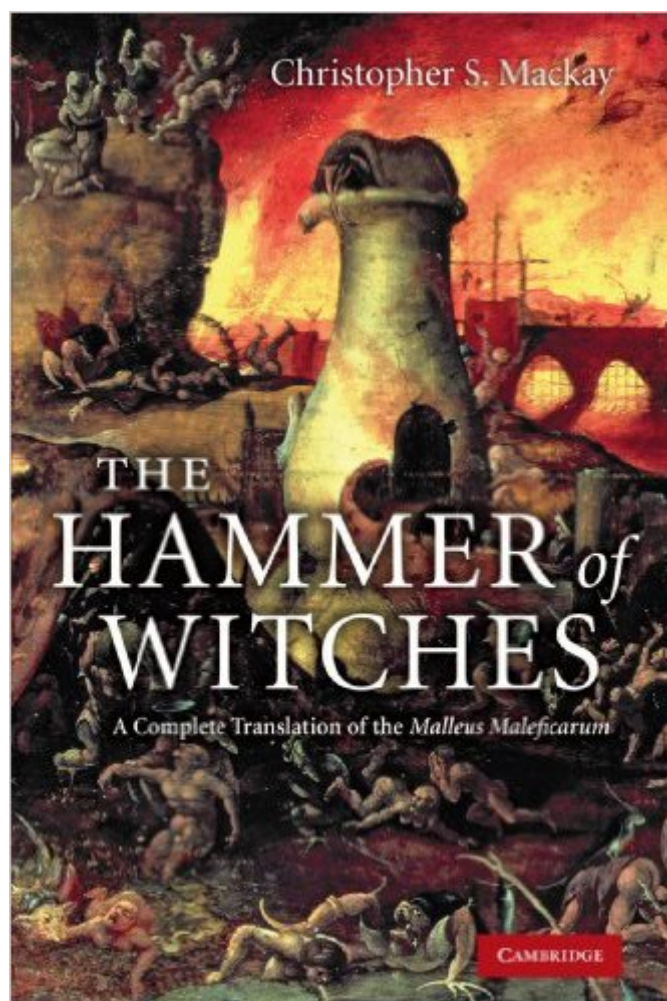


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The Hammer Of Witches: A Complete Translation Of The Malleus Maleficarum



Synopsis

The *Malleus Maleficarum*, first published in 1486-7, is the standard medieval text on witchcraft and it remained in print throughout the early modern period. Its descriptions of the evil acts of witches and the ways to exterminate them continue to contribute to our knowledge of early modern law, religion and society. Mackay's highly acclaimed translation, based on his extensive research and detailed analysis of the Latin text, is the only complete English version available, and the most reliable. Now available in a single volume, this key text is at last accessible to students and scholars of medieval history and literature. With detailed explanatory notes and a guide to further reading, this volume offers a unique insight into the fifteenth-century mind and its sense of sin, punishment and retribution.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My interest in this work developed after a course I took on the history of witchcraft and the witch hysteria. This is a translation of *The Maleus Maleficarum* which was first published c. 1486. Translator Christopher S. Mackay provides readers with insights into this 15th century treatise on witchcraft. As stated in the introduction, the book's primary objective is to provide readers with insights into this work, with reference to how the work was perceived by those of its time and also its ramifications in the years since its publication. The focus here is on the intellectual context and cultural/historical background of the work. Having never read other translations of this work, my review is based purely on this work. I found the detailed outline provided in the Introduction to be

useful in making sense of how the material is organized. The translator also provides suggestions for further reading and useful maps. Personally, I found this text to be accessible and readable and the price makes this a value buy for those interested in the subject.

Clearly this is a quality work of translation and presentation. The original text has suffered over the centuries through misrepresentation and being sensationalised but it remains a key medieval work. At last we have a translation, both tasteful and learned, that gives the work full value. It should remain a primary reference.

This is not the most exciting or leisure reading you will find. On the other hand, it does provide the modern reader with an open window directly back into the daily life of the 1450s. This is a manual written by two of the leading authorities on Inquisitional methods. The majority of this book deals with the subject of witches: their power, their methods and tools and how they should be tried in trials. This is written in a common style of question and answer. There are indeed many typos throughout the book, but these are easily enough identified. The reader will begin to see much more clearly how the mind of those centuries thought, and how prevalent the world of witchcraft and the occult was. Or, how much the general public thought it existed. What you will find is a quest for academic rigor, paired with a strange superstition. The planets influence us just as certain gems and rocks... With some clarity you will note that women are more likely to fall under the power of evil spirits, and the midwives are the most horrible of all people (always looking to kill the babies for use in their magic potions). You will also find that the use of torture was perfectly normal and advisable - to garner a confession of guilt. But note that said confession only allowed your soul to be forgiven, but never saved your body from its due punishment - death! The reasoning is flawed in most places and relies not upon Scripture, but reinterpretations of other early church writers. If you want a good look at how people thought about the spiritual or superstitious world during this time - this book will provide a most interesting commentary. This may explain much of how many people and countries think still today, as history shapes its future.

The lengthy introduction is quite interesting in terms of history, however, the translator's compulsion to comment in footnotes upon matters of personal belief call into question his bias in translation. At some points the translation is stilted to the point of nonsense. It doesn't flow well logically in places, and the translator uses what I believe are erroneous terms in some places in reference to philosophical concepts that are well-known in the scholastic tradition (i.e., interchanging substance

and essence, as well as portraying an equivalence between the physical and the substance of a being). The failures in logic could be the failures of Institoris, and in those cases would warrant a footnote saying as much. That said, the book is quite an informative read.

This book provided me with a look at the mind of a 15th-century European with regard to witchcraft. It presented an outline on how witches interacted in society and how those in authoritative positions should deal with them.

Would've given it more stars if not for the author changing all instances of "witch" to "sorcereress" in the name of political correctness so as not to offend any modern "witches." This was so dumb I couldn't believe it. Don't rewrite history just to be PC.

Good book. Classic for a reason. Fairly dense and not exactly a beach read, but worth it if you are interested in the history of the persecution of witches, especially from a seven hundred year old perspective.

This makes for fascinating reading for those interested in this period of history.

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