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Italian Witchcraft Strega

Stregheria is an ancient Italian term for witchcraft. In recent times, Italians also have used the term Stregoneria or Strega for the new pagan traditions that originate in Italy. Strega was originally very similar to Wicca in many ways; the practitioners used to honor a large number of deities but the Moon Goddess and the Horned God is regarded as the most important divine entities. The Goddess and God are considered to be lovers and are called by many names including Diana and Dianus, Jana and Janus, Uni and Tagni, etc.

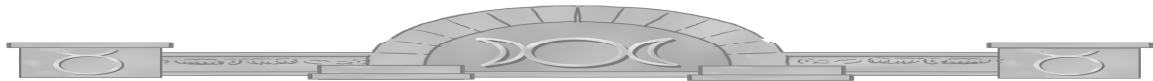
As in Wicca, the followers of Strega also celebrate the seasons and practice rituals and spells to effect changes in their lives. The pantheon of Goddesses and Gods also include ancestors and deities that have specific duties or powers.

Raven Grimassi is a well known scholar of Strega who has written several books on this subject. He even won the "Book of the Year" award for his book titled "The Wiccan Mysteries". His award winning work also includes "The Encyclopedia of Wicca and Witchcraft". One of Grimassi's ancestors included an Italian witch, Calenda Tavani, who had learned the art of witchcraft in Naples. Grimassi later supported the Arician Tradition of witchcraft and had many students including (supposedly) Scott Cunningham.

When the Italian Immigrants arrived in North America, they were exposed to a lot of hardship and hatred. As a means of survival, Italian witchcraft thrived amidst the violence and racism of the early years in America. Many of the practices of European Mystery traditions, theories of witchcraft from Aegean/Mediterranean region and the old religion of Italy was incorporated into the Arician Tradition into which Strega evolved among the settlers in North America.

The Arician Tradition was founded in 1998 by author Raven Grimassi as an introduction to Old Italian witchcraft when combined with the newer traditions. Many ancient Strega rituals are mentioned in the Arician literature. In ancient Italy, the craft was usually





passed on from the mother to the daughter. As one gets initiated to Strega, blood was exchanged and a new mark was made on the left thigh of the new member. The witches gathered at night to perform the ritual of "calling down the Moon". As early as 30B.C, witchcraft in Italy seems to have been an accepted form of lifestyle and worship. The main deity was Diana, who was known in Greece as Artemis, Apollo's sister.

There is also evidence that the practitioners of Strega kept manuscripts similar to the Book of Shadows. This meant that oral as well as written knowledge was being passed on to the future generations. As the major religions took hold and threatened the existence of Witchcraft, the Strega practitioners later joined the Masonic groups and other secret societies. The Strega tradition also influenced Gerald Gardner's work.

The core beliefs of Strega include:

Divinity is present in the feminine and the masculine

We have the same divine spirit that is present in the Creator

All the knowledge is present in the world around us

Reincarnation helps us move towards liberation and enlightenment

Our actions will always affect others. What we do to others returns to us.

All life in the Universe is equally important

The deities and guardians exist to help us on our journey

Love and compassion are the most important values to an evolving soul.

The Arician tradition also celebrates the following holidays: Autumn Equinox and Spring Equinox, Cornucopia, Summer and Winter Solstice, Goddess day (May 1st) and Lupercus.

This tradition believes in celebrating life in awareness and kindness while taking responsibility of our life. Conservation of resources, Peaceful coexistence and a compassionate life is emphasized in this practice.

The pentagram is considered sacred in Strega as well as the Aricia and Wiccan traditions. It was also worn as jewelry at that time. Strega also used ritual tools including the wand, pentacle, cup, blade, tarot cards, etc. Their altar faced the Northerly direction and casting the circle for rituals was practiced by the followers.

As we can see, Strega and Wicca have a lot of similarities as they evolved in Italy and northern Europe. This indicates that the root of the two religions may have been the same, namely the African tradition of ancient witchcraft.

Mastering The Magick Of Witchcraft
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