

Witchcraft, in various historical, [anthropological](#), [religious](#) and [mythological](#) contexts, is the [alleged](#) use of [supernatural](#) or [magical](#) powers. Historically, it was widely believed that witchcraft involved the use of these powers to inflict harm upon members of a community or their property.^{[[citation needed](#)]} Since the mid 20th century, the term witchcraft has sometimes been used to distinguish between bad witchcraft and good witchcraft, with the latter often involving healing. The concept of witchcraft as harmful is normally treated as a cultural ideology, a means of explaining human misfortune by blaming it either on a supernatural entity or a known person in the community.^[1] A witch (from Old English [wicce f. / wicca m.](#)) is a practitioner of witchcraft.

Beliefs in witchcraft, and resulting [witch-hunts](#), are both found in many cultures worldwide, today mostly in [Sub-Saharan Africa](#) (e.g. in the [witch smellers](#) in [Bantu](#) culture), and historically notably in [Early Modern Europe](#) of the 14th to 18th century, where witchcraft came to be seen as a vast diabolical conspiracy against Christianity, and accusations of witchcraft led to [large-scale witch-hunts](#), especially in [Germanic](#) Europe.^[2]

The "[witch-cult hypothesis](#)", a controversial theory that [European witchcraft](#) was a suppressed pagan religion, was popular in the 19th and 20th centuries. Since the mid-20th century, [Witchcraft](#) has become the self-designation of a branch of [neopaganism](#), especially in the [Wicca](#) tradition following [Gerald Gardner](#), who claimed a religious tradition of *Witchcraft* with pre-Christian roots.^[3]

hearfull greatings

GAEL