

by ALEX SANDERS

To those of you who have read books of witchcraft and have examined photographs showing altar layouts and various implements and magical weapons of the craft, first and foremost among these weapons is always displayed the black hilted knife or athame without which no modern coven in England can operate. The first request made to the would be witch is to obtain a black hilted knife with a plain hilt to be inscribed during the first degree ceremony, and three silk cords, red, white and blue. Each one measuring 9ft. in length with a strict instruction of no knots before the ceremonies. The cords are one of the essential working tools of the Wicca. They are necessary in the swearing of the oath and for binding the material basis of the Art. The material basis are various figures, images, or fath fiths to be used for healing or restraint. The colours are, of course, symbolic of aspects of the God and Goddess in relationship to the initiate and the colours, red, white and blue, have nothing to do with patriotism to one's country, whether Union Jack or Stars and Stripes, this is a nice thought to bear in mind.

Witches today believe that the athame originally was a hunting weapon of the Iron Age man although there are covens that use stone knives. The knife along with fire were man's most treasured possessions. As steel against flint can produce fire, so the athame is used in most forms of magnetism by the use of ceremony. The western cult of the Wicca practised by modern witches can be traced to the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead or the Chapters of Coming Forth By Day. Where the priest opens the mouth with the instrument of iron, literally opening the door to the inner plains. The athame is the possession of every witch and with it he, or she casts the magic circle, which is the meeting place between the worlds of the Gods and of men; the gateway or portal of the inner plains.

Much can be said of the sword although one reads of it mainly in connection with magicians. In the Wicca one may collect the 8 magical weapons in preparation for higher degrees, but the first degree witch is allowed to possess only the knife and cords, whilst a HPs or HP will cast the circle with the magic sword as a symbol of his or her authority and rule within that particular coven. The witch casts the circle with the direct purpose of creating a barrier between them and the outside world, not as a magician does to keep behind the boundaries of his circle the forces he may raise and which may try to overcome him over the boundaries of the magic circle. The witch circle is purely to confine the power which they raise from within their own bodies. There are further mysteries of the sword in connection with the southern watchtower of Fire but these mysteries are revealed only in the second degree.

The white handled knife is for the express purpose of making all images, talismans amulets, of clay or wood, carving and cutting and all of these objects must be made with the white handled knife which can only be used in the magic circle and in no other place, hence the reason many of the so-called lucky symbols are bought by people with no luck or power whatsoever attached to them, simply because of the ignorance of the existence and power of the white handled knife in witch rituals. The white knife is the partner of the black knife, the athame being male or masculine.

In the first degree ritual, as the weapons are being presented, the initiator says, 'Next I present the wand. Its use is to call up and control certain angels and geni to whom it would not be meet to use a sword or athame.' The sword and the athame are weapons of force, to cause unwilling spirits to be commanded to the circle where they may be banished by the element of fire. The wand is phallic, can be seen as the caduceus entwined with serpents or as the thyrsis, the wand which is pine cone tipped or as plain and as simple as a painted rod tipped with silver. It is measured from the crook of the elbow to the centre of the palm of the hand where it can be hidden easily under the wide sleeves of a robe and produced unexpectedly and immediately with a word of command. It is used symbolically to enlighten the intellect.

Among the old gods, the bearer of the magic wand was the greatest and wisest teacher of all time, Hermes Trismegistus or Thoth of Egypt and was known as the guide and protector of the winged ones, god and guide of the underworld, the meaning of the wand can be found hidden in the symbol of the hexagram or six pointed star which is one of the earliest symbols in the world. It belongs not only to the Jews, that which is above is also that which is below but after another manner. When the one divine intent in the magic circle bringing macrocosm into harmony with microcosm, through the High Priest and High Priestess, the divine principles represented in nature.

Throughout all records of past times one reads of, throughout scriptures and books of wisdom, of the beautiful and rare aromatics, oils, gums and perfumes which were burnt in honour of the gods. The incense is a sacrificial offering today to the gods in place of the burned flesh offerings. It is used for purification of the magic circle which is the temple of the worshippers of the God and Goddess. The oils and perfumes enhance the natural fragrance of the naked bodies gathered together in the circle and do not kill sexuality, as do modern deodorants. Many of the perfumes and incenses can open the senses through smell, work upon the operator for his visions and meditations. Certain incenses, along with certain flowers, can accentuate positions and posture which are used by the witches to penetrate deeper into the awareness and communion of the God and Goddess. There are incenses which can cause hallucinations but witches discourage the use of these; we are taught that we must never give our will over to another.

The pentacle of power.

There are various pentacles or plates, of metal, or inscriptions on parchment or paper. Pentacles are medallions as opposed to the five pointed stars also called pentacles or pentagrams, through the first degree initiation which is known as the grade of the inverted triangle and not to be confused with Black Magic, but which refers to the spheres of Netsach, Hod and Malkuth only. Yesod is the point within the centre. A silver pentacle is used. The initiate is told this is for the purpose of calling up the appropriate spirits, the appropriate spirits for the initiation ceremony are the God and Goddess. Therefore, the pentacle has symbols expressing the importance of the God and the Goddess. This pentacle particularly relates to Earth, the beginning and symbolising of the ankh ring on Earth, of the cosmic forces for the training of the new initiate.

The charge of the Goddess says that the youths of Lacedemon in Sparta made due sacrifice. When the mother goddess Cybele was worshipped and served by young men who deliberately cut off their genitals and had to run along a 1½ mile track between Priest and Priestess who scourged them as they ran carrying before them their severed genitals in their hands. If the new initiates survived the journey their wounds were cauterised with boiling pitch and they became a priest of the Goddess. The scourge is a sign of power and of domination. When it is presented we are told "It is also used to cause purification and enlightenment" for it is contained in our Book of Law; to learn you must suffer and be purified. Nowadays our scourging ceremony is symbolic but the first step to pass the portals of the Wicca is the longest step. Are you willing to suffer to learn?



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