological research that is aimed at examining the flora in cemetery contexts is of importance not only for the analysis of diet in the past, but also for gaining greater insight into the position of the dead in the social structure. Botanical remains are a witness to funeral traditions of the past – traditions that are sometimes not easily understandable to us.

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