

WEREWOLVES A HUNTER'S GUIDE

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Sample file

INTRODUCTION

In 2013, I received an email from Joseph McCullough, the author of *Zombies: A Hunter's Guide*. During the course of writing his book, Joe had been granted unprecedented access to the US Army's 34th Specialist Regiment, nicknamed the Nightmen, and had been approached to compile an official unit history of this remarkable group of men and women. Impressed by what he had seen of my research into the Knights Templar, Joe invited me to collaborate with him on the Nightmen project. Both flattered and intrigued, I agreed and began working on background research.

It was while I was researching the 34th's operations in World War II – in particular, their encounters with the *Werwolf* guerrillas of SS Obergruppenführer Hans-Adolf Prützmann in Cologne and elsewhere – that I first heard of the Tyana Institute. I began with orthodox sources, and made a number of inquiries through contacts in various European universities, but this initial research hit a dead end.

In the interests of the Nightmen project, I should probably have moved on. However, the few snippets of information I had unearthed on the Tyana Institute convinced me that there was more to find. I turned to less orthodox avenues of inquiry, and what I found fully bore out my first instincts. There was a story here, I knew – though what I could not have anticipated was just how many stories there were, and how many different groups were involved. I called Joe, and after looking at my initial findings he agreed to give me time to continue this line of research.

Werewolves are far from unknown. From the Big Bad Wolf of nursery tales to the computer-generated beasts of the movies, they have earned a prominent place in popular culture. Everyone knows that one bite from a werewolf is enough to pass the curse of lycanthropy on to the victim; that the full moon forces them to change shape and surrender their human reason to savage animal passions; that wolfsbane and silver are their only weaknesses. Almost no one knows that there are many forms of lycanthropy, and not all of them are occult in nature.

The following pages tell a few of the stories I have uncovered. There is much work still to be done, many facts to be verified and many more leads and sidetracks to be followed. A definitive treatment of the subject may take a lifetime – perhaps more than one lifetime – and the deeper one delves, the more elusive hard information becomes.



I still hope, one day, to return to the history of the Nightmen. Of course, there is always the chance that when I do, I will stumble upon yet another irresistible side-track. Until then, I offer my thanks to Joe for the email that began this whole journey, to the personnel of the 34th who were unfailingly patient and helpful in answering my questions, and to others – many others – who for various reasons prefer to remain anonymous.

The 17th-century painting *Jupiter and Lycaon* by Jan Cossiers. In the ancient Greek myth, Lycaon decided to test the god Zeus (called Jupiter by the Romans) by serving him human flesh. Zeus punished Lycaon by turning him into a wolf. Many believe that Lycaon was the father of all werewolves and that the original virus can be traced back to him. Others think he is just one more example of a man cursed by dark sorcery.

VIRAL WEREWOLVES

The viral werewolf is sometimes called the “true” or “classic” werewolf. This is the werewolf of movies and literature: active around the full moon; vulnerable to silver; capable of transforming into beast or “wolf man” form; and able to pass on its condition through a bite or scratch. While viral werewolves are not the only werewolves, they are by far the best-known type.

Based on reports dating back to Classical antiquity, scientists believe that viral werewolves originated somewhere in southeastern Europe, in the heavily wooded, mountainous country now occupied by Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and eastern Austria, and stretching southward into the Balkans, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and northern Greece.

In ancient times this form of lycanthropy was mostly confined within the borders of that region, known then as Moesia and Dacia, owing to its remoteness and the lack of significant outside trade. The region’s evil reputation as a haunt of werewolves, vampires, witches, and other monsters also contributed to its isolation.

The area lay largely outside the bounds of the Roman and Byzantine empires, so Classical writers like Pausanias and Pliny the Elder record only occasional rumors of lycanthropy in the area. They make no distinction between these viral lycanthropes and the werewolf cults of southern Greece and Anatolia; to them, all werewolves were alike. However, a few documents from the Roman provinces of Moesia and Dacia contain hints of the truth.

Crassus the Younger, the grandson of Octavian’s colleague-turned-rival, conquered Moesia for Rome in 29–27 BC, subduing an area that covers present-day Serbia, Macedonia, and adjoining parts of Romania and Bulgaria. However, the emperor Augustus denied him the usual honors and titles due to the conqueror of a new province, and it was only after some persuasion that he was even permitted a triumphal procession on his return to Rome. It was rumored that he had become unpredictable following a wound received on the battlefield; the poet Catullus, ever a thorn in the emperor’s side, published a scurrilous verse that had Crassus urinating on his own doorpost and sniffing the backsides of every woman he met. Crude as these images are, they strongly suggest that Crassus had contracted lycanthropy in Moesia. Also interesting is the fact that he produced no natural heirs, adopting the son of the old but declining Piso family.

While most werewolves spend a majority of their time in either human or wolf form, it is the rarer wolf man form that has caught the popular imagination thanks to modern media. Illustration by Hauke Kock.



It was more than a century before the Roman Empire regarded Moesia as stable. In AD 87, the emperor Trajan used it as a springboard for his Dacian campaign, which is recorded on Trajan's Column in Rome. The Dacian Wars dragged on for almost 20 years, and Dacia remained a battleground until it was finally abandoned in AD 275.

Roman exploitation brought Roman administrators, Roman tax-collectors, and Roman merchants into the area, creating more vectors for the spread of lycanthropy across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. In AD 193, the emperor Pertinax used the Praetorian Guard to suppress a cult of Selene Sanguinea ("the Blood Moon") which had arisen in Rome, citing "the great violence of its rites and its profaning of the Lupercalia" (a very ancient Roman festival honoring the she-wolf who had suckled Romulus and Remus). His enemies claimed the move was political, since his predecessor, the notorious