



Mastering The Magick Of Witchcraft
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Rose Ariadne Blog
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Pagan Rituals And Wiccan Rituals

The modern usage of the word Paganism is an umbrella term that can include everything from Asatru (worship of Norse gods) to Hellenic (worship of Greek gods) traditions. The word pagan usually refers to a person who has a polytheistic religion; that is, a religion that includes more than one god or goddess. In older times, the word pagan was used to mean a godless person who was only interested in sensual pursuits, which, frankly, doesn't sound like much of an insult to me! The word also had the connotation of unsophisticated, or country dweller, much like our modern words hick or redneck.

I think of modern pagans as being polytheistic, frequently nature based magical practitioners who are not bound by the Wiccan Rede and practice a religion that is not Christianity, Judaism, or Islam. Each group of gods and goddesses has different rules, after all.

Wicca, by contrast, is a new religion, originating only fifty or sixty years ago. It is partly based on what earlier generations may have practiced, but many Wiccan traditions step away from history entirely.

Wiccans generally celebrate Sabbats and Esbats, holidays based on seasonal changes. These celebrations as a whole are commonly referred to as the Wheel of the Year. Other terms that differentiate Wicca from Paganism are the Rede and the Rule of Three. The most important part of the Rede is the oft-quoted "an it harm none, do what thou wilt," while the Rule of Three is a karmic law that states that all actions of the witch will reflect on him or her with three fold consequences, whether positive or negative.

While Wicca can be included under the umbrella of paganism, there are often differences in the rituals each subset practices. One of the major differences between Wicca and pagans is that a certain group within Paganism devotes much time and energy to reconstruction. This is the study of how ancestral peoples practiced those religions that have survived in one form or another into the modern age, with the goal of keeping modern practice as true to original traditions as possible. Therefore, Hellenic, Celtic, Khemetic and other traditions based on location can have very different rituals from Wiccan, or indeed other pagans.





A Hellenic offering ritual, for example, has elements similar to Wiccan rituals. The participants are purified through the use of consecrated water, and sometimes modern Hellenic pagans choose bloodless offerings as many Wiccans who are trying to observe the Rede strictly do. Yet a more traditional ceremony differs in some important ways. If an animal sacrifice is used, its parts each have a different use within the ritual format. Often, inedible parts of the animal are set aside for the gods. Hestia, as goddess of the hearth, frequently received the first offering, with all other deities associated with the ritual following. The parts set aside for the gods were frequently burned.

In my mind this is one of the greatest differences between Pagan and Wiccan ritual. The Pagan practitioner has the option of bloodletting and other things like scarification, branding, and death magic's open to them, as they may not follow the Rede. This is not to say that Pagans who use these ritual tools are practicing evil or black magic, and it is very important to recognize the difference! Pagans and Wiccans are found in every possible permutation, so there are very few (if any) hard and fast characteristics of either. Keep learning! I like to collect stories of what Paganism means to each individual practitioner; I can almost guarantee that every answer you get will be at least slightly different!

Be clever, crows!

~Rose

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