

Witchcraft

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Classification of Paganism

- By the 20th century, people engaged in religious activities not associated with an organized religion began to call themselves pagan.
- **Neopagan** religions are modern versions of pre-Christian religions that focus on the supremacy and unity of nature in spirituality. Wicca, neo-Druidism, and Heathenry are examples.
- **Paleopagan** religions are modern versions of the ancient Greek, Roman, and other polytheistic national faiths.
- **Mesopagan** religions range from African-diasporic faiths to New Age groups. Another way to categorize pagan religions is by primary traits. Polytheistic religions honor many divine beings, nature-based religions see nature and supreme, not fallen as Christians do. Sacred feminine beliefs use the concept of a female goddess to join or replace a male god.

Zodiac Talisman



Witchcraft History

- Traditionally, men with magic were considered Shamans who helped the community. Women with magic were considered witches who hurt the community.
- As a result, 80-85% of those accused of witchcraft were women from 1550 to 1650. Women were far more likely to be punished for their “magic”.
- Women were considered weaker, more emotional, and less likely to give in to the devil than men.
- Marginalized women (single, elderly, diseased) were more likely to be accused but any woman could be.



Five Common Beliefs on Witchcraft (1)

- A witch causes harm by uncanny means.
- Her power is supernatural. It may work whether or not it acts deliberately and whether or not she knows about it. Some believe that spirits in witches can use her power while she sleeps.
- A witch is an internal threat against her own community. Magic to harm outsiders was not necessarily frowned upon. In fact, Amazon, Siberian, Australian, and Melanesian societies used groups of magicians to attack enemies.
- The efficacy of witchcraft is directly proportional to the closeness between witch and victim.
- In some peoples, witchcraft was used by leaders to punish those with whom they disliked.

Five Common Beliefs to Witchcraft (2)

- The witch works within a tradition. Powers of witchcraft were believed to have been acquired through inheritance or initiation. Magical items are important, but not necessary with some witches.
- The witch is evil. It was seen as immoral and often thought to involve communion with evil beings.
- Witchcraft could be thwarted by defensive magic, persuasion, intimidation, or physical punishment of the alleged witch.



Accusations of Witchcraft

- Accusations from neighbors with whom you have had conflict.
- Injuries, or diseases that come on rapidly or dissipate slowly.
- Impotence in men and infertility in women.
- Death, sickness, or poor performance by animals (cows not giving milk).
- A person was caught in the act of positive or negative sorcery.
- A well-meaning sorcerer or healer lost their clients' or the authorities' trust.
- A person did nothing more than gain the enmity of their neighbors.
- A person was reputed to be a witch and surrounded with an aura of witch-beliefs or occultism.

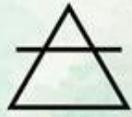
Witchcraft Symbols



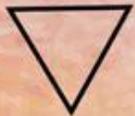
earth



fire



air



water



Ankh



Circle



Celtic Knot



Eye of Horus



Pentacle



The
Horned
God



All-Seeing
Eye



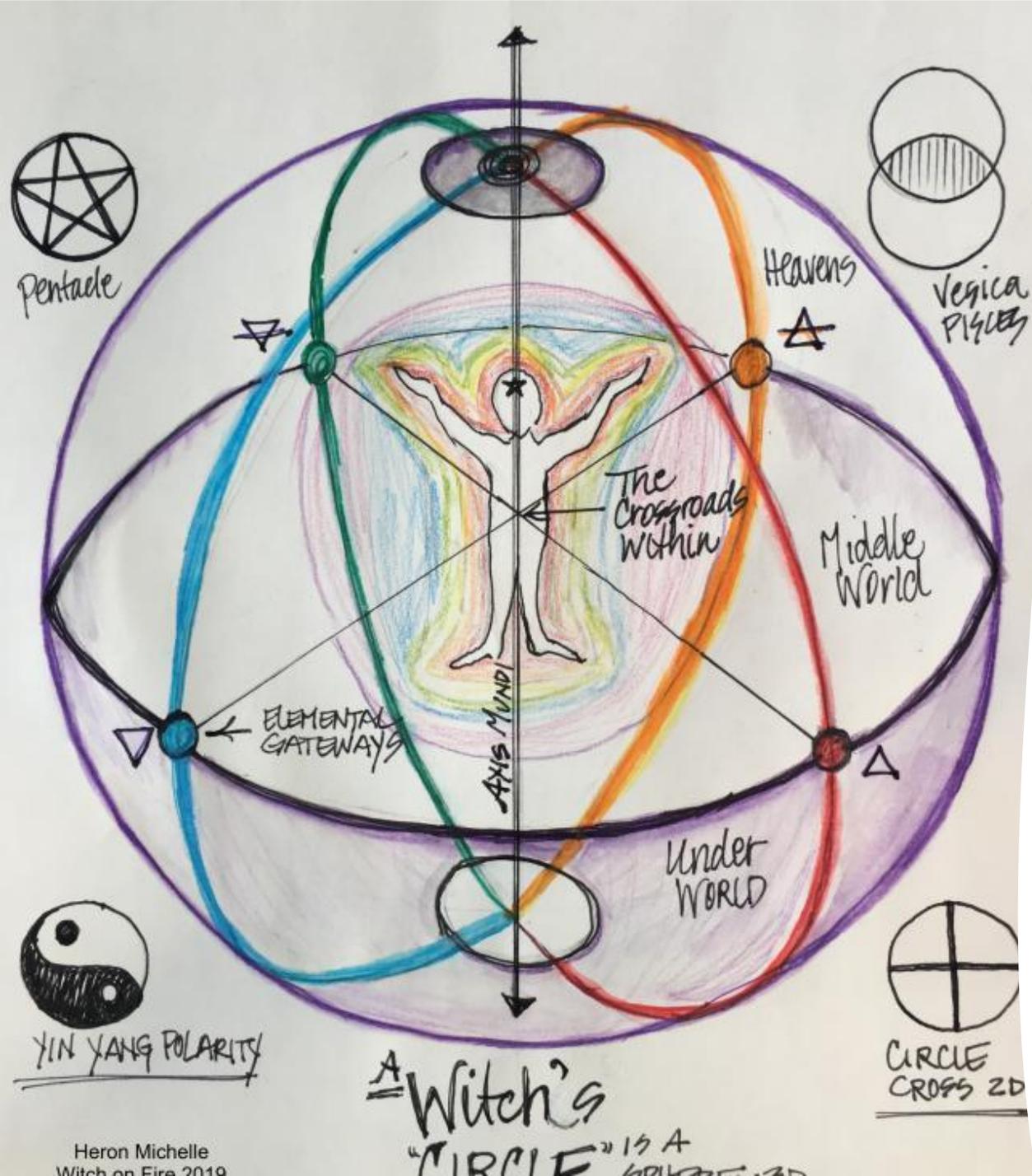
Hecate's
Wheel

www.wiccanow.com

Witchcraft Symbols

Techniques of Witches

- Verbal actions like curses, spells, chants, and repeating words
- Objects like wax or clay images, herbs.
- Body parts of animals or humans.
- Substances to make potions or poisons.
- Using something belonging to a victim like hair or nail clippings.
- Work at night, alone or with a group.
- Necromancy for prophecy or divination.
- Witches use knives (athames), pentagrams, and herbs in their ceremonies.
- Rosemary is thought to be protective.
- Beltane is a common festival in witchcraft.
- It is uncommon for witches to practice astrology.



The Witches' Circle

- Resembles the Native American World Tree
- Interesting how different traditions take from each other

A Modest Enquiry
Into the Nature of
Witchcraft,

A N D

How Persons Guilty of that Crime
may be *Convicted*: And the means
used for their Discovery Discussed,
both *Negatively* and *Affirmatively*,

An
archival
article on
witchcraft

Who Believes in Witches? (1)

- A 2022 study found that of more than 140,000 people in 95 countries examined, over 40% believed in witchcraft.
- Ranging from 9% in Western Europe and the United States to 90% in parts of Africa.
- Risk factors for a higher belief in witches
 - Countries with weak institutions and poor quality of governance.
 - Countries with high levels of cultural conformity.
 - Low levels of trust in a society, especially with high levels of antisocial behavior.

Who Believes in Witches? (2)

- Lower levels of life satisfaction, diminished sense of control, less self-efficacy, and more fatalism.
- Poor creative culture and innovation
- Intermediate economic development. Very high or very low economic development is correlated with a lower belief in witchcraft.
- Personal misfortunes such as unemployment and group misfortunes such as drought and famine increase belief in witchcraft.



Who Believes in Witches? (3)

- Demographically, people who are younger, female, undereducated, in a bad economic situation, Muslim, and very religious, are more likely to believe in witchcraft.
- Lack of societal cohesion, mistrust of out-groups, stress, diminished cooperation, a zero-sum mindset, and a pessimistic worldview are associated with higher levels of belief in witchcraft.
- Witchcraft belief and practice is extremely common in people who identify as lesbian, homosexual queer, transgender, radical feminist and far left.
- Societies have used a variety of methods to decrease witchcraft. Laws tend not to work, as the very existence of a law makes people more likely to believe in witchcraft and consider it a bigger threat.

Witchcraft



Example of Modern Witchcraft

- “A Spell to Bind Donald Trump and All Those Who Abet Him (2016).”
- To bind someone in witchcraft is to make them powerless to do harm, with harm defined as whatever the spellcaster thinks harm is. Practitioners cast spells and extensively used social media to publicize their actions and resistance to Trump, whom they did not wish to name. Even more, they denied the humanity of Trump and his supporters, calling them “it” and reducing them to demon status.

Witches attack Trump

The Magic Resistance
Needs You

IN THE NAME
OF JUSTICE
AND LIBERTY

AND LOVE
AND EQUALITY
AND PEACE

TO BIND DONALD TRUMP & ALL THOSE WHO ABET HIM



BIND THEM
IN CHAINS
BIND THEIR
TONGUES

BIND THEIR
WORKS
BIND THEIR
WICKEDNESS

TUESDAY APRIL 21, 2020
11:59 PM (ET)
#MAGICRESISTANCE #BINDTRUMP

Example of Modern Witchcraft (2)

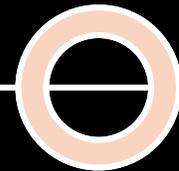
- In their spells and other activities, witches used “biblical language (strike, vanity, loins), Puritan-era witchcraft-related language (malignant, wickedness, thrice), and American political documents such as the Declaration of Independence (polity).”[4] They expanded their venom to the “heteronormative, White, patriarchy,” but were forced to use the language of the “patriarchy” (Biblical, Puritan, Democratic) to do it. Conservatives organized counterprotest groups, especially prayer groups, which gave conservatives something to do but legitimized the perceived power of the witches.

Witchcraft Today

- Overwhelming women participate in modern witchcraft/wicca.
- Witchcraft is associated with women's rights and the feminist movement.

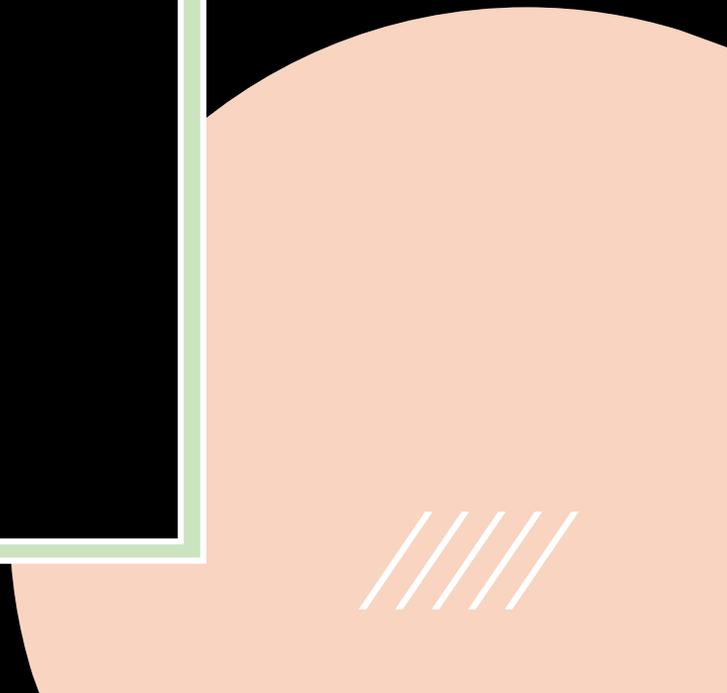
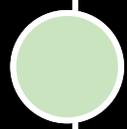


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Conclusion

Discussion



References

- H. Wayne House, Charts of World Religions, Zondervan, 2006