

Wittenberg History Journal

*Medieval Magic
and Modern Injustice*



SPRING 2023 | VOLUME XLIX

WITTENBERG UNIVERSITY • SPRINGFIELD, OH

Wittenberg History Journal

Spring 2023

Volume XLIX

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Medieval Magic and Modern Injustice:

Wittenberg University
Springfield, Ohio

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On the Cover

Image of Medieval Bloodletting

Address Correspondence to:

The Wittenberg History Journal
Department of History
Wittenberg University
P. O. Box 720
Springfield, OH 45501-0720

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Dedication

The editors of the History Journal would like to dedicate this issue to Christian Raffensperger, Ph.D., professor and chair of history and Kenneth E. Wray Chair in the Humanities. We appreciate the patience he holds with all of the jokes we make, the way he pushes us to produce our best work, and how he matches the energy of his students.

Thus Always to Traitors: Contending with the Legacy of Dermot MacMurrough

Isabella Fiorito '23

Hundreds of years ago a medieval Irish king boarded a ship and makes the treacherous journey to England to beg a favor for which his entire country will pay. In the 12th century, the King of Leinster Diarmait Mac Murchada (anglicized as Dermot MacMurrough) brokered a deal which prompted the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland. MacMurrough's story tells of how one man's political ambitions changed the course of Irish history and began centuries of invasion, colonization, and tensions that persist into the present day; how might a nation deal with the history of the man who invited the enemy to their doorstep?

Up until the invasion, Irish kingship was a complicated system that consisted of one High King who ruled over all of Ireland and several smaller kings ruling smaller kingdoms. MacMurrough was one of these smaller rulers and he had few allies among the other kings of Ireland. He had made a particular enemy of the O'Rourkes who ruled Breifne in the 11th and 12th centuries, and in 1152 he had even kidnapped the wife of Tiernan O'Rourke.¹ Having made many enemies, he was deposed as ruler of Leinster and—naturally—he wanted his kingdom back. MacMurrough was willing to go to extreme lengths for power; he had even gone so far as to burn his home and capital city, Ferns, to prevent others from taking it.² As is recorded in accounts compiled in *The Annals of the Four Masters*, these types of power plays and infighting among the Irish elite were common.³ This time, however, the outcome would lead to the end of Irish rule entirely.

To take back Leinster, MacMurrough sought the aid of Henry II and returned with an army of Anglo-Normans.⁴ MacMurrough and his party then mounted a series of raids and quickly regain Leinster. However, in 1171, MacMurrough would die of an unknown illness, never living to see the full impact of the deal he had made to regain his power on his country.⁵ The unfortunate timing of his death

so soon after returning allowed the Anglo-Normans to gain even more unchecked power in Ireland. From there, the country would not return to independence until the 20th century.

On the English side, MacMurrough is perhaps better known by his female descendants. As part of his agreement with the Anglo-Normans, his daughter Aoife would be married to Richard de Clare (Strongbow). Their union, immortalized in artist Daniel Maclise's 17th century painting "The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife," is a chaotic scene which portrays MacMurrough standing behind his daughter and looking at the proceedings with anxious suspicion.⁶ Aoife and Strongbow would go on to have ten children, including Isabel de Clare, the wife of William Marshall and maternal ancestor of the Stuart monarchs.

For the Irish, however, MacMurrough's legacy is understandably a much more difficult subject. One of the primary accounts of MacMurrough provided by 12th century historian Giraldus Cambrensis describes him as "A tyrant to his own people, he was hated by strangers; his hand was against every man, and the hand of every man against him."⁷ While many Irish people today share a similar disdain for MacMurrough, others seek to convey a more holistic picture of the complicated man.

Present day locals in the once burned capital of Ferns, for example, take pride in their connection to the former king of Leinster. They are eager to tell his tale and are critical of him, but they are also the first to jump to his defense.⁸ "How could he have 'kidnapped' another King's wife" a staff member at the town's "Medieval Ferns Experience" says, "when she brought all of her things with her."⁹ In this case, the tale of Dermot MacMurrough is a way for the residents of his former capital to play a part in the narrative of their

national history—a history which is still being reclaimed and reconstructed after centuries of suppression.

Despite his complicated status in the minds of many Irish people, Dermot MacMurrough's story is key to understanding Ireland's colonial history. MacMurrough draws the ire of many because of the fallout of his betrayal but he also remains fascinating, and his image is constantly being reevaluated, even centuries later.

Endnotes

- 1 Geoffrey Keating, *The History of Ireland*, trans. Edward Comyn and Patrick S. Dineen, (Ex-Classics Project, 2009), 311.
- 2 Catherine McLoughlin and Emmet Stafford, *The Town in Medieval Ireland: in the light of recent archaeological excavations*, ed. Christiaan Corlett and Michael Potterton (Wordwell Books, 2021), 86.
- 3 *The Annals of the Four Masters*, ed. Myriam Priour and Stephen Beechinor (Cork, Ireland: CELT online, 2002, 2008), <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T100005B.html>
- 4 Giraldus Cambrensis, *The Conquest of Ireland*, trans. Thomas Forester, (Cambridge, Ontario: In Parenthesis Publications, 2001), 12.
- 5 *The Annals*, 1183.
- 6 Maclise, Daniel. *The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife*, 1854, oil on canvas, The National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23610339>, 112.
- 7 Cambrensis, *The Conquest*, 18.
- 8 Brendan Keane, "Medieval Ferns Experience Provides Window to the Past," *Gorey Guardian*, August 31, 2021. <https://www.independent.ie/regionals/wexford/news/medieval-ferns-experience-provides-window-to-the-past-40802797.html>
- 9 Evidence for this is supported by Cambrensis's claims including that it was "not against her will" (Cambrensis, *The Conquest*, 12).

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Byzantine Occult Sciences

Gabrielle Doty '23

Introduction

Medieval Europe was a dynamic place that witnessed the rise and fall of countless cultures, ruling families, and empires. Byzantium, the continuation of the Roman Empire centered in Constantinople, stood from late antiquity, through the Middle Ages, and fell at the start of the Renaissance. Despite its prominence during the medieval period, it is nevertheless overlooked and outright misunderstood by historians. From the general disregard of it truly being the Roman Empire to authors both of the Middle Ages and beyond perpetuating a biased narrative of its culture and people, Byzantium's influence and importance in the medieval world still remains to be fully recognized and understood. One of the most notable characteristics of the empire, besides it being synonymous with Orthodox Christianity, is its occult sciences. Byzantine occult sciences were a variety of traditions that fell between science and magic including alchemy, astrology, astronomy, botany, dream interpretation, geomancy, medicine, magic, numerology, and Christian apocrypha.

These sciences were woven into the fabric of Byzantine society, with its members both being familiar with the occult and utilizing them regularly. For rulers of Byzantium, the occult sciences were an especially valuable tool, which they held a complicated relationship with. The sciences additionally held a tense relationship with the Christian church, as they defied the laws of God through their use of predictions. These sciences developed through Byzantium's cultural traditions, as well as through the influences and relationships with the other empires in Europe and the Middle East during Antiquity and the Middle Ages. While on the surface Byzantium's occult sciences may seem like a footnote of Byzantine culture, they were deeply engrained into the foundations of

Byzantine society and rulership alongside Christianity. This research paper therefore seeks to further explore what the Byzantine occult sciences were and how the specific sciences of astrology, dream interpretation, and omens were utilized in daily life.

Background

Byzantium, as established in the introduction, was the Roman Empire at its core. The people identified themselves as Romans and, while the empire was no longer located in Rome, it nonetheless remained Roman in its political ideology.¹ Furthermore, the term Byzantium itself was coined in the sixteenth century by German historians in order to differentiate the western and eastern half of the Roman Empire, as they would later come to distinguish it. The people themselves who lived in Byzantium during the empire's existence called it Romanía.² Culturally, Byzantium held many Greek influences, which can be seen through their use of the Greek language, art and statuary, and various cultural customs which, while being a Roman nation, were all overwhelmingly Greek in nature. Their Greek cultural ties were so strong that later historians have gone to the length of outright denying their claims to being Roman and identifying them solely as Greek.³

Religiously, Byzantium was a Christian Empire. Not only was this religion the most widely practiced, but it effectively became the official religion of Byzantium. The emperor or empress themselves was regarded as "God's representative on earth," and therefore a divinely chosen ruler.⁴ However, given the

1 Peter Sarris, *Byzantium: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 5, 18.

2 Anthony Kaldellis, *Byzantium Unbound* (Arc Humanities Press, 2019), 78.

3 Sarris, *Byzantium*, 7.

4 *Ibid.*, 2.

empires Greek ethnicity, its religious beginnings were Pagan. All throughout the empire Greek mythology remained present through its classical texts, statues, and temples. Rather than eliminating these links to its Pagan past, the people of Byzantium simply removed their religious associations and created the new categories of art and literature in order to preserve this element of their society.⁵ Additionally, legislation was created to further protect the art and literature for its beauty, educational purposes, and cultural significance opposed to the divinity it once represented. Beyond religion, Byzantium's location also played a role in its culture. Byzantium resides in the middle of a highly culturally diverse area, given its location between the medieval spheres of influence to its west, the kingdom of Rus' to its north, and the Islamic world to its east. This position allowed for an inherent blending of ideas, literature, and traditions into Byzantine culture.⁶ These influences, however, were not always met kindly depending on whether they threatened the religious structures and beliefs of Byzantium but were nonetheless a critical element of the empire's development.

Occult Sciences

The occult sciences were a well-documented and highly utilized set of practices in Byzantine society. Conversely, the origins and history of these practices are not nearly as well known or documented. These occult sciences were a "distinct category of Byzantine intellectual culture."⁷ This cultural tradition could be categorized as existing between science and magic, while also holding a relationship with philosophy and religion.⁸ On the scientific and philosophical end were alchemy, astronomy, astrology, botany, and medicine, while geomancy, numerology, dream interpretation, and Christian apocrypha leaned closer towards the magical and religious. These categorizations, however, reflect how we differentiate these traditions in the modern world. In the medieval period, the distinction between these classifications was blurred, and depending on the

individual practitioner or culture, their associations to either science or magic varied. Therefore, the label occult sciences have been created to encapsulate these varying traditions. Additionally, while these were practiced individually, heavy overlap often occurred between the different sciences:

While many manuscripts are exclusively devoted to single disciplines – this is notably the case with astrology – other consist of wide-ranging miscellanies in which treatises on astrology, medicine, numerology, dream interpretation, alchemy, geomancy and lecanomancy rub shoulders with each other and quite different texts.⁹

The use of occult sciences has been recorded all across the medieval world, from western Europe, through Byzantium, Egypt, Persia, and into India.¹⁰ While each of these cultures have their own practices and methods, the traditions hold many similarities with one another, indicating cross cultural sharing of information.

Within Byzantium, occult science was utilized by all of the social classes. In particular, the occult sciences found a place in the imperial court and became a prominent tool of the emperor. For the ruling powers of Byzantium, the occult sciences were especially tempting as they "can promise the ruler access to extraterrestrial forces, fabulous wealth, and inside knowledge of the future."¹¹ Emperors and empresses throughout Byzantine history have been documented having occult practitioners as advisors, using them to take glimpses into the future and determining the best course of action in order to secure their success as rulers. This relationship between the ruler and occult scientist was a mutually beneficial one as well. The occult sciences were often at odds with the religious doctrines of Byzantium, which viewed them as blasphemous and a viable cause for religious persecution. Therefore, occult practitioners working for the rulers of Byzantium gave them safety, security, and monetary backing, "The ruler can offer the occult scientist research funding, job security, and protection from persecution in societies where, as everywhere in the Christian and Islamic Middle Ages, the occult is more or less outlawed by the dominant

5 Kaldellis, *Byzantium Unbound*, 68-70.

6 Sarris, *Byzantium*, 4.

7 Paul Magdalino and Maria Mavroudi, *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium* (La Pomme d'or, 2006), 11.

8 Joel T. Walker, "The Occult Sciences in Byzantium," *Aestimatio: Critical Reviews in the History of Science* 5 (2008), 246; Magdalino and Mavroudi, *The Occult Sciences*, 12.

9 Magdalino and Mavroudi, *The Occult Sciences*, 21.

10 Walker, "The Occult Sciences in Byzantium," 250.

11 Magdalino and Mavroudi, *The Occult Sciences*, 119.

ideology.”¹² This relationship between the sciences and political regimes was common outside of Byzantium and was a notable feature of the many Christian and Islamic empires in the medieval world.

Moreover, occult scientists were keenly aware of the power they possessed in Byzantium, along with the rulers they served. Both those in command of the empire and those in opposition to them sought out their talents. This placed the occult practitioners in a position of constant suspicion by those they worked for, as it was assumed they could be actively aiding their enemies, “The ruler who lavishes trust and patronage on a matter of the occult risks not only being defrauded, betrayed or at least misled, but also incurring the resentment of his other courtiers, the censure of his clergy, and a general loss of the political credibility.”¹³ Despite the occult sciences being a well-known and widely used practice in Byzantium, they still faced heavy scrutiny given their defiance of the laws of the church, which was arguably the most important governing body in the empire. Additionally, the emperor or empress themselves as the extension of God, should be refraining from using methods marked as unholy. Yet, political histories and other royal documentation have provided evidence for the use of occult science in some of the most critical and important times throughout the empire.¹⁴ These sciences were a high-risk high-reward tool that seemingly was used time and time again even though it defied the very power that granted them their rule.

Due to their connection to the ruling class in Byzantium, records of the use of occult science by the imperial court and by the rulers themselves remain the most predominant form of documentation. While there is evidence of their use by all levels of society within the empire, these records have preserved their place in history and displayed the crucial role they held within society.¹⁵ It is also critical to note that one of the most well-known scholars of Byzantium, Michael Psellus, has been recognized as providing us with much of the information regarding occult sciences. Due to his work in the courts of Byzantium, he was able to save critical literature that has become the base knowledge for our

understanding of these practices, “The extraordinary thing about Psellos is that, singlehandedly, he was responsible for bringing back, almost from the dead, an entire group of occult authors and books whose existence had long been as good as forgotten.”¹⁶ Not only does his writing provide information over many of the rulers personal uses of the occult sciences, but his often unrecognized work through preserving these books has effectively left an even larger impact on this field and the materials historians have to work with today. Beyond the importance of Psellus, the occult sciences are a massive conglomerate of practices and individual traditions, which each have their own origins and specific uses. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, only three of these sciences, namely astrology, dream interpretation, and Christian apocrypha through omens, will be explored in order to provide a more thorough investigation of each.

Astrology

Astrology can be most simply understood as the measurement, tracking, and observation of the stars. These observations are then correlated to human activity and most commonly used for their ability to make predictions.¹⁷ Astrological traditions and usage have had a long history prior to their existence in the Roman Empire. The ninth century astrologer Abū Ma’shar from Balkh stated that the Chaldeans were the first group known to measure the stars and record observations of them, followed then by the Indians, Syrians, and the Arabs.¹⁸ This is a rather linear interpretation of the flow of information, as the actual diffusion of information moved circularly between these various groups and was further developed throughout this process.¹⁹ Traditional western astrology developed out of the Greek and Alexandrian culture, with many of its manuals being written in Alexandria. These Egyptian manuals were then introduced to Islamic scholars, notably Theophilus of Edessa and

12 Magdalino and Mavroudi, *The Occult Sciences*, 119.

13 Ibid., 119-120.

14 Ibid., 120.

15 Magdalino and Mavroudi, *The Occult Sciences*, 120.

16 John Duffy, "Reaction of Two Byzantine Intellectuals to the Theory and Practice of Magic: Michael Psellos and Michael Italikos," *Byzantine Magic*, ed. Henry Maguire (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), 83.

17 Efsttratos Theodosiou, Vassilios Manimanis, and Milan Dimitrijevic, "Astrology in the Early Byzantine Empire and the Anti-Astrology Stance of the Church Fathers," *European Journal of Science and Theology*, vo. 8, no. 2 (2012), 7-8.

18 David Pingree, "Classical and Byzantine Astrology in Sassanian Persia," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 43 (1989), 227.

19 Ibid.

Masha'allah ibn Athari, following the incorporation of Alexandria into the Islamic realm.²⁰ One of Theophilus's students, Stephanus the Philosopher, moved to Byzantium around 775 CE and introduced the empire to Theophilus's teachings, which were a "mixture of Greek, Persian, and Indian astrology."²¹ This was not the first introduction of astrology in Byzantium, as it was a tradition utilized by the Romans since their capital was located in Rome. However, Stephanus brought in a new wave of Arabic astrology which propelled Byzantine astrology forward.

In order to utilize astrology, Byzantine astrologers created books that acted as guides to interpret their observations of the stars. These books compiled horoscopes and were used primarily for predictions. Other astrological literature included seismologia (earthquake guides), selenodromia (moon-phase books), and vrrontologia (thunder guides), each of which interpreted their own specific natural occurrence and supplied the reader with information regarding what this event indicated.²² Outside of literature, astrology was used throughout various parts of daily life and astrologers became a sought out profession, "parents were asking for the advice of astrologers not only for the future of their children, but also for the appropriate dates for them to start courses. Even hunters were asking astrologers about the best days for hunting and the best method to use for a particular day or week."²³ Astrology was a trusted source of information for all those in Byzantium and provided the ability to see into the future, a power that was unmatched by pure faith alone in their Christian God.

Documentation of astrological advice being sought out by the emperor of Byzantium can be found in Psellus's *Chronographia*. In the fifth book regarding Michael V, Psellus provides a detailed account of Michael's attempt at exiling his adopted mother, Empress Zoe. To create an appropriate and successful plan, Michael brought in a series of counsellors to advise him, but ultimately rejected their arguments and turned to the astrologers of his court for their

predictions.²⁴ Following his inquiry "Observations were taken and the general position of the stars was carefully examined at the proper moment, and when the astrologers saw that everything portended blood and sorrow, they warned him to give up his enterprise."²⁵ Angry with this advice, Michael scrutinized the science of astrology and declared it fraudulent. Nevertheless, this prediction came true as Michael's attempt at deposing Zoe failed and he was effectively arrested and blinded for his betrayal.

Throughout the *Chronographia*, Psellus interjects into the text on several occasions to include his own opinion regarding the practice of astrology. In the middle of his record of the account above he includes the following statement,

Certain predictions were then offered to persons who asked for advice and their questions were answered. In some cases, too, they did indeed hit on the correct answer. I say this, because I myself have some knowledge of the science, a knowledge acquired after long and diligent study, and I have been of some assistance to many of these men and helped them to understand the planetary aspects. Despite this, I am no believer in the theory that our human affairs are influenced by the movements of the stars.²⁶

This statement provides both the information that Psellus himself has a background in astrology, but also that he does not find any validity in the practice. His stance over astrology despite his apparent knowledge and utilization of the practice is highly contradictory, however, later historians have remarked that Psellus knew of the dangers of promoting the science as it was forbidden by the church.²⁷ By including statements of his studies in astronomy he legitimizes himself as a reliable source for information over the topic. Conversely, by then denying his belief in the science, Psellus effectively avoids being labeled as a heretic and receiving punishment by the church. Moreover, his word choice in the *Chronographia* by

20 Charles Burnett, "Astrological Translations in Byzantium," In *Actes du Symposium internationale. Le livre. La Roumanie. L'Europe*, vol. 3 (2012), 178.

21 Ibid., 179.

22 Theodosiou, Manimanis, and Dimitrijevic, "Astrology in the Early Byzantine Empire," 8.

23 Ibid., 21.

24 Michael Psellus, *Chronographia*, trans. E.R.A Sewter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953).

25 Ibid.

26 Psellus, *Chronographia*.

27 Andrew Vladimirov, "Michael Psellos and Byzantine Astrology in the Eleventh Century," *Culture and Cosmos*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2009), 45-46.

calling the astrologers “distinguished men” further indicates an underlying respect for astrology which he has to dismiss through his writing to retain his lively hood and avoid the persecution that some of his contemporaries faced.²⁸ While astrology retained a place in the imperial courts, it nonetheless faced a deviant label by the dominate religious powers.

Not all rulers of Byzantium were open to the use of astrology in their imperial matters. In the

Annals of Niketas Choniates it is recorded that “Emperor Manuel firmly regarded Skleros Seth and Michael Sikidites with a secret anger and justly moved to punish them, whence by his command they were blinded by the sizzling hot iron for their devotion to astrology and the practice of the demonic magical arts.”²⁹ This punishment of astrology was not a rare phenomenon in Byzantium, as the church itself promoted this penalty, and emperors or empresses that opposed the practiced utilized it as they saw fit. Furthermore, the name sake of this annal Niketas Choniates additionally scrutinized the practice of astrology and equvalated it with other medieval superstitions calling them “buffooneries and vulgarities.”³⁰ Despite the widespread knowledge of astrology in Byzantium, not all members of society regarded it with the same dignity and legitimacy.

Dream Interpretation

Dream interpretation is a long-held practice of analyzing one’s dreams in order to understand the symbols and messages it contains. It was understood in the ancient and medieval world that “the true dream is a communication from the heavenly realm concerning the unseen.”³¹ The origins of dream interpretation have been traced back to Egypt and the Near East around the first and second millennia before the common era.³² These traditions grew and became popular within Graeco-Roman society, later influencing larger Christian, Jewish, and Islamic dream interpretation traditions. The most common dream

literature was through dreambooks. These books acted as guides which contained predictive dream symbols, their meanings, and how to appropriately interpret them. Additionally, “Dream interpreters attempted to lend scientific credibility to the profession by laying out in detail the many factors that could influence the interpretation of a dream.”³³ Dreambooks were written originally for these dream interpreters, but overtime they became a common tool people could utilize independently from interpreters to find meaning and understand their own dreams.³⁴

There were nine dreambooks or *Oneirocritica* in Byzantine dream interpretation traditions. These books spanned from the second to the fifteenth century and contained information regarding everyday life, political implications, and the perceptions of men and women within society.³⁵ When analyzing these dreambooks it is important to be conscious of two factors:

The first factor is that the dreambooks’ texts are products of male writing and, therefore, convey a one-sided perspective. The second factor concerns the symbolic character of their writing, which hampers a more thorough study, and it often demands a hypothetical approach of interpretation and a great deal of imagination.³⁶

These texts contain models from the classical and late-antique period, which consequently perpetuates the gender roles and values of these eras. Through the Byzantine dreambooks it is evident that men were assumed dominate both socially and sexually.³⁷ Furthermore, “The fact that the dreambooks approach women ambiguously is a consequence of the social and religious perceptions that have their roots in antiquity and have influenced Byzantium.”³⁸ Dreambooks were highly influential literature that sought both to interpret the various symbols within dreams, along with a being tool used to maintain societal norms and patriarchal ideals.

28 Psellus, *Chronographia*; Vladimirou, “Michael Psellos and Byzantine Astrology,” 50.

29 *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates*, trans. Harry J. Magoulias (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 84.

30 *Annals of Niketas Choniates*, xxvii.

31 Bronwen Neil, *Dreams and Divination from Byzantium to Baghdad, 400-1000 CE* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 1.

32 Ibid., 51.

33 Neil, *Dreams and Divination*, 50.

34 Ibid.

35 Vassiliki Kokkori, “Dream Symbols in the Mediterranean World: Woman’s position in the Byzantine Society,” *Symbols and Models in the Mediterranean: Perceiving through Cultures* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 190-191.

36 Ibid., 191.

37 Ibid., 209.

38 Ibid.

Dreambooks, as with other Byzantine occult sciences, were prominent within the imperial court. Literature, such as the *Oneirocriticon* which was a “Christian adaptation of Islamic dream interpretation probably based on more than one Arabic dreambook,” were compiled and used by interpreters specially for dream interpretation of imperial court members.³⁹ Dream interpretation and its value was also recognized by the Byzantine military. Leo Katakylas, a high-ranking military official, included dream interpretation literature in the list of books he advised emperor Constantine VII to take with him on campaign.⁴⁰ Leo VI, father of Constantine VII, also addressed the importance of dreams to his generals:

Nothing about dreams seems reliable to me. But, in time of war, it is useful and even necessary to fabricate <them> and to persuade the soldiers to believe your dreams that promise victory. For, thinking that the dream that you narrate is a portent from God, they will attack the enemy courageously and steadily, and their bravery will be doubled by their eagerness.⁴¹

While Leo himself did not believe in the science of dream interpretation, he nevertheless recognized its power and popularity among the people of his military and how it could influence their motivations and ability to fight.

Other records of Byzantine dream interpretations include John Moschus’s *The Spiritual Meadow*. Moschus was a Byzantine monk and ascetical writer, with his work having a specific monastic perspective. This book was written in the early seventh century during Moschus’s travels and contains “some colourful dream stories from the monks he met on his travels through Egypt.”⁴² One such interaction was with a robber-chief named Cyriacos who after being arrested on crimes he was not responsible for and held captive for ten years without an order of

execution by the emperor, remained optimistic of his eventual release. Cyriacos told Moschus “It is thanks to those babes that I escaped bitter death. I used to see them in my dreams, saying to me: ‘Do not be afraid; we are putting forward the case for your defense.’”⁴³ These dreams Cyriacos, Moschus, and other travel companions all attributed as divine messages from God meant to encourage his continue patience in his given circumstance.

Anna Komnene, daughter of Emperor Alexius I Komnenos, author of *The Alexiad*, and Medieval Europe’s only documented female historian, similarly includes dream interpretation throughout her text. A notable account involves the Sultan Soliman in a battle with the Byzantine forces against the Turkish armies. During this encounter, the Sultan dreamt that “while he was breakfasting swarms of mice encompassed him, and while he was eating, they snatched the bread out of his hands; and, as he was disdainful of them and tried to drive them away, they suddenly changed into lions and overpowered him.”⁴⁴ The following morning he inquired the meaning of this dream to one of the emperors’ soldiers, who interpreted the mice and lions as the Sultan’s enemies. The Sultan did not believe this dream to be a truthful prediction and carried on the campaign with little precaution. However, directly following this the Sultan was tricked into entering into the town of Tyrageion where he was surrounded, arrested, and blinded.⁴⁵ Similar to Cyriacos dream, the Sultan was given a warning of future events, however, he did not believe the dream held any meaning and was consequently met with the same fate his dream predicted. The occult science of dream interpretation was regarded with the same skepticism and hesitation as astrology, yet both remained a prominent fixture of Byzantine society.

Omens

Christian apocrypha, or non-canonical biblical literature, was prominent throughout Christian empires in the Middle Ages, especially Byzantium. This literature included many notable elements, none of which was as influential or prevalent as omens.

39 Maria Mavroudi, "The Oneirocriticon and Byzantine Intellectual Activity in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries," *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation* (Brill, 2002), 392, 422.

40 Ibid., 426–427.

41 Ibid., 428.

42 Bronwen Neil, "Apocalypse then: Dreams and visions in Byzantine apocalyptic in the context of conflict," *Materiality and text: Essays on the ancient world in honour of GW Clarke, Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature* (Uppsala: Astrom Editions, 2017), 353.

43 John Moschos, *The Spiritual Meadow*, trans. John Wortley (Cistercian Publications, 1992), 135–136.

44 Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad*, trans E. R. A. Sewter (Penguin Books, 1969), 489.

45 Ibid., 490.

Omens were a prophetic event that functioned based on the “popular belief that God communicated with man through natural events.”⁴⁶ That is, natural events were interpreted as a message from God regarding a specific person or event and indicated either a positive or negative reaction, which would be directly correlated to the future. The use of omens has existed in Byzantium since the introduction of Christian scripture, which features omens and other prophetic natural signs heavily throughout its books. Moreover, omens and their record throughout Christian and Byzantine texts established a “clear link between the natural world and the intervention of divinity.”⁴⁷ Their connection with one another became a commonly held understanding within Byzantine society and one that is present throughout many Byzantine texts. Omens are especially prominent in literature involving the rulers of Byzantium, given their role as God’s representative on Earth and therefore omens acted as an extension of God’s communication with them.

Similar to dreams, interpreters were often utilized to explain the meaning behind omens. In some cases, omens and their messages were ambiguous or hard to decipher, leading to an expert being sought out to properly interpret them.⁴⁸ In *The Alexiad*, Anna Komnene writes of an occurrence where a comet was present in the sky for forty days and nights. Emperor Alexius did not think much of it beyond a natural cause, however, those around him expressed concern that this comet was in fact an omen.⁴⁹ Due to their unease, Alexius sought out Basil the Eparch to decipher the comets meaning. Following his examinations and calculations of the sun and comet, Basil had a vision of St. John the Evangelist who stated, “It foretells an invasion of the Kelts [...] and its extinction prophesies their dismissal from here.”⁵⁰ In this record, the omen was a sizable natural occurrence and one that warned of a major event within an ongoing military conflict.

Other omens within Byzantine texts were much smaller in scale, however, they nevertheless foretold significant events. In the *Annals of Niketas*

Choniatēs, a hawk with white plumage and thong shackles on its feet flew back and forth between Hagia Sophia and the Great Palace three times over.⁵¹ This caused those spectating the event to debate what this omen was prophesying in reference to Emperor Andronikos I Komnenos:

The majority regarded this as a portent that Andronikos would be apprehended forthwith and subjected to violent punishment, for the omen of the bird's flight, they contended, clearly referred to Andronikos, since he had been frequently cast into prison, and the hair of his head was snow white. Others, more clever and discerning in their interpretation of the future, maintained that the threefold flight to the same destination augured that at the end of Andronikos's reign as emperor of the Romans he would once again be subjected to imprisonment and the stocks.⁵²

Similar to other occult sciences in Byzantium, the public was familiar with omens and understood the role they held within society. As evident by the excerpt above, they were capable of recognizing and interpreting omens without the use of an expert, guidebook, or other prophetic literature.

Michael Attaleiates, a predominate Byzantine chronicler and author of *The History*, also records several omens throughout his text. One of the omens involving the natural world is a thunder cloud which prophesizes the demise of the recently crowned Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos following his marriage to Empress Zoe. Attaleiates recounts, “But suddenly dark clouds appeared in the west crackling with doom, and they threatened both to ruin him and drive him from the throne.”⁵³ A second type of omen can be found in *The History*, which falls outside of the traditional classification of a natural event. This omen was a breach of ceremonial rituals. Attaleiates describes the divine festival celebrating the salvific Easter, which involved an imperial procession through the streets of Constantinople. Emperor Michael V, unknowingly, began this procession earlier than was customary, leaving many onlookers concerned, “They

46 Elizabeth A. Fisher, "Natural Omens in Byzantine Literature: An Unpublished Translator's Preface to a Brontologion (Petrop. Bibl. Publ. 575)," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 59, no. 4 (2019), 714.

47 Ibid., 715.

48 Ibid.

49 Comnena, *The Alexiad*, 378.

50 Comnena, *The Alexiad*, 379.

51 *Annals of Niketas Choniatēs*, 252.

52 Ibid.

53 Michael Attaleiates, *The History*, trans. Anthony Kaldellis and Dimitris Krallis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 31.

noticed that the emperor gave the signal to start before the scene was fully set and the streets were full, and this untimeliness was not regarded as a good omen.”⁵⁴ In both of these instances the warnings the omens foretold came to pass with Constantine killed in battle and Michael being deposed and blinded.⁵⁵ Omens were a prominent fixture of Byzantine literature, with the excerpts above displaying how common they were in society and suggesting that they were more expected than other occult sciences due to their ties with Christianity.

Intersections of Occult Sciences

The occult sciences were all individually developed and transmitted into Byzantium, with each of them possessing unique characteristics that defined them as a truly separate discipline. Despite this, the occult sciences as a whole were often times used in conjunction with one another. This overlap can be attributed to both the shared prediction or divination abilities that many of the sciences utilized, as well as a combined literary tradition.⁵⁶ Compilers of occult literature would often combine texts together based on their own understanding or classification of the various sciences.⁵⁷ The ways in which these individual practitioners and writers interpreted and categorized the occult sciences sought only to increase the variety of texts:

Magdalino and Mavroudi contend that the Byzantines possessed ‘a clear notion of the occult sciences as distinct from, but consistently associated with, other types of learning, both practical and theoretical.’ But the assertion of this distinction by Michael Psellus and other Byzantine writers only underscores how fluid such definitions could be in practice. The editors themselves emphasize the variability of the manuscript tradition, in which one encounters a bewildering mixture of treatises on alchemy, astronomy and astrology, botany, dream interpretation, geomancy, medicine, magic, numerology, and Christian apocrypha.⁵⁸

Through their use of individualistic understandings and logic in organizing the texts and sciences with one another, many of the prominent and influential texts in Byzantium possessed a combination and heavy interwovenness of occult traditions.

Throughout Byzantine texts, records of the use of multiple occult sciences with one another is nearly as common as the use of single occult practices on their own. One instance of this can be seen in Psellus’s *Chronographia* in the first book during the revolt of Bardas Phocas. Emperor Basil II and his brother Constantine were at war with Phocas, who at the turning point of their conflict sought out a fortune of his future:

So he committed his cause to fortune. It was contrary to the advice of the astrologers in his retinue, for they would have dissuaded him from fighting. Their sacrifices clearly showed the folly of it, but he gave rein to his horse and obstinately refused to listen. It is said that signs of ill-omen appeared to him, as well as to the astrologers, for no sooner had he mounted his horse than the charger slipped under him, and when he seated himself on a second, that too, a few paces further on, suffered the same fate.⁵⁹

In this account, astrologers were advised for their predictions over his future, along with the appearance of an omen, whose message aligned with the astrologers warning over Phocas’s fate. As with other accounts of the occult used for predictions in Psellus’s work, both the astrologer’s prediction and the omens caution proved to be true as Phocas died due to a poisoning by Basil soon after his ill-fated fortune was given.⁶⁰ This event displayed the combined utilization of both astrology and omens, as well as astrologers themselves using omens in their practices. Together the overlap of multiple sciences is a reflection of the intersections of these traditions and a further mark of Byzantium’s distinct occult practices.

Conclusion

Despite the heavy influence of the Orthodox church in Byzantium, the occult sciences nevertheless

54 Ibid., 19.

55 Ibid., 27, 29, 33.

56 Magdalino and Mavroudi, *The Occult Sciences*, 20-21.

57 Mavroudi, "The Oneirocriticon and Byzantine Intellectual Activity," 394.

58 Walker, "The Occult Sciences in Byzantium," 246-247.

59 Psellus, *Chronographia*.

60 Psellus, *Chronographia*.

remained a prominent feature of society. Their documentation, while limited, provides various examples of the use of these sciences within the empire. Through these sources it is evident that the occult practices were highly valued for their ability of prediction, which the ruling powers of Byzantium especially treasured as it provided them access to military and imperial knowledge. Astrology, dream interpretation, and omens all presented their own unique virtues, which all levels of society found uses for in their daily life. They each held a rich history that often dated back to before the empire's existence, as well as developing from influences derived from the surrounding empires and spheres of influence. Interpreters trained in each of the sciences were a respected profession and one that was cherished in the imperial court. Nonetheless, practitioners of the occult remained at odds with the church and vulnerable to persecution. While not all those within Byzantium believed in the power of the occult sciences, they still remained a central fixture of everyday life.

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Viking Medicine and Magic

Gabrielle Doty '23

Introduction

The people of medieval Scandinavia, known commonly as the Vikings, were similar to many other Europeans of their time. Farming, agriculture, craftsmanship, and trade were primary aspects of their lives, along with exploration. Where the Vikings tended to differentiate themselves from the rest of Europe, as well as gain much of their notoriety, was through their extensive raids, killings, and lootings all across the medieval world. These frequent and often violent interactions required adequate medical attention that could address everything from minor injuries to life-threatening battle wounds. The techniques used, like many aspects of Viking culture, were a blend of practices pulling from a variety of areas within Scandinavian daily life, religion, spirituality, and practicality. Most notable was the primary aspect of magic that seemingly blended into many areas of medicine. While herbal remedies and superstitions associated with medical practices were not uncommon in other parts of Europe, the Norse entanglement between these methods was beyond that of many other cultures. This ultimately led to the question of what medical and magical practices were used in Viking society and to what degree magic played alongside medicine, as well as the effectiveness of these treatments.

Background

Scandinavians, hailing from modern-day Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, had a structured and self-sufficient society. It was organized into three classes: the jarls or aristocracy, karls or the lower class, and thralls or slaves.¹ Settlements consisted mainly

of small villages centered around agriculture and rearing animals. Due to fertile land being scarce in Scandinavia, these villages were isolated and held small populations.² The Vikings, along with being farmers, were “blacksmiths, armorers, brewers, merchants, weavers, luthiers (those who made stringed instruments), drum-makers, poets, musicians, craftsmen, carpenters, jewelers, and many other occupations.”³ Given their isolation, Norse men and women had to have a diverse set of skills that allowed them to be self-sustaining. For women, they had relative autonomy over their lives, including authority over the house and family; however, they lacked a role in public life and free will in marriage.⁴ Nevertheless, they boasted more independence than in other societies during this period. Vikings of all classes gave care to their physical appearances and health, “Evidence from both literary sources and archaeological sources shows that cleanliness, good hygiene, and regular grooming were a part of Norse life.”⁵ This allowed for the Viking population at large to be generally healthy and have a longer life expectancy.⁶ The importance they placed on their health and wellbeing stayed with them and became an important element of their success as they expanded into the rest of the medieval world.

Around the eighth century, the Viking Age began which marked a wave of Norse exploration, interaction, and raids on the European mainland

2 John Haywood, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of the Vikings* (Swanston Publishing Limited, 1995): 36.

3 Mark, “Vikings.”

4 Haywood, *Historical Atlas of the Vikings*, 44–45.

5 “Health, Grooming, and Medicine in the Viking Age,” Hurstwic, accessed October 2, 2021, http://www.hurstwic.org/history/articles/daily_living/text/health_and_medicine.htm.

6 Neil Westphalen, “Viking Warfare, Ships and Medicine,” *Journal of Military and Veterans' Health*, accessed October 2, 2021, <https://jmvh.org/article/viking-warfare-ships-and-medicine/>.

1 Joshua J. Mark, “Vikings,” *World History Encyclopedia*, January 29, 2018, <https://www.worldhistory.org/Vikings/>.

and the British Isles. Causes for this age have created significant debate among historians for centuries, with some of the major reasons being population expansion, limited resources, advancement in seafaring technology, trade, religious retribution against the Christians, and an opportunity for wealth and power.⁷ A combination of these reasons was probable for Viking expansion, and with this came development within their societies at home and abroad. The first Viking towns began being built around this time in Scandinavia, along with permanent settlements in Iceland, Greenland, and Vinland.⁸ Additional Viking interactions, settlements, and trade have been recorded all across the western European coast, North America, into Russia, the Mediterranean, and the coast of North Africa.⁹ Following the Viking Age came the spread of Christianity and with it the spread of European ideas and knowledge. It became evident through the utilization of new medical techniques that “the new medicine of the south was making inroads throughout Scandinavia.”¹⁰ This spread of medical knowledge, however, did not have the same degree of influence as it possessed in Europe. Norse medicine remained heavily centered around the traditional techniques and methods developed and passed down from generations of healers.

Norse Medicine

General Health Care and Treatments

The Vikings, unsurprisingly, dealt with extremely similar daily health problems, illnesses, and diseases that humans still deal with today. Their methods, while seeming counterproductive and crude in some instances, nevertheless provided relatively effective solutions. To treat infections, Scandinavians would combine leek, garlic, and wine into a brass or copper container and pour it onto the infected area. While having cytotoxic properties that made this treatment very painful, it proved to be effective nonetheless.¹¹ Honey, the Norse discovered, could be used as an antiseptic, “its high sugar content draws

out water from bacteria cells, dehydrating and killing them.”¹² Due to the Norse diet being heavy with fish, many instances occurred where fish bones were accidentally swallowed. To remedy this or any other sharp object that entered a person’s digestive system, a “thick oatmeal porridge would be given to the patient in order to dislodge or encapsulate the sharp object.”¹³ Diabetes was another problem the Vikings faced and would be diagnosed by the smelling or tasting of a person’s urine. If it was sweet, they would remove honey and sugar from their diets to remedy this chronic health condition.¹⁴ In most cases, Norse healers could diagnose a majority of the ailments they encountered and prescribe the correct treatment to combat them properly.

Herbal and other natural remedies were a major part of Norse medicine. The use of herbs for treatments came in a variety of forms:

They might be taken or applied internally (systemically or topically), externally (topically), used as a protective ward (kept in a pouch worn around the neck, laid at windows and the doorsill of a sickroom), placed in bedding, or planted near the entrance of the house and/or byre. They were compounded with other ingredients to make potions, pills, tinctures, gruels, teas, syrups, poultices, gargles, salves, etc.¹⁵

Some common uses for herbs included the utilization of marrubium vulgare or white horehound to treat a cough.¹⁶ This herb is still used today and can be found in modern lozenges. Additionally, flaxseed was combined with small amounts of warm water to create a thick, slimy pudding that could stimulate digestive action when ingested.¹⁷ Aromatic herbs were used to treat cramps and muscle pain. Eucalyptus oil or turpentine were used as disinfectants or to treat issues with the peripheral nervous system.¹⁸ Herbs, seeds, fungi, mosses, oils, and other plants were all regularly used in Norse medicine, both on their own and

7 Haywood, *Historical Atlas of the Vikings*, 99–11.

8 Haywood, *Historical Atlas of the Vikings*, 36, 8.

9 Ibid., 8.

10 David Robertson, “Magical Medicine in Viking Scandinavia,” *Medical History* 20, no. 3 (1976): 317. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1081785/pdf/medhist00110-0088.pdf>.

11 “Surgery & Medicine,” Vikings of Middle England, accessed October 2, 2021, <https://www.vikingsof.me/surgery-medicine.html#top>.

12 Ibid.

13 J.T. Sibley, *The Way of the Wise: Traditional Norwegian Folk and Magic Medicine* (Xlibris US, 2015).

14 Sibley, *The Way of the Wise*.

15 Ibid.

16 Vikings of Middle England, “Surgery & Medicine.”

17 Sibley, *The Way of the Wise*.

18 Ibid.

alongside surgical procedures and magical practices.

Battlefield First Aid

One of the most common records of Norse medicine is that of battlefield first aid. This is unsurprising for a variety of reasons, the first of which being that Viking interactions abroad were often violent and deadly affairs that required heavy medical attention. Secondly, the sagas of the Icelanders are the predominant source historians have that reveal what life was like in medieval Scandinavia. The majority of medical information found in these sagas is the treatment of wounds following the violent Vikings' interactions abroad. The sagas themselves do, however, cause some difficulty in terms of reliability as they were recorded in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries while detailing information from the ninth through the eleventh century. Nonetheless, "the general consensus today is that sagas about Icelanders provides genuine insight into the social structure and social processes of Iceland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries."¹⁹ Therefore, while the events described in the sagas may have been fictional accounts, the medical practices recorded would be accurate to the time and provide a reliable account to how certain injuries would have been cared for.

During Viking battles, a variety of tactics were employed to protect and temporarily aid those who had been wounded. Warriors would throw their shields onto fallen men to cover and protect them from further injury.²⁰ An account from *Gisli Sursson's Saga* recounts that during Gisil's final battle he was attacked by a barrage of spears causing his guts to spill out, which he "gathered them up together in his shirt and bound them underneath with the cord."²¹ This method was recorded as being performed without hesitation, indicating either that this technique was commonly performed during battle or that Gisil was a quick thinker and determined to keep fighting despite the risk. While only meant to be a temporary fix, the saga continues to describe Gisil killing a(n) Eyjolf's kinsman, Thord, only to then collapse and die on top

of him.²² Therefore, whilst being effective as a short-term solution, it did not prove effective for survival after the battle. In *The Saga of the Heath Slaying*, it is recorded that during long battles a pause could be called, as well as the use of lulls in the fighting, to allow the men to bind up their wounds.²³ Majority of the battlefield first aid tactics used by the Vikings were temporary solutions that prioritized the continuing of combat and persevering over the long-term health and survival of their warriors.

Surgical Procedures

Following battles and other violent interactions, the sagas often recorded how wounds were diagnosed and cared for. One of the methods used to diagnose intestinal wounds was by ingesting soup that had a strong odor:

She examined the wound that he had in his side, felt that there was a piece of iron stuck in it, but could not tell for certain which way it had gone in. She had been cooking in a stone kettle there, ground garlic and other herbs and boiled it together and was giving it to wounded men and could find out like that whether they had intestinal wounds, for it smelt of garlic from out of the wound if it was intestinal.²⁴

Once this diagnosis was made, the wound could be properly treated. Another practice recorded in the sagas was the setting of broken bones. In *The Saga of the Ere-Dwellers*, following a battle, the men returned home to have their wounds healed, with Thorod Thorbrandson sustaining a neck injury that caused him to be unable to hold his head upright.²⁵ After being healed, his neck was "somewhat drawn backwards on his trunk" and was corrected by reopening the wound and resetting it to be straight with his spine.²⁶ This technique was again used in *The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue* where in

19 Margaret Cormack, "Fact and Fiction in the Icelandic Sagas" *History Compass* 5, no. 1 (2007): 207.

20 Hurstwic, "Health, Grooming, and Medicine in the Viking Age."

21 "Gisli Sursson's Saga," In *The Sagas of Icelanders*, edited by Örnólfur Thorsson (Leifur Eiriksson Publishing Limited, 1997): 555.

22 "Gisli Sursson's Saga," *The Sagas of Icelanders*, 555.

23 "The Saga of the Heath Slayings," *Icelandic Saga Database*, translated by William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon, accessed October 2, 2021, http://www.sagadb.org/eyrbyggja_saga.en.

24 Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, translated by Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, (Viking Society, 2014): 262.

25 "The Saga of the Ere-Dwellers," *Icelandic Saga Database*, translated by William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon, accessed October 2, 2021, http://www.sagadb.org/eyrbyggja_saga.en.

26 "The Saga of the Ere-Dwellers," *Icelandic Saga Database*.

a wrestling match a man's ankle was twisted out of its joint and treated by bandaging and resetting the joint back into its correct place.²⁷ Both of these sagas provide evidence that the Norse regularly used corrective treatments to manipulate bones back into their correct position. This is additionally supported through skeletal remains that, "show evidence of fractures that have healed in ribs, and bones of the arms and legs."²⁸ These procedures are not far off from the techniques utilized today and have proven to be effective in mending bones back together.

Norse Magic

Background and Overview

Norse magic holds deep roots in Scandinavian society and culture. Magic was closely linked to the Old Norse religion through its connection to the deities of Óðinn and Freyja. Its developments were most prominent during the Iron Age, with Scandinavian magics' true origins being unknown.²⁹ The core of Old Norse magic was Seiðr, which was "a collective term for a whole complex of practices, each serving a different function within the larger system of sorcery."³⁰ Seiðr was associated with the mind and acted as an extension of its abilities. Some of the rituals and uses of seiðr included:

Divination and clairvoyance; for seeking out the hidden, both in the secrets of the mind and in physical locations; for healing the sick; for bringing good luck; for controlling the weather; for calling game animals and fish. Importantly, it could also be used for the opposite of these things – to curse an individual or an enterprise; to blight the land and make it barren; to induce illness; to tell disaster; to injure, maim and kill, in domestic disputes and especially in battle.³¹

Beyond seiðr, five other types of sorcery have been displayed and identified throughout Norse sources. The first of which is galdr, a category of magic that is centered around high-pitched singing most

often employed for cursing. While sometimes used in combination with seiðr, the two are separate practices, with seiðr setting the "pattern for the ritual as a whole" and galdr being "a particular element in a larger complex of operative magical practice."³² A second category of magic is gandr, which is related to Ginnungagap, the Norse and Germanic mythological belief of a void in which the universe was formed. Gandr was one of the primary forces used in this creation, and its power can be harnessed through this principle of Norse magic. Although, this type of magic was extremely powerful, with only the highly skilled Norse having the ability to possess it as, "this form of sorcerous power was of considerable dignity."³³ This aspect of dignity extended to be a mark for both the magic itself, given its origin, and the status of the person wielding it.

The third aspect of Norse magic is útisetá, a practice that is not a specific ritual but rather a technique that was used to insight other rituals. This form of magic is related to the "Óðinnic communications with the dead. In brief, it seems to have involved sitting outside at night, in special places such as burial mounds, by running water, or beneath the bodies of the hanged in order to receive spiritual power."³⁴ The fourth category of magic has been termed Óðinnic sorcery.³⁵ These rituals are in connection to Óðinn and his abilities. Some of the skills of this practice are completely off-limits for human sorcerers, but from the Eddic poems, it is made known that others are readily available.³⁶ Lastly is general sorcery, referenced to as "a general 'background noise' of popular magic, often unsophisticated or indeed completely unarticulated in a practical way, occurring throughout the literature."³⁷ These six types of Norse magic display the wide range of abilities and uses that Norse magic entailed, as well as the mythological traditions they stemmed from.

Uses of Magic for Medical Treatment

In the Icelandic sagas, there are various records of instances where magic was used to heal ailments

27 "The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue," In *The Sagas of Icelanders*, edited by Örnólfur Thorsson (Leifur Eiríksson Publishing Limited, 199): 582.

28 Hurstwic, "Health, Grooming, and Medicine in the Viking Age."

29 Neil Price, *The Viking Way: Magic and Mind in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*, (Oxbow Books, 2013): 34.

30 Ibid.

31 Price, *The Viking Way*, 34.

32 Price, *The Viking Way*, 35.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Price, *The Viking Way*, 35.

37 Ibid.

instead of traditional medical or herbal remedies. One of these accounts is in *Egil's Saga*, where a woman named Helga was suffering from a “wasting sickness, and could not sleep at night because of some kind of delirium.”³⁸ Her sickness was recorded as being caused by love runes that were incorrectly inscribed onto a whalebone resulting in a sickness curse instead. Egil, to cure her ailment, scraped the inscription off into the fire along with burning the whalebone and carved new runes that he placed under her pillow. These runes effectively counteracted the original ones and cured her.³⁹ In *The Saga of the People of Laxardal*, a sword named Skofnung was given magical abilities, one of which being that “Any wound it inflicts will not heal unless rubbed with the healing stone which accompanies it.”⁴⁰ This effectively meant that without the sword being rubbed onto the healing stone, no wounds would be able to heal regardless of other magic or medical treatments used on the person the sword struck. The saga does, however, fail to provide evidence of whether or not this held true.

Beyond the sagas, other records of Norse magic used for healing include a wide variety of additional practices. The use of transference, a method in which “disease could be transferred from a patient to some disposable or distant object,” was a common practice in Scandinavia.⁴¹ The custom of smörjning is a prime example of this, where a sick child would walk through an opening in a “healing tree” that would effectively transfer their disease onto the tree.⁴² Other openings utilized for transference or to trap a person’s sickness included holes in stones or in the earth, underneath or between the legs of a foal or in its afterbirth, and under hung criminals, especially thieves.⁴³ A method used to treat heartburn was through the carving of crosses. In this magical practice “the healer would cut several (usually three to four) crosses on the patient’s chest over the sternum, and blood from these shallow incisions was put on a lump of sugar, which the

patient would eat.”⁴⁴ To treat mosott, a Norse term for depression and poor appetite, woolen yarn would be measured and cut to match the length of the patient’s body. Following this:

The measurer then rolled the yarn up into a smallish skien, upon which the patient had to spit on it three times. The skein was then tied onto the left arm of the patient, who had to keep it there for three days and three nights, after which it was buried in the earth for the same length of time [...] It was important that the patient not smell or see the smoke. In other cases, folks simply let the yarn lie in the earth to rot, and when it has done so, the patient would theoretically be cured.⁴⁵

The aspect of borrowing was another method of healing magic. Bones or pebbles would be taken from churchyards and replaced by coins temporarily until they were returned to their previous location.⁴⁶ Borrowing, while mainly used for healing, did border close to the realm of black magic and other more sinister uses of seiðr.

Other magic practices to remedy sickness included the use of charms. These charms, also known as word magic or incantations, played an important and central role in magical healing. The charms themselves all involved similar elements, “it may contain an epic portion, an appeal to a superior spirit, the enunciation or writing of potent names or letters, the listing of ways to bind or dispose of the offending ailment, and the performer’s boast of power over the enemy.”⁴⁷ The Old Norse poems and sagas record charms being used for the treatment of aches and pains, by midwives to lessen the strains of labor, and as treatments for fractures and broken bones.⁴⁸ Magic on its own proved to be a versatile tool for medical treatment and employed many different techniques to properly combat the ailments it sought to heal.

Role of Women

Early Nordic magic was dominated by women

38 “Egil's Saga,” In *The Sagas of Icelanders*, edited by Örnólfur Thorsson, (Leifur Eiriksson Publishing Limited, 1997): 141.

39 Ibid., 141, 147.

40 “The Saga of the People of Laxardal,” In *The Sagas of Icelanders*, edited by Örnólfur Thorsson (Leifur Eiriksson Publishing Limited, 1997), 383-384.

41 Thomas DuBois. *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age* (United Kingdom: University of Pennsylvania Press, Incorporated, 1999): 105.

42 Ibid., 105-106.

43 Sibley, *The Way of the Wise*.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Sibley, *The Way of the Wise*.

47 DuBois. *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age*, 106-107.

48 Ibid., 111.

to the extent that it could be argued they had a monopoly over the skill. The gift of *forsjá* or foresight was solely possessed by mortal and mythical women, which allowed them to predict the future based upon premonitions or dreams without the help of magic.⁴⁹ Predicting the future through the use of magic was known as *forlog* and was most often used to determine the fate of an individual.⁵⁰ This activity was linked to the *vǫlur*, which was a group of all-female seeresses. *Forlog* was also said to have originally been a “female specialty reserved for the goddesses.”⁵¹ The connection and shared practices of magic between women and goddesses further defined the belief that magic was a sacred female-dominated profession. Women who practiced magic were respected in their communities and recognized for being generally skilled at the art.⁵² Nevertheless, not all women were free from persecution. In some instances, women were killed for utilizing their abilities, especially when it was used to cause harm.⁵³ Men who practiced magic did hold the same respect women were given, yet a stigma remained attached to it as many considered it to be a womanly profession. Following the rise of Christianity, an increase of men to the profession also occurred, possibly as a way to “domesticate pagan magic.”⁵⁴ This demographic shift may have also been influenced due to the surrounding misogyny of the time. Regardless, the role of women in Norse magic remained prominent as they were at the center of its practices and traditions.

Medicine and Magic Intertwined

Norse healers and Wise Women commonly utilized both medical and physical treatments alongside magical and supernatural ones. There are many factors that contributed to why these practices were so intertwined with each other, with the most prominent being Norse culture itself, “In a world of staggering epidemics, hand-to-hand combat, and hard manual labor, the healing traditions of the Norse

Viking Age provided a link between the needs of the human community and the powers that lay beyond.”⁵⁵ Norse healers became one of the key members of Viking society as they acted as this link between the two and tapped into the spirituality the Scandinavians cherished so much. Practicing Wise Women or Wise Ones were required to be “fluent not only in spellcraft, but also in the use of medicinal plant, seeds, fungi, animal products, etc. [...] The Wise One would have to be skilled in diagnosis, midwifery, the techniques of simple surgery and pharmacology, psychology, veterinary medicine, dentistry, nutrition.”⁵⁶ Information over magical and medical practices would be passed down throughout the generations of healers, both the treatments that proved effective and those that did not. Versatility was the key in Norse medicine, as specialization was not a common aspect of this profession, but rather their ability to treat any diseases, physical ailment, or other medical or mental condition a Viking may possess.

Brain diseases and mental health problems such as headaches, schizophrenia, epilepsy, depression, and bipolar syndrome were all treated with both herbal and magical remedies. Indigestion, heartburn, stomach ulcers, constipation, diarrhea, and hemorrhoids, along with a variety of other dimensional and intestinal issues, were also dealt with through a combination of herbal treatments and the uttering of a few healing spells.⁵⁷ These dual treatments also extended into women’s health, mainly cramping, heavy menstrual bleeding, premenstrual syndrome, and vaginal yeast infections. If a woman’s menstrual bleeding was especially heavy to the point of concern, bloodstopping douches would be utilized along with magical spells.⁵⁸ Additionally, sexual enhancements, prevention of conception, and encouragement of miscarriage all employed the mixed practices of magic and herbal treatments.⁵⁹ Finnish healers in specific employed a combination of “charms, sauna, massage, and ecstatic trance to treat various ailments.”⁶⁰ While not traditional medicine, these hygiene and therapeutic practices did contribute to the healing process and were used in

49 Jenny Jochens, “Old Norse Magic and Gender: Þátrr Þorvalds Ens Víðfǫrla,” *Scandinavian Studies* 63, no. 3 (1991): 306-307.

50 *Ibid.*, 307.

51 *Ibid.*

52 Jochens, “Old Norse Magic and Gender,” 307.

53 “The Role of Women in Viking Society,” Hurstwic, accessed October 2, 2021, <http://www.hurstwic.org/history/articles/society/text/women.htm>.

54 Jochens, “Old Norse Magic and Gender,” 208.

55 DuBois. *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age*, 120.

56 Sibley, *The Way of the Wise*.

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Ibid.*

59 *Ibid.*

60 DuBois. *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age*, 104.

combination, especially with transference methods to dispose of the disease.

Childbirth was another primary aspect of Norse life that saw the entanglement between magical and medical practices. At the beginning of labor, chamomile tea, reindeer moss, or rose blossoms crushed in ale would be given to help with birthing pains.⁶¹ As labor continued and contractions became more frequent, spells and charms could be recited into ale, tea, water, or salt and given to the mother to consume. Following the birth, “medicines prepared from mugwort root were used to expel the placenta.”⁶² Other practices observed during childbirth included “The injunction against crossing or knotting in the presence of a women in labor – a piece of sympathetic magic seeking to create an environment of looseness and ease for the emerging infant.”⁶³ A blend of medicine and magic proved to be versatile in handling most ailments and biological processes Norse healers encountered, as these methods were seemingly used interchangeably or hand in hand with one another.

Yet, the effectiveness of magic alongside medicine may, in truth, be less practical for the physical healing of the body, but rather was meant to play a separate role. The aspect of dramatization was a notable part of Norse medical treatments, with magic being the biggest contributing factor to this. The healer’s appearance and home alone could set the tone, ease the patient’s mind, and convince them that they possessed the skills required to adequately help them, “the healer might have many bunches of herbs hanging from the rafters and walls of her cottage to dry, pots and jars of various ointments on the shelves, and mysterious tools tucked not-quite-out-of-sight here and there.”⁶⁴ The addition of spells following treatments via herbs, amputations, or surgeries were intended to both assist with the physical treatments performed and to add to the drama of the given circumstance. This could act as a way to legitimize the procedure given and as a way to appease the patient, given the Norse’s spirituality and love for the added flare. Norse healers would additionally utilize Latin and other non-Norse vocabulary to heighten the drama of a spell.⁶⁵ While

magic was still used on its own to provide medical treatments, when added alongside medicine it was used less to heighten the effectiveness of a given procedure, but more so to add the much-desired theatrics Scandinavians revered.

Conclusion

Vikings are memorialized for their brutality and skill in combat, elaborate seafaring technology, and unique religious beliefs. However, their intelligence in medical practices receives far less praise, given its versatility and general effectiveness. The Norse healers possessed an eye for ailment and utilized visual and physical cues to properly diagnose their patients. The treatments prescribed not only displayed their intelligence and understanding of human anatomy but also their knowledge of their environment and plant life. While herbal remedies were used frequently throughout the rest of medieval Europe, the methods in which the Vikings utilized them both in and on the body and throughout a person's residence were a very distinctive practice. On the battlefield, the Vikings' determination often trumped the prioritization of their own health and longevity. On the other hand, their surgical procedures were centered around the long-term health of the Scandinavians. These treatments were not only recorded as being effective but are very similar to surgical and corrective treatments used in modern medicine.

Norse magic was as rich and complex as the culture that practiced it. It was seemingly just as versatile and all-encompassing as Scandinavian medicine. Women possessed a major role in magic, a factor that added to their greater freedoms and independence compared to the rest of the medieval world. This female-majority profession was regarded highly in Viking society, and they were called upon to treat many of the illnesses they also had medical solutions for. Viking healers had to be multidisciplinary in their skills, as they were required to be well-versed in all aspects of medical, herbal, and surgical knowledge, as well as spells and charms. In addition, the dramatization of medical treatments was another important element in which magic, more often than not, took on this role in combination with the actual physical treatment.

61 Sibley, *The Way of the Wise*.

62 Ibid.

63 DuBois. *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age*, 113.

64 Sibley, *The Way of the Wise*.

65 Sibley, *The Way of the Wise*.

While the question over whether the magic on its own was effective in combatting illness is disputable, the medical knowledge that the Vikings employed is undeniably advanced and an undervalued part of their legacy.

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Germany in the German South West Africa

Racheal Vargo '24

Introduction

“For as long as I remain Chancellor, we will not become involved in colonialism.”¹ This statement was made in 1881 by German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck.² Three years later, from 1884-1885, Germany would participate in the Berlin Conference alongside dominant European powers and thus, the ‘scramble for Africa.’ The conference did not section off colonies for the European powers. Instead, it laid the ground rules for claiming colonies. Until the end of the century, around 1899, the German empire began to acquire colonies all over the globe, from China, the Pacific, and Africa.³ One of their colonies was in what is now Namibia. At the time, it was simply called German Southwest Africa (GSWA). Consisting of around 835,100 square kilometers, GSWA was one of Germany’s largest colonies, specifically standing at one and a half times the size of Germany.⁴ While GSWA was made to be a settler colony to solve domestic problems in Germany, tensions between the German settlers and the Herero and Nama peoples led to the what some have referred to as first genocide in the twentieth century. The 1904 to 1907 German campaign led to the extermination of around 10,000 Nama and 60,000 Herero, which is around 60 and 80 percent of their respective populations.⁵ Examining the

causes for colonialism provides a better understanding of Germany’s relations with the GSWA. Along with colonialism, examination of Kaiser Wilhelm II, General von Trotha, and the German military culture may help to understand how war turned into genocide.

Background on GSWA

German Southwest Africa was home to many ethnic groups; however, the most notable, and perhaps the most affected by colonization, were the Nama and Herero. During this time, the Khoisan-speaking Nama were led by Hendrik Witbooi, while the Bantu-speaking Herero were led by Samuel Maharero.⁶ By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Herero dominated cattle breeding and herding, causing the economy to rely mainly on cattle.⁷ Many scholars acknowledge that prior to German arrival there were preexisting tensions between the Herero and the Nama. However, this perhaps is not due to tribalism. The Herero and Nama already had a taste of colonialism. GSWA was “already a colonial frontier zone, much influenced by colonial South Africa, where white settlers had grabbed land and displaced indigenous communities, which had then moved northwards across the Orange River, trying to maintain their independence, yet already dependent on the colonial market for trade and for weapons and ammunition.”⁸ Under Witbooi, smaller Nama groups were united, moving north from the South African

1 Sebastian Conrad, *German Colonialism: A Short History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 21.

2 Conrad, *German Colonialism*, 21.

3 Woodruff D. Smith, “The Ideology of German Colonialism, 1840-1906,” *The Journal of Modern History* 46, no.4 (Dec. 1974), 652. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1877789>

4 Mads Bomholt Nielsen, “Colonial Violence in Southern Africa at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” in *Britain, Germany and Colonial Violence in South-West Africa, 1884-1919: The Herero and Nama Genocide*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 17, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94561-9>

5 Timothy Stapleton, “Wars of Colonial Conquest (1900-36),” in *Africa: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (Routledge, 2018). Credo Reference.

6 Stapleton, “Colonial Conquest”

7 Samuel Totten and William S. Parsons, “The Genocide of the Herero and Nama in German South-West Africa, 1904-1907,” in *Centuries of Genocide: Essays and Eyewitness Accounts* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 93.

8 Jeremy Silvester, *Re-Viewing Resistance in Namibian History*, (Windhoek: University of Namibia Press, 2015), 41.

Cape.⁹ Nevertheless, many scholars also agree that the Germans used these tensions to their advantage. Ultimately the Germans used tactics of divide and rule to increase animosities further and take the focus away from their invasion.¹⁰ Initially, both the Nama and Herero attempted to use Germany for their own purposes; however, these relations turned cold.¹¹

Colonialism

The causes of colonialism must be examined in order to understand why the Germans were in Southwest Africa. Some of the main reasons for German colonialism stem from the change in attitude of Chancellor Bismarck about colonies. Prior to the Berlin Conference, the Chancellor thought it too risky for economic and foreign policy reasons to acquire colonies.¹² Many scholars have debated the reason for the change. Scholars point to a number of theories, such as public pressure, desire for expansion, economic issues, and redirecting social tensions.¹³ Another interesting justification deals with strategic foreign policy. Specifically, the Chancellor hoped that by bringing Germany closer to France through similar colonial interests, it would act as a way to circumvent English domination as well as prevent France from “plotting revenge against Germany.”¹⁴ Of course, there were also reasons similar to that of other European powers at the time, stemming from the Victorian era’s ideas regarding race. From this came the idea that Germany and other European powers could provide civilization to the so-called savage way of African life. Whatever the reasons, perhaps the most prominent reasons are what some scholars refer to as the ‘economic’ and ‘emigrationist’ ideologies.

Economic ideologies allowed colonies to be seen as extensions, benefitting the industrial and commercial industries of Germany.¹⁵ This ideology could also be exemplified by the economic depression and crash of 1873. The idea was that overproduction

was the cause of the depression.¹⁶ This overproduction would have to be exported elsewhere, and Germany turned toward overseas colonies to carry out the so-called ‘export offensive.’¹⁷ The desired result of the offensive would bolster German industry, overseas commerce, and reduce a possible socialist revolution.¹⁸

Perhaps the more dominant of the two ideologies, the emigrationist ideology calls for colonies to act as settlements in hopes of creating a ‘New Germany.’¹⁹ The German government hoped that creating a ‘New Germany’ would alleviate two problems: increased emigration and population growth. The population was rapidly growing in Germany by the 19th century. From 1890 to 1913, Germany’s population grew by 16 million.²⁰ Simultaneously, the German government was dealing with the problem of *Auswanderung*, the massive emigration from Germany.²¹ By the 19th century, around 250,000 Germans would emigrate, mainly to the United States.²² However, Germany wanted its emigrants to “stay within the home territories”²³ and colonies seemed like a perfect way to achieve this. This ideology was the predominant motivation for the colonization of German Southwest Africa.

GSWA was Germany’s poster child for colonial settlement. While settlement to the colony was slow at first, more Germans warmed up to the idea later on, to the point that GSWA was the most settled colony out of all of Germany’s colonies.²⁴ Perhaps part of this reason is due to the advertisement of GSWA as an agricultural hub. In a report from 1886, it stated the agricultural possibilities in the colony, even if these claims may have been exaggerated.²⁵ The land the Germans thought most suitable was in the South, which was primarily inhabited by the Herero and Nama.²⁶ The Herero and Nama also held most of

9 Stapleton, “Colonial Conquest”

10 Jeremy Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide of the Herero: Kaiser Wilhelm II, His General, His Settlers, His Soldiers*, (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2011) 59.

11 Conrad, *German Colonialism*, 38.

12 Conrad, *German Colonialism*, 21.

13 Conrad, *German Colonialism*, 21.

14 Conrad, *German Colonialism*, 21.

15 Smith, “The ideology of German Colonialism,” 642.

16 Smith, “The Ideology of German Colonialism,” 645.

17 Smith, “The Ideology of German Colonialism,” 645.

18 Smith, “The Ideology of German Colonialism,” 645.

19 Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide*, 51.

20 Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide*, 51.

21 Smith, “The Ideology of German Colonialism,” 641.

22 Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide*, 51-52.

23 Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide*, 52.

24 Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide*, 53.

25 Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide*, 54.

26 Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide*, 64.

the land.²⁷ A similar report produced the following year also stated positive things about the agricultural potential and further increased prospects by adding that the climate was suitable.²⁸

In order to get promote GSWA, the German government implemented many initiatives. Programs to get more women to the colonies, land ordinances, and loans were used to increase the number of German emigrants.²⁹ The German government already had goals set for its colony: “land for settlement, cattle for export, gold, and diamonds for mining and Africans to work for long hours for little or no money.”³⁰

Eventually, the number of German settlers would increase. However, as the number of settlers increased, so did the need for land. By 1897, Rinderpest plagued Herero cattle, causing them to lose up to 90 percent.³¹ While the Herero depended on cattle for their livelihood, the loss was devastating, especially economically. As a result, many Herero sold their land to the Germans, racking up debt in the process.³² By the 1900s, the balance of power shifted heavily towards the Germans. Herero cattle and land were confiscated by the German soldiers in order to settle debts, leading to multiple uprisings and eventually war in 1904.³³

Genocide

It is clear that what once was a war radicalized into a genocide. Perhaps the turning point of this war came in October of 1904, when General von Trotha issued the notorious ‘extermination order,’ declaring that all men, women, and children to be killed.³⁴ Perhaps this begs the question as to why war turned into genocide. While Trotha issued the extermination order, there persists debate among scholars as to who authorized it. The two most likely suspects are General von Trotha himself and Kaiser Wilhelm II. Despite the debate, perhaps an examination of both figures can lead to a better understanding of how the war radicalized

into genocide.

The Kaiser was known to be a brutal, violent, and sadistic man with racist and extremist views. While this violence extended to international leaders, prominent members of foreign governments, and even the Kaiser’s own family,³⁵ perhaps it found itself in the GWSA as well. For example, during the Boxer Rebellion, the Kaiser exclaimed to the German army, “Give no quarter! Take no prisoners! Kill him when he falls into your hands!”³⁶ This has a similar sentiment to that of the extermination order for the Herero and Nama. Wilhelm II also believed in the extermination of Jews.³⁷ Furthermore, during the first World War, the Kaiser stated men, women, and children should be killed, further elaborating, “considerations of humanity will unnecessarily prolong the struggle.”³⁸ This was said about a European war. If the Kaiser had been able to say this about Europeans, he most likely would have readily accepted (or ordered) the extermination of Africans. Prior examples also demonstrate that the Kaiser usually thought of extermination as a possible option during conflict, and it seems unlikely he would not have considered the extermination of the Herero and Nama.

Wilhelm II also had a history of revenge. For example, he demanded reprisals when German missionaries were killed in China, as well as ordering his troops to ‘take revenge’ in Peking when an envoy was killed.³⁹ Perhaps this idea of revenge acted as a motivator for genocide. Perhaps the Kaiser wanted revenge for the uprisings and to avenge the deaths of Germans and soldiers who died. Another concept that goes along with revenge is punishment. Perhaps the combination of extermination, revenge, and punishment led to the establishment of concentration camps in order to carry out genocide.

The idea for concentration camps came from the British, who utilized them in the South African War.⁴⁰ However, while the British camps were not intended to “exterminate, enslave, or significantly reduce the Boer population, the intention of German

27 Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide*, 65.

28 Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide*, 54.

29 Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide*, 60-62.

30 Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide*, 54.

31 Totten and Parsons, *Centuries of Genocide*, 94.

32 Totten and Parsons, *Centuries of Genocide*, 94.

33 Stapleton, “Colonial Conquest”

34 South-West Africa Administrator’s Office, *Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and Their Treatment by Germany*, (London: Stationery Office, 1918), 63. <https://archive.org/details/b32172266>

35 Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide*, 162-163.

36 Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide*, 18.

37 Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide*, 166.

38 Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide*, 179.

39 Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide*, 167.

40 Nielsen, “Colonial Violence,” 29.

camps in GSWA, however, was exactly that.”⁴¹ A Deputy Governor in the colony stated, “The more the Herero people now feel physically the consequences of the uprising the less they will yearn after a repetition of the experience for generations to come.”⁴² This harkens back to the idea of revenge and punishment. Unsurprisingly, the conditions of the camps were miserable. In a camp near Lüderitz, referred to as Shark Island, prisoners suffered from rape and beatings.⁴³ Across all camps, prisoners succumbed to malnutrition, torture, and unsanitary conditions.⁴⁴ Prisoners were also subjected to forced labor and medical experiments.⁴⁵

Perhaps it was through the Kaiser’s knack for ruthless brutality that he supported the appointment of General von Trotha for assignments in the GSWA. The general had experience in the colonies, dealing with rebellions in Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi, and China during the Boxer Rebellion.⁴⁶ Von Trotha also had “a great reputation for his utterly ruthless methods with rebels.”⁴⁷ Perhaps because of this reputation, the Kaiser ‘wanted it replicated’ in the GSWA.⁴⁸

When it came to the GWSA, von Trotha also had extreme views, stating that there was only one way to end the war: “I believe that the nation as such must be annihilated or if this is not possible from a military standpoint then they must be driven from the land.”⁴⁹ He also claimed that the Herero and Nama must “melt away,” as “Darwin’s law ‘Survival of the Fittest’” must thrive.⁵⁰ Interestingly, von Trotha’s view disagreed with other officials and even settlers in the GWSA. Many did not want the extermination of the Herero and Nama.⁵¹ However, the reasoning was no better; Germans depended on Africans for forced labor. While the Kaiser and von Trotha are two prominent figures that should be examined, perhaps another group, who played a major role, should be examined as well: the German military.

Arguments exist that the genocide was not based on ideology. Instead, the brutal German military culture would have turned the war into a genocide regardless of whether or not an order was issued. Many scholars acknowledge prior military conflicts, such as the Maji–Maji rebellion.⁵² As a result, some scholars believe “the military preferred solving political problems by ‘total unlimited force’ and brutal methods employed cannot be attributed to the orders given, but to the way the soldiers conducted the campaigns.”⁵³

The campaign in the GSWA was extremely brutal. Jan Cloete, a guide for the Germans, recounts the time a nine-month-old baby Herero boy was brought back to a German camp, watching as “The soldiers formed a ring and started throwing the child to one another and catching it as if it were a ball. After a time, they got tired of this, and one of the soldiers fixed his bayonet on his rifle,” and “the child was tossed into the air towards him, and as it fell, he caught it and transfixed the body with the bayonet.”⁵⁴ This resulted in “roars of laughter by the Germans, who seemed to think it was a great joke.”⁵⁵ In another instance, Daniel Esma Dixon, who worked as a transport driver, recalled giving a crippled man and his wife some food.⁵⁶ As the two left, German soldiers shot both of them.⁵⁷ Dixon exclaimed, “How on earth did you have the heart to do such a thing? It is nothing but cruel murder” to which the soldiers “merely laughed, and said, Oh! These swine must all be killed; we are not going to spare a single one.”⁵⁸ The Germans used many other methods, such as hangings with fence wires and burning Africans alive.⁵⁹ The Germans also referred to killing as ‘hunting,’ signifying the Germans dehumanized the Herero and Nama into no more than sport.⁶⁰

Some scholars account for this brutality by fear. German soldiers had little knowledge about the Herero, Nama, and geography of the region.⁶¹ Consequently, they feared ambushes and had “paranoid

41 Nielsen, “Colonial Violence,” 31.

42 Totten and Parsons, *Centuries of Genocide*, 95.

43 Nielsen, “Colonial Violence,” 32.

44 Totten and Parsons, *Centuries of Genocide*, 95.

45 Stapleton, “Colonial Conquest”

46 Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide*, 193.

47 Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide*, 192.

48 Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide*, 194.

49 Totten and Parsons, *Centuries of Genocide*, 97.

50 Totten and Parsons, *Centuries of Genocide*, 97.

51 Totten and Parsons, *Centuries of Genocide*, 97.

52 Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide*, 213.

53 Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide*, 213.

54 Administrator’s Office, *Report*, 64.

55 Administrator’s Office, *Report*, 64–65.

56 Administrator’s Office, *Report*, 66.

57 Administrator’s Office, *Report*, 66.

58 Administrator’s Office, *Report*, 66.

59 Administrator’s Office, *Report*, 66–67.

60 Administrator’s Office, *Report*, 62.

61 Totten and Parsons, *Centuries of Genocide*, 99.

fantasies.”⁶² The soldiers also heard rumors that Africans “would torture white women and violate the corpses of Europeans,” justifying the Germans cruelty towards the Africans.⁶³

Perhaps this information can explain how the war turned into genocide. Perhaps it was a combination of many factors. For one, genocide may have been committed as a form of punishment. The Kaiser was known for revenge and punishment of those who rebelled. Perhaps this explains why he supported the appointment of von Trotha. The Kaiser knew of von Trotha’s methods of quelling rebellions. Thus, the Kaiser knew revenge and punishment would be achieved with von Trotha in charge. Perhaps the genocide was also about land. Going back to why Germany colonized Namibia, it was to become a settlement colony. The colony was also a success, as more people settled there. Even statements by von Trotha perhaps reinforce this ideology. He stated that the Herero and Nama should at least be driven from the land if unable to be exterminated. He was also a social Darwinist. Perhaps genocide was a way for Germany to fully complete its goal of having a new, white Germany. A final factor in genocide was racism. The Kaiser, General von Trotha, and most likely the soldiers held racist views of the Herero and Nama. Viewing the Africans as inferior and less than humans most likely made the soldiers ready to commit brutal acts of genocide.

Conclusion

Germany colonized GSWA to bolster its industries and, more importantly, to become a 'New Germany' for German settlement. As tensions increased between the Herero and Nama and Germany, it led to uprisings against the Germans, eventually leading to war. However, the war radicalized into a genocide. Perhaps the genocide stemmed from Kaiser Wilhelm II's violent disposition and his habit of revenge and punishment. Perhaps this is why concentration camps were instated in the colonies. Maybe genocide stemmed from the want of land. General von Trotha, a racist and social Darwinist, stated that, at the very least, the Herero and Nama should be driven from the land. Perhaps this illustrates that Germany committed genocide in order to commit the colony to be a new,

white Germany. As for the brutality of the soldiers, perhaps they could commit such heinous acts because of their racist views of the Africans.

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62 Totten and Parsons, *Centuries of Genocide*, 99.

63 Totten and Parsons, *Centuries of Genocide*, 99.

The Effects of Modern-Day Slavery: Mass Incarceration

Caroline Marlow '23

Introduction

After the Civil War ended in 1865, the South was left without a government or economic structure. While the Confederate States were adopted back into the United States, the South was still left with the responsibility to rebuild. With the ratification of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, African Americans were freed, granted citizenship, and African American men were able to vote. Many African Americans fled the South with hopes of escaping violent mobs and finding solitude in northern cities. This meant that the South was in high demand for labor to run and profit from their plantations. The South quickly found loopholes to solve the demand issue, and control African Americans in a whole new legal way. The South implemented convict leasing which led to oppressive segregation under Jim Crow which led to mass incarceration that stripped African Americans of their rights. These efforts have been further instigated by prominent political figures within the past sixty years such as Presidents Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton. These oppressive efforts that occur even today are a direct result of slavery and the continued prejudice and racism that allowed loopholes to be created and problematic policies to be implemented. Mass incarceration is a modern caste system classifying people of color as second-class citizens limiting their human rights.

Convict Leasing

After the end of the Civil War, the 13th Amendment was passed in 1865 which abolished slavery. However, there was an important clause embedded into the language of the amendment. It stated that “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude,

except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction”.¹ What is most important about the language of this Amendment is the clause that states slavery is illegal “except as a punishment for crime”.² The language of this meant that slavery was not wholly illegal and there was a loophole. Immediately, people in the South recognized this and found a way to use this loophole to keep Black people working on their plantations under inhumane conditions with zero compensation for their work. Within the next few months after the Amendment was ratified, the Republican majority outlawed race-based forms of convict leasing which did not acquire much change. The House then “passed a bill outlawing race-neutral convict leasing, which the Senate postponed when the focus of Republican strategy shifted to Black voting rights”³ and convict leasing was pushed to the side.

The convict leasing system emerged as a response to the new Amendments. Similar to the “Black Codes, vagrancy laws, and sharecropping arrangements, the convict lease system was a mechanism of race control used to prevent ex-slaves from obtaining the status and rights enjoyed by wage workers”.⁴ The convict leasing system allowed plantation owners to find cheap or inexpensive labor to boost the southern economy back up. Unfair sentencing for menial crimes fed prisoners into this

1 *13th*. Directed by Ava DuVernay. 2016. Netflix, Film., 1:23:54.

2 *Ibid.*, 1:23:54.

3 Pope, James G. "Mass Incarceration, Convict Leasing, and the Thirteenth Amendment: A Revisionist Account." *New York University Law Review* 94 (December 2019), 1465.

4 Adamson, Christopher R. "Punishment after Slavery: Southern State Penal Systems, 1865-1890." *Social Problems* 30, no. 5 (June 1983), 555.

system in which companies paid fees to the state or local governments for labor at lumber camps, textiles, brickyards, farms, railroads, and elsewhere. Black people were arrested for any crime white people could stick on them for things like loitering. This system had great “fiscal appeal, since state governments were paid hundreds of thousands of dollars by the companies leasing convicts”.⁵ From the start, this system was incredibly corrupt. During this time, most African Americans had yet to flee the South so in states like Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina, they comprised fifty percent of the population.⁶ The system was meant to diminish Black men and keep them at the same status they had when they were a slave. Black people without a job or could not hire themselves out were “prosecuted as vagrants and sentenced to hard labor on local plantations”.⁷ By arresting Black people for simple crimes such as vagrancy, they were able to control the public and forced “Black laborers to choose between compulsory labor and employment at a sub-living wage.”⁸ They did not seek out white men without jobs and throw them into this system and that is where the discrimination in this system lies. When Southern governments shaped the law to exploit Black people, “The Thirteenth Amendment had transformed Black slaves into free trespassers on the real property of their former owners.”⁹ This further supports the claim that the Punishment Clause kept Black people stuck in a new form of slavery. Within this system, according to Adamson (1983), “Black convicts throughout the South were starved, chained to each other at night in over-crowded dirty stockades, overworked and forced to continue working while sick, and whipped occasionally to death”.¹⁰ This system practically legalized slavery with a new name as its cover-up. Black people accounted for over ninety-five percent of most prison populations, with the highest percentages in the South.¹¹

5 Adamson, Christopher R. "Punishment after Slavery: Southern State Penal Systems, 1865-1890." *Social Problems* 30, no. 5 (June 1983), 556.

6 Ibid., 558.

7 Ibid., 559.

8 Pope, James G. "Mass Incarceration, Convict Leasing, and the Thirteenth Amendment: A Revisionist Account." *New York University Law Review* 94 (December 2019), 1512.

9 Ibid., 1512.

10 Adamson, Christopher R. "Punishment after Slavery: Southern State Penal Systems, 1865-1890." *Social Problems* 30, no. 5 (June 1983), 561.

11 Ibid., 565.

In the nineteenth century, the systems in the prisons and convict leasing, were created with the intent to continue the economic and racial relationships that were formed during slavery.¹² After emancipation,

“white ‘Redeemers’ – white planters, small farmers, and political leaders – set out to rebuild the pre-emancipation racial order by enacting laws that restricted Black access to political representation and by creating Black Codes that, among other things, increased the penalties for crimes such as vagrancy, loitering, and public drunkenness.”¹³

The Jim Crow laws that came after convict leasing was eradicated in the 1920s, mimicked Black Codes, and were segregationist and oppressive laws that outright made African Americans second-class citizens, socially and economically, in the South. Not only did the prison systems get worse and the population of Black men in prison rise, but white southerners could shut out Black people even more openly and, in more ways, than before. In the first fifty years of the twentieth century, thousands of Klansmen were running for office and stoking the violence committed against African Americans. Black people began to seek refuge in northern cities like Detroit, Chicago, Harlem, and Pittsburgh with the hope they would find solitude.¹⁴

Also in the twentieth century, a statute that would have prohibited peonage (a form of involuntary servitude), was struck down meaning peonage was upheld in the 1905 case of *Clyatt v. United States* and the 1914 case of *United States v. Reynolds*.¹⁵ As more interpretations and understanding of the Thirteenth Amendment developed, lawyers continued to draw “on changing academic, political, and popular meanings of peonage and involuntary servitude”¹⁶ throughout the rest of the twentieth century. Because of these actions, “white supremacist regimes incarcerated

12 Browne, Jaron. "Rooted in Slavery: Prison Labor Exploitation." *Race, Poverty, & the Environment* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2007), 43.

13 Gilmore, Kim. "Slavery and Prison - Understanding the Connections." *Social Justice* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2000), 198.

14 *13th*. Directed by Ava DuVernay. 2016. Netflix, Film., 7:49.

15 Goluboff, Risa L. "The Thirteenth Amendment in Historical Perspective." *Journal of Constitutional Law* 11, no. 5 (July 2009), 1453.

16 Goluboff, Risa L. "The Thirteenth Amendment in Historical Perspective." *Journal of Constitutional Law* 11, no. 5 (July 2009), 1465.

African-American laborers en masse and leased them to private employers without facing a serious Thirteenth Amendment challenge.”¹⁷ It is widely agreed that the lack of challenge to laws and actions like this is “evidence that the Amendment authorizes such practices.”¹⁸ Inaction like this allowed convict leasing and later more racial targeting to incarcerate a disproportionate number of African Americans. Southern states were even found to be guilty of exploiting the Punishment Clause to ensnare Black laborers.¹⁹

Government Policies

African Americans’ hope that they would find solitude and refuge in the North did not exactly hold up. The North still experienced race riots and discrimination, even though they did not have the same Jim Crow laws. The Civil Rights Act was even a fight in the North, too. Black people were still being prosecuted in many urban areas for the same menial crimes southern Black people were being prosecuted for. African Americans were labeled as vagrants and criminals when they were getting arrested. Being arrested meant they would face job discrimination, wage discrimination, societal discrimination, and in other forms, too. For the first time with the Civil Rights Act, Black people changed the narrative of what it meant to be arrested and criminality. Being arrested became a noble cause in the fight for their civil rights. They voluntarily sought to turn the system on its head, and got arrested for peacefully protesting.²⁰ After the Civil Rights Movement and the passage of the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act of 1964 and 1965, respectfully, the focus within the American government shifted to being tough on crime.

With so many African Americans now with the ability to vote without restrictions and the Jim Crow Era officially closed, the U.S. government needed a new way to control people of color. This time in American history is marked by more human rights protests and anti-war protests. Many people in the US. felt that the country was out of control and needed

order. President Nixon, who was struggling with low approval ratings, was the first President to make crime and order a priority. Nixon created the ‘War on Drugs’ to show he was taking back control of a country that had just seen a decade of violent protests and many formative changes. When they shifted focus to crime, they made the media address addiction as a criminal issue instead of a health issue. They made drugs a new enemy.²¹ How does making drugs an enemy take care of protestors and control people of color? Drugs were mostly prominent in urban areas and impoverished neighborhoods that housed many people of color because generational poverty put them in those positions. Protestors, especially anti-war protestors, were known for experimenting with drugs. Furthermore, “by treating civil rights protest as a strain of social disorder, veiled connections were drawn between the crime problem, on one hand, and black social protest, on the other.”²² So, that is how Nixon’s administration took them down. What many white southerners failed to realize was this was just a narrative spun by a President seeking re-election. White people used drugs at the same rate as Black people but were not as prosecuted for it or did not receive such harsh sentencing. John Ehrlichman from Nixon’s administration later came out long afterward and admitted that it was all a lie. Ehrlichman said that:

“The Nixon campaign in 1968 and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and Black people. You understand what I'm saying? We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or Black but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and the blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.”²³

This quote is monumental to the exposure of the true

17 Pope, James G. "Mass Incarceration, Convict Leasing, and the Thirteenth Amendment: A Revisionist Account." *New York University Law Review* 94 (December 2019), 1465.

18 Ibid., 1465.

19 Ibid., 1511.

20 *13th*. Directed by Ava DuVernay. 2016. Netflix, Film., 11:13.

21 *13th*. Directed by Ava DuVernay. 2016. Netflix, Film., 15:30.

22 Western, Bruce, and Christopher Wildeman. "The Black Family and Mass Incarceration." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 621 (January 2009), 223.

23 *13th*. Directed by Ava DuVernay. 2016. Netflix, Film., 18:12.

motives behind the ‘War on Drugs.’ They knew that they were creating a false public understanding and that they had created a divide between communities that was manufactured by their own government. The only thing the government had correct was the fact that “elevated crime rates and the realigned race relations of the post-civil rights period provided a receptive context for the law and order themes of the Republican Party.”²⁴ However, Nixon’s ‘War on Dugs’ set up the rest of the twentieth century to be riddled with policies “put into place [such as] rigid sentencing guidelines that required (1) longer sentences; (2) mandatory minimums; (3) reclassifying some drug offenses from misdemeanors to felonies; and (4) the passage of the ‘Three Strikes You’re Out’ laws.”²⁵

President Reagan was the next president to stoke the ‘tough on crime’ agenda. With his wife, Nancy Reagan’s, ‘Just Say No to Drugs’ campaign implementing an educational tactic, he won moderates over into that sphere of anti-criminals thinking and made drugs a top issue when it was not on the general public’s agenda. A new drug in the 1980s called crack cocaine emerged and overtook inner-city communities. With the new spike in crime and drugs, mandatory sentences were established but powder cocaine (a drug used more in rich, suburban communities) was hardly met with the same kind of scrutiny.²⁶ Reagan’s plans allocated millions of dollars to house the exceedingly increasing number of prisoners. Later, a tape came out of Lee Atwood, a member of the Reagan campaign, admitting that because they could not use racial slurs anymore, they would have to change their rhetoric to phrases like ‘state’s rights’ and focus on economic tactics like ‘cutting taxes’ where they knew Black people were hurt worse by those things than white people. To still achieve that racial division among southern whites, the Reagan campaign knew that they had to change their rhetoric.²⁷ Labeling people of color as “crack heads’, ‘crack babies’, ‘super-predators’, and

welfare queens”²⁸ and then using the media to over-represent Black people being arrested or involved in crime every day on the news created too strong of a narrative. In 1980, there were 513,900 people in U.S. prisons.²⁹ In 1985, that number rose to 759,100.³⁰ In 1990, just five years later, after Reagan’s administration, that number skyrocketed to 1,179,200.³¹

President Clinton was the next president to play a significant role in mass incarceration. It is even debated that he played the largest role in the corruption of our prison system. By the time Clinton ran for President, it was “virtually impossible for a Democrat to run and be soft on crime”.³² With the implementation of Clinton’s ‘Three Strikes You’re Out’ policy, he drove the fight to allocate more funds to the police, to put more police on the street, create more mandatory minimums, and add even more people to the prison system with the 1994 thirty million dollar criminal spending bill. Because of this focus and influx of money, officers, and prisoners, the police force became militarized, and incentives were created that encouraged police abuse.³³ In an effort to avoid being “cast by conservatives as ‘soft on crime’...”, even Clinton, who was a progressive, and “publicly aligned himself with the Black community and Black leaders, escalated the racially discriminatory drug war”³⁴. Even though, in the past several years, both Bill and Hillary Clinton have publicly admitted they regret the policies they put in place, the damage has been done. One huge consequence of the effects these three presidents had is the fact that throughout the past few decades, these systems have been resistant to change because people from all races were “willing to tolerate the disposal of millions of individuals once they had been labeled criminals in the media and political discourse”.³⁵ Because of the incessant labels, discrimination, and acceptance by both Republicans and Democrats, the issue of mass incarceration, discriminatory sentencing, unpaid forced labor in prisons, and the war on drugs

24 Western, Bruce, and Christopher Wildeman. "The Black Family and Mass Incarceration." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 621 (January 2009), 223.

25 Smith, Earl, and Angela J. Hattery. "Incarceration: A Tool for Racial Segregation and Labor Exploitation." *Race, Gender, & Class* 12, no. 1/2 (2008), 82.

26 *13th*. Directed by Ava DuVernay. 2016. Netflix, Film., 22:19.

27 *13th*. Directed by Ava DuVernay. 2016. Netflix, Film., 26:30.

28 Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*. The New Press, 2010, xv.

29 *13th*. Directed by Ava DuVernay. 2016. Netflix, Film., 18:49.

30 *Ibid.*, 26:55.

31 *Ibid.*, 34:35.

32 *13th*. Directed by Ava DuVernay. 2016. Netflix, Film., 35:33.

33 *Ibid.*, 39:08.

34 Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*. The New Press, 2010, xlii

35 *Ibid.*, xlii.

and crime had hardly been fought against, let alone talked about, until the twenty-first century.

Effects of Mass Incarceration

The effects of mass incarceration have only worsened and have grown to be detrimental in the twenty-first century. Currently, the United States houses twenty-five percent of the world's incarceration rate and yet the U.S. only accounts for five percent of the world's population.³⁶ Black men make up six and a half percent of the U.S. population but account for 40.2 percent of the prison population.³⁷ It is projected that one in every seventeen white men will be imprisoned at some point in their lifetime but one in every three Black men are likely to be imprisoned at some point in their lifetime.³⁸ Some urban areas experience an even higher percentage. In our nation's capital, Washington D.C., "it is estimated that three out of every four young Black men can expect to serve time in prison".³⁹ Because of new and harsher policies that put more police on the streets in urban areas and made the criminal justice system give out harsher punishments, "the incarceration rate for young low-education Black men rose by 22 points in the two decades after 1980".⁴⁰ These statistics and the people suffering within them are a perfect representation of the racial complications of our criminal justice system. Furthermore, "if white men were incarcerated at the same rate as blacks, there would be more than 6 million people in prison and in jail".⁴¹ Archaic systems made to control people of color such as the convict leasing system are thought of to have disappeared. Even back in 1982, "many states still had clauses in their constitutions that deemed slavery and indentured servitude legal punishments or had no proviso about the legality or illegality of prison enslavement".⁴² Even today, during the 2022 midterm elections, states voted on the ballot about whether or not to include language

abolishing slavery, making forced labor illegal, and paying prisoners minimum wage in their constitutions. However, the systems are still very much thriving under a different name. Private corporations can run for-profit prisons and lease factories similar to convict leasing.⁴³

More recently, the exploitation of prisoners and their forced labor is being more commonly referred to as 'modern-day slavery' to call attention to the reconstruction of slavery after the 13th Amendment. However, it is different in its own way this time in history. As Dylan Rodriguez states in an interview with Angela Davis (2000), "when we look more closely at the emergence of the prison-industrial complex, the language of enslavement fails to the extent that it relies on the category of forced labor as its basic premise".⁴⁴ The difference between before the 13th Amendment was ratified to now is that, now, Black men and women have been granted equal rights and voting rights. While they do face the major problem of forced labor in prisons, there are other huge consequences that follow with being arrested now. More than "70 million Americans—over 20 percent of the entire U.S. population, overwhelmingly poor and disproportionately people of color—now have criminal records that authorize legal discrimination for life".⁴⁵ People who have been imprisoned now face legal discrimination in employment, education, housing, and thus in the economy. Because more Black people have been charged with felonies than white people, they also face voter discrimination in many states due to "voter disenfranchisement laws effectively suppressing the Black vote as well".⁴⁶ All because for more than three decades, politicians and the news has constantly told the public that these 'criminals' deserve to suffer in prison and have successfully made the public forget or made them ignorant to the fact that "whites are just as likely to commit many crimes, especially drug crimes".⁴⁷ The loophole that the 13th Amendment provides is dangerous. Even "the fiercest critics of mass

36 *13th*. Directed by Ava DuVernay. 2016. Netflix, Film., 1:05.

37 *13th*. Directed by Ava DuVernay. 2016. Netflix, Film., 1:23:34.

38 *Ibid.*, 1:23:18.

39 Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*. The New Press, 2010, 8.

40 Western, Bruce, and Christopher Wildeman. "The Black Family and Mass Incarceration." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 621 (January 2009), 225.

41 *Ibid.*, 228.

42 Gilmore, Kim. "Slavery and Prison - Understanding the Connections." *Social Justice* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2000), 200.

43 Browne, Jaron. "Rooted in Slavery: Prison Labor Exploitation." *Race, Poverty, & the Environment* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2007), 44.

44 Davis, Angela Y. "The Challenge of Prison Abolition: A Conversation." By Dylan Rodriguez. *Social Justice* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2000), 213.

45 Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*. The New Press, 2010, xxix.

46 *Ibid.*, 239.

47 Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*. The New Press, 2010, 226.

incarceration generally accept that the Punishment Clause permits practices they condemn as brutal and exploitative.”⁴⁸ Today, Black people face discrimination in more legal ways for the same crimes white people commit than ever before. If more action had been taken or more protections were put into place, we “might have prevented or shortened one of the most barbaric and shameful episodes in United States history.”⁴⁹

Conclusion

Even though the Civil War ended in 1865, emancipating slaves, and the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery was ratified, slavery still very much existed under a different guise. Because the South had to rebuild their economy and restore their governments, they adopted a convict leasing system which fed Black prisoners to private companies and farms to work forced labor in inhumane conditions. This system eventually led to the Jim Crow laws of the south which then led to ‘tough on crime’ policies put into place by Presidents Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton after the Civil Rights Movement in 1965. These oppressive efforts, such as unfair sentencing, which occur even today have a direct, undeniable relationship to slavery. These modern policies have overcrowded prisons, targeted minorities, disenfranchised American citizens, and stripped many Black people of their rights. Mass incarceration is a modern caste system classifying people of color as second-class citizens limiting their human rights and increasing the discrimination they face.

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48 Pope, James G. "Mass Incarceration, Convict Leasing, and the Thirteenth Amendment: A Revisionist Account." *New York University Law Review* 94 (December 2019), 1467.

49 Ibid., 1553-1554.

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