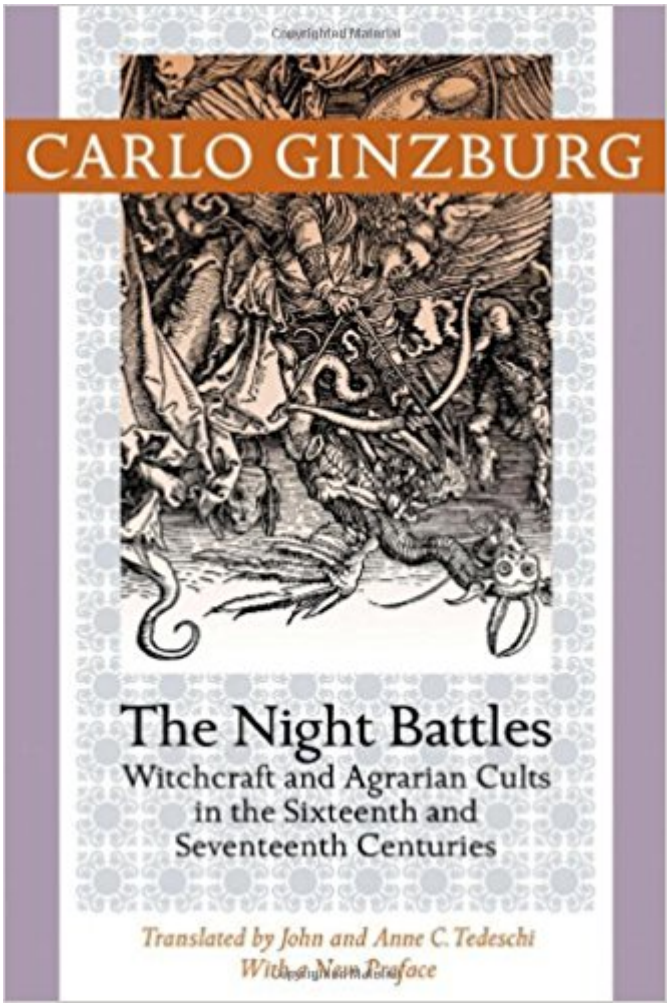
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The Night Battles: Witchcraft And Agrarian Cults In The Sixteenth And Seventeenth Centuries



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Synopsis

Based on research in the Inquisitorial archives of Northern Italy, The Night Battles recounts the story of a peasant fertility cult centered on the benandanti, literally, "good walkers." These men and women described fighting extraordinary ritual battles against witches and wizards in order to protect their harvests. While their bodies slept, the souls of the benandanti were able to fly into the night sky to engage in epic spiritual combat for the good of the village. Carlo Ginzburg looks at how the Inquisition’s officers interpreted these tales to support their world view that the peasants were in fact practicing sorcery. The result of this cultural clash, which lasted for more than a century, was the slow metamorphosis of the benandanti into the Inquisition’s mortal enemiesÃ¢â ¬â ¢witches.Relying upon this exceptionally well-documented case study, Ginzburg argues that a similar transformation of attitudesÃ¢â ¬â ¢perceiving folk beliefs as diabolical witchcraftÃ¢â ¬â ¢took place all over Europe and spread to the New World. In his new preface, Ginzburg reflects on the interplay of chance and discovery, as well as on the relationship between anomalous cases and historical generalizations.

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Customer Reviews

"A work of genuine intellectual distinction. It is an unusually original contribution to the study of witchcraft in early modern Europe, but its importance is far from being exhausted by that description." (Peter Burke New York Review of Books)"A tour-de-force of reconstruction, building out of scattered and fragmentary sources a whole world for the reader to inhabit." (Anthony Pagden

London Review of Books)

Carlo Ginzburg has taught at the University of Bologna, the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. The recipent of the 2010 International Balzan Prize, he is author of The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller and Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method, also published by Johns Hopkins.

In the area of Friuli Italy back during the medieval times there was a group of people properly known as the Banadante. There work was connected primarily to the agricultural farming seasons. There job was to protect the seeds and the harvest from the witches. Going to sleep at night lying on their backs there astral bodies would float thorough the air to meet the witches for battle. Armed with fennel sticks the Benadante were ready to defend , mean while the witches were armed with Sorghum sticks. Battle would ensue, no one really got killed but there were definite winners and losers. If the witches one it would be a year of famine if the Benadante won then it would be a bountiful year. Sometimes the Benadante ventured into Hell itself to rescue the seeds. Coming back from battle they would stop I houses and seek refreshment. If cool clear water was a available they slaked their thirst with it and if not then they would raid your basement drin the wine and then urinate in the barrels. Four times a year they would go out for battle, the ember days. Sometimes they went out every Thursday to do battle.How does o0ne become a Benadnate, one is born with a caul over their head. They keep the caul and have a priest say mass over it or a blessing. Often times the caul is worn on the person in order for them to participate in the battle. One is usually summoned in their early 20ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s and their service ends when they are forty or whenever they are inclined to leave the service. Usually they are summoned by an angel or the captain . The banner for the good guys is a golden flag and a lion. The bad witches had a black flag.The bendnantes sometimes knew who each other were and who the witches were at other times they didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t. They were vowed to silence unless they get beaten or killed.The Inquisition by the Catholic church which was started to route out heretics and witches took a lenient view toward the Benandante during the 1300ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s . Often times they would question them and then let them go. As time progress they were associated more and more with witches and they could end up being imprisoned or tortured. They were often said to have gone to the witches sabbats and partaken in profane rites that blasphemed Christianity. A total change in attitude.It seems connected with the Witches sabbat where in a goddess like Diana in Italy or Hulda or Perchta led a procession of fairies or souls of the dead. At their sabbats they would dance, sing,

drink and eat among other things. The inquisition often made it worse then what it was. Like Margaret Murray had [postulated that therer was an ancient pagan religion of Europe that was goddess and agricultural based that prdated Christianity. These seemed to be connected.Over all good book. The author does a great job explaining the concepts that even a layman would find it comprehensible and enjoyable. It is filled with case studies that document that change and progression of attitude by the church towards the Benadante. It getÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s a bit over kill at the end with the appendices but then again this is a scholarly book.Gret book

I rated this as objectively as I could no think Ginsburg's review of the inquisition trials during the 16th and 17th century was an excellent read, however, unlike other ethnographies, this one was dense with court language and definitely not for everybody. If you're interested in medieval magic and or history, definitely worth the read. Otherwise, be prepared to stop and start a lot as you research while you skim.

A very interesting read. Ginzburg, however, should have stayed away from speculating about how widespread the benandante were...

Great condition

Very interesting history. I first heard of this in the Great Courses lecture series "The Terror of History: Mystics, Heretics, and Witches in the Western Tradition' which covers it in one lecture (The Origins of Witchcraft). The professor recommended this book as a resource for more detailed information.

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