



# **Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 1: Biblical and Pagan Societies (Witchcraft and Magic in Europe (Paperback))**

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In the ancient Near East, the art of influencing the natural course of events by means of spells and other ritual forms was universal. The social and political role of magic is apparent, too, in the competition to achieve precedence over rival systems of ritual practice and belief. Within a region filled with petty kingdoms competing for power, the Jews of ancient Palestine maintained control over adherents by developing distinct ritual practices and condemning as heretical those of nearby cults. Texts from Mesopotamia reveal a striking number of incantations, rituals, and medical recipes against witchcraft, attesting to a profound fear of being bewitched. Magical rituals were also used to maintain harmony between the human and divine realms.

The roots of European witchcraft and magic lie in Hebrew and other ancient Near Eastern cultures and in the Celtic, Nordic, and Germanic traditions of the continent. For two millennia, European folklore and ritual have been imbued with the belief in the supernatural, yielding a rich trove of histories and images.

Witchcraft and Magic in Europe combines the traditional approaches of political, legal, and social historians with a critical synthesis of cultural anthropology, historical psychology, and gender studies. The series, complete in six volumes, provides a modern, scholarly survey of the supernatural beliefs of Europeans from ancient times to the present day. Each volume of this ambitious six-volume series contains the work of distinguished scholars chosen for their expertise in a particular era or region.

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