



Issue 40

Spring 2024

Interview with Witch Hunt podcast

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This issue we interviewed Josh Hutchinson and Sarah Jack, hosts of the *Witch Hunt* podcast. *Witch Hunt* delves into the societal, religious, and psychological factors that fuelled historical witch-hunts, while also shining a light on the persistent scourge of witchcraft-related violence in the modern world. Through interviews with historians, lawyers, and witchcraft advocates, Sarah and Josh pursue two central questions: how and why do we hunt witches? *Witch Hunt* can be found on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and all other major podcast platforms.

What is the genesis of Witch Hunt?

Sarah: Our podcast was created to spark a dialogue that both educated and integrated perspectives from many facets of insight within the context of witch hunting. I am gratified to see it achieving our goal and fostering a vibrant community.

Josh: *Witch Hunt* began as *Thou Shalt Not Suffer: The Witch Trial Podcast*, which was initially created to promote the Connecticut Witch Trial Exoneration Project's efforts to exonerate those accused of witchcraft in colonial Connecticut. At first, the podcast focused on witch trials in and near Connecticut. However, the show has since expanded its reach to include historic witch trials from around the world, as well as modern-day cases where witchcraft accusations result in violence against innocent persons accused of sorcery and witchcraft.

What is your family connection to historical victims of witchcraft accusations? How have your local communities dealt with this history?

Sarah: I am directly descended from four great-grandmothers who faced trials in New England. Sisters Rebecca Nurse and Mary Esty, my 9th great-grandmothers, were tragically executed by hanging during the Salem witch trials. A decade before Salem, my 10th great-grandmother, Mary Hale, was tried in Boston but fortunately acquitted. Her daughter, Winifred Benham, my 9th great-grandmother, was involved in Hartford, Connecticut's last witch trial, occurring five years after Salem. Alongside her daughter, Winifred Jr., they faced accusations but were ultimately

acquitted, concluding this grim chapter in my family's history and the era of formal witch trials in the American Colonies. I was raised in the Midwestern United States, as over generations, my ancestral lines dispersed from New England and ventured into the frontier. I am living in a part of the Western United States where there is not a history of witchcraft trials. There is some witchcraft trial history in the South Western United States, and that's a history we will feature on Witch Hunt soon.

Josh: I first learned of my family connections on a family trip to my grandfather's hometown of Danvers, Massachusetts, which I learned was formerly Salem Village. At the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, I saw my name, or something very close to it, on a monument honouring those who defended Rebecca Nurse during her witchcraft trial. One name on the stone marker read, 'Jos'h Hutchinson', which I first took for Josh Hutchinson but turned out to be the name of my 10th great-grandfather, Joseph Hutchinson. That first family link led me into genealogy, and I soon learned I was descended from Rebecca Nurse's sister, Mary Esty. Since then, I've found dozens more connections to people on both sides of the accusations. I have never lived in a community directly affected by witchcraft trials, but I can say that Salem has definitely embraced its occult heritage and the title 'Witch City', with numerous museums and other attractions featuring witch trial history and lore. More recently, Salem has become the Halloween Capital of the World with its month-long Haunted Happenings celebration.

What can communities and governments do to better commemorate historical victims of witchcraft accusations?

Sarah: I appreciate Josh's response, and I'd like to further stress that communities and governments should focus more on highlighting the innocence of the victims and differentiating between fact and folklore. It's important to enjoy local legends while ensuring the humanity of the victims is emphasised. The women who were executed were daughters, sisters, mothers.

We should prioritise their true stories over the myths that surround them. Furthermore, there are still names that need to be cleared; these victims cannot be fully honoured until formal apologies are issued.

Josh: Create memorials that lead people in some way to seek more information, and have that information available online and in local museums and historical societies. Use these traumatic historical events to educate people about the fact that witch-hunts have actually not stopped but simply left the court system, replaced by extrajudicial violence, which results in widespread trauma today. Lead visitors to pause and reflect upon the events and the lessons to be learned, such as never to let fear change who we are.

What is your role in the Connecticut Witch Trial Exoneration Project?

Sarah: As a descendant of Winifred Benham, who faced witchcraft charges in Hartford, Connecticut, I aimed to use my social media reach to unite other descendants and supporters to collaboratively highlight the history, seek exoneration, and achieve state-level recognition and memorialization. This personal initiative led me to connect with the four other co-founders. Once united, we bolstered our social media communities together and prioritised forming additional partnerships to propel our cause. I had the privilege of presenting testimony before the Joint Committee on the Judiciary during the hearing for our proposed bill. Additionally, the five co-founders actively engage in presentations and interviews whenever possible, continuing our mission to educate the public. Despite being out of state, I actively support efforts to commemorate Connecticut's witch trial history in local communities. My passion for bringing people together for a common purpose is a role I continue to embrace and in part what drove me to register our nonprofit End Witch Hunts.

Josh: I am one of the 5 co-founders, with Sarah, Mary-Louise Bingham, Beth Caruso, and Tony Griego. I have served as social media manager, technical expert, and guiding hand. I synthesised our project goals and what we were looking to get out of the legislation. I also interacted with the media and created our own podcast.

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Volume 18 issue 2 (Fall 2023)

Now on Project Muse

Special Issue on Borrowing, Accommodation, Contestation: Religious Practices and Ritual Creativity in Contemporary Vietnam

Guest editors: Nguyễn Thị Hiền and Laurel Kendall

ARTICLES

Introduction: *Borrowing, Accommodation, Contestation: Religious Practices and Ritual Creativity in Contemporary Vietnam*

NGUYỄN THỊ HIỀN and LAUREL KENDALL

Borrowing and Borrowing Back: The Mother Goddess Religion in the Northern Mountains of Vietnam

NGUYỄN THỊ HIỀN and VŨ HỒNG THUẬT

A Hospital of Ritual Healing: Creativity, Empowerment, and Discipleship

MAI THI HẠNH

Logistics and Legitimation: Religious Pluralism in the Bà Tower, Nha Trang City, Vietnam

HOÀNG CẦM, and NGUYỄN THỊ HIỀN

Inculturation and Hegemony: The Case of Quan Âm Nam Hải (Guanyin of the Southern Sea)

TRẦN THỊ AN

Inculturation and Symbiosis Through Ritual Practice: Catholic Funerals in the Northern Delta of Viet Nam

LÊ THỊ CÚC

*“We know only our Po Then Luang”:
Heritagization, religious inculturation and
resistance in post - đổi mới Vietnam*

HOÀNG CẦM

Vol 18, issue 3 (Winter 2023)

Forthcoming soon

ARTICLES

Epigraphy, Image, and Material: The Strategic Power of the Word “and” on Byzantine Uterine Amulets

JACQUELYN TUERK-STONBERG with
JORDAN BARDZIK

*Fāṭima, the Righteous Sorceress, and Ibn ‘Arabī’s
Notions of Magic and Miracles*
DUNJA RAŠIĆ

*“Donne moy ce crochet que j’arrache le reste!”:
Witchcraft and Gender-Based Violence in the Poetry
of Pierre de Ronsard, Agrippa d’Aubigné, and
Mathurin Régnier*
RYAN J. EVELYN

*Materia Magica. Book II of the Sacred Magic of
Abramelin the Mage: An English Translation Based on
a Newly Discovered Manuscript*
STEWART CLELLAND and PAUL FERGUSON



Visualising Ancient Magic

Time: March 4 – May 31, 2024

Place: Combined Classics Library
Institute of Classical Studies, University of London
3rd floor, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU

Entry: free

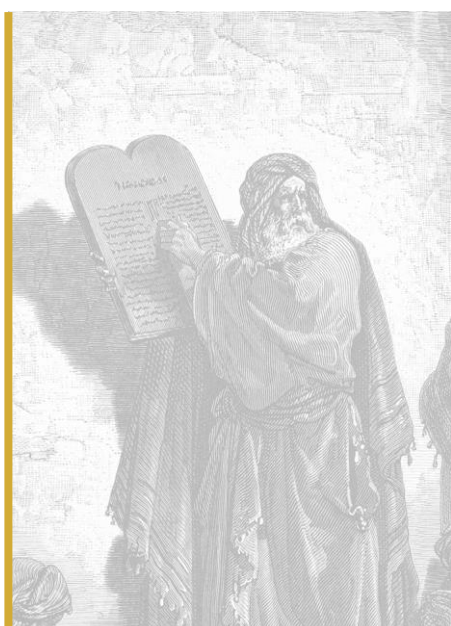
Authors: Nicole Iu, Gabriel Bodard

This temporary exhibit curated by two experts in Greco-Roman magical text and ritual explores transgressive and marginal ritual practice in ancient mythology, literature, art, history, archaeology and theory. We will show examples and images of magical scenes, including 3D printed replicas, rare books from the Classics Library special collections, and notes giving translations, analysis and commentary. Four



exhibition cases will be divided into: Mythology and art; Polemic and accusation; Texts; Objects and recipes. The artefacts and texts included in this exhibit are meant to illustrate some of the characteristics of magic as conceived in antiquity, such as subversive behaviour, representations of ‘the Other,’ and secret and arcane knowledge. As a result, these rituals also demonstrate the ongoing negotiation between private, magical ritual and public, civic religion and tradition.

Learn about ancient magical practice and stereotype, see the evidence for yourself, and catch a glimpse of the scholarship, old and new, on the ancient supernatural and occult.



Call for essays for future newsletters

We invite proposals for essays to run in future issues of the newsletter. We are looking for short essays (1500-2500 words) announcing new developments deriving from research in the study and teaching of magic and its related topics. We are interested in relevant articles dealing with all regions and time periods.

We are also looking for smaller pieces, such as interviews or announcements for our notes and queries column. News about dissertations in progress or completed, manuscript discoveries, or other such items are welcomed.

Send your proposals to the editors at
newsletters@societasmagica.org

Cont'd from page 2

Some historians, such as Jan Machielsen in [The Conversation](#), have expressed concern about state-issued apologies for witch hunting and convictions. If the purpose of an official apology is to primarily pin blame for witch-hunts on the state, then does this ignore the role that communities and ordinary people played in this process?

Sarah: An official apology holds significant power when issued by an authoritative body. This is crucial due to the contemporary violence associated with witchcraft accusations. I don't see the objective as assigning blame, but as taking a firm role-modelling stance. Historical justice should be pursued by governments through actionable responses to past injustices, ensuring that justice is served in similar situations we encounter today.

Josh: I remember reading this article when it came out and noting that the author's opposition is not particularly strong. However, many historians have supported our efforts and provided testimony to the state legislatures. These apologies are useful opportunities to call out the mistakes of the past and share important lessons, such as not to allow fear to change who we are or how we proceed in difficult times. Further, Leo Igwe of Advocacy for Alleged Witches addressed the Connecticut state legislature the week before the resolution passed. He stated his strong desire to see the resolution adopted, due to the impact it may have on other nations, where witch-hunting is not a thing of the past.

Why is witch hunting and witchcraft-related violence still ongoing in the 21st century? What countries are the worst offenders on this issue?

WH: According to a study by economist Boris Gerhsman, roughly 40% of the people of the world believe that some people have the ability to do harm through spells, curses, or the evil eye. In many nations, this belief is held by a majority of the populace. This belief causes believers to experience acutely high levels of fear when they think a witch is at work. Experiencing these high levels of fear leads many people to react with great anger. Rage becomes violence, and innocent people are blamed for negative experiences, like the loss of a loved one or the loss of agricultural output. I hesitate to say that any nation is a worse offender than another. Going by numbers of cases, India, Papua New Guinea, and Nigeria lead the way. Going by the level of state sponsorship, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan stand out as states where witchcraft and sorcery are illegal and prosecuted in court.

Are the UN and other international agencies doing enough to combat modern witch-hunting? What strategies are in place?

WH: The United Nations has done well to begin to address this issue by defining Harmful Practices Related to Accusations of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks, but much more work needs to be done. Many funds, programmes and specialised agencies within the UN system are in positions to address the crisis and support local advocacies and rescue/recovery organizations. In recent months, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has taken an interest in including Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence (SARV) in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for nations such as PNG, and the United States has issued similar guidance to its own agencies assisting PNG with its SDGs. However, the International Court of Justice or the International Criminal Court needs to take up a case of SARV or Harmful Practice. Further, many agencies are under obligations presented by the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and other international agreements to protect everyone's inherent rights to life and dignity. The Human Rights Council and the International Law Commission are obligated to intervene. Due to the misogyny involved in witch-hunting, the majority of victims are men (in most places but not all). Therefore, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-WOMEN) and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) need to get involved in prevention of Harmful Practices as a form of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Other agencies like UNICEF could advance awareness of the issue and advocate for the application of national working plans to address Harmful Practices by Member States.

- Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children (SRSG/VAC) should be acting in defence of the mass numbers of children accused of witchcraft and kicked out of their homes or abused. The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) even has a stake, as climate change triggers natural disasters, leading to economic crises and climate refugeeism, which in turn fuel Harmful Practices, due to the human need to assign blame.

- The World Health Organization (WHO) should address one of the major problems underlying the epidemic of Harmful Practices, lack of basic medical knowledge among many actors of these practices. This lack of essential knowledge often results in persons being unable to explain natural medical conditions and deaths by natural causes, leading many to seek alternative explanations, including witchcraft and sorcery.
 - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) can encourage educators to teach that when bad things happen, there are explanations other than witchcraft.
 - 2026 is the UN's International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development. Perhaps by then, a broader coalition of NGOs will participate in anti-witch-hunt volunteerism.
- NGOs like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Committee of the Red Cross need to step up to the plate and include Harmful Practices in their messaging to the public. Others, such as women's rights advocates, child safety advocates, groups that promote eldercare and senior rights, advocacies against gender-based violence, and many others, have their own special interests in joining the effort to end Harmful Practices, as vulnerable persons are the most targeted.

What can individuals do to combat modern witch-hunting?

Sarah: Discuss human rights and dignity. Take a stand against violence directed at women, children, the elderly, and the vulnerable. Support initiatives that advocate for victims. Ask leaders in your community and country to get involved.

Josh: Help raise awareness of modern witch-hunting. Talk to your friends and family. Post on social media.

What can the Catholic Church and other denominations do to combat modern witch-hunting?

Sarah: I aspire for the universal value of human dignity to be embraced to such an extent that the notion of hunting witches becomes obsolete. Religious, spiritual, and governmental entities that partake in or tolerate witch hunts and contribute to this form of violence have fundamentally disregarded the intrinsic dignity of every individual. By upholding the principle of innocence until proven guilty, we can ensure that our vulnerable community members, including children and the elderly, are not unjustly labelled as supernatural threats.

Josh: All religious and spiritual bodies should denounce Harmful Practices and teach leaders and members not to accuse others of witchcraft or perform rites which endanger the life, liberty, or other rights of any individual.

Is witchcraft-related violence an issue in western countries?

Sarah: Societal indifference plays a role. This widespread pattern of being uninformed or misinformed, combined with our culture's sensationalization of the supernatural, fuels fear of witchcraft and diminishes the humanity of those who are feared. The scapegoated individuals labelled as witches causing harm are dehumanised, despite being our loved ones and friends.

Josh: Yes, for two reasons. Witchcraft belief is endemic to all nations of the world. In the era of global travel and migration, there is also a great deal of cross-cultural exchange in the present moment. Further, immigrants from non-western countries bring their own beliefs when they relocate to the West.

What is your view on the 20th/21st century pagan witchcraft movement?

Sarah: Those who have faced persecution have laid a vital foundation for future generations, navigating their struggles to pave the way forward. I look forward to a shift where the fear and stigmatization of the witchcraft movement wanes, driven by a more informed public perspective, fostered by the active engagement and education from communities sharing about their witchcraft practices.

Josh: The neopagans I have met are compassionate individuals with respect for the dignity of other people. I welcome the movement and the new definitions of 'witch' and 'witchcraft.' Our organization does not desire to change anyone's beliefs. Rather, we focus on addressing negative outcomes that arise from traditional beliefs about witchcraft as a form of evil. I believe 'Witches' with a capital 'W' have a stake in this, as well. If the neopagan movement wishes to reclaim the word 'witch,' it will help for members to address these negative beliefs and raise awareness of the goodness of the new definition of 'Witch.'

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Private Material Religion across Cultures

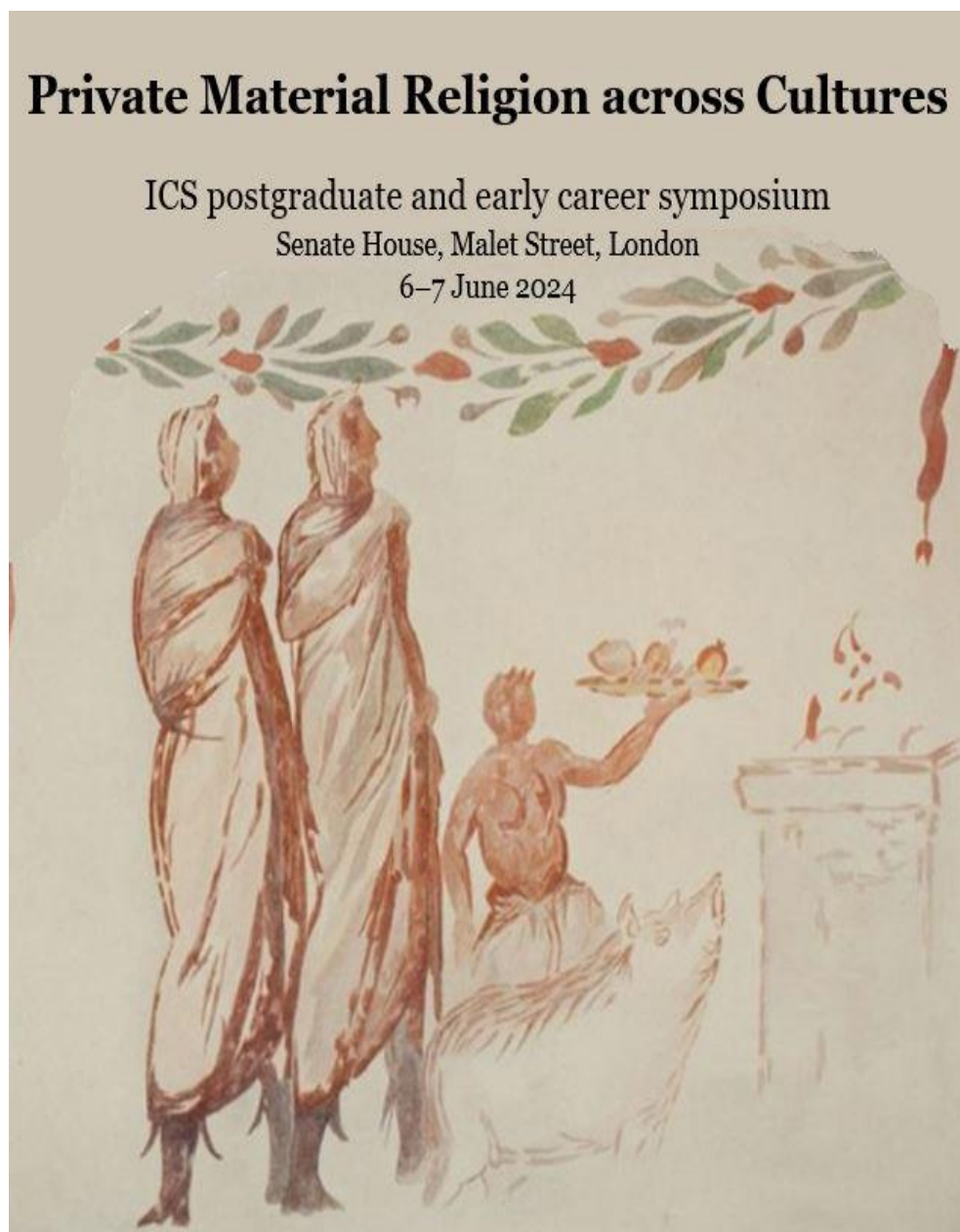
This 2-day in-person colloquium will take place in Senate House, Malet Street, London.

We are excited to announce a colloquium on private material religion hosted by the Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, on 6–7 June 2024. We invite primarily postgraduates and early career researchers in archaeology and history to attend. The colloquium will explore the boundaries and intersections between ‘private’ and ‘public’ religion, magic and other ritual behaviours in material culture from a wide range of time periods and cultures across the ancient Mediterranean (broadly conceived). The colloquium thus aims to facilitate a cross-cultural perspective of ancient religious practice.

Most research on ancient material religion tends to focus on what is publicly displayed, centrally commissioned, and monumentalised. There is, however, a wealth of archaeological material also attesting to private and individualised religious rituals. These rituals could be conducted within the household or among small community groups, independent of the ‘state’. Although private religious practice often reflects the grammar of religious power visible in public religion, the context and social significance of the worship tends to be quite different. Religion could be practised within the household, by minority groups, and in contexts that can sometimes even be described as ‘magic’, all of which manifests itself in material culture in a manner distinct from the literary record.

If you are interested in attending, please sign up at <https://ics.sas.ac.uk/events/private-material-religion-across-cultures-ics-postgraduate-and-early-career-colloquium>.

Organised by Nicole Iu (University of London) and Timothy Smith (Oxford)



PhD Thesis Announcements

Amuletic Objects in Late Antique Italy and Sicily

Barbara Roberts, Open
University

Awarded 2023

E-thesis:

<https://oro.open.ac.uk/91075/>

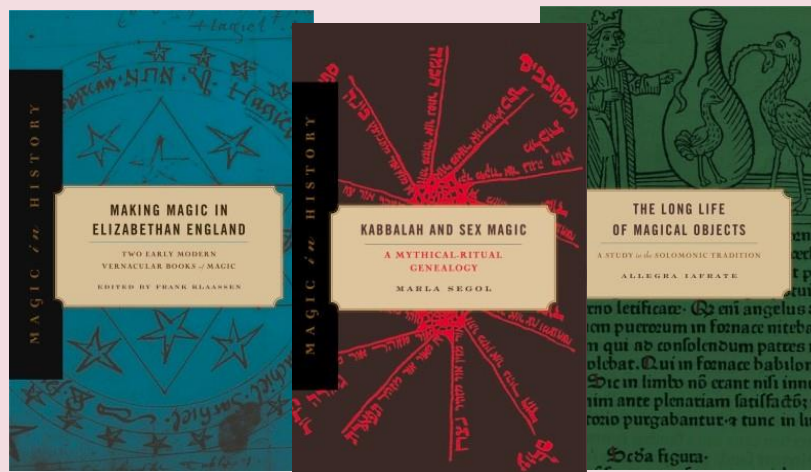
DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.21954/ou.ro.000163c3>

This thesis focuses on amuletic objects in Italy and Sicily dating to between the third to the seventh centuries CE. The words ‘amulet’ and ‘amuletic’ are used in the thesis to refer to a variety of material things used by people in antiquity to protect, heal, or bring good luck. An introductory chapter establishes this specific definition through a close analysis of Greek and Latin texts and a critical assessment of the definitions used by modern historians and archaeologists, challenging the assumption that amuletic objects of the late antique Mediterranean were only or mostly worn objects like pendants. The remainder of the thesis examines material culture from late antique Italy and Sicily, finding that the category of amuletic object can be applied to things as diverse as inscribed stones, toads, amber, of mosaics. Using a series of case studies, these three central chapters investigate the themes of living bodies, graves, and places respectively. For the chapter on living bodies, the focus of the discussion is on

amuletic objects’ interactions with bodies as material objects, as tools of social discourse (both positively and negatively) and as mediators between people and the supernatural world. The chapter on graves considers how the past history of an amuletic object, whether ‘old’ (previously used in a different context) or ‘new’ (manufactured specifically for the grave), affected how people might have engaged with it. It also identifies how both the grave as a unit of space and the bodies of the deceased could be treated as things to be affected with amuletic objects. The final main chapter deals with places, and amuletic objects that were situated beyond living and dead bodies. These include objects built into or buried under structures or placed around areas. It considers how these objects affected visitors and utilises place theory to identify how amuletic objects could interact with a wide

variety of other things to create highly specific experiences. Each of these chapters emphasises the importance of relations with people to how these objects functioned, drawing on current work in the fields of lived and material religion. The chapters combine this theoretical underpinning with close analysis of literary sources and the material objects themselves to offer new insights into how amuletic objects worked in this period. Overall, the thesis moves the conversation about amuletic objects away from questions of identification or typology to instead investigate how these powerful things were entangled with people, the landscape, and the late antique world at large.



20% Discount

Members of the Societas Magica are entitled to a 20% discount on all books in the Magic in History series put out by the Penn State University Press. See your member home page for the discount code to use when ordering books online or by phone (800-326-9180).

The concept of magic in second century AD Roman society and during the Antonine Plague

Nicole Iu, Institute of Classical Studies,
University of London
Expected completion 2024

This thesis contributes to the understanding of how magic was perceived in Roman society in the second century AD, with a particular focus on the Antonine Plague. It examines practices and materials commonly associated with magic, in order to explore some common characteristics. It reviews existing scholarship before proposing a novel framework, which is then applied to several case studies covering various Roman social contexts. This framework is not intended as a diagnostic test to define Roman magic, but to explore several important questions: 1) Why are certain figures, practices, and objects associated with magic? 2) How did this association change over time, e.g. new law, societal changes and times of crisis, especially through the case study of the Antonine Plague?

The first chapter consists of surveys on previous scholarship, Roman legislation, literature, and archaeology which interact with magic. The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the approaches of other scholars and analyse common contexts in which Roman magic appears. The second chapter develops a novel framework consisting of seven characteristics built upon the surveys of the first chapter. The purpose of developing this framework is to provide a new lens to examine ancient magic, in particular how its association changed throughout antiquity. The final and longest section of the thesis consists of three chapters which use the new framework to investigate three sets of case studies. The first case study covers the legal accusations of magic against Apuleius—a philosopher and Asclepian priest in North Africa in the second century AD whose cultic rituals and intellectual experiments provoked suspicion within the community of Oea—to explore how the concept of magic was arbitrated between legal authorities and those accused during ‘non-crisis’ times. This case study therefore investigates the tension which could ensue between a marginal figure in Roman society, and how their actions were perceived as ‘magical’.

The second selection of case studies examine the intersection of medicine and magic, with the aim to understand how and why medicine and magic were differentiated, despite their traditional interconnection. This section also includes an analysis of Apollonius of Tyana, a first-century healer and miracle-worker according to some sources, a magic practitioner to others. The final case study focuses on several phenomena during the Antonine Plague, which provides a unique opportunity to study magic during a time of crisis and heightened anxiety in the Roman Empire. This includes the analysis of the widespread fame of Alexander of Abonoteichus and the popularity of the Cult of Bona Dea during this time. Similar to Apuleius and Apollonius, Alexander was a charismatic spiritual leader about whom sources are divided as to whether he possessed legitimate divine powers, or was simply a charlatan or nefarious mystic.

Through these surveys, novel framework, and case studies it is possible to observe how Roman magic, in the form of practices, materials and individuals, was conceived and transformed through various social and political circumstances.

*The Book of the Science of the Sand:
Geomancy between Divination,
Prognostics and Psychology in Medieval
Europe*

Arianna Dalla Costa, Warburg Institute,
University of London
Expected completion 2024

In the context of the cultural renewal that characterised the renaissance of the twelfth century, among the mathematical, astronomical and astrological texts that were being translated from Arabic into Latin, a discipline previously unknown to the West made its entrance into Europe through Spain. This was called in Arabic ‘the science of the sand’, and became known in Latin as *geomantia* (‘earth divination’). Geomancy quickly became a very popular, as well as controversial, form of prediction in medieval Europe. Geomancy claimed to be a branch of astrology, yet some geomantic texts asserted that geomancers drew their knowledge directly from God. This perspective viewed geomancy as a form of divination or prophecy, a divinely inspired knowledge rather than a form of natural

prediction. Additionally, geomancy was believed to have the power to explore the depths of the human soul, revealing its innermost thoughts and wishes. These facets of geomantic practice, combined with the incorporation of ritualistic elements, led to it being perceived as contentious by intellectual and ecclesiastical elites. In fact, many condemnations in the late medieval and early modern periods categorised geomancy as a form of illicit magic, placing it alongside practices like necromancy and auguries. In my thesis, I contribute to the ongoing effort to illuminate the medieval practice of geomancy by examining its epistemic status and its position at the intersection of divination, prognostics, and psychology. My primary case study is a text titled *Liber arenalis scientiae* (*The Book of the Science of the Sand*), a geomantic tract translated from Arabic into Latin in 1135 in Barcelona by the Italian translator Plato of Tivoli. Using this work

as the basis for my analysis, I engage with a broader range of medieval geomantic literature as well as philosophical, theological, and literary texts from the same period. This approach helps understanding how geomantic knowledge redefined the correspondence between humans as microcosms and the universe as macrocosm. In a cosmos where causal connections linked the heavens to the terrestrial world, the geomancer served as both a messenger and an exegete of celestial signs. Through their technique, they revealed the inseparable connection between the heavens, the earth, and the human soul. By shedding light on the intricacies of geomancy's epistemic foundation and its role at the crossroads of divination, prognostication, and psychology, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the cultural and intellectual landscape of the late medieval period, and of the role that Arabic cultures played in the development of Western science.

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Why do you think the North American witch-trials feature so prominently in popular culture?

Josh: Salem has had a constant presence in literature, visual art, and performance art. While the witch trials were still ongoing, people like Cotton and Increase Mather published accounts of the trials, which were published in Boston and in London. These tales were expanded upon by Massachusetts governor Thomas Hutchinson (no relation) in the 18th century and incorporated in popular history books throughout the 19th century. That same century also saw popular novels, plays, and poetry about the Salem Witch Trials. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables* and *Young Goodman Brown*, among other works crystallised the witch trials in the American mind. Then memorialization began with the Rebecca Nurse Memorial in Danvers, Massachusetts in 1885.

Should the history of witch hunts be taught in schools?

Sarah: Certainly, continue hosting mock trials, but ensure that students first research and understand the underlying tensions that escalated into a witch hunt. Hmm, should they be called mock trials? The 17th-century trials should not serve as a blueprint for contemporary reactions to fears surrounding witchcraft. I would prefer that these classroom trials be referred to and regarded as educational dramas or reenactments. It's crucial to emphasise that the accused were unequivocally innocent of conspiring with the devil to inflict harm. Let's shift the lesson focus away from accusations and the pursuit of identifying the witch. Additionally, dedicate time to differentiate between contemporary witchcraft religions and historical fears of witchcraft

Josh: Absolutely. There is much to be learned, if only educators will tap into the true lessons of witch hunts. Students can be taught how to remain rational in times of fear and uncertainty, how to treat each other with dignity and respect, how to be inclusive of people who may seem different in some way, etc.

What are your long-term plans for Witch Hunt?

WH: Witch Hunt will continue as long as witch hunts are still a thing. Our primary focus is on interviewing experts about the witch hunts of the past and present, discussing with advocates all the ways to potentially address Harmful Practices, and presenting educational episodes detailing the facts of specific witch hunts. In addition, we will soon begin airing Witch Hunt in video form, and we also have plans to create short-form content as an alternative for those who can't listen to full episodes. In the near future, we will begin publishing short biographies of witch trial participants. We also hope to do more traditional media appearances and podcast crossovers. Eventually, we want to be seen and heard anywhere people consume media.

Societas Magica Newsletter

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The Examination of a Witch. Oil painting by Thompkins H. Matteson. Peabody Essex Museum and Darwin R. Barker Museum, 1853.

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