

*The Witch-Cult
in Western Europe*



Margaret Alice Murray

**Witch Cult in Western Europe: A Study in
Anthropology**

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Witch Cult in Western Europe: A Study in Anthropology Details

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From Reader Review Witch Cult in Western Europe: A Study in Anthropology for online ebook

Andreea says

Interesting and very pleasant.

Loree Iverson says

Interesting!

Alexandra Chauran says

A little slice of history. I wish I could see this literature study redone with better scholarship.

Bri Fidelity says

Thoroughly unconvincing as actual history, and thoroughly entertaining as an exercise in world-building. I only wish Murray hadn't left such great swathes of her source material in its original Ye Olde French.

Tepintzin says

I was only reading this because of its being so influential. I couldn't finish. Despite the subject matter, it was agonizingly boring. Yes, even though I speak French.

Ryan says

This book is written by Anthropologist Margaret Murray to outline the survival, beliefs, and rituals of a pre-Christian witchcraft-centric "old religion." Unfortunately Murray subjectively interpreted the confessions of witch trials and manipulated and cited her findings out of context to support her theory of an old pre-Christian religion based around a horned god and a goddess that survived the persecution of witch trials in Europe. While her work is not accepted by modern historians, Murray's thesis has had great influence in the modern perception of the witch and has led to the beliefs and practices of newer neopagan religions, especially including Gerald Gardner's Wicca. The value in this book is not that it is historically accurate, but rather as a starting point of which to understand where much of the source material for modern day Pagan religions draw from.

Patrick Walker says

A bit dry...

Molly says

This was a superb book! Finally reading it gave me perspective on not only the controversial issues it touches on (the possibility of a real, widespread survival of pre-Christian Paganism and its suppression during the Witch Hunts), but also the controversy which has surrounded the book itself since its publication.

Personally, I believe Murray's work to have been treated with undue criticism, then and now. Though this book has gained more respectability in recent times, the scoffing that went up around it tarnished not only the worthy parts of it but Murray's reputation in general. When reading it, I saw many excellent ideas fleshed out with substantial evidence for support. She shows her work with extensive annotations for all the transcripts and quotes used. Yes, sometimes she did speculate, but she was always clear that it **was** speculation. If a reader desired another viewpoint, all the evidence was there for him/her to make one.

From a personal perspective: Reading the exact words of the accused and the way many spoke so passionately about their beliefs was heartening. I think a lot of us have the image of tortured souls saying any wild thing that came to mind to appease the Inquisitors. That was not always the case. Many of the quotes (especially by the wonderfully bold Isobel Gowdie) showed fearlessness, honesty, and the kind of bluntness only possible with a person who doesn't see anything shameful in their actions. Despite the tragic end of many who are quoted, I salute their efforts. I am proud to carry on the tradition of this attitude in my own practice, whether or not a person believes the victims of the Witch Hunts to be fellow witches.

As for the tone of the book, it varies between slightly dry and absolutely riveting. I like my books meaty so I was well satisfied with this one. Prepare yourself, however, for text in French, German, and a smattering of Latin. In my edition, there were no translations for these parts (I am unsure if other editions might have remedied this). Happily, the surrounding text often sums up these quotes for we English speakers.

Allison says

It's a good source for quotes and starting points for further research, as it is well-organized and -categorized alongside being at least two-thirds direct quotes and passages. But it is fairly difficult to read. The quotes are not translated, so you see: Middle English, non-standardized Early Modern English, Scotch, French (Early Modern?), and German (I do not know German, so I can't guess what period of the language). You also get to read Us as Vs and Js as Is. Otherwise, I find this subject very interesting and appreciate that Murray approaches it as an actual historical cult rather than a bunch of people's corroborating flights of fancy.
