

# Modern witches, a counter-culture rebirth

It was in America that the witchcraft religion became a significant aspect of the counter-culture phenomenon, expressed most cogently<sup>1</sup> in the feminist movement. After all, the majority of executed witches during the witch trials were women. [...] They rightly saw social parallels between the past and present in terms of patriarchy and misogyny. In 1968 one radical feminist movement, which was not Wiccan<sup>2</sup> in inspiration, called themselves “WITCH,” the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell. Members of WITCH organized public protests and street theatre events to highlight the dominance of patriarchal capitalism.

[...] The most influential feminist Wiccan text of the 1970s, however, was *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (1979). Its author Miriam Simos, better known as Starhawk, took Wicca in a new direction with a strong emphasis on ecological concerns, feminist spirituality, and shamanism. She co-founded the activist witch movement ‘Reclaim’ to further press for the social, political, and environmental concerns that resonated with her conception of a goddess nature religion. By the year 2000, *Spiral Dance* had sold more than 300,000 copies, influencing many feminists within and beyond the Wiccan community, and it was one of the first significant American influences on British Wiccans.

*The Oxford Illustrated History of Witchcraft and Magic, Owen Davies, 2017*

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<sup>1</sup> convincingly

<sup>2</sup> a form of modern paganism