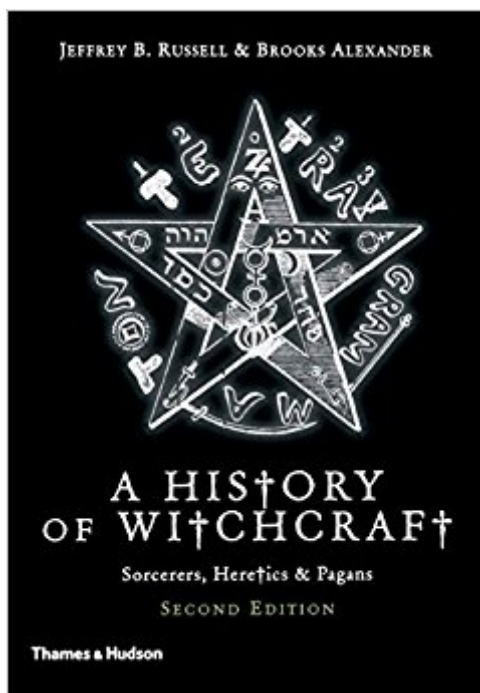


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# A History Of Witchcraft: Sorcerers, Heretics, & Pagans



## Synopsis

"It separates centuries of supernatural nonsense from documented fact spellbinding." •Los Angeles Times For nearly thirty years, Jeffrey B. Russell's authoritative book has been the one illustrated history to which anyone interested in this subject could turn with confidence. Now, in collaboration with Brooks Alexander, who has himself conducted innovative research in the field, this classic book has been fully revised, with an updated introduction and bibliography, new information throughout, and an extended account of witchcraft from ancient times to the present day. Drawing comparisons between modern sorcery and that of the ancient world, the book shows how the European witch craze in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries developed out of a combination of ancient sorcery and medieval Christian heresy, paganism, folklore, scholastic theology, and inquisitorial trials. Whether the diabolical witchcraft for which men and women went to the stake ever existed is open to question. What matters more is that it was believed to exist by intellectuals and peasants alike.

110 illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Jeffrey B. Russell is Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Brooks Alexander is the author of *Witchcraft Goes Mainstream* and has written numerous articles on witchcraft and neo-paganism and their effect on contemporary religious movements. He lives in Texas.

A great historical accounting of witchcraft. Mr. Russell provides a fair, balanced, and unbiased

history from the perspective of a non witch. The contents are: Intro, what is a witch? PART 1 SORCERY AND HISTORICAL WITCHCRAFT 1 Sorcery Sorcery worldwide Sorcery in ancient times Sorcery and religion 2 The roots of European witchcraft Interpretations of European witchcraft Sorcery, folklore, and religion in pagan Europe The legal status of sorcery 3 Witchcraft, heresy, and inquisition The dualist heresies From sorcery to witchcraft 4 The witch-craze on the continent of Europe The growth of the witch-craze The climax of the witch-craze 5 Witchcraft in Britain and America Witchcraft in the British isles Witchcraft in the American colonies 6 Witchcraft in society Witchcraft and women The Salem trials 7 The decline of witchcraft The romantic revival PART II MODERN WITCHCRAFT 8 Survivals and revivals Modern sorcery Satanism 9 The religion of the witches The rise of neopagan witchcraft Witchcraft and the feminist movement Witchcraft today 10 The role of witchcraft

The author has a nice flow throughout the book, WITCH was a joy to read. This volume dispels some myths, and includes a lot of information within its covers. Read this book in two nights, and while you may not agree with everything written here, this is a first-rate offering! I loved it! This author possesses a great talent. Read and enjoy!

My first thought on receiving this book was, "Wow, what a small book!" My second thought was, "Half of this book is pictures!" My third thought was, "How could a book with only 100 pages of text possibly cover the history of witchcraft?" As I started reading though, my fears got knocked out, one by one. A quick glance at the Contents pages shows how thorough this book is: 1 Sorcery 2 The Roots of European Witchcraft 3 Witchcraft, Heresy and Inquisition 4 The Witch-Craze on the Continent of Europe 5 Witchcraft in Britain and America 6 Witchcraft and Society 7 The Decline of Witchcraft 8 Survivals and Revivals 9 Neopagan Witchcraft: The Sources 10 Neopagan Witchcraft: The Movement 11 The Role of Witchcraft

Pretty self-explanatory, but I was glad to find that this book also mentions sorcery/witchcraft in not just Europe, but countries like Africa, as well. On the coverage of American witchcraft, I was pleased to see that there was a quick but sufficient history on the Salem witch trials and not a repetitive drawn-out version. What I liked most about this book was how it came across as very unbiased --the authors frequently call out authors by name and criticize their "unscholarly" research. They also viewed witchcraft from different perspectives, to include economic, such as on page 111, where it says: "Nor did declining economic conditions necessarily correlate with witchcraft. Macfarlane observed that in Essex prosecutions were at their height in the 1580s and 1590s, a period of relative prosperity." The only bad thing I can say about this book is a small one: Because the pages are so glossy they are often prone to a glare that makes reading indoors a matter of finding the right spot/sitting position. One other small thing I just

noticed: The picture for this book shows the title as "A NEW history of witchcraft", however, when I received my book the title is merely "A history of witchcraft: Second Edition". I assume both are the same book, just different covers. A very fascinating book (this coming from a person who does not normally read non-fiction). If only textbooks could be this interesting . . .

Book was very well written! Sources are relevant and well cited. The author managed to pack a ton of information into an easy-to-read format. It's a little heavy on the pictures, which isn't a bad thing. The writer had a very neutral approach to the subject matter. All in all, a great resource for studying the history of witchcraft.

Great introduction to the overall history of witchcraft. It's written in a very scholarly format, but it's an interesting read for anyone who wants to understand how witchcraft became demonized (literally and figuratively).

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