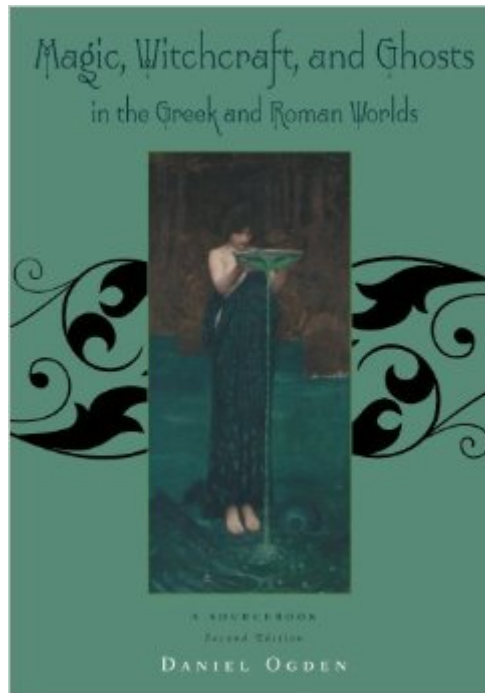


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# Magic, Witchcraft And Ghosts In The Greek And Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook



## Synopsis

In a culture where the supernatural possessed an immediacy now strange to us, magic was of great importance both in the literary and mythic tradition and in ritual practice. Recently, ancient magic has hit a high in popularity, both as an area of scholarly inquiry and as one of general, popular interest. In *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds* Daniel Ogden presents three hundred texts in new translations, along with brief but explicit commentaries. This is the first book in the field to unite extensive selections from both literary and documentary sources. Alongside descriptions of sorcerers, witches, and ghosts in the works of ancient writers, it reproduces curse tablets, spells from ancient magical recipe books, and inscriptions from magical amulets. Each translation is followed by a commentary that puts it in context within ancient culture and connects the passage to related passages in this volume. Authors include the well known (Sophocles, Herodotus, Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, Pliny) and the less familiar, and extend across the whole of Greco-Roman antiquity. The second edition includes a new preface, an updated bibliography, and new source-passages, such as the earliest use of the word "mage" in Greek" (fr. Aeschylus' *Persians* ), a werewolf tale (*Aesop's Fables*), and excerpts from the most systematic account of ancient legislation against magic (*Theodosian Code*).

## Book Information

Paperback: 416 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 2 edition (April 24, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0195385209

ISBN-13: 978-0195385205

Product Dimensions: 9.9 x 1.2 x 6.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (10 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #70,114 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 in [Books > History > World > Religious > New Age, Mythology & Occult](#) #38 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Occult & Paranormal > Ghosts & Hauntings](#) #63 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Occult & Paranormal > Occultism](#)

## Customer Reviews

If you're not involved in research or the scholarly pursuit of this subject, or if you don't enjoy reading footnotes and obscure anecdotes, then this is not the book for you. However, that said, this is the

only book I've come across with such a detailed account of the subject. I've used this text again and again for research and reference. Ogden's commentary on the texts is precise and to the point, too. I'd highly recommend this book, but just know what it is before you buy it.

This book is an important book in the study of ancient Greek and Roman magical practices and views on magic. It is a sourcebook which is obviously intended to be used alongside Prof. Ogden's analytical work on the subject, "Night's Black Agents." While Night's Black Agents provides analysis, this book provides the sources referenced in the book. The combination of these two books, along with "Necromancy in the Greek and Roman Worlds" represent important contributions to classical studies generally, and studies of classical views on magic in particular. These topics are important to those interested in what the Greeks and Romans really thought about magic, necromancy, and the like, but they also have a more general application as well. The approach to necromancy in particular shows a very different relationship between the dead and the living in Ancient Greece (less so with Ancient Rome) than we have today. I would highly recommend these books together, along with Walter Burkert's "Greek Religion." The combination of these works will change the way you look at ancient Greece and Rome forever.

Ogden has compiled a masterful compendium of much needed primary source material in the study of ancient magic. The only reason why I docked a star is because, at a graduate level, it would have been even nicer (and more convenient) if he had included the texts in the original languages as well as his translations. Thank you Dr. Ogden for such a useful sourcebook!

Ogden's writing is informative and compelling as a sourcebook for future research, but this is not an ideal introduction into magic in the ancient world. The title refers specifically to magic in the Greek and Roman worlds, but there is information on Egyptian ritual, as well. The content is organized encyclopedically, without much analysis of theme or cultural impact. It is written in a 'case study' style, of sorts.

This was an assigned text for one of my classes, and I found it to be the most utilitarian of the four assigned texts. Very adequate for most undergraduate writing, though if you're a classics major (I was not) I would recommend using the untranslated texts very likely available in your library or through interlibrary loan. I would have liked more legal sources and legal commentary on magic-related laws, as that was my main topic.

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