

Paranormal "U"**Alchemy**

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When you hear alchemy, you might picture a white bearded sage in a laboratory full of bottles, mixing ingredients in a cauldron to some desired effect, possibly turning lead into gold, or working on an elixir for immortality.

Alchemy is a philosophical and pseudoscientific tradition practiced throughout Europe, Egypt and Asia. It had many goals, including aiming to purify, mature, and perfect certain objects, make a cure all (panacea) for diseases, and making an elixir for immortality. Most people recognize one aspect of this as the traditional transmutation of materials. Lead into gold for example or making a philosopher's stone for immortality that Voldemort would covet. But Alchemy is also having a deep philosophical aspect. Practitioners also worked on the purification of the human soul.

Some medieval practitioners believed in alchemy as more of a spiritual experience than the actual physical change of a material like lead into gold. They saw it as a metaphor for life. They strove to change themselves and others from "lead" into "gold". Other practitioners strove for the actual transmutation of base metals, like lead, into gold. This practice was made illegal in the 14th century. By the 1700's anyone claiming to be trying to do this was more or less shunned by other alchemists. This practice was in disrepute.

People think of alchemy and picture a European castle. History shows that alchemy has its roots in ancient Egypt, and extends into Europe and as far India and China. Each culture had its own focus on alchemy. Egypt and Greece alchemists studied metallurgy and were among the first to record findings in papyrus scrolls. Many of these scrolls and books were destroyed over the ages by time and the occasional religious uprising.

The goals of alchemy in India included the creation of a divine body and immortality and was restricted to certain operations, metals, drugs, compounds, and medicines, many of which have mercury as their core element. Its principles restored the health of those who were ill beyond hope and gave back youth to fading old age.

The Muslim alchemists introduced a new approach to alchemy, based on scientific methodology and controlled experimentation in the laboratory, in contrast to the ancient Greek and Egyptian alchemists whose works were often allegorical and unintelligible, with very little concern for laboratory work.

Whereas European alchemy eventually centered on the transmutation of base metals into noble metals, Chinese alchemy had a more obvious connection to medicine. The philosopher's stone of European alchemists can be compared to the Grand Elixir of Immortality sought by Chinese alchemists. These two goals were not unconnected, and the philosopher's stone was often equated with the universal cure all. Black powder may have been an important invention of Chinese alchemists. As previously stated above, Chinese alchemy was more related to medicine. It is said that the Chinese invented gunpowder while trying to find a potion for eternal life.