

## = Etymology of Wicca =

In Modern English , the term Wicca ( / ˈwɪkə / ) refers to Wicca , the religion of contemporary Pagan Witchcraft . It is used within the Pagan community under competing definitions . One refers to the entirety of the Pagan Witchcraft movement , while the other refers explicitly to traditions included in what is now called British Traditional Wicca .

Although pronounced differently , Wicca is related to the Old English word *wicca* , which referred to sorcerers in Anglo-Saxon England . In the early 1950s , English Wiccan Gerald Gardner , founder of the Gardnerian tradition , referred to the Pagan Witchcraft community as the Wica . He claimed to have learned the term during his initiation into the New Forest coven in 1939 . By the late 1950s , Gardner 's rival Charles Cardell , founder of his own tradition , had begun referring to the religion 's followers as Wiccans , and possibly used Wicca in reference to the religion itself .

The inclusive use of the term Wicca ? referring to the entirety of Pagan Witchcraft religion ? has been traced to Britain in the early 1960s , when it was used by various groups and publicised through use in adverts , magazines , and other literary sources . It was later adopted by figures like Alex Sanders and Gavin and Yvonne Frost , who took it to the United States . There , practitioners of British Traditional Wicca adopted it exclusively for themselves as a means to differentiate their practices from those of other Pagan Witches . This exclusive meaning was countered by its popularisation as a generic term by prolific authors such as Raymond Buckland , Scott Cunningham and Silver RavenWolf . As it entered popular culture , it gained an increasingly eclectic character in its usage . During the 1990s , some attempted to distance themselves from it by utilising the term Traditional Witchcraft .

## = Definitions =

There are two separate definitions of the term Wicca that have been used in Paganism and Pagan studies since circa 1980 . The first developed in England during the 1960s . Broad and inclusive , it covers most , if not all , forms of modern Pagan Witchcraft , especially if they share sufficient theological beliefs and ritual practices to be considered denominations within a common religious movement . In contrast , the second developed in the United States during the late 1970s . It refers specifically to the Gardnerian tradition of Witchcraft and those descended from it with little variation , namely Alexandrian and Algard Witchcraft , which are together known as British Traditional Wicca .

## = Usage within Pagan studies =

The development and use of the term Wicca within contemporary Paganism has been a recurring topic of discussion in the field of Pagan studies . The majority of academics and independent scholars use the first , more inclusive definition . Given its historical status and prevalent usage within Paganism , Pagan studies scholar Ethan Doyle White thought it the logical and easier choice for academia , although there is still some disagreement and confusion among researchers as to what defines Wicca . Among those who have used the former definition are American sociologist Margot Adler , literary scholar Chas S. Clifton , and religious studies scholar Aidan A. Kelly , while others such as the Britons Graham Harvey and Ronald Hutton failed to make their usage clear . To deal with this problem in future , Doyle White urged scholars to specify which definition they used in their work .

## = Origins =

## = Old English *wicca* and *wicce* =

In the Early Medieval language of Old English , the term *wicca* ( / ˈwɪkə / ) was a masculine noun for sorcerer ; *wicce* was its feminine counterpart . They are ancestral to Modern English witch .

The Modern English term Wicca took the Old English wicca as its basis , although the two are fundamentally two distinct words with differing meanings , pronunciation , and grammatical usage , with nearly a millennium between their respective floruits .

In 1932 Lewis Spence writes in *The Weekly Scotsman* , in response to the popularisation of Margaret Murray 's witch @-@ cult hypothesis in Scotland , that " the Saxon word ' wicca ' , a witch " was " of immemorial usage " in the Scottish Lowlands .

Doyle White suggests that the early Wiccans adopted the term wicca as the basis for the name of their burgeoning faith because theirs was a new religious movement that took " iconography and inspiration " from the polytheistic cults of pre @-@ Christian Britain .

= = = Gerald Gardner 's Wica : 1939 ? 1966 = = =

Gerald Gardner ( 1884 ? 1964 ) , the man largely responsible for propagating the Wiccan religion in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s and the founder of the Gardnerian tradition , never used the term Wicca in either sense that it is used today . He referred to the religion as the " cult of witchcraft " or " the witch @-@ cult " , the latter likely being a term borrowed from Margaret Murray , who wrote a book entitled *The Witch @-@ Cult in Western Europe* ( 1921 ) . Gardner did use the term Wica , which he always spelled with only one c in his writings , but this did not refer to the religion itself , instead referring to the religion 's practitioners in a plural sense .

What are [ the witches ] then ? They are the people who call themselves the Wica , the " wise people " , who practise the age ? old rites and who have , along with much superstition and herbal knowledge , preserved an occult teaching and working processes which they themselves think to be magic or witchcraft .

In contrast with this plural use of the word , in a 1954 article written by Arnold Field , a reporter for the *Daily Dispatch* , Gardner had apparently explained to him that " there are man and woman witches . Each is called a wica . " This quote offers the only piece of evidence that Gardner also referred to Pagan Witches individually as a wica . It is possible that Field misunderstood what Gardner was saying by not capitalising Wica , and that therefore Gardner might have never used Wica in a singular sense .

In his book *The Meaning of Witchcraft* ( 1959 ) Gardner states that he first heard the term Wica while being initiated into the New Forest coven in September 1939 , stating that " I realised I had stumbled on something interesting ; but I was half @-@ initiated before the word Wica which they used hit me like a thunderbolt , and I knew where I was , and that the Old Religion still existed . " This account was repeated in his biography , *Gerald Gardner : Witch* ( 1960 ) , written by Idries Shah but attributed to Jack L. Bracelin , in which he is quoted as saying that " it was halfway through when the word Wica was first mentioned ; and I knew that that which I had thought burnt out hundreds of years ago still survived . " If Gardner 's account was accurate and the New Forest coven had really existed , then the fact that Gardner spelled the word as Wica would not necessarily indicate that the coven members had spelled it the same way . As he relates , from Gardner 's account , " it seems that he had heard rather than read the word in the midst of his initiatory rite " and that , " suffering from a poor grasp of spelling , punctuation , and grammar , something caused by the fact that he was self @-@ educated and possibly also influenced by dyslexia " , he would have therefore spelled the word phonetically as Wica .

In *The Meaning of Witchcraft* , Gardner also notes the term Wica 's resemblance to the Old English word wicca , stating that " It is a curious fact that when the witches became English @-@ speaking they adopted their Saxon name ' Wica ' . " In his published writings , Gardner propounds the idea that his Pagan Witchcraft religion dated back at least to the Anglo @-@ Saxon period , when Old English was the dominant language .

Wica soon became an accepted term among the early Gardnerians , as Gardner 's followers and initiates became known . Patricia and Arnold Crowther , a Gardnerian High Priestess and High Priest who operated a coven in Sheffield , use the term in their book *The Witches Speak* ( 1959 ) , writing that " [ T ] he Red Queen told Alice that she made words mean what [ she ] wanted them to mean . She might very well have been talking about witchcraft , for today it is used to describe

anything that one wishes to use it for . From the simple meaning ' the craft of the Wica ' , it is used in connection with Black Magic , Satanism , Black Masses ... "

= = = Charles Cardell 's Wiccen : 1958 ? 1960 = = =

Charles Cardell ( 1892 ? 1977 ) was the founder of a Pagan Witchcraft tradition that rivalled that of Gerald Gardner 's in southern England during the 1950s . A psychologist and stage conjurer , Cardell ran a company named Dumblecott Magick Productions from his home in Charlwood , Surrey , from where he also controlled a local coven that was spied on by the press , leading to a well @-@ publicised court case . Having been involved with Spiritualism as well as Pagan Witchcraft , Cardell initially befriended Gardner , but in 1958 they had an argument , and in 1964 Cardell tried to discredit him by publishing much of the then @-@ secret Gardnerian Book of Shadows .

Cardell used the term Wiccen to refer not just to members of his own tradition , but to all followers of the Pagan Witchcraft religion , placing an advert in Light magazine , the journal of the College of Psychic Science , entitled " The Craft of the Wiccens " in 1958 . The advert asked fellow Wiccens to get in contact with him . This advert shows that Cardell was responsible for the propagation and possibly invention of the term Wiccen .

It is possible Cardell had also used the term Wicca , evidenced by the fact that Margaret Bruce , the owner of a mail @-@ order business selling occult titles , wrote a letter to her friend Gerald Gardner on 23 February 1960 , in which she consoled him on the attacks made against him by Cardell and included a poem in which she referred to " the ' Wicca ' " . In Melissa Seims ' opinion , this use of Wicca was explicitly in reference to the Cardellian Craft , and therefore meant " that this spelling , along with ' Wiccan ' , was used by Cardell . " However , it is also possible that Bruce was referring to " the Wicca " as " a community of Pagan Witches " , in which case it would be a misspelling of Gardner 's " the Wica " .

= = = The emergence of Wicca : 1962 ? 1970 = = =

The term Wicca appears to have developed within the Pagan Witchcraft community during the early 1960s , as increasing numbers of Pagan Witches learned of the Old English term wicca , the etymological origin of the Modern term witch . This etymological fact had been referred to five times in Gerald Gardner 's book The Meaning of Witchcraft ( 1959 ) , as well as in other early texts propagating Pagan Witchcraft , such as Doreen Valiente 's Where Witchcraft Lives ( 1962 ) and Justine Glass ' Witchcraft , The Sixth Sense ? and Us ( 1965 ) . None of these specifically referred to the Pagan Witchcraft religion as Wicca .

The earliest known published reference for the word Wicca is within an advertisement published in a 1962 issue of Fate magazine ; in this , a Cardiff @-@ based group of Pagan Witches advertised a tradition as " Wicca ? Dianic and Aradian " . The advert may have been linked to Charles and Mary Cardell because Mary was allegedly born in Wales and Cardellian Witchcraft had apparently venerated a goddess under the name of Diana . However , many Pagan Witchcraft groups would have adopted the deity name Diana and Aradia , these being the goddesses featured in the American folklorist Charles Leland 's supposed account of a Tuscan witch tradition , Aradia , or the Gospel of the Witches ( 1899 ) . Another early use could be found from December 1965 , in the penultimate issue of Pentagram , the newsletter of the Witchcraft Research Association . Here , a small column on Halloween made reference to " the Craft of the Wiccan " , apparently referring to the entire Pagan Witchcraft community . The author 's name was not printed , although it had probably been produced by one of the figures involved in editing Pentagram , such as Gerard Noel or Doreen Valiente . In July 1968 , a group of British Gardnerians began publishing a magazine titled The Wiccan , while Welshman Gavin Frost founded the Church of Wicca in the United States that same year .

In the 1960s , the Gardnerian initiate Alex Sanders founded his own tradition , which became known as Alexandrian Wicca ; he used the terms Wicca and the Wicca in reference to the entire Pagan Witchcraft religion . One of Sanders ' initiates , Stewart Farrar , describes Wicca as " the

witches ' name for their Craft " in his book *What Witches Do* ( 1971 ) . The widespread adoption of Wicca in reference to Pagan Witchcraft would have brought benefits to its practitioners , who were widely maligned and faced persecution for their practice of witchcraft ; an emotive term often associated with Satanism that had negative connotations in the Western imagination . Doyle White argued that the practitioners ' presentation of themselves as Wiccans rather than witches removed some of the social stigma that they faced .

= = Popularisation = =

= = = Developments in North America : 1970 ? 1990 = = =

From 1970 onward , increasing numbers of books teaching readers how to become Pagan Witches were published ; the earliest was Paul Huson 's *Mastering Witchcraft* ( 1970 ) , which made no reference to Wicca . This was followed by Raymond Buckland 's *The Tree : The Complete Book of Saxon Witchcraft* , in which he propagated his newly developed tradition of Seax @-@ Wica ; utilising Wica as the name of the tradition , he also referenced the Wicca as the name of the religion as a whole . Contrastingly , during the 1970s the term Wicca was rejected by feminist Pagan Witchcraft groups in the United States , in particular the Dianic tradition ; the term does not appear in the early works of Zsuzsanna Budapest and Starhawk , although the latter would adopt it by the 21st century .

This was part of a phenomenon that took place during the 1970s and 1980s , as the term Wicca became increasingly associated purely with Gardnerianism and Alexandrianism ( together known as British Traditional Wicca in North America ) , rather than with other variants of Pagan Witchcraft . This was encouraged by elements within the Gardnerian and Alexandrian communities who wished to emphasise what they perceived as their special position within the Pagan community . The word Wicca first appeared in a book title in 1981 as *Wicca : The Ancient Way* ; written by Janus @-@ Mithras , Nuit @-@ Hilaria and Mer @-@ Amun and published in Canada . It discussed a Gardnerian @-@ based tradition .

= = = Increasing popularisation and reaction : 1990 ? 2010 = = =

In ensuing years , many other authors would publish books containing Wicca in their titles which advocated solitary practice of Pagan Witchcraft ; best known were Scott Cunningham 's *Wicca : A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* ( 1988 ) and Silver RavenWolf 's *Teen Witch : Wicca for a New Generation* ( 1998 ) , but other examples included Gerina Dunwich 's *The Wicca Garden* ( 1996 ) , D. J. Conway 's *Wicca : The Complete Craft* ( 2001 ) , Raymond Buckland 's *Wicca for Life* ( 2004 ) and *Wicca for One* ( 2004 ) , Arin Murphy @-@ Hiscock 's *Solitary Wicca for Life* ( 2005 ) and Ann @-@ Marie Gallagher 's *The Wicca Bible* ( 2005 ) . It was also adopted by American novelist Cate Tiernan as the title of her series of young adult novels .

The term Wicca was employed in an increasingly eclectic manner by authors like RavenWolf , who considered it to be a synonym for witchcraft . In turn it began to be adopted on a wider scale , being popularised in India by Ipsita Roy Chakraverti and being adopted by a French Luciferian group , *Le Wicca Française* . Becoming widely known in western popular culture , it was utilised by the script writers of two popular American television shows , *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Charmed* ; the first episode of the latter was titled " Something Wicca This Way Comes " while the tenth was titled " Wicca Envy " .

Reacting against the increasingly inclusive use of the term were Pagan Witches who instead characterised their practices as forms of Traditional Witchcraft . Many Pagan Witches who considered themselves to be Traditional Witches exhibited an us @-@ and @-@ them mentality against Gardnerianism and allied traditions , for whom they reserved the term Wicca . Doyle White suggests that they had done so in order to distance themselves from the increasing influence of the New Age movement over the Wiccan mainstream with its " iconographical emphasis on white light " .

, instead embracing the traditional European view that associated witchcraft with darkness . Historian Ronald Hutton states that he knew of three Wiccan covens founded in the 1980s who began to describe themselves as Traditional Witches in the 1990s .

= = = Etymologies = = =