



Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History

Wolfgang Behringer

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In this major new book, Wolfgang Behringer surveys the phenomenon of witchcraft past and present. Drawing on the latest historical and anthropological findings, Behringer sheds new light on the history of European witchcraft, while demonstrating that witch-hunts are not simply part of the European past. Although witch-hunts have long since been outlawed in Europe, other societies have struggled with the idea that witchcraft does not exist. As Behringer shows, witch-hunts continue to pose a major problem in Africa and among tribal people in America, Asia and Australia. The belief that certain people are able to cause harm by supernatural powers endures throughout the world today.

Wolfgang Behringer explores the idea of witchcraft as an anthropological phenomenon with a historical dimension, aiming to outline and to understand the meaning of large-scale witchcraft persecutions in early modern Europe and in present-day Africa. He deals systematically with the belief in witchcraft and the persecution of witches, as well as with the process of outlawing witch-hunts. He examines the impact of anti-witch-hunt legislation in Europe, and discusses the problems caused in societies where European law was imposed in colonial times. In conclusion, the relationship between witches old and new is assessed.

This book will make essential reading for all those interested in the history and anthropology of witchcraft and magic.

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