

Wicca was the first (or at least one of the first) of the neopagan religions. As a result, it is the best known, and tends to overshadow its younger, smaller siblings. This bias appears in the postings in alt.pagan and in this FAQ. This does not mean that Wicca is more valid than other neopagan religions--just larger and louder.

Wicca, however, is only one of the things called W/witchcraft (or sometimes, the Craft, a term also applied to Masonry). There are a whole range of styles of folk-magic around the world which are called witchcraft in English. If the word Witch is capitalized, it indicates that it is being used to refer to a member of a pagan religion, not just to a practitioner of folk-magic. There are also Witches who practice religions called Witchcraft which are not Wicca. These religions tend to be more folk-pagan than Wicca, drawing on the heritage of a specific culture or region.

Wicca itself is a new religion, drawing strongly on the practices of Ceremonial Magic. While there are claims that Wicca goes back into the mists of pre-history, honest examination of the practices and history of the Wicca will make it clear that Wicca is new. (Actually, the word "Wicca" itself is recently coined, at least in its present usage. The OE "wicca" was pronounced "witch-ah" and meant male magician. The new word "Wicca" is pronounced "wick-uh", capitalized as a religion, and means a religion, not a person.) However, Wicca has developed in many directions and should not be seen as a unified whole, even though it is fairly new. Rituals and beliefs vary widely among Witches.

Unlike most of the neopagan religions, Wicca is an initiatory religion, that is, people who choose to practice Wicca believe that the commitment to this path set changes in motion in their lives. Many Traditions (sects) of Wicca formalize this with a ritual (or series of rituals) of initiation. Others, especially Solitary Witches, trust that the Gods will do the initiating of the Witch.

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