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### Horrifying Characters in the Mythical Universe of the Fairy Tales of the Vaser Valley (Eastern Maramureș)

#### Summary

Horror figures are fear-arousing fantasy products, which occur in mythological tales, but also have a moral function as warning figures for children. In the Wassertal (Water Valley), many horror figures were known, intended to warn children against norm violations. Opposed to them was the guardian angel. In addition to four male figures of terror, the Zipsers from Upper Wischau knew five female horror figures.

For a description of their nature and function, a cultural-historical comparison and the etymology of their names are both useful. Thus the night ghost *Bäbä* or *Baubau* is comparable to the Slovak *Bubu*, the Hungarian *Mumus*, and the winter demon *Krampus*. The *Feuermandl* were said to be spirits of evil-doers. The *Njepesch* goes back to the Polish 'bat' *Nietopierz*. The *Wassermann* has the function of warning playing children about fountains and rivers. The 'owl' called *Buha* derives from the Romanian *buhă* (Latin *buho*) and was regarded as a demonic beast. The origin of the *Momanta* is the Romanian *momâie*, i. e. 'scarecrow'. The designation corresponds to the Greek *mamounas* and the Slovak *matoha*. On the other hand, the dreadful 'scarecrow' *Schecha* corresponds to *skāhhāri* or 'robber' in Old High German, and one should beware of it.