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Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Western esotericism -- Rituals of initiation, secret societies -- Historical background -- The craft degrees of Freemasonry -- High or additional degrees of Freemasonry -- The Hermetic order of the Golden Dawn -- Modern pagan witchcraft or wicca.
Sommario/riassunto	For more than three hundred years the practice of Masonic rituals of initiation has been part of Western culture, spreading far beyond the boundaries of traditional Freemasonry. Henrik Bogdan explores the historical development of these rituals and their relationship with Western esotericism. Beginning with the Craft degrees of Freemasonry—the blueprints, as it were, of all later Masonic rituals of initiation—Bogdan examines the development of the Masonic High Degrees, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn—the most influential of all nineteenth-century occultist initiatory societies—and Gerald Gardner's Witchcraft movement of the 1950s, one of the first large-scale Western esoteric New Religions Movements.