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Witches and Witchcraft in the Hispanic Folklore of New Mexico

Lois Bartlett Harpham

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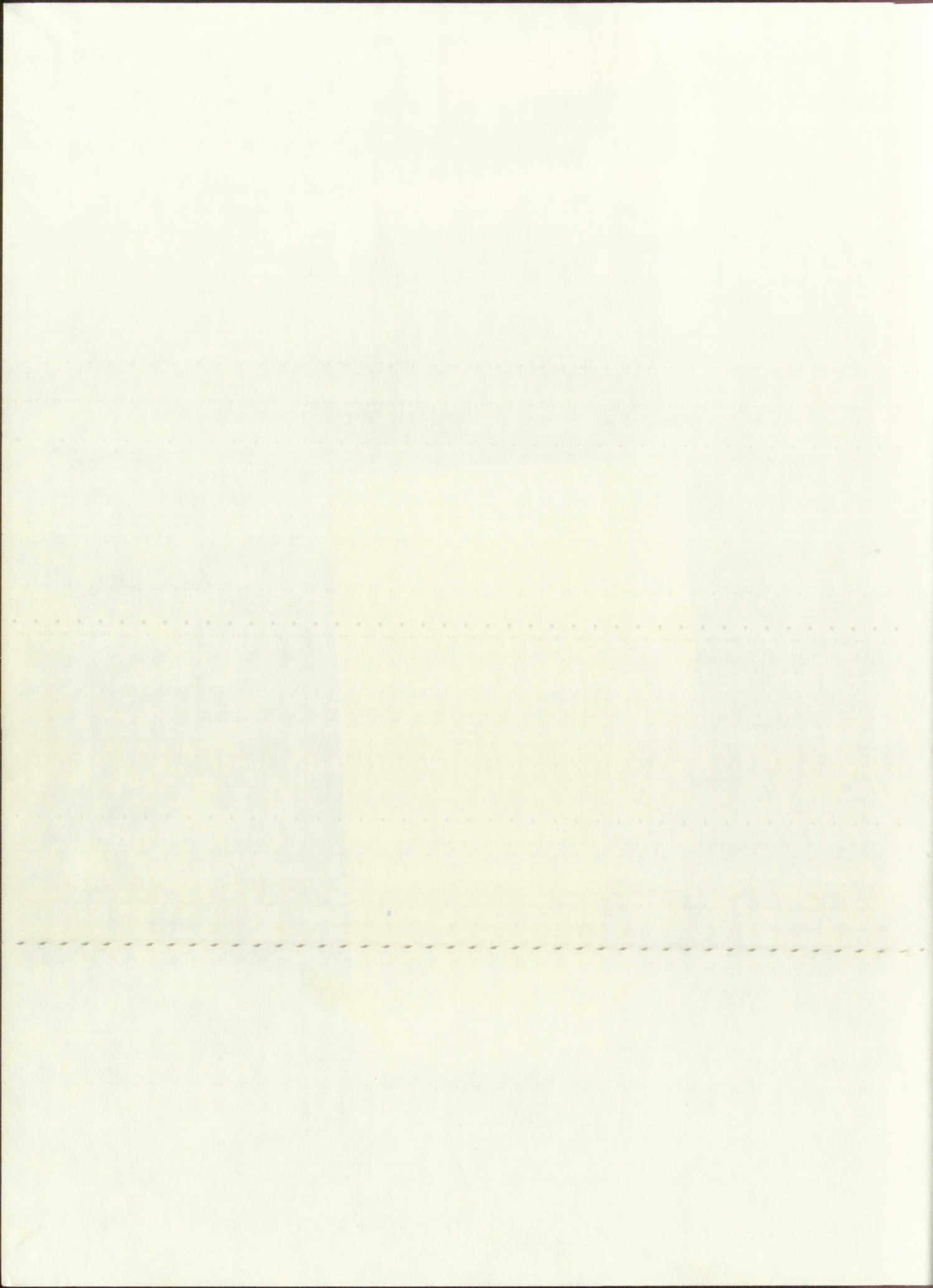
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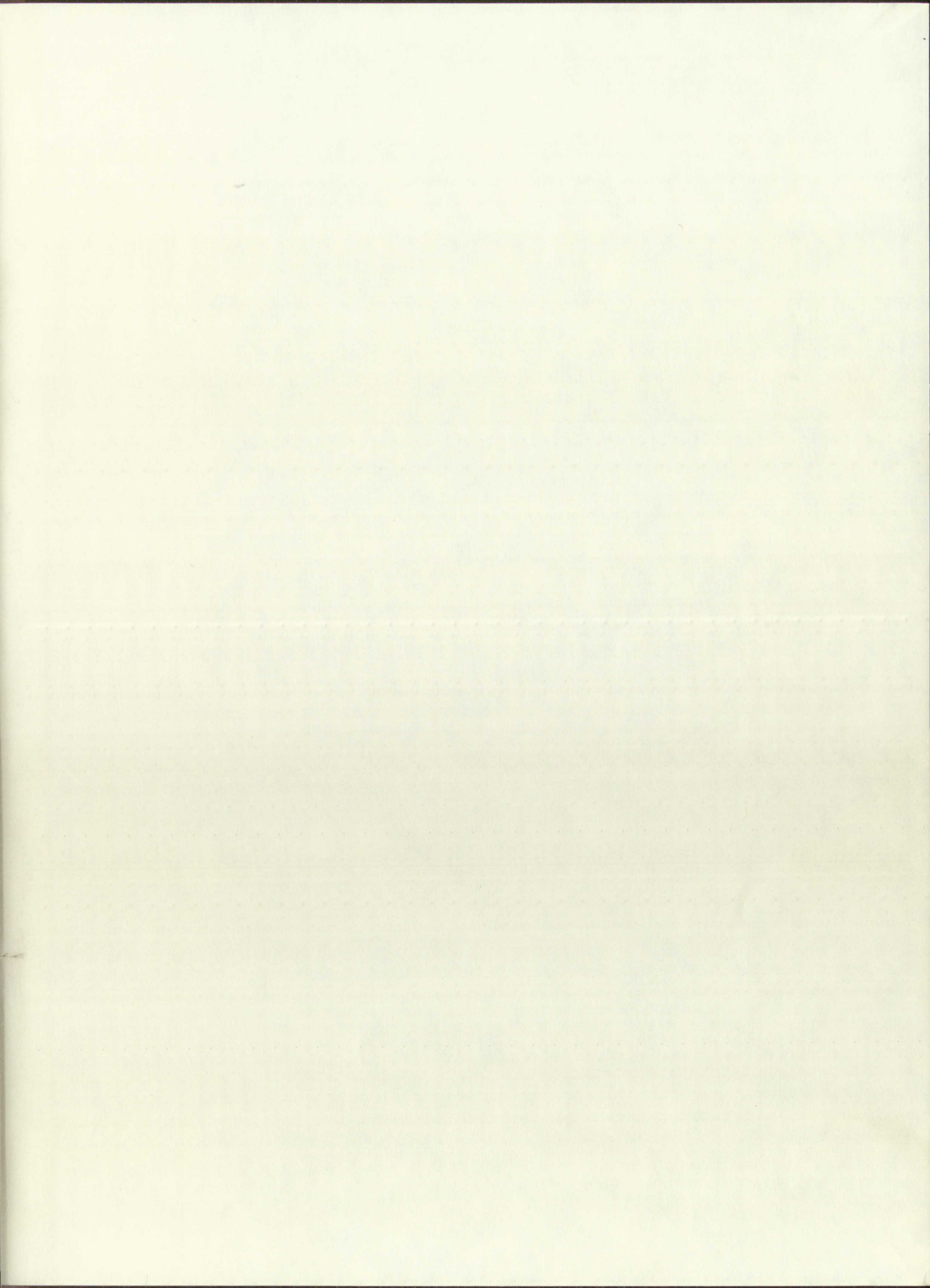
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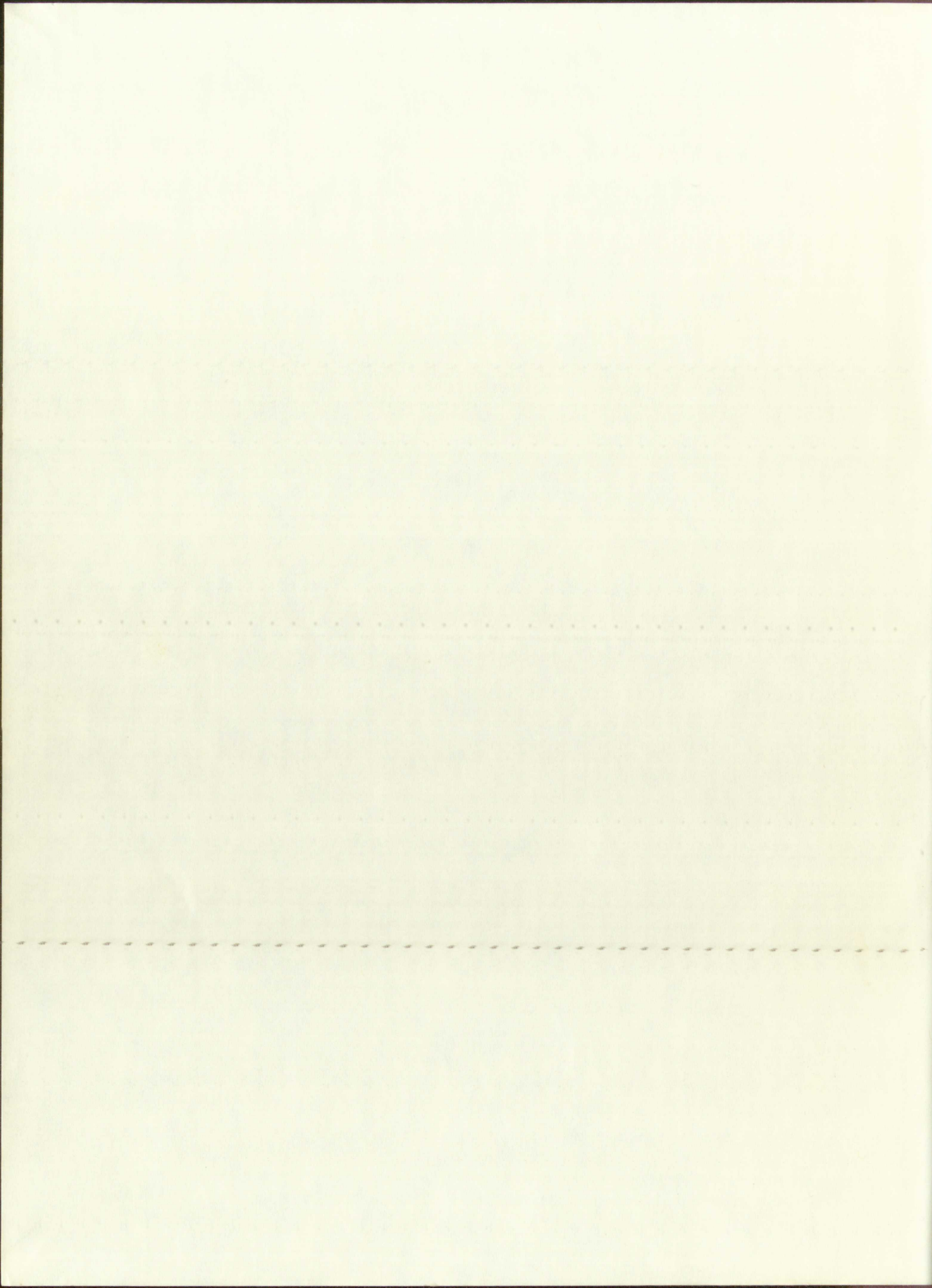
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WITCHES AND WITCHCRAFT IN THE HISPANIC
FOLKLORE OF NEW MEXICO

A Thesis

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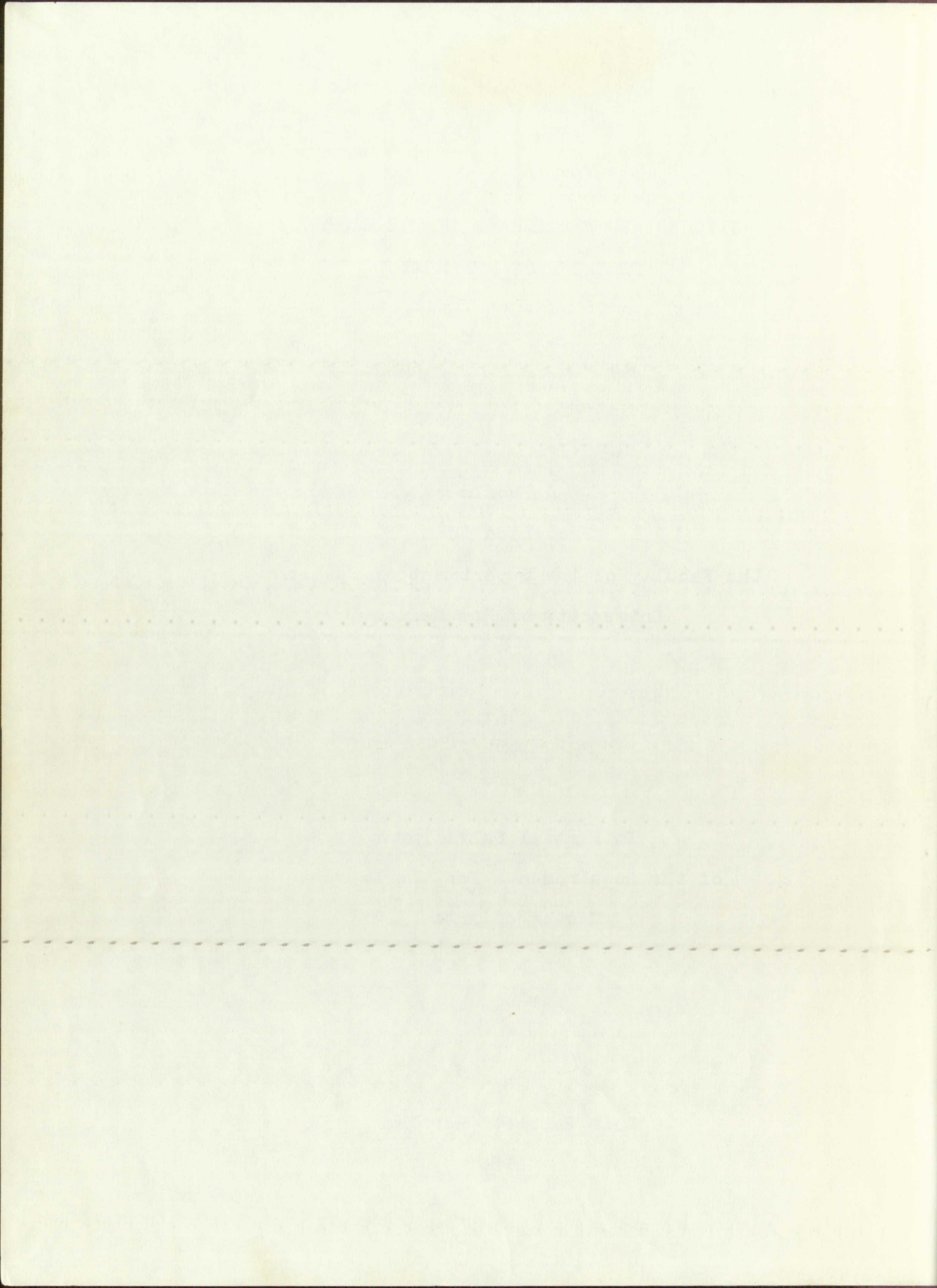
the Faculty of the Department of Spanish
University of New Mexico

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Lois Bartlett Harpham

1950



This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of the University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

E. H. Castetter

DEAN

May 15, 1950

DATE

WITCHES AND WITCHCRAFT IN THE HISPANIC
FOLKLORE OF NEW MEXICO

by

Lois Bartlett Harpham

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE PROBLEM	1
II. CHARACTERISTICS AND HABITS OF WITCHES	9
III. RELIGION AND CHARMS	26
I Religion	26
Charms	31
IV. WITCHES AND CHILDREN.	37
V. WITCHES AND ANIMALS	47
VI. ORIGINAL INVESTIGATIONS	54
VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	64
BIBLIOGRAPHY	69

155403

100
 101
 102
 103
 104
 105
 106
 107
 108
 109
 110
 111
 112
 113
 114
 115
 116
 117
 118
 119
 120
 121
 122
 123
 124
 125
 126
 127
 128
 129
 130
 131
 132
 133
 134
 135
 136
 137
 138
 139
 140
 141
 142
 143
 144
 145
 146
 147
 148
 149
 150
 151
 152
 153
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 155
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 157
 158
 159
 160
 161
 162
 163
 164
 165
 166
 167
 168
 169
 170
 171
 172
 173
 174
 175
 176
 177
 178
 179
 180
 181
 182
 183
 184
 185
 186
 187
 188
 189
 190
 191
 192
 193
 194
 195
 196
 197
 198
 199
 200

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE	CHAPTER
1	I. THE PROBLEM
9	II. CHARACTERISTICS AND HABITS OF WITCHES
23	III. RELIGION AND CHARMS
25	IV. RELIGION
31	V. CHARMS
37	VI. WITCHES AND CHILDREN
47	VII. WITCHES AND ANIMALS
54	VIII. ORIGINAL INVESTIGATIONS
64	IX. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
69	X. BIBLIOGRAPHY

155403

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The principal purpose in this study is to accumulate as much material as possible pertaining to witches and witchcraft in the Hispanic folklore of New Mexico, and to make a critical and analytical study of this material. There are many articles and stories in various periodicals, folklore journals, collections of folktales, and varied sources; but there is no work devoted exclusively to this particular phase of New Mexican folklore.

This study will deal with the following related subjects: the characteristics in general of the witches in the stories, the various types of stories in which witches occur, and the superstitious beliefs of the people. It will then compare the elements of the witch tales found in New Mexico with similar folk tales of other countries.

Definition of folklore. According to Dr. Aurelio M. Espinosa,¹ folklore is an English word composed of two

¹ Aurelio M. Espinosa, La Ciencia del Folklore, Publicado en "Archivos del Folklore," de la Habana, Vol. III, Num. 4.

Statement of the project

This study is to investigate the
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sections of folktales, and to make
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Folklore is an old word
M. Rapin, J. Rapin, and
I. Rapin, M. Rapin, and
Publicado en "Revista del Folklore"
Núm. 4

words, folk,² meaning people, and lore,³ meaning knowledge or learning. Folklore means then, popular knowledge. It is the science which studies the knowledge of the people, that which they learn and practice during their life and that which handed down from generation to generation forms the basis of their life, their mode of thinking, their working, their religion, in fact, the philosophical basis of their material and spiritual life.

J. Frank Dobie simplifies the definition somewhat when he says, "In its broadest sense, folklore is the fundamental expression of a folk. . . ."4

Besides the scientific side of folklore, there is the angle which is purely artistic, including painting, music, and literature. Folklore as popular literature is a natural manifestation of the soul of the people. Out of the various forms in which it takes shape -- tales, proverbs, anecdotes, ballads, and the like, will be revealed the spiritual life of the people, their thoughts, their emotions, and their dreams. It is with this phase of folklore that

2 The German word volk and the English word folk are cognates, each derived from an older root word of its own language.

3 Lore is derived from the English word lar, meaning learning. It also has a German cognate, leare.

4 J. Frank Dobie, Folklore of the Southwest, Reprinted from Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. II, No. 3, September, 1924, pp. 269-284.

words, folk, meaning people, and folk, meaning knowledge or learning. Folklore means then, popular knowledge. It is the science which studies the knowledge of the people, that which they learn and practice during their life and that which handed down from generation to generation forms the basis of their life, their mode of thinking, their working, their religion, in fact, the philosophical basis of their material and spiritual life.

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4 J. Frank Dobie, Folklore of the Southwest, Reprinted from Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 11, No. 2, September, 1924, pp. 225-234.

this thesis will be concerned.

Definition of witch. Webster's International Dictionary defines the word witch as "one who practices black art, or magic; one regarded as having supernatural or magical power by compact with an evil spirit; especially with the devil."⁵

Witches, as seen in the folklore of New Mexico, have a much more pleasing aspect than the foregoing definition would indicate. The tales told around the fireside on a cold winter night, or in the cool breeze of a summer evening are interesting to old and young alike. The element of witchcraft, far from being sinister, proves to be a fascinating one, and witch tales are found in the repertory of almost any raconteur, or popular story-teller.

The subject of witchcraft is as old and as wide as the world. Some authorities on witchcraft seem to date it from the sixteenth century, but others claim that it was firmly established many centuries earlier when paganism first gave place to Christianity.⁶ This early history of

⁵ Webster's New International Dictionary, Second edition, Unabridged, (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1947), p. 2939.

⁶ J. W. Wickwar, Witchcraft and the Black Art (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, (n. d.)), p. 14.

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Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, Unabridged, Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1947, p. 2882.

S. J. E. Elwes, Witchcraft and the Black Art (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, n.d.), p. 1A.

witchcraft will have no particular place in this thesis aside from certain phases of it which might still be seen as characteristic of the present-day tales of the folklore of New Mexico.

Background of folklore. According to Mr. Stith Thompson, "The interest in the study of folklore has increased tremendously in the past fifty years."⁷ Specialists in the field have been busy in all parts of the world collecting tales, publishing them, and making analytical and comparative studies of the tales from various countries.

From the beginning of time, story-telling has been one of the most important pastimes of mankind. The need for entertainment is a basic one found in all peoples regardless of geographic location or station in life. Leisure hours had to be filled in, and what is a more natural diversion than the telling of tales, true or imaginary? Therefore, the natural art of story-telling developed in all countries as the answer to the demand for entertainment. This art has developed in every rank of society from the lowly peasants spinning yarns after the day's toil to the nobility in the courts with their lavish display of luxury and grandeur. Tales of actual happenings, of heroic deeds, or

⁷ Stith Thompson, The Folktale (New York: The Dryden Press, 1946), preface p. vii.

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figments of one's imagination have been told and retold from one generation to the next with many possible changes, additions, or omissions. From this oral art has evolved our written narratives; and much of modern fiction, if not based on, is at least inspired by the tale as brought down through history.

Background of New Mexican folklore. Concerning the background of New Mexican folklore, Dr. José M. Espinosa says, "At the present time most folklorists are of the opinion that the folklore of Spanish America is fundamentally and principally of peninsular Spanish origin."⁸ The plausibility of this statement can readily be seen since the Spaniards have played such a great part in the course of the history of New Mexico. This vast territory now known as the Southwest was one of the first of the northern regions to be visited by the Spaniards following the conquest of Mexico. Coronado was the first European to visit what is now New Mexico. Later, expeditions of colonists began the conquest of the territory, and in 1598, under the leadership of Juan de Oñate, the Spaniards succeeded in establishing a permanent colony in New Mexico. The region became

⁸ José Manuel Espinosa, Spanish Folktales From New Mexico, Memoirs of the American Folk-Lore Society, 1937, Vol. XXX, p. XI.

elements of oral tradition have been told and retold from one generation to the next with many possible changes, additions, or omissions. From this oral art has evolved our written narratives; and much of modern fiction, it has been said, is at least inspired by the tale as brought down through history.

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completely hispanized and in time became one of the strongest frontier settlements of the Spanish empire of the seventeenth century. European folktales were transplanted to American soil from these early days of the Spanish settlers and have been handed down from generation to generation.

Culturally, a great part of New Mexico is still a part of Spain. Religion, many of the customs, and the traditions of the Spanish conquerors still persist today, and New Mexico is therefore the natural laboratory for traditional Spanish ballads and other folk material. It naturally follows that a part of the education of the children of the Southwest should include an understanding of this background, rich in the culture and traditions of the Old World.

An interesting point which has been brought out by specialists in the field of folklore is the fact that Indian tradition has had such little influence on the Spanish folktales of New Mexico. On the contrary, a marked influence of Spanish tradition is seen in the Indian folklore of New Mexico.⁹ In the early part of the twentieth century, the two foregoing statements were believed completely true. However, in the late 1920's and in succeeding years, the

⁹ Ibid., p. XVII

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belief in the degree of influence has changed, and more Indian influence has been discovered in the Hispanic folklore of New Mexico.¹⁰

The natural tendency in story-telling is to vary the tale according to the whims of the raconteur, making it fit into local conditions and familiar situations. Therefore, many variations will be found which stem from one original theme, but the changes are insignificant, and the stories remain basically Spanish.

Basis of this study. For the most part, this study will be based on folktales which have already been collected, most of which have been published. Some of the tales used, however, will be from unpublished manuscripts as in the case of Dr. Juan B. Rael's Cuentos Españoles de Colorado y Nuevo Méjico, and from New Mexico Witchcraft, unpublished manuscript in the files of New Mexico Writer's Project, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Some original investigations will also be made by means of personal contact and questionnaires in an effort to discover new materials in the field.

The major portion of this thesis will be concerned with stories about witches and witchcraft; however, some

¹⁰ George M. Foster, "Some Characteristics of Mexican Indian Folklore," Journal of American Folklore, 58:225-235, January-March, 1945.

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¹⁰ George M. Foster, "Some Characterizations of Mexican Indian Folklore," Journal of American Folklore, 58:222-232, January-March, 1945.

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CHAPTER II

CHARACTERISTICS AND HABITS OF WITCHES

Types of witches. After an analysis of certain witch tales, beliefs, and superstitions about witchcraft from the various parts of New Mexico, it is seen that, according to popular belief, there are characteristics which are common to witches throughout the state. As a general belief, witches are women, and most commonly, they are old, haggard, and scrawny. Not only is this true in New Mexican folklore, but the universal conception of a witch is that of an ugly, old woman. According to Charles F. Lummis,¹ there was actually a witch named Marcelina who was a thin, withered, little woman about fifty years old. In 1887, she was stoned to death in San Mateo because she had turned Don José Patricio Mariño into a woman, and had also caused Señor Montaña to become lame.

In a tale told by Cleofas M. Jaramillo² in Shadows of the Past, there was an old woman, La Chon, who lived alone in the village of Arroyo Hondo who was believed to be a witch. These are only two of the many tales found in New Mexico in which the witch appears as an old woman.

¹ Charles F. Lummis, A New Mexico David (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), p. 127.

² Cleofas M. Jaramillo, Shadows of the Past (Santa Fe: Seton Village Press, 1941), p. 99.

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1 Charles F. Lummis, A New Mexico Legend (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), p. 124.
2 Charles M. Jaramillo, El Estero de las Fiestas (San Antonio: San Antonio Press, 1941), p. 52.

However, there are some exceptions to the belief that witches are always old women, and in some of the tales, the witch is a young and beautiful girl; and in others there is the brujo, a male witch, sometimes young and at other times an old man. In Paul Horgan's story, "The Witch,"³ there is an unusual tale of a beautiful young girl who became a witch. Andrella, whose hair was burned off in a tragic fire, realized that her sweetheart, Lupe, would not love her as she was no longer beautiful. She, therefore, took up witchcraft and bewitched him, causing his illness and eventual death.

An example of a young man as a witch is found in "El Brujo," a tale in Dr. Rael's⁴ collection. The brujo assumes the form of a cat in order to convince his compañero that witches really do exist.

Not only in New Mexico, but the world over, witches are noted for their cruelty and evil deeds. But in the case of the New Mexican witches, in spite of the evil which they inflict on persons who incur their ill will, these witches never injure dumb animals.⁵ This may be due to the

³ Paul Horgan, "The Witch," Folk-Say, B. A. Botkin editor, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), p. 197.

⁴ Dr. Juan B. Rael, Cuentos Españoles de Colorado y Nuevo México, (Unpublished manuscript).

⁵ "Witchcraft in New Mexico," Journal of American Folklore, 1:167-168, July-September, 1888.

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⁴ Paul Horgan, "The Witch," Talk-Say, B. A. Haskin, Editor, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), p. 107.

⁵ Dr. Juan B. Paez, Guatemala: Religión y Folklore, Mexico: Editorial (unpublished manuscript).

⁶ "Witchcraft in New Mexico," Journal of American Folklore, 1:167-168, July-August, 1932.

fact that animals play such a great part in their witchcraft. New Mexican witches usually go about by day in their familiar human form, but at night they are believed to assume the form of various animals or birds. They often retain part of their human form, taking only the eyes and legs or other separate members of a cat, coyote, or other animal.

There are a number of versions of the tale in which a witch loses his or her own eyes and has to go through life with the eyes of an animal. Juan Perea, in the vicinity of San Mateo, is said to be one of those unfortunates.⁶ He was out one night wearing the eyes of a cat, having left his own eyes at home in a dish. While he was gone, a dog knocked over the table and ate Juan's eyes, leaving him with cat eyes for the rest of his life.

In the tale, "The Women With Cat's Eyes," related by Ruth L. Barker⁷, an old gentleman called Pánfilo was in the habit of playing cards every afternoon with two old maids, Fefe and Pilar. People warned him that they were brujas, but he paid no heed as he enjoyed their company. But he was annoyed because they always made him go home at night and would never play cards after dark.

⁶ "Witchcraft in New Mexico," Journal of American Folklore, 1:167-168, July-September, 1888.

⁷ Ruth Laughlin Barker, "New Mexico Witch Tales," Tone the Bell Easy, J. Frank Dobie, editor, Texas Folklore Society, 10:62-70, January, 1932.

fact that animals play such a great part in their lives. New Mexicans watched animals go about by day in their familiar human form, but at night they are believed to assume the form of various animals or birds. They often retain part of their human form, taking only the eyes and legs or other separate members of a cat, dog, or other animal.

There are a number of versions of the tale in which a witch loses his or her own eyes and has to go through life with the eyes of an animal. Juan Perez, in the vicinity of San Mateo, is said to be one of these unfortunate. He was out one night wearing the eyes of a cat, having lost his own eyes at home in a dish. While he was gone, a dog knocked over the table and ate Juan's eyes, leaving him with cat eyes for the rest of his life.

In the tale, "The Woman With Cat's Eyes," related by Ruth L. Barker, an old gentleman called Páez was in the habit of getting out every afternoon with two old maids, Pete and Maria. He warned them that they were witches, but he paid no heed as he enjoyed their company. But he was caught because they always made him go home at night and would never play cards after dark.

5 "Witchcraft in New Mexico," *Journal of American Folklore*, 1:167-168, July-September, 1888.
7 Ruth L. Barker, "New Mexico Witch Tales," *Journal of American Folklore*, 1:167-168, July-September, 1888.
8 "The Woman With Cat's Eyes," *Journal of American Folklore*, 1:167-168, July-September, 1888.

One night he went to their house and finding no one at home, he decided to go in and wait for them. He found the witches' eyes on the fireplace as if they had left them there to keep warm. Acting on impulse, he took the eyes and threw them into the fire, but was frightened to see them pop and hop around in the fire, so he made a hasty retreat.

The next afternoon when he called on the old maids, he was horrified to see that both had cat's eyes, and that the two skinny cats were blind, without even any eyeballs in their heads. They could not play cards any more as the two old maids could not see well enough in the day time.

"Los Ojos de la Bruja," another of Dr. Rael's⁸ cuentos is similar to the two foregoing tales. A little boy who was an orphan went to live with a woman who was a witch. He watched her at night when she would get up out of bed; cut off her legs; take out her eyes and put them in a dish. She always put the cat out before she left. She would then say, "Sin Dios y Santa María," and would fly up the chimney.

One night she forgot to put the cat out. He got up on the table and ate the witch's eyes. The next day she was very ill, and she told the boy that she had had such a headache that her eyes disappeared. She continued to live

⁸ Rael, loc. cit.

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threw them into the fire, but was frightened to see them

pop and hop around in the fire, so he made a hasty retreat.

The next afternoon when he called on the old maids,

he was horrified to see that both had cat's eyes, and that

the two skinny cats were blind, without even any eyeballs

in their heads. They could not play cards any more as the

two old maids could not see well enough in the day time.

... "Like Cates de la Braye," another of Dr. Kael's patients

is similar to the two foregoing cases. A little boy who was

an orphan went to live with a woman who was a witch. He

watched her at night when she would get up out of bed, cut

off her legs; take out her eyes and put them in a dish. She

always put the cat out before she left. She would then say,

"Stu Bles y Bles Bles, and would fly up the chimney.

One night she forgot to put the cat out. He got up

in the night and saw the witch's eyes. The next day she

was very ill, and she told the boy that she had had a

a headache that her eyes disappeared. She continued to live

Dr. Kael, loc. cit.

without eyes, but she could always fly.

Witches' mode of travel. By popular belief, New Mexican witches do not fly about on broomsticks, as do the witches in the Anglo Hallowe'en stories. New Mexican witches often make quejas from hollow pumpkins in which they sail through the air to places they wish to visit.⁹ It is also believed that they go about by day as commonplace people, but at night they are transformed into different animals or birds and sally forth to their witch meetings or to prowl about wreaking their vengeance on those who have incurred their enmity. A great number of witch tales in New Mexico are those concerned with animals which will be discussed later as a group.

Type of harm done by witches. Many New Mexicans believe that witches can do anything they wish, but they seldom wish to do a good act unless bribed or frightened into doing it. Brujas may cause illness, crop failure, unhappiness in love affairs, and bad luck in general. The witch has the power to lift her own spell, if one has the skill to threaten her into doing so. Curanderos¹⁰ have great

⁹ Jaramillo, loc. cit.

¹⁰ The feminine form is curandera.

without any, but especially in the case of the
Mexican children who were brought to the United States
in the early 1900s. The children were often made
through the air to believe that they were
but at night they are told that they are
blinds and early forth to the
about wrecking their eyes. A great
their enemy. A great number of children
those concerned with the children
as a group.

Types of born here children
believe that children can be
children who are in a good way
into going to the United States
unhappy in love with the United States
skill to threaten her children

9 January 1961
to the United States

powers in curing those who have been bewitched and can prevail against the most powerful witch.¹¹ The various remedies of the curanderos and means of effecting cures are unlimited and are reminiscent of ancient superstitions and beliefs.

Witches opposed to religion. The general belief concerning the nature of witches, not only in New Mexico but the world over, is that they are opposed to anything religious. This trait is exemplified in New Mexican witchcraft by the procedure which they must follow in order to be able to fly. The phrase which they say is, "Sin Dios y sin Santa María," (Without God and without the Virgin Mary), whereupon they mount up into the air with ease and in a flash they arrive at their destination. Thus, by denying God, their powers of sorcery are increased. When they go to their witch meetings or dances which are held at secret places, deserted houses, and mountain haunts, they must hang their rosaries or other religious paraphernalia on a tree outside. They are afraid of the cross, and through this fear, people have been able to detect witches and mete out just punishment.¹²

¹¹ Erna Fergusson, Our Southwest (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. 254.

¹² Lummis, op. cit., p. 132.

power in curing those who have been bewitched and can prevail against the most powerful witch. The various remedies of the magical and means of attacking enemies are unlimited and are reminiscent of ancient superstitions and beliefs.

Witches engaged in religion. The general belief con-

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11. El Huevo Negro, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943), p. 234.

12. Ibid., p. 132.

A clever tale illustrating this fear of the cross is found in "New Mexico Witch Tales."¹³ As the story goes, many people claimed that Doña Refugia was a witch, but none had been able to prove it. One day when she was to call on a certain family, the father took two needles and made a cross under the zalea (sheepskin rug) at the back door. After Doña Refugia entered the house, he made another cross under the zalea at the front door. He then went outside and shouted to Doña Refugia that her house was on fire. She ran here and there, first to the front door, then to the back door, but dared not to step on the zalea, for fear of the cross.

The man finally told her that it was only the smoke from her chimney, and as he walked in he moved the zalea and said, "Look, mamacita, here are two needles under this zalea." When he picked them up, Doña Refugia ran out of the house, and he shouted at her as she ran away, "Now we know you for the old bruja that you are."

The spoken name of God or the Virgin Mary breaks a witch's spell at once. A witch or anyone being transported by a witch must avoid calling on God or any of the saints. There are numerous stories in which persons who were being carried on the back of a witch would cry out in fright,

¹³ Barker, loc. cit.

A clever tale illustrating this fact of the cross is found in "New Mexico Witch Stories" as the story goes. Many people claimed that Dona Betegia was a witch, but none had been able to prove it. One day when she was on call on a certain family, she took two needles and made a cross under the eaves (anchepetia twg) at the back door. After Dona Betegia entered the house, he made another cross under the eaves at the front door. He then went outside and shouted to Dona Betegia that her house was on fire. She ran here and there, first to the front door, then to the back door, but dared not to step on the eaves, for fear of the cross.

The man finally told her that it was only the smoke from her chimney, and so he walked in he moved the eaves and said, "Look, Magistrate, here are two needles under the eaves." When he picked them up, Dona Betegia ran out of the house, and he shouted at her as she ran away, "Now we know you for the old witch that you are."

The spoken name of God or the Virgin Mary is a witch's spell at once. A witch or anyone being transported by a witch must avoid calling on God or any of the saints. There are numerous stories in which persons who were being carried on the back of a witch would cry out in fright.

"God save me!" Immediately the spell was broken and the person fell thousands of feet to the earth to find himself, unhurt, in an unknown wilderness.

By the same token of breaking the spell of a witch by invoking God's aid, one may also use this means as a preventive measure against the evil deeds of witches. A witch is powerless to cast any sort of spell on a person who implores God's aid.

Means of catching witches. The relationship of religion to witchcraft is also illustrated in the New Mexican beliefs as to the means of catching witches. Among the more common of these beliefs is that of applying holy water. If any person, not necessarily a priest, is able to sprinkle some holy water on a witch, she immediately loses her power and is helpless in her captor's hands.¹⁴ Holy water used in witchcraft was not original in New Mexico. In the early days of Christianity when paganism was fused with religious rites, there were evidences of the use of holy water in combatting witchcraft.¹⁵

There are several methods of catching a witch besides that of applying holy water. According to popular belief in

¹⁴ Lummis, op. cit., p. 132.

¹⁵ George Lyman Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1929), p. 147.

"God save me!" Immediately the spell was broken and the person felt himself at home as the earth he tilled himself, amidst, in unknown wilderness.

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¹⁸ Landa, op. cit., p. 122.
¹⁹ George Jean Kupper, Witchcraft in Old and New England (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1929), p. 127.

many sections of the state, anyone with the name of Juan or Juana has the power to catch a witch. His method is simple. All he has to do is to draw a nine foot circle on the ground, turn his shirt inside out and call out, "Venga bruja," (Come witch), whereupon the witch will fall helpless into this circle. It would seem that with this ability, those native peoples named Juan or Juana would have rid the country of witches. But a person with that name seldom exercised his power, for when he did, all the other witches fell upon him and beat him to death.¹⁶

The fact that these beliefs are prevalent in various parts of the state brings us to the consideration of their origin. The similarity of events and beliefs suggests a common origin for most of the bruja stories throughout New Mexico. Almost identical stories were found in Manzano, a little town on the east slope of the Manzano mountains about sixty miles southeast of Albuquerque, and in Bernalillo, eighteen miles from Albuquerque, on U. S. Highway 85. Besides their ability to transform themselves into animals, witches can also travel as balls of fire over the country at night, leaping great distances from place to place. To catch a witch in this form, Juan must draw a circle in the road. The ball

¹⁶ "Witchcraft in New Mexico," Journal of American Folklore, 1:167-168, July-September, 1888.

many stories of the witch, anyone with the name of Juan or
 'Juan' has been known to catch a witch. The witch is always
 all in black and is always a black-foot circle on the ground.
 Juan has a black inside coat and a white one, "Yankee pants," (brown
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of fire will be drawn into it. The next day when the witch changes back to her natural form she cannot leave the spot unless pulled away by another person.¹⁷

As related by Wesley R. Hurt, Jr.,¹⁸ in 1897, there lived in Tomé a man named Juan Chávez who was famous for his ability to thwart witches. There was also in Tomé at the time, an old woman called Chata who was believed to be a witch.

As Juan was traveling by horseback to Casa, Colorado, to visit a friend of his, he saw a large ball of fire rolling toward him. He dismounted, drew a circle in the road, and then continued his journey. When he returned the next day, he saw a woman sitting in the road at the exact spot where he had drawn the circle. As the reader probably has guessed, it was Chata. She could not leave the spot of her own will. She begged Juan to take her hand and pull her out of the circle, which he did, and she returned to Tomé with him, a very subdued and contrite old woman.

Another common belief found in several sections of the state is that if a witch comes into the house in the form of an animal or bird, Juan has to change his clothes, putting

¹⁷ Wesley R. Hurt, Jr., "Witchcraft in New Mexico," El Palacio, 47:73, April, 1940.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 76

of fire will be drawn into it. The next day when the witch
changes back to her natural form she cannot leave the spot
unless pulled away by another person.

As related by Wesley H. Hurt, Jr., in 1937, there
lived in Toms a man named Juan Cárdenas who was famous for his
ability to charm sickness. There was also in Toms at the
time, an old woman called Concha who was believed to be a
witch.

As Juan was traveling by horseback to Oaxaca, Colima,
to visit a friend of his, he saw a large ball of fire
rolling toward him. He dismounted, drew a circle in the
road, and then continued his journey. When he returned the
next day, he saw a woman sitting in the road at the exact
spot where he had drawn the circle. As the reader probably
has guessed, it was Concha. She could not leave the spot of
her own will. She begged Juan to take her hand and pull her
out of the circle, which he did, and she returned to Toms
with him, a very emaciated and convulsive old woman.

Another common belief found in several sections of the
state is that if a witch comes into the house in the form of
an animal or bird, then he or she has to change his clothes, putting

El Palacio, 47:13, April, 1940.
Wesley H. Hurt, Jr., "Witchcraft in New Mexico."

them on inside out, and draw a circle near the doorway. The witch will disappear, but the next morning she will be found in her normal form, dead.¹⁹

Witch tests. There are also a great number of schemes for determining whether or not a person is a witch. Old women who live alone are usually suspected of being witches, and their skeptical friends and neighbors often apply the following tests in order to ascertain the truth about the suspect. The food test is a common one for detecting a witch. Food or drink proffered by one suspected of being a witch is considered dangerous, and, whenever possible, the recipient will not eat or drink it. The general belief is that anything made by a witch will turn to worms within three days. Another tale recounted in "New Mexico Witch Tales"²⁰ is that of Doña Paulita, who was thought to be a witch. She took a requesón (dish of cheese) to a neighbor of hers. The neighbor thanked her for it, but not daring to eat it, she set it aside for three days. According to the story, at the end of the required time, the neighbor had her proof that Doña Paulita was a bruja, for the requesón was full of worms.

Another tale concerning food which is similar to the

¹⁹ Hurt, loc. cit.

²⁰ Barker, loc. cit.

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that anything made by a witch will turn to worms within
three days. Another tale recounted in New Mexico Witch
Tales²⁰ is that of Doña Felicitas, who was thought to be a
witch. She took a resaca (dish of cheese) to a neighbor
of hers. The neighbor thanked her for it, but not daring
to eat it, she set it aside for three days. According to
the story, at the end of the specified time, the neighbor
had her proof that Doña Felicitas was a brujita, for the resaca
was full of worms.

Another tale concerning food which is similar to the

foregoing is related by Jaramillo.²¹ As the story goes, Candelaria, an old woman who was believed to be a witch, owned a herd of goats and made a very delicious goat cheese. A boy insisted on buying some of the cheese, but his mother, knowing that Candelaria had alienated her husband from her, was afraid to eat the cheese. When she cut the cheese, she took the first slice (because she had heard that the evil spell was always in the first slice) and fed it to the dog. Within a few days the dog grew very sick, and when the boys investigated, they found him swarming with worms.

A superstitious belief concerning the owl is found in many different sections of the state. The tales are numerous, but all of them contain the idea that an owl or the hooting of an owl forbodes bad luck or indicates that a witch is near. This motif of the owl in witchcraft is also found in many versions of European folktales.²²

A belief of the people in Arroyo Hondo is that if an owl is heard hooting on the chimney top at night, it is a sign that some evil will befall. Someone should go out and say to the owl, "Mañana vendrás por sal." ("Tomorrow you will come for salt.") The first person to enter the house the next day to ask for something is believed to be the witch, who, in the form of an owl, had hooted on the

²¹ Jaramillo, op. cit., p. 101

²² Kittredge, op. cit., p. 491

Forgetting is related by Jarrold.²² As the story goes, Candelaria, an old woman who was believed to be a witch, owned a herd of goats and made a very delicious goat cheese. A boy insisted on having some of the cheese, but his mother, knowing that Candelaria had alienated her husband from her, was afraid to eat the cheese. When she ate the cheese, she took the first slice (because she had heard that the evil spell was always in the first slice) and fed it to the dog. Within a few days the dog grew very sick, and when the boys investigated, they found him swarming with worms.

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A belief of the people in Arroyo Honda is that if an owl is heard hooting on the chimney top at night, it is a sign that some evil will befall. Some say that if you will come for sale." The first person to enter the house the next day to ask for something is believed to be the witch, who, in the form of an owl, had perched on the

²² Jarrold, op. cit., p. 102

²³ Kitzberger, op. cit., p. 421

chimney top. One could determine if she were really the witch by making a cross out of two broom straws and placing it on the door-sill. The person would attempt to leave the house, but not until the cross was removed would she actually go through the door. At times a needle instead of the cross was placed on the door-sill. The witch would not leave if the needle's eye were turned down, that is, if the needle were lying flat. However, if the needle were stuck in the wood so that it stood up, the witch escaped through the eye of the needle.²³

Another belief similar to the foregoing is that if a couple of needles are stuck into a broom so that they form a little cross, and the broom is put behind the door when a witch is in a house, she cannot get out of that door until a dog or a person has gone out ahead of her.²⁴

Still another variation of the cross and broom belief is that the needles should be crossed over the doorway with the broom behind the door. In this event, the witch will not be able to leave until the articles have been removed.

It is a significant fact that the broom and cross play such an important role in the witchcraft of New Mexico,

²³ Jaramillo, op. cit., p. 101

²⁴ Lummis, op. cit., p. 132.

...the witch would attempt to leave the house, but not until the cross was removed would she actually go through the door. At times a candle instead of the cross was placed on the door-sill. The witch would not leave if the needle's eye were turned down, that is, if the needles were lying flat. However, if the needles were stuck in the wood so that it stood up, the witch escaped through the eye of the needles.²²

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²² Jaramilla, op. cit., p. 101.
²³ Jaramilla, op. cit., p. 102.

since they both are characteristic figures in the witchcraft of all countries.²⁵

The importance of the cross is seen early in the history of Christianity, and its influence has been felt down through the ages. To quote Mr. J. F. Wickwar:

The sign of the cross was used because the Christians of the third century adopted it as a symbol of their belief in heavenly protection against subtle influences of the Evil One, and the idea, more beautiful than than in many a succeeding age, has never been lost sight of. When or before they undertook a journey it was their custom to make the sign of the cross on their body--for protection -- just as some good people do to this day upon entering a church; and furthermore, when a document was drawn up for the affixing of signatures those who were to sign it would, on writing their names, place a cross after it, to preserve its provisions from going awry through the machinations of evil spirits. If for want of education a witness was unable to write his name he would merely place a cross upon the document, which after all, was thought to be of greater importance than the signature itself. How many today, one wonders, remember or know that when they are placing a cross to a document, or even a ballot-paper, they are playing the part of the legatee from a superstitious past.²⁶

Witch meetings. Various tales and beliefs found in New Mexico indicate that witches held nocturnal meetings usually starting at midnight and continuing until cock-crow. The revelry indulged in at these meetings consisted of

²⁵ Dr. Aurelio M. Espinosa, "New Mexican Spanish Folklore," Journal of American Folklore, 23:398, October-December, 1910.

²⁶ J. W. Wickwar, Witchcraft and the Black Art (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, (n. d.)), p. 199.

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The importance of the cross is seen early in the

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The sign of the cross was used because the Christians
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in many a succeeding age, has never been lost sight of.
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crosses to mark the sign of the cross on their way
for protection -- just as some good people do to this
day upon entering a church, and sometimes, when a
document was drawn up for the signing of a contract
those who were to sign it would, as with their
index, place a cross over the signature, the
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ballot-paper, they are placing the sign of the cross
from a superstitious practice.

Witch Meetings. Various other and similar forms in

New Mexico indicate that witches hold nocturnal meetings

usually starting at midnight and continuing until dawn.

The revelry indulged in at these meetings consisted of

Dr. Amelio M. Espinosa, *Journal of American Folklore*,

Vol. 10, No. 4, December, 1910.

Dr. J. W. Wickham, *Journal of American Folklore*,

Vol. 10, No. 4, December, 1910.

(London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 10, Ave. M., N.Y.C.)

feasting, dancing, and initiation ceremonies involving certain rituals which one must undergo in order to become a witch. The meetings were held at secret places such as deserted houses, lonely canyons, or far-away mountain retreats.

In the tale, "El Chivato," from Dr. Rael's²⁷ collection, is found one of the most detailed accounts of a witch meeting. According to the tale, near Peña Blanca there was a place where witchcraft meetings were held. Nana Pabla, who was reputed to be a witch, had a son named Guadalupe. The boy finally obtained his mother's permission to attend a witch meeting near Peña Blanca with his friend.

The friend told Guadalupe to get on his back, but that he must keep his eyes closed until told to open them, or they would both be killed. When the friend said, "Voy sin Dios y Santa María," Guadalupe felt himself going through the air. In a few minutes, he was permitted to open his eyes, and Guadalupe was amazed to see a beautiful house with many people inside making merry. There was a cedar grove outside where they had to hang their rosaries and scapularies before entering.

They danced for a while and then had supper. Guadalupe bit down on something hard which he thought was a

²⁷ Rael, loc. cit.

bone, but when he took it out of his mouth and examined it, he discovered it to be a human fingernail.

When the dancing was resumed, un chivato came prancing into the room and each individual had to kiss the goat's tail. When the chivato had made the rounds, it left and a snake came in. The snake went to each individual, wrapped itself around his body, and stuck its tongue into the person's mouth. When the snake came to him, Guadalupe was so frightened that he cried out in horror, "Jesús, María, y José."

At the utterance of these holy words, the house and everything inside it disappeared, and Guadalupe was left in the middle of a plain. It took him three days to find his way home.

When he finally reached home, Guadalupe told his mother all that had happened and showed her the fingernail. She scolded him for not being brave, and said that since he did not have valor, he had lost everything.²⁸

Every motif found in the above tale had its origin hundreds of years earlier in the history of witchcraft in Europe. The appearance of the goat, and kissing its posterior had its beginning as far back as the middle ages,

²⁸ Dr. Rael told the writer of this thesis that the narrator who had told him the above tale sincerely believed it and told it to him as the truth.

hope, but when he took it out of his mouth and examined it, he discovered it to be a human finger.

When the dancing was over, the guests went to the
 into the room and each individual had to kiss the
 Guest's cell. When the dancing had ended the women, it felt
 and a snake came in. The snake went to each individual,
 wrapped itself around his body, and drank its tongue into
 the person's mouth. When the snake came to him, Guadalupe
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Marie, Y. Jones.

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according to Mr. Montague Summers.²⁹ The evil powers of the serpent and its role in witchcraft are also evidenced in European history of witchcraft.³⁰

That witchcraft was completely opposed to anything religious has already been pointed out. In this tale we see it displayed by the witch's denial of God and his subsequent ability to fly through the air. To quote Mr. Summers on this subject:

. . .It is significant that the belief in the nocturnal transport through the air of sorcerers, either bent on some malefic business or to attend their assemblies, is practically universal, and exists among savage races as strongly as amongst civilized people.³¹

Another religious phase of witchcraft is exemplified in the fact that all religious medals had to be left outside of the meeting house, as well as the fact that the spell was broken when the holy names were called out.

There are many variations of the tale of "El Chivato" found in other sections of the state.

²⁹ Montague Summers, A Popular History of Witchcraft (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1937), p. 145.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 259.

³¹ Ibid., p. 134.

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29 Montague Summers, A Popular History of Witchcraft
(New York: E. P. Dutton, 1927), p. 144.

30 Ibid., p. 282.

31 Ibid., p. 154.

CHAPTER III

RELIGION AND CHARMS

I. RELIGION

Witchcraft and religion. Not only in New Mexico, but the world over, the relationship of witchcraft to religion is outstanding. According to J. W. Wickwar,¹ witchcraft was originally a pseudo-religious organization. He says:

Thus the witches of the early centuries not only observed a Sabbath, a Dedication, and a Sacrament, but they possessed a Baptistry; and their meetings, or "covens" as they were called, only functioned when they consisted of thirteen: twelve witches and a chief, as though to burlesque the twelve disciples with their Master.²

In their witch meetings throughout the ages, witches have burlesqued religious services, believing that by their denial of God, they increased their powers of sorcery.

Throughout the middle ages as well as in modern times, the Christian Church has been faced with the problem of struggling against the abuse of its sacraments, ordinances, ceremonies and holy things for profane purposes. It was not an uncommon thing for would-be sorcerers or even well-

¹ J. W. Wickwar, Witchcraft and the Black Art (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, (n. d.)), p. 14.

² Ibid., p. 17.

CHAPTER III

RELIGION AND CHURCH

I. RELIGION

Religion and Religion - Not only in New Mexico, but

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originally a pseudo-religious organization. He says: "Thus the witness of the early centuries not only observed a Sabbath, a Dedication, and a Sacrament, but they possessed a Baptism, and their religious or 'governance' as they were called, only in the sense that they consisted of individuals who were united and a chief, as though to preserve the Twelve disciples with their Master."

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struggling against the abuse of its sacraments, ordinances,

ceremonies and holy things for profane purposes. It was

not an uncommon thing for would-be sorcerers or even well-

J. W. Hickman, Religion and Religion, (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1937), p. 17.

meaning but ignorant persons to use religious rites or holy objects in furthering their own aims. As late as the last half of the last century, many superstitious people were known to take communion whenever they felt ill. Many women in the old Welsh parishes considered "Churching" only as a charm to prevent witchcraft.³ The use of baptismal water, holy water, holy bread and the like was common in various concoctions or remedies as a curative power. These traits of witchcraft, found in history, are also prevalent in the folklore of New Mexico.

As witchcraft, its prevention and cures were intermingled with religion in Old and New England, so it has been also in New Mexico. A number of instances have already been cited revealing the aversion of witches to anything pertaining to religion: their fear of the cross and inability to pass by a cross, the phrase "Sin Dios y Santa María" (without God and the Virgin Mary) which they must say in order to sail through the sky, the use of holy water to catch a witch, their inability to cast a spell or do harm to anyone who invokes the aid of God or the holy saints, and forbidding any holy emblems to be worn at their meetings. These motifs are found in many of the witch tales and are still believed

³ George Lyman Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1929), p. 145.

... the use of holy water, holy bread and the like was common in various superstitions or remedies as a curative power. These traces of witchcraft, found in history, are also prevalent in the folklore of New Mexico. ... its effectiveness, its prevention and cure were ... mingled with religion in Old and New England, so it has been also in New Mexico. A number of instances have already been cited revealing the evasion of witches to anything pertaining to religion: their fear of the cross and inability to pass by a cross, the phrase "Eia Hine Maria" (without God and the Virgin Mary) which they must say in order to call through the air, the use of holy water to catch a witch, their inability to cast a spell or do harm to anyone who invokes the aid of God or the holy saints, and forbidding any holy emblem to be worn at their meetings. These motifs are found in many of the witch tales and are still believed

in by many Spanish-speaking New Mexicans.

Religious tale of witchcraft. "The Field Crosses of the Farmers,"⁴ is a tale which has been handed down for many generations and is believed to determine the success or failure of the crops. As the story goes, many years ago there lived in the community near Santa Fe, an old woman who was peculiar in her mind. Because of the strange things she said and the queer things she did, she was called a witch. She lived alone in a small room and was cared for by neighbors who saw to it that she did not lack for food or clothing.

One day in the spring of the year, the old witch with great concern in her voice told the men that a great storm was coming. She predicted that there would be snow, and raindrops which would turn to hail and beat down the young plants. But people just laughed at her, for it was a beautiful spring day with not a cloud in the sky.

Days passed and the crops grew bigger and stronger, and people had forgotten the warning of the old woman. But she started her mutterings again, predicting a complete loss of crops. She begged the men to plant little crosses in their fields, crosses which would be prayers to the Master

⁴ Nina Otero, Old Spain in Our Southwest (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936) pp. 123-128.

in my story speaking New England.

The Old Woman of the Forest

The forest, as a tale which has been handed down for many generations and is believed to determine the success or failure of the crops. In the story goes, many years ago there lived in the community near Grafton, an old woman who was peculiar in her mind. Because of the strange things she said and the queer things she did, she was called a witch. She lived alone in a small room and was cared for by neighbors who saw to it that she did not lack for food or clothing.

One day in the spring of the year, the old witch with great concern in her voice told the men that a great storm was coming. She predicted that there would be snow, and raindrops which would turn to hail and beat down the young plants. But people just laughed at her, for it was a beautiful spring day with not a cloud in the sky.

Days passed and the crops grew plump and sweet, and people had forgotten the warning of the old woman. But she started her utterances again, predicting a complete loss of crops. She begged the men to plant little crosses in their fields, crosses which would be prayers to the Master.

asking Him to watch over the corn, beans, and squash plants.

Still other days passed, but at last it came. A cold wind came down from the mountains and the Truchas peaks were white. The rain came and then the hail and all growing things were beaten down to the earth. It was indeed a sad day when all the men went into their fields to see their crops frozen flat on the ground. Only one field in the whole valley had not suffered from the storm. It belonged to an old couple who had believed in the witch and had nailed little wooden crosses to their fence posts and to the stumps of trees. Their corn and bean plants were refreshed by the rain and not damaged in the least by the hail or frost. Quietly and humbly the men returned to their homes in deep sorrow and great faith.

From that time on, when farmers plant seed, before the day's work is done, they also set up small crosses to invoke a blessing on the crops.

Bones used as charms. Another relationship seen between religion and witchcraft is the fact that bones are used as charms either for protection against witchcraft or to augment a witch's ability for sorcery.

The use of bones as amulets has evolved from ancient

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The use of bones as amulets has evolved from ancient

religious rites connected with the sacredness of bones.⁵ The word bon-fire was originally bone-fire and referred to a fire where bones were burned as symbolic of a sacrifice. These bones represented the animal or man burned in the sacrifice. There is an almost universal notion that the soul is in the bones; therefore the bones are sacred. No doubt, the belief in the power of the rabbit foot as a good luck charm, the wish made from the pull-bone of a fowl, and the belief in the efficacy of small bones worn as charms or to give power to witches are an outgrowth of these ancient religious rites.

San Cirilo, the protector against witchcraft. Since religion plays such a tremendous part in the folklore of witchcraft in New Mexico, there is one particular saint who is designated as the protector against witchcraft. He is San Cirilo and is believed to protect one from witchcraft and all black arts. A tale which proves the power of this saint is that of Carpio,⁶ a young boy who had been bewitched. Whenever he was left alone, some witches would stick him with cactus needles and suck his blood. Since the doctors could not cure him, his father took him to Librada, an ambularia.

⁵ Daniel G. Brinton, M. D., "Folklore of the Bones," Journal of American Folklore, 3:17-22, January-March, 1890.

⁶ Cleofas M. Jaramillo, Shadows of the Past (Santa Fe: Seton Village Press, 1941), p. 100.

religion with...
The word...
a fire...
These bones...
sacred...
is in the bones...
the belief in the power of...
shows, the wish...
belief in the efficacy of...
give power to...
religion...

San Gilio...
religion plays such a...
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Gilio and is believed to...
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is that of...

ever he was left alone...
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not cure him...
Journal of...
G. Gilio...
San Gilio...

Using a copper pot, Librada made a brew of several herbs and a sunflower which she gave the boy to drink. She cleaned the ashes from the fireplace and set the statue of San Cirilo inside the hearth.

During the night there were loud noises at the doors and windows and hooting and flapping of wings on the chimney top. But the next morning the statue still stood on the hearth. The same thing happened the second night, but the witches could not get in, for San Cirilo was guarding the only opening. The third day, Carpio was taken home, cured.

In an earlier chapter pertaining to characteristics and habits of witches, several phases of religion in witchcraft were discussed and need not be repeated here.

II. CHARMS

World wide use of charms. The belief in the efficacy of charms is ageless and exists in all parts of the world. Even though today, it is probable that many of the people who carry charms do not sincerely believe in their power, it was discovered in a survey of a college class that fifty per cent of the people carried charms of some sort.⁷ Though it is hardly credible that anyone would really think that it could

⁷ Mark Cranbard, "Some Contemporary Observations on Ancient Superstitions," Journal of American Folklore, 59:124-133, January-March, 1946.

bring him good luck, who would not be happy to find a four leaf clover?

Importance of the lodestone. Charms or amulets of many types are prevalent in the witchcraft of New Mexico. An important fact is that some of these have divers powers; in the possession of a witch, they give her extreme power to perform her witchcraft, while in the possession of an ordinary person they give protection against witchcraft. Such a charm is the piedra imán, the ordinary lodestone. According to Cleofas M. Jaramillo⁸ in Shadows of the Past, the ambularias, who were graduates in witchcraft, who possessed a piedra imán had unlimited powers; they knew everything and had the ability to assume any shape they desired. The piedra imán was a stone, supposedly possessing life, which had to be fed needles and water. It was believed that if it were lost or stolen from its owner, she would lose her mind or fade away into a skeleton.

As related in an article by Wesley R. Hurt, Jr.,⁹ the piedra imán is believed to be the best all-purpose charm. This stone is supposed to be an effective love amulet, good luck piece, and protection against witchcraft. The stone is

⁸ Jaramillo, op. cit., p. 98.

⁹ Wesley R. Hurt, Jr., "Witchcraft in New Mexico," El Palacio, 47:75, April, 1940.

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 such stones.

Importance of the Stone - Certain or similar to

any stone are prevalent in the vicinity of New Mexico.
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 luck piece, and protection against witchcraft. The stone is

E. Jaramilla, op. cit., p. 58.

Wesley E. Hunt, Jr., "Witchcraft in New Mexico,"
El Pasa, 47:12, April, 1910.

supposed to possess life, and every Friday must be fed needles.

If the owner fails to do this, he will pine away and die.

Mr. Hurt also says:

The belief in the powers of the lodestone, the piedra imán, can be traced to Europe. During the reign of the Emperor Honorius, in about the year 409, the Roman poet, Claudian, wrote a poem entitled, "The Magnet." In this poem the powers of the lodestone are described. It is worthy of note that the Romans believed this stone possessed life and must be fed with iron.¹⁰

Another charm for protection against the evil deeds of witches is a portion of wild gourd, calavacia, which must be carried on one's person to be effective. Also a powerful amulet for protection is a burnt portion of gachana root which must be carried in one's pocket.

Bones as amulets. The importance of bones in witchcraft has already been mentioned. The invisible cat bone is one which New Mexican witches strive to get. To obtain this charm, witches throw a perfect black cat without any blemishes into a pot of boiling water. When the flesh has fallen away from the bones, they are held one by one in front of a mirror, and the bone that is not visible is kept for a charm. The common belief is that the use of this bone automatically leagues the witch with the devil, thereby giving her unusual powers.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 82.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 76.

The evil eye. The belief in the evil eye and the numerous methods of averting the influence cast by its spell are still found in many parts of the world today. To quote Mr. Stith Thompson, "It is generally believed that certain persons can cast an evil spell by a mere glance."¹² A strange feature of this power is that the person who has the ability to cast the evil eye is often unaware of it and may unintentionally cause harm to befall his loved ones or friends.

According to William John Potts,¹³ the method used in Italy for protection against the evil eye was that of closing the thumb and the two middle fingers, leaving the forefinger and the little finger pointing at the accused person. The wearing of any kind of coral is said to keep one safe from the effects of the evil eye, and it is therefore a very common sight in Italy to see people wearing a small coral charm in the symbolic shape of the hand described above.

This recent custom in Italy evidently had its origin much earlier, since Mr. Wickwar says about the subject:

As the special form of evil supposed to be flashed from one eye to another could be thwarted or warded

¹² Stith Thompson, The Folktale (New York: The Dryden Press, 1946), p. 260.

¹³ William John Potts, "The Evil Eye," Journal of American Folklore, 3:70, January-March, 1890.

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Dr. John Thompson, *The Evil Eye* (New York: The Century
 Press, 1905), p. 250.
 Dr. William John Foster, "The Evil Eye," *Journal of
 American Folklore*, 3:70, January-March, 1900.

off by holding up the hand for protection, so it came about that a charm representing the hand came into existence. Proof has been given that these charms were worn so far back in history as 500 to 1000 B. C.¹⁴

Mal ojo. The belief in the evil eye, or mal ojo, is a common one among many Spanish Americans of New Mexico. They believe that if one admires a pretty child or baby, he is likely to cast the spell of el ojo, at times called, mal de ojo, on the child. A phrase which is supposed to break the spell of el ojo is the blessing, "Dios te guarde, tan linda." (God keep you, pretty baby.)

A charm which is worn for protection against el ojo in New Mexico is also that of the coral, in some form of necklace or bracelet.

If a child should become ill, the person who has last admired it is supposed to be the one who cast the spell, and must be called in to effect a cure. One means of doing this is for the person to give the child a drink, and get in bed with it, cuddling it close until it perspires.¹⁵ Another method is that of breaking an egg in a saucer and holding it over the sick child. If an eye appears in the yolk, the baby will soon recover.

Some persons also cast el ojo on plants they admire, causing the flowers to wilt and die. This can be cured by

¹⁴ Wickwar, op. cit., p. 86.

¹⁵ Jaramillo, op. cit., p. 104.

having the person spit salt water on the plant, or by watering it with warm water.

Religious charms. Since the common belief in New Mexico is that witches are in league with the devil, it naturally follows that religious medals, charms, crosses, and the like are believed to be a protection against witchcraft. The belief that crosses of various types protect one from witches is also prevalent in Europe. Among the Tuscans of Italy, thorns in the form of a cross are laid in the windows to prevent witches from entering. The relationship between the cross and witchcraft was seen in early days in England and New England. As has already been stated, these examples of similar types of witchcraft found in Europe, Mexico and New Mexico suggest a European source for many New Mexican beliefs.¹⁶

¹⁶ Hurt, op. cit., p. 83.

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in Europe, Mexico and New Mexico suggest a European source
for many New Mexican beliefs.

CHAPTER IV

WITCHES AND CHILDREN

Universality of witch tale involving children. In a very important series of witch tales found in many different parts of the world, the principal part is played by children. Probably the best known of these is the "Hansel and Gretel" story, one of the most frequently reprinted of the Grimm tales. The main thread of the story is so well known that it hardly needs retelling, but in brief it is as follows:

The two children sent by their poverty-stricken parents into the woods, the trail of grain eaten by the birds, the gingerbread house, the appearance of the terrible witch, the fattening of the boy in the pen, and the burning of the witch in her own oven are constantly recurring motifs in this tale.¹

This tale has been carried to the remotest parts of the earth, to all parts of Africa, to Japan, to the Negroes of the West Indies, and to American Indian tribes all over the continent. In the many versions of this tale, it is difficult to determine how much is borrowed and which parts have developed independently in the various countries.

In the folktales of New Mexico, there are a number of stories containing this theme. Here, again, it is difficult to determine the exact origin of these stories,

¹ Stith Thompson, The Folktale (New York: The Dryden Press, 1946), p. 36.

very important matter of which the people of the world, the principal part of the world, are ignorant. Probably the first known of these stories, one of the most frequent, is that of the blind men and an elephant. The main theme of the story is so well known that it hardly needs retelling, but it is as follows:

The two children came by a large river and saw a large animal in the water. One of the children said, "That is a horse." The other said, "That is a snake." The first child was touching the animal's head and the second child was touching the animal's tail. The first child was touching the animal's side and the second child was touching the animal's leg. The first child was touching the animal's back and the second child was touching the animal's belly. The first child was touching the animal's ear and the second child was touching the animal's foot. The first child was touching the animal's eye and the second child was touching the animal's nose. The first child was touching the animal's mouth and the second child was touching the animal's tail. The first child was touching the animal's back and the second child was touching the animal's belly. The first child was touching the animal's ear and the second child was touching the animal's foot. The first child was touching the animal's eye and the second child was touching the animal's nose. The first child was touching the animal's mouth and the second child was touching the animal's tail.

This story has been carried to the remotest parts of the earth, to all parts of Africa, to Japan, to the Indies, to the West Indies, and to all the islands all over the continent. In the many versions of this tale, it is difficult to determine how much is borrowed and what part is original.

In the collection of New Negroes, there is a number of stories containing this theme. Many of these stories are difficult to determine the exact origin of these stories.

I write this story, The Blind Men and an Elephant, in the year 1911, p. 38.

but it is safe to assume that parts of them, at least, had their origins in the European versions. As with most tales, they have been adapted to their local setting, in some cases using place names of the various locations. The motifs vary in different localities, though there is always a common basic theme.

New Mexican version of "Hansel and Gretel." A story from the collection of José Manuel Espinosa² is "Los Dos Niños Perseguidos," ("The Two Persecuted Children.") It was told by Marcelino Baca, a man of forty, who lived in Peña Blanca, New Mexico. Two children, a boy and a girl, are abandoned in the mountains by their father and step-mother. They find their way back by white pebbles they had dropped along the way. The second time, the stepmother does not allow the boy out of her sight to gather stones, so he drops crumbs of bread along the trail. Birds eat the crumbs, and the children, hopelessly lost, wander into the house of an old woman who is a witch. She gives them lodging. One night the witch decides to kill the little girl, so she has her build a fire to heat a big pot of water. When the water is boiling, the witch tells the girl to put her

² José Manuel Espinosa, Spanish Folk-Tales from New Mexico, Memoirs of the American Folk-Lore Society (New York: Published by the American Folk-Lore Society, G. E. Stechert and Co., Agents, 1937), p. 15.

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One night the witch decides to kill the little girl, so she has her build a fire to heat a pot of water. When the water is boiling, the witch tells the girl to put her

foot in it to see if it is hot. The little girl pretends not to know how and asks the witch to show her. As she is showing her, the girl pushes the witch into the boiling water and she is killed. The children acquire the treasures of the witch and start out for their home. They cross a river and find an oven full of gold. On arriving home, they find that the stepmother is dead, so they live happily with their father.

Variations from the "Hansel and Gretel" story. This story follows the Hansel and Gretel story very closely. The two main variations are the fact that the little girl was to be killed instead of the boy; and the method of killing was in a pot of boiling water instead of the oven.

Another witchtale concerning children. Another story concerning witches and children from Espinosa's³ collection is "Los Niños Perseguidos," ("The Persecuted Children"), told by María del Carmen González, age twelve, from San Ildefonso, New Mexico. A man and his wife have three beautiful children, two sons with golden hair, and a daughter with a star on her forehead. A witch who lives near is very envious, so one day she steals the children and throws them into a canyon to die. The father, furious

³ Espinosa, loc. cit.

foot in it to see if it is hot. The little girl pretends
not to know how and asks the witch to show her. As she is
showing her, the girl pushes the witch into the boiling
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from San Antonio, New Mexico. A man and his wife have
three beautiful children, two sons with golden hair, and a
daughter with a star on her forehead. A witch who lives
near is very envious, so one day she steals the children
and throws them into a canyon to die. The father, furious

with his wife because the children are stolen, imprisons her.

An old woman finds the children and cares for them. When she dies, she leaves them three beads telling them that when one of the beads stands, it means the death of one of the brothers.

One day another witch comes to the house of the children and tells them that up in the mountains are a bird with green feathers, a bottle of holy water, and a whistle. The elder brother starts off in search of them, but two witches meet him and order him to roll a ball and put cotton in his ears. He does so, but when he hears voices, he cannot resist looking back, and when he does, he is turned to stone. The same thing happens to the younger brother.

The sister goes out in search of her brothers. She is given the necessary tools with which to cut hair. She cuts the witches' hair and they tell her to seek the three magic objects. They tell her to roll a ball and put cotton in her ears, but they warn her not to look back when she hears voices, or she will be turned to stone.

She finds the holy water which she sprinkles all around and it brings her brothers back to life. Then she also gets the whistle and the bird. They return to their home in the canyon.

One day their father arrives at their house, not

with his wife because the children were so small and helpless.
The old woman finds the children and takes care of them.
When she dies, she leaves her three children behind.
Then that year one of the brothers goes to the city
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One day another brother comes to the house of the
children and tells them that up in the mountains there is a
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The elder brother starts off in search of them, but the
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around and it brings her brothers back to life. Then she
also gets the whistle and the ball. The return to their
home to the canyon.
One day their father arrives and they are all
happy to see him.

knowing that they are his children. They give him lodging, and after supper, the bird begins to sing and to tell him the story of his three children. Then the bird goes to each child and removes the caps from their heads. When the father sees the golden hair of his sons, and the star on the forehead of the little girl, he recognizes them as his children. He takes them back to his home, releases his wife, and they live happily, after burning the witch with green wood.

Discussion of "Los Niños Perseguidos." This tale is much more complex than the foregoing. The initial motif, that of the witch stealing the children, is also a popular one in European folktales.⁴ Also a much used element of motif of folk tales, not only of witch tales, but of all types of folk literature is that of the magic objects.⁵ This motif has many variations. At times the magic objects are sought by the main character, and he must overcome various obstacles in order to obtain them. In others, by the possession of the magic object, persons are able to accomplish unusual feats. Since the magic objects have elements of the supernatural, the unknown, they are naturally closely related to

⁴ Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, Vol. 3, (Helsinki, 1934), p. 219.

⁵ Stith Thompson, The Folktale (New York: The Dryden Press, 1946), p. 253.

knowing that they are his children. They give him lodging, and after supper, the wife begins to sing and to tell him the story of his three children. When the bird goes to each child and removes the cap from their heads. When the father sees the golden hair of his sons, and the star on the forehead of the little girl, he recognizes them as his children. He takes them back to his home, releases his wife, and they live happily, after burning the witch with green wood.

Discussion of "The Three Children." This tale is

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tasks. Since the magic objects have elements of the supernatural, the unknown, they are naturally closely related to

² See Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, Vol. 2, (Belmont, 1934), p. 212.

³ See Thompson, The Folktale (New York: The Dryden Press, 1946), p. 253.

witchcraft, and this motif is frequently used in witch tales.

The burning of the witch is also a popular motif in folk literature of European countries, as well as in this country.⁶

Metamorphosis in children stories. "Los Siete Bueyes" ("The Seven Oxen") was told by Benigna Vigil, age fifty-two, from Santa Cruz, New Mexico.⁷ Eight children, one girl and seven boys, are left orphans. The girl and the oldest boy take care of the younger children.

One day the fire goes out, so the girl goes to the old witch's house to borrow some fire. The witch tries to catch her, but she escapes. Then the witch causes corn and other vegetables to grow around the children's house.

The girl thinks that the Blessed Virgin has planted the vegetables, so she cooks them for her brothers. But as soon as they have eaten the food, they are all seven turned into oxen. The poor girl goes out sadly every day to care for the oxen, her brothers.

A king comes along and wants to buy the oxen, but the girl refuses to sell them at any price. The king then marries the girl and takes her to the palace, where he has a caretaker for the oxen. A son is born to the young queen.

⁶ Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk Literature, p. 223.

⁷ Espinosa, op. cit., p. 17.

new, low-profile series of gold A

When the king goes off to war, the witch sticks a pin into the girl's head and changes her into a dove. She sadly flies about the countryside.

When the king returns from the war, the witch is in the queen's bed. She pretends to be sick and keeps the room so dark that the king does not recognize her, but believes it to be his wife who is ill. As he is walking in the garden, he hears a dove singing sadly, "Mi niño gime y llora, y yo, su madre, en el campo sola." ("My baby moans and cries, and I, his mother, am in the country alone.") The king has the dove caught, and as he is carressing it, feels the bump on its head. He pulls the pin out, and immediately the dove resumes her original form and the king recognizes his wife. She tells him what has happened, and that the witch is the one who had bewitched her brothers.

The king forces the witch to disenchant the brothers and they are fine young men. Then the witch is burned.

Discussion of "Los Siete Bueyes." Two other important motifs of folktales brought into this tale are the enchantment by conversion of the boys into oxen, and the pin in the girl's head which converts her into a dove. The stories with animal motifs are prevalent in New Mexican folklore and will be discussed at greater length in another

When the king goes off to war, the witch takes a pin from
the girl's head and changes her into a dove. The king
thinks about the enchantment.
When the king returns from the war, the witch is in
the queen's bed. She pretends to be sick and keeps the
room so dark that the king does not recognize her, but
believes it to be his wife who is ill. As he is walking
in the garden, he hears a dove singing sadly. "All night long
I have been sad and lonely. I have been sad and lonely."
sorrow and grief, and I, his mother, am in the country
alone." The king has the dove brought, and as he is
carrying it, he feels the bump on the head. He puts the
pin out, and immediately the dove resumes her original
form and the king recognizes his wife. She tells him what
has happened, and that the witch is the one who had be-
witched her brothers.
The king forces the witch to dismount the brothers
and they are fine young men. Then the witch is burned.
The story of the girl who was changed into a dove is
important motifs of folktales brought into this tale are
the enchantment by conversion of a boy into an ox, and
the pin in the girl's head which changes her into a dove.
The stories with animal motifs are prevalent in New Mexican
folklore and will be discussed at greater length in another

section.

There is a story which is very similar to the foregoing "Los Dos Bueyecitos" ("The Two Little Oxen"), which was told to Mr. Espinosa⁸ by Benigna Pacheco, about sixty-eight, from Arroyo Seco, three miles west of Taos, New Mexico. In this tale, there are only two brothers and one sister, who are orphans. The two brothers tell their sister not to go to the witch's house, but she disobeys and goes to get some fire. The witch causes vegetables to grow about the girl's house. Not knowing the danger, she cooks them and feeds them to her brothers, whereupon they become oxen. The girl also marries a king. The end of the tale is similar to the foregoing, "Los Siete Bueyes," except that the brothers do not regain their human form.

Origin of motif. The motif of the transformation of the boys into oxen is not found exclusively in New Mexico. The origin of this anecdote is, according to Mr. Kittredge,⁹ in Italy at about the eleventh century. The original story relates how old women fed cheese to travellers, whereupon they became beasts of burden, retaining their human reason.

The element of fire, or the borrowing of fire, in

⁸ Espinosa, op. cit., p. 19.

⁹ George Lyman Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1929), p. 184.

There is a story which is...
...the first of the...
...was said to be...
...eight, from...
...Mexico. In this tale, there are...
...sister, who are orphans. The...
...not to go to the witch's house, and...
...get some fire. The witch...
...the girl's house. Not knowing...
...and leads them to the...
...The girl also...
...similar to the...
...the brothers do not...

Origin of motif. The motif...
...the boys into...
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They became...
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the two stories above would indicate a very early origin, centuries prior to our modern pilot lights and automatic lighters.

Young children as witches. From Dr. Rael's¹⁰ collection, is found the tale of "Los Inditos Brujos" ("The Little Indian Witches"), in which children are involved both as the witch and the bewitched. The tale, in brief, is as follows: Some Indian boys, who were shepherds, and a Mexican boy had a fight. The Indians bewitched him. They made a mud image and stuck nopal thorns in the temples, which caused the Mexican boy to become very ill.

He finally told his father about the fight with the Indians and that they had threatened to bewitch him. The father found the Indian boys and after beating them severely, they promised to cure his son. They gave him the image which they had made, and when the father destroyed it, his son got well at once. The man threatened to kill the boys if they harmed his son again. The use of monos and image magic are also characteristic of European folk literature and will be discussed in a later chapter.

Tales involving children as witches seem to be quite rare, not only in New Mexican folklore, but in the folklore of other countries as well, while those relating to children

¹⁰ Dr. Juan B. Rael, Cuentos Españoles de Colorado y Nuevo Méjico, (Unpublished manuscript)

the two stories above would indicate that the two stories are not independent but are related in some way. The first story is a very early version of the second story, and the second story is a later version of the first story.

Young children are often told the story of the "Indian Boy and the Mexican Boy". The story is told in two versions, one in which the Indian boy is the hero and one in which the Mexican boy is the hero. The story is told in two versions, one in which the Indian boy is the hero and one in which the Mexican boy is the hero. The story is told in two versions, one in which the Indian boy is the hero and one in which the Mexican boy is the hero.

He finally told his father about the sign with the Indians and that they had threatened to punish him. The father found the Indian boy and water holding them away. They promised to give him the sign which they had made, and which the father had given him. They got well at once. The son threatened to kill the boy if they harmed his son again. The son of the Indian boy and the Mexican boy.

be discussed in a later chapter. Tales involving children are common to be found not only in New Mexican folk tales, but in the folk tales of other countries as well, while the tale of the Indian boy and the Mexican boy is a later chapter. ID Dr. Juan E. Ruiz, *Contos de la Sierra de Colorado y Nuevo Mexico*. (Unpublished manuscript)

who have been bewitched are numerous.

In the tale, "Three Grains of Corn" found in "New Mexico Witch Tales,"¹¹ there was little Paulita Barelás who had been a vicious witch even as a child. She was very fond of her brother just older than she. As is often the case, she was also very jealous of him, and when he married María, Paulita was extremely mean to her.

One day Paulita gave her three grains of popcorn which caused María to be violently ill. José realized the cause of his wife's illness and beat his sister until she promised to take the spell off María. Paulita mixed some powder with boiling water which her sister-in-law drank. As soon as the potion was swallowed, María vomited three whole mice and was immediately well again. José beat Paulita some more to cure her of being a witch.

The tales related above are representative types of witch tales found in all parts of New Mexico in which children and witches are involved. There is also found in New Mexico, a great number of folktales involving children and witches in which these motifs are not the most predominant theme of the story. Many of them have the "air" of a fairy tale and are told purely for entertainment with no inference of any truth.

¹¹ Ruth Laughlin Barker, "New Mexico Witch Tales," Tone the Bell Easy, J. Frank Dobie, editor, Texas Folklore Society, 10:62-70, January, 1932.

CHAPTER V

WITCHES AND ANIMALS

Animal motifs. In this section dealing with witches and animals, a detailed study has been made of twenty-five New Mexican witch tales in which the important role of animals is seen in the witchcraft of New Mexican folklore. The most outstanding phase of the animal stories is the fact that witches have the power to transform themselves into various animals. To quote Mr. Stith Thompson, the word motif

. . . is made to include any of the elements of narrative structure. . . . Most of the items are found worthy of note because of something out of the ordinary, something of sufficiently striking character to become a part of tradition, oral or literary.¹

In the Motif-Index of Folk Literature, by Stith Thompson, there are thirteen separate motifs in which are listed the various animal forms into which the witch is transformed. They are as follows:

- 211.1. Witch in form of horse.
- 211.2. Witch in form of cat.
- 211.3. Witch in form of dog.
- 211.4. Witch in form of hare.
- 211.5. Witch in form of wolf.
- 211.6. Witch in form of fox.
- 211.7. Witch in form of bear.
- 211.8. Witch in form of mouse.

¹ Stith Thompson, Motif Index of Folk Literature, Vol. 1, (Helsinki, 1934), pp. 8-9.

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- 211.9. Witch in form of hen.
- 211.10. Witch in form of duck,
- 211.11. Witch in form of crow.
- 211.12. Witch in form of fly.
- 211.13. Witch in form of toad.²

Witch in the form of a horse. Of these thirteen motifs, seven are found prevalent in the witch tales of New Mexico. The first of these is the witch in the form of a horse. An example of this is found in the tale, "La Yegua Prieta" ("The Black Mare"), in the collection of Dr. Rael.³ As the story goes, seven Ute Indians found a herd of horses which they recognized as belonging to Felipe Lucero, a friend of theirs. However, in the herd was a beautiful black mare, which they knew did not belong there, so they decided to catch her to try to find the rightful owner. The mare broke away from the herd and ran swiftly into the thicket. They found no mare, only Dolores, a very dark-skinned woman whom all suspected of being a witch. Dolores, covered with perspiration, was panting and breathless. They started to kill her because they knew she was a witch. However, as she had a large family, the Indians relented and let her go free, admonishing her not to become a mare again.

² Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 212-213

³ Dr. Juan B. Rael, Cuentos Españoles de Colorado y Nuevo México (Unpublished manuscript)

Witch in form of a cat. The motif in which the witch takes the form of a cat is much more popular than the foregoing one in New Mexican folklore. Hardly any village or suburban district is without its own tale or numerous tales in which a cat, usually a black cat, is believed to be a witch who has assumed this animal form. The most facetious of these tales, also found in Dr. Rael's⁴ collection, is "El Brujo" (The Witch). There were two companions who were shepherds, an old man and a young man who was a brujo. As the old man was skeptical as to the existence of witches, the young man was going to prove his point by taking his friend to a witch meeting. The old man arrived at the appointed place and built a fire to get warm. In a few moments, the brujo, in the form of a cat, sat down beside his friend and said, "Ah! Qué frío, compañero." (Oh! How cold it is, friend.)

The old man was so frightened on hearing a cat talk that he jumped up and started to run. When he was so tired that his legs would carry him no farther, he dropped down to rest, covering his eyes with his arm. In a few moments, the cat appeared again, and said, "Qué tal hemos corrido, compañero." (How we have run, friend.)

⁴ Rael, loc. cit.

Again the old man ran as fast and as far as he could. When the cat appeared the third time, it said, "Qué tal hemos corrido, compañero. Qué tal estamos de consaos!" (How we have run, friend. How tired we are!)

Too tired to run any more, the old man slowly got up and walked down the road where he soon bumped into his young friend in his human form. The old man told his companion that he was convinced, that it was sheer brujería, "Hablándome los gatos!" (Cats talking to me!)

Witch in form of a dog. Almost as numerous and as widespread over the state as the stories of a witch becoming a cat is that of their transformation into a dog. Near the town of Arroyo Hondo was an old woman who was supposed to be a witch. The husband of a woman who was ill, supposedly maleficiada (bewitched), saw a stray dog in his yard one night. He picked up a stick and beat the dog severely. The next day, it was discovered that the old woman who was believed to be a witch was very sick and that her whole body was covered with black and blue bruises.⁵

Witches in form of owls and foxes. A tale related to Dr. A. M. Espinosa⁶ is concerned with owls and foxes. In a

⁵ Cleofas M. Jaramillo, Shadows of the Past (Santa Fe: Seton Village Press, 1941), p. 99.

⁶ Aurelio M. Espinosa, "New Mexican Spanish Folklore," Journal of American Folklore, 23:397, October-December, 1910.

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small village in northern New Mexico, so the story goes, the noise from the howling of foxes and the hooting of owls one night became unbearable. The people all armed themselves with bows and arrows and went out in a body to attack the source of disturbance. They shot many times and in a few moments the animals disappeared completely, that is, all except one injured fox. He limped away into the bushes, but no one dared go near him. The next day, an old witch who lived near, was in her death bed with an arrow wound near her heart.

Witch in form of an owl. In the New Mexican tales studied, there were no examples of the fowls listed in the Motif-Index, that is, the hen, duck, and crow. However, the owl appears to be the most popular creature in the folklore of New Mexico. Of these twenty-five tales studied, seven of them were concerned particularly with the owl. The motif was fairly consistent in all of them, that is, the witch in the form of an owl was wounded. The following day, or, at least, very soon after, the witch would be discovered in human form bearing an injury in the same part of the body in which the owl was injured. In this manner, the witch was apprehended and often put to death, or punished severely.

A popular tale of this type is found near Santa Fe

and is told in "New Mexico Witch Tales."⁷ Dolores la Penca was an old woman who lived in a deserted house near Santa Fe. Though she was a curandera, most people were afraid of her remedies for fear that she would cast a spell on them.

Dolores gave a bar of soap to a young girl who was soon to be married. The day before the wedding, the girl washed her hair with the sweet-smelling soap and immediately a spell was cast upon her, for her face and arms broke out in a horrible red rash.

The same night, the girl's brother, Jesús, who was with a surveying party in Silver City, shot an owl that had been hooting and disturbing the camp. He noted and wrote down the curious way in which the owl died, that is, with a bullet in the right eye, its left wing raised, and its left foot doubled up.

Jesús returned to Santa Fe the next day and discovered that the mysterious death of Dolores the night before coincided exactly with the death of the owl; a bullet had gone through her right eye, her left arm was raised, and her left foot was doubled up under her.

Witch in the form of a toad. The tales concerning toads are less prevalent, but they do exist in some areas of

⁷ Ruth Laughlin Barker, "New Mexico Witch Tales," Tone the Bell Easy, J. Frank Dobie, editor, Texas Folklore Society, 10:62-70, January, 1932.

and he said he had been in the same place for some time.

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the state. In the not too remote past, there was a man in the mountain village of Mora, New Mexico, who was brought to trial for being a witch. His wife and niece accused him of transforming himself into a frog and biting them mercilessly on the hands and face.⁸

Universality of animal motifs. Most of the animal tales concerned with witches in New Mexican folklore are similar, if not in their entirety, at least in the individual motifs, to the elements of folklore as they appear in various parts of the world. The metamorphoses depicted in the animal tales above are common occurrences in the folklore of many lands. They are everywhere prevalent in the folklore and folk literature since they are primitive and universal characteristics.

Aside from the metamorphosis of the witch into various and sundry animals, there is seen also the power that the witch has to transform her victim into an animal or bird. Examples of this were found in tales discussed earlier in this thesis, that is, in "Los Siete Bueyes" and "Los Dos Bueyecitos," in which the children were transformed into oxen.

⁸ Wesley R. Hurt, Jr., "Witchcraft in New Mexico," El Palacio, 47:73-83, April, 1940.

CHAPTER VI

ORIGINAL INVESTIGATIONS

Since most of the original investigations made in this study revealed cases involving bewitched persons who, because of the supposed curse of some witch, suffered bodily harm or illness, that particular phase of witchcraft pertaining to health has been reserved for this chapter.

It is the contention of Mr. George L. Kittredge that:

. . . . The belief that witches exist and that they can work supernaturally to the injury and even to the destruction of their enemies -- is the heritage of the human race.¹

He also says:

. . . . We should never forget that the essential element in black witchcraft is maleficium -- the working of harm to the bodies and goods of one's neighbors by means of evil spirits or of strange powers derived from intercourse with such spirits. This belief in maleficium was once universal; it was rooted and grounded in the minds of all European peoples before they became Christian; it is still the creed of most savages and of millions of so-called civilized men.²

From a detailed study of New Mexican witchcraft, and from original investigations made, it has been discovered that maleficium is also one of the most important elements

¹ George Lyman Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1929), p. 5.

² Ibid., p. 24.

ORIGINAL INVESTIGATION

Since most of the original investigations made in
this field have revealed cases involving persons who
because of the supposed cause of their illness
believe that they are suffering from a disease,
pertaining to health has been reserved for this chapter.
It is the contention of Mr. George H. W. Brown that

... The belief that disease exists and that
they are working experimentally to the injury and even
to the destruction of their enemies -- is the
basis of the human race.

He also says:

... We should never forget that the essential
element in black witchcraft is religion -- the
worship of the sun, the moon and gods of every
kind, by means of evil spirits or of strange
powers derived from intercourse with such spirits.
This belief in religion was once universal; it
was rooted and grounded in the minds of all mankind.
People have been becoming gradually less and less
aware of their superstices and of the influence of so-called
civilized men.

From a detailed study of New Mexican witchcraft, and

from original investigations made, it has been discovered
that religion is also one of the most important elements

I believe I have already mentioned in this and how
England (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press,
1933), p. 8.

of witchcraft in this state. When questioned about witch tales, hardly anyone fails to tell a story of una persona maleficiada. The type of maleficence varies. It may be that a person is stricken with a fever, fainting spells, a general feeling of weakness and wasting away, epilepsy, or any form of sickness or disease to which mankind is subject.³

El ojo. In New Mexico, perhaps the most common example of bewitchment resulting in bodily harm is that of el ojo. This has already been mentioned in an earlier chapter pertaining to charms, but its prevalence in New Mexico warrants further discussion. In a questionnaire involving forty people, twenty-seven of them related actual experiences with cases of el ojo in which they themselves, their immediate families, or close friends were afflicted by some malady because someone had cast the evil eye on them. This questionnaire represents a fair cross-section of the state since it includes fifteen towns from Taos, Chimayo, and Truchas in the northern part, to Silver City and Bayard in the southern part.

The greatest number of cases of el ojo are those involving children. Many New Mexicans believe that if a

³ Fictitious names have been used in all of the material collected by the writer of this thesis.

of which is in this case. The question of the
 being, which is in this case, is a matter of
 the type of the disease which is in this case.

A person is attacked with a fever, lasting several
 days, feeling of weakness and feeling very, especially, or
 any form of sickness or disease to which nothing is subject.

El glo. In New Mexico, perhaps the most common example

of sickness resulting in death is that of el glo.
 This has already been mentioned in an earlier chapter.

belong to the same, but its prevalence in New Mexico is

in a question of the type of the disease which is in this case.
 people, twenty-seven of them related actual experience with

cases of el glo in which they themselves, their immediate

family, or close friends were afflicted by some malady

because someone had cast the evil eye on them. This

questionnaire response is a fair cross-section of the

which is indicated fifteen towns from Toluca, Chimalpa, and

Tehuacan in the northern part, to Silver City and Bayside in

The greatest number of cases of el glo are those

involving children. Many New Mexicans believe that it is

3. The following names have been used in all of the
 material collected by the author of this thesis.

person admires a pretty child, he may cast a spell on it, thus causing the child to become ill. More often than not, the offender is unaware of this evil power which he possesses. So it is, that if a child becomes ill, the adults are prone to believe that the last person who admired the child, or carressed him, is responsible for his illness.

There are two very frequently used cures for the child on whom the evil eye has been cast. One method is for the offender to give water directly from his mouth into the mouth of the sick child. Another remedy is to break an egg in a saucer and place it at the head of the bed of the sick child. If an eye appears in the yolk of the egg, the child will get well immediately. The efficacy of these two remedies is vouched for by many parents who have hovered at the bedside of a sick child. They will say, without a shadow of a doubt, that their child had been given el ojo and was cured by these simple remedies.

There was only one account of the cure in which the person who had caused el ojo was administered three sound spankings. Immediately after the third spanking, the child was well and sound.

Prevention of el ojo. The most frequently used method of preventing el ojo is for the person admiring a child to bless him at the same time with such common expressions as

person administers a gentle child, he may cause a swelling of the
 membrane the child is become ill. Some often think that
 otherwise is a matter of this evil power which is possessed.
 So it is, that if a child becomes ill, the advice are given
 to believe that the last person who touched the child or
 carried him, is responsible for his illness.

There are two very frequently used remedies for the
 child on whom the evil eye has been cast. One remedy is
 for the offender to give water directly from his mouth into
 the mouth of the sick child. Another remedy is to break an
 egg in a saucer and place it at the head of the bed of the
 sick child. If an eye appears in the yolk of the egg, the
 child will get well immediately. The efficacy of these two
 remedies is vouched for by many persons who have hovered at
 the bedside of a sick child. They will say, without a
 shadow of a doubt, that their child had been given an eye
 and was cured by these simple remedies.

There was only one account of the cure in which the
 person who had caused the eye was administered three sorbs
 speaking. Immediately after the third speaking, the child
 was well and sound.

Prevention of eye. The most frequently used method
 of prevention of eye is for the person striking a child to
 place him at the knee with such common expressions as

"Que Dios te bendiga," (God bless you), and "Dios te guarde," (May God keep you). Another prevention in the form of a blessing is to make a cross with saliva on the child's forehead. An often used prevention for the evil eye is that of spitting in the child's face. This is also evidenced in European folklore, according to the Motif-Index of Stith Thompson.⁴

Charms. The charms mentioned in Chapter III of this thesis are also prevalent today, and it is a common thing to see Spanish American children, or even small babies, wearing a coral bracelet or necklace, or a religious medal in order to prevent the spell of el ojo.

Present-day witches. The questionnaire mentioned above also revealed that there were fourteen of the forty people who knew of living persons who are believed to be witches. Some of the accounts of these reputed witches and the harm they caused are related in the following pages.

In Albuquerque, during the days of prohibition, two men went to Doña Luisa's house in search of mula blanca. They were curious about Doña Luisa because she was believed

⁴ Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, (Helsinki, 1934), Vol. II, p. 312.

to be a witch. Therefore, when she went to the basement to get the mula blanca, they stealthily followed her and were amazed to see all of the paraphernalia used in witchcraft. Doña Luisa was furious when she discovered the men gazing at her monos, or figurines, cow horns, herbs, pumpkins, and other articles with which she worked her evil. So she threatened that if either of them ever told what he had seen, he would regret it.

A number of years later, a group of hunters were sitting around the campfire spinning yarns. In the group was Pedro, one of the men who had discovered Doña Luisa's secret. Pedro told them of the experience at Luisa's, and no sooner had he finished speaking than he had an epileptic fit. He continued to have these fits for three years, until he and some of his friends sought out Doña Luisa and beat her soundly, until she promised to remove the spell. From that day on, he has never had another fit.

Another true story which has a much more tragic ending concerns a man who was estranged from his wife. He firmly believed her to be a witch, and when he became ill, he knew that she had bewitched him. After suffering for two years and going to many doctors who could not locate his trouble, he finally went to his wife's house and murdered

both her and his step-son. His belief in witchcraft was so strong, that immediately after killing his wife, he became well and healthy. It is doubtful whether or not he enjoys his health, as he will have to spend the rest of his life in prison.

Effigies in witchcraft. In Mogollón, New Mexico, there lived a woman named Erlinda, who used to tell fortunes and was known to practice witchcraft. She used monos, or effigies, in which she stuck pins or cactus thorns in order to inflict some malady on those whom she wished to harm. She received great sums of money for bewitching people in this manner.

Erlinda died at the age of sixty-five. While she was on her deathbed, her husband learned that she was a witch and shouted angrily at her, "So you are one of those! Well, may God judge you as He sees fit. I will not forgive you!"

Erlinda's husband remarried, but life became unbearable for him and his new wife because of the noise in the house. He had the house thoroughly cleaned and gave all the effigies, pins, dead frogs, and other equipment to the pastor of the church, who burned them. However, the noise continued and they were forced to move away.

In time, the house was completely destroyed because of the complaints of the neighbors, who saw a woman on a

with him and his family. He was a very kind and
friendly man. He was a very good man. He was a very
well educated man. He was a very well
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black horse enter the house every day and then gallop away at night.

This type of tale is very common in New Mexican folklore. The mono is stock equipment for those practicing witchcraft, and the maladies which can be inflicted in this manner include almost everything known to mankind. The monos are made of various materials; some are rag dolls, some are made of clay, or wax, and still others are carved of wood.

This image magic has existed in European history as well as the folklore for many centuries. Mr. Kittredge says concerning the subject:

If we had newspapers or folklorists from middle ages, such cases would be countless, for they turn up constantly in recent times and even at the present day, despite the progress of science and what is called rationalism.⁵

Witchcraft in Silver City. In Silver City, New Mexico, all four members of the Lucero family are continuously suffering from some ailment or another, and usually they attribute it to witchcraft. Recently, the father became ill. He suffered from some sort of stomach disorder as food did not agree with him and he gradually lost weight and became very weak. He went to two different doctors who could not help him at all.

⁵ Kittredge, op. cit., p. 91.

which have been the same every day and then calling some

of them.

This type of life is very common in the Indian

land. The man is seen to be very busy for those practicing

witchcraft, and the material which can be found in this

manner includes almost everything known to mankind. The

people are made of various materials, some are the bones

some are made of clay, of wax, and still others are carved

of wood.

This image magic has existed in European history as

well as the folklore for many centuries. Mr. Kittredge says

concerning the subject:

It is not necessary or desirable to be able

eyes, such cases would be dangerous, for they turn

up constantly in recent times and even at the present

day, especially the progress of science and what is

called witchcraft.

Whitcraft is still with us. In Oliver's case, New

Mexico, all four members of the Lincoln family are continuously

suffering from some ailment or another, and usually they

all. He suffered from some sort of stomach disorder as

food did not agree with him and he gradually lost weight

and became very weak. He went to two different doctors

who could not help him at all.

Whitcraft, pp. 215, p. 216.

At last, he decided to visit an old lady in Hanover, New Mexico, about twenty miles from Silver City. The old lady was famous for her cures of bewitched persons. The treatment lasted several weeks during which time the family drove back and forth every day. Mr. Lucero did not have to take any medicine. The treatment consisted of long conversations during which time the old woman rubbed the palm of his hand. At the same time, she mumbled something in a low tone, which might have been a prayer.

When the treatment was over and he was pronounced well, the old woman told him who had cast the spell on him. It was an old friend of his, a woman whom he had once intended to marry. She had sent him a religious painting which had bewitched him. On learning this, Mr. Lucero destroyed the painting and has not been sick since that time.

A colored witch. Also from the southern part of the state is the tale about Lizzie, although it is not actually a tale, it is a current fact. Lizzie is a colored woman whose fame has spread not only to near-by towns, but to all parts of the state. She speaks Spanish fluently and will treat only Spanish American people.

At least five times, Lizzie has been arrested and put in jail for using unorthodox methods of treating her

At first, he seemed as usual, and in fact, in the morning
New Mexico, about twenty miles from Silver Lake. The old
lady was famous for her sense of humor, and she was
treatment lasted several weeks during which time the family
drove back and forth every day. Mr. Linnard did not have
to take any medicine. The treatment consisted of long
conversations during which time the old woman rubbed the
palm of his hand. At the same time, she whispered something
in a low tone, which might have been a prayer.

When the treatment was over, and he was pronounced
well, the old woman told him and had sent him away on him.
It was an old friend of his, a woman who had known
him since he was a boy. She had sent him a religious picture
which had bewitched him. On learning this, Mr. Linnard
destroyed the picture and has not been sick since that
time.

A colored woman, Anna, from the southern part of the
state in the late about 1880, although it is not actually

whose name has spread not only to nearly every part of the
parts of the state. She speaks Spanish fluently and will
speak only Spanish American people.
At least five times, Anna has been arrested and
put in jail for being unwelcome outside of reading her

patients. However, each time her case has been thrown out of court because no one is willing to testify against her. Before she takes a person for treatment, he has to give the Catholic promise that no outsider will be told about her methods. Although no one has been able to prove a crime against her, there have been several families who have accused her of slowly killing some member of their family, supposedly by witchcraft or some form of black magic.

Here in Albuquerque, there is a Spanish American family whose father was said to be under the spell of a business rival. The father made several trips to Lizzie for treatment and soon died as a result. Yet this case, like so many others, has not succeeded in convicting her.

Drugs and witchcraft. According to a prominent druggist in Albuquerque, there are several persons in this vicinity known as witch doctors. One lives near Jémez and always has a number of cars around her place with people waiting to see her. There is a midwife who takes all of her patients to this witch doctor for additional treatment. The druggist does not believe in witch doctors, but he knows that they exist because he sells them many ingredients which they use to effect their cures. Some of them have common names, and as a pharmacist, he knows what they might be used for; but many of them have such mysterious names,

construction, and appearance, that only a witch doctor would know what to do with them! A few examples of these mysterious objects are: ojos de venado (a round object almost one-half inch thick which actually looks like a deer's eye), huesos de víbora, pasmo, simonillo, lengua de vaca, orejuela de ratón, barbas de coco, and many others.

Superstitious belief. An interesting belief among the Spanish speaking people of this state is that concerning the color blue. It is a common belief that if the door and window frames of a house are painted blue, it will keep out the evil spirits. This superstition has been repeated by many people, but no one seems to have any idea where it originated.

From the foregoing accounts of witchcraft, it would seem that we are living, not in the twentieth century, but in the sixteenth, or even in the middle ages or earlier. It has amazed the writer of this thesis in gathering this information, to find that there are so many Spanish Americans in New Mexico who believe in witchcraft and the existence of witches in this, our so-called modern world. Many of the tales are told for the sake of story-telling just as any fairy-tale is told. But all of the accounts in this particular chapter are told for the truth and are firmly believed in by those concerned and those who actually know the principal characters.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Even though witches and witchcraft in the Hispanic folklore of this state have a distinctive New Mexican atmosphere, scientists and specialists in the field of folklore have concluded that most of the lore of the New Mexican folk had its origin in Spain and other European countries. The early opinion was that the Indian influence was slight, or practically negligible. However, studies and discoveries made during the late 1920's and in the period following have altered this generally accepted opinion, and the degree of influence of Indian folklore upon that of the Hispanic folklore of the state is now thought to be greater than was originally believed. Since the study of folklore, as such, is a fairly new field, it is possible that later discoveries and further study may alter this opinion even more.

A close relationship between witchcraft and religion is apparent not only in the history of witchcraft as it appears in the Old World, but also in the Hispanic folklore of New Mexico. The services and rituals of witches of the early centuries closely imitated the religious services by means of burlesque. The witch's power was supposedly derived from evil spirits or the devil, and this power was increased

Even though it has not been possible to find any evidence of this state have a distinctive New Mexican atmosphere, especially in the field of folklore have suggested that some of the folk of the New Mexican folk and the origin in Spain and other European countries. The early opinion was that the folk of the New Mexican folk, or practically negligible. However, studies and discoveries made during the last 1930's and in the period following have shown that the folk of the New Mexican folk, and the degree of influence of Indian folk upon that of the Hispanic folk of the state is not thought to be greater than was originally believed. The study of folklore, as such, is a fairly new field, it is possible that later discoveries and further study will after this opinion even more.

A close relationship between the folk and the folk of the New Mexican folk, but also in the Hispanic folk of New Mexico. The services and rituals of which of the early centuries closely related the religious services of the folk. The folk's power was especially derived from the folk of the folk, and this power was increased

by denying God and reviling all religious things.

Also in the history of New Mexican witchcraft is found this complete opposition to all things pertaining to religion. A denial of God, the witch's fear of the cross, the power of holy names and the use of religious emblems to protect one from witchcraft, are but a few of the common beliefs among the Spanish Americans of New Mexico.

The metamorphosis seen in witches of other lands is also found in New Mexican folklore, and the witch is discovered to have the power to transform herself into various animals or fowls. This seems to be a primitive and universal belief and not necessarily an influence of one country upon another. The tales are numerous and widespread over the state in which the witch transforms herself into a cat, dog, coyote, owl, or other animal. Tales and beliefs involving the owl seem to be the most numerous of those concerned with metamorphosis.

The profusion of evil deeds which it is believed New Mexican witches are able to inflict upon those who arouse their enmity are similar to those found in the witchcraft of other lands. One of the most common of these is to put a curse in the form of some sickness or disease upon the offender. Besides illness, the witch may also cause

by having God and revealing His will to the world. This is the history of the Jewish people. From this comes the conception of all things pertaining to religion. A belief in God, the will of God, the power of holy names and the use of religious symbols to protect one from evil spirits, are but a few of the common beliefs among the Jewish people of New Mexico.

The metaphysical side in the case of the Jewish people is also found in New Mexican folklore, and the wish to discover to have the power to transfer oneself into various states of being. This seems to be a universal and universal belief and not necessarily an inheritance of one country upon another. The belief in the power to spread over the state in which the wish transfer itself into a cat, dog, monkey, owl, or other animal. This and beliefs involving the wish seem to be the most numerous of those concerned with metaphysics.

The transfer of evil deeds which is believed New Mexican wishes are able to inflict upon those and wishes themselves are similar to those found in the wish-erect of other lands. One of the most common of these is to put a curse in the form of some sickness or disease upon the offender. Beliefs in illness, the wish to, also come

failure of crops, unhappiness in love affairs, and any form of misfortune or disaster which could cause discomfiture or unhappiness for the victim.

As a natural consequence of those cases of personas maleficiadas, there resulted the arbolarios or curanderos who have the power to cure those who have been bewitched. These witch doctors correspond to the white witches of European witchcraft who have the power to lift the spell or cure a bewitched person.

The cures of the New Mexican curanderos have a wide range. They might include the drinking of some concoction brewed from various herbs (which actually may have some curative power), the beating of the witch who was believed to have cast the spell on the victim, or the rubbing of ashes on the patient. Whatever the remedy may be, many Spanish speaking New Mexicans have faith in its healing power and will vouch for its effectiveness. And since it is a fact that mind has such power over one's body, who is to deny that the faith in these cures is sufficient to make them a fact?

Incredible as it may seem to the average person in this day of enlightenment and supposedly advanced civilization, there still exists in the minds of many people, not only in New Mexico, but in other parts of the United States and foreign countries, a firm belief in the existence of

failure of crops, and losses in live stock, and any loss of life, and any other calamity which would be a disaster to the community, is attributed to the witch.

As a natural consequence of this case of witchcraft, the witch is regarded as the author of the disaster, and has the power to cure those who have been afflicted. These are the powers which correspond to the witch of the European witchcraft who have the power to lift the spell or cure a diseased person.

The cases of the New Mexican witchcraft have a wide range. They include the drinking of some composition which is supposed to be a poison, the poisoning of the victim who was believed to have cast the spell on the victim, or the poisoning of the victim on his person. However, the remedy may be, many special medicines, but the most common is the use of the power and will which is the characteristic of the witch. It is a fact that mind has such power over the body, who is so busy that the fact is less known, is sufficient to make

impossible as it may seem to the average person in this day of scientific advancement and supposedly advanced civilization. There still exists in the minds of many people, not only in New Mexico, but in other parts of the United States and foreign countries, a firm belief in the existence of

witches and their power to inflict harm. In the Albuquerque Journal, dated March 24, 1950, there appeared an article entitled, "Delaware Woman Denies She Practiced Witchcraft."¹ In this article, a young woman is accused of practicing witchcraft and of accepting money for effecting cures. Since the case has not yet been tried, the outcome is unknown. However, the fact that the woman is accused and will be brought to trial in a court of law is sufficient to illustrate the fact that the belief in witchcraft is still alive in the world today.

It is to be hoped that in time, education in the schools as well as in the churches will succeed in eradicating these strange and childish superstitions from the minds of its people.

¹ Albuquerque (New Mexico) Journal, March 24, 1950.

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