

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Magic in Ancient Morocco: A Study of Practices and Historical Significations

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Abstract

Magic represents a deeply rooted human phenomenon, originating from early human attempts to comprehend the surrounding world and to address the profound questions that primitive thought could not yet explain. Since prehistoric times, human beings have believed in the existence of invisible forces shaping the course of life some benevolent, to be appeased, and others malevolent, to be feared. From these beliefs emerged ritualistic, sacrificial, and symbolic practices intended to communicate with such forces, seeking their protection or the prevention of harm.

This study aims to analyze the manifestations of magic in ancient Morocco through archaeological findings, inscriptions, and symbolic representations, in order to shed light on the religious and cultural dimensions of these practices.

Keywords: Magic; Religious beliefs; Rituals; Medicine.

Introduction:

The fear of the unknown, the awe of predatory creatures, and the early human awareness of weakness before the phenomena of life and death all contributed to shaping a complex relationship between humankind and the external world. Faced with the limitations of rational understanding, humans turned to the creation of symbolic systems that allowed them albeit illusorily to exert control over reality and to interpret it. Out of this need, magic emerged as a means of comprehending and taming the unseen realms.

From this perspective, the present study arises from a central question: How was magic manifested in the practices and beliefs of ancient Morocco, and what were its religious, social, and cultural dimensions?

I- The Nature of Magic

1. Linguistic Definition:

According to Al-Misbah al-Munir, the term “sihr” (magic) denotes “the act of presenting falsehood in the guise of truth; it is also described as deception.”¹ It is further said that “anything subtle in its cause and delicate in its effect is called sihr.” The plural forms are ashār and suhūr. The verb sahara – yasharu sihran means “to bewitch.” A sāhir is a magician, with the plural saḥara or saḥḥārīn, while saḥḥār serves as an intensive form. Moreover, sihr may also refer to eloquence combined with wit or perceptiveness². Another definition describes magic as “anything whose cause remains hidden, which appears contrary to its true nature, and operates through illusion, deceit, or trickery.”³

2. The Concept of Magic (Terminological Definition)kj

The concept of magic is among the most elusive and difficult to define comprehensively, despite numerous attempts by anthropologists and theologians to delineate its fluid and ambiguous nature. This difficulty stems from the complex domains that intersect with it religion, science, mythology, and superstition as well as its profound association with illusion, the supernatural, miracles, and imagination. Consequently, magic is often regarded as a broad and inclusive term. For this reason, it can best be approached through selected conceptual perspectives.

Some scholars have defined it as **“a set of complex beliefs and practices characteristic of tribal societies distinguished by simplicity and a primitive mode of life, To understand the nature of the beliefs and practices related to magic, one must study the unfortunate events that affect individuals and communities. such as illness, death, agricultural failure, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, and droughts”**⁴

Accordingly, it can be noted that the concept of magic tends to revolve around its clear association with primitive and simple societies, which interpreted natural phenomena in a supernatural manner, establishing connections between these phenomena and the world of spirits, deities, and ancestors, all within a structured framework governed by specific rituals that could not be deviated from.

3. The Concept of Magic in European Languages

The term “magic” in European languages is derived from the Greek word *magia*, which was originally used to refer to the rituals and ceremonies performed by the *magos* (plural *magoi*). It is said that the *magoi* or *magi* were priestly sorcerers from the East, specifically from Chaldea a Babylonian kingdom located in southern Iraq or from Persia;.... The word *magos* itself was originally derived from the Old Persian term “magush.” For the ancient Greeks, the term *magia* at that time carried particular

¹ - Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Fayūmī, *Al Miṣbah al Munir* dans *Gharib al-Sharḥ el Kabir*, Al-Maktaba al Ilmiyya, Beirut, Lebanon, p. 102.

² - Ibn Mandur, *Lisan al Arab*, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, Beirut, Lebanon, p. 1951

³ - Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, *Op cit*, p102.

⁴ - Warda Lawati, *The Power of Magic in African Pagan Belief through the African Novel: Chinua Achebe’s Works as a Model*, *Issues in Language and Literature Journal*, No. 8, Vol. 5, 2019, p. 314.

connotations, though they also possessed other words to describe magical practices. For example, “nekyomanteia” referred to necromancy, or communication with the dead for divinatory purposes. In addition to this term, the word “pharmaka” also appeared, which was used in reference to spells, potions, and poisons prepared and employed by sorcerers or magicians.

Concurrently with the two previously mentioned terms, the expression “goētes” also became widespread, referring to sorcerers or magicians skilled in deception and the casting of spells. Throughout the ages, the term “magic” has carried connotations of deception, priestcraft, and witchcraft, and has been closely associated with incantations, trickery, and illicit practices performed by a group known as the Magoi¹. This group was reputed to oversee rituals involving human and animal sacrifices as offerings to appease the gods. They also sought to control the wandering spirits of the dead, supervised libation ceremonies, and recited enigmatic or suspicious hymns timed to coincide with sunrise.

II. Magic in Classical Sources

Magic, contrary to the common perception of it as a marginal practice or a mere popular belief, constituted in many societies a coherent epistemological and functional system, deeply rooted in cultural and social structures, and closely intertwined with religion and authority.

In the case of Ancient North Africa, magic held particular significance due to its deep entrenchment in everyday life and its close connection with cosmological conceptions and religious beliefs among the Amazigh (Berber) communities and others.

1. Herodotus:

When a Nasamon man marries for the first time, on the wedding night, the bride offers all the guests her gifts, and each of them, in turn, presents her with a gift brought from his own home. This is their customary way of taking oaths and performing acts of divination.

They place their hands upon the tombs of men renowned for justice and uprightness, swearing by them. For divinatory purposes, they visit the graves of their ancestors, offer prayers there, and then sleep upon the site. If they experience a dream during their sleep, they interpret it and act according to its message; They also demonstrate mutual trust by drinking from each other’s hands; and if they have no liquid, they pick up the dust of the earth and lick it² this if it indicates anything, shows that they interpret the dreams they see as messages or signs for the future a form of astrology or popular magic.

The Ausiæ and the Machlyes: these two nations inhabit the waters surrounding Lake Tritonis, but they are separated by the River Triton. The Machlyes let their hair fall on the back of their heads, while the Ausiæ wear it on the front. During a festival celebrated annually by these peoples in honor of Minerva, the girls are divided into two groups and fight each other with stones and sticks, believing that these rites

¹ - Warda Lawati, Op cit.

² - Herodote , Histoires, IV, 172, trad. P.-H. Larcher, Paris, 1882

were established by their ancestors to honor the goddess born in their land, whom we call Minerva. Those who die from their wounds in this combat are called “false virgins.” Before they ceased this practice, the girl unanimously recognized as the most distinguished used to wear full Greek armor¹; This can be regarded as a form of ritual or shamanic magic, as women served as intermediaries between humans and the spiritual or invisible world a pattern known among societies that practiced magical rites.

2. Virgil

At the end of Book IV of the Aeneid, Virgil depicts Queen Dido’s resort to a sorceress and mysterious magical rituals, which outwardly aimed to make her forget Aeneas but in reality served as a prelude to her inevitable death². Rather than facing her fate with reason and composure, Dido chose to turn to magic and superstition, thereby highlighting the profound contrast between herself and the hero Aeneas, who embodies the values of duty and rationality.

3. Pliny the Elder:

No one should be surprised by its immense power (that is, the most deceptive art of magic), for it alone has condensed the three other forces most dominant in the human mind into a single one medicine, religion, and astrology.

There is no doubt that this art was originally born from the womb of medicine, that it first disguised itself as a higher and holier form of healing, and that it added the powers of religion to the most flattering and desirable promises now deceiving humankind.

Moreover, in order to succeed, it blended in the mathematical arts, so that no one is left who does not long to know their own future and believe that guidance truly comes to them from heaven³.

4. Apuleius:

Magic is one of the prominent themes in Apuleius’ writings, appearing in several passages that reveal his deep interest in the subject whether from a philosophical perspective or out of personal curiosity.

This fascination is most evident in his novel *The Metamorphoses*, where the protagonist, Lucius, is portrayed as being passionately drawn to magic and eager to experience it firsthand by attempting to transform himself into a bird. However, his adventure ends with his transformation into a donkey a

¹ - Ibid, 180

² - Virgile, *Énéide*, IV,450 -553, [tradu](#) et commentée de A.-M. Boxus et J. Poucet, Bruxelles, juillet 1998 - juin 2001

³ - Pline l'Ancien, *Histoire naturelle* , Livre XXX,1- 6 Trad. de E. Littré, Paris, 1877.

symbolic representation of the unforeseen consequences that accompany one's immersion in hidden forces.

The presence of magic in Apuleius' life was not limited to the literary realm; it extended into his personal experiences as well. He was accused of practicing magical arts, which prompted him to compose a famous defensive speech, the *Apologia*, in which he sought to refute these allegations using rational and legal arguments.

His accusers based their claims on several incidents, including his pursuit of rare species of fish, his marriage to a wealthy freewoman fourteen years after her widowhood, and an episode in which a child fell in his presence. At the time, these events were interpreted as evidence of magical practices¹. In his defense, Apuleius offered rational explanations for these occurrences, striving to assert his innocence, and to counter the perception that he was a sorcerer capable of exerting supernatural influence through communication with the immortal gods and the power of incantations².

5. Tertullian:

In his view, sorcerers employ the powers of demons and evil spirits to perform acts that appear miraculous, but are in reality mere deception and manipulation of souls, as he states: **"If the magicians display phantoms, if they summon the spirits of the dead, if they make children, goats, and tables prophesy, if they imitate miracles as skilled impostors, if they even know how to send dreams through angels and demons whom they have invoked, and to whom they entrusted their power—how much more will these seductive powers do for their own interests rather than for foreign purposes? But if your gods are no more than angels and demons, what will become of the excellence, the superiority that distinguishes the essence of divine nature? Will you persuade yourselves that the gods are no more than angels and demons? Is it not possible that the very spirits, which convince you of their miracles as gods, are worshiped under their own names as well? Or is all the difference due to location, so that those you know as gods in temples cease to be so elsewhere³?"**

6. Saint Augustine:

Saint Augustine also addressed magic, describing these malicious and mysterious practices as the work of demons rather than a manifestation of true divine power. He states: **"To refute this magical awe, which some attribute to their misfortune and corruption, boasting of it in the name of**

¹ - Apulée, *Apologie*, 67 la tard de V, Bétoland, Paris, 1836.

² - Ibid, 43.

³ - Tertullien, *Apologétique*, Traduction française : J.-A.-C. BUCHON, Choix de monuments primitifs de l'église chrétienne, Paris, Delagrave, 1882.

demons—do not the Twelve Tables, the oldest law of Rome, prescribe severe punishment for those who commit this crime?"¹

He further regarded such practices as equivalent to fornication and idolatry, asserting that those who engage in them will not inherit the Kingdom of God and will be punished eternally².

III. Types of Magic

Archaeological research in the Sahara Desert and the broader Maghreb has revealed ritualistic and ceremonial indications with a magical character, reflecting the presence of beliefs in supernatural forces that could be influenced through symbolic means. These magical conceptions evolved over time and were shaped by external influences, particularly Phoenician, Carthaginian, and Roman, resulting in complex patterns of magical practices.

Magic in North Africa manifested in two main forms: malevolent magic, or what is commonly referred to as black magic, and protective or benevolent magic, often known as white magic.

Black magic is notably well attested in the African curse tablets (*Tabellae defixionum*), which were found almost exclusively in Carthage and Hadrumetum. Most of these tablets were discovered in tombs, placing them in direct connection with the underworld. They often invoked chthonic deities and infernal spirits above all others.

In contrast, white or protective magic encompassed all the practices used by the peoples of North Africa to safeguard themselves against the evil eye and malevolent individuals. Numerous protective inscriptions formed part of this tradition; they are frequently found in mosaics, especially on household thresholds. In addition, various apotropaic or anti-evil motifs were carved, engraved, or depicted on door lintels and mosaics, serving as spiritual safeguards for the inhabitants

1. Malevolent Magic (Black Magic):

This term refers to a form of magic practiced with the intent to cause harm to others. It manifests in various ways, such as instigating hatred, bringing about death, inflicting physical or psychological suffering, or spreading diseases. This type of magic was often associated with specific ritual techniques, most notably the use of metal tablets—commonly made of lead inscribed with magical incantations, amulets, curses, and symbols of esoteric or ritual significance. After the inscriptions were completed, these tablets were usually rolled or folded and then deposited in tombs, based on the belief that their contact with the realm of the dead would enhance the efficacy of the curse or spell. Several such tablets have been discovered in archaeological contexts, including burial sites in Carthage and Hadhramaut.

1.1 Magic of Harm in the Circus Tracks:

¹ -Augustin, *La Cité de Dieu*, livre VIII,19, Trad: L. MOREAU. Paris, Lecoffre, 1855.

² - Ibid, 21, 26.

Due to the Romans' and the ancient Maghreb inhabitants' passion for the circus, it became necessary to excel and resort to harm by placing a spell or inscribing a magical tablet against one's rival and depositing it in the circus. One of these tablets contains the following text: **"Smislam, Damatamneus, I implore you to bind every limb and every nerve of Victorios... Bind also the others who may ally with him... Bind their legs, their steps, their leaps, their racing, and their eyes so they cannot see. Destroy their minds and their hearts so they cannot breathe, just like the one whose limbs, wings, and head you have bound. Bind the legs, hands, and heart of Victorios, charioteer of the Blue team, tomorrow so that he does not win the race at the circus. Now, now, quickly."**¹

Another curse tablet was discovered in the circus of Sousse a lead sheet measuring 0.55 m in length and 0.09 m in width invoking a malediction against the charioteer Archelaos, wishing that he might fall during the race along with the horses he drove². In another tablet from the same area, the text reads: "The demon twists the soul of Hesichios, upside down"³.

In Ḥaḍramawt, similar magical practices have been attested. Meanwhile, in Carthage, four curse tablets were uncovered two inscribed in Greek and two in Latin. The first Greek tablet measures 7.3 cm in height and 5.5 cm in width; although the text is too fragmentary to allow linguistic or thematic comparison with the rest of the group, it likely belongs to the same category of circus curses. The second Greek tablet, written on a rectangular lead sheet measuring 16.6 cm in height and 12.6 cm in width, directed its malediction against both the Blue and the Red teams⁴. An examination of these texts reveals that the immediate aim of the curses was to cause the charioteer's overturning in the race, yet the underlying intention was death itself since the overturning of a high-speed chariot almost invariably resulted in fatal injury.

1.2. Love charms: (*Tabellae amatoriae*)

whose practitioners aimed both to win the love of a desired person and simultaneously to harm or eliminate a rival. Many examples have been found; the largest proportion of these inscriptions are love spells, compared with other types of magical texts. They date to the second–third centuries CE and may be divided into two groups: the first comprises texts intended to arouse or kindle a person's feelings, while the second consists of maledictions aimed at injuring a rival. An example of the latter is a curse discovered at Tebessa written against Saturnina :**"I bind Saturnina... I will bind her spirit to a bitter man... Bind her offspring, and let nothing come upon Saturnina except bitterness and terror until the moment when Saturnina is at the point of death... Saturnina, I will destroy you with madness at this very hour now and forever; now, now, now, now quickly, quickly, quickly, quickly I will cut her off, utterly; Saturnina, wholly, swiftly, forever quickly, quickly, quickly."** Historians have

¹ - Mohamed el habib Bechari, Apuleius, A Witness of his Time, Annals of the Historian, Volum 11 et 12, p 32.

² - Ibid, p 33.

³ - Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón , Magical Practice in the Latin West Papers from the International Conference held at the University of Zaragoza 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005 , LEIDEN • BOSTON 2010,p392, 393

⁴ -Celia Sanchez Natalias More Magical Square –Spirals From Carthage (AND KÖNIGSBERG) aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 224 (2022) , p 255, 256.

interpreted this text as evidence of romantic rivalry, and some have argued that the author of the spell was a woman, on the grounds that women could hate one another for various personal reasons¹.

Magicians also sought, in practical terms, to deprive their beloveds of basic needs, with the aim of arousing feelings of restlessness and deprivation, often manifested through sleeplessness and fasting, which in turn weakened their balance and health. One spell, for instance, records that Felix, son of Fructa, who loved Vattia, daughter of Optata, requested that “**she may not sleep out of love for me, and may be unable to accept food or any kind of nourishment.**” Another spell, whose victims were four² women, was performed by Gaius, son of Ouitalis, who implored that their minds, hearts, and entrails be burned and tormented³ Such a form of love may more rightly be regarded as hatred rather than affection, as it drives its victims toward destruction rather than union.

A tablet was also discovered in Sousse, depicting two swords or keys, with a central inscription composed of fragmented magical words written in Greek letters. The text was addressed to Victoria, daughter of Suavulva. This may indicate that she had many admirers, or that the first spell had proven ineffective, prompting the creation of a second, more precise one. In the first spell, the author expresses his desire that she love him and turn her attention toward him, while in the second, he implores that she be unable to go to Ballincus Lilliorus, who is likely to have been her fiancé⁴

2. White Magic or Protective Magic:

Amulets are among the most evident archaeological traces of this type of magic. They were used as charms carried or openly worn on necklaces or rings, with the purpose of bringing success or providing protection from disease, oppressive supernatural forces, or magical spells cast by enemies. It appears that this form of protective magic was widespread throughout the region.

2.1. Protective Spells Against the Evil Eye and Envy:

The inhabitants of ancient North Africa held a firm belief in the influence of the evil eye, convinced of its capacity to inflict harm upon their souls, children, possessions, and even their agricultural crops and yields. This conviction was so deeply rooted that it led them to adopt a series of preventive measures aimed at averting the dangers of the evil eye, diminishing its power, and, in some cases, redirecting its harmful effects back to their source.

The evil eye was perceived as a hidden affliction, for which a specific remedy was devised, referred to as *Medicus invidiae* literally meaning “**the medicine of envy.**” This treatment consisted of wearing amulets imbued with symbolic value, the most prominent of which was the Phallus amulet, representing the erect male sexual organ. Such amulets were typically hung around the necks of children and individuals considered vulnerable to envy, or placed at the entrances of dwellings, in the belief that they

¹ - Ficheux (G), *Eros et Psyché, l'être et le désir dans la magie amoureuse antique*, thèse de doctorat d'histoire, Directeur de thèse, Pierre Brulé université de Rennes 2, 2007, P348, 349.

² - Ibid, P351.

³ - Ibid, p352.

⁴ - Mokaddem bent el- Nabi, *Social Life in North Africa during the Roman Period*, Kawkab Al-Ulum Publishing, Algiers, 2023, P 476; Ficheux (G), *Eros et Psyché*, Op .Cit ,p209.

could repel misfortune and ward off the malevolent gaze of the eye¹ Moreover, gold and silver were employed for this purpose, as well as semi-precious stones such as Amethyst, Chalcedony, and Hematite. These objects often bore engraved inscriptions and depictions of the owl—a bird traditionally associated with the evil eye. The accompanying text commonly read: **“O evil eye, you shall not harm a pure and innocent soul.”**²

Some individuals resorted to changing their names, believing that this measure could mislead evil spirits and prevent them from tracking or harming them. This belief stemmed from the idea that a person’s name constituted an essential component of their spiritual identity; thus, knowing it granted one’s adversary or a sorcerer the ability to exercise control over that individual.

In this regard, the Greek historian Herodotus provides a highly significant reference, mentioning a tribe known as the Atarantes, whom he distinguished from others by noting that their men possessed no personal names, being collectively identified only by that designation. The purpose of this practice was to safeguard the members of the tribe from magical acts that might target them if their names were known. Hence, concealing one’s name was considered a form of spiritual protection and defense against unseen forces³. In the era of Apuleius, the representation of Mercury may have carried a request for protection during travel or served as a symbolic means of defense⁴.

2.2. Protection of Property:

The use of incantations was not limited to tablets and magical texts; it also extended to the protection of property and households. This form of protection was often achieved through the depiction of symbolic images on walls and floors. For instance, in the city of Sousse, a painting was discovered representing an eye being attacked by a serpent, symbolizing the warding off of evil and envy.

Similarly, in Sour el-Ghozlane (Ozya), a scene depicts a deceased man and his family, beside an eye being attacked by a bird, aided by a serpent, a scorpion, and a snail, in a symbolic attempt to pierce the malevolent eye and neutralize its harm.

Another example can be found in a mosaic from the baths of El Jem, bearing the inscription: **“May the birds die of jealousy, and may the owl remain indifferent.”** The image shows an owl as the city’s protector, surrounded by small birds representing the envious, defeated and struck down by death⁵.

2.3. Protection of Agricultural Production:

Siti Sidouq, Therapeutic Methods among the inhabitants, Of North Africa, Jordanian Journal of History and Archéology, -¹ Vol 7, No2, 2022, P6.

²- Mohamed el habib Bechari, op cit ,P34.

³ - Herodote, IV , 184.

⁴ -Apulee, Apologie, 61 trad V, Bétolaud , Œuvres Complètes d’Apulée, Tome II, Paris, Garnier, 1836.

⁵ - Mohamed el habib Bechari, Op cit, P 35.

Although magical incantations were generally employed to protect buildings and even entire cities, they also played a significant role in rural protection. Farmers faced challenges that were unfamiliar to urban dwellers; therefore, their protective magic aimed to ward off various natural threats.

A remarkable example of this is a magical inscription dating from the late second or early third century CE, which contains a prayer intended to repel natural disasters such as hail, rust, storms, and locusts. The owner of the estate, driven to despair by the repeated destruction of his crops, no longer knew what to do in the face of these calamities and could no longer bear to see the fruit of his labor ruined time after time. Thus, he turned to magic and composed a genuine plea for help, addressing the gods whose names appear at the beginning of the inscription, saying: **“O sovereign gods, hinder and turn away from this estate and from all that grows within it vines, olive groves, and cultivated fields every destructive evil. Have mercy on the harvest, and protect it from the rust of the grains, from the fury of the winds, and from the swarms of harmful locusts, so that these evils may not touch this field nor any of its produce. Instead, guard it completely, that no harm or corruption may befall it, as long as these stones engraved with your sacred names stand upon this land.”**¹

IV. Tools Used in the Practice of Magic:

The practice of magic was associated with several material tools and mediums mentioned in ancient literary sources. Apuleius, in his work *The Metamorphoses*, describes the chamber of the witch **“Pamphile”**, which was filled with objects that inspired fear and unease rather than delight, as follows:

- a. **Ashes:** Boxes containing dark black ashes.
- b. **Bones:** Small fragments of bones, believed to be the remains of nocturnal birds.
- c. **Liquids and Animal Substances:** Containers filled with fats taken from human bodies, torn apart by the fangs of wild beasts, with entrails still throbbing beside them. There were also rows of oils and potions preserved in glass vessels some covered with dried blood, and others exuding unbearable odors.
- d. **Tablets and Candles:** The room also contained engraved wax tablets, sheets inscribed with incomprehensible symbols, and iron tools allegedly taken from shipwrecks².
- e. **Plants:** Strange plants arranged in a way that aroused terror. Near the wall, there were also plants believed to neutralize magic, as mentioned by Pliny the Elder. Among them was Amiantus, a substance resembling oyster shells, which, when mixed with honey, was used to heal wounds and relieve pain. It was said to retain its strength even under fire and to counteract spells, especially those cast by sorcerers³.

F. Feathers:

The sacrifice of birds was among the common means used in magical practices. It was not only the birds themselves or their parts that were employed, but their feathers in particular played a crucial

¹ -N. Plantade, « Magie », Encyclopédie berbère [En ligne], 30 | 2010, document M14, mis en ligne le 17 septembre 2020, P 3

² Apulée, *Les Métamorphoses*, III,13, 4.

³ -Pliny l'ancien, XXXVI, 31.

role in magical rituals—especially the feather of the ibis. It is also reported that the tongue of a bird was used in a ritual intended to force a woman to confess the name of her lover¹.

G. Hair:

Apuleius gives us a vivid description of such a practice when Pamphile fell in love with a young man and ordered her maid to steal a lock of his hair. However, the barber noticed her and drove her away, so she collected some wool from a nearby sheep whose color was yellow like the young man's hair and brought it to Pamphile. In the middle of the night, Pamphile burned the hair in a magical cauldron, and as it burned, the bags of skin from which the hair had been taken began to move as if they were human beings².

It becomes evident that most sources have addressed these instruments as essential components of magical practices. The Latin poet Horace stands out among those who documented such rituals. In one of his poems, he describes a ceremonial scene in which the characters express their disgust toward women who seek to manipulate the minds of men through the use of spells and poisons. He notes that these women would collect bones and herbs with destructive properties, taking advantage of the moon's ascent, which he poetically refers to as **"the wanderer"** when its beautiful face appears.

Horace also provides a detailed depiction of the witch Canidia, who appears barefoot, dressed in a black gown, with her hair hanging loose. She is accompanied by Sagana, an older witch, in a scene that evokes dread due to their pale and ghostly features. The two witches begin by clawing at the earth with their fingernails, after which one of them tears apart a dark-colored lamb with her teeth, pouring its blood into a pit prepared for summoning spirits from the underworld in order to obtain answers.

It is also mentioned that two dolls one made of wool and the other of wax were used as ritual symbols in magical practices. The scene was completed with other symbolic elements such as serpents and the hounds of the underworld, depicted wandering through the place, while the moon blushed red and hid behind the grand tombs, as if ashamed to witness such rites³.

It is noteworthy that many ancient and modern sources alike indicate that women were more closely associated with magical practices. Classical and anthropological literature often portrays the woman as a witch or a seer. This stereotypical image was linked to cultural and social contexts that granted women extensive knowledge of herbs and rituals, thereby reinforcing the belief in their ability to communicate with, or influence, the invisible world.

Conclusion:

¹ - Leonardo Costantini Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, *The Real Tools of Magic: Pamphile's Macabre Paraphernalia* (Apuleius, Met. 3,17,4-5), *Ancient Narrative*, Volume 15, P85.

² - Apulée, *les Métamorphoses*, III, 16,1.

³ -Horace, *Satire*, I, 8,15-20, Trad. de Leconte de Lisle, Paris, 1911

Magic is one of the deeply rooted phenomena in ancient civilizations, particularly in the region of North Africa, where it was closely connected to humanity's earliest attempts to comprehend the mysterious forces surrounding them. Ancient sources often referred to magic and highlighted its significance in daily life—both in its malevolent aspect, used for harm and domination, and in its protective aspect, aimed at warding off dangers and ensuring safety. The tools and materials employed in magical practices reveal the depth of the beliefs that prevailed at the time. Hence, it can be concluded that the study of magic in North Africa contributes to a deeper understanding of the intellectual and symbolic structures of ancient human thought.

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