

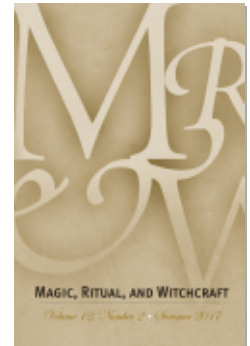


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Faith and Magic in Early Modern Finland by Raisa Maria Toivo
(review)

Sonja Hukantaival

Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft, Volume 12, Number 2, Summer 2017, pp. 259-261
(Review)



Published by University of Pennsylvania Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mrw.2017.0027>

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between colonists and Native Americans, or in religion in general, this book reveals the debates and conflicts in a new and surprising light. Juster's examination of the medieval, early modern, and colonial contexts of each analytical category simultaneously speaks to the productivity of the transatlantic turn and to the possibilities that her methods could generate in future scholarship.

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RAISA MARIA TOIVO. *Faith and Magic in Early Modern Finland*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Pp. ix + 183.

The early modern Finn could be a devout Lutheran, yet sacrifice a lamb at a saint's holy day, and ensure a good harvest by drinking a toast to the deity called Ukko. The recent book by Dr. Raisa Maria Toivo, Academy Research Fellow at the University of Tampere, discusses these different aspects of early modern religiosity in Finland side by side. This kind of inspiring approach where official theology and lived religion are not seen as completely separate but rather as forming a dynamic whole, has recently gained popularity in studies discussing past practices and beliefs. Toivo's book is a valuable contribution to this discussion. Moreover, the fact that she observes early modern practices as meaningful in their historical context instead of simply relics from previous eras is one of the main merits of the study.

The book is divided into five chapters. Between the introduction and conclusion one finds the three main themes of the study: lived Lutheranism and the development of superstition, Catholic influence and magic in Finland, and Eastern Orthodox influence and its demonization in Finland. Already the table of contents of the book shows clearly that Toivo's approach is comprehensive as it attempts to encompass all aspects of early modern religion in Finland including competing faiths, theology, religious teaching, and everyday religious experience. Toivo is a historian, so the source material of the study consists of various written records such as accounts of episcopal visitations, manuals, confession books, model sermon collections, and circular letters. The voice of the lay people is heard through church and secular court records. As Toivo well recognizes, reliance on written records poses a challenge, since laypeople seldom recorded their religious experience in written form. Here the study could have benefited from the recent, slowly growing corpus of archaeological studies discussing material remains of historical religious practices in Finland. These are not yet well known outside their discipline, so the omission is understandable. Nevertheless, some quantitative

information on the source material could have been helpful when assessing the representativeness of the sources.

The first main theme, lived Lutheranism and the development of superstition, presents the policies of the church in early modern Finland and then moves on to discuss the consequences of those policies on everyday lived religion. In early modern times Finland was part of the Swedish kingdom where Lutheranism was officially adopted in 1527 at the Diet of Västerås. Toivo presents the shifts in church policies in the context of Sweden's changing foreign policy and internal situation. She explains how the Lutheran church defined itself not only in contrast to Catholicism but also Calvinism. Meanwhile, the attention of authorities also turned towards lay practices that could be interpreted as unorthodox. Here Toivo notes the use of prayers in the vernacular in healing and other rituals, and the tradition of Lutheran pilgrimage and offering-churches. Laypeople understood these practices as acts of devotion, but they were problematic, even blasphemous, in eyes of authorities. Still, the fact that many of these practices survived in spite of the campaign to educate the populace was, according to Toivo, because the Lutheran confessionalization defined itself more strongly against anti-ritualistic Calvinism than Catholicism.

The second theme observes Catholic influence after the Reformation. This chapter is quite interesting since it discusses the little-known Counter-Reformation and its influence in Finland. Some aspects that have been previously discussed as survival of medieval Catholic traditions are here shown to be products of the Counter-Reformation efforts. The very locally (in Lower Satakunta) appearing rosary cult is a likely example of this. While saint's day celebrations occurring throughout the period are less likely to be connected to the Counter-Reformation, Toivo places also these practices in the context of the Lutheran period and everyday life. Here she states the important observation that laypeople were not content with a passive role in sacred matters, but needed active ways to participate in religion.

The final theme discusses the Eastern Orthodox faith and its demonization in a mainly Lutheran kingdom. The uneasy balance of acceptance and conflict connected to the Eastern Orthodox faith in the easternmost parts of the Swedish kingdom is a very interesting phenomenon. Demonization took place mainly on the local level, in occasional conflicts between Lutheran and Orthodox neighbors, while the state needed to maintain good relations with the eastern faith for political reasons. In terms of structure, however, this chapter turned out to be the weakest link in the book; yet this could have been easily remedied by dividing it into at least two chapters. The problem with the section is that it deals very little with the topic implied by its title,

the Eastern Orthodox influence and its demonization, and focuses instead on other kinds of practice occurring in the eastern parts of Finland (and even more widely). Especially the extensively discussed non-Christian practices and beliefs would have deserved a chapter of their own. Still, the topics discussed in this section are relevant indeed.

While excellent as a whole, some critical remarks can be noted as to details of the book. The first point may be a bit unfair since scholarly traditions are different, but the book could have benefited from a clearer structure where the author's theoretical viewpoints (and the dating of the early modern period in Finland) would have been made explicit in the beginning of the study instead of gradually within the text. Also, the fact that there are references in the concluding chapter is unusual to me. I noted a few cases where references to archaeological results were taken from secondary studies by non-archaeologists instead of the original study. Moreover, several typographical errors (and some redundancy) interfere with the flow of the text, so the book would have benefited from an extra proofreading before print.

Overall, *Faith and Magic in Early Modern Finland* is an enjoyable read which can be warmly recommended for anyone generally interested in the interrelationship of faith and magic or the situation in Finland more specifically. It makes clear that that people had a need to participate actively in religion and were not merely passive listeners and observers of rituals performed by priests. Thus it shows excellently how religion and its interpretation lived and changed together with other aspects of society.

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HEIDI MARX-WOLF. *Spiritual Taxonomies and Ritual Authority: Platonists, Priests, and Gnostics in the Third Century C.E.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. Pp. 216.

This academic, scholarly, and thoughtful book makes a positive contribution to a wide range of disciplines including philosophy, the history of religion (particularly late ancient religion), broad cultural history, esotericism, and mysticism. It is a well written, riveting, and fascinating book that many readers will be unable to put down, but it deserves careful reflection and even multiple readings.

The book focuses on how four third-century Platonic philosophers—namely, Plotinus, Origen, Porphyry, Iamblichus (POPI)—developed spiritual