

WHAT IS WICCA

'Wicca' means 'the Craft of the Wise'.

Wicca is the rites and practices of an initiated mystery priesthood which preserves ancient traditions that enable and allow contacts with the Gods. This is achieved through acts of worship and of magic.

Through understanding of the world in which we live, we can understand and approach the Creator through the manifestation of creation that is the world.

Wicca

- has a religious base
 - : worship of the Goddess and the God
 - : some forms are avataristic and some forms are identificatory/initiatory
- has a working ('craft') base
 - : wicca-craft → wise-craft → witchcraft
- has a priesthood, but no congregation
 - : the ladies are priestesses of the Goddess and the Mother, and can manifest the power of the Divinity
 - : the men are priests of the God and can manifest the power of the Divinity
 - : women and men are regarded as equals, as each has strengths and weaknesses not found in the other
- has a defined theology and dogma (including morals and ethics), but these vary between traditions

'Wicca' derives from the anglo-saxon 'wicca' - 'wise one'

wicca - masculine
wicce - feminine
wida - the people

The root of the word 'wicca' is the teutonic 'wyk' meaning 'to bend'.

All laws against the practice of witchcraft in England were repealed in 1951 when the James I "Witchcraft Act of 1735" was replaced with the "Fraudulent Mediums Act of 1951".

FURTHER READING

- Lethbridge, T.C. "Witchcraft : Investigating An Ancient Religion"
Harrison, M. "The Roots of Witchcraft"
Donovan, E "Never on a Broomstick"
Buckland, R. "Witchcraft - Ancient and Modern"
Gardner, G.B. "Witchcraft Today"
Crowther, A. & P. "The Witches Speak"

THE CRAFT TRADITIONS

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There is only one Craft, the Craft of the Mother.

However, in order to discuss the multitudinous approaches to the worship of the Mother, it is convenient to adopt certain labels

- . Hereditary Craft
 - witchcraft as practised by those of 'witch blood'
(see additional notes)
- . Traditional Craft
 - witchcraft as practised by those following rituals and methods used since the times of the great persecutions (the "Burning Times")
(see additional notes)
- . Gardnerian Craft
 - traditional witchcraft as popularised by Dr Gerald Gardner
(see additional notes)
- . Alexandrian (or Alexandran) Craft
 - hereditary/traditional Craft as popularised by Alex Sanders
(see additional notes)
- . Seax Wicca
 - a form of Craft developed by Raymond Buckland
 - : developed c1973-74
 - : based on Saxon beliefs
 - : worship of Frey and Freya
- . Dianic Craft
 - Goddess-oriented tradition
 - : developed by Z. Budapest and others
(Susan B. Anthony coven founded by Budapest Yule 1971)
 - draws heavily on the theories of Dr Margaret Murray
 - feminist/lesbian
- . Church of Wicca
 - founded by Gavin and Yvonne Frost
 - claims Celtic background
 - denies being of pagan orientation
 - monotheistic and patriarchal
 - : the theory of matriarchy "a marxist heresy" (Gavin Frost)
 - run through The School of Wicca in Missouri
- . Fairy (or Faery) Tradition
 - traditional/bardic
 - Goddess-oriented
 - : Tana
- . Georgian
 - founded by George Patterson of Bakersfield (California)
 - eclectic/revivalist
- . Fairy Tradition/
. Tayu Fellowship
 - homosexual/gay Goddess-oriented paganism

FURTHER READING

- Adler, M. "Drawing Down The Moon"
Drury, N. "The Occult Experience"
Holzer, H. "The Witchcraft Report"
Gardner, G.B. "The Meaning of Witchcraft"
Buckland, R. "The Tree - The Complete Book of Saxon Witchcraft"
Martello, L.L. "Witchcraft - The Old Religion"
Budapest, Z. "The Feminist Book of Lights and Shadows"
Weinstein, M. "Earth Magic - A Dianic Book of Shadows"
Frost, G. & Y. "The Witches Bible"
Anderson, V. "Thorns of The Blood Rose"

NEWSLETTERS ASSOCIATED WITH CRAFT AND/OR PAGANISM

- "Castle Rising Newsletter" eds Jo and James Dixon
"Circle Network News" eds Jim Alan and Selena Fox
"The Cauldron" ed Mike Howard
"The Coming Age" ed Sister Chrysothemis (Lux Madriana)
"Covenant of the Goddess Newsletter" ed Alison Harlow
"The Crystal Well"
"Druid Chronicler & Pentalpha Journal" ed Isaac Bonewits
"The Fellowship of Isis Newsletter - Isian News" eds The Hon Olivia
Durdin Robertson and Lord Strathloch
"The Heathen" ed Tom Kelly (The Pagan Movement)
"Korythalia" pub. Feraferia
"The Pagan Way" ed David Stasin
"Pagana" ed Valerie Voight
"WomanSpirit"
"The Wiccan" ed Prudence Jones
"Wood and Water" ed Jan Herning
"Dark Circle" ed Tim Hartridge
"Kindred Sprits Quarterly" eds Naomi and Bill Lewis
"Shadowplay" ed Bill Beattie

Hereditary Craft

Those witches who are born into a 'witch family' i.e. can trace their lineage back to a publically-acclaimed witch.

Little is known about their workings, but we can possibly say

- Godnames are seldom used
 - little pagan religious practice
 - : mainly Christian
- Initiations are performed
 - Grandmother to grand-daughter or father to son
 - only one level of initiation
 - ritual is only to 'continue the blood' and not 'hierophanous'
- Workings are of sorcery
 - charms and spells
 - herbalism
 - not ritualised
- Magic Circle is not used
- 'Working tools' are not sacred
 - 'mixing bowl magic'
- Sabbats and Esbats are not usually worked
- No ritual workbook
 - oral tradition
- Always work in normal clothes
- Usually women

Hereditary Claimants

- Louise Huebner
- Lady Sheba (Jessie Bell)
- Simon and Claire Lorde (Kent and Catherine Forrest)
- Lady Ishbell (Olga Sambell)
- Alex Sanders
- Reverend Dame Helena Bartlett-Walker (Faye Cubbon)

FURTHER READING

John, J. "King of The Witches"

Huebner, L. "Witchcraft"

Traditional Craft

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Those witches who have been initiated into a group who can trace their lineage back to the days of persecution, or have married into an hereditary witch family and have subsequently been accepted as being of 'witch blood'. Their belief structure is said to be 'traditional'.

Little is known about their workings, but we can possibly say

- Godnames are of a local divinity
 - usually singular i.e. either a god or goddess, but seldom both.
- Initiations are performed
 - male to female and female to male
 - usually only one or two levels of initiation
 - first initiation is a 'sexual induction'
 - ritualistic working, varying according to the tradition
- Workings are both of worship and of magic
 - Sabats are convened
 - : Sabbat cycle varies according to the tradition
 - Esbats are sometimes convened
- Workings are within a consecrated or sacred area
 - may be either a special place or a ritually consecrated circle
- Ritual tools are used
 - number and type vary according to the tradition
 - : a dagger-type knife tends to be universal
- Traditional witches tend to work in groups
 - coven structure
 - number in group varies from three to twenty
 - : number is not fixed
 - group is ruled by a High Priest (or Magister) and High Priestess (or Lady)
- Usually work robed
- Rituals written down in a workbook (the "Book of Shadows")

Traditional Claimants

- Marian Green
- Sybil Leek
- Dr Leo Louis Martello
- Doreen Valiente

FURTHER READING

Martello, L.L. "Witchcraft - The Old Religion"

Leek, S. ...

Gardnerian Craft

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Those witches who follow the rituals made available by Dr Gerald Gardner. These are traditional.

The workings of the Gardnerians have been revealed in print often since the early 1960's

- Godnames are Arida for the Goddess and Karnayna for the God
 - at the First and Second Degree levels
 - : Goddess name changes on Third Degree initiation
- Initiations are performed
 - male to female and female to male
 - three degrees of initiation
 - Second Degree initiation involves a symbolic or actual sex rite
 - rituals are in accordance with the Book of Shadows
- Workings are both of worship and of magic
 - Eight Sabbats are convened
 - Thirteen Esbats are convened
- Workings are within a consecrated Magic Circle
 - Ritual of construction of the Circle in accordance with the Book of Shadows
- Eight ritual Working Tools are used
- Work in Covens
 - Goddess-oriented
 - number varies between five and twenty witches
 - : lower number is fixed by the requirements needed to perform certain rituals
- Usually work robed
- Rituals written down in a workbook (the "Book of Shadows")

Gardnerian Witches

- Gerald Brousseau Gardner
- Doreen Valiente
- Monique Wilson
- Elenore Bone
- Patricia Crowther
- Loise Bourne
- Raymond Buckland

FURTHER READING

- Bracelin, J. "Gerald Gardner - Witch"
- Buckland, R. "Witchcraft From The Inside"

Alexandrian Craft

Those witches who follow the rituals made available by Alex Sanders. These correspond closely in format with the rituals of the Gardnerians.

The Workings of the Alexandrians have been revealed in print often since the late 1960's, they having a high public profile

- Godnames are Aradia for the Goddess and Karnayna for the God
 - at the First and Second Degree levels
 - : Goddess name changes on Third Degree initiation
- Initiations are performed
 - male to female and female to male
 - three degrees of initiation
 - Second Degree initiation involves a symbolic or actual sex rite
 - rituals are in accordance with the Book of Shadows
- Workings are both of worship and magic
 - Eight Sabbats are convened
 - Thirteen Esbats are convened
- Workings are within a consecrated Magic Circle
 - ritual of construction of the Circle in accordance with the Book of Shadows
- Eight ritual Working Tools are used
- Work in Covens
 - both Goddess and God are invoked
 - number varies between five and twenty witches
 - : lower number is fixed by the requirements needed to perform certain rituals
- Work robed or nude ("skyclad")
- Rituals written down in a workbook (the "Book of Shadows")

Alexandrian Witches

- Alex and Maxine Sanders
- Stewart and Janet Farrar

FURTHER READING

- Johns, J. "The King of The Witches"
- Deutch, R. "The Ecstatic Mother"
- Sanders, M. "Maxine The Witch Queen"
- Farrar, S. "What Witches Do"
- Farrar, S. & J. "Eight Sabbats For Witches"
- "The Witches Way"

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(continuation of the above two books)

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THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE CRAFT

THE MYSTERIES

A Mystery is experienced - it cannot be spoken of, because its essence lies outside the limitations of language.

Enactment of a Mystery involves the presentation of a cosmic 'truth' to an initiand. The initiand must have been properly prepared through training and through expectations to be able to achieve the change of consciousness necessary for the cosmic knowledge expressed in the Mystery to be assimilated into his psyche.

A Mystery involves presentation of an HIEROPHANY. Walter Otto describes an Hierophany as "a showing forth of something wholly other". An Hierophany is an ACTION, GESTURE or OBJECT which is symbolic of a COSMIC CONSEQUENCE.

- "Brimo hath brought forth Brimos!"
With the production of the ear of wheat from beneath her robe, and its presentation to the initiate, the High Priestess of the Eleusinian Mysteries proclaims
 - the origins of their civilization
: hunters to agriculturalists
 - the regeneration and proliferation of man post mortem
; to be reborn we must die, and to die we must be born
- As Isis covered Osirus, so the Nile covers the valley each year, and as Horus was born from the sterile Osirus, so new crops sprin forth from the sterile ground.
 - ISIS → ASSET → UR ZIT (Great Serpent - The Nile)

"...the myth is thought to express the absolute truth, because it narrates a sacred history; that is, a transhuman revelation which took place at the dawn of the Great Time, in the holy time of the beginings (in illo tempore). Being real and sacred, the myth becomes exemplary, and consequently repeatable, for it serves as a model, and by the same token a justification, for all human actions. In other words, a myth is a true history of what came to pass at the beginning of Time, and one which provides the pattern for human behaviour. In imitating the exemplary acts of a god or of a mythic hero, or simply by recounting their adventures, the man of an archaic society detaches himself from profane time and magically re-enters the Great Time, the sacred time."

Eliade, M. MYTHS DREAMS AND MYSTERIES Fontana 1972

Either myth - the relating of a sacred truth - or legend - the relating of

FURTHER READING

- Campbell, J. ed "The Mysteries : Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks"
- Eliade, M. "Myths Dreams and Mysteries"
- Huxley, F. "The Sacred and The Profane"
- Harding, M. Esther "Woman's Mysteries - Ancient and Modern"
- D'Alviella, G. "The Mysteries of Eleusis"
- Apuleius "The Golden Ass"
- Hartley, C. "The Western Mystery Tradition"
- Schur , E. "The Great Initiates"
- Hall, M. "The Secret Teachings of All Ages"

INITIATION

Initiation is the testing of an initiand by a group that the candidate has or is capable of attaining the levels of consciousness necessary to understand an Hierophany, and by the performance of a ritual, confirming the acceptance by the group of the candidate.

Initiation involves a symbolic death and rebirth - death to the old personality and rebirth to a new spiritual awareness.

Craft initiation involves the re-enactment of the Life of the God.

Five Rites of Passage are involved : -

- 1. Birth
- 2. Maturity
- 3. Marriage
- 4. Fatherhood
- 5. Death

All initiation rituals have five stages :-

- 1. Rebirth
- 2. Redemption
- 3. Oath
- 4. Revelation
- 5. Consecration

In Wicca there are Three Degrees of initiation

- FIRST DEGREE - WITCH AND PRIEST (WITCH AND PRIESTESS)
- SECOND DEGREE - HIGH PRIEST AND MAGUS (HIGH PRIESTESS AND WITCH QUEEN)
- THIRD DEGREE - CONFIRMATION OF SECOND (No new title)

FURTHER READING

Farrar, S. "What Witches Do"
 Haitch, E. "Initiation"
 Fortune, D. "Sea Priestess"
 La Fontaine, J. "Initiation"
 Bates, B. "The Way of Wyrd"

Probationer ((?))

Has a thorough understanding of the religious principles and the practices of the religion in which they have been raised, or if brought up in no specific religion, have some understanding of the practices and beliefs of several religions.

Has undertaken some reading of the beliefs and practices of paganism.

Has a genuine desire to investigate the beliefs and practices within the pagan religious framework.

First Degree

Has a good understanding of the beliefs of the Wida.

Has a good understanding of the development of paganism and the matriarchal religions.

Is capable of casting a Circle and holding the boundary of the Circle.

Has a thorough understanding of the Eight Festivals and the Esbat, and is capable of participating fully in their observance.

Has a thorough understanding of the Eight Paths, and has mastered at least four of them.

Has a good understanding of at least three methods of divination, and is proficient in the application of at least two of them.

Has a good understanding of the principles of psychic healing, and has had some degree of success in lone workings.

Has a good understanding of Herbalism, is proficient in the making of ointments, salves and tinctures, and the extraction of oils, and can utilize herbals for remedies.

Has a thorough understanding of the First Degree Initiation ceremony, and the use of the Eight Working Tools.

Is capable of remaining silent.

Second Degree

Has a thorough understanding of the First and Second Degree Initiation ceremonies.

Is capable of conducting a First Degree Initiation, and Handing Down of Power.

Has a complete understanding of the principles of apostolic succession.

Is capable of conducting the Rites of the Sabbats and Esbats.

Has a complete understanding of the Legends of the Wida - the Legend of Atlantis, the Legend of Aradia, the Legend of The Descent, and the Legend of The Cauldron.

Has a good understanding of the differing Craft traditions, and a respect for them.

Has the Eight Working Tools and has properly consecrated them.

Has memorised the Theban Script, and can translate short passages.

Has undertaken research into the practices of Ritual Magic, and is capable of forming a Circle according to ceremonial methods by reference to a Grimoire.

Is proficient in the use of the M.P.E. and L.R.P.

Has undertaken successfully a magical invocation/evocation.

Has successfully undertaken a ceremonial scrying, and has an understanding of several methods of ceremonial divination.

Has a good working knowledge of mythology.

Has a good understanding of the practices of sexual magic and the Great Rite.

Has a desire, and proven ability, to teach within the Craft, those of lesser Degrees, and to undertake research into magical and pagan practices under direction.

Has a love of the Mighty One's, their Children, and a desire to continue their worship.

Is capable of remaining silent.

RITEs OF PASSAGE

A Rite of Passage is a ritual whereby a person moves from one status to another. The rite marks a change in the relationship between the person and their society

- change in duties
- change in responsibilities
- change in rewards.

The Rite of Passage may accompany a physical change or a change in age. The Rite of Passage involves either a 'passage' in location or in time.

Common examples of Rites of Passage are -

- 21st Birthday Party
- Bar Mitzvah
- Wedding
- Puberty rituals
- Funeral

A Rite of Passage can be considered 'initiatory' in its broadest sense.

A Rite of Passage is divided into three distinct phases

- A - SEPARATION PHASE - the candidate is separated from his previous social position.
- B - MARGINAL PHASE - the candidate is held in a liminal position
- C - AGGREGATION or REAGGREGATION PHASE - the candidate is postliminally joined to a new social position, or returned to his former social position, sometimes with the concept of resurrection being displayed.

An Occult Initiation is a Rite of Passage.

FURTHER READING

Van Gennep, A. "The Rites of Passage"

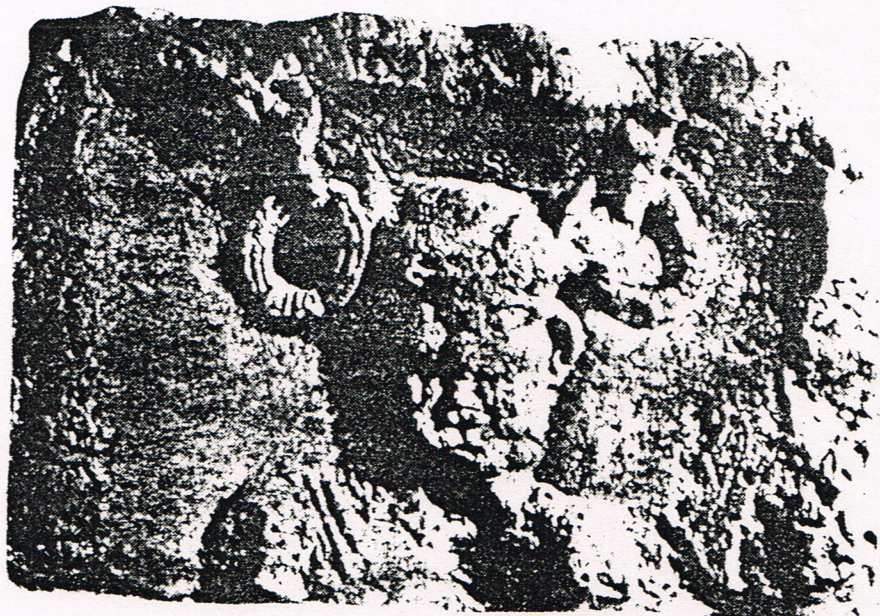
Gluckman, M. ed "Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations"

Turner, V.W. "Forest of Symbols"

La Fontaine, J. "Initiation"

Elkin, P. "Medicine Men of High Degree"

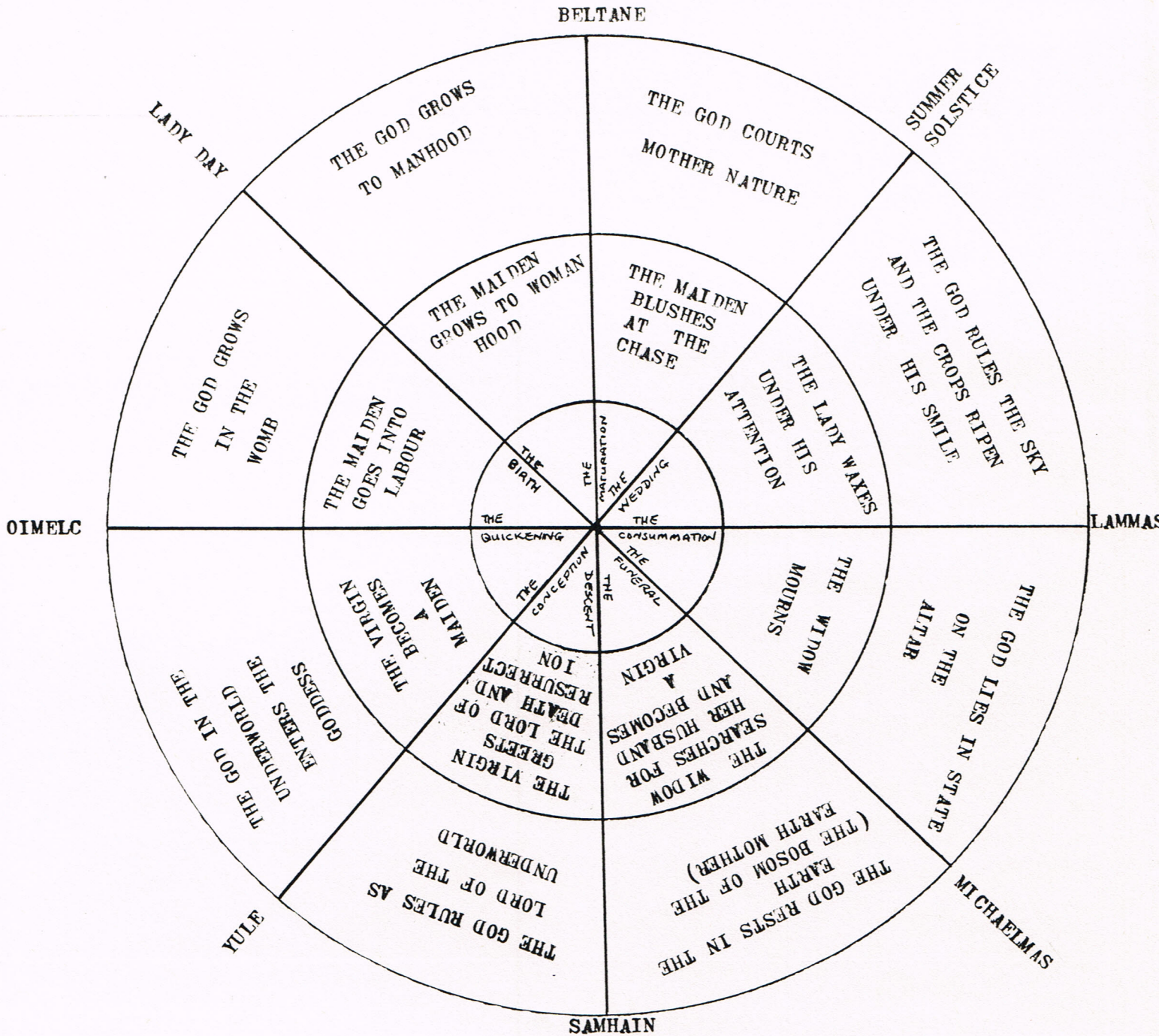
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THE FESTIVALS OF THE CRAFT

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The Festivals of the Craft celebrate the Cycle of Life of the Sky Father and the Earth Mother, and this is done through Mother Nature.



Sometimes the God is invoked in His Solar aspect as the Sun, and sometimes in His Earth aspect as Lord of Animals or Grain King. But behind all is The Mother ...

The woman stands before the Altar of stone, within the stone circle. Candles flicker in the slight breeze. Whilst Canberra prepares for bed, she and others prepare for the Feast. Tonight is the end of summer and they have come from Canberra and Queanbeyan to join together to worship the Old Gods. You would call them witches. They speak only of the Old Ways, for they are pagans - the Hidden Children of the Goddess - and of the Wicca. Tonight is Hallowe'en - Samhain they call it - Celtic for "summer's end".

The woman lifts the Sword and walks around the circle of stones, a necklace of the Earth. "Oh Thou Circle, be Thou a Boundary between the World of Men and the Realms of the Old Ones. Let there be peace and joy herein", she intones. "Bless us and make us one", responds the others, and they are spun across the boundary to begin a night of feasting and dancing.

But first the worship.

The witches believe that all Creation comes from the one Source, and this Source becomes polarized as the masculine and feminine principles. Each is equally holy. They worship the Lady of the Fields and the Lord of the Hunt, the Solar King and the Queen of the Moon and Stars, the Earth Mother and the Sky Father. Woman and man are respected as equals; the rites of worship are conducted by either. Eight times a year they come together for the Sabbats - the holy days. There are the fire festivals of Beltane and Samhain - May Eve and November Eve (Hallowe'en), the birthing festival of Imbolc (Lady Day or Candlemas), the harvest festival of Lughnasa, and the festivals marking the four points of the Earth Cycle - Midsummer (Summer Solstice), Yule (Winter Solstice), Ostara (Spring Equinox), and Michelmas (Autumn Equinox).

Samhain (pronounced "sow-an") is the festival most commonly associated with the pagans. With limited barn accomodation and feed storage only the best of the breeding stock could be quartered over the harsh winter months. All other stock was slaughtered and preserved by smoking or salting, hard work which involved the whole village. But not all the meat could be preserved, and so a feast would be held at the end of the work where all would come together to rest and give thanks for the good seasons. This was a time for merriment and memories. Thoughts of the future gave rise to games of divination. Two chestnuts roasting on the hearth, one for the belle and one for the beau. Slow smouldering betokens a lusty union, springing apart shows a broken romance. Two bowls of water on the table. Blindfolded damsel reaches in hope. Clean water promises another year as a maiden, dirty or "drumly" water a fruitful marriage.

Thoughts of the harsh winter ahead brings memories of those family and friends who have passed away. No time for such reminiscences in the spring and summer when work in the fields from sunrise to sunset occupied all fully. But work is finished and now the memories come. The Veil separating the Worlds of Now and Past is thin at this time, and the people call across the boundary of Death for those who have been loved and have have passed over, to join with those still living for the feasting, the Dumb Supper. Who will cross the other way in the months ahead?

...continued

The feasting is over, the games have been played, and the balefire is now a heap of glowing coals. Each of the witches are filled not only with food and drink, but also the songs of the stars, the laughter of the breeze, and the wholeness of the earth. Once more the Sword is taken around the Boundary, returning all to the mundane world. The coals are extinguished, and carrying brooms and riding in cars they return from the Circle in the hills to the city, leaving each other with the old words - "Merry met, merry part!" or "Blessed Be thee!"

Another Festival is over. They will meet again on the night of the Full Moon to learn more of the workings of magic and of the Old Gods. Whether in a house in Hughes or the Circle in the hills does not matter, for wherever they join, the path of faery is trod, and the old ways are worked again.

Hey, ho for Hallowe'en,
When all the witches can be seen.
Some in brown and some in green,
Hey, ho for Hallowe'en.

Simon Goodman ©1986

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