



# Witchcraft and Magic: Contemporary North America

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Magic, always part of the occult underground in North America, has experienced a resurgence since the 1960s. Although most contemporary magical religions have come from abroad, they have found fertile ground in which to develop in North America. Who are today's believers in Witchcraft and how do they worship? Alternative spiritual paths have increased the ranks of followers dramatically, particularly among well-educated middle-class individuals. *Witchcraft and Magic* conveys the richness of magical religious experiences found in today's culture, covering the continent of North America and the Caribbean.

These original essays survey current and historical issues pertinent to religions that incorporate magical or occult beliefs and practices, and they examine contemporary responses to these religions. The relationship between Witchcraft and Neopaganism is explored, as is their intersection with established groups practicing goddess worship. Recent years have seen the growth in New Age magic and Afro-Caribbean religions, and these developments are also addressed in this volume.

All the religions covered offer adherents an alternative worldview and rituals that are aimed at helping individuals redefine themselves and make their interactions with the environment more empowered. Many modern occult religions share an absence of dogma or central authority to determine orthodoxy, and have become a contemporary experience embracing modern concerns like feminism, environmentalism, civil rights, and gay rights. Afro-Caribbean religions such as Santería, Palo, and Curanderismo, which do have a more developed dogma and authority structure, offer their followers a religion steeped in African and Hispanic traditions. Responses to the growth of magical religions have varied, from acceptance to an unfounded concern about the growth of a satanic underground. And, as magical religions have flourished, increased interest has resulted in a growing commercialization, with its threat of trivialization.

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