

Penzer

Poison Damsels

First published in 2004. These four classic masterpieces in esoteric research by the noted orientalist - M. Penzer explore customs and traditions from other cultures and periods of history which, for all their apparent strangeness, mask fundamental subjects of continuing interest. The first concerns the motif of the poison damsel -- the beauty who dealt death in many forms to her admirers - which originated in India, was prevalent in medieval Europe, and persists today in the belief of the femme fatale. The volume includes a study in the ancient Tale of the Two Thieves, an essay on sacred prostitution in India, the ancient East and West Africa, and an exhaustive treatment of the custom of chewing the betel or areca nut which is widespread in the far East from India through Indonesia to New Guinea. A natural stimulant and narcotic whose effects are similar to that of tobacco, betel is of growing interest to the medical world, and has, as the author shows here, a rich legacy of customs and belief.

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