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Petr Bogatyrev, Stephen Reynolds, Patricia Ann Krafcik, Bogdan Horbal
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Petr Bogatyrev, Stephen Reynolds, Patricia Ann Krafcik, Bogdan Horbal : Vampires in the Carpathians before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Vampires in the Carpathians:

8 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Rites and beliefs but NOT vampiresBy F. Orion PozoThis book was originally published in French in 1929 with a title that translates as: 'Magical Acts, Rites, and Beliefs in Subcarpathian Rus'. The title Vampires in the Carpathians was added for this 1998 English translation and is really misleading. The last two chapters: "Funerals" and "Apparitions and Supernatural Beings" do make passing references to vampires, but focus mostly on other spirits. So if you are looking for a book on vampires, look elsewhere. What little is said about vampires will be only of interest to the serious scholar who needs to know every possible reference in the literature. The original title, which is the current subtitle, is a much more accurate description of what this book is about. However, Bogatyrev spends over 35 pages talking about his research methodology which he calls the synchronic method. Unless this is what you really want to learn about, I advise you skip the Introduction and Conclusion. His methodology is that he tells us what the ritual means to the people performing it at that time. He does not try to draw inferences back in time or determine origins. He just "tells it like it is" or, in this case, as it was back in the 1920's. What results is very unsatisfying. He tells you a ritual and what it means in village X, then tells you that in village Y they do the same thing, but have no idea why. Then, he relates that in village Z they don't do this at all. He goes through the whole religious calendar relating quaint old customs attached to each religious holiday, then does the same for rituals attached to births, weddings and funerals. We owe this author a debt of gratitude for documenting this snapshot of Carpathian village life. English-speaking folklore scholars will be glad to have access to this work and

Americans of Rusyn descent may finally understand what crazy rituals and customs drove their grandparents to leave this rustic corner of Central Europe for the USA and Canada. On the plus side, this is an excellent translation and the biography of Bogatyrev is engaging. Not for any but the most dedicated readers. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Heavy going but full of odd information. By Unnamed Customer This book is a treasure trove of folklore and customs of the Carpathian Rus. Following the service cycle of the Orthodox Church, the authors discuss the various folk customs associated with each feast as well as marriage, death, etc. The probable origins and variations are discussed as is the intention of the act. It's a great read, but a bit heavy, being written in full blown academic style. For anyone interested in the small traditions of these people, it is invaluable. 11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. When Is a Title Not a Title? By Marc Ruby I'm going to have to confess that I bought this book because of its title. I like to read and review vampire books, and believe that having some background knowledge can add some interest to a review. So I pulled the book down from the shelf, turned to one of the few pages in the book that actually contained the word vampire, and bought it. It was only when I started to read it at home that I discovered that its real title is 'Magical Acts, Rites and Beliefs in Subcarpathian Rus.' The current title is an invention of either the translator's or the publisher. So, starting right out, the book loses a star for pretending it is what it is not. What is it? Petr Bogatyrev was a Russian ethnologist who should have been better known than he is. He was born in 1893 and died in 1971. Among his other accomplishments besides this book is his translation into Russian of Hasek's 'Good Soldier Svejk.' He spent his early academic life studying the folklore and customs of Czechoslovakia, eventually earning an honorary Doctor of Philology for this book. He pursued his career in Russia upon returning, but eventually fell victim to the Stalinist fervor of the times and spent most of his life in obscurity. To our loss, since 'Magical Rites...' reveals a keen and interesting mind. Bogatyrev was an exponent of the synchronic method of ethnography, which he came upon in his linguistic studies. In its essence it was a rebellion against historical ethnography which attempts to trace backward from contemporary studies to discover the original myths and legends as they existed in some prehistorical period of cultural unity. Instead, Bogatyrev believed we should try to study the present legends and belief systems in context in order to understand their contemporary significance. This allows us to understand the 'magical' mechanisms underlying folk practices, categorize them appropriately, and recognize the sources of variation and commonality. This method reminds me most of Mircea Eliade, who uses a similar approach in 'Shamanism' in 1951, albeit with much greater success. The flaw in this method is that the reader is often confronted with a massive catalog of facts, without the kind of organization that makes it easy to see the forest rather than get lost in the trees. Only in isolated paragraphs do we find discussions which gradually bring the material together into a conceptual whole. Often the message is disappointingly trivial. Bogatyrev spends a great deal of time and effort rediscovering Frazer's principles of magic; the law of similarity and the law of contact. But he never muses on his inability to discover examples of the law of opposition, and so leaves his findings in question, or at least, lacking in depth. Since catalogs of Subcarpathian folklore are not common, the book's intrinsic value is greater than its expository worth as a demonstration of methodology. That it belongs on the shelves of ethnographers is without doubt. The exposition is well written. The book is organized into a methodological introduction followed by a large section organized according to the folk calendar. Subsequent chapters discuss births and baptism, weddings, funerals, finally ending with apparitions and supernatural beings. In no case, however, should you buy this in the hope of discovering anything relevant to vampires. They are most definitely not what Bogatyrev was interested in.

Describes in detail the traditions and beliefs of the people of Subcarpathian Rus' - traditions which have been handed down, generation to generation, for hundreds of years. The text discusses the rites of the 14 celebrations in the annual church calendar, from Christmas and the Epiphany to Lent and Easter. There are detailed descriptions of the festivals on the occasions of births, baptisms, weddings and funerals. Also explored are Rusyn beliefs in supernatural beings and accounts of sightings of demons, witches and vampires.

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