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The Historical Treatment of Women as Witches

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The Historical Treatment of Women as Witches

The origin of witches is not well known; however, early witches were individuals that exercised witchcraft by utilizing magic enchantments and calling the spirits to bring variations in the society or give them help. Federici (2018) stated that most of the witches were perceived as pagans who devoted their lives to Satan's work. Nonetheless, other women were viewed as natural healers, but the expertise was not well recognized. The first scene stated in the bible states the story of King Saul fight with the Philistine army. King soul consulted help from the witch of Endor to ask Samuel's spirits to come and assist Saul in fighting the Philistine (Davies, 2017). Although the witch succeeded in rousing Samuel, they prophesized that Sauls and his sons will die; later the next day, the sons died in the war, and Saul committed suicide.

Moreover, witchcraft was a crime in Europe between the 15th and 17th centuries. Although as centuries moved, there were changes in the laws to handle witches, and by the 1650s, witchcraft was an earthly crime because the criminals could be jailed, humiliate, or executed. Grossman (2019) claimed that by the end of the 17th century, nearly ninety thousand individuals had been suspected to involve in witchcraft, and almost half of them were already executed. Women were treated harshly when they involve in witchcraft because among the forty-five thousand executions; women had the highest number of suspects. Federici (2018) provided a statistic of historical witchcraft based on gender and stated that women had the highest percentage of suspected witches in the majority of the countries. For instance, the same source stated that in German-speaking Holy Roman Empire, the women accused of witchcraft were ninety percent, and Switzerland had more than ninety-five percent of women witches, to name a few.

Witches created fear in the society, and they were referred to as individuals that agreed with the evil spirit in exchange for magic influence to pledge wicked activities. Grossman (2019) claimed that women were victims of witchcraft because they were believed to interact with evil spirits, relate to lurid sex, murder kids, and harm other pregnant women. Similarly, the women witches also could make men impotence by stealing their genitals. Women witches were treated through capital punishment in history. Capital punishment is the lawful method of killing individuals that are involved in crime. Therefore, the main reason for subjecting the women witches to capital punishment is to assimilate, discourage and retribute the crime. Moreover, the capital punishment methods used to handle women comprised hanging, beheading, and burning at stake.

The increased number of women witches resulted in the publication of “*Malleus Maleficarum*,” which provided the steps of recognizing, hunting, and interrogating the witches. The book considered witchcraft as deviation, which rapidly became the power for protestants and Catholics to take out witches staying with them. Women were susceptible to evil misconceptions and could easily blame their greed, jealousy, and imprudent nature, allowing them to have an evil spirit influence (Institoris, 2017). majority of the poor, widowed and elderly, and single were treated to be witches because power is regarded as a thing that takes women into witchcraft.

Witch women obtained their source of authority through performing malevolent witchcraft. Women were oppressed by men because, in most cases, women were accused by women and not men. Also, more allegations happen in the society before they could be accused, and after the allegations improve, the witches were then accused of murdering kids and affecting fertility. Women witches also faced trials; for instance, one of the well-recognized witch trials happened in Salem, Massachusetts (Van Engen, 2016). The same source stated that three women

were accused of witchcraft, but only Tituba confessed to participating. Tituba also accused others of utilizing black magic, and the same year Bridget Bishop got accused of being a witch and sentenced to death. Bridget was hanged at Salem gallows during the Salem witch trial.

Almost one hundred and fifty women were accused and eighteen murder (Van Engen, 2016).

Although women were more dominant in witch activities, they were addicted to evil fallacies and involved in witchcraft events such as killing children, affecting pregnant women, and stealing penises. They were not treated well because they could be accused and punished for witchcraft.

Capital punishment comprised hanging, beheading, and burning at stake.

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