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What is Paganism?

Paganism

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

"Pagan" and "Heathen" redirect here. For other usages, see [Pagan \(disambiguation\)](#) and [Heathen \(disambiguation\)](#).

Paganism (from [Latin](#) *paganus*, meaning "country dweller", "rustic")^[1] is a blanket term used to refer to various [polytheistic religions](#). The group so defined includes most of the [Eastern religions](#), [Native American religions and mythologies](#), as well as non-[Abrahamic](#) folk religions in general. More narrow definitions will not include any of the [world religions](#) and restrict the term to local or rural currents not organized as [civil religions](#). Characteristic of pagan traditions is the absence of [proselytism](#) and the presence of a living [mythology](#) which [explains religious practice](#).^[2]

The term "pagan" is a Christian adaptation of the "[gentile](#)" of Judaism, and as such has an inherent Abrahamic bias, and [pejorative](#) connotations among Western [monotheists](#),^[3] comparable to heathen, and [infidel](#) also known as [kafir](#) (كافر) and [mushrik](#) in Islam. For this reason, [ethnologists](#) avoid the term "paganism," with its uncertain and varied meanings, in referring to traditional or historic faiths, preferring more precise categories such as [polytheism](#), [shamanism](#), [pantheism](#), or [animism](#); however others^[*who?*] criticize the use of these terms, claiming that these are only aspects that different faiths may share and do not denote the religions themselves.

Since the later 20th century, "Pagan" or "Paganism" has become widely used as a self-designation by adherents of [Neopaganism](#).^[4] As such, various modern scholars have begun to apply the term to three separate groups of faiths: [Historical Polytheism](#) (such as [Celtic polytheism](#) and [Norse paganism](#)), [Folk/ethnic/Indigenous religions](#) (such as [Chinese folk religion](#) and [African traditional religion](#)), and [Neo-paganism](#) (such as [Wicca](#) and [Germanic Neopaganism](#)).

* Pagan refers to a group of many different Pre-Christian religious paths, just as Christian refers to many different branches and paths with the same or similar values.

For example, one might be considered a Pagan if they follow the Wiccan path, however because one is Pagan does not mean they are Wiccan. Common traits among Pagan religions are to name a few, celebration of the seasons or cycles of nature, veneration of the earth as an entity and a representation of the divine, belief in God or Goddess and the balance between them, a reverence for all living things, plant, animal, and environmental, as well as a spiritual connection with all other beings including the divine.

I have been asked many times to explain what a Pagan is and why we worship as we do. I guess the best way to explain is to tell you a little bit about when Paganism began and how we know this to be the first "religion".

The name Pagan comes from the Latin word "paganus" which means peasant or country dweller. It later came to mean one who worshipped in a polytheistic form.

Based upon artifacts found we trace the origins of the Pagan religions. The Venus figurines and the cave paintings of Lascaux France, indicate the growing belief in multiple deities originating in the Paleolithic era which is divided into three separate time frames.

Lower Paleolithic (Early Stone Age) The Lower Paleolithic lasted between 2.5 million-200,000 years ago (or at least according to one permutation), and it was when the Hominid ancestors of human beings, including Australopithecus, Homo habilis, Homo erectus and Homo ergaster, roamed most of the earth and began making the first stone tools.

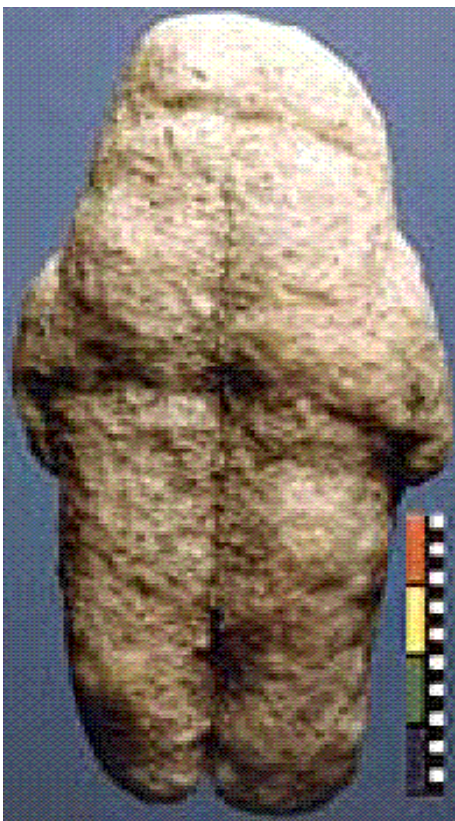
Middle Paleolithic (Middle Stone Age) The Middle Paleolithic (ca 200,000 to 45,000 years ago) witnessed the evolution of Neanderthals and the first anatomically modern Homo sapiens, and some of the first glimmers of modern behaviors: sophisticated stone tools, caring for the elderly, hunting and gathering and some amount of symbolic or ritual behavior.

Late Stone Age (Upper Paleolithic), 45,000-20,000 years ago by the LSA, only fully modern humans were left, and we spread all over the planet. The LSA is characterized by fully modern behaviors such as cave art, hunting, and a wide range of tools.

Throughout Europe figurines have been found which we call "the Venus figures". They come from the upper Paleolithic era, and some, the Tan figurine, for example, is about 500,000 years old.

By: Fran McIntosh, Master of Anthropology

We see diversity in religious iconography growing by the Archaic period and by the time of the major cultures it has been defined into a vast cultural phenomenon.



Most Frequently Asked Questions:

1.) Do you worship Satan?

Answer: No, Satan is a Christian Demi-God, to worship Satan we would have to believe in him and we do not.

2.) Do you do Black Magic?

Answer: No, Magic is neither white nor black, besides we believe in the law of three or Karma. Both young and wise behold for what you put out you get back three-fold.

3.) Aren't you worried about going to Hell?

Answer: No, Again Hell is a Christian concept

Do you cast spells?

Answer: Yes, from time to time we are known to cast spells, which I might add are more or less modified prayers; then only after we have exhausted all mundane means.

4.) Do you sacrifice babies or animals?

Answer: No, Modern Pagans see all living things as representations of the divine and are therefore treated as such.

5.) Do all pagans have orgies? Do all pagans sleep with everyone in their group? Do you have sex with minors?

Answer: Some pagan groups may practice what is called "The Great Rite" during a ritual but this is done privately and is conducted by two consenting adults who are representing the God and Goddess. We do NOT advocate having sex with minors nor do we sleep with everyone in our group. We have morals just like other religious sects. Where there are exceptions to the rules in other religions there may be exceptions in Pagan also.

6.) "And it harm none, do as thou wilt", does that mean you can do anything you want, whether it is legal or illegal?

Answer: Pagan or not the law is the law, being Pagan does not make you exempt from it. Not only that all religions have tenants or rules and we believe it is between you and your deities of choice as to whether you follow them or not.

7.) Can you Make Tom fall in love with me?

Answer: No, as it been proven time and time again in history the Human heart is not to be controlled by the gods or mortal man. Most pagans believe it is a violation of someone's civil liberties to hinder free will.

8.) If you know so much about the Bible and Modern Christianity, why are you not Christian?

Answer: It is because I know so much about the Bible that I am not Christian.

9.) What are Sabbats and Esbats?

Answer: Both Sabbats and Esbats are holidays in the Pagan faith. The Pagan holidays are called Sabbats. This is based upon a Wheel of the Year which was guided by the season and is viewed as the life process of our God. We celebrate eight throughout the year. An Esbat is the celebration of the phases of the Goddess and are viewed as the same as those of the Moon.

Paganism and the Law

The essence for religious freedom is the United States Constitution, the First Amendment states:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." The opening statement of the First Amendment is commonly known as the "Freedom of Religion" clause or the "Establishment" clause. By operation of the Fourteenth Amendment, the First Amendment is binding upon all the states; however, most state constitutions have a similar phrase somewhere within them. So, any action which is in violation of the federal constitution will most likely be a violation of the state constitution, thus giving a potential litigant dual cause of action: in federal and in state law.

This does not automatically entitle Pagans to wave their athame's in public parks, run around naked, or have multiple spouses any more than it entitles the Seventh Day Adventists to deny their children medical care or the Mormons to have multiple spouses. The courts and government have been in the business of putting restrictions on religion from the very beginning of our nation's history. The only court that every other court in this country is legally obligated to follow is the Supreme Court. Just because the 13th Circuit Court says that a cat is a cat does not mean that the Supreme Court of Arkansas is obligated to say that a cat is a cat. Courts and legal precedent are tricky things, and often misunderstood.

There is no United States Supreme Court case which declares Paganism a religion, or Wicca a religion, or the Temple of Isis a religion. There are some state and federal court cases which are very favorable to Wicca and other Pagan spiritual traditions.

Many Wiccan traditions have been recognized by both the federal and state courts of the United States. In those cases, the specific Wiccan tradition under scrutiny met the standards for determining what is a religion as set forth by the U.S. Supreme Court in such cases as *Thomas v. Review Board*, 450 U.S. 707 (1981); *Welsh v. United States*, 398 U.S. 333 (1970); *United States v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163 (1965) (please see Justice Douglas' concurring opinion therein where he mentions religions whose central figure is a goddess); *Torasco v. Watkins*, 367 U.S. 488 (1961); and *United States v. Ballard*, 322 U.S. 78 (1944). An excellent case sets forth guidelines for "what is a religion?" is the case of *Int'l. Society for Krishna Consciousness, Inc. v. Barber*, 650 F.2d 430 (2d Cir. 1981). What should be obvious here is that courts can and do routinely determine what is, and what is not, a religion for purposes of the First Amendment.

Excerpt from: Some Brief Points for Modern Pagans

By: Dana D. Eilers

Quotes on Religious Freedom:

"The Government of the United States is not in any sense founded upon the Christian Religion."
1797 the treaty of Tripoli, signed by President Washington, and approved by the Senate of the United States

"The legitimate powers of Government extend only to such acts as are injurious to others, but it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or none. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg." - Thomas Jefferson

"Almighty God hath created the mind free; all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments of burdens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in His almighty power to do."
Thomas Jefferson, Acts for Establishing Religious Freedom in Virginia, 1785.

"Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in us. Our defense is in the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands everywhere. Destroy this spirit and you have planted the seeds of despotism at your own doors. Familiarize yourself with the chains of bondage, and you prepare your own limbs to wear them. Accustomed to trample on the rights of others, you have lost the genius of your own independence and become the fit subjects of the first cunning tyrant who rises among you." *Abraham Lincoln, Speech at Edwardsville, IL, 1858.*



Pantheons

Put simply Pantheons are deities belonging to a specific mythology. In Neo-Paganism practitioners have a choice of specific pantheons or certain deities from many different pantheons. A lot of a pagan's faith is highly dependent upon the pantheon in which they follow. I have here a list of the most common pantheons with the more prominent deities of each.

Greek:

Zeus: divine God

Hera: Wife of Zeus, mother Goddess

Apollo: God of prophecy, archery, and music

Aphrodite: Goddess of love

Ares: God of action and war

Athena: Goddess of war and wisdom

Demeter: earth Goddess

Dionysus: God of wine and ecstasy

Gaia: primal earth Goddess

Hades: God of the underworld

Hermes: messenger of the Gods (male)

Pan: God of the forest

Persephone: Queen of the underworld

Poseidon: God of the sea

Psyche: Goddess of the soul

Celtic:

Dagda: Father God (the good god)

Danu: Mother Goddess

Abarta: Warrior energy

Amaethon: God of agriculture

Badh: Goddess of battle-one of three faces if Morrigan

Bran: God of sea voyages

Brigid: Goddess of healing, fertility, poetry, and forge

Idun: Goddess of youth and apples

Lugh: God of the sun

Lir: God of the sea

Macha: Goddess of war-one of three faces of Morrigan

Morrigan: Goddess of war; original goddess of earth and agriculture

Nauda: God valor

Ogma: God of eloquence

Rhiannon: Goddess of suffering and patience

Tuatha de Danann: People of the Goddess Dana

Norse/Germanic Pantheon:

The Aesir: The younger branch of the family of the gods

Baba Yaga: Avenger of the Women

Freyja: Goddess of fertility

Frigg: Queen of the gods

Hel: Goddess of the underworld and the dead

Loki: God of fire

Mani: Moon god

Odin: Father of the gods; gifted in eloquence

Rig: Watchman of the gods

Sol: Goddess of the sun

Skadi: Goddess of vengeance and the hunt

Thor: God of thunder

Tyr: God of the sky and bravery

The Vanir: The older of the two branches of the Germanic family of gods

Egyptian:

Amon: First worshipped as a fertility god, rose to prominence for a time as most important god of Egypt

Anubis: God of the dead and protection

Apis: The black bull, symbol of fertility and the undying soul

Aten: Sun god who turned into monotheistic entity

Bastet: Goddess of cats, fertility, music, the moon, and protection

Hathor: Goddess of business, beauty, joy love and harmony

Horus: God of the sky, divine child

Isis: Goddess of all; Divine mother

Maat: Goddess of truth, balance, justice

Neith: Goddess of destiny, war, and mother of Ra; bisexual

Nephthys: Goddess of secrets, initiation, and dead

Nut: Goddess of the sky

Osiris: God of vegetation and the dead

Ra: God of the sun

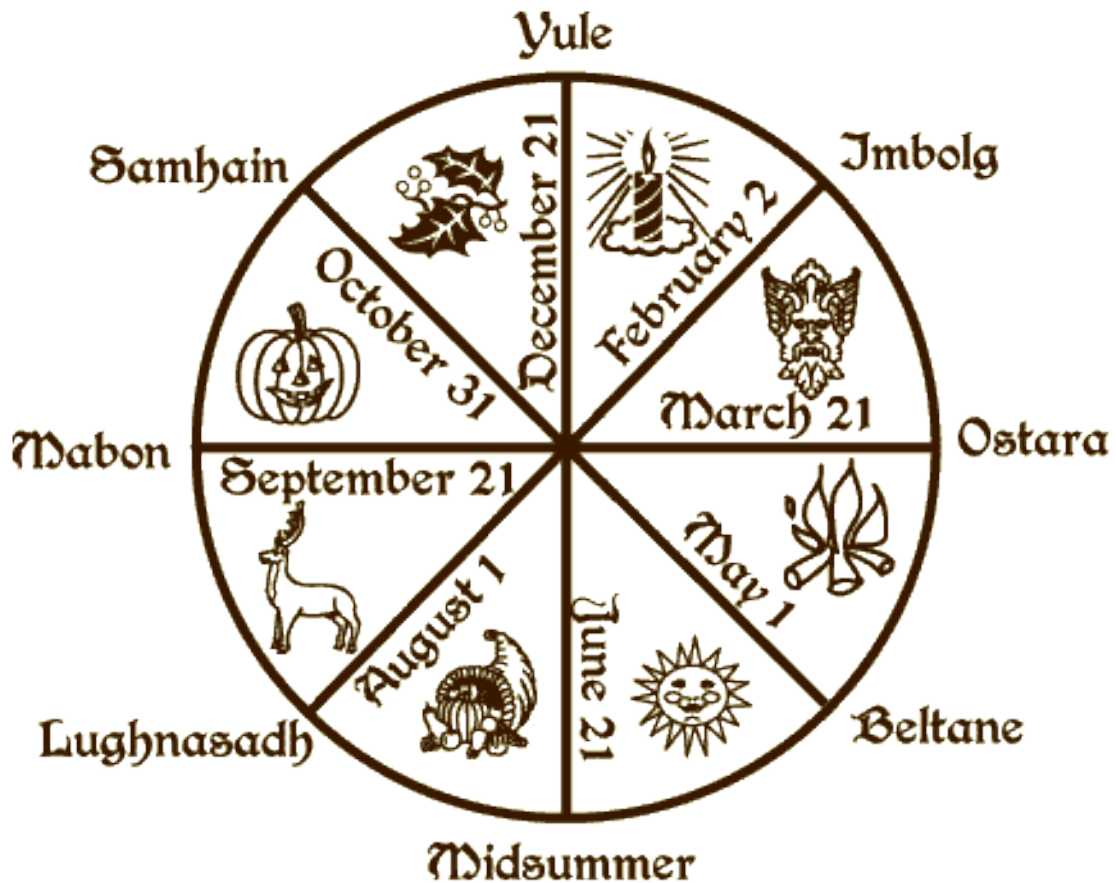
Sekhmet: Goddess of prosperity and the home

Seth: God of storms and chaos; although unfriendly and cruel, respected

Thoth: God of knowledge, wisdom, and the moon

Pagan Holidays:

The Wheel of the Year



The Four Lesser Sabbats

Spring Equinox (Ostara) March 21

The Germanic Goddess Ostara or Eostre (Goddess of the Dawn), after whom Easter is named, is the main deity of this holiday. The Spring Equinox defines the season where Spring reaches its apex, halfway through its journey from Candlemas to Beltane. Night and day are in perfect balance, with the powers of light on the ascendancy. The God of light now wins a victory over his twin, the God of darkness. In the Welsh Mabinogion, this is the day on which the restored Llew takes his vengeance on Goronwy by piercing him with the sunlight spear.

Summer Solstice (Litha) June 21

Directly opposite Yule on the Wheel of the Year, this is the Longest Day of the year and the time when we honor the Sun God as He ascends to His height of power before beginning His descent towards death and rebirth. The Mother Goddess is now heavily pregnant with the divine Sun Child representing the growing bounty on Earth. Couples in the Old Ways often didn't get married until after they had a baby on the way, incidentally; it was necessary for farming couples to have children to help work the farm, and if a woman and man couldn't prove themselves fertile before making a promise to stay together, it would not be a blessed marriage.

Fall Equinox (Mabon) September 21

The autumnal equinox is commonly called "Mabon" after the Welsh god Mabon ap Modron, which means literally "son of mothers." Another name for this festival is from the Gaelic, Alban Elfed, or "Light of the Water." Now, as at Ostara, the days and nights are equal once again. This is the second of the three fall harvest festivals. Mabon marks the completion of the grain harvest begun during Lughnasadh. Celebrations revolve around the gathering of crops and thanksgiving for the abundances of the harvest, and rituals to insure the success of next year's harvest are characteristic during this harvest time.

Winter Solstice (Yule) December 21

The name "Yule" derives from the Norse word for "wheel". This is the longest night of the year and the turning point when the days shall afterwards grow longer as winter begins its passage into the coming spring. It is the time when the Goddess (in her Divine Mother form) gives birth to the Sun God Child who shall eventually become her lover and father of the next child in the coming solar cycle.

The Four Greater Sabbats

Candlemas (Imbolc) February 2

Imbolc, February 1 or 2, Many American Wiccans celebrate on the 2nd probably because of a confusion with Groundhog's Day) Originally celebrated on February 1st, this ancient Irish holiday was called Imbolc which means "in the belly". This festival is often called Brigid after the Celtic Fire Goddess Brigid, to whom this day is sacred. Her threefold nature rules smith craft, poetry/inspiration, and healing. Brigid's fire is a symbolic transformation offering healing, visions, and tempering. This is the time of Waxing Light.

Beltane (Walpurgis) May 1

This is the last of the three spring fertility festivals, the other two being Imbolc and Ostara. This festival and its counterpart, Samhain, divide the year into it's two primary seasons - Winter and Summer. Whereas Samhain is about honoring death, Beltane is about honoring life. This festival heralds the beginning of summer and honors the joining of the God and the Goddess. Those wiccans who don't place the conception of the new Sun Child at Ostara place his conception here at Beltane. As such it is a common time for wiccan engagements and trial hand fasting's (a year and a day). Beltane translated means "fire of Bel" or "bright fire". Bel is known as the bright and shining one, a Celtic Sun God. Beli is the father, protector, and the husband of the Mother Goddess.

Lammas (Lughnassadh) August 1

Lughnasadh, in fact, has an even older name, Brón Trogain, which refers to the painful labor of childbirth. For at this time of year, the earth gives birth to her first fruits so that her children might live. Thus, this is one of the four great Celtic fire festivals, this particular one having its emphasis on the first harvest. Now is the time when the powerful gods of the grain harvests are honored. One traditional Lammas custom was the construction of the kern-baby, corn dolly, or corn maiden.

Halloween (Samhain) October 31

From the old Gaelic meaning "summer's end", this is third and last of the harvest festivals. Lying directly opposite of Beltain, this is one of the two great Celtic holidays which separates Summer from Winter. Many traditions consider this the eve of the New Year (as day begins with sundown, so the year begins with the first day of Winter). This is the best night for all forms of divination because the veil between the world of the seen and unseen is at its thinnest allowing us to better see the unknown. This is the time to revere our ancestors and to say farewell to those that have passed this last year. The Crone Goddess, the ruler of the Otherworld, bids farewell to the Sun God as He passes over into death to face His rebirth at the upcoming Yule.

Rituals

A ritual, an action or a set of actions, that are performed primarily for their symbolic value, which is dictated by a religion or by the traditions of a community. A ritual may be performed on specific occasions, or at the discretion of individuals or communities. They may be performed by a single individual, by a group, or by the entire community; in arbitrary places, or in places especially reserved for them; either in public, in private, or before specific people. A ritual may be restricted to a certain subset of the community and may enable or underscore the passage between religious or social states.

The purposes of rituals are varied; they include compliance with religious obligations or ideals, satisfaction of spiritual or emotional needs of the practitioners, strengthening of social bonds, social and moral education, demonstration of respect or submission, stating one's affiliation, obtaining social acceptance or approval for some event or, sometimes, just for the pleasure of the ritual itself.

It is common place to find Pagans having rituals, for a variety of reasons. As a pagan I feel that ritual is at the very root of my spiritual path. The rituals I do and perform no matter the reason make me who I am spiritually and put me in touch with the divine, like no other actions I partake in on a regular basis, other than perhaps prayer it's self.

The Ritual or ritual "Circle" as we prefer to call it, is our Sunday service, our communion with nature and the divine, a celebration, a time for spell work, and a time communion with others of like mind. In my mind without our rituals we would be but followers of a blank faith, sitting listlessly in pews of a plain white building, listening to the murmur of a nameless, faceless, preacher reading from a tomb of some intelligible antiquity.

Rituals: by Bryen Scott-Kiddy

Ritual Structure

Ritual Structure or Why We Do What We Do

Set the boundaries of the space you will be using if it is not a standing circle.

Cleanse the area; this can be done in many ways; This can be accomplished by using salt and a besom (broom).

Cleanse self and all attending. Again, this can be done in different ways. Commonly this is done by smudging with Sage.

Ground; prepare mentally and spiritually for the service you are attending.

Cast the circle; this is defining your sacred space and placing an energy barrier around you. Raising circle can also be done many ways. We draw a visualized circle around the place where we are doing a ritual, creating a sacred space.

Invoke Elements; Earth, Air, Fire, Water

Invoke Deities and Spirit

Ritual This is the heart of the celebration. We might try to heal ourselves, or something in the world. We might try to raise energy and send it out into the world. We might seek guidance, or power within ourselves. We might build a vision of a more peaceful world. We might be very quiet, and meditative, or we might make a lot of noise. We might sing, or dance, or make something out of sewing or other arts and crafts materials. We might be very serious, and some of us might cry. Or we might be very joyous and have a lot of fun, laughing and joking.

Cake and Ale

Release Elements

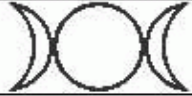





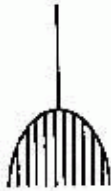

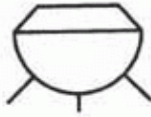

Release Deities and Spirit

Open Circle

Ritual Tools

Although it is commonly believed among modern pagan's that the only tool required by a pagan is one's self and intent. As human beings we are very visual and tactile creatures. As such we seem to enjoy using ritual and divination tools to assist us in our everyday spiritual practices.

Throughout our long history we pagan's have used many different types of tools. Here I will give a brief summary of the most common of ritual tools, a picture, and common associations for each of them.

The Goddess		Pentacle	
The God		wand	
Candle		athame	
Broom		altar	
Cauldron		salt	

The Goddess Symbol:

a symbol of the divine feminine power, a statue, and sets to the left on an alter. The goddess symbol is often characterized by the color silver and typically associated with the moon, magic, prophecy, intuition, and giving of new life.

The God Symbol:

a symbol of the divine masculine power, a statue, sets to the right on an alter. The God symbol is often characterized by the color Gold and typically associated with the sun, strength, stability, wealth, protection, and fertility.

Candle:

used in magic, religious worship, in community processions, and for daily house hold needs. The candle has been with us for over 5000 years. In myth the flame of a candle catches the attention of the divine.

Broom (Besom):

used in magic and ritual to sweep away negativity. It is highly possible that the broom is the oldest of magical tools. Can also be used to lay across an opening in circle to serve as a temporary closure.

Cauldron:

A cauldron is the central image of the Celtic Shamanic tradition, a vessel of heat, plenty and inspiration. It is also associated with the grail, conferring plenty, healing, and spiritual wisdom. A huge silver cauldron discovered in Denmark was dated between 400 and 300 BCE.

Pentacle:

Represents all of the five elements one at each point, Earth/North, Air/East, Fire/South, Water/West, and Spirit/Akasha. Used as a symbol for Paganism as a whole and is worn upside down as sign of a second degree practitioner.

Wand:

Tool made of wood, crystal, or metal used to direct magical current usually in a magical circle. Most think of wands as being straight however the first were curved and used to drive away evil.

Athame/Sword:

An Athame is a type of double-edged dagger used much like the wand to direct magical energy and set boundaries, used only for non-cutting ritual purposes. (the blade doesn't cut anything physical, and if it does, the metal is considered tainted.)

Alter:





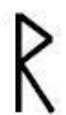












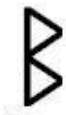

















The word alter comes from the Latin word which translates to "on high" In magical and ritual use alters are considered the doorway between the worlds. Ancient alters were made of stone and if made of wood had a stone surface at the center. Alters are used to leave offerings for the gods or ancestors, direct magical workings, and a central point for ritual work.

Salt:

Salt although not an herb is used for many things by the modern Pagan. For cleansing, setting boundaries, and as a representation of the earth mother herself. It is also found in many potions, incense and charms.

Signs, Symbols, and Runes:

The Pagan world is filled with all types of signs, symbols and runes. From the pentagram we wear around our neck to the triquetra on the front of our book of shadows, and even the runes we inscribe on our candles. To non-pagan's these symbols can be misinterpreted, misunderstood and often even feared. I have included a few of the more common symbols, signs and runes here illustrated as well as some of the more common meanings for each.

								
feoh - f "wealth"	ur - u "cattle"	þorn - þ "thorn"	os - o "mouth"	rad - r "ride"	cen - c "torch"	ziefu - z "gift"	pynn - p "joy"	hæzl - h "hail"
								
nyd - n "need"	is - i "ice"	jea - j "year"	eeoh - eo "yew"	peorð - p "game"	eolxec3 - x "elk-sedge"	sizel - s "sun"	tyr - t "Tyr"	beorc - b "birch"
								
eoh - e "horse"	man - m "man"	lagu - l "lake"	ing - ng "Ing"	ædel - æ "estate"	dæg - d "day"	ac - a "oak"	æsc - æ "ash"	
								
yr - y "bow"	ear - ea "earth"	iar - iá "serpent"	kalc - k "chalice"	kalc - kk "chalice"	gar - g "spear"	cpeorð - cp "fire"	stan - st "stone"	

The **runic alphabets** are a set of related alphabets using letters known as **runes** to write various Germanic languages prior to the adoption of the Latin alphabet and for specialized purposes thereafter. Each has a pictographic meaning and an association with one of the five elements.



A **pentagram** was used symbolically in ancient Greece and Babylonia and is used today as a symbol of faith by many Wiccans, akin to the use of the cross by Christians and the Star of David by Jews. The pentagram has magical associations, and many people who practice Neo-pagan faiths wear jewelry incorporating the symbol. Christians once more commonly used the pentagram to represent the five wounds of Jesus, and it also has associations within Freemasonry.



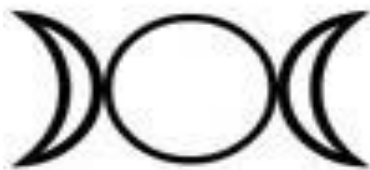
Triquetra - Its original meaning was simply "triangle" and it has been used to refer to various three-cornered shapes. Nowadays, it has come to refer exclusively to a certain more complicated shape formed of three *vesicae piscis*, sometimes with an added circle in or around it. This has been used as a symbol of things and persons that are three-fold. The triquetra has been found on rune stones in Northern Europe and on early Germanic coins. It presumably had pagan religious meaning and it bears a resemblance to the *Valknut*, a symbol associated with Odin.



Aum, also **Om** is a mystical or sacred syllable in the Indian religions, including Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism. It is placed at the beginning of most Hindu texts as a sacred exclamation to be uttered at the beginning and end of a reading of the Vedas or previously to any prayer or mantra.



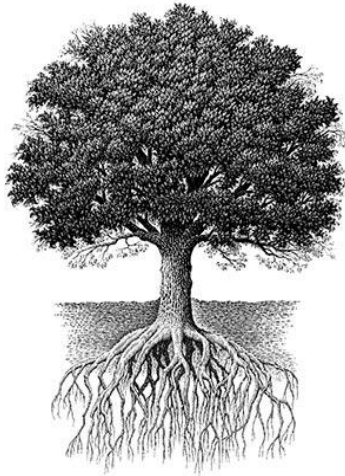
The **ankh** ('**key of life**', '**the key of the Nile**', '**crux ansata**') was the Egyptian hieroglyphic character that read "eternal life", a trilateral sign for the consonants ʕ-n-ḥ . Egyptian gods are often portrayed carrying it by its loop, or bearing one in each hand, arms crossed over their chest. It is still used and worn today by modern Pagan's with the same meaning.



Wiccan "**Triple Goddess**" symbol of waxing, full and waning moon. She comprises three separate figures united; the Maiden, the Mother and the Crone, each of which symbolizes a separate stage in the female life and a phase of the moon.



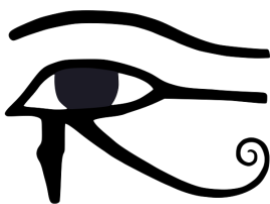
In Chinese philosophy, the concept of **yin yang** *eum-yang* in Korean; often referred to in the west as yin *and* yang) is used to describe how seemingly disjunct or opposing forces are interconnected and interdependent in the natural world, giving rise to each other in turn.



The concept of a many-branched tree illustrating the idea that all life on earth is related has been used in science, religion, philosophy, mythology and other areas. A **tree of life** is variously, a) a mystical concept alluding to the interconnectedness of all life on our planet, b) a metaphor for common descent in the evolutionary sense, and c) a motif in various world theologies, mythologies and philosophies.



In Norse mythology, **Mjöllnir** is the hammer of Thor, a major god associated with thunder in Norse mythology. Distinctively shaped, Mjöllnir is depicted in Norse mythology as one of the most fearsome weapons, capable of leveling mountains.



The Eye of Horus, Wedjat Eye of the Moon; and afterwards as **The Eye of Ra** or **Udjat** is an ancient Egyptian symbol of protection and royal power from deities, in this case from Horus or Ra. The symbol is seen on images of Horus' mother, Isis, and on other deities associated with her.

Glossary of Terms:

Anoint: to consecrate or make sacred in a ceremony that includes the token applying of oil.

Alter: basically, a table or slab that has been set aside and consecrated according to holy rites.

Akasha: The name given to the Spirit or essence of life.

Athame: A tool used to direct energy, a knife or metal blade. Never used to physically cut

Asatru: A group who follow a modern type of Norse path.

Astrology: The practice of divining using the heavens.

Bless: Is to confer good or positive energy and negate negativity. Used to protect or to guard against evil.

Bell: Used to chime certain times within a ritual.

Boline: A knife used to cut herbs or to carve runes or various other works. It is a working tool.

Book of Shadows: A tome in which a Pagan writes their personal journey.

Binding: To bind is to keep someone from doing something specific, particularly harm.

Broom: Also called a Besom. A tool used to “cleanse”; sweep away negative energy.

Candle: Used for rituals or spell work, most common tools used in modern Paganism.

Cauldron: Can be made of many metals but most are cast iron. They have multiple uses. The one tool which represent all of the elements.

Censor (thurible): This is a container in which incense is burned; it is also called a thurible.

Chi: Thought to be the vital life force in the body.

Circle: A sacred space created for worship and to perform magick.

Conjure: This is to affect or influence by invocation or spell.

Coven, circle or grove: A group of like minded Pagans who worship together; a sacred place.

Chalice: A vessel for drinking a toast to the Deities.

Charm: Something worn or carried on one's person for its supposed magical effect; also called an amulet.

Crystals: Stones used for the power within them.

Canon: This is any officially recognized set of sacred texts.

Corner calls: Calling upon the four Elements.

Ceremony: A formal celebration which can be held for many reasons.

Deosil: Walking clockwise.

Divination: Seeing the future or the past.

Druid: An ancient sect of Holy men and teachers. A Pagan path followed today.

Elements: Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Akosha or life

Empathy: Being able to experience the feelings, thoughts, and attitudes of another.

Enchant: To make something subject to magickal influences.

Ethereal: Heavenly, celestial, airy, delicate, or refined.

Esbat: The celebration of the Goddess as seen through the cycles of the moon.

Familiar: An animal, mythical or real, that helps a witch.

Green Man: A legendary pagan deity who roams the woodlands of the British Isles and Europe. He usually is depicted as a horned man peering out of a mask of foliage, usually the sacred oak. He is known by other names such as "Green Jack, "Jack-in-the-Green" and "Green George." He represents spirits of trees, plants and foliage. It is believed he has rain making powers to foster livestock with lush meadows. He was frequently depicted in medieval art, including church decorations.

Golden Dawn: An ancient secret society brought to modern prominence by Alistair Crowley

The Good People: Fairies of many faiths or cultures

God/Goddess: Seen as the duality of Deity.

Great Right: The sexual joining of two consenting adults. In many groups this act is done symbolically.

Handfasting: An ancient type of wedding

Heathen: A Pagan

Heka: The ancient Egyptian deification of magick.

Hoo Doo: African-American folk magick.

Incense: Fragrant substance burned for various reasons.

Karma: The belief that what you send you get back.

Libation: The pouring out of wine or another liquid in honor of a Deity.

Mage, Magus, Magi: Another name for a magician.

Magick, Magic, Majic: This is the practice of consciousness manipulation and/or autosuggestion to achieve a desired result

Manna: Thought to be the food which was eaten by the Israelites during their travels in the desert. It was said to be sweet to the taste.

Medium: One who communicates with spirits.

Mortar& Pestle: Tools used to grind herbs and/or resins.

Mojo: Magical charm bag.

Meditation: Mental discipline that leads to a higher awareness.

Parchment: A type of paper.

Pentacle/pentagram: A star or a star within a circle which is the symbol for the Element Earth.

Poppet: In folk magic and witchcraft this is a doll made to represent a person and is used for casting spells on that person. These dolls may be fashioned from such materials as a carved root, grain or corn shafts, a fruit, paper, wax, a potato, clay, branches, or cloth stuffed with herbs.

Pendulum: A divination tool, consisting of a device hanging from a chain, string, etc. The movement is what determines the answer.

Psychic: Someone who is sensitive to influences or forces of the nonphysical or supernatural nature.

Rune: A letter in the Nordic alphabet.

Robe: Ceremonial dress.

Rede: The name given to the ethical laws followed by Wiccans.

Ritual: A Pagan religious celebration.

Sabbat: A Pagan holiday.

Staff: A strong magick stick.

Spell: Magic workings.

Spirit: Supernatural being or the essence of self.

Santeria: African-American religion.

Sacred: Holy; sanctified.

Sigil: A symbol created especially for a magical purpose.

Shamanism: A range of beliefs and practices that works with communicating with the spirit world.

Theurgist: Divine or supernatural intervention.

Temple: A place built in honor of a Deity.

Triquetra: A symbol that designates something threefold.

Talisman: A small object or amulet worn for a specific magical purpose.

Tenants: Beliefs

Vodoun, Voodoo: A religion practiced in Benin, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Haiti, Togo and various centers in the US - largely where Haitian refugees have settled.

Wicca: A branch of Paganism.

Wiccaning: The blessing or naming of a child.

Widdershins: Walking counter clockwise.

Wand: A magickal tool use for various purposes.

Waning Moon: The time from Full Moon to New Moon; this is when the moon is getting smaller.

Waxing Moon: The time from New Moon to Full Moon; this is when the moon is getting larger.

Editor's Choice

The following is a short list of the most popular books in my magical library. This list is not meant to imply any specific preference when purchasing books. I felt it important to add this list as it truly is my storehouse of information and where I turn on pages, when in need of knowledge on my given path.

Solitary Witch ~ Silver Ravenwolf

The Elemental Encyclopedia of Witch Craft ~Judika Illes

Earth, Air, Fire & Water ~ Scott Cunningham

Buckland's Complete Book of Witchcraft ~ Raymond Buckland

Gay Witchcraft ~ Christopher Penczak

Who's Who in Egyptian Mythology ~ Robert Steven Bianchi

The Essential Crystal Handbook ~ Simon and Sue Lilly

Talismans and Amulets ~ Feleccitas H. Nelson

Dionysos ~ Ralph Manheim

Sons of the Goddess ~ Christopher Penczak

Magical Aromatherapy ~ Scott Cunningham

The Pagan Book of Living and Dying ~ Starhawk

The Magical House Hold ~ Scott Cunningham

Faery Wicca ~ Kisma Stepanich

The Encyclopedia of Magical Ingredients ~ Lexa Rosean

Magical Herbalism ~ Scott Cunningham

Handfasting and Wedding Rituals ~ Raven Kaldera & Tannin Schwartzstein

The 21 Lessons of Merlyn ~ Douglas Monroe

Spirit of the Witch ~ Raven Grimassi

Spell Crafts ~ Scott Cunningham & David Harrington

The Goodly Spellbook ~ Coven Oldenwilde

The Complete Book of Incense, Oils & Brews ~ Scott Cunningham

The Path of the Green Man ~ Michael Thomas Ford

Elements Encyclopedia of 5000 Spells ~ Judika Illes

Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank all who participated in the development of this product.

I would like to thank Uni, Barb, Zibach, Gypsie, Tii, Ra, Christina, Will, Titania and Sylphmoon. You all have had a part in the development of the end product and due credit goes to all of you. I would also like to thank my Assistant Editor Isis. Your wisdom and insight is always a joy.

I am Bryen Scott-Kiddy/Nebkheperure Creator and Editor of this Field Guide to Paganism and Other Earth Based Religions. It has been a joy to work on such a project. This project was conceived and designed as a tool of teaching and knowledge. It is a product of Darkmoon Sanctuary Inc. for Arkansas Pagan Pride on October 12th, 2009 and beyond. It should not be used or copied for any reason without express written permission.

Updated by Karrie Griffin. 2018