

The Kropemann

Outline:

Luxembourg's horrific version of the bogeyman that lures unwary children to the bottom of the water, the Kropemann is now celebrated as a protective water creature at the Kropemannfest in Redange-sur-Attert.

Text:

While the origins of the Kropemann are lost in antiquity, the story remains essentially the same. Kropemann is an evil water spirit who uses his harpoon (the Kropestaang, in Luxembourgish) to grab unsuspecting children who come too close to a river. He lures them into the water to devour them or force them to work for him. According to the oldest versions of the myth, this bogeyman lives in the river Attert near Redange, in the west of the Grand Duchy. He is usually depicted as a rather small man, with a sneering face, a shaggy beard, tattered clothes and covered with seaweed. He sometimes displays large predatory teeth!

The Luxembourg poet Willy Goergen (1867-1942) composed a poem dedicated to the aquatic spirit. In "De Kropemann" [1], the poet sets him in a well rather than in the river Attert, but the main motivation is unchanged: to present the frightening creature to children to prevent them from venturing near rivers or drowning in wells.

However, this character can also be seen as a guardian of ecology, a protector of the natural landscape of the Attert Valley who knows the value of water. As such, he is the emblem of Redange-sur-Attert, where he is celebrated every year on the last Sunday of September with the Kropemannfest! Visit Redange with the whole family to enjoy activities for children, stroll along and sample various culinary delights, browse craft stands, and of course... meet the Kropemann in person!

[1]

Lurking in the water at the bottom of the well,
what is the Kropemann doing?
He waits with his harpoon
and catches the child who passes by!

What will he do with this child?

Lock him up in his cave

dark, damp and cold.

The cherub would like to come out,

but no matter how much he screams, complains and moans,

he won't see his loving mother again.

Therefore, my sugarloaf

stays away from the deep well,

don't you dare look into it,

otherwise the evil Kropemann will come

to harpoon your toe!

Come quickly, my star!