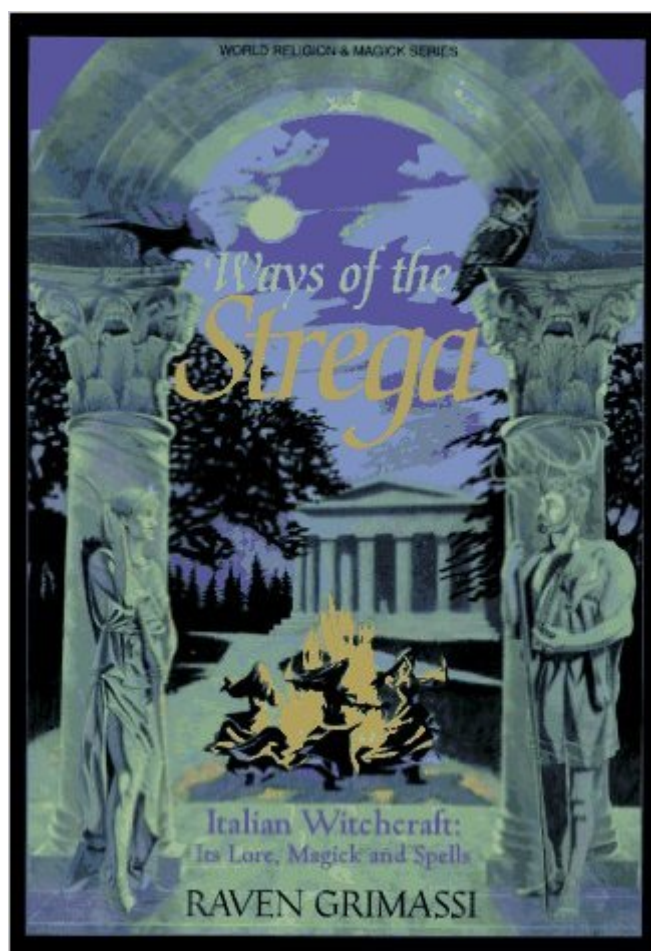


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# Ways Of The Strega: Italian Witchcraft: Its Legends, Lore, & Spells (Llewellyn's World Religion & Magick Series)



## Synopsis

Discover, for the first time in one complete work, the rich legacy of magick and ritual handed down by Italian witches through the generations. *Ways of the Strega* reclaims the beliefs and practices of southern European Pagan spirituality. Learn the secrets of Janarra (lunar) witches, Tanarra (star) witches, and Fanarra (ley lines) witches. This book also details the how-to's of modern Strega traditions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Okay. First, the positive. Raven Grimassi does a good job of presenting various Italian folk practices, and some of the history is interesting as well. This book is by and large well-written, and the author is also diligent in presenting citations for his source material. This book has a more scholarly tone, and is not as fluffy as most -- although there is the obligatory mention of the Mean Christians. There is one huge, glaring exception to the normally careful citations. The story he presents as the history of Aradia is nearly identical to a story presented by Leland in *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches* called "The house of the Winds." Granted, the author does make faint mention of this being his own interpretation of Aradia's story, but it would have been helpful -- and frankly, more honest -- to point out the striking similarities (in fact, nearly identical) elements in Leland's version. Furthermore, Grimassi never makes it clear that the three witch clans mentioned in the book -- the Tanarra, Janarra and Fanarra -- are only three of many, many iterations of Italian

Witchcraft. Possibly his story of Aradia's life is unique to those clans, but it's certainly not the version I was told as a kid. The Gospel of Aradia is possibly the fluffy-bunniest part of the book. Certainly, there are elements of what Aradia actually taught but there are also distinct Wiccan overtones as well as a truly bizarre comment on homosexuality. (paraphrasing) "You have heard it said that homosexuality is unbalanced, yet I say to you heterosexuality is likewise unbalanced." Ummm, whatever criticism 14th century Italian clerics and society had about homosexuality, it is very unlikely that any of it had to do with some yin-yang balance thing. It was condemned as unnatural, as squawked about in the Judaic and Christian Scriptures. As for heterosexuality being likewise "unbalanced," all I have to said is ... what the heck is he TALKING about? In that case, the Treguende throughout the century have been seriously unbalanced as what is called "The Great Rite" often caps the evening's festivities, at least in traditional practice. Aside from grounding energy, it represents the union of male and female energies into a cohesive whole and as such is incredibly powerful. Among other things! Now mind you, while male/female energies usually belong to their respective genders it is possible to be a male with a preponderance of feminine energy and vice versa which is why homosexual relationships are perfectly capable of being balanced (and I'm not saying this means anyone's effeminate or butch, "energy" is separate from mannerisms). There is a difference between sexual acts and energy balance, and this appears to be a odd and highly Wiccanized interpretation (I guess I can call it that) of an actual teaching by Aradia regarding sex magick. And, there is no "J" in the Italian alphabet. "Janarra" and "Jettatura" may be phonetic spellings for the masses, but it looks so fake. As far as the religious aspects go -- Grimassi is constrained, as most authors are, from revealing inner-court material, which is usually oath-bound. Regretfully, like many authors in this genre, he never explains the distinction between freely-available outer-court material and restricted inner-court material to the reader. I don't know if such authors believe that those who are truly called will eventually discover this or they're oath-bound not to even reveal that there ARE inner-court teachings or they forget or Llewellyn edits it out, but they really should inform people that what they're getting is the lite version of any given tradition. I also have the updated version of this book, which has more information but alas, the same flaws. Still, it's good as a source of reference, and Raven Grimassi is to be commended for being a better writer and researcher than most of his contemporaries in this genre.

"Ways of the Strega. Italian Witchcraft: Its Lore, Magick and Spells" Raven Grimassi has captured a unique look at European Paganism, Italian Style! "Ways of the Strega" is a valuable addition to any library of Pagan work, regardless of one's tradition or family origin. While focusing mainly on Italian

witchcraft, Raven makes many historical connections to the Greeks, Celts, Egyptians, the Mideast and other cultures. This book is not a mere re-hash of Roman Pantheon myths. In fact, it shows that what was done in the public temples of the Roman State, was often quite different from what was done in the homes of the common folk, the country Pagans of southern Europe. Raven offers an in-depth look at the everyday practices of the old Italian witches, the local wise ones of the village, or "Strega." He also shares many interesting customs used in Italy over the ages, from charms of protection, prosperity or healing, to prayers and rituals both old and new. Readers will find many insightful and thought-provoking concepts. For example, Raven's discussion of herbs reminds us that plants are living beings; using the herb involves both the body and spirit of the plant! Page 175 explains that a plant "is a living vessel for a spirit or entity. This is similar to the relationship between our own spirits and bodies. When treated properly, the 'consciousness' of the herb can work toward our needs." On pages 207-211, he also describes a fascinating, innovative process for working with a living plant as a familiar! Likewise, he notes the tree as a "sacred being" when discussing a Strega's wand and staff. For those who enjoy detailed descriptions of rituals and tool-making, Raven supplies beautifully worded rites, from consecrating your "Spirit Blade" to praising the Old Ones. He elaborates on specific spells for a variety of purposes. His discussion of Shadow Magick, which Raven claims is the first public disclosure of this ancient practice, is quite intriguing. It involves the "casting" of a specially shaped shadow onto an object to "cast" your spell. His discussion on Starlore adds a new twist to astrology. His explanation of the "Lare" (ancestral spirits) are valuable to anyone interested in the ancestors, reincarnation, or spirit guides. Raven gives us an interesting taste of Italian folklore, including Befana the Good Witch, who filled the stockings of children with treats near the Winter Solstice. He also explains the Italian Stag God and Wolf God, representing the waxing/waning year, similar to the Oak and Holly Kings. For art lovers, Raven's 20 chapters are filled with lovely drawings both old and new. "The Tools of Witchcraft" drawing on page 78 is suitable for framing! In his bibliography, Raven cites 50 sources, from Charles Leland, to Gardner and Valiente, to historian Carlo Ginzburg, inviting us to read further. Raven's chapter entitled "Leland, Gardner, and Frazer" is in itself worth the book's notable \$20 price! Raven claims to bring twenty five years of research to this work, as well as being trained in "The Family Tradition of Old Italy." His book details both ancient and modern Strega practices, from historical beliefs, to rituals used today by Raven's Aridian Tradition of Stregheria. This mix gives us a living, breathing view of Stregheria, but at times it is difficult to separate Raven's recently created practices from the age-old ones passed down over the years. Also, Raven's writing shows a great deal of pride in the Italian heritage. While this adds enthusiasm to his work, it could make some readers question the

objectivity of a few of his conclusions. Easy-to-read, thoroughly enjoyable, and extremely thought-provoking, "Ways of the Strega" should definitely find its way into your book collection!LinkAnthLink@aol.com

Stregheria is a reconstructed fiction perpetuated by `Raven Grimassi' in order to add his name to the pseudo-Gardnerian rubbish that passes for paganism today. The book is a pleasant read, if you like fiction, or should I say blatant fabrication and misrepresentation of history. Gramassi lies about the origins of his purported `craft.' There is nothing inherently and `authentically' pagan (as in ancient Italian religion) about Strega. Grimassi's basic premise is founded upon the work of Charles Godfrey Leland who wrote the "Gospel of the Witches" in 1899. Leland clearly describes his idea as Messianic Paganism (a prettier name for heresy) and that he did NOT inherit it or learn it from an elder sage. Leland makes it quite clear that his theories were presented to him by his assistant Maddalena after studying Italian folklore, not from any participation in the old religion. Leland clearly described Judeo-Christian/Babylonian imagery; Cain, Lucifer, Jesus etc. in his religion. Even Gramassi is forced to admit that his form of `witchcraft' was considered a medieval Christian heresy, but continues to proclaim its origins in Romano-paganism. If you read Grimassi's book, it becomes sickeningly evident that the general mode of practice is lifted from quasi-Masonic ceremonial magic. He even goes so far as to commit the worst act of SPIRITUAL PLAGIARISM I've ever seen by misappropriating the Hindu system of Chakras without crediting the real source and calling it "Strega Centers of Power." So any claim he makes about Italian paganism, belief, ceremony and tradition should also be held in suspicious contempt. On the Plus side, Grimassi is a skilled author with a very creative imagination.

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