



0. THE IRON MAIDEN OF NUREMBERG - Story Preface

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This image of medieval-era Nuremberg is from the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, the most densely illustrated book of the 15th Century. Hartmann Schedel wrote the text which was illustrated with woodblocks created by Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff (both artists from Nuremberg). The illustrations were hand-colored by other, contemporary German artists. ([Read more about it](#) at the University of Cambridge.) Nuremberg, according to some stories from history, was the place where "The Iron Maiden" was used as a method of punishment.

The Iron Maiden was principally used in Germany and was characterized by spikes on the inside of the door. Both doors had similar spikes.

When the accused was inside, the doors were closed slowly. The object was not to use the Iron Maiden to quickly kill someone. The object was to inflict pain and punishment.

Although an accurate history of the Iron Maiden of Nuremberg is not clear, there is evidence (perhaps unreliable) that it was used at least as early as August 14, 1515.

On that day—according to a story told by a man called Johann Philipp Siebenkees—a German who had forged coins was tortured with the device. As the doors were slowly shut, spikes supposedly penetrated the forger's body just enough to cause excruciating anguish but not enough to kill him. Crying in vain, the forger—according to the tale—lived two days.

Like the Iron Maiden, hanging was intended to draw-out the death process. Medieval hanging was not an event where death came quickly (such as the "English drop"). Hanging, in the Middle Ages, was intended to occur slowly and torturously.

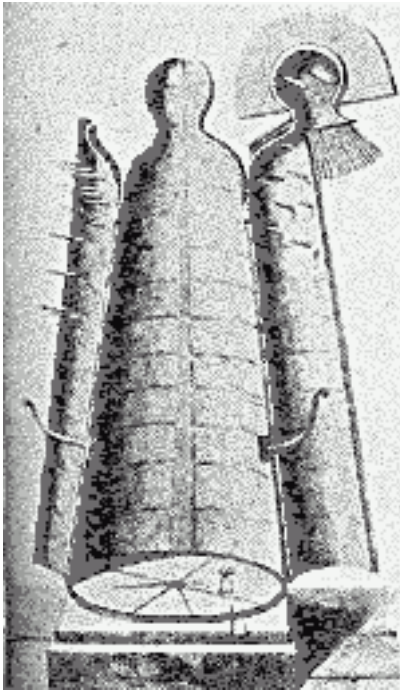
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Media Stream



Iron Maiden - Germany's Doors of Death

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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