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## History of Witchcraft in Philippines

When the sea faring Spaniards pushed into unknown seas in search of new land, an eerie looking piece of land in the Mindanao Sea in the Pacific Ocean attracted them. This land gave off an eerie glow and the Spaniards named it "Island of Fire". Later, they understood that the glow came from swarms of fireflies that lived off the molave trees on the island province, which is now called Siquijor.

Present era tourists flock to this island province for demonstrations of treatment by "bolobolo" which is a healing technique using water. Usually, a practitioner of bolobolo, called a mambobolo can remove a person's illness by blowing it out into a glass of water!

It was in the middle of the 16th century this land was discovered. However, pre-Hispanic indigenous people had Indonesian cultural influences which included Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic mythologies. The hierarchical social structure of society in Philippines stems from the Hindu or Confucian cultural philosophies which include spirituality and a respect for the ephemeral and the unseen worlds.

The culture of the Tagalog people is the second largest Filipino culture. The inhabitants of the islands before the conquerors landed and almost destroyed their culture; they were believers of animism, Sufi, Hinduism and Buddhism. Bathala was the major God of the Tagalog people and He was represented by the sky. The Ninuno were ancient ancestors who believed in the Supreme God. For the Bikolanos, people who lived in the southern most region of the Philippines, Gugurang was the supreme deity.

Gods and Goddesses in the pagan beliefs of the Filipino indigenous people include the Sun (ARAW), the Moon (BUWAN), the stars (TALA), and natural entities such as trees, shrubs, mountains, rocks, etc. When the invading European conquerors tried to convert the Filipinos, many of them clung to their ancient beliefs. Because of this fortunate occurrence, witchcraft is still practiced by many people in Philippines.





Spirits abound in the magickal arenas of Philippines, including Aswang (weredog), Tikbalang (creature with head of a horse and body of a man), kapre (giant), tiyanak (monster child), santelmo (fireball), duwende (dwarfs), manananggal (evil women), and diwata (from Devata in Sanskrit - entities who are fairies/nymphs/goddesses).

Voodoo is also practiced in Philippines. One such practice called Pangkukulam, which was practiced in pre-colonial era of Philippines. Psychic surgeries, where medicine men and women conduct rituals to get rid of illness, hex or misfortune are still practiced in Philippines. Witches who can cast spells or lay curses are called "Mangkukulam". Healing may also be carried out by sticking the hands of the surgeon into the patient's body and getting the disease flesh out while leaving the patient scar free and pain free.

The Arbularios also practice witchcraft and also black magic. They are witch doctors who are endowed with deep knowledge about medicinal herbs and roots on the island.

If you plan to visit this beautiful country, remember to check out the neighborhoods of the Siquijor island province. Although this place is a beautiful tourist attraction now, the witch festivals and open displays of witchcraft costumes and other ancient pagan deities will be a feast for the eyes and the imagination.

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