



Medieval Torture

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In the middle ages torture was used to extract information, force confessions, punish suspects, frighten opponents, and satisfy personal hatred.

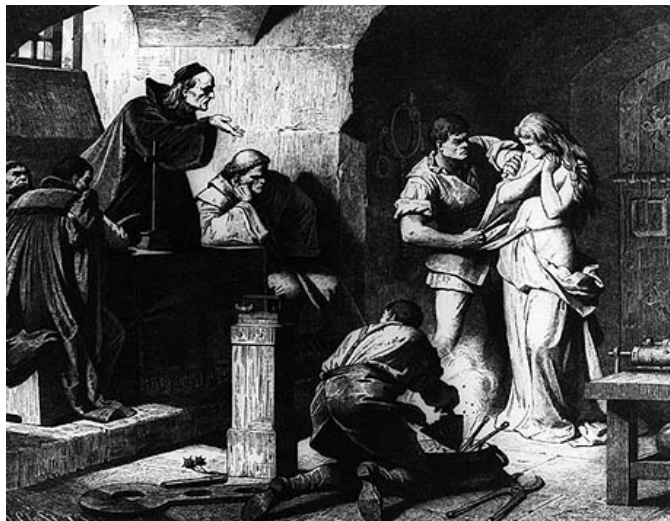
Historically, ancient Greeks and Romans used torture for interrogation. Until the second century AD, torture was used only on slaves.. A slave's testimony was admissible only if extracted by torture.

The word 'torture' comes from the French *torture*, originating in the Late Latin *tortura* and ultimately deriving the past participle of *torquere* meaning 'to twist'. Many characteristically Christian tortures rely on a twisting of the limbs, twisting ligatures, or turning screw mechanisms as the Church discouraged the shedding of blood.

The Norman French who came to England with William the Conqueror used torture to extract treasure from the Anglo-Saxons in their new kingdom. During the Anarchy, the Norman supporters of both of the claimants to the throne practiced torture to extract gold and silver from the peasantry. As the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 1139 puts it:

They hanged them by the thumbs, or by the head, and hung fires on their feet; they put knotted strings about their heads, and writhed them so that it went to the brain ... Some they put in a chest that was short, and narrow, and shallow, and put sharp stones therein, and pressed the man therein, so that they broke all his limbs ... I neither can nor may tell all the wounds or all the tortures which they inflicted on wretched men in this land.

Medieval and early modern European courts used torture, depending on the accused's alleged crime and social status. Torture was deemed a legitimate means to extract confessions or to obtain the names of accomplices or other information about a crime. In theory, it was permitted only if there was already half-proof against the accused. Defendants already sentenced to death would be tortured to force them to disclose the names of accomplices.



Torture was used almost exclusively for the crime of treason. In civil society this meant in practice that it was generally restricted to monarchs and the highest nobles. In the Church, matters were different. The Church taught that any deviation from orthodoxy amounted to lèse majesté against God, and therefore treason against the King of Kings. This meant that in contrast to civil society, treason and therefore torture were common in the Church. It was not only the Inquisition that practised torture but it is the Inquisition that has lodged in the popular mind as masters of the trade.

As many historians have noted, the most vicious procedures in Medieval times were inflicted on devout Christians by even more devout Christians. Dominicans gained a reputation as the most fearsomely innovative torturers.


Torture had long been practised by bishops, but it was formally authorised for the Medieval Inquisition in 1252. It should have ended in 1816 when a papal bull forbade its use, but secret torture continued in the Papal States until they were seized by French Forces in the 1870s.

Torture was usually conducted in secret, often in secure underground dungeons. In contrast, torturous executions were usually public, and drew large crowds of spectators. Public holidays were often declared and free penances given to spectators to ensure large attendances.



Deliberately painful methods of execution for severe crimes were taken for granted as part of justice until the development of Humanism in 17th century philosophy, and "cruel and unusual punishment" was denounced in the English Bill of Rights of 1689. The Age of Enlightenment in the western world further developed the idea of universal human rights. The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 marks the recognition of a general ban of torture by all UN member states.






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Torture and Execution Methods

Remarkable ingenuity has been shown in the invention of instruments and techniques of physical torture.

Torture devices can be classified in many ways.

- Tortures that leave a visible mark v those that do not
- Tortures that draw blood v those that do not (in theory the Catholic Church permitted only the latter)
- Physical torture v psychological torture
- Tortures used to extract information v tortures used as an additional punishment to prolong death

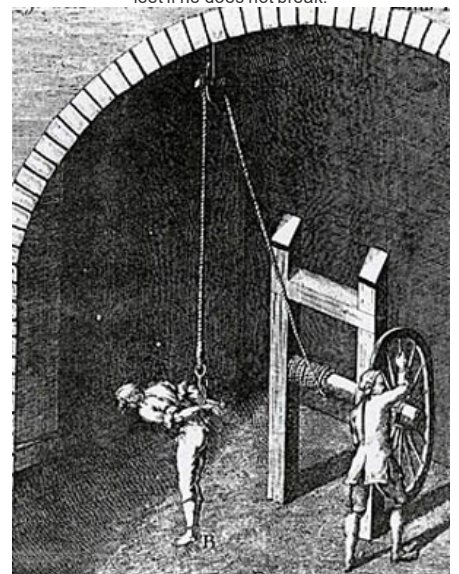


Here is our classification of torture types with examples of corresponding torture devices

- **Restraint or confinement in painful or damaging positions**
 - the Barrel Pillory, or Spanish Mantle, or Drunkards' Cloak
 - Branks or Scold's bridle or Gossip's Bridle and Variants
 - Pillory
 - Stocks
 - Scavenger's Daughter
- **Animals**
 - Rats
 - Horses
- **Extremes of heat and cold**
 - Boiling Water
 - Branding Irons
 - Brazen Bull
 - Exposure
- **Physical Damage - Piercing**
 - Instep Borer
 - Chair of Torture or Iron Chair



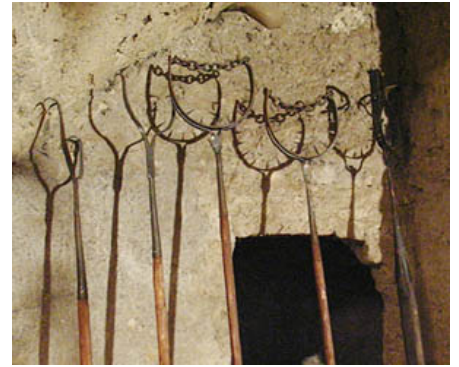
The strappado - a favourite of the Inquisition. Notice the weights on the floor, ready to be attached to the victims feet if he does not break.



- o Impalement
 - o Iron Maiden
- **Physical Damage - Crushing**
 - o Boot, Spanish Boot, Buskin & Foot Press
 - o Crushing Devices
 - o Tablilla
 - o Thumbscrews or Perriwinks
- **Physical Damage - Mutilation**
 - o Denailing Devices
 - o Flaying Knives
 - o Flogging Equipment: Whips, Flails, Cats o'Nine Tails
 - o Hanging, Drawing & Quartering (& castration)
 - o Mutilation Tools
- **Physical Damage - Amputation:**
 - o Axes and Swords
 - o Decapitation - the Halifax Gibbet & the Guillotine
- **Physical Damage: Twisting & Stretching**
 - o Hanging (suspension)
 - o Judas Cradle
 - o Pear of Anguish, Pear of Confession, Pope's Pear, Oral pear, Vaginal Pear, Anal Pear
 - o Piquet
 - o Rack
 - o Strappado
 - o Tearing Limb from Limb
 - o Wooden Horse
- **Public Humiliation**
 - o Drunkards' Cloak
 - o Branks or Scold's bridle or Gossip's Bridle and Shame Mask
 - o Pillory
 - o Stocks
 - o Tarring and Feathering
- **Restrictions on Breathing**
 - o Ducking Stool, Cucking Stool(North America, Dunking Stool)
 - o Garrote
 - o Pressing, Peine Forte et Dure
 - o Water Cure (Water Torture)
- **Starvation or Thirst**
 - o Wheel or Breaking Wheel or Catherine Wheel
 - o Coffin Torture
- **Sensory or Sleep Deprivation**
 - o Heretic's Fork
 - o Drugs
- **Murder Torture**
 - o Hanging, Drawing & Quartering, Gibbeting
 - o Intestinal Crank.
 - o Sawing.
 - o Burning Alive



Equipment for leading prisoners around. The spiked loop would be fitted around their necks.




A cat o Nine Tails used for flogging until recent times



Torture devices. Equipment like this was blessed and sprinkled with holy water by priests before being used by the Inquisition.






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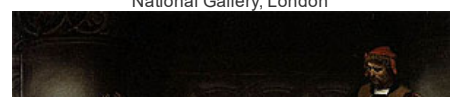
Torture and Execution Devices

Axes and Swords for Beheading

Beheading was a form of execution rather than a form of torture, but it could form part of a programme of torture. For example beheading was a part of the process of drawing, hanging, and quartering.

Decapitation has been used as a form of capital punishment for millennia. The terms

The Execution of Lady Jane Grey
by Paul Delaroche (1797–1859)
Oil on canvas
National Gallery, London



"capital offence", "capital crime", "capital punishment," derive from the word caput, Latin for "head", referring to the punishment for serious offences involving the forfeiture of the head.

Decapitation by sword or axe was considered the "honourable" way to die for a noble, who, being a warrior, could often expect to die by the sword in any event. In England it was considered a privilege of noblemen and noblewomen to be beheaded. Others suffered a dishonourable death on the gallows or through burning at the stake. In medieval England the penalty for treason by men was to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. The penalty for women traitors was to be burned at the stake. In practice sentences of nobles were almost always commuted to beheading. In legends of Christian martyrdom the fictitious saints withstood all attempts to execute them, until the wicked heathens finally beheaded them.



If the headsman's axe or sword was sharp and his aim true, decapitation was quick and presumed to be a painless form of death. If the instrument was blunt or the executioner clumsy, multiple strokes might be required. The person to be executed was therefore advised to give a gold coin to the headsman to ensure that he did his job with care. Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, and Mary, Queen of Scots, both required three strikes at their executions. Margaret Pole, 8th Countess of Salisbury, required ten strokes before being dispatched by a fatal blow.

To ensure that the blow would be fatal, executioners' swords were usually blade-heavy two-handed swords. If an axe was used, it almost invariably would be wielded with both hands. In England a special form of axe was used for beheadings, with the blade's edge extending downwards from the tip of the shaft.

Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, first cousins and the second and fifth wives of King Henry VIII were both condemned to be burnt alive for adultery, but on Henry's orders they were both beheaded. Lady Jane Grey was also condemned to burn as a traitress but again the sentence was commuted to beheading by Mary I.



Giovanni Battista Bugatti, executioner of the Papal States between 1796 and 1865, carried out 516 executions (Bugatti is pictured here offering snuff to a condemned prisoner). The Vatican City abolished its capital punishment statute in 1969.



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Barrel Pillory, or Spanish Mantle



A barrel is fitted over the entire body, with the head sticking out from a hole in the top. The person is kept locked in the barrel, forcing him to kneel in his own filth, and in some cases suffer extremes of hot or cold.

For a short time this was merely unpleasant, but prolonged confinement could cause death through hunger or thirst, or scaphism - allowing or encouraging insects to breed on and feed on the victim's flesh.

The defenceless individual's faeces accumulated within the container, attracting ever more insects, which would eat and breed within his or her exposed and often gangrenous flesh.

Feeding the victim would often be allowed each day in some cases to prolong the torture, so that dehydration or starvation did not provide him or her with the release of death.

Delirium would typically set in after a few days.

Death, when it eventually occurred, was probably due to a combination of dehydration, starvation and septic shock.



Drunkard's Cloak

A less horrific variation was used to punish drunkards, the feet projecting through the bottom of the barrel. It was used for a range of other misdemeanours, often represented pictorially on the exterior of the barrel.

In 1655, Ralph Gardner wrote that in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England "he hath seen men drove up and down the streets with a great tub or barrel opened in the sides, with a hole in one end to put through their heads, and so cover their shoulders and bodies, down to the small of their legs, and then close the same, called the newfangled cloak, and so make them march to the view of all beholders; and this is their punishments for drunkards and the like."

In 1641, the diarist John Evelyn wrote that in Delft, Holland the Senate House contained "a weighty vessel of wood, not unlike a butter churn, which the adventurous woman that hath two husbands at one time is to wear on her shoulders, her head peeping out at the top only, and so led about the town, as a penance for her incontinence"

The Drunkard's Cloak was used in 1862 on soldiers in the American Civil War. An eyewitness "was extremely amused to see a rare specimen of Yankee invention, in the shape of an original method of punishment drill. One wretched delinquent was gratuitously framed in oak, his head being thrust through a hole cut in one end of a barrel, the other end of which had been removed; and the poor fellow loafed about in the most disconsolate manner, looking for all the world like a half-hatched chicken".



Boiling Water



A large Cauldron was filled with water, oil, tar, tallow or molten lead. The liquid was then boiled. Sometimes the victim would be placed in the cauldron before it was boiled so as to be cooked slowly. Or they would be placed, usually head first, into the already boiling liquid.

This was more frequently a way to execute a prisoner rather than to extract a confession.

In England, statute 22 passed in 1531 by Henry VIII, made boiling a legal form of capital punishment. It began to be used for murderers who used poisons after the Bishop of Rochester's cook gave a number of people poisoned porridge, resulting in two deaths in February 1531.

It was employed again in 1542 for a woman who used poison. The act was repealed in 1547.

This form of capital punishment was also used for counterfeiters and coin forgers during the Middle Ages (who were technically guilty of treason)

Coiner of False Money being boiled alive Les coutumes de Toulouse, XIIIth C. (BNF fr9187 f34v)



Boiling water was also used as an ordeal

Boot, Spanish Boot, Buskin & Foot Press

Spanish Boot



The Spanish boot was an iron casing for the leg and foot. Wedges were hammered in between the casing and the victim's flesh. A similar device, commonly referred to as a shin crusher, squeezed the calf between two curved iron plates, studded with spikes, teeth, and knobs, to fracture the tibia and fibula.



A Spanish Boot



Forerunners of the archetype can be found dating back as far as a thousand years.

The first Scottish effort, referred to as a buskin, made use of a vaguely boot-shaped rawhide garment that was soaked with water, drawn over the foot and lower leg, and bound in place with cords. This contraption was heated over a gentle fire, drastically contracting the rawhide and squeezing the foot until the bones were dislocated, though there would not have been sufficient pressure actually to crush the bones of the foot.

A variant, found in both the British Isles and France, consisted of a trio of upright wooden boards that splintered around and between the feet and were tied in place by cords. Wedges were hammered between the boards and the feet to dislocate and crush the bones. An example from Autun, France, consisted of high boots of spongy, porous leather that were drawn over the feet and legs. Boiling water was poured over the boots, eventually soaking through the leather and eating the flesh away from the feet.



The Boot

Oversized boots of iron or copper, often brazed onto the floor, received the prisoner's bare feet as he lay in stocks or sat bound in a chair. The boots were filled with boiling water, or molten lead, to consume the feet and legs. A variant applied in Ireland to Dermot O'Hurley consisted of lightweight metal boots that were filled with cool water and heated with the feet inside over a fire until the water boiled.

Foot press or Foot screw

The foot press or foot screw consisted of a pair of horizontal iron plates tightened around the foot by means of a crank mechanism to lacerate the flesh and crush the bones of the foot.

Although it was standard to line the lower plate with ribs to prevent the bare foot from popping out of the grip of the instrument as it became sweatier, a crueller variant of this device in Nuremberg lined the upper plate with hundreds of sharp spikes.

A version from Venice connected the crank mechanism to a drill, so that a hole was drilled in the centre of the instep while the instrument was tightened.

Humiliation shoe, one of a pair of *peinliche Schuhe*, adjustable iron shoes worn by prisoners on their walk to the execution ground. The shoes were tightened to pinch the toes so that the prisoner could not walk normally. The bell provided additional humiliation.

Museum of tortures in Peter and Paul Fortress, St. Petersburg, Russia



Torture Shoes



Clink Prison Museum



The boot. Museum of tortures in Peter and Paul Fortress, St. Petersburg, Russia



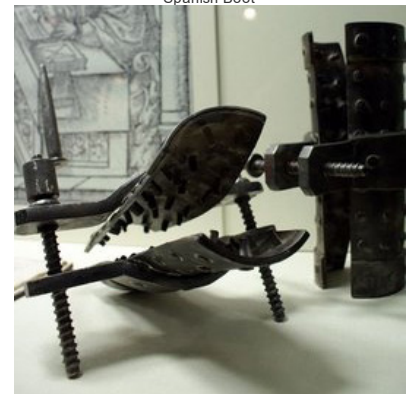
Urbain Grandier was tortured by having his lower legs smashed in a boot, having been convicted of trumped up charges by a Cardinal and an Abbess.



Spanish boot in Spis castle Slovakia



Spanish Boot

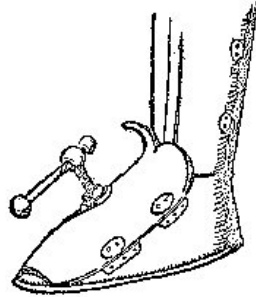


Screw operated Spanish Boot





Instep Borer



The instep borer was a medieval German instrument of torture that externally resembled an iron boot. It was hinged to permit the insertion and removal of the bare foot.

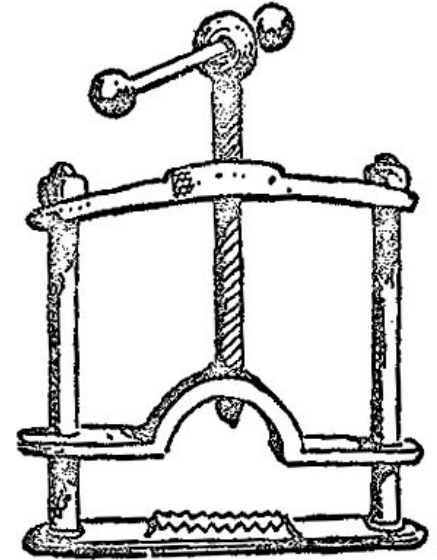
A crank projected from a housing over the instep, which concealed a long, thick, serrated iron blade, grooved so as to inflict maximum damage and promote liberal blood flow.

Turning the crank slowly advanced the blade into the boot, punching a hole through the centre of the instep. The resultant wound was so large that it was

common for the prisoner to die of toxæmia soon after.



It seems that the instep borer was used only in Nuremberg.



Branding Irons

Human branding or stigmatising is the process in which a mark, usually a symbol or ornamental pattern, is burned into the skin of a living person, with the intention that the resulting scar makes it permanent. This is achieved using a very hot or very cold branding iron.

In criminal law, branding with a hot iron was a mode of punishment by which marking the subject as if goods or animals, sometimes concurrently with a reduction of status.

Brand marks have also been used as a punishment for convicted criminals, combining physical punishment, as burns are very painful, with public humiliation, especially if marked on a normally visible part of the body, providing an indelible criminal record

The punishment was adopted by the Anglo-Saxons, and the ancient law of England authorised the penalty. By the Statute of Vagabonds (1547) under King Edward VI, vagabonds and Gypsies were ordered to be branded with a large V on the breast, and brawlers with F for "fraymaker"; slaves who ran away were branded with S on the cheek or forehead. This law was repealed in England in 1550. From the time of Henry VII, branding was inflicted for all offences which received Benefit of clergy (branding of the thumbs was used around 1600 at Old Bailey to ensure that the accused who had successfully used the Benefit of Clergy defence, by reading a passage from the Bible, could not use it more than once), but it was abolished for such in 1822. In 1698 it was enacted that those convicted of petty theft or larceny, who were entitled to benefit of clergy, should be "burnt in the most visible part of the left cheek, nearest the nose." This special ordinance was repealed in 1707. James Nayler, a Quaker who in the year 1655 was accused of claiming to be the Messiah, convicted of blasphemy in a highly publicised trial before the Second Protectorate Parliament and had his tongue bored through and his forehead branded B for 'blasphemer'.

In the 16th century, German Anabaptists were branded with a cross on their foreheads for refusing to recant their faith and join the Roman Catholic Church.

In the North-American Puritan settlements of the 17th century, men and women sentenced for having committed acts of adultery were branded with an "A" letter on their chest (men) or bosom (women).

Canon law sanctioned the punishment, and in France, in royal times, various offences carried the additional infamy of being branded with a fleur de lys. In Germany however, branding was illegal.

A letter B brand. "B" for Blasphemer



A cross brand, as used by Roman Catholics on German Anabaptists



The practice of branding as a punishment was widespread in Christendom. It was also used on slaves and animals to indicate ownership. These are slave brands.



In the Lancaster criminal court a branding iron is still preserved in the dock. It is a long bolt with a wooden handle at one end and an M (malefactor) at the other; close by are two iron loops for firmly securing the hands during the operation. The brander would, after examination, turn to the judge and exclaim "A fair mark, milord." Criminals were formerly ordered to hold up their hands before sentence to show if they had been previously convicted.

In the 18th century, cold branding or branding with cold irons became the mode of inflicting the punishment on prisoners of higher rank. "When Charles Moritz, a young German, visited England in 1782 he was surprised at this custom, and in his diary mentioned the case of a clergyman who had fought a duel and killed his man in Hyde Park. Found guilty of manslaughter he was burnt in the hand, if that could be called burning which was done with a cold iron" (Markham's Ancient Punishments of Northants, 1886).

Such cases led to branding becoming obsolete, and it was abolished in 1829 except in the case of deserters from the army, which were marked with the letter D, not with hot irons but by tattooing with ink or gunpowder.



A slave being branded.



Branks or Scold's bridle or Gossip's Bridle



Branks were used to punish nagging, slander, cursing, witchcraft and criticism of Christianity.

A scold's bridle, sometimes called a "branks", was a punishment device usually for women, also used as a 'mild' form of torture. It was an iron muzzle or cage for the head with an iron curb-plate projecting into the mouth and pressing down on top of the tongue. The 'curb-plate' was often studded with spikes so that if the tongue remained lying calmly in place, it inflicted a minimum of pain.

The branks was used as a formal legal punishment, first recorded in Scotland in 1567. Branks were also used in England, where it may not have been formally legalised as a punishment.

Kirk-sessions and barony courts in Scotland inflicted it upon transgressors or women that were considered to be 'naggers' or 'common scold'. Branking was a punishment for "gossips", "shrews" or "scolds" (women of the lower classes whose speech was "riotous" or "troublesome") and women accused of witchcraft by preventing them from speaking.

It was also used as corporal punishment for other offences, notably on female workhouse inmates. The women were placed in a public place for additional humiliation and were sometimes beaten.

Once the branks was placed on the 'gossip's' head, they would be led through town to show that they had been doing something wrong or scolding too often. This would also humiliate them into 'repenting' their 'riotous' actions.

Quaker women were punished with the branks for preaching in public places.

In 1567 Bessie Tailiefeir slandered Baillie Thomas Hunter in Edinburgh, saying that he was using false measures. She was sentenced to the brankit and set on the cross for one hour.

In Walton on Thames, in England, a scold's bridle is displayed in the vestry of the church. It is dated 1633, with the inscription "Chester presents Walton with a bridle. To curb women's tongues that talk too idle." The story is that a man called Chester lost a fortune due to a Walton woman's gossip, and presented the town with the instrument of torture out of anger and spite.

The branks was in use at Bolton-le-Moors, Lancashire as late as 1856.



Variants

Variants might be shaped like an animal's head, for example a cow for a lazy-bones, a donkey for a fool, a hare for an eavesdropper or a pig for a glutton.

See also

Brazen Bull

The Brazen Bull was invented in Ancient Greece by Perillos of Athens. Perillos proposed his idea of a painful means of execution to Phalaris, the tyrant of Akragas. Phalaris liked the idea of the Brazen Bull, and had one made. Once finished, Phalaris ordered it to be tested on Perillos himself.

The Bull was made wholly of brass. It was hollow and furnished with a door in the side.

When a victim was placed inside the brazen bull, he or she was roasted to death by a fire lit underneath it. A system of tubes made the victim's screams sound like an infuriated bull, and also made the bull's muzzle snort smoke.

In the Middle Ages it was used in Central Europe.



Breaking Wheel

see [Wheel](#)

Burning



In the Middle Ages burning was used both as a form of torture and as a capital punishment.

As a form of torture the victims feet could be held to a fire, or trapped into metal boots that were heated up, or they could be strapped into an iron chair with a fire lit underneath, or red hot irons could be applied. Metal torture instruments were often heated - pincers, pliers and so on. Burning or molten liquids could also be used, the victims being forced to dip limbs in them or even having them poured down their throats.

According to the Talmud, the "burning" mentioned in the Bible was done by melting lead and pouring it down the convicted person's throat, causing immediate death. The particular form of execution by burning in which the condemned is bound to a large stake is more commonly called burning at

the stake.

As a form of capital punishment, burning has a long history for crimes such as treason (heresy, blasphemy and witchcraft being regarded by the Christian Churches as treason against God). Sodomy was also punished by burning alive, again because it was seen as a crime against God.

The Burning of two "sodomites" at the stake outside Zürich, 1482 (Spiezer Schilling)



Adopting an old Roman practice, the Christian Church adopted burning as a



favoured form of capital punishment. Under the Byzantine Empire, burning was introduced as a punishment for Zoroastrians because of the erroneous belief that they worshiped fire. The Christian Emperor Justinian (r. 527-565) ordered death by fire, and confiscation of all possessions by the State as the punishment for heresy against the Christian faith in his *Codex Iustiniani* (CJ 1.5.), ratifying the decrees of his predecessors the Christian Emperors Arcadius and Flavius Augustus Honorius.

In 1184, the Roman Catholic Synod of Verona confirmed this form of punishment, legislating that burning was to be the official punishment for heresy, as Church policy was against the spilling of blood. It was also widely believed that the condemned would have no body to be resurrected in the afterlife. This decree was reaffirmed by the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215, the Synod of Toulouse in 1229, and numerous spiritual leaders up to the nineteenth century.



Civil authorities burnt persons judged to be heretics under the medieval Inquisition. Burning was also used by Protestants during the witch-hunts of Europe.

Among the best-known individuals to be executed by burning were Jacques de Molay (1314), Jan Hus (1415), St. Joan of Arc (30 May 1431), Savonarola (1498) Patrick Hamilton (1528), John Frith (1533), William Tyndale (1536), Michael Servetus (1553), Giordano Bruno (1600) and Avvakum (1682). Anglican martyrs Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley (both in 1555) and Thomas Cranmer (1556) were also burnt at the stake.

If the fire was large (for instance, when a large number of prisoners were executed at the same time), death often came from smoke inhalation or carbon monoxide poisoning before flames actually caused harm to the body. If the fire was small, however, the convict would burn for some time until death from heatstroke, shock, loss of blood or the thermal decomposition of vital body parts. Several records report that victims took over 2 hours to die. In many burnings a rope was attached to the convict's neck passing through a ring on the stake and they were simultaneously strangled and burnt.



When this method of execution was applied with skill, the condemned's body would burn progressively in sequence: calves, thighs and hands, torso and forearms, breasts, upper chest, face before death intervened. When the Catholic Inquisitions burned people they generally ensured a good distance between the flames and the victim, so that he or she was actually roasted to death rather than burned to death.

In later years in England some burnings only took place after the convict had already hanged for half an hour. In many areas in England condemned woman (men were hanged, drawn, and quartered) was seated astride a small seat called the saddle which was fixed half way up a permanently positioned iron stake. A similar "seat" resembling a peg can be seen between the legs of the male victims in the painting of St Dominic presiding over an Auto-da-fe, shown on the right.

In Britain the stake was about 4 metres high and had chains hanging from it to hold



Jacques de Molay and another Templar sentenced to the stake in 1314, from the *Chronicle of France or of St Denis* (fourteenth century).



Painting by Pedro Berruguete from the sacristy of the Santo Tomás church in Ávila.

Saint Dominic Presiding over an Auto-da-fe, painted around 1495. Oil on wood. 60 5/8 x 36 1/4" (154 x 92 cm). Prado Museum (catalog number P00618), Madrid.



the condemned woman still during her punishment. Having been taken to the place of execution in a cart with her hands firmly tied in front of her she was lifted over the executioner's shoulder and carried up a ladder against the stake to be sat astride the saddle. The chains were then fastened and sometimes she was painted with pitch which was supposed to help the fire to burn her quicker.

Edward Wightman, a Baptist from Burton on Trent, was the last person to be burnt at the stake for heresy in England in the market square of Lichfield, Staffordshire on 11 April 1612.



The "baptism by fire" of Old Believer leader Avvakum in 1682, condemned by the Orthodox Church



Cat o' Nine Tails

The cat o' nine tails, commonly shortened to the cat, is a type of multi-tailed whipping device that originated as an implement for severe physical punishment, notably in the Royal Navy and Army of the United Kingdom, and also as a judicial punishment in Britain and some other countries.

The cat is made up of nine knotted thongs of cotton cord, about 2 1/2 feet or 76 cm long, designed to lacerate the skin and cause intense pain. It traditionally has nine thongs as a result of the manner in which rope is plaited. Thinner rope is made from three strands of yarn plaited together, and thicker rope from three strands of thinner rope plaited together. To make a cat o' nine tails, a rope is unravelled into three small ropes, each of which is unravelled again.



Chair of Torture or Iron Chair

There are many variants of the chair, though they all have spikes covering the back, arm-rests, seat, leg-rests, and foot-rests. The number of spikes ranges from 500 to 1,500.

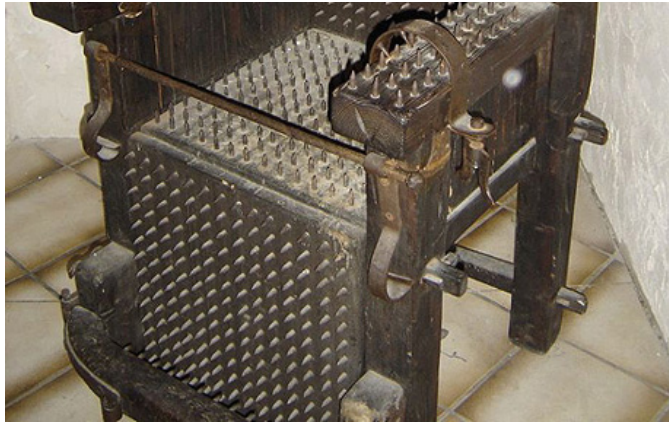
The victim's wrists were tied to the chair or bars pushed the arms against arm-rests for the spikes to penetrate the flesh even further.

In some versions of iron chair, there were holes under the chair's bottom where the torturer placed red hot coal to cause severe burns. In other versions weights would be placed on the victim's thighs or feet. In some there were spikes on the head rest.

It was a common practice to extract a confession by forcing one victim to watch another being tortured with this instrument.

No spikes penetrated a vital organ and wounds were closed by the spikes themselves, this delayed blood loss and ensured a lingering death.





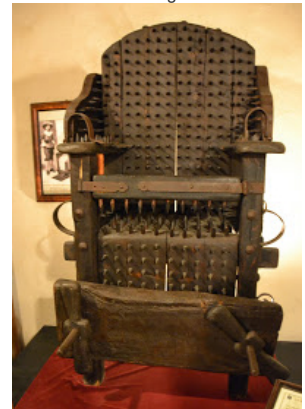
Torture Museum in Siena



San Gimignano



San Gimignano



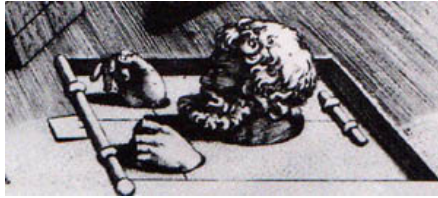
Chaining & Constraints

Simply restricting movement is a form of torture - the more restrictive the constraint, the more severe the torture.

As with the pillory or the stocks, victim cannot turn to look in certain directions, they cannot open or close windows, They cannot make themselves comfortable by moving or dressing or undressing, or scratching an itch, or moving inside or outside. They cannot make adjustments for heat or cold, or light or dark. They cannot visit a lavatory. They cannot defend themselves against physical or sexual abuse. They cannot shoo away insects or rats. They cannot eat or drink easily, and in some cases cannot eat or drink at all - leading to death within days.

In prisons run by Churches, the victims were generally restricted to a diet of stale bread and foul water - in line with a biblical text - and so were effectively condemned to death, since even a diet of good bread and water will sustain human life for only around three months.





See also Coffin Torture



Chastity Belts

A chastity belt is a locking item of clothing historically designed for women, to prevent sexual intercourse. Their purpose was to ensure chastity, in order to protect women from rape or to dissuade women and their potential sexual partners from sexual temptation; to this extent.

According to modern myths, the chastity belt was used as an anti-temptation device during the Crusades. When a knight left for the Holy Lands on the Crusades, his Lady would wear a chastity belt to preserve her faithfulness to him. There is no credible evidence that chastity belts existed before the 15th century, more than a century after the last Crusade, and their main period of use falls within the Renaissance rather than the Middle Ages. Research into the history of the chastity belt suggests that they were not used rarely before the 16th century.

Renaissance chastity belts were said to have had padded linings (to prevent large areas of metal from coming into direct prolonged contact with the skin), and these had to be changed fairly frequently, so that such belts were not practical for uninterrupted long-term wear.

It is debatable whether chastity belts should be counted as torture devices, though continuous long-term wear could certainly have caused genitourinary infection, abrasive wounds, sepsis and eventual death.



17th century French chastity belt

Female chastity belt. Museum of tortures in Peter and Paul Fortress, St. Petersburg, Russia



The business end of a chastity belt on display in the Doge's palace, Venice. (Claimed to be 16th–17th century.)



metal cage (Coffin Torture)



Coffin Torture

Here the victim was placed in a cage just big enough to accommodate the body, but not large enough to allow movement.

The cage could also be used as a gibbet for executed criminals.

It could also be used as a method of execution, the live victim left to starve, or die of thirst, or exposure - generally being hoisted high up to prevent help or rescue.

CHAINED ALIVE

Sometimes a felon was hung in chains while he was still alive so that he died of hunger, thirst or exposure. A compassionate traveller happening upon the wretch might put an end to the misery, by running him through with a sword. This savage penalty was rarely employed and had all but died out in Europe by the 18th century.

However, highwayman John Whitfield was so detested in the community where he was captured that he was hung alive in chains at Durham in 1777 and left to perish. It was several days before a mailcoach man dispatched him with a single shot.

See also [Gibbeting](#) and [Iron Maiden](#)



Crushing Devices

Devices existed for crushing many parts of the body, but the most common screw equipment, vices, for crushing limbs.

Sometimes the crushing was achieved by hammering wedges into constrained spaces where the limbs were confined - see Boot.

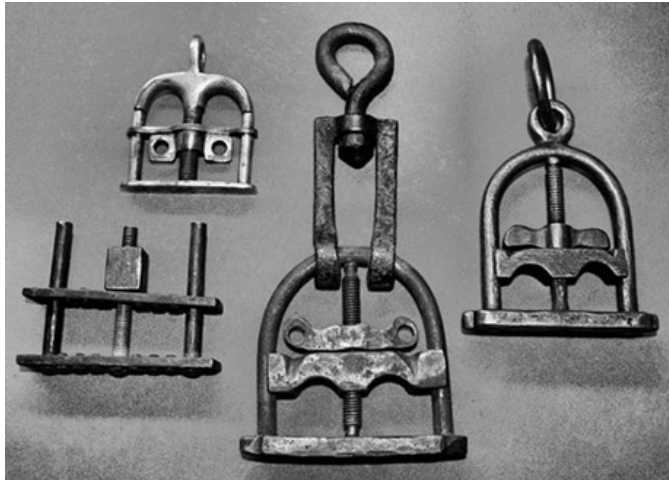
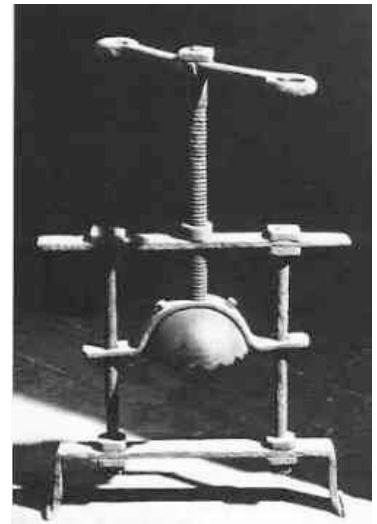
Tools resembling nut crackers could also inflict significant pain when applied to various parts of the body.

This torture device was used to crush the victim's knees





head crusher



Hand Crusher



Cucking Stool

see [Ducking Stool](#)

Denailing Devices

Denailing-the forcible extraction of the fingernails or toenails, or both, was a favourite method of medieval torture, the quicks under the nails being particularly sensitive..

In its simplest form, the torture is conducted by constraining the prisoner on a tabletop and using a metal forceps or pliers (often heated red-hot) to grasp each nail in turn and tear it from the finger or toe.


A crueller variant used in medieval Spain introduced a sharp wedge of wood or metal between the flesh and each nail. The wedge was slowly hammered ever further under the nail until it was torn free.

Medieval Pliers



Medieval German witch-hunters conducted this torture with rough wooden skewers dipped in boiling sulphur. A number of skewers were slowly driven into the flesh under the prisoner's toenails. Alternately, the skewer could be dipped in boiling oil, which served a dual purpose of burning the incredibly sensitive flesh and lubricating the skewer so that the torturer could more easily explore the surface area beneath the nail. When enough skewers had been driven home to pry each nail loose from its bed, the nail was torn out at the root with a pair of pliers.






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Drugs

Although poorly documented, it is clear that some torturers were familiar with a range of drugs that could elicit confessions even when physical torture failed. Medieval monasteries were expert in all kinds of herb, including toxins and hallucinogens.

The following is from H. Sidky's *Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs and Disease* (pp. 208-211)

Drugs administered by torturers and exorcists to produce desired states of mind among their victims and patients, respectively, may prove to be more significant than any opiate of narcotic used by alleged witches. In his *Cautio Criminalis* (1632), Spee wrote that torture technicians who were unable to extract a confession from their victims forced them to drink a potion which produced disorders of the brain, thus leading to bizarre confessions. Similarly, Weyer, in his treatise *De Lamiis* (1577), pointed out that confessions to impossible crimes were "elicited by administering potions causing drunkenness or mental disturbance." In Rottenburg, Germany, in 1530, authorities obtained confessions from three women suspected of witchcraft, who had resisted 186 applications of the strappado, through the administration of a special potion. A similar concoction was employed for the same purpose in the German town of Esslingen in 1562. Likewise, an accused werewolf from Westphalia, who resisted twenty applications of torture, finally confessed after being forced to imbibe an intoxicating draught. A comparable incident occurred in Denham, England (1585-1586), when an intoxicating potion was used to exorcists to induce their patient into believing that she really was possessed.

European torture technicians, we have already seen, had a wide assortment of tools and techniques at their disposal for extracting confessions, ranging from mechanical devices designed to inflict gross tissue damage, to psychological and physiological techniques, such as solitary confinement and sleep deprivation. Hallucinogenic or psychotomimetic drugs appear to have been part of this arsenal of weapons at the disposal of the interrogators. Although drugs have not proven to be effective tools for "brainwashing," i.e., radically and permanently altering the personality, drug-induced psychosis can be an extremely unnerving experience, and chemical torture can thus be a formidable tool.

Atropine and scopolamine, for instance, often produce frightening and disagreeable symptoms, and subjects who have experienced such effects rarely use these drugs a second time. This may explain why the witches' ointments were applied topically: inunction (introducing a drug into the body through the skin) is often used when it is necessary to maintain low levels of a drug in the blood stream.

A person under the influence of Atropine, according to Schenk, "may easily be subordinated to another's will, for he is completely open to influence and will do whatever he is told. If he has swallowed a great deal of the poison, this state of confusion and sensory derangement leads to a temporary, but acute, mental disorder exactly resembling a symptomatic psychosis. Sudden outbursts of delirium and increasingly intense periods of mania create a terrifying and uncanny clinical picture, which finally ends in convulsions similar to those of epilepsy." Similarly, hyoscyamine, when given even in moderate doses causes, among other symptoms, delirium, near blindness, and unbearable pain. Mixtures containing both these drugs, as well as those containing extracts of mandrake and datura, which would have had similar effects, were administered to suspected witches prior to torture.

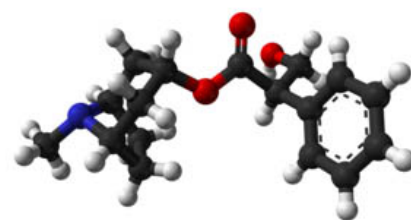
Such drugs, used to induce debility, would, by disrupting the perceptual and conceptual processes, confuse and weaken the victim. The result of such psychochemical torture would be a mixture of fantasy, delusional and hallucinatory memories, interspersed with random real ones, precisely the kinds of confession magistrates and torture technicians sought and obtained. Again, according to Lewin: "We find these plants [the Solanaceae species discussed] associated with incomprehensible acts on the part of fanatics, raging with the flames of frenzy and fury and persecuting not only witches and sorcerers but also mankind as a whole. Garbed in the cowl, the judge's robe, and the physician's gown, superstitious folly instituted

Atropa belladonna or Atropa bella-donna, commonly known as belladonna or deadly nightshade, a source of Atropine.

An Illustration from Köhler's Medicinal Plants 1887



An atropine molecule
(8-methyl-8-azabicyclo[3.2.1]oct-3-yl) 3-hydroxy-2-phenylpropanoate



A flowering Brugmansia suaveolens, a member of the Solanaceae family of flowering plants that contains many toxic plants.



diabolical proceedings in a trial of the devil and hurled its victims into the flames or drowned them in blood." Given the propaganda value of confessions and cases of demonic possession, it is very likely that hallucinogenic drugs, administered to produce dramatic effects, may have been used more extensively for this objective than hitherto suspected.

Drunkards' Cloak

see [Barrel Pillory](#)

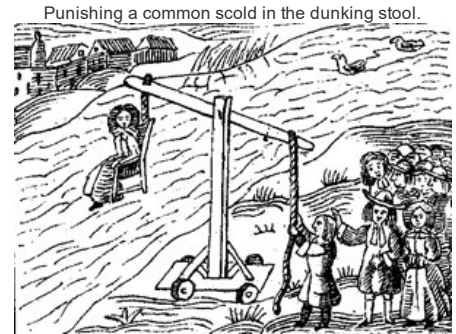
Ducking Stool, Cucking Stool (North America, Dunking Stool)

Ducking was a form of punishment that was mainly reserved for supposed witches. The victim was tied to a chair and elevated by ropes above a pond or river. She was lowered into the water until completely submerged. The chair could be raised if the victim was about to pass out, or to give the victim a chance to confess.

If the victim confessed they would be executed. This method was widely used during the Spanish Inquisition and in England and France. It was also used at the Salem Witch Trials in New England, where victims were subjected to varying lengths of time and levels of submersion. The victim was intermittently submerged for hours until he or she confessed, revealed information or drowned.

While supposed witches were commonly tortured using this method, thieves and murderers could be subjected to it in order to extract a confession. This was more common when other more sophisticated torture devices were not available.

Ducking or dunking was also used as punishment for common scolds.



Exposure

Victims could be exposed to the elements by restraining them. In winter exposure could cause death, even for example in the stocks or pillory, or tied to a whipping post

In winter a torturer could poured water over a victim's head which eventually became frozen causing the victim to die slowly and painfully. Sometimes the body was left for the winter to dissuade any further crimes.

Alternatively, The victim could be buried up to his neck letting any animals, insects or other people kill him slowly.

In addition to regular restraint, the gibbet, a large basket made of iron or other metal, with holes large enough for arms and legs, but not for an entire body to fit through, would be hung from a pole with a person inside it. During hot days, the metal would heat, causing pain. During cold days and nights, the chill, as well as lack of protection from the wind, could easily sap a victim's body heat. Holes in the grating were also big enough to allow carrion birds to enter and pluck at a victim's skin and eyes.

Due to its cost efficiency and cruelty, the exposure torture was very widespread in medieval Europe. The victim's remains often served as a warning to the population.

In many cases, the victim was sentenced to a short period of exposure, depending on the crime. However, death was frequent since they were completely defenceless

See also [Gibbeting](#) and [Coffin Torture](#)

Gibbet at Rothenburg



Flaying Knives (skinning knives)

Flaying alive, ie removing the skin, has been widely but infrequently employed in Christendom.

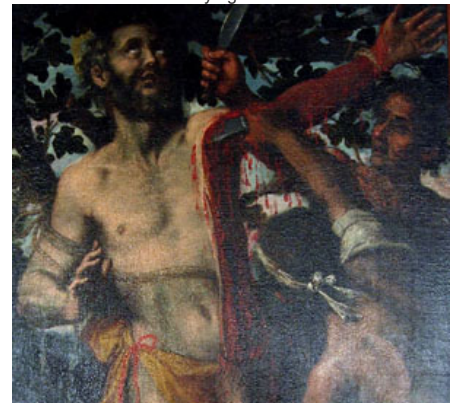
In 415, the philosopher Hypatia of Alexandria was flayed alive by a Christian mob led by St Cyril.

Pierre Basile for shot and killed King Richard I of England with a crossbow at the siege of Chalus in March 1199. Although the king forgave him before he died, Basile was flayed subsequently alive after the King's death, by order of the mercenary leader Mercadier.

in 1303 the Subprior and the Sacrist of Westminster Abbey broke into the Chapel of the Pyx and treasury chamber, and stole from the contents. It is thought that he was flayed, as the Pyx chapel door has been found to have fragments of human skin attached to it (as have the three doors to the revestry). According to well documented ancient traditions, a number of churches in Essex, once had human skins nailed to the Church door (as a warning to pagan Danes).

Searing or cutting the flesh from the body was sometimes used as part of the public execution of traitors in medieval Europe.

Flaying Alive



A similar mode of execution was used as late as the early 18th century in France; one such episode is recounted in the opening chapter of Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1979).

Flogging Equipment: Whips, Flails, Cats o'Nine Tails

Flagellation or flogging is the act of methodically beating or whipping the human body. The word comes from the Latin flagellum, "whip". Specialised implements for flogging include whips, rods, switches, the cat o' nine tails. Typically, flogging is imposed on an unwilling subject as a punishment; but was also undergone voluntarily by religious and sadomasochistic individuals. As in many forms of torture practised within Christendom, flogging provided a pretext to expose women's naked or semi naked bodies. Inquisitors and witch finders were renowned for finding reasons for exposing female bodies.

A Christian flagellant sect was immensely popular in the Middle Ages.

In some circumstances the word "flogging" is used to include any sort of corporal punishment, including birching and caning. However, in British legal terminology, a distinction was drawn (and still is, in some ex-colonial territories) between "flogging" (with a cat-o'-nine-tails) and "whipping" (formerly with a whip, but since the early 19th century with a birch). In Britain these were both abolished in 1948.

A common form of punishment was to be flogged at a whipping post and then taken to the pillory. This might account for the expression "from pillar to post". The post was a whipping post and the pillar was the pillory. The original version of our idiom, which first appeared around 1420, was the other way around: from post to pillar.



For a flogging, the offender's upper half was bared and he or she was suspended by the wrists from a post or beneath a tripod of wooden beams (known as 'the triangle'). The offender's feet normally did not touch (or barely touched) the ground. This helped to stretch the skin on the back taut and centred the offender's weight in the shoulders, which served to increase the pain of the whipping.

With the prisoner stripped and bound, either one or two floggers administered the prescribed number of strokes, or "lashes," to the victim's back. If the offender had fainted from blood loss or suffered extreme skin and flesh loss from the back, the punishment was usually suspended until the offender had been restored to consciousness (i.e. a bucket of water splashed on his face). Once the prisoner was conscious, the remainder of the required lashes were administered. Punishment was usually limited to 20, 50 or 100 lashes at one flogging, though records exist of prisoners in the nineteenth century receiving more than 3,000 lashes over a number of months or years. Following the whipping, the prisoner's lacerated back was normally rinsed with brine. While this caused additional pain, the brine was intended to serve as an antiseptic.

Garrote

A garrote or garrotte is a handheld weapon, most often referring to a ligature of chain, rope, scarf, wire or fishing line used to strangle someone. The term especially refers to an execution device but is sometimes used in assassination.

A garrote can be made out of many different materials, including ropes, tie wraps, fishing lines, nylon, and even guitar strings, telephone cord and piano wire.

Sometimes a stick used to tighten the garrote like a tourniquet. The Spanish name refers to such a rod. In Spanish. In fact the word garrote is used variously to denote the rod, the ligature, or a device used to constrain the victim and mechanise the garrotting process.

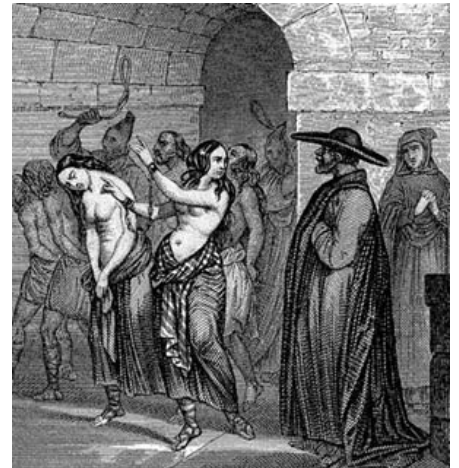
One of the first depictions of a garrote occurs in Pedro Berruguete's painting of, Saint Dominic presiding over an Auto-da-fe, reproduced elsewhere on this page (see Burning)

At one point execution victims were killed by beating with a club while constrained. Garrotting equipment was later refined to consist of a seat to restrain the condemned person, while the executioner tightened a metal band around his or her neck with a crank or a wheel until suffocation of the victim was accomplished.



Garrotes were used in the Middle Ages in Spain and Portugal, and employed during the conquista of Latin America, as attested by the execution of the Inca emperor Atahualpa.

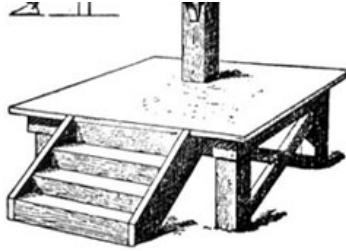
In the 1810s, the earliest known metallic versions of garrotes appeared and started to be used in Spain.



Photograph of a Whipped Slave



the execution of a sorcerer in Munich in 1666, whose sentence was to have his right hand struck off then to be strangled and burnt to ashes - the hand is about to be removed with a chisel and mallet, and the executioner



was captured in 1898.

In May 1897, the last public garrotting was carried out in Spain, in Barcelona. After that, all executions would be held in private inside prisons (even if the press took photos of some of them).

In March 1974 Heinz Ches (real name Georg Michael Welzel) and Salvador Puig Antich, both convicted of killing police officers, were executed by garrotting. These were to be the last state-sanctioned garrottings in the world.

In Spain, garrotting was abolished, along with the death penalty, in 1978. In 1990, Andorra, in 1990 became the last country to abolish the death penalty by garrotting,

On 28 April 1828, the garrote was declared the sole civilian execution method in Spain.

Some versions of this device incorporated a fixed metal blade or spike directed at the spinal cord to hasten the breaking of the neck. The spiked version, called the Catalan garrote, was used until 1940. American authorities kept the garrote as a form of execution in the Philippines after that Spanish colony

has his garrote round the sorcerer's throat



Gibbet

[Click here for a form of Medieval Guillotine called the Halifax Gibbet.](#)

A human shaped cage was known as a gibbet. It could be used as a form of torture, exposing victims to the elements, animals, and hunger and thirst. It could also be used as a method of close confinement and public humiliation. Finally it could be used as a post mortem punishment, supplementary to execution, generally as a deterrent to others. In England gibbeting was common law punishment, which a judge could impose in addition to execution.

Exhibiting a body in a gibbet could 'backfire' against a monarch, especially if he was unpopular and the victim popular. Henry of Montfort and Henry of Wylynton, enemies of Edward II, were drawn and hanged before being exhibited on a gibbet near Bristol. People made relics of these bloody and mutilated remains and surrounded them with respect in violent protest. Bogus miracles were organised at the spot where the bodies were hanging.

In cases of hanging, drawing and quartering, the body of the criminal was cut into four or five portions, with each gibbeted in a different place.

In some cases, the bodies would be left until their clothes rotted or even until the bodies were almost completely decomposed, after which the bones would be scattered.

Oliver Cromwell was gibbeted after his death when monarchists disinterred his body during the restoration of the monarchy.

Pirates were sometimes executed by hanging on a gibbet erected close to the low-water mark by the sea or a tidal section of a river. Their bodies would be left dangling until they had been submerged by the tide three times. In London, 'Execution Dock' is located on the north bank of the River Thames in Wapping; after tidal immersion, particularly notorious criminals' bodies could be hung in cages a little further downstream at either Cuckold's Point or Blackwall Point, as a warning to other waterborne criminals of the possible consequences of their actions. There was objection that these displays offended foreign visitors and did not uphold the reputation of the law, though the scenes even became gruesome tourist attractions.

So that the public display might be prolonged, bodies were sometimes coated in tar or bound in chains. Sometimes, body-shaped iron cages were used to contain the decomposing corpses. For example, in March 1743 in the town of Rye, East Sussex, Allen Grebell was murdered by John Breads. Breads was imprisoned in the Ypres Tower and then hanged, after which his body was left to rot for more than 20 years in an iron cage on Gibbet Marsh. The cage and Breads' skull are still kept in the Town Hall.

The Common Law on Gibbeting was supplemented in England by the Murder Act 1752, which explicitly empowered judges to impose gibbeting for murder. It was most often used for traitors, murderers, highwaymen, pirates, and sheep-stealers, and was intended to discourage others from committing similar offences. The structures were therefore often placed next to public highways (often at crossroads) and waterways. There are many places named Gibbet Hill in England.

Modern hanging cage at the main gate to Corciano, Province of Perugia, Italy



Captain William Kidd executed and gibbeted in May 1701



The Murder Act 1751 stipulated that "in no case whatsoever shall the body of any murderer be suffered to be buried". The cadaver was either to be publicly dissected or left "hanging in chains" ie a gibbet. Since early times Christians had been keen not to allow their enemies bodies to be buried as this was popularly thought to be necessary for resurrection (this was also why heretics were burned and their ashes scattered, and why amputees were buried with their severed limbs wherever possible)

Samuel Pepys expressed disgust at the practice. The sight and smell of decaying corpses were offensive, and regarded as "pestilential", so a threat to public health.

The last two men gibbeted in England were William Jobling and James Cook, both in 1832. Their cases are good examples of the different attitudes to the practice.

William Jobling was a miner hanged and gibbeted for the murder of Nicholas Fairles, a colliery owner and local magistrate, near Jarrow, Durham. After being hanged the body was taken off the rope, and loaded into a cart and taken on a tour of the area before arriving at Jarrow Slake where the crime had been committed. Here the body was placed into an iron gibbet cage. The cage and the scene were described thus:

"the body was encased in flat bars of iron of two and a half inches in breadth, the feet were placed in stirrups, from which a bar of iron went up each side of the head, and ended in a ring by which he was suspended; a bar from the collar went down the breast, and another down the back, there were also bars in the inside of the legs which communicated with the above; and crossbars at the ankles, the knees, the thighs, the bowels the breast and the shoulders; the hands were hung by the side and covered with pitch, the face was pitched and covered with a piece of white cloth."

The gibbet was a foot in diameter with strong bars of iron up each side. The post was fixed into a one-and-a-half ton stone base, sunk into the Slake. The body was soon removed by fellow miners and given a decent burial.

James Cook was a bookbinder convicted of the murder of his creditor Paas, a manufacturer of brass instruments, in Leicester. He was executed on Friday 10 August 1832 in front of Leicester prison. Afterwards:

"The head was shaved and tarred, to preserve it from the action of the weather; and the cap in which he had suffered was drawn over his face. On Saturday afternoon his body, attired as at the time of his execution, having been firmly fixed in the irons necessary to keep the limbs together, was carried to the place of its intended suspension."

His body was to be displayed on a purpose-built gallows 33ft high in Saffron Lane near the Aylestone Tollgate. According to The Newgate Calendar:

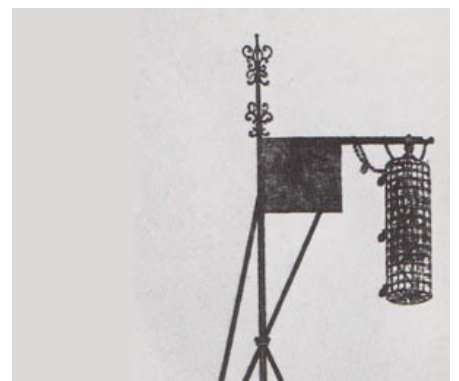
"thousands of persons were attracted to the spot, to view this novel but most barbarous exhibition; and considerable annoyance was felt by persons resident in the neighbourhood of the dreadful scene. Representations were in consequence made to the authorities, and on the following Tuesday morning instructions were received from the Home Office directing the removal of the gibbet."

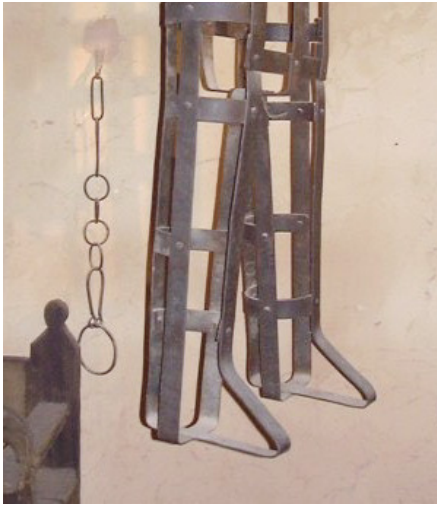
In 1834 gibbeting was abolished in England, but In 1837 the body of John McKay was gibbeted on a tree near the spot where he murdered Joseph Wilson near Perth, Tasmania.

An example of an iron cage used to string up bodies on a gibbet can still be seen in the Westgate Museum at Winchester.

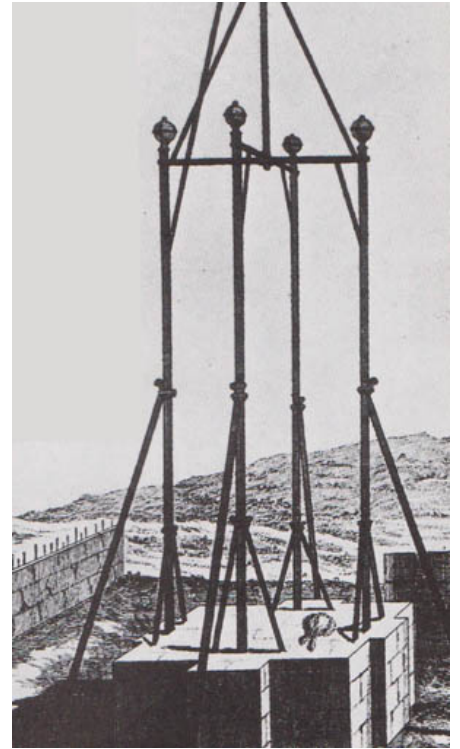


Museum of tortures in Peter and Paul Fortress, St. Petersburg, Russia

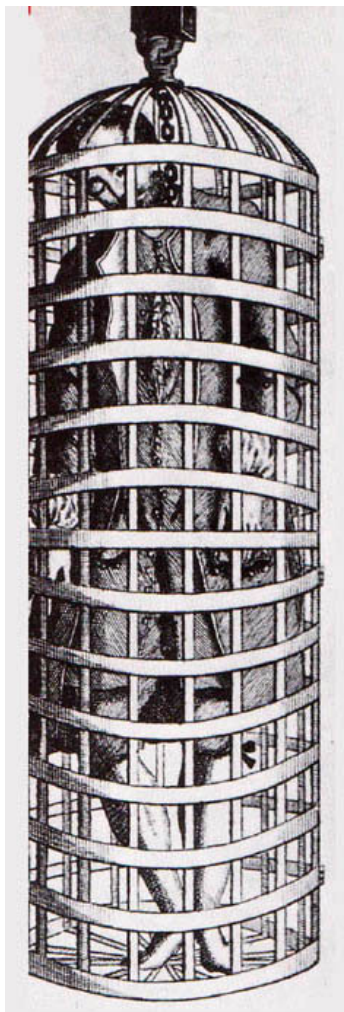




Gradara, Italy



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Guillotine or Halifax Gibbet



Long before the French Revolutionaries adopted the execution device known as a Guillotine, a similar device was in use in Halifax in Yorkshire.

Halifax had held the right to execute criminals since 1280. Although there is early reference to a gibbet, including a report that the first person to be beheaded by it was John of Dalton in 1286, formal records of victims did not begin until 1541, when the town acquired a fixed machine which used a heavy, axe-shaped iron blade dropping from a height of several feet to cut off the head of the condemned criminal.

Between 1541 and 1650, official records show that 53 men and women were executed by the Halifax Gibbet. The Gibbet was taken down in 1650 after the execution of Anthony Mitchell and John Wilkinson, but a replica was erected in 1974 on the original site at Gibbet Street.

The Gibbet could be operated by either cutting the rope holding up the blade or by pulling out a pin which prevented it falling. If the offender was to be executed for stealing an animal, the end of a rope was fastened to the pin holding the blade in place and tied to the animal, which was then driven off, causing the pin to pull out and the blade to drop. Otherwise, the bailiff of the Lord of the Manor or his servant cut the rope.

The Halifax Gibbet Law gave the Lord of the Manor of Halifax the power to try and execute any felon for thefts of the value of 13½ pence or more.

In 1577 William Harrison described the Halifax Gibbet:

There is and has been of ancient time a law, or rather a custom, at Halifax, that whosoever does commit any felony, and is taken with the same, or confess the fact upon examination, if it be valued by four constables to amount to the sum of thirteen-pence-halfpenny, he is forthwith beheaded upon one of the next market days (which fall upon the Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays), or else upon the same day that he is convicted, if market be then holden. The engine wherewith the execution is done is a square block of wood of the length of four feet and a half, which does ride up and down in a slot, rabbet or regall, between two pieces of timber, that are framed and set upright, of five yards in height. In the nether end of the sliding block is an axe, keyed or fastened with an iron into the wood, which being drawn up to the top of the frame is there fastened by a wooden pin (with a notch made into the same, after the manner of a Samson's post), unto the midst of which pin also there is a long rope fastened that cometh down among the people, so that, when the offender hath made his confession and hath laid his neck over the nethermost block, every man there present doth either take hold of the rope (or putteth his arm so near to the same as he can get, in token that he is willing to see true justice executed), and, pulling out the pin in this manner, the head-block wherein the axe is fastened doth fall down with such a violence that, if the neck of the transgressor were as big as that of a bull, it should cut in sunder at a stroke and roll from the body by a huge distance. If it be so that the offender be apprehended for an ox, oxen, sheep, kine, horse or any such cattle, the self beast or other of the same kind shall have the end of the rope tied somewhere unto them, so that they, being driven, do draw out the pin, whereby the offender is executed.

William Harrison, *Description of Elizabethan England 1577*, Ch XVII

The Halifax Gibbet is referred to in Thomas Deloney's ballad "Thomas, of Reading" (1600), while the reputation of Halifax for strict law enforcement was noted by Daniel Defoe, who gave a detailed description in his *Travels*; by the antiquary William Camden; and by the "Water Poet" John Taylor, who penned the Beggar's Litany: "From Hell, Hull, and Halifax, Good Lord, deliver us!"

Louis XVI banned the use of the breaking wheel in 1791. The National Assembly researched a new method to be used on all condemned people regardless of class. Their concerns contributed to the secular humanist idea that capital punishment's purpose was the ending of life instead of the infliction of pain.

A committee was formed under Antoine Louis, physician to the King and Secretary to the Academy of Surgery. Joseph-Ignace Guillotin, a professor of anatomy at the faculty of medicine in Paris, was also on the committee. The group was influenced by the Italian Mannaia (or Mannaja), the Scottish Maiden and the Halifax Gibbet.

Laquante, an officer of the Strasbourg criminal court, made a design for a beheading machine and employed Tobias Schmidt, a German engineer and harpsichord maker, to construct a prototype. Antoine Louis is also credited with the design of the prototype. Schmidt suggested placing the blade at an oblique 45-degree angle and changing it from the curved blade. The first execution by guillotine was performed on highwayman Nicolas Jacques Pelletier on April 25, 1792.

The basis for the machine's success was the belief that it was a humane form of execution, contrasting with the methods used in pre-revolutionary, Ancien Régime France. In France, before the guillotine, members of the nobility were beheaded with a sword or axe (which typically took at least two blows before killing the condemned), while commoners were usually hanged, a form of death that could take minutes or longer. Other more gruesome methods of executions were also used, such as the wheel, burning at the stake, etc. In the case of decapitation, it also sometimes took repeated blows to sever the head completely.

The guillotine was perceived to deliver an immediate death without risk of suffocation. Furthermore, having only one method of execution was seen as an expression of equality among citizens. The guillotine was then the only legal execution method in France until the abolition of the death penalty in 1981, apart from certain crimes against the security of the state, which entailed execution by firing squad.

The period from June 1793 to July 1794 in France is known as the Reign of Terror or simply "the Terror". Most of the democratic reforms of the revolution were suspended and large-scale executions by guillotine began. The first political prisoner to be executed was Collenot d'Angremont of the National Guard, followed soon after by the



The flat blade of the Halifax Gibbet, like a single ghastly upper tooth.



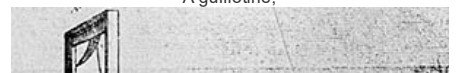
The Halifax Gibbet, with a horse operating the release mechanism



A guillotine, with the characteristic angled blade



A guillotine,



King's trusted collaborator in his ill-fated attempt to moderate the Revolution, Arnaud de Laporte, both in 1792. Former King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette were executed in 1793.

Maximilien Robespierre became one of the most powerful men in the government, and the figure most associated with the Terror. The Revolutionary Tribunal sentenced thousands to the guillotine, known as "Madame Guillotine" or "The National Razor". Estimates of the death toll range between 16,000 and 40,000. At this time, Paris executions were carried out in the Place de la Revolution (former Place Louis XV and current Place de la Concorde) near the Louvre; the guillotine stood in the corner near the Hôtel Crillon where the statue of Brest can be found today.

For a time, executions by guillotine were a popular entertainment that attracted great crowds of spectators. Vendors would sell programs listing the names of those scheduled to die. Many people would come day after day and vie for the best seats; knitting female citizens (tricoteuses) formed a cadre of hardcore regulars, inciting the crowd. Parents would bring their children. By the end of the Terror the crowds had thinned drastically. Excessive repetition had staled even this most grisly of entertainments, and audiences grew bored.

Eventually, the National Convention had enough of the Terror, partially fearing for their own lives, and turned against Maximilien Robespierre. In July 1794 he was arrested and executed in the same fashion as those whom he had condemned. This arguably ended the Terror, as the French expressed their discontent with Robespierre's policy by guillotining him.

The last public guillotining was of Eugen Weidmann, who was convicted of six murders. He was beheaded on 17 June 1939, outside the prison Saint-Pierre rue Georges Clemenceau 5 at Versailles, which is now the Palais de Justice. The allegedly scandalous behaviour of some of the onlookers on this occasion, and an incorrect assembly of the apparatus, as well as the fact it was secretly filmed, caused the authorities to decide that executions in the future were to take place in the prison courtyard.

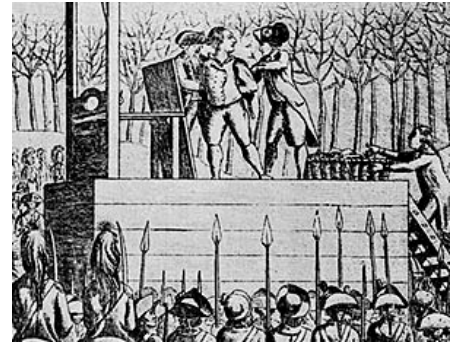
The guillotine remained the official method of execution in France until France abolished the death penalty in 1981. The last guillotining in France was that of torture-murderer Hamida Djandoubi on September 10, 1977.

In Germany, where the guillotine is known in German as Fallbeil ("falling axe"), it was used in various German states from the 17th century onwards, becoming the usual method of execution in Napoleonic times in many parts of Germany. The guillotine and the firing squad were the legal methods of execution during the German Empire (1871–1918) and the Weimar Republic (1919–1933).

The original German guillotines resembled the French Berger 1872 model but eventually evolved into more specialised machines largely built of metal with a much heavier blade enabling shorter uprights to be used. Accompanied by a more efficient blade recovery system and the eventual removal of the tilting board (or bascule) this allowed a quicker turn-around time between executions, the victim being decapitated either face up or down depending on how the executioner predicted they would react to the sight of the machine. Those deemed likely to struggle were backed up from behind a curtain to shield their view of the device.

In 1933 Adolf Hitler had a guillotine constructed and tested. He was impressed enough to order 20 more constructed and pressed into immediate service.] Nazi records indicate that between 1933 and 1945, 16,500 people were executed in Germany and Austria by this method. When West Germany was formed in 1949, its constitution prohibited the death penalty; East Germany abolished it in 1987, and Austria in 1968.

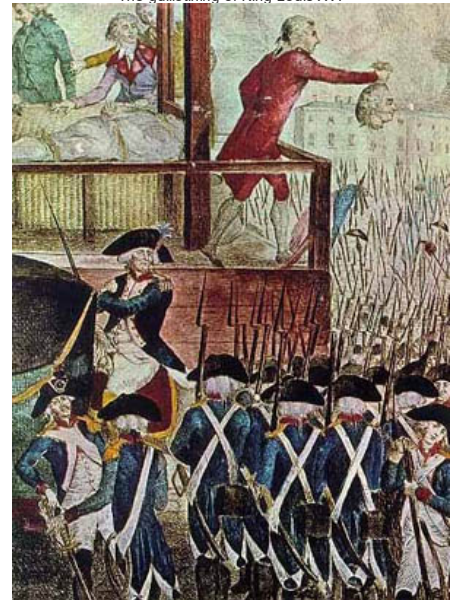
The Scottish Maiden (based on the Halifax Gibbet) was introduced to Edinburgh, by James Douglas, 4th Earl of Morton in the 16th century. It continued in use until 1708. The scaffold itself is now housed in the National Museum of Scotland. In Sweden, where beheading was the mandatory method of execution, the guillotine was used only once, for the very last execution in the country, in 1910 at Långholmen Prison, Stockholm.



A guillotine,



The guillotining of King Louis XVI



Hanging



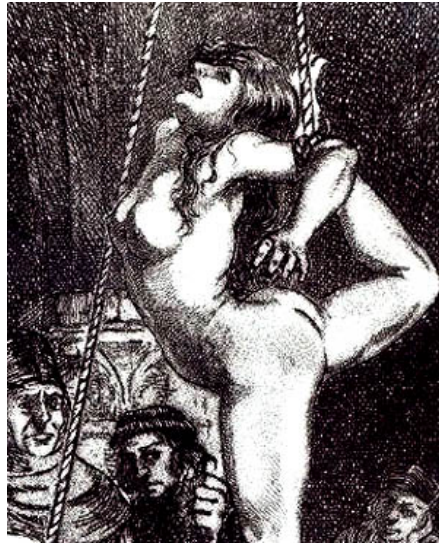
Hanging can be divided into two types: suspension by the limbs as a form of torture, and hanging by the neck as a form of capital punishment.

Some variations are shown here.

For hanging as torture see [Strappado](#)

For hanging as capital punishment see [Hanging](#), [Drawing and Quartering](#).





Hanging, Drawing and Quartering

On 24 November 1326, Hugh Despenser the Younger was judged a traitor and a thief, and sentenced to public execution by hanging, as a thief, and drawing and quartering, as a traitor. Additionally, he was sentenced to be disembowelled for having procured discord between the King and Queen, and to be beheaded, for returning to England after having been banished.

Immediately after the trial, Hugh was dragged behind four horses to his place of execution, where a great fire was lit. He was stripped naked, and Biblical verses denouncing arrogance and evil were written on his skin. He was then hung from a gallows 50 ft (15 m) high, but cut down before he could choke to death. Hugh was then tied to a ladder, and in full view of the crowd had his genitals sliced off and burned (in his still-conscious sight) then his entrails slowly pulled out, and, finally, his heart cut out and thrown into the fire. Just before he died, it is recorded that he let out a "ghastly inhuman howl," much to the delight and merriment of the spectators. Finally, his corpse was beheaded, his body cut into four pieces, and his head was mounted on the gates of London. This execution seems to have provided a template for legislation for later punishments for Treason in England.

To be hanged, drawn and quartered was from 1351 the penalty in England for men guilty of high treason, although its use is first recorded during the reign of King Henry III. Those convicted of treason were drawn by horse on a wooden hurdle to the place of execution. Once there, they were ritually hanged almost to the point of death, emasculated, disembowelled, beheaded and quartered (chopped into four pieces). As a warning against further dissent, their remains were often displayed at prominent places, such as London Bridge. For reasons of public decency, women convicted of high treason were instead burnt at the stake.

Many notable figures were subjected to the punishment, including over 100 treasonable priests executed at Tyburn. Catholic plotters engaged in treasonable conspiracies like the Gunpowder Plot were hanged, drawn and quartered, as were some of those involved in sentencing Charles I to death. During the 1685 Bloody Assizes hundreds of rebels were dispatched in less than a month.

The Treason Act of 1351, passed in the 25th year of Edward III's reign and still in force today was enacted at a time in English history when a monarch's right to rule was indisputable, and was therefore written principally to protect the throne and sovereign. The Act split the old feudal offence of treason into two classes. Petty treason referred to the killing of a master (or lord) by his servant, a husband by his wife, or a prelate by his clergyman. Men guilty of petty treason were drawn and hanged, while women were burnt.

High treason was the most egregious offence an individual could commit, and was seen as a direct threat to the king's right to govern. Attempts to undermine his authority were viewed with as much seriousness as if the accused had made a direct assault on his body, which itself would be an attack on his status as sovereign. As such an attack could potentially undermine the state, retribution was considered an absolute necessity, for which the ultimate punishment was required. The practical difference between the two offences therefore was in the consequence of being convicted; rather than being drawn and hanged, men were to be hanged, drawn and quartered, while for reasons of public decency women were instead drawn and burnt. The act declared that a person was committing high treason if engaged in one of the following seven offences:

- compassing or imagining the death of the king, his wife or his eldest son and heir,
- violating the king's wife, his eldest daughter if she was unmarried, or the wife of his eldest son and heir,
- levying war against the king in his realm,
- adhering to the king's enemies in his realm, giving them aid and comfort in his realm or elsewhere;

Illustration of Hugh the younger Despenser's execution from a manuscript of Froissart (Bibliothèque Nationale MS Fr. 2643, folio 197v)



The decapitated head of Jeremiah Brandreth, executed on 7 November 1817, one of the last people in England sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered.



- counterfeiting the Great Seal or the Privy Seal, or the king's coinage,
- knowingly importing counterfeit money,
- killing the Chancellor, Treasurer or one of the king's Justices while performing their offices.

After being sentenced, malefactors were generally held in prison for a few days before being drawn by horse to the place of execution, usually on a hurdle, their hands tied. Once stripped of their clothing, they were taken to the scaffold and hanged for a short period, but only to cause strangulation and near-death. They were then disembowelled, and normally emasculated. Those still conscious at this point would have seen their entrails burnt, before their heart was removed. The body was then decapitated, signalling an unquestionable death, and quartered. Each dismembered piece of the body was later displayed publicly, as a warning to others.

The heads of the executed were often displayed on London Bridge, for centuries the route by which many travellers from the south entered the city. On occasion accompanied by the parboiled quarters, such gruesome trophies served as a more permanent reminder of the penalty for treason.

Before they were hanged, prisoners normally gave a public speech, expressing their remorse and asking for forgiveness.

Tudor conspiracies, such as the Babington plot, resulted in further executions:

...John Ballard a preest, and first persuader of Babington to these odious treasons, was laid aloof vpon an hurdell, and six others two and two in like sort, all drawne from Tower hill through the cite of London, unto a field at the vpper end of Holborne, hard by the high waie side to saint Giles in the field, where was erected a scaffold for their execution, and a paire of gallows of extraordinarie hight...and although the thousands were thought (and indeed so seemed) to be numberlesse: yet somewhat to note the huge multitude, there were by computation able men enow to giue battell to a strong enimie...On the first daie the traitors were placed vpon the scaffold, that the one might behold the reward of his fellowes treason. Ballard the preest, who was the first broker of this treason, was the first that was hanged, who being cut downe (according to iudgement) was dismembred, his bellie ript up, his bowels and traitorous heart taken out and throwne into the fire, his head also (seuered from his shoulders) was set on a short stake vpon the top of the gallows, and the trunk of his bodie quartered and imbrued in his owne blood, wherewith the executioners hands were bathed, and some of the standers by (but to their great loathing, as not able for their liues to auoid it, such was the throng) besprinkled.

Holinshed, Raphael (1808), *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, London: Johnson, pp. 915-916

With the restoration to the throne of Charles II, Major-General Thomas Harrison, a Fifth Monarchist and regicide who helped sentence Charles's father Charles I to death, was himself executed for high treason. His sentence, passed at the Old Bailey, was pronounced:

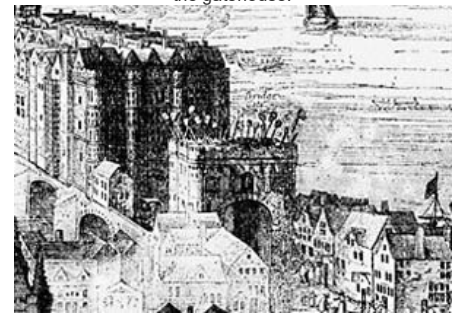
That you be led to the place from whence you came, and from thence be drawn upon a hurdle to the place of execution, and then you shall be hanged by the neck and, being alive, shall be cut down, and your privy members to be cut off, and your entrails be taken out of your body and, you living, the same to be burnt before your eyes, and your head to be cut off, your body to be divided into four quarters, and head and quarters to be disposed of at the pleasure of the King's majesty. And the Lord have mercy on your soul.

Harrison was executed two days later, at Charing Cross. After being hanged for several minutes, half-choking, he was cut open. Watched by a large crowd of spectators, including the new king, Harrison reportedly leaned across and hit the executioner—resulting in the swift removal of his own head. His entrails were thrown onto a nearby fire. Three days later his head adorned the sled which drew fellow regicide John Cooke to his execution, before later being displayed in Westminster Hall; his quarters were fastened to the city gates. In all, 13 men were hanged, drawn and quartered for their involvement in Charles's execution.

Petty treason was abolished in 1828. Hanging, drawing and quartering was finally rendered obsolete in England by the Forfeiture Act of 1870, which limited the death penalty for treason to hanging alone; although the 1814 Act allowed for the monarch to substitute beheading for hanging.



Detail of London Bridge, Claes Jansz. Visscher (1616). Spiked heads of executed criminals are visible above the gatehouse.



The fate of the Gunpowder plotters 1606



Quartering



Quartering



Heretic's Fork



The heretic's fork was a torture device, consisting of a length of metal with two opposed bi-pronged "forks" as well as an attached belt or strap.

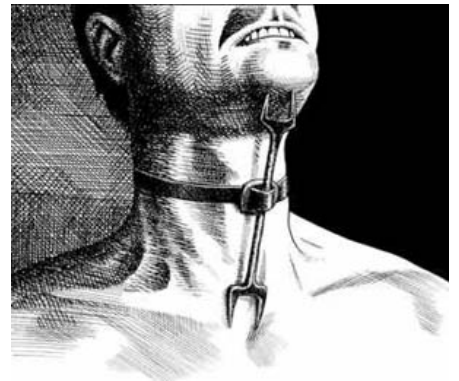
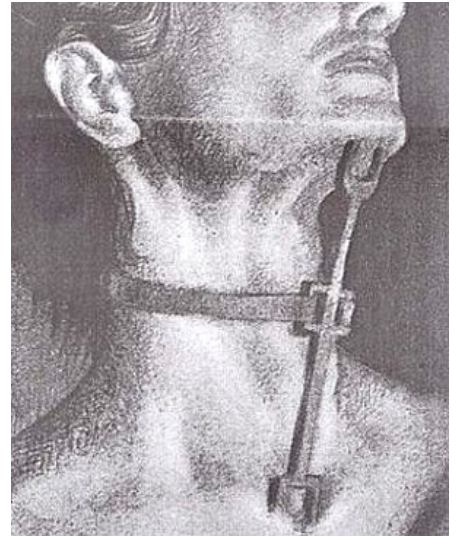




The device was placed between the breast bone and throat just under the chin and secured with a leather strap around the neck, while the victim was hung from the ceiling or otherwise suspended in a way so that they could not lie down.

A person wearing it couldn't fall asleep. The moment their head dropped with fatigue, the prongs pierced their throat or chest, causing great pain. This very simple instrument created long periods of sleep deprivation. People were awake for days, which made confessions more likely.

Traditionally, the fork was engraved with the Latin word *abiuro* (meaning "I recant"), and was used by the various Inquisitions.



Iron Chair

see [Chair of Torture](#)

Pale (Spike for Impalement)

Impalement was a method of torture and execution in which a person is pierced with a long stake.

The penetration can be through the sides, from the rectum, or through the mouth.



This method would lead to slow, painful, death. Often, the victim was hoisted into the air after partial impalement. Gravity and the victim's own struggles would cause him to slide down the pole.

Death could take many days. Impalement was practised in Europe throughout the Middle Ages.

Vlad III Dracula, who learned the method of killing by impalement while staying in Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, as a prisoner, and Ivan the Terrible have passed into legend as major users of the method.

Impalement was Vlad's preferred method of torture and execution. His method of torture was a horse attached to each of the victim's legs as a sharpened stake was gradually forced into the body. Death by impalement was

slow and agonising. Victims sometimes endured for hours or even days. Vlad often had the stakes arranged in various geometric patterns. The most common pattern was a ring of concentric circles in the outskirts of a city that constituted his target. The height of the spear indicated the rank of the victim. The corpses were often left decaying for months.


One of the most famous woodcuts of the period shows Vlad feasting in a forest of stakes and their grisly burdens outside Braşov, while a nearby executioner cuts apart

Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia (1431–1476), more commonly known as Vlad the Impaler, also known as Dracula (little dragon)




other victims. This place was famously known as the Forest of the Impaled.

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Intestinal Crank

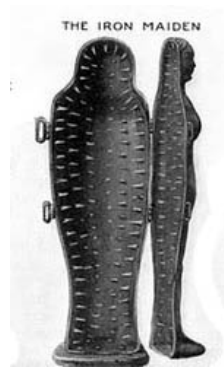
This method of torture - or rather capital punishment - involved making an incision in the abdominal area, separating the duodenum from the pylorus, and attaching of the upper part of the intestine to a crank.

The crank would then be rotated to extract the intestines from the gastrointestinal cavity of the still conscious person. The outcome was always death, but not immediately.

We have no images of real intestinal cranks, but martyrdom stories sometimes feature intestinal cranks, and the images illustrating these imaginary events are presumably as reliable as contemporary illustrations of tortures inflicted by (not on) Christians



Iron maiden



An iron maiden (German: Eiserne Jungfrau) is a torture device, consisting of an iron cabinet, with a hinged front, sufficiently tall to enclose a human being. It usually has a small closable opening so that the torturer can interrogate the victim and torture or kill a person by piercing the body with sharp objects (such as knives, spikes or nails), while he or she is forced to remain standing.

Inspiration for the "Iron Maiden" may come from the Carthaginian execution of Marcus Atilius Regulus, as it was recorded in a passage in Augustine of Hippo's *The City of God* (I.15) in which the Carthaginians "packed him into a tight wooden box, spiked with sharp nails on all sides, so that he could not lean in any direction without being pierced".[or by the account of Nabis of Sparta's deadly statue of his wife, the Apega.

The legendarium that has accrued to the early 17th-century Countess Elizabeth Báthory features a very similar torture device, which she allegedly dubbed the "iron virgin". The iron maiden is often associated with the Middle Ages, but there is no wholly unambiguous account of the iron maiden earlier than 1793. Some iron maidens have earlier dates carved on them - but this is not a reliable way to date them, as dates can be added at any time.

Geoffrey Abbot attributes to a French officer the following account of discovering such a device in the dungeons beneath the headquarters of the Inquisition:

In a recess in the subterranean vault, next to the private hall where the interrogations were conducted, stood a wooden figure, carved by the monks, and representing the Virgin Mary. A gilded halo encompassed her head, and in her right hand she held a banner extolling the glory of her Faith.

It appeared to us at first sight that, despite the silken robe adorning her, she wore some kind of breastplate which, on closer examination, was seen to be stuck full of extremely sharp, narrow knife-blades, the points being directed towards the spectator. The arms and hands were jointed, controlled by machinery concealed behind a curtain.

One of the Inquisition staff was commanded to set it in motion, and when the figure extended its arms, as though to press someone most



The first reference to an execution with the Maiden that has yet come to light stems from August 14, 1515, although the instrument had been in use for several decades by then. That day a forger of coins was placed inside, and the doors shut "slowly, so that the very sharp points penetrated his arms, and his legs in several places, and his belly and chest, and his bladder and the root of his member, and his eyes, and his shoulders, and his buttocks, but not enough to kill him; and so he remained making great cry and lament for two days, after which he died"



lovingly to its heart, a Polish grenadier was ordered to substitute his well-filled knapsack for an imaginary victim. The effigy hugged it closer and closer, and when finally it was made to unclasp its arms, the knapsack had been perforated to a depth of two or three inches, and remained hanging on the points of the projecting daggers.

Persons accused of heresy, or of blaspheming God or the Saints, and obstinately refusing to confess their guilt, were conducted into this cellar, at the furthest end of which, numerous lamps placed around a recess, threw a variegated illumination of the gilded halo, and on the figure with a banner in her right hand. At a little altar standing opposite to her, and hung with black, the prisoner received the sacrament, and two ecclesiastics earnestly besought him, in the presence of the Mother of God, to make a confession. "See," they said, "how lovingly the blessed Virgin opens her arms to thee! On her bosom thy hardened heart will be melted; there thou wilt confess."

All at once the figure began to extend its arms; the prisoner was led to her embrace; she drew him nearer and nearer, pressed him almost imperceptibly closer and closer, until the spikes and knives just pierced his chest.

Abbot, Geoffrey (April 2006). *Execution*. New York: St. Martin's Press. pp. 287..

The iron maiden of Nuremberg was anthropomorphic. It was probably styled after primitive "Gothic" representations Mary, the mother of Jesus, with a cast likeness of her on the face. The "maiden" was about 7 feet (2.1 m) tall and 3 feet (0.91 m) wide, had double doors, and was big enough to contain an adult man. Inside the tomb-sized container, the iron maiden was fitted with dozens of sharp spikes.

Several nineteenth century iron maidens are on display in museums around the world.

It is possible that some Iron Maidens were originally designed as a kind of coffin torture with the spikes added later.



Torture Museum in Siena



The iron maiden of Nuremberg



Iron Maiden in the torture chamber at Castello di Amorosa



Iron Maiden with inscription, dated 1593, Austria





Judas Cradle

The Judas Cradle is often attributed to the Spanish Inquisition

The Judas cradle was a tall stool shaped device with a metal or wooden pyramid on top.



The victim would be stripped, bound with ropes, and suspended above the device. They would then be lowered, usually very slowly, on to the device, making the pyramid enter the vagina, anus or scrotum. The amount of pain the device inflicted could be changed in several ways. The victim could be rocked, they could be dropped repeatedly onto the device, one leg could be lifted, olive oil could be spread on the pyramid, or brass weights could be hung from the victim's legs.

Sometimes to prolong torture the victim would be suspended above the device over night, and torture would continue the next morning.

The device was rarely, if ever, cleaned. If victims did not die from the device, they almost always died from infection. Torture with the Judas Cradle could last several hours to several days.

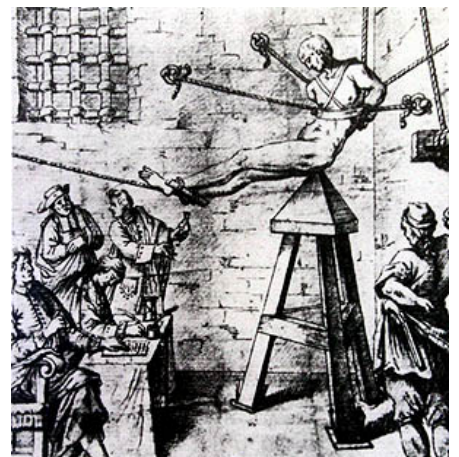
Apart from the agonising pain one suffered, the humiliation was the primary attraction for this method of torture. Whenever the victim fainted from the pain, the torturer

would lift the victim until the tortured person was "awake" again to commence with the process.

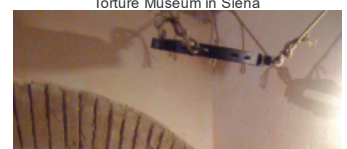
The Judas Cradle was used in several different countries, each having their own names for it. In Italy it was known as "culla DI Giuda" ("Cradle of Judah"), in Germany "Judaswiege" ("Jews' Cradle"), and in France "la veille" ("The Old Woman"). It is also known as the Judas Chair.

A similar device, known as a horse, is sometimes said to have been used in Prussia to discipline soldiers. This device was not designed to break the skin.

See also [Wooden Horse](#)



Torture Museum in Siena





Mutilation Tools



In the Middle Ages mutilation was popular. As well as branding, Church and Civil authorities carried out a range of mutilations, lopping off hands, feet, ears, tongues, lips, noses, breasts and genitals.

In England ear lopping was particularly popular. Pamphleteers attacking the religious views of the Anglican episcopacy under William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury, had their ears cut off, John Bastwick, Henry Burton and William Prynne (1637).

including Dr. Alexander Leighton (1630) and John Bastwick, Henry Burton and William Prynne (1637).

In Scotland a Covenanter, James Gavin of Douglas of Lanarkshire had his ears cut off for refusing to renounce his religious faith.

The Church had little incentive to publicise the tortures it used, but was much keener to illustrate fictitious martyrdoms, which by happy happy coincidence features exactly the same range of tortures.



Witch's Spider



Flesh ripper known as a Cat's Paw



Breast Ripper



Breast Ripper



tongue tearer



Flesh ripper known as a Cat's Paw





Iron Chair

see [Chair of Torture](#)

Pear of Anguish

This version of the pear has also been referred to as the "Pear of Confession", the "Pope's Pear" (these due to reports that such devices were used during the Inquisition); the "oral pear", "vaginal pear", or "anal pear"; and just "The Pear".

A pear shaped instrument, consisting of four leaves that slowly separated from each other as the torturer turned the screw at the top.

This device was used during the Middle Ages as a way to torture women who conducted a miscarriage, liars, blasphemers, and homosexuals.

A pear-shaped instrument was inserted into one of the victim's orifices: the vagina for women, the anus for those considered to be male homosexuals, and the mouth for liars and blasphemers.

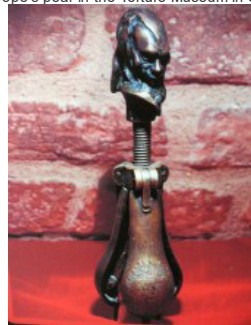
The instrument consisted of four leaves that slowly separated from each other as the torturer turned the screw at the top. It was the torturers decision to simply tear the skin or expand the "pear" to its maximum and mutilate the victim.

The Pear of Anguish was usually very adorned to differentiate between the anal, vaginal and oral pears. They also varied in size accordingly.



Pear of Anguish closed

A Pope's pear in the Torture Museum in Siena



Pear of Anguish open



This torture very rarely caused death, but was often followed by other torture methods.

The choke pear (or pear of anguish) is the modern name for a type of instrument displayed in some museums, consisting of a metal body (usually pear-shaped) divided into spoon-like segments that could be spread apart by turning a screw. The museum descriptions and some recent sources assert that the devices were used either as a gag, to prevent people from speaking, or as an instrument of torture. The instrument was inserted into the victim's mouth, and then slowly spread apart as the screw was turned.

There is no contemporary first-hand account of those devices or their use. The earliest mention is in F. de Calvi's *L'Inventaire général de l'histoire des larrons* ("General inventory of the history of thieves"), written in 1639, which attributes the invention to a robber named Capitaine Gaucherou de Palioly in the days of Henry of Navarre. Palioly would have used a mechanical gag to subdue a wealthy Parisian while he and his accomplices robbed the victim's home.

Further mentions of the device appear in the 19th century. They are also mentioned in Grose's *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1811) as "Choak Pears," and described as being "formerly used in Holland."

There are a number of extant examples of ornate and elaborate, pear-shaped devices with three or four leaves or lobes, driven by turning a key that rotates the central screw thread, which spreads the leaves.

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Peine Forte et Dure

Peine forte et dure (Law French for "hard and forceful punishment") was a method of torture formerly used in the common law legal system, in which a defendant who refused to plead ("stood mute") would be subjected to having heavier and heavier stones placed upon his or her chest until a plea was entered, or as the weight of the stones on the chest became too great for the condemned to breathe, fatal suffocation would occur.



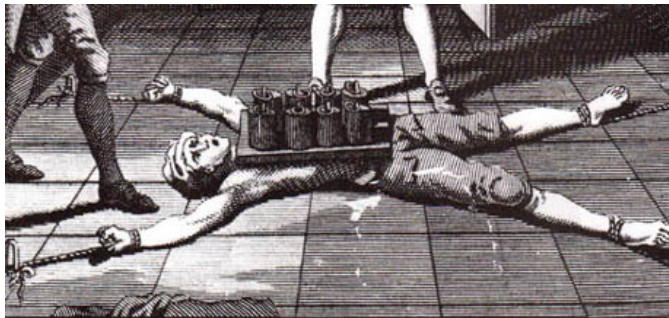
The procedure was recorded by a 15th-century witness: "he will lie upon his back, with his head covered and his feet, and one arm will be drawn to one quarter of the house with a cord, and the other arm to another quarter, and in the same manner it will be done with his legs; and let there be laid upon his body iron and stone, as much as he can bear, or more ..."

Common law courts originally took a very limited view of their own jurisdiction. They considered themselves to lack jurisdiction over a defendant until he had voluntarily submitted to it by entering a plea seeking judgement from the court. A criminal justice system that punished only those who

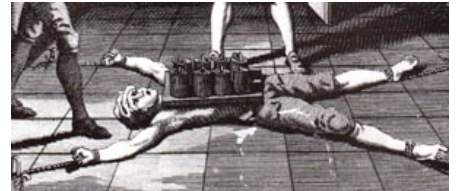
volunteered for punishment was unworkable; this was the means chosen to coerce them.

Many defendants charged with capital offences refused to plead, since by refusing they would escape forfeiture of property, and their heirs would still inherit their estate. If the defendant pleaded guilty and was executed, their heirs would inherit nothing, their property escheating to the Crown.

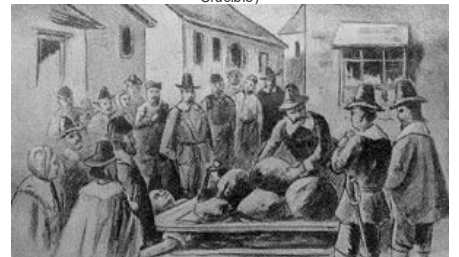
Peine forte et dure was abolished in the Kingdom of Great Britain in 1772, although the last known actual use of the practice was in 1741. In 1772 refusing to plead was deemed to be equivalent to pleading guilty. This was changed in 1827 to being deemed a plea of not guilty. Today, in all common law jurisdictions, standing mute is treated by the courts as equivalent to a plea of not guilty.



A more formalised method



Giles Corey was pressed to death during the Salem Witch Trials in the 1690s. (He is mentioned in Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*)



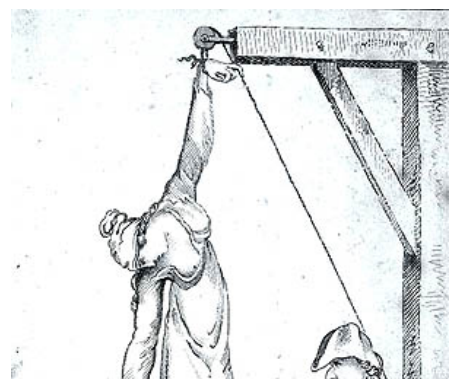
The Picquet

The picquet (alternately spelled piquet) is a form of punishment or torture. A particularly fiendish example is shown on the right where a French Revolutionary woman is being subjected to it.

It was more commonly a military punishment in vogue in late medieval Europe that was sufficiently cruel and ingenious to be characterised by some as a method of torture.

The punishment of the picquet required extremely simple equipment, a stake with one end in the ground and other, exposed end, facing upward. The exposed end would be sharpened to a rounded point. The malefactor, typically a soldier who had disobeyed orders, had one thumb was suspended from a tree, while the sole of the opposite naked foot was balanced on top of the stake.

The point of the stake was sharp enough to jab into the bony interstice and cause considerable discomfort, but not sharp enough to draw blood. To relieve pressure



upon the suffering foot, the prisoner relegated all his weight to the thumb, all but tearing the thumb from its socket, which could, in turn, only be relieved by shifting weight onto the tortured foot.

The procedure could be continued for as short a duration as a few hours, or as long a duration as twenty-four hours (or even forty-eight during extreme cases). The punishment did not cause lasting harm but was tremendously effective in reminding the sufferer of the supremacy of military discipline.



Pillory



The pillory was a device made of a wooden or metal framework erected on a post, with holes for securing the head and hands, formerly used for punishment by public humiliation and often further physical abuse, sometimes lethal.

Like the lesser punishment called the stocks, the pillory consisted of hinged wooden boards that formed holes. In the pillory the head and hands were inserted in these holes. In stocks the feet were inserted. In some variations both hands and feet were inserted. The boards were then locked together to secure the captive. Different pillories could accommodate one, two, three or more people.

The word is documented in English since 1274, and stems from Old French *pellori*, itself from medieval Latin *pilloria*, perhaps a diminutive of Latin *pila* "pillar, stone barrier."

Pillories were set up to hold petty criminals outside churches, in marketplaces, crossroads, and other public places. They were often placed on platforms to increase public visibility of the punished offender. Often a placard detailing the crime was placed nearby. These punishments generally lasted only a few hours.

Time in the pillory was more dangerous than in the stocks, as the pillory forced the offender to remain standing and exposed. A criminal in the stocks could expect to be abused but his or her life was not targeted. A prisoner in the pillory was presumed to have committed a more serious crime and usually triggered a more aggressive reaction from the public.

As part of the punishment, crowds would throw rubbish, ordure and other objects at the captive pilloried offender. With hands trapped, he or she could not avoid thrown objects whether harmless items like rotten food, or injurious ones such as heavy stones, which could and often did result in blinding, permanent maiming, or death.

The criminal could also be sentenced to further punishments while in the pillory: humiliation by shaving of some or all hair or regular corporal punishment. A pillory could also serve as a "whipping post", for birching, caning or permanent mutilation such as branding or having an ear cut off, as in the case of John Bastwick.

After 1816, use of the pillory was restricted in England to punishment for perjury or subornation. It was abolished as a form of punishment in England and Wales in 1837, but the stocks remained in use until 1872. The last person to be pilloried in England was Peter James Bossy, who was convicted of "wilful and corrupt perjury" in 1830. He was offered the choice of seven years transportation or one hour in the pillory, and chose the latter.

In France, time in the "pilori" was usually limited to two hours. It was replaced in 1789 by "exposition", and abolished in 1832.

The poteau was a simple post, often with a board around only the neck, and was synonymous with the mode of punishment. This was the same as the schandpaal ("shamepole") in Dutch. The carcan, an iron ring around the neck to tie a prisoner to such a post, was the name of a similar punishment that was abolished in 1832. A criminal convicted to serve time in a prison or galleys would, prior to his incarceration, be attached for two to six hours (depending on whether he was convicted to prison or the galleys) to the carcan, with his name, crime and sentence written on a board over his head.

A permanent small tower, the upper floor of which had a ring made of wood or iron with holes for the victim's head and arms, which was often on a turntable to expose the condemned to all parts of the crowd.

Like other permanent apparatus for physical punishment, the pillory was often placed prominently and constructed more elaborately than necessary. It served as a symbol of the power of the judicial authorities, and its presence was a deterrent, like permanent gallows or a gibbet.

In Portugal several pelourinhos, typically on the main square or in front of a major church or palace, are now counted among the major local monuments, several bearing the emblems of a king or queen. In Spain it was called *picota*.

There was a variant, called a barrel pillory, or Spanish mantle, used to punish drunks. It fitted over the entire body, with the head sticking out from a hole in the top. The criminal was put in either an enclosed barrel, forcing him to kneel in his own filth, or an open barrel, also known as "barrel shirt" or "drunkards collar" after the punishable crime, leaving him to roam about town or military camp and be ridiculed and scorned.

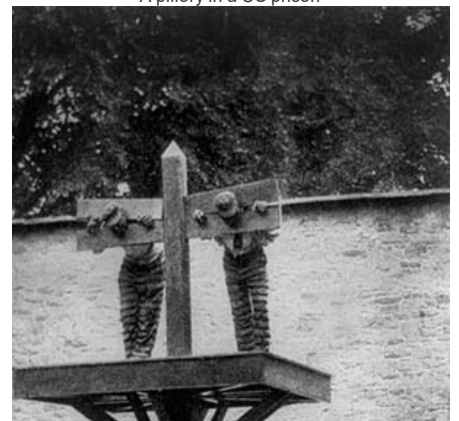
A Simple Pillory for one person



A Pillory in London

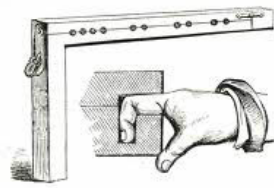


A pillory in a US prison



Another variant was the finger pillory, in which a person could be trapped by locking a bent finger in it.

A Finger Pillory



Pressing

see [Peine forte et dure](#)

The Rack

The rack is a torture device that consists of an rectangular, usually wooden frame, raised from the ground, with a roller at one end or both ends, having at one end a fixed bar to which the legs were fastened, and at the other a movable bar to which the wrists were chained to the other.

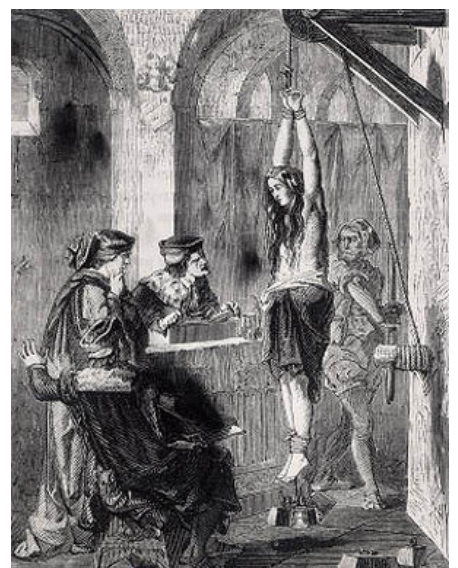


The torturer turned a handle causing the ropes to pull the victim's arms. Eventually, the victim's bones were dislocated with a loud crack, caused by snapping cartilage, ligaments or bones. If the torturer kept turning the handles the limbs would eventually be torn off.

This method was mostly used to extract confessions, not confessing meant that the torturer could stretch more. Sometimes, torturers forced their victim to watch other people be tortured with this device to implant psychological fear.

Many Knights Templar were tortured with the rack. The limbs collected from this and other punishments of the time were "emptied by the hundreds".

Sometime this method was limited to dislocating a few bones, but the torturer often went too far and rendered the legs or arms (sometimes both) useless. In the late Middle Ages, some new variants of this instrument appeared. They often had spikes that penetrated the victim's back - as the limbs were pulled apart, so was his or her spinal cord increasing not only in physical pain, but the psychological one of being handicapped.





As the interrogation progresses, a handle and ratchet attached to the top roller are used to very gradually stepwise increase the tension on the chains, inducing excruciating pain. By means of pulleys and levers this roller could be rotated on its own axis, thus straining the ropes until the sufferer's joints were dislocated and eventually separated. If muscle fibres are stretched excessively, they lose their ability to contract, rendering them ineffective.

One gruesome aspect of being stretched too far on the rack is the loud popping noises made by snapping cartilage, ligaments, or bones. One powerful method for putting pressure upon prisoners was to force them to watch someone else being subjected to the rack.

A crueller variant of the rack included a rotating drum studded with spikes. The prisoner was tied face-down to this rack; as he was stretched, the rotation of the spiked roller against his abdomen gradually disembowelled and killed him.

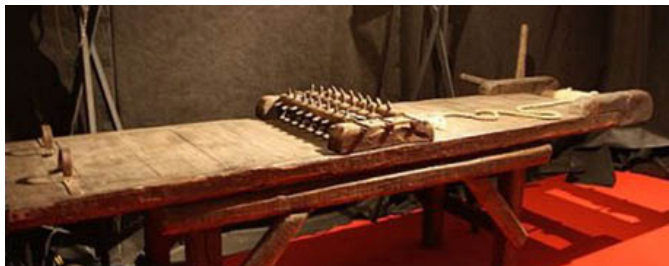
Confining the prisoner on the rack enabled further tortures to be applied, typically including burning the flanks with hot torches or candles or using pincers with specially roughened grips to tear out the nails of the fingers and toes.

Its first employment in England is said to have been due to John Holland, 2nd Duke of Exeter, the Constable of the Tower in 1447, whence it was popularly known as the Duke of Exeter's daughter. Being tortured on the rack was often referred to as being "put to the question".

In 1628 the question of its legality was raised by the attempt of the Privy Council to rack John Felton, the assassin of the Duke of Buckingham. The judges, unanimously declared its use to be contrary to the laws of England.

Well known victims of the rack in England include Guy Fawkes, Edmund Campion and Anne Askew, venerable William Carter (1584), Elizabethan dramatist Thomas Kyd (1592), William Wallace and Jesuit lay-brother Saint Nicholas Owen (1606).

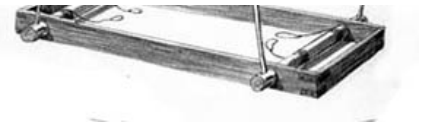
The French introduced an "improvement" to the rack in the form of spiked rollers that were inserted under the spine of the victim, thus causing even more severe pain and damage.



The Inquisition used the rack as one of its chief weapons of torture.

The term rack is also used, occasionally, for a number of simpler constructions that merely facilitate corporal punishment, after which it may be named specifically, e.g., caning rack.

Several devices similar in principle to the rack have been used through the ages. One of these was the Wooden Horse, a device used to torture prisoners during the Roman Empire by stretching them on top of a tall wooden frame until the shoulders were dislocated followed by a violent drop into a hanging position and beating. In another variant used primarily in ancient times, the victim's feet were fixed to the ground and his/her hands were chained to a wheel. When the wheel was turned, the person was stretched in a manner similar to the rack. The Austrian Ladder was basically a more vertically oriented rack. As part of the torture, victims would usually be burned under the arms with candles.



Rats

A cheap and effective way to torture someone was with rats. There were many



variants, but the most common was to force a rat through a victim's body (usually the intestines) as a way to escape.

This was done as follows: The victim was completely restrained usually being tied to the ground or any horizontal surface. He would then have slits cut in his belly. Hungry rats would then be placed in the slits to eat the victim from the inside. Gnawing the intestines usually took hours or days of agonising pain for the victim. Unless stopped almost immediately this torture always resulted in eventual death (through peritonitis if nothing quicker intervened).



Sawing

Sawing is a method of torture and execution.

The victim was hung upside down and then sawed apart down the middle, starting at the groin. Since the condemned was hanging upside-down, the brain received a continuous blood supply in spite of the severe bleeding. They would remain conscious until the saw severed the major blood vessels of the abdomen, and sometimes even longer.



Scavenger's Daughter



The Scavenger's Daughter was invented as an instrument of torture in the reign of Henry VIII by Sir William Skevington (also known as William Skeffington), Lieutenant of the Tower of London. It was an A-frame shaped metal rack to which the head was strapped to the top point of the A, the hands at the mid-point and the legs at the lower spread ends; swinging the head down and forcing the knees up in a sitting position.

The Scavenger's Daughter was conceived as a complement to the Duke of Exeter's Daughter (the rack) because it worked the opposite principle to the rack by compressing the body rather than stretching it.

The Scavenger's Daughter is rarely mentioned in the documents and the device itself was probably not much used. The best-documented use is that on the Irishman Thomas Miagh, charged with being in contact with rebels in Ireland.

It may be in connection with Scavenger's Daughter that Miagh carved on the wall of the Beauchamp Tower in the Tower of London, "By torture straynge my truth was tried, yet of my libertie denied. 1581. Thomas Miagh."

Another victim of the Scavenger's Daughter was Thomas Cottam, from Lancashire who was executed for treason during the reign of Elizabeth I.

It is also known as Skevington's gyves, as iron shackle, as the Stork (as in Italian cicogna) or as Spanish A-frame. Further it is known as Skevington's daughter, from which the more commonly known folk etymology using "Scavenger" is derived.

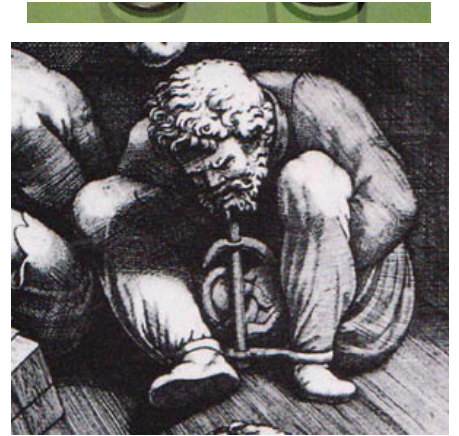
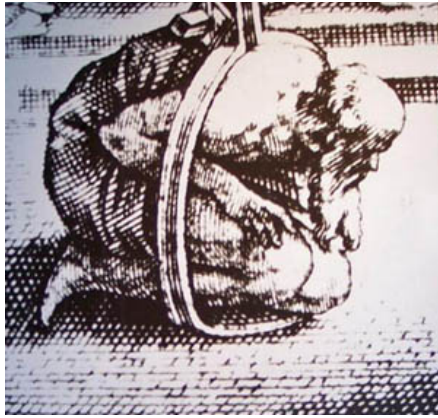
A Scavenger's daughter is on display in the Tower of London museum.

An instrument similar in principal to the Scavenger's Daughter



Scavenger's Daughter (circa 1550)





Shame Masks, or Masks of Shame

One of the lesser punishments used was forcing people to wear masks, often metal and often designed to attract derision. They have locking devices to prevent them being removed.

Typical features include a pig's snout or donkey's ears, or both. Bells are sometimes attached to attract attention to the wearer, as are whistles attached to a mouth-piece to make a sound every time the wearer breathed.

Although less vicious than many other tortures, they could still be painful and distressing especially if kept on for extended periods. As well as the inconvenience and public humiliation, the mask could make it difficult to eat, drink or sleep, and could attract violence from hostile mobs.

They were used as punishments for various misdemeanours, most notably for uppity wives who scolded their husbands - a serious sin which contravened the bible's clear instruction for wives to remain subservient. These masks were generally fitted with an attachment that projected into the mouth, depressing the tongue. This caused further discomfort and could be designed to cause pain and injury. In any case it would make speech impossible. These masks were known as Scold's Bridles. In Scotland such a mask was called a Branks.

A pair of shame masks, intended to attract ridicule



Shame Mask from a witch trial exhibition in Jeseník, Czech Republic



Shame Mask



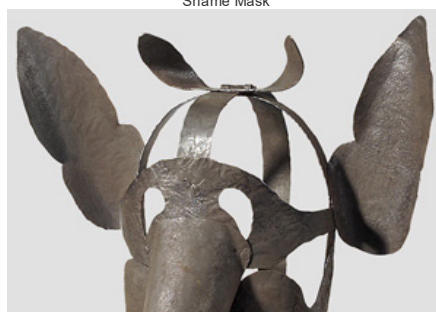
Shame Mask



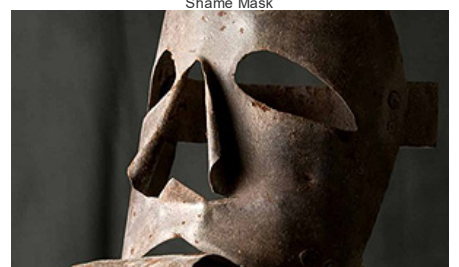
Shame Mask



Shame Mask



Shame Mask





Shame Mask
Branks



Shame Mask



Shame Mask



Shame Mask



Shame Mask



Shame Mask



german Shame Mask (Schandmaske), 1700s



Shame Mask





Shame Mask



Shame Mask. Wrought Iron. German. Circa 1650



Shame Mask



Shame Mask, Torture Museum in Siena



This is not a Shame Mask, but a mask used to conceal the identity of a political prisoner



Shame Mask



This is not a shame mask but an executioner's mask. It is a 17th-18th century iron executioner's mask in the Tower of London.



Shrew's Fiddle and Shrew's Fife

The Shrew's Fiddle or Shame Fiddle was a wooden contraption, shaped roughly like a fiddle, that acted like portable stocks.

The Shrew's Fife or Noisemaker's Fife was a similar contraption, but shaped like a fife or flute.



a Shrew's Fiddle

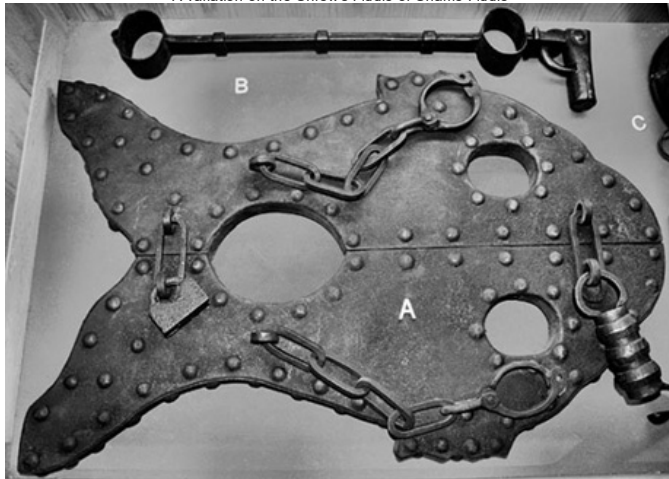


a Shrew's Fiddle





A variation on the Shrew's Fiddle or Shame Fiddle



a Noisemaker's Fife



a Noisemaker's Fife



Shame Flute



The Shame flute was specially designed to punish those who made bad music.



This is a double Shrews' Fiddle at the torture museum in Freiburg im Breisgau. It was used when two women had an unseemly public argument. They were locked together facing each other, both equally helpless and humiliated. They were obliged to remain locked together until reconciled to each other. The photograph on the right shows a modern reconstruction.





Spike

see Pale (for impalement)

Stocks



stocks, their feet are locked in place, and sometimes as well their hands or head, or these may be chained.

With stocks, boards are placed around the legs or the wrists, whereas in the pillory they are placed around the arms and neck and fixed to a pole, and the victim stands. Since stocks served an outdoor public form of punishment its victims were subjected to the daily and nightly weather. It was not uncommon for people kept in stocks over several days in winter to die of hypothermia.

As for so many forms of torture, the Inquisition found new variations



An felon in the stocks might expect the punishment to be complemented by tickling, verbal insults, rotten food, kicking, spitting, urinating and defecating. An unpopular one could expect whipping, bastinado or even to be stoned to death. Fellons in the stocks for a prolonged period would receive only bread and water, plus anything brought by their friends.

Public stocks were typically positioned in the most public place available, as public humiliation was a critical aspect of such punishment.

Stocks are devices used in the medieval times as a form of physical punishment involving public humiliation. The stocks partially immobilised its victims and they were often exposed in a public place such as the site of a market to the scorn of those who passed by. Since the purpose was to punish offenders against the standards of conduct of the time, anybody could assault, revile or aim filth at the victim.

The stocks are similar to the pillory and the pranger, as each consists of large, hinged, wooden boards. The difference is that when a person is placed in the



Stocks for three people



Stocks for hands and feet

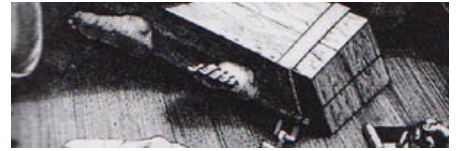


The stocks were popular among civil authorities from medieval to early modern times. They were widely used in Elizabethan England, and by the Puritans in the colonial period of American history. Their last recorded use in the United Kingdom was in 1872 at Adpar, Newcastle Emlyn, west Wales.

Spanish conquistadores introduced stocks as a form of punishment and humiliation against those that impeded the consolidation of Christian settlements in the new world. They were still used in the 19th century in Latin America.

They are occasionally preserved in churches.

Finger pillories often went by the name of "finger stocks".



Strappado

Strappado is a form of torture in which the victim's hands are first tied behind his back, and then he is suspended in the air by means of a rope attached to wrists, which most likely dislocates both arms. Weights may be added to the body to intensify the effect and increase the pain.

Other names for strappado include "reverse hanging". It is best known for its use in the torture chambers of the medieval Inquisition.

There are three variants of this torture. In the first one, the victim has his or her arms tied behind their back; a large rope is then tied to the wrists and passed over a pulley, beam or a hook on the roof. The torturer pulls on this rope until the victim is hanging from the arms. Since the hands are tied behind the victim's back, this will cause a very intense pain and possible dislocation of the arms. The full weight of the subject's body is then supported by the extended and internally-rotated shoulder sockets. While the technique shows no external injuries, it can cause long-term nerve, ligament, or tendon damage. The technique typically causes brachial plexus injury, leading to paralysis or loss of sensation in the arms.

The second variation is similar to the first, but a series of drops is added, meaning that the victim is allowed to drop until his or her fall is suddenly checked by the rope. In addition to the damage caused by the suspension, the painful jerk would cause major stress to the extended and vulnerable arms, leading to broken shoulders.

In the third variant, the victim's hands are tied to the front. The victim is also hung from the hands, but the ankles are tied and a heavy weight is attached to them. This will cause pain and possible damage not only to the arms, but also to the legs and hips. This variant was known as "squassation".

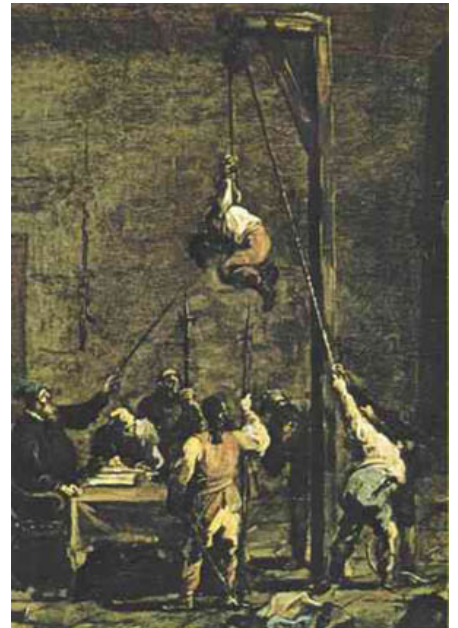
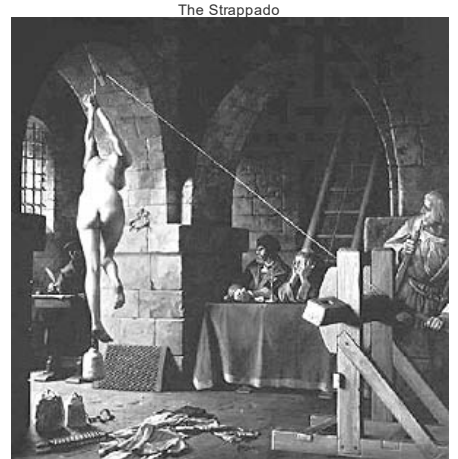
Squassation



The second variation with arms tied behind the back and with repeated drops was the favoured method of the Medieval and Spanish Inquisitions.

According to William Godwin, Savonarola was tortured by strappado multiple times before being put to death in a trial by fire; Savonarola apparently renounced his confessions after being tortured.

It is believed that Niccolò Machiavelli, during his 1513 imprisonment after allegedly conspiring against the Medici family in Florence, was also subjected to this form of strappado.



Tablilla

The medieval Spanish tablillas, was an instrument of torture used to crush toes. The prisoner was bound face-upward to the rack and stretched until the tension in his bare feet held his toes tense and stiffly pointed. The tablillas were essentially a pair of pillories for the feet - two small wooden tablets featuring five narrow holes through which the toes were forced and immobilised. Before putting each question, the torturer positioned a sharp wedge of hard wood over the tip of one of the prisoner's toes. If he found the answer unsatisfactory, the torturer sharply struck the wedge with a heavy mallet, driving the wedge head-on into the toe with sufficient force to obliterate the tiny bones. The toes were destroyed one by one, ranging upward in size from the smallest toes to the great toes.

While the tablillas could theoretically be applied to the fingers as well, the results were inferior: long, thin fingers were more likely merely to snap under the wedge while short, stubby toes were more readily pulverised. The pudgier the prisoner's toes, the stronger his candidacy for successful torture by the tablillas.

Tarring and Feathering

Tarring and feathering is a physical punishment, used to enforce formal justice. It was used in feudal Europe and its colonies in the early modern period

In a typical tar-and-feathers attack, the subject of a crowd's anger would be stripped to his waist. Hot tar was poured or painted onto the person while he was immobilised. Then the victim either had feathers thrown on him or was rolled around on a pile of feathers so that they stuck to the sticky tar. Often the victim was paraded around town on a cart or a rail. The aim was to inflict enough pain and humiliation on a person to cause him to either reform his behaviour or leave town.

Sometimes only the head was shaven, tarred and feathered. In some cases a match was held to the feathers to light them, as well as the tar, on fire to inflict pain.

The earliest mention of the punishment occurs in the orders of Richard I of England, issued to his navy on starting for the Holy Land in 1189.

"Concerning the lawes and ordinances appointed by King Richard for his navie the forme thereof was this... Item, a thiefe or felon that hath stolen, being lawfully convicted, shal have his head shorne, and boyling pitch poured upon his head, and feathers or downe strawed upon the same whereby he may be knowen, and so at the first landing-place they shall come to, there to be cast up"
(transcript of original statute in Hakluyt's Voyages, ii. 21).

A later instance of this penalty being inflicted is given in *Notes and Queries* (series 4, vol. v), which quotes one James Howell writing from Madrid, in 1623, of the "boisterous Bishop of Halberstadt", who, "having taken a place where there were two monasteries of nuns and friars, he caused divers feather beds to be ripped, and all the feathers thrown into a great hall, whither the nuns and friars were thrust naked with their bodies oiled and pitched and to tumble among these feathers, which makes them here (Madrid) presage him an ill-death."

During the night of March 24, 1832, Joseph Smith, Jr., the leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was dragged from his home by a group of men who stripped and beat him before tarring and feathering him. Smith was left for dead, but he limped to the home of friends who spent much of the night scraping the tar from his body, leaving his skin raw and bloody.

In 1851 a mob in Ellsworth, Maine tarred and feathered a Swiss-born Jesuit priest, Father John Bapst, in the midst of a local controversy over religious education in grammar schools.

The punishment was also used by the IRA in Northern Ireland in the Twentieth century.

An excise man tarred and feathered in Pennsylvania in 1794 after taxes on whiskey went up



Tarred and Feathered



A tarring and feathering victim in Northern Ireland in 2007. Tied to a lamppost, the victim stands with his head and upper body covered in tar and feathers. A makeshift placard hung around his neck announces the reason for his treatment.



Tearing Limb from Limb

While traitors in England were hanged, drawn and quartered, in France they were usually torn limb from limb. Out in the open each limb was tied to a horse, and the horses would be goaded to gallop off in four different directions. The torso would then be drawn and quartered.

This was for example the fate of the regicide François Ravallac a Catholic zealot who stabbed the French King Henri IV in 1610. The hand that had wielded the knife was first burned off with flaming sulphur. Boiling lead, oil and resin was poured over him before his execution at the Place de Grève in Paris .

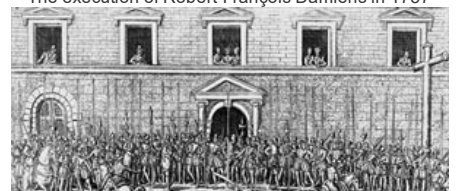
On January 5, 1757, as King Louis XV of France was entering his carriage, Robert-François Damiens rushed forward and stabbed him with a knife, inflicting a slight wound. Damiens made no attempt to escape, and was apprehended at once. He was tortured to force him to divulge the identity of his accomplices. This was unsuccessful. He was condemned as a regicide by the Parlement of Paris, and sentenced to be drawn and quartered, by horses at the Place de Grève.

Brought from his prison cell on the morning of 28 March 1757, Damiens was tortured first with red-hot pincers. His hand, holding the knife used in the attempted assassination, was burned using sulphur. Molten wax, lead, and boiling oil were poured into his wounds. After hours of agony, he was remanded to the royal executioner. Horses were tied to his arms and legs, but the attempted regicide's limbs did not separate easily. After several more hours, the executioner cut Damiens'

The execution of François Ravallac in 1610



The execution of Robert-François Damiens in 1757



joints with an axe. Damiens was dismembered to the applause of the crowd, and his torso - reportedly still living - was burnt at the stake.

Damiens' fate provided ammunition for anti-religious proponents of penal reform including the philosopher Cesare Beccaria and Thomas Paine. An allusion to Damiens's execution, and Casanova's account of it, are used by Mark Twain to suggest the cruelty and injustice of aristocratic power in chapter XVIII of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Damiens was the last regicide or attempted regicide to be executed in this way.

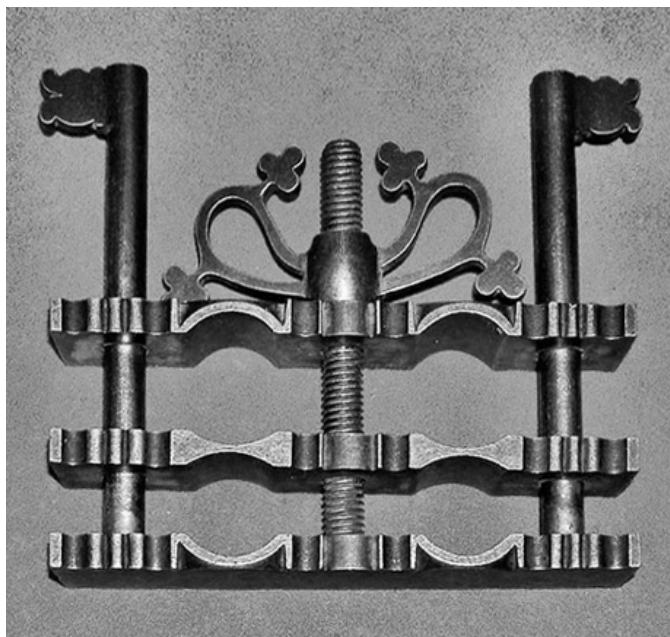
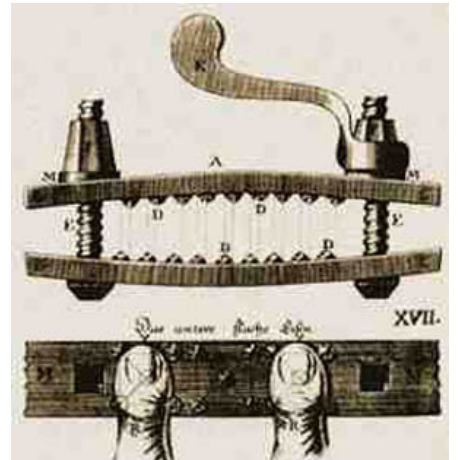


Thumbscrews

The thumbscrews or pilliwinks is a torture instrument which was first used in medieval Europe. It is a simple vice, sometimes with protruding studs on the interior surfaces. The victim's thumbs or fingers were placed in the vice and slowly crushed.

Thumbscrews were also applied to crush prisoners' big toes. The crushing bars were sometimes lined with sharp metal points to puncture the nails and inflict greater pain in the nail beds. Larger, heavier devices based on the same design principle were applied to crush knees and elbows.

The pilliwinks used for this purpose probably differed from thumbscrews by squeezing the fingers. According to the Tudor historian Eric Ives, Anne Boleyn sent a pilliwinks to the nursemaid looking after her daughter, the future Elizabeth I.



Water Cure (Water Torture)



Water cure as a term for a form of torture refers to a method in which the victim is





forced to drink large quantities of water in a short time, resulting in gastric distension, "water intoxication", and possibly death.

Often the victim has the mouth forced or wedged open, the nose closed with pincers and a funnel or strip of cloth forced down the throat. The victim has to drink all the water (or other liquids such as bile or urine) poured into the funnel to avoid drowning. The stomach fills until near bursting, and the victim is sometimes beaten until the victim vomits. The torture then begins again.



While this use of water as a form of torture is documented back to at least the 15th century, the first use of the term Water Cure in this sense is indirectly dated to around 1898, by U.S. soldiers in the Spanish-American war.



Water torture was used extensively and legally by the courts of France from the Middle Ages to the 17th and 18th centuries. It was known as being put to "the question", with the ordinary question consisting of eight pints (3.6 litres) of water forced into the stomach, and the extraordinary question consisting of sixteen pints (7.3 litres).

The French poet and criminal François Villon was subjected to this torture in 1461. Jean Calas suffered this torture before being broken on the wheel in 1762. The true case of the Marquise de Brinvilliers was reported in fiction by Arthur Conan Doyle in "The Leather Funnel", by Alexandre Dumas, père in "The Marquise de Brinvilliers" and by Émile Gaboriau in "Intrigues of a Poisoner".

A form of water cure known as the Swedish drink was used by various international troops in the German states during the Thirty Years' War.

Water cure was among the forms of torture used by the Spanish Inquisition. The Inquisition at Málaga subjected the Scottish traveller William Lithgow to this torture, among other methods, in 1620. He described his ordeal in *Rare Adventures and Painful Peregrinations* (1632):

"The first and second [measures of water] I gladly received, such was the scorching drought of my tormenting pain, and likewise I had drunk none for three days before. But afterward, at the third charge, perceiving these measures of water to be inflicted upon me as tortures, O strangling tortures! I closed my lips, gainstanding that eager crudelity. Whereat the alcalde enraging, set my teeth asunder with a pair of iron cadges, detaining them there, at every several turn, both mainly and manually; whereupon my hunger-clung belly waxing great, grew drum-like imbolstered: for it being a suffocating pain, in regard of my head hanging downward, and the water reingorging itself in my throat with a struggling force; it strangled and swallowed up my breath from yowling and groaning." Hadfield, Andrew, ed. (2001). *Amazons, Savages, and Machiavels*. Oxford University Press. p. 114. (Spellings modernised).

Before pouring the water, torturers often inserted an iron prong (known as the bostezo) into a victim's mouth to keep it open, as well as a strip of linen (known as the toca) on which the victim would choke and suffocate while swallowing the water.

This form of torture was famously used in the twenty-first century by American agents as a way of extracting information and confessions from suspected Islamic terrorists.



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Wheel or Breaking Wheel or Catherine Wheel

The breaking wheel was a torturous capital punishment device used in the Middle Ages and early modern times for public execution by cudgelling to death, especially in France and Germany.

In France the condemned were placed on a cart-wheel with their limbs stretched out along the spokes over two sturdy wooden beams. The wheel was made to slowly revolve. Through the openings between the spokes, the executioner hit the victim with an iron hammer that could easily break the victim's bones. This process was repeated several times per limb. Once his bones were broken, he was left on the wheel to die. It could take hours, even days, before shock and dehydration caused death. The punishment was abolished in Germany as late as 1827.

Less severe offenders would be cudgelled 'top down', with the first blow to the neck, causing death; more heinous criminals were punished 'bottom up', starting with the legs, and sometimes being beaten for hours. The number and sequence of blows was specified in the court's sentence. Corpses were left for carrion-eaters, and the criminals' heads often placed on a spike.

The wheel used in France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Romania, Russia, Greece, Spain, Portugal, and other countries. It was typically a large wooden wagon wheel with radial spokes, but a wheel was not always used. The condemned was sometimes spread-eagled and broken on a St Andrew's cross consisting of two wooden beams nailed in an "X" shape, after which the victim's mangled body might be displayed on the wheel. The condemned's shattered limbs were woven ('braiden') through the spokes of the wheel, which was then hoisted onto a tall pole so that birds could eat the sometimes still-living individual.

In France, the condemned were placed on a cartwheel with their limbs stretched out along the spokes over two sturdy wooden beams. The wheel was made to revolve slowly, and a large hammer or an iron bar was then applied to the limb over the gap between the beams, breaking the bones. This process was repeated several times per limb. Sometimes it was 'mercifully' ordered that the executioner should strike the criminal on the chest and stomach, blows known as coups de grâce (French: "blows of mercy"), which caused fatal injuries. Without those, the broken man could last hours and even days, before shock and dehydration caused death.

In France, a special grace, the retentum, could be granted, by which the condemned was strangled after the second or third blow, or in special cases, even before the breaking began.

In the Holy Roman Empire, the wheel was punishment reserved primarily for men convicted of aggravated murder (murder committed during another crime, or against a family member) or for belonging to a Christian denomination other than the Catholic Church.

The wheel was sometimes called a Catherine Wheel, because of a fictitious story that St. Catherine of Alexandria was executed on one of these devices. The story seems to be a mangled version of the murder of Hypatia of Alexandria by an early Christian mob.



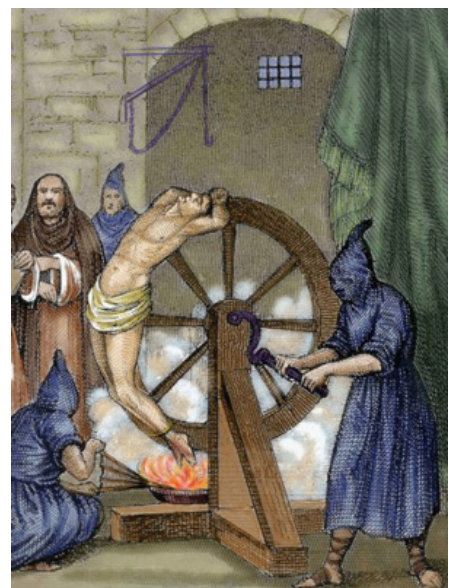
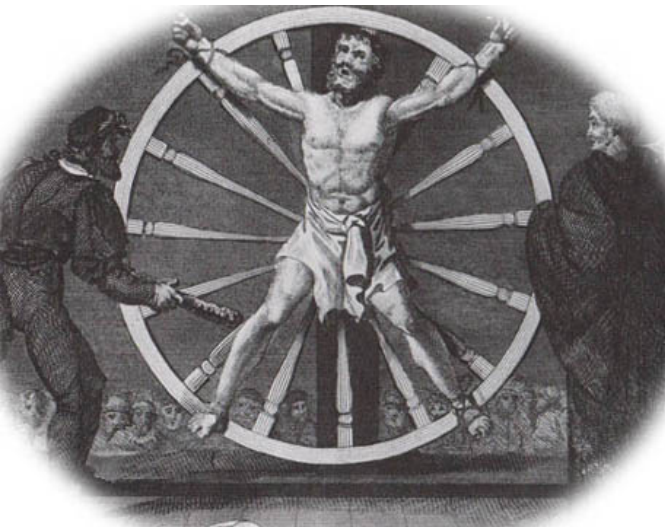
In Scotland, a servant named Robert Weir was broken on the wheel at Edinburgh in 1603. This punishment had hardly ever been used before in that country. The crime had been the murder of John Kincaid, Lord of Warriston on behalf of his wife. Weir was secured to a cart wheel and was struck and broken with the coulter of a plough.

The breaking wheel was used in Germany as recently as the early 19th century for the crime of parricide, and the last known use occurred in 1841 when the assassin of the Bishop of Ermeland in Prussia was executed in this manner.





From Kulturgeschichte by Friedrich Anton Heller von Hellwald, 1896



Wooden horse

The Spanish Donkey, also known as Wooden Horse

A wooden horse (or Spanish donkey) is a torture device, of which there exist two variations.

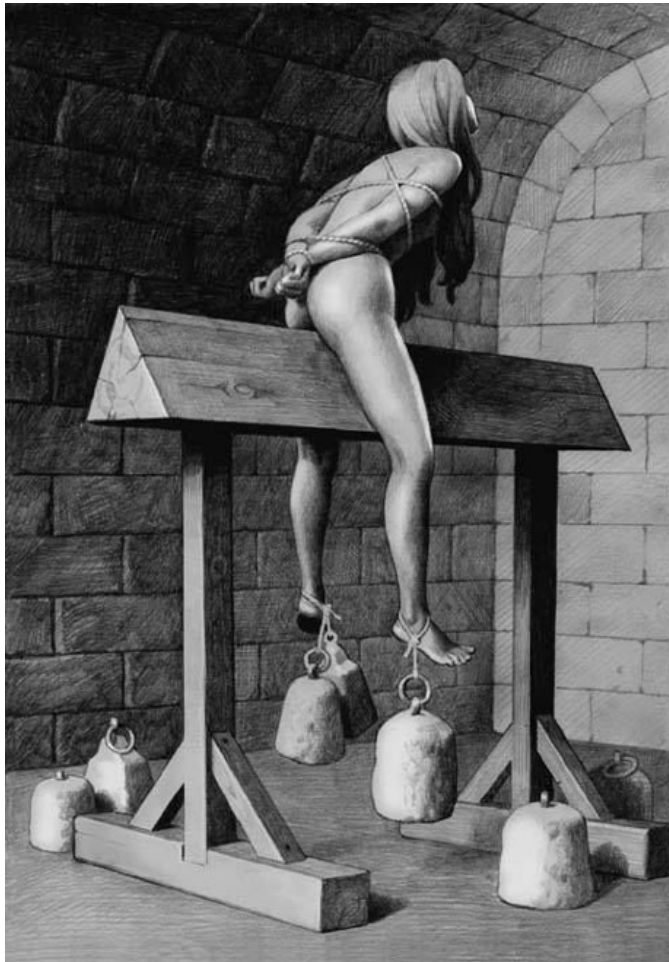
The first is a sharply angled device with the sharp point of the angle pointing upward, mounted on a saw-horse like support. The victim is made to straddle the triangular "horse" and place their full body weight on their genitals, which rested on the point of the angle. Weights or additional restraints were often added to keep the victim from falling off.

A punishment similar to this was used during the American colonial period and later. Called Riding the Rail, the victim was often carried through town in this predicament, often in conjunction with the punishment of tarring and feathering. The crotch can be injured and the victim could be left unable to walk without pain.

A less immediately painful variation, often dubbed the wooden pony, is a single plank of wood supported (either again with wooden legs or suspended from the ceiling) horizontal from the floor on its side, with the thin edge up. Usually this edge is filed to a blunt point or rounded off. The victim is made to straddle the plank, which is adjusted (raised or lowered) in order to make the victim stand on his tiptoes or rest his body weight on his genitals on the plank.



The Spanish Donkey, also known as Wooden Horse





Psychological torture

Psychological torture uses non-physical methods that cause psychological suffering. Its effects are not immediately apparent unless they alter the behaviour of the tortured person. Since there is no international political consensus on what constitutes psychological torture, it is often overlooked, denied, and referred to by different names.

Psychological torture is less well known than physical torture and tends to be subtle and much easier to conceal. In practice the distinctions between physical and psychological torture are often blurred. Physical torture is the inflicting of severe pain or suffering on a person. In contrast, psychological torture is directed at the psyche with calculated violations of psychological needs, along with deep damage to psychological structures and the breakage of beliefs underpinning normal sanity. Torturers often inflict both types of torture in combination to compound the associated effects.

Psychological torture includes deliberate use of extreme stress and situations such as mock execution, shunning, violation of deep-seated social or sexual norms and taboos, or extended solitary confinement. Because psychological torture needs no physical violence to be effective, it is possible to induce severe psychological pain, suffering, and trauma with no externally visible effects.

Rape and other forms of sexual abuse were and still are often used as methods of torture for interrogative or punitive purposes.

Torture Chambers

The torture chamber was specifically designed to evoke fear in the victims. It was usually built underground and only dimly lit. Inside the chamber waited the executioner, his face covered and wearing a black hood. When the sight of the chamber, the torture instruments and the executioner did not cause the victim to confess, a full-scale torture session was initiated.

During the Inquisition, the method of construction of the torture chamber of the papal palace at Avignon has been described as ingenious. The walls of the torture chamber were constructed in such a manner as to project the shrieks of the tortured from wall to wall, without ever reaching the outside. The chamber where the victims were being burnt was of circular construction and resembled the furnace of a glass-house with a funnel-like chimney at the top. Up to 1850 the chambers were shown to visitors after which time the ecclesiastical authorities of Avignon decided to shut them down. The torture chamber of the Spanish Inquisition in Lima, Peru had one metre thick walls so that the screams of the victims could not penetrate them.

In Nuremberg and Salzburg torture chambers featured trapdoors on their floors. In Nuremberg the room underneath the main torture chamber featured torture machinery while in Salzburg, the room under the trapdoor, functioned like a waiting room for prisoners. When the time came the prisoner was pulled up and into the upper torture chamber. In some places, deep water pits could be found under the trapdoor, where the victims of the torture chamber could be thrown, after a torture session, to drown.

The torture chamber was the final destination in a progression of four cell types during incarceration at the Palace of the Inquisition. The palace contained the Judgement Hall, the offices of the employees, the private apartments of the Grand Inquisitor and the detention cells adjacent to the apartments.

The detention cell gradations started with the cells of mercy reserved mainly for rich transgressors who upon bequeathing all their property to the Inquisition were normally let go after a time of detention in the cells.

For more difficult prisoners the next cell stage was the cell of penitence. These were situated in small round towers of about 3 metres (ten feet) in diameter. They were painted white and included rudimentary furniture such as a stool and a bed. Very little light was allowed in.

If the prisoner did not co-operate, the next step in the detention process was the dungeon. The dungeon had walls 1.5 metres (five feet) thick, double doors and was in complete darkness. No conversation of any type was allowed in the dungeon. The food allowance for prisoners was less than a penny a day including the profit of the warden while any human refuse was removed every four days.

After a stay in the dungeon, uncooperative prisoners were moved to the torture chamber.

One of the oddities of history is that today many castles buy old torture equipment to

The Palace of the Popes in Avignon where the torture chambers were open to the paying public up until 1850



attract visitors to their cellars so that they can be presented as torture chambers. By contrast the overwhelming majority of genuine torture chambers, owned and operated by the Church, are closed to the public, their equipment destroyed or sold off, and their very existence implicitly denied, presumably because the scale of torture sanctioned by the Church over many centuries is difficult to justify in a secular age.

Effects of torture

For survivors, torture often leads to lasting mental and physical health problems. Victims were permanently mutilated, crippled or disfigured. Prolonged confinement in a scavenger's daughter would render the victim permanently unable to stand up.

The consequences of torture reach far beyond immediate pain. Victims suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, with symptoms such as flashbacks or intrusive thoughts, severe anxiety, insomnia, nightmares, depression and memory lapses. Torture victims often feel guilt and shame, triggered by the humiliation they have endured. Many feel that they have betrayed themselves or their friends and family. Such symptoms are normal human responses to abnormal and inhuman treatment.

Physical problems can be wide-ranging, and include sexually transmitted diseases, musculo-skeletal problems, brain injury, post-traumatic epilepsy and dementia or chronic pain syndromes. Mental health problems are equally wide-ranging. Common are post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety disorder.



Torture and the Christian Church

The Christian Churches, and especially the Catholic Church, not only practised torture, they also provided the moral underpinning for its use, and pioneered new techniques. The papal Inquisitions were by far and away the most prolific and proficient torturers for many centuries. They codified rules for the application of torture but it is not clear why, since they routinely ignored all restrictions: for example they tortured children, they carried out repeated tortures, and they accepted as evidence the sort of tittle-tattle that no civil court would countenance. Whenever they broke the rules they were empowered to forgive each other.

Instruments of torture were regularly blessed and sprinkled with holy water.

Under the influence of increasing secular western society, the Catholic Church abandoned the use of torture in the nineteenth century. Today the Catechism of the Catholic Church condemns the use of torture. In No. 2297-2298 it states:

Torture, which uses physical or moral violence to extract confessions, punish the guilty, frighten opponents, or satisfy hatred is contrary to respect for the person and for human dignity... In times past, cruel practices were commonly used by legitimate governments to maintain law and order, often without protest from the Pastors of the Church, who themselves adopted in their own tribunals the prescriptions of Roman law concerning torture. Regrettable as these facts are, the Church always taught the duty of clemency and mercy. She forbade clerics to shed blood. In recent times it has become evident that these cruel practices were neither necessary for public order, nor in conformity with the legitimate rights of the human person. On the contrary, these practices led to ones even more degrading. It is necessary to work for their abolition. We must pray for the victims and their tormentors.

Despite first appearances, this is not an unconditional condemnation of torture. For example it does not condemn the use of torture to extract information such as the names of accomplices. Neither does it recognise that the Church was responsible for the deaths of countless thousands of people who were wholly innocent, or whose crimes would not today attract so much as a small fine.

One of the many mass witch hunts, and possibly the worst, was that at Bamberg in Germany. In many ways it was typical.

Bamberg witch trials

Bamberg witch trials took place in Bamberg in Germany in 1626-1631. They resulted in the deaths of between 300 and 600, one of the greatest mass executions in peace time.

The Bamberg Witch Trials erupted during a period of a series of mass witch trials in

In the past the Church commissioned paintings showing their heroes presiding over executions and burnings. This is St Dominic the founder of the Dominican Order, which staffed the Inquisition, shown presiding over garrotting and burning of supposed heretics. (Detail)



Prince-Bishop Gottfried Johann Georg II Fuchs von Domheim



the area of Southern Germany, contemporary with the Würzburg witch trials and others. The witch craze of the 1620s was not confined to Germany, but influenced Alsace, Lorraine and Franche-Comté: in the lands of the abbey of Luxeuil the years 1628-30 have been described as a demonic epidemic.

The area around Bamberg had been devastated by war and conflicts within the Holy Roman Empire, as well as a series of crop failures, famines and plagues. The Church looked for supernatural explanations, and accusations of witchcraft proliferated. Bamberg at the time was a small state ruled by the Prince-Bishop Gottfried Johann Georg II Fuchs von Dornheim, who took a leading role in the persecutions. He earned the nickname Hexenbischof or "Witch-bishop." The prince-bishop built a "witch-house," complete with torture-chamber adorned with appropriate biblical texts. The Bamberg witch trials have been described as possibly the worst of the period.

The bishop's chancellor, Dr. Haan, was burnt for showing suspicious leniency as a judge. He confessed to having seen five burgomasters of Bamberg at the sabbat, and they too were duly burnt: one of the was Johannes Junius, perhaps most known of the many victims of the Bamberg witch trials, whose testimony of the torture he was exposed to became famous.

Johannes Junius

Johannes Junius (1573 - August 6, 1628) was the Burgomeister of Bamberg, who wrote a letter to his daughter from jail while he awaited execution for witchcraft during the Bamberg witch trials. Junius became Burgomeister in 1608 and remained in that position until his arrest, which came shortly after his wife had been executed on similar charges.

He was implicated in witchcraft by other victims of the witch craze, who had been pressured under torture to reveal the names of their accomplices. Court documents describe how Junius at first denied all charges and demanded to confront his witnesses, and continued to deny his involvement in witchcraft after almost a week of torture, which included the application of thumbscrews, leg vices (Beinschrauben), and the strappado. He finally confessed on July 5, 1628, and was publicly burned to death one month later.

On July 24, shortly before his execution, Junius managed to write a letter to his daughter, Veronica, which was smuggled out of jail by his guard and successfully delivered. In the letter he defends his innocence, claims that those who testified against him have secretly begged his forgiveness, and recounts the abject horror of his torture (inflicted on him by his own brother-in-law and three others). He also says that at first he attempted to create a confession in which he could not identify the other witches, but was forced to name names under threat of further torture. Here is an English translation of his famous heartbreaking letter:

Many hundred thousand good-nights, dearly beloved daughter Veronica. Innocent have I come into prison, innocent have I been tortured, innocent must I die. For whoever comes into the witch prison must become a witch or be tortured until he invents something out of his head and - God pity him - bethinks him of something. I will tell you how it has gone with me. When I was first time put to the torture, Dr. Braun, Dr. Kötzendörffer, and two strange doctors were there. Then Dr. Braun asks me, "Kinsman, how come you here?" I answer, "Through falsehood, through misfortune." "Hear, you," he says, "you are a witch; will you confess it voluntarily? If not, we'll bring in witnesses and the executioner for you." I said, "I am no witch, I have a pure conscience in the matter; if there are a thousand witnesses, I am not anxious, but I'll gladly hear the witnesses." Now the chancellor's son was set before me ... and afterward Hoppfens Else. She had seen me dance on Hauptsmoor. . . . I answered: "I have never renounced God, and will never do it - God graciously keep me from it. I'll rather bear whatever I must." And then came also - God in highest Heaven have mercy - the executioner, and put the thumb-screws on me, both hands bound together, so that the blood ran out at the nails and everywhere, so that for four weeks I could not use my hands, as you can see from the writing. . . . Thereafter they first stripped me, bound my hands behind me, and drew me up in the torture. Then I thought heaven and earth were at an end; eight times did they draw me up and let me fall again, so that I suffered terrible agony. . . .

And this happened on Friday, June 30, and with God's help I had to bear the torture. . . . When at last the executioner led me back into the prison, he said to me: "Sir, I beg you, for God's sake confess something, where it be true or not. Invent something, for you cannot endure the torture you will be put to; and, even if you bear it all, yet you will not escape, not even if you were an earl, but one torture will follow after another until you say you are a witch. Not before that," he said, "will they let you go, as you may see by all their trials, for one is just like another. . . ."

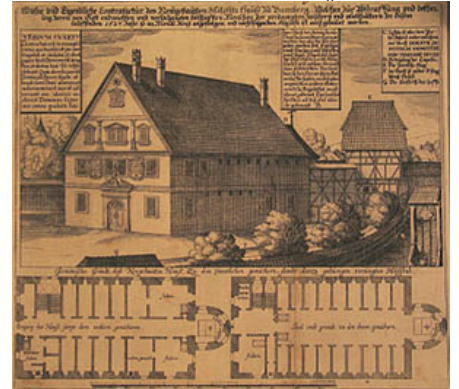
And so I begged, since I was in wretched plight, to be given one day for thought and a priest. The priest was refused me, but the time for thought was given. Now, my dear child, see in what hazard I stood and still stand. I must say that I am a witch, though I am not, - must now renounce God, though I have never done it before. Day and night I was deeply troubled, but at last there came to me a new idea. I would not be anxious, but, since I had been given no priest with whom I could take counsel, I would myself think of something and say it. If were surely better that I just say it with mouth and words, even though I had not really done it; and afterwards I would confess it to the priest, and let those answer for it who compel me to do it. . . . And so I made my confession, as follows; but it was all a lie.

Now follows, dear child, what I confessed in order to escape the great anguish and bitter torture, which it was impossible for me longer to bear. . . .

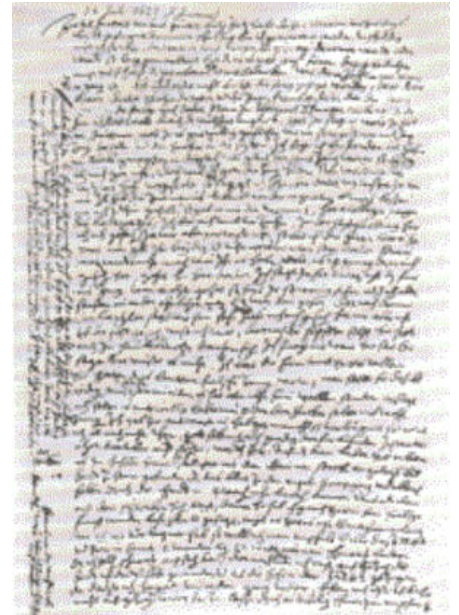
Then I had to tell what people I had seen [at the witch-sabbath]. I said



The "Witch House" at Bamberg



Letter of Johannes Junius



that I had not recognized them. "You old rascal, I must set the executioner at you. Say - was not the Chancellor there?" So I said yes. "Who besides?" I had not recognized anybody. So he said: "Take one street after another; begin at the market, go out on one street and back on the next." I had to name several persons there. Then the Zinkenwert - one person more. Then over the upper bridge to the Georgthor, on both sides. Knew nobody again. Did I know nobody in the castle - whoever it might be, I should speak without fear. And thus continuously they asked me on all the streets, though I could not and would not say more. So they gave me to the executioner, told him to strip me, shave me all over, and put me to the torture. "The rascal knows one on the market-place, is with him daily, and yet won't name him." By that they meant Dietmayer: so I had to name him too.

Then I had to tell what crimes I had committed. I said nothing. . . . "Draw the rascal up!" So I said that I was to kill my children, but I had killed a horse instead. It did not help. I had also taken a sacred wafer, and had desecrated it. When I had said this, they left me in peace.

Now, dear child, here you have all my confession, for which I must die. And they are sheer lies and made-up things, so help me God. For all this I was forced to say through fear of the torture which was threatened beyond what I had already endured. For they never leave off with the torture till one confesses something; be he never so good, he must be a witch. Nobody escapes, though he were an earl. . . .

Dear child, keep this letter secret so that people do not find it, else I shall be tortured most piteously and the jailers will be beheaded. So strictly is it forbidden. . . . Dear child, pay this man a dollar. . . . I have taken several days to write this: my hands are both lame. I am in a sad plight. . . .

Good night, for your father Johannes Junius will never see you more. July 24, 1628.

[In the margin he had added]

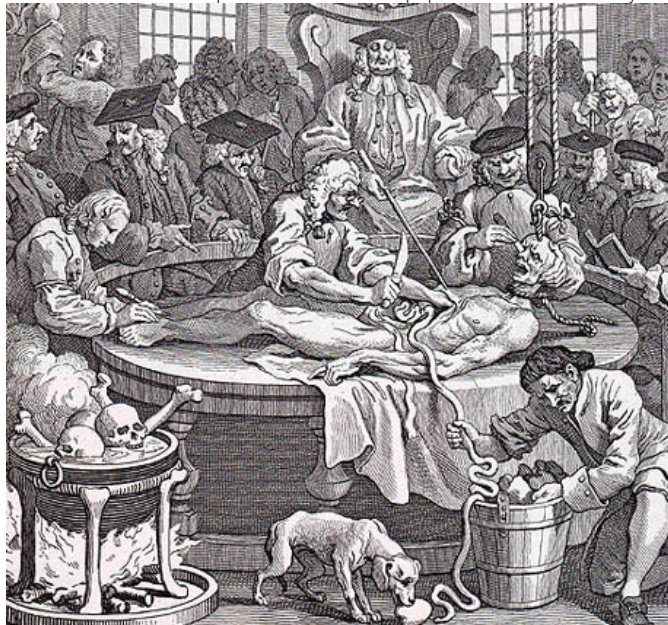
Dear child, six have confessed against me at once: the Chancellor, his son, Neudecker, Zaner, Hoffmaisters Ursel, and Hoppfens Elsse - all false, through compulsion, as they have all told me, and begged my forgiveness in God's name before they were executed. . . . They know nothing but good of me. They were forced to say it, just as I myself was. . . .



Post mortem torture

Those of whom the Church did not approve were punished even after death. Suicides for example were not only denied a Christian burial but their bodies were often mutilated or dismembered. Witches' bodies were also abused.


For religious reasons, anatomy was prohibited on human bodies. In the Eighteenth century a legal exception was made for the bodies of executed criminals. It was a sort of additional punishment that served the purpose of the medical community.



800-year-old remains of a witch discovered in Italian graveyard, with seven nails driven through her jaw. The discovery was made during a dig on what is thought to be a 'witches graveyard' after another woman's skeleton was found surrounded by 17 dice - a game which women were forbidden from playing 800 years ago. They were found buried in a simple shallow grave in the ground with no coffin or shroud. The remains were found during a dig close to the sea at Piombino near Lucca in Italy's Tuscany region








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Decline of Routine Torture

In the early modern period, the torture of witches became commonplace. Countless people were targeted and tortured for imaginary relationships with the devil.

In England the trial by jury developed considerable freedom in evaluating evidence and condemning on circumstantial evidence, making torture to extort confessions unnecessary. For this reason in England a regularised system of judicial torture never existed and its use was limited to political cases, except under the short-lived Puritan regime.

When the papacy was trying to find (or create) evidence against the Knights Templar, it encouraged monarchs throughout Europe to torture Templars to gain confessions. Torture was applied and the confessions obtained in most countries, but His Holiness was shocked to discover that the civil authorities in England were not prepared to apply torture. When two Inquisitors were sent to England in 1310 to extract confessions from Knights Templars, they insisted on using torture. The king allowed some torture to be applied "according to ecclesiastical law", but apparently not enough to satisfy the Inquisitors. The Pope wrote to the King:

We hear that you forbid torture as contrary to the laws of your land; but no state can override Cannon Law, Our Law; therefore I command you at once to submit these men to torture...Withdraw your prohibition and we grant you remission of sins

(Letter from Pope Clement V to King Edward II of England. Regestum Clementis Papae V, nunc primum editum cura et studio Monachorum Ordinis S. Benedicti, (Rome, 1885-92) year 5, no. 6670, pp 84-6. . The English translation is quoted from G. G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama, (CUP, 1947) p 380.

Although torture was not permitted under English Common law, in Tudor and early Stuart times it was applied, with the King's warrant, under certain conditions. The confession of Marc Smeaton at the trial of Anne Boleyn was presented in written form only, perhaps to hide from the court that Smeaton had been tortured on the rack for four hours, or because Thomas Cromwell was worried that he would recant his confession if cross-examined.

When Guy Fawkes was arrested for his role in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 he was tortured until he revealed everything he knew about the plot. This was not so much to extract a confession, which was not needed to prove his guilt, but to extract from him the names of his fellow conspirators. By this time a special warrant from King James I was needed before he could be tortured. The wording of the warrant shows concerns for humanitarian considerations, the severity of the methods of interrogation were to be increased gradually until the interrogators were sure that Fawkes had told all he knew. In the end this did not help Fawkes much as he was broken on the only rack in London, in the Tower of London.

Torture was abolished in England around 1640 (except peine forte et dure, which was abolished in 1772).

In 1613 Anton Praetorius described the situation of the prisoners in the dungeons in his book *Gründlicher Bericht Von Zauberey und Zaubereim* (Thorough Report about Sorcery and Sorcerers). He was one of the first to protest against all means of torture.

In the 17th century the number of incidents of judicial torture decreased in many European regions. Johann Graefe in 1624 published *Tribunal Reformation*, a case against torture. In 1764 Cesare Beccaria, an Italian lawyer, published *An Essay on*



Crimes and Punishments", in which he argued that torture unjustly punished the innocent and should be unnecessary in proving guilt. Voltaire (1694-1778) also fiercely condemned torture.

While in Egypt in 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte wrote to Major-General Berthier that the barbarous custom of whipping men suspected of having important secrets to reveal must be abolished. It has always been recognised that this method of interrogation, by putting men to the torture, is useless. The wretches say whatever comes into their heads and whatever they think one wants to believe. Consequently, the Commander-in-Chief forbids the use of a method which is contrary to reason and humanity. (Napoleon Bonaparte, *Letters and Documents of Napoleon*, Volume I: *The Rise to Power*, selected and translated by John Eldred Howard (London: The Cresset Press, 1961), p 274.

European states abolished torture from their statutory law in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Sweden and Prussia was the first to do it in 1722 and 1754, respectively; Denmark abolished it in 1770, Austria in 1776, France in 1780, and the Netherlands in 1798. Russia abolished torture in 1801. Bavaria did it in 1806 and Württemberg in 1809. In Spain the Napoleonic conquest put an end to the torture in 1808. Norway abolished it in 1819 and Portugal in 1826. Swiss cantons abolished torture in the first half of the nineteenth century.

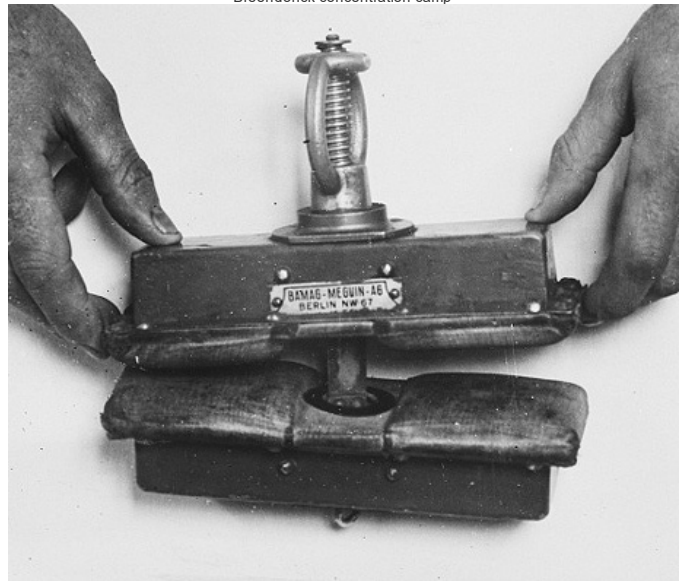
Some forms of torture, most notably Water Boarding, a form of Water Torture was re-introduced by the USA in the Twenty First Century.



Modern Revivals of Traditional Christian Tortures



Breendonck concentration camp



Lash with pieces of metal used by Gestapo in Pardubice



Illustration of Jews Being Burned in Cologne after a Woodcut by Wohlgemut



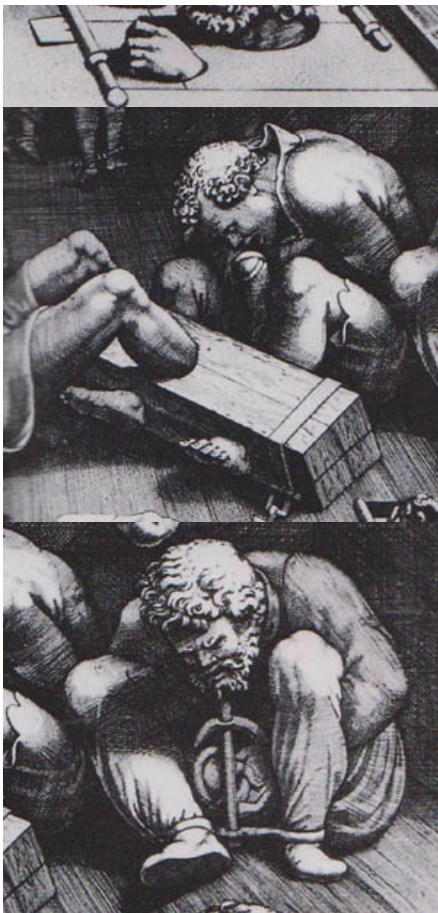
Wooden club used to crush the skulls of prisoners at Jasenovac





Water Torture, After a Woodcut in Praxis Rerum Criminalium by Joos de Damhouder

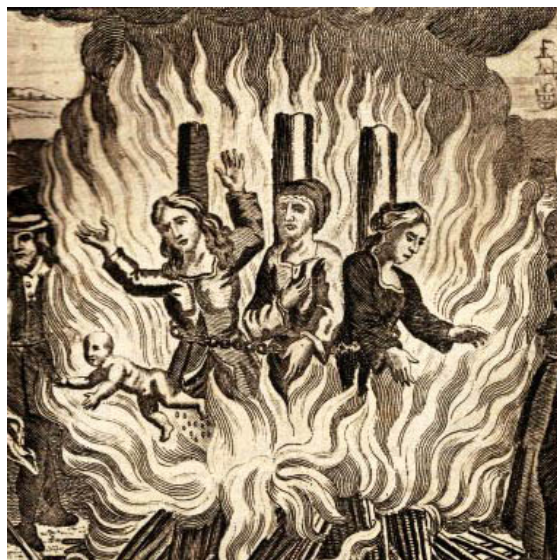


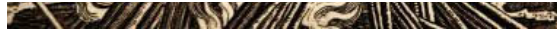




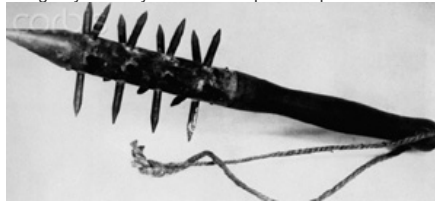
King Wenceslas Banned the Use of Torture Instruments







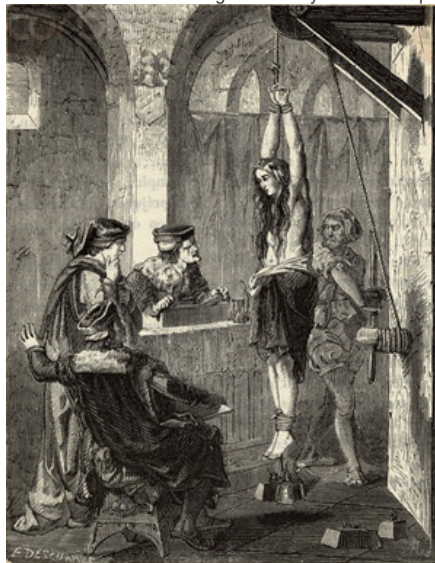
A spiked trench mace allegedly used by Austrian troops to dispatch Italian POWs in World War One



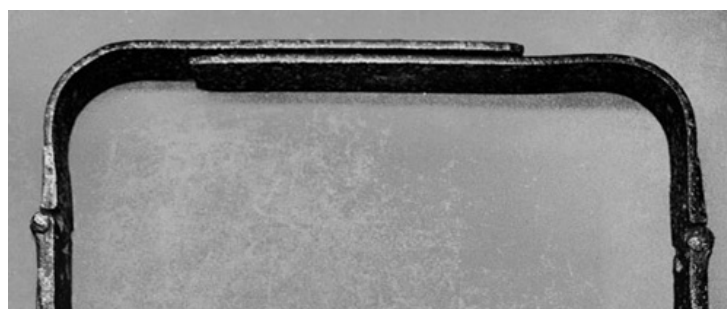
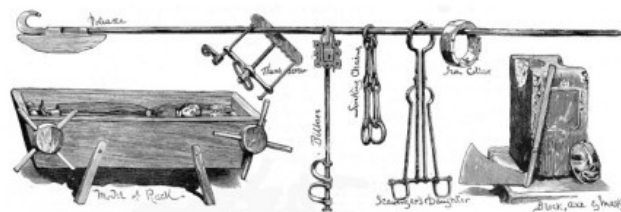
The Jugum Penis was intended to cure spermatorrhoea

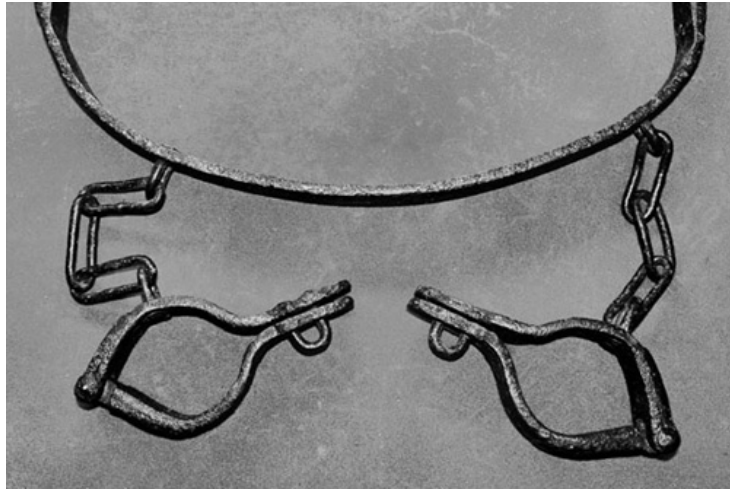


Illustration of Woman Being Tortured by E. Deschamps



Torture Instruments at the Tower of London, 1883



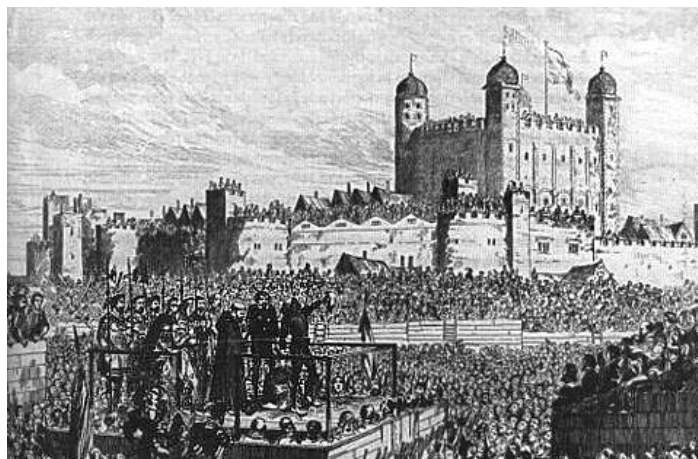


robert-francois-damiens





ravillac





Torture Museum in Siena

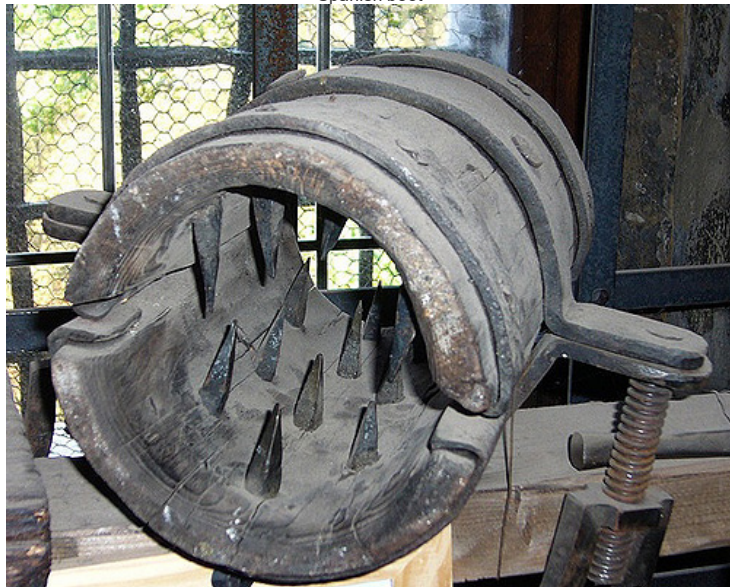




Spanish boot in Spis castle Slovakia



Spanish boot



Iron shoe. Museum of tortures in Peter and Paul Fortress, St. Petersburg, Russia





The boot. Museum of tortures in Peter and Paul Fortress, St. Petersburg, Russia



Torture shoe

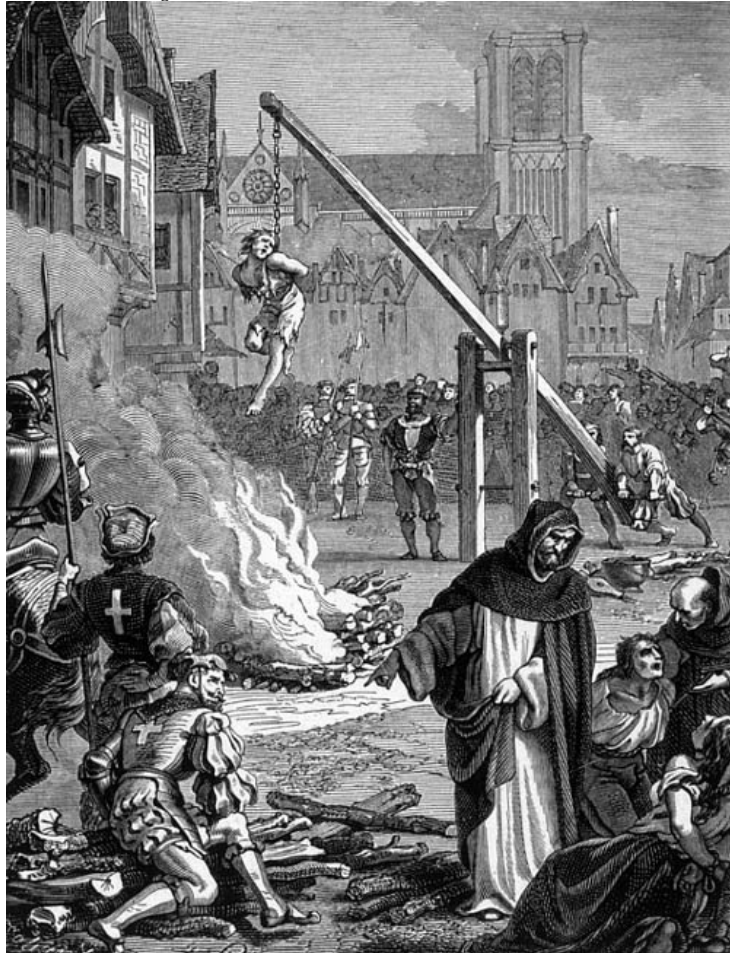


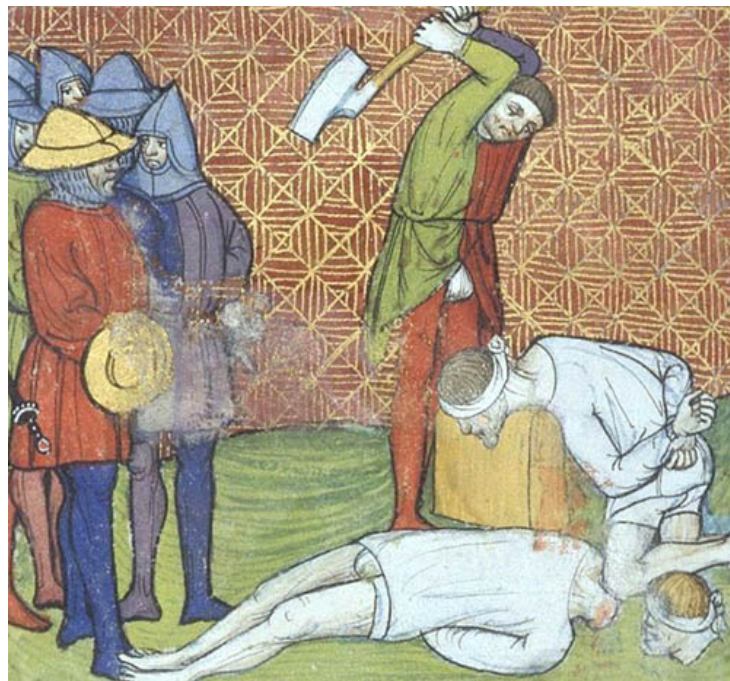


Foxe



Torture of Huguenots in France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 1685







The astronomer Kepler was untouchable because of his links to the Emperor. But his mother was no so well protected. Katharina Kepler was accused of witchcraft but Kepler himself organised her defence and saved her life. As was standard practice during the process in 1619, she was induced to confess by being shown the instruments of torture. Being "shown the instruments of torture" was a little more terrifying than the term might suggest. The instruments were described in detail one by one, pincers like the ones shown might be headed until glowing red. The victim would be able to feel the heat as she as shown exactly where they would be applied. Which body parts would be burned, which flesh ripped, which arteries stripped out, which bones broken. It was enough to induce most innocent people to confess, but not Frau Kepler. The instruments shown in this illustration, incidentally, include a Scavenger's Daughter and a hook for a Strappado.



LE DOUBREAU DE STUTTGARD MONTRE A LA MÈRE DE KEPLER LES INSTRUMENTS DE TORTURE.

Executioner's mask, Portugal, 1501-1800. Science Museum, London



A spiked wheel in the San Diego Museum of Man





Buchenwald, Germany, 1945, A liberated prisoner demonstrating a style of punishment in the camp



English merchant Nicholas Burton is tortured by officers of the Spanish Inquisition in Cadiz. He was burned at the stake in Seville in 1560



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