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THE BOOK OF

PRACTICAL WITCHCRAFT



A GUIDE TO RITUAL AND SPELLS

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ARCTURUS

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CURIOSITY, EXPLORATION AND SECRECY

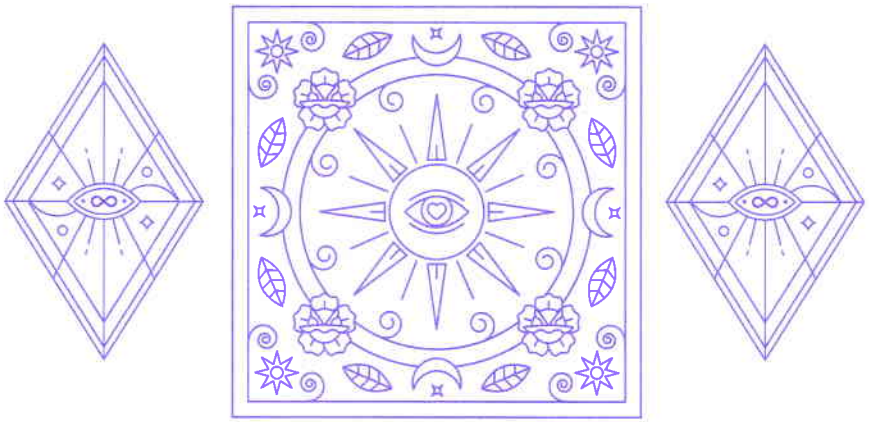
One of most interesting characters from early times was Abraham Abulafia (1240–95), who made available much arcane knowledge, which ultimately formed the basis of Kabbalah. Believing in the divine nature of the Hebrew alphabet, he held that God cannot be described or conceptualized using everyday symbols. He therefore used abstract letter combinations and permutations (tzeruf) in intense meditations lasting for hours to reach ecstatic states.

These were spells in the real sense of the word since they literally "spelt out" the keys to altered states of consciousness – failure to carry through the keys correctly could have a far-reaching effect on the careless practitioner, resulting in madness and other states of illusion. Again, these beliefs have been brought through to the modern day and used to great effect. Controlled use of altered states of consciousness, backed up by empirical evidence, is still one of the most potent tools a magical practitioner can have.

The Renaissance period in Europe saw the coming to prominence of many secret societies and scholar-magicians. Because of the burgeoning natural curiosity encouraged by Renaissance principles, a new importance was placed on the actual controlling of the forces of nature. The basis of magic-working had previously been seen as harnessing the power of spirits and demons. Now, additionally, the human mind was a factor to be considered and magical working was geared to gaining power, not only over external forces but also over internal states. Much good work was done in understanding the interaction between the spiritual realm and the physical, and how changes can be brought about within the latter. Both Kabbalah and alchemy, one of whose objectives was to transform baser metals into gold, became very popular.

By the 17th century, folk magic and witchcraft were being used side by side, often with little differentiation between them.

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Most people were alternately fascinated and frightened by energies that offered control of nature coupled with opportunities for enormous wealth. However, witchcraft then became more widely identified with demonic or satanic entities opposed to God and therefore was deemed to be wholly evil. A heretic was defined as a traitor – an offence punishable by death – and the persecution of those who did not conform to the so-called religious thought of the day became relentless. Suspicion alone was enough to ruin a life. This caused the practice of witchcraft to go underground, not just in terms of secrecy but in actuality, for example in the use of caves and secret places, such as Wookey Hole in Somerset, England.

The practice of magic survived, however, and by the 19th century there is evidence that many secret societies, each surrounded by its own unique mysteries, still survived. They were often formed by highly creative people who were searching for new and different ways of self-expression. Many of the beliefs of these societies were based on the old traditions, though some differed widely from those of the old alchemists. Rituals and invocations were developed that were supposedly based on the ancient rites, often with a very strong bias towards melodrama. Secret societies have also survived into the present day, though not always with full awareness of the fact that their rituals are based on magical practice.

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WITCHCRAFT TODAY

Today there is a rich heritage of magical practices and beliefs on which we can call to satisfy our need for control over our own lives. Where conventional religion no longer offers an outlet for our sense of belonging, we can turn to magical rituals and spell-making to honour our origins. We can make use of the knowledge and practices that have been handed down to us and have survived, often in the face of adversity. The principles that form the basis of magical practice still operate today, as do the various belief systems associated with them.

Many of these belief systems take their names from the Greek word *theo*, meaning "god". One can be polytheistic (belief in many gods) yet see all things as being part of one great mystery, or monotheistic (belief in one god) yet recognize that for others there may be many gods. Again one might be atheistic (with no belief in god), with simply a belief in one's own power.

In the working of magical spells no one can tell you what to believe – you must make your own decisions. The words "Paganism" and "Pagan" come from the Latin *paganus*, meaning "rustic" or "belonging to the country". Largely, ancient Paganism was pantheistic (believing in all gods) but today the word has come to mean someone who does not recognize the God of the main religions of the world, such as Christianity or Judaism. Irrespective of what you choose to believe, magic and spell-making is aligned closely to a belief in the power of nature and there is the need for love and respect for all living things. How we express that will be mirrored in our spell-making.

Spell-making is such an individual craft that nobody can, or indeed should, be so bold as to try to tell others how to cast their spells. However, in some areas it is useful to receive guidance as a starting point from which you can devise your own ways of working. This book is divided into two parts; in the first we look at what you will need to begin working with spells. This includes the tools you will need, how to create sacred space, and the best times and correspondences for spell-working. Finally, in this first section, we advise on the best ways for constructing your spell and rituals and how to record your methods and results.

The spells in the second part of the book are divided into the following four categories: Friendship, Love and Relationships; Health,

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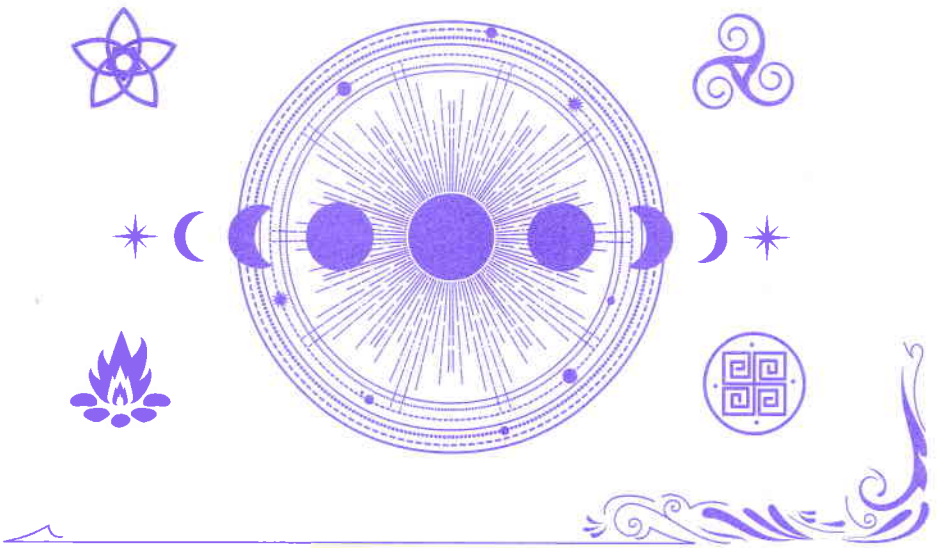
Healing and Well-being; Money, Luck and Career; Home and Personal Protection.

Each spell has an introductory paragraph with information as to what type of spell it is, the best time to carry it out, and which discipline it comes from (if known). We then tell you what you will need and then give you the method to use. Some spells require incantations, some invocations and others simple actions to make them work, and this is laid out for you. Lastly, we tell you what to expect – results can be unpredictable, and sometimes conspicuous by their absence.

If a spell doesn't work for you in the way that we have suggested, it might be that your intended result does not fit into the overall scheme of things. Do try it again on another occasion and use your intuition to decide what might be changed or adjusted to suit your personality. Have confidence in yourself and never be afraid to experiment.

Popular acceptance of magical powers and spell-making will always be mixed. Some people will accept unquestioningly, others will search for alternative causes and others still will remain concerned by the manifestation of such powers. For some people these powers are part of everyday life and it is for each individual to decide whether or not they wish to develop and use them.

It now merely remains for us to wish you health, wealth and happiness and the hope that you enjoy your spell-work and its results!



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HISTORY OF WITCHCRAFT

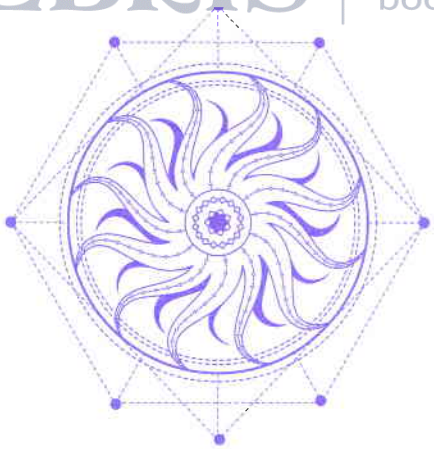
The word "magic" comes to us from *magea*, the Greek word which itself derives from "magoi". The Magoi were a caste of Persian priests who studied astrology and practised divination. It was not just in Persia (modern-day Iran) that these arts were practised thousands of years ago. All over the world, in every primitive society, men and women looked to the stars for guidance and the spirit world for inspiration. Our ancestors worshipped gods who, they believed, looked after the spirits of those who had died and gone to live in the spirit world. In most, if not all, of these societies there was one person, usually a man, who was regarded by the others as being able to communicate with ancestral spirits. Today, we call such a person "the shaman". There are many parts of the developing world in which the shaman continues to play a major role in small communities.

As part of his (or very occasionally her) role, the shaman performed rituals and made magic. Rituals help to demarcate the ordinary and the extraordinary, focusing attention on aspects of the cosmic process, which were believed to control every aspect of life. Magic was an integral part of these rituals and it is fair to say that some magical elements survive in the religions of today and that most of these religions have their roots in some aspect of shamanic practice. As an example of the former, some Roman Catholics believe that during the Mass, consecrated wine turns into the blood of Christ and bread into His body (although the majority have now come to see the bread and the wine as symbolic rather than actual). And to exemplify the latter, Sufis believe that in entering a state of ecstasy brought about by intense physical exercise, their holy men can communicate with God.

As "civilization" dawned, first, according to archaeological evidence, in Mesopotamia and from there spread east into India and west into Egypt, religions developed in which magic played a central part, and both magic and religion depend on ritual. The religions of Ancient Egypt, of Classical Greece and Ancient Rome, those of the Celtic world and the Scandinavian countries, all had magic in some form at their roots.

Magic has no one homeland, but Ancient Egypt can be said to be its cradle. There it

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was believed that the sun god Ra died in the western sky every night to spend the hours of darkness in the underworld and to be magically reborn every morning in the eastern sky. Many later magicians believe that nine-tenths of the world's magic comes from Egypt and the Old Testament depicts Egyptian magicians as so powerful that they could reproduce the magic that Moses used to convince the Pharaoh to allow his people to leave Egypt.

In Ancient Egypt, magic was known as "hike," which was a spoken formula that had to be reproduced exactly as prescribed if it was to work, and an act or gesture that had to be performed at a particular time and place and under special conditions. The Egyptians believed that two things that had been connected could continue to react on each other even when separated and that like has the power to affect like.

Thus, a burn could be cured by the recitation of the words used by Isis over her son Horus when he was once burned, and that one may cause one's enemies pain by mistreating a wax image of them. From these, and similar conceptions, arose the belief in protective amulets which assumed huge importance for both the living and the dead.

Egypt was an extremely stratified society, in which everyone knew their place, but there was no professional class of magicians – indeed, there was not even a general word for magician. Magic was the domain of priests and others who studied sacred books. But magic on a small, personal scale was within the reach of anyone who was willing to observe the conditions laid down, and judging from tomb paintings and papyri that have survived the many thousand years that have passed, magic played a very large part in everyday life. There are records of spells being cast to escape death, to drive out disease, to avert the evil eye, to cure snakebite, to drive out rats from a barn and to prevent the approach of a storm. There was even a spell to secure the various advantages summed up in the phrase, "to be blessed every day."

In the Graeco-Roman world, the gods were duly worshipped and tales of them

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looking down from where they lived and using their magic powers to help those whom they favoured, and hinder those whom they frowned upon, became part of common belief. And the same can be said of the Germanic and Scandinavian people.

All of these peoples honoured the same things – rivers, trees, plants, animals, the wind and the rain, the sun and the moon. But perhaps it was for Pagan Celts that they played the most important part in religious ritual, although little is known about the Celts for they left no written records and archaeological records of them are scant. A number of votive sites have been found, suggesting that religious rites were performed at sites of natural significance – on the banks of important rivers, in clearings in woods and on the tops of hills and mountains.

Paganism

It is the oral rather than the written tradition that makes many people believe that nature played a significant role in Celtic religious ritual and it is this oral tradition that suggests to many that modern witchcraft has Celtic roots. Away from the world of fairytales and wicked witches, modern magic and its spells have their roots in Celtic times – 700BCE–100CE. The deeply spiritual Celts were artistic, musical, fine farmers and brave warriors, feared by their adversaries. As pantheists, they honoured the "Divine Creator of all Nature" and worshipped the "One Creative Life Source" in all its many aspects. They believed that after they died they went to "Summerland" where they rested and awaited new birth on Earth.

Celtic rites and rituals (the names of which will be familiar to those who study witchcraft today) were supervised by the Druids (the word translates from the Celtic phrase for "knowing the oak tree"). It is believed that it took twenty years of hard study to become a Druid.

Druids were regarded not just as priests: they were judges, teachers, astrologers, healers, bards and ambassadors, passing from one warring tribe to another to settle disputes. Nature and the passing seasons governed the Celts' religious year. At the end of summer, they celebrated Samhain – the final harvest of the year, which marked their New Year. This was the time when they honoured their ancestors, their loved ones who were resting in Summerland. Many of the customs that we now follow at Halloween have come to us from the Celts' Samhain rites and rituals.

Samhain was followed by the Winter Solstice, the annual rebirth of the sun, which the Celts celebrated as jovially as we celebrate Christmas today, and in some respects in not dissimilar fashion!

The time when spring was just around the corner and when domestic animals were about to drop their young was called Imbolg, followed shortly afterwards by the Spring

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Equinox and Beltane – both of which were regarded as fertility festivals.

Lughnassa, the Summer Solstice and another harvest festival, celebrated the sun's glory and the power of nature. It was now that the sacred mistletoe used by Celtic priests was harvested, cut down with a golden sickle from the oak trees on which it grew and caught in a white cloth so it would never fall to the ground.

The Autumn Equinox, or Mabon, was the final harvest festival of the year.

These religious beliefs and practices grew into what later became known as "Paganism". The word derives from the Latin for "country-dweller," and as the wheels of the year went round and round, Paganism's beliefs and Druid rituals blended with the ways of others and such practices as concocting lotions and potions, performing works of magic and casting spells developed.

The Coming of the Bad Times

Further south, Rome was fast becoming the dominant power in Europe and as its empire spread north into and beyond the Alps, the number of Druids dwindled as the conquering armies brought their own ways and beliefs which spread far and wide.

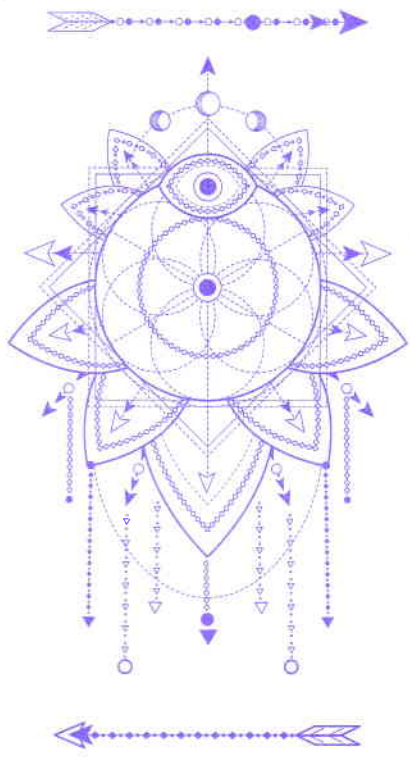
Around 2,000 years ago, in Palestine, the Christian religion was born. Like those who followed the Jewish faith, Christians believed in one god. The main difference between the two faiths being that while many Jews came

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to believe that Jesus Christ was a prophet, followers of Christ believed that he was the son of God and part of the "Holy Trinity" a triad made up of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.

Christians believed that the way to communicate with God was through Jesus Christ. The Christian faith spread from Palestine, eastwards into Europe and in 317CE, the Emperor Constantine declared it to be the official religion of the Roman Empire. All over Europe old gods were banished and the new religion imposed in their place.

Of course, followers of the old ways persisted with their traditions, despite the fact that it was not uncommon for the priests, including the Druids, to whom people looked for spiritual leadership, to be persecuted and in some cases put to death. But old traditions die hard and they continued to be handed down from generation to generation.



Two hundred years later, Pope Gregory I (540-604) did a great deal to consolidate the power of the Catholic faith. Tens of thousands of people were baptized into it, forswearing their old ways and giving themselves to Rome. Gregory was cunning. He realized that people are unwilling to change their ways. He saw that they would continue to gather to honour the one god in places where they, and their fathers, and their fathers before them had gathered to worship the old gods and perform the rituals and ceremonies attendant with traditional worship. So wherever it was possible, he decreed that churches be built on the sites of existing Pagan temples. Pagans believed in an entity called "The Great All" who was formed of "The God" and "The Goddess". Sites dedicated to The Lord and The Lady were common, and when churches were

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built on these sites, they were often dedicated to The Virgin Mary and called "The Church of Our Lady," "Our Lady" being another name for the Holy Virgin. In simple ways like this, the old ways persisted.

In any organization, the larger it grows, the more difficult it becomes to control. So it was with the Catholic Church. Centralized in Rome but spreading north to Britain, west into present-day Spain and Portugal and east into Greece, it was hard for the Pope in the Vatican to stop variations in doctrine and ritual creeping in. To discourage this, inquisitors were employed to search out Christians whose beliefs and practices were not in line with official dogma. Anyone who did not follow the true path was branded heretic and if they did not immediately recant when the accusation had been made, they were imprisoned and in some cases put to death.

An Infamous Bull

In 1484, Pope Innocent VIII issued a papal bull concerning the practice of witchcraft. He was not the first to do so: several of his predecessors had written on the subject and what should be done about it. Innocent's was different in that it was much more widely read than earlier ones. Thanks to the European invention of movable-type printing by Johannes Gutenberg around 1432 (it had been used in China many centuries earlier) it was easy for the Church to issue many copies of Innocent's bull. Without it, each copy would have had to be laboriously handwritten by monks.

All over Europe, priests read that clergy and laymen and women were not treating the threat posed by witchcraft seriously enough. Innocent insisted that it was the duty of every Roman Catholic (and that meant almost everyone, for the Church was so powerful) to help his inquisitors search out witches.

While it is true that there were men and women who were practicing witchcraft as an evil art – worshipping Satan and weaving malevolent spells – most of the people who came under the inquisitors' suspicious eyes were innocent men and women. They were people who believed that remedies that had been handed down from generation to generation worked. They were often country people who were more in tune with the forces of nature than their urban cousins. It is more than possible, in fact it is almost certain, that some of these folk remedies and the way that nature's powers were harnessed were survivals of Druid customs and rituals.

Innocent's bull encouraged two monks, Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger to publish the *Malleus Malleficarum*, or *The Hammer of Witches*, which was essentially a witch-hunter's manual. It explained why witchcraft was such a terrible thing, why it was the duty of all good Catholics to stamp it out and how to tell if someone was practising the evil arts.