

The True Dracula

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Background

The classic origin of Dracula was represented in Bram Stoker's "Dracula" based on the historical figure Vlad Dracul, born in 1431. Vlad was known for his horrendous capital punishment of impaling both his enemies and his own subjects on stakes that passed from the rectum to the head, earning him the nickname "Vlad the Impaler". His father (Vlad Dracul) held the throne twice, playing on both sides of the war. He first secured the throne in alliance with the Hungarians and then later through the Turks. Because of his shifting alliances, he gave his two younger sons, Dracula (aged 12) and Radu (aged 9) to the Turks in 1444 to guarantee he would not side with Hungary again. Dracula's father made sure to keep the older and favorite son, Mircea with him. Coming at an impressionable time in their lives, these experiences took a toll on both boys. Radu became an apprentice to the Turkish Sultan. Dracula understood the dispensability of life and being in constant danger of execution hardened his character. He also learned the various torture techniques of the Turks.

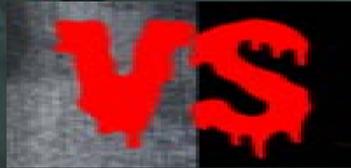


Hero

- He helped unite Wallachia, Moldavia, Romania, and Transylvania
- He followed the order of the Dragon to protect Christianity
- His lore has brought many tourists to Romania
- He influenced popular culture around the world as a character in film, literature, and legend

Research question

How has Vlad the Impaler's identity been shaped throughout history? Was he a hero or a monster and why is he one of the more famous rulers of his time?



Monster

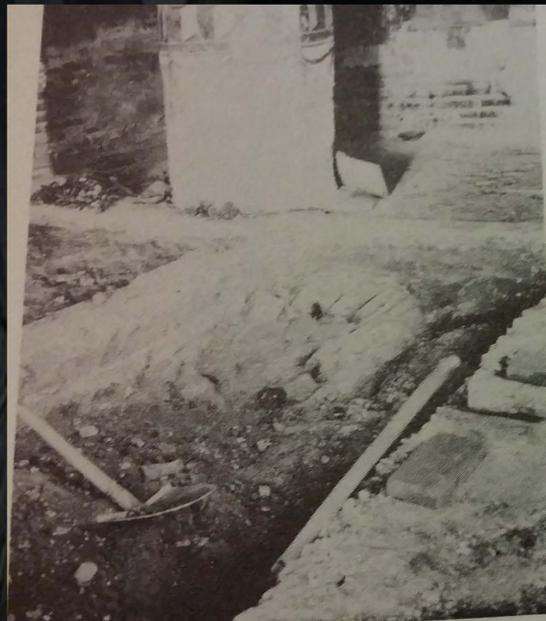
- He tortured people by impaling them
- He tested his subjects loyalty and honesty with games.
- He surrounded his kingdom with enemies and is said to have feasted surrounded by the dead
- Increased tourism brings a disruption to everyday life and culture.
- Was he protecting Christianity or was he siding with whomever could best suit his interest?



Archaeology

Dracula is believed to be buried in the Snagov Monastery. Genealogist George Florescu and archaeologist Dinu Rosetti were assigned by Romania's Commission on Historic Monuments to dig the site. Many bodies were found along with gold & silver coins, which supports the report that Snagov was used to hold Dracula's wealth as well as that of many other later rulers.

- Popular tradition suggests Dracula was buried (without a head) beneath the altar, the traditional place for a prince's burial.
- Only animal bones were present.
- The northern entrance of the church had burial covered by unmarked stone (tombstone) that contained a casket covered with a purple shroud embroidered with gold, a skeleton covered in purple silk brocade similar to that worn by Dracula in the Ambras portrait above. A sleeve had a ring sewn into it, traditionally given by a female admirer
- It includes a mark that is most likely the mark of the Order of the Dragon.
- Buried nearby were what appeared to be the remains of a crown.
- Loss of tangible evidence including a the degradation of the coffin and no true bio-archaeological analysis of the remains complicates the identificaiton



29. Dracula's tomb, excavated in 1931 at Snagov. Photo was taken by George D. Florescu.



28. Photograph of one of the graves opened at Snagov during the early 1930s when excavations were carried out. Snagov Monastery is on an island located about forty miles north of Bucharest. Photo was taken by George D. Florescu, uncle of Radu Florescu, who opened this grave.



Dracula's Desecrated Grave

- In the 17th century Greek monks are reported to have reinterred his remains in the rear of the monastery, removing the portrait and inscription, so that all who enter trample over his remains.
- It is also possible that the burial could have been looted by grave robbers
- The mystery of where Dracula's bones are will require future excavations by archaeologists in order to investigate these claims.

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