



Witchcraft

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Monty Python Clip



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrzMhU_4m-g

History of Witchcraft

- The liberal tradition: There really were no actual witches, but the concept was a product of overactive ecclesiastical fears.
- The Margaret Murray tradition: European witchcraft was an ancient fertility religion based on worship of the horned god Dianus.
- The social history view: The social pattern of witch accusations is more important than actual study of witches, if any existed.
- History of ideas school: Witchcraft is a composite of concepts gradually developed over the centuries.

<http://www2.kenyon.edu/projects/margin/witch.htm>

Theories of the Origin of Witchcraft

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 - There really were no actual witches, but the concept was a product of overactive ecclesiastical fears.
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How did one become a witch?

- Healers passed the gift from mother to daughter
- One was too weak to fight the devil's influence
 - Witches tended to be women because women were weaker than men



Matteuccia Francisci

- Tried in Todi in 1428 for magic
- Taught people to cure illness by taking the bone of an unbaptized baby out to the cross road, burying it, and saying prayers over it for nine days
- Could counteract curses and transfer ailments
- Specialty was love magic
 - Women used her love potions to arouse men's affections

Types of Magic

- Natural Magic-
 - Also referred to as white magic
 - Not from the devil
 - A branch of science
 - Wolfsthurn handbook
 - Dealt with “occult virtues” and hidden powers with in nature
- Demonic Magic-
 - Also referred to as black magic
 - Perversion of religion
 - Religion that turned away from God and towards demons for help in human affairs
 - Munich manuscript

Sorcerers used a mixture of potions, charms and amulets alongside a ritual.

Divination and Astrology



- A means for knowing a foretold destiny.
- There are different types of divination
 - Oneiromancy- Interpretation of dreams
 - Chiromancers- palm readers
- Also scientific astrology in which someone would study the stars and zodiacs
 - Commonly known as astrology

Charms and Talismans

Types of Charms

1. Prayers in the form of a request
 - addressed to God
2. Blessings in the form of wishes
 - addressed to the patient
3. Adjurations or exorcisms in the form of commands
 - addressed to the sickness or demon

Amulets and Talismans

- protective magic
- Amulets are objects that protect individuals
 - EX.-wearing a hares foot attached to your left arm will allow you to go anywhere without harm
- Talismans are objects with written words on them
 - Serve the same purpose as talismans

Some Uses of Spells and Charms

- Heal wounds
- Protect against animal attacks
- Cure ailments (physical or spiritual)
- Help with childbirth
- Decrease chances of a miscarriage
- Increase the fertility in soil
- Control the weather
- Recover stolen goods
- Call down a swarm of bees

Herbs

- Healers used more trial and error methods of healing than theoretical
- There was a system to gathering and mixing herbs
- There were certain taboos about preparation of the ingredients such as how and when
- Ingredients were chosen because of their properties or what they represented
- Position of the planets influenced the herbal medicine.

Herbs
Many Wise Women had a knowledge of herbal medicine. Yarrow was used to stop bleeding and the root of the plant of yew was used to make a poison. Sage was made into a brew to cure stomach aches. Turpentine was used to cure rheumatism. A young girl who was blind was cured with a special herb. A woman was said to have been cured of a disease by a herb which was found in a field.

Green Witch
The words of magic are said to be spoken by a witch.

Some Charms and Herbs

- **Acorn** - fertility. May simply be carried as an amulet to enhance fertility powers.
- **Belladonna** - Historically used by Italian women to dilate the pupils to draw attention to the eyes, making them more beautiful, also used in poisons
- **Celery Seed** - use to enhance psychic powers and to bring prophetic dreams.
- **Garlic** - magical powers against evil
- **Juniper** - strengthens the mind, health, spell casting, drives away evil spirits and disease, to increase virility in men, enhance sensuality in women, and to attract physical love
- **Mandrake Root** - used for troubled eyes, wounds, snakebites, earaches, gout and baldness
- **Tarragon** - energy, good luck in all matters

Christianized witchcraft

- Monks practiced magic through copying texts about medicinal herbs and having to learn about herbs in medicine
- Could use mandrake or charms to chase away elves causing sickness
- Parish priests had to have medical knowledge

Punishment

- Being accused of witchcraft in the Middle Ages meant being labeled as a heretic. If accused of witchcraft, the accused was forced to confess, even if he was innocent, through brutal torture. Then he was hanged or burnt alive for his crimes.
- Laws against witchcraft were further tightened when they began to be used for personal vendettas against the accused or in order to gain property of the accused.
- The accusations were arranged by influential persons in society or the clergy who would bring about the suspicions against those they wanted to target. They then arrested their victims, made them confess, and executed them.
- Almost 80% of those accused of witchcraft were women.
- In some cases, the clergy were genuinely concerned about the souls of those they were executing. As such, they chose to burn the so-called “witches” alive in order to save them.



Modern Day Accounts

Indian villagers arrested over 'heinous' witchcraft murder

Posted Sun 9 Jun 2013, 12:13pm AEST

At least 18 tribal villagers have been arrested in India for allegedly killing a man they suspected of practising witchcraft.

The villagers reportedly said they killed the 55-year-old man to appease a Hindu goddess who appeared in their dreams.

Local police chief Diganta Bora described the attack, in Assam's Cachar district, as "barbaric".

"A group of hysterical villagers sacrificing the man by piercing his neck with sharp weapons and chanting religious hymns," he said.

"Most of the people were drunk and dancing with the dead body in front of them and later they buried him a pit.

RELATED STORY: [UN demands action to stop sorcery-related violence](#)

RELATED STORY: [Indian mob lynches family for 'witchcraft'](#)

MAP: [India](#)



Sources

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