



God of the Witches

By Dr. Margaret Alice Murray

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God of the Witches By Dr. Margaret Alice Murray

"An important and fascinating book."--New Statesman and Nation

"A book of absorbing interest."--Psychic News

This celebrated study of witchcraft in Europe traces the worship of the pre-Christian and prehistoric Horned God from paleolithic times to the medieval period. Murray, the first to turn a scholarly eye on the mysteries of witchcraft, enables us to see its existence in the Middle Ages not as an isolated and terrifying phenomenon, but as the survival of a religion nearly as old as humankind itself, whose devotees held passionately to a view of life threatened by an alien creed. The findings she sets forth, once thought of as provocative and implausible, are now regarded as irrefutable by folklorists and scholars in related fields. Exploring the rites and ceremonies associated with witchcraft, Murray establishes the concept of the "dying god"--the priest-king who was ritually killed to ensure the country and its people a continuity of fertility and strength. In this light, she considers such figures as Thomas a Becket, Joan of Arc, and Gilles de Rais as spiritual leaders whose deaths were ritually imposed. Truly a classic work of anthropology, and written in a clear, accessible style that anyone can enjoy, *The God of the Witches* forces us to reevaluate our thoughts about an ancient and vital religion.

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Editorial Review

Review

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About the Author

Margaret Alice Murray (13 July 1863 - 13 November 1963) was a prominent British Egyptologist and anthropologist. Primarily known for her work in Egyptology, which was "the core of her academic career," she is also known for her propagation of the Witch-cult hypothesis, the theory that the witch trials in the Early Modern period of Christianized Europe and North America were an attempt to extinguish a surviving pre-Christian, pagan religion devoted to a Horned God. Whilst this theory is today widely disputed and discredited by historians like Norman Cohn, Keith Thomas and Ronald Hutton, it has had a significant effect in the origins of Neopagan religions, primarily Wicca, a faith she supported. Her work in Egyptology took place largely alongside her mentor and friend, the archaeologist Sir Flinders Petrie, whom she worked alongside at University College London. One of the earliest women to "make a serious impact upon the world of professional scholarship," she was also an ardent feminist, being actively involved in the Suffragette movement. From 1953 to 1955, she was the president of the Folklore Society, although since her death various members of the society have attempted to dissociate the organization from her and the Murrayite theory of the Witch-Cult.

Users Review

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