

History of NeoPaganism and Druidry

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Question 1: Define Paleopaganism, Mesopaganism, and Neopaganism, giving examples of each. (minimum 100 words for each)

Paleopaganism is a term invented in 1979 by Isaac Bonewits and published for the first time in his book, *Real Magic*. It is still used in ADF though it has not yet made it into the dictionary or into common use in Pagan academic circles. It is used to describe the original tribal religions of a culture at the time that they were still intact. This would have included the religious belief systems of the various indo-European cultures, African tribal religions, Australian aboriginal religion, and Native American religions. A few modern religions still fall into this category, namely Vedism, Shinto, and Taoism.¹

The term *Mesopaganism* is a word coined by Robert Goodfellow, a Wiccan High priest. It was first published in 1979 in Isaac Bonewit's *Real Magic*. It is used to define religions that make attempts to recreate Paleopagan religions but have been heavily influenced by the beliefs, traditions, teachings, concepts and practices from monotheistic, dualistic, or nontheistic worldviews of Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Judaism, or Islam. Rosicurianism, Voodoun, Santeria, some Western influenced Hindu practices, Mahayana Buddhism, and various fraternal movements like the Freemasons would fall into this category. Additionally, several Neopagan religions like Thelema, some types of Heathenry, and most orthodox denominations of Wicca would also be in this category. Most people would just call these religions Pagan or Neopagan.²

The word *Neopaganism* is a term coined by Oberon Zell, a founder of the Church of All Worlds, and is used to refer to religions created since 1960 that attempt to combine elements from Paleopaganism and new-age ideals. Followers of Neopaganism try to remove as much of the influence of western religion as is possible. Generally, Neopagan religions believe in multiple deities, perceive those deities as both immanent and transcendent, are committed to environmental awareness, and perform magical as well as spiritual rituals to help both themselves and others. Wicca, *Ásatrú*, and many varieties of Druidism would be included in this definition.³

Question 2: Name and describe several of the literary sources that contributed to Neopaganism in the first quarter of the 20th century, and discuss their impact on its development. (minimum 300 words)

The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion was another work that was highly influential in the development of Neopagan religions during the 20th century. It was written by a Scottish anthropologist, Sir James George Frazer and published in 1890 in three volumes. It was later republished from 1906-1915 and was twelve volumes long. This work of comparative mythology focused on the mythological cycle of The Goddess' lover and son, the solar God who dies and is

¹ Bonewits, Isaac. Defining Paganism: Paleo-, Meso-, and Neo-(Version 2.5.1). 1979, 2007. Retrieved 05 June 2008. <<http://www.neopagan.net/PaganDefs.html>>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

reborn.⁴ His book was extremely influential in the writings of Robert Graves, Margaret Murray, and Gerald Gardner. Though Frazer's theories have been largely debunked by modern anthropologists, many Neopagans still observe traditions founded, at least in part, as a result of his work.

The White Goddess is a lengthy essay about the nature of poetic myth creation. It was written by Robert Graves and published in 1948. Revised editions came out later in 1966. Basically, it is a creative approach to the study of mythology in which the author proposes the ancient worship of a European deity, the "White Goddess of Birth, Love and Death" who he recognizes as the universal goddess from which all goddesses of European mythology come. The Wiccan ideas of a triple goddess (mother, maiden, and crone) as well as the concept of a son/consort of the goddess who dies and is reborn were heavily influenced by this work.⁵ Again, this work, while having already been thoroughly discredited by modern scholars, has had an incredible influence on many modern Neopagan traditions.

The Spiral Dance was a book written by Starhawk. It was first published in 1979 and has been republished twice more since then. It has become one of the most popular books on modern feminist Wicca and witchcraft to be published in the United States and has been translated into a number of languages. One of the largest criticisms of this work is the incredibly high estimate of people killed during the "Burning Times" in Europe (the author estimates nine million). This fallacy has become part of the modern Pagan mythos. Another major criticism is that her work is very feminist and anti-male. Many critics say that true Wicca incorporates both male and female energies or it is not really Wicca at all. Whether they agree with her work or not, most can not deny that it has had an incredible influence on modern Neopagan traditions.⁶

Question 3: Describe several examples of authentic folk customs absorbed into Neopaganism, and describe how they have been adapted. (minimum 300 words)

Herbal and folk healing - A return to the earth in Neopagan religious practices has become a movement to return to the earth in a number of other ways as well. Folk medicine and herbalism have been incorporated into many Neopagan traditions. These practices probably have their roots in ancient Pagan practice. We know at least that herbalism was practiced in medieval times by monks and village healers. The "laying on of hands" and sympathetic magic is often utilized in Neopagan healing rituals as well.

Food offerings - Making offerings of food, drink and art to the spirits of the land, ancestral spirits, and the Celtic deities are also vestiges of folk traditions. I recall as a child attending an Irish Catholic service where the priest poured out buttermilk in a saucer and placed it at the feet of the statue of Mary. When I asked if it was for his kitty he said "oh no, that is for the fair folk." I didn't know what the "fair folk" were at the time but I asked my mom later and she explained that they were imaginary creatures like the fairies in my story books. It didn't make much sense

⁴ Hutton, Ronald. *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1999, 114-117.

⁵ Ibid. 41-42.

⁶ Ibid. 345-347.

to me at the time that the priest would give buttermilk to creatures that didn't exist but I got the impression that I shouldn't ask about it again. Many Neopagan traditions give similar offerings to the spirits of nature, ancestors, or the deities.

Bonfire jumping - In modern Iran and various parts of the Islamic world the tradition of jumping one of three community bonfires is meant to bring health. This tradition originated with the Zoroastrians of ancient Iran and continues today as the culmination of the feast of the dead and New Year, celebrated at spring equinox.⁷ A similar folk custom is celebrated at Beltane, when the people of Scotland would drive their cattle between bonfires for health and fertility. It also seems to be a modern custom on or around Beltaine in England and Wales. In modern Paganism people jump the bonfire, often during midsummer or Beltane but others will do it during any High Day. Presumably this practice is to bring luck, health, or fertility to the person doing the jumping.

Question 4: *Of the following names, identify and explain the importance each has had in Neopagan history and/or the magical revival (minimum 100 words for each):*

Gerald Gardner is well known for being one of the most influential founders of modern witchcraft. After being initiated into a coven of the "old religion" in 1939, he was given permission to publish some of the rituals of the coven in his novel, *High Magic's Aid*.⁸ In 1954, Gardner published the book, *Witchcraft Today*,⁹ which announced his religious beliefs to the world. Gardner's life and work in early Wicca are more fully traced after 1949 because of the notoriety of his increasing circle of eclectic and eccentric friends who shared his curiosity about witchcraft. The esoteric sides of Catholicism, Theosophy, and Freemasonry all contributed to the development of witchcraft which included the common elements of all of these with new beliefs engineered to fill in the gaps.

Robert Graves was a well respected poet and was a popular novelist. His work, *The White Goddess* (1948) was very influential in the development of the modern Neopagan concept of the goddess and the god. He was particularly instrumental in the development of *the Goddess* as a triple aspect; mother, maiden and crone.¹⁰ The dual-role of *the God* as the son/consort of the Goddess who was represented in a double aspect of god of the waning year and god of the waxing year was also developed in his work.¹¹ He was also integral in the development of Ogham as a modern Neopagan divinatory method, despite the fact that his father, Charles Graves, a well-known scholar on the topic, frequently denied the use of the Ogham as a divinatory method.¹²

⁷ Suren-Pahlav, Faranak (Ed.). Iranian Peoples and Non-Iranians of the Persianate Societies Celebrate Norouz. *The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies*. 20 March 2008. Retrieved 5 June 2008. <<http://www.cais-soas.com/News/2008/March2008/20-03.htm>>.

⁸ Hutton, Ronald. *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1999, 206.

⁹ *Ibid.* 201.

¹⁰ Graves, Robert. *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*. Manchester: Carcanet Press. 1997.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Graves, Charles. On *the Ogham Character and Alphabet. Part II*. Academy, Royal Irish. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*. Vol. Vol IV. Dublin: M. H. Gill, 1847, 356-367.

Dion Fortune, also known as Violet Mary Firth Evans, was a British occult author. Of her non-fiction works, the best remembered are; *The Cosmic Doctrine*,¹³ *The Mystical Qabalah*,¹⁴ and *Psychic Self Defence*.¹⁵ Ms. Fortune was one of the primary founders of the Fraternity of the Inner Light, a Christian magical order. Her early writings were exceedingly focused on Christian mysticism but through the influence of her husband, Thomas Penry Evans, and her magical partner, Charles Seymor, she later came to write extensively about Paganism and how the god of Moses was really just a representation of the “Old Gods with a coat of whitewash.”

Oberon Zell-Ravenheart, along with R. Lance Christie, formed the Church of All Worlds (CAW) on April 7, 1962. The inspiration to begin CAW came from reading Robert A. Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*. Even the name of the church was taken from a spiritual group described in the book. Oberon served as the leader of the church for over 30 years, starting in the 60's and later returned in 2005 to lead it once more. He was also the creator of one of the biggest Neopagan magazines, *The Green Egg*, which was one of the greatest networking resources available at the time. Both *The Green Egg* and the *Church of All Worlds* have had a strong influence on the modern practice of Paganism.¹⁶

Starhawk wrote the first Pagan book I owned (back in 1991), *The Spiral Dance* (1979).¹⁷ My aunt gave me a copy of the second edition and told me to work through the meditations. I have never read another of her books because I quickly was immersed in green craft and herbalism and found that the natural world was where my spirituality fit best. However, *The Spiral Dance* had a heavy impact on me in my early days as a Pagan and it seems a great deal of the Pagan community was heavily affected by it as well. The 1990s was a period of strength for the feminist movement and many of the people who came into Paganism around the time that I did were influenced heavily by her work. Her book has been inspirational to a number of modern Pagans and it lent a great deal of credibility to Paganism. Her talent for poetic language and ability to evoke strong emotional reactions with the words she wrote were powerfully influential on the face of Paganism as we know it today.

Isaac Bonewits has had an influence on a number of Pagan groups over the years and especially influenced a number of modern Druid churches such as RDNA, NRDNA, ADF, and Henge Keltira. He is best known for his involvement in the Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA), where he began serving as a priest in 1969, and his subsequent founding of ADF. During his time with the RDNA Isaac ministered to groves in many locations including Berkley, Seattle, and Minneapolis. He was also known for his involvement in the Church of Satan and

¹³ Fortune, Dion. *The Cosmic Doctrine*. Newburyport: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2000.

¹⁴ Hutton, Ronald. *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1999. 187.

¹⁵ Fortune, Dion. *The Mystical Qabalah*. Newburyport: Red Wheel, 2001.

¹⁶ Adler, Margot. *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today*. Beacon Press Books: Boston. 1986. 283-318.

¹⁷ Starhawk. *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*. New York: Harper Collins. 1989.

appeared in the 1970 documentary *Satanis*.¹⁸ In 1983 he started ADF and continued to be the Archdruid until 1996 before giving up the title due to health issues.¹⁹

(Up to two other individuals of your choice):

Marija Gimbutas was a Lithuanian-American archeologist who was well-known for her explorations into the Neolithic and Bronze Age cultures of “Old Europe.” Her theory of an Old European system, which she viewed as matriarchal (she uses the term “matristic”) and which was overthrown by Bronze Age Indo-European invaders who were patriarchal (she uses the term “androcratic”) has survived in the modern mythology of Neopagan religion, especially in feminist Wicca. In *The Civilization of the Goddess*²⁰ she indicated that the gynocentric, matrilineal societies of Old Europe were peaceable, egalitarian, and respected homosexuals. Her ascertains of a peaceable feminine-centered people of Old Europe were taken up by the feminist movement and a number of Neopagan, particularly feminist-oriented Wiccan, groups in the 1980s. Her books *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*,²¹ and *The Language of the Goddess*²², while not accepted or endorsed by the majority of the modern academic community, are well-known and often used in Wiccan study programs.

Sir James George Frazer was the author of *The Golden Bough* (1890),²³ in which he compares similar magico-religious beliefs around the world. He believed that spiritual beliefs in humans progressed through three stages beginning with primitive magic, then religion, and then science. He was highly influential on the early stages of comparative mythology and religion. In *The Golden Bough*, his most famous work, he discusses the pattern of ancient pagan belief in a dying and reviving god that represented the fertility of the plant world and goes on to imply that the Christian Jesus was an outgrowth of that universal pagan belief. Since that time his theory of the universality of the dying/reviving god in pagan belief has been largely debunked; however, his work on the topic has greatly influenced the mythology of the Neopagan movement.

Question 5: Compare and contrast your understanding of three various forms of Neopaganism, such as Wicca, Asatru, eclectic Neopaganism, shamanism, and discordianism. (minimum 300 words)

Wicca is a religion with a focus on the worship of the Goddess and, in many cases to a lesser degree, the God. The Goddess is often seen as a triple aspect deity and is honored as the Mother, the Maiden, and the Crone. The God is both son and consort of the Goddess depending on which time of year it is. In most Wiccan rites circles are cast to create sacred space and to protect the

¹⁸ Satanis. Dir. Ray Laurent. Perf. Isaac Bonewits, Anton LaVey, Diane LaVey. 1970. DVD. Something Weird Video, 17 June 2003.

¹⁹ Thompson, Anthony. Archdruid. 17 Jul 2003. Retrieved 05 June 2008. <<http://www.adf.org/cgi-bin/adf/wiki/view/Main/Archdruid>>.

²⁰ Gimbutas, Marija Alseikaitė. The Civilization of the Goddess. San Francisco: Harper. 1991.

²¹ Gimbutas, Marija Alseikaitė. The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe: Myths and Cult Images. Berkley: University of California Press. 1982.

²² Gimbutas, Marija Alseikaitė and Joseph Campbell. The Language of the Goddess. New York: Thames & Hudson. 2001.

²³ Frazer, Sir. James George. The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion. Vol 1, Abridged. New York: Macmillan Paperbacks. 1922.

participants against evil. This is often done by spreading salt in a circle around the participants. Wiccans also honor four elements earth, air, fire, and water by invoking their powers at each of the “cardinal points” or directions.²⁴

Ásatrú, which means “Æsir faith” in Icelandic, is a religion that is polytheistic and honors the old Germanic gods. The inspiration for this religious tradition is found primarily in the Eddas. The two main strains of *Ásatrú Íslenska Ásatrúarfélagið*, founded in Iceland in 1972 and the *Ásatrú Free Assembly* (later *Ásatrú Folk Assembly*) in the USA 1974. The primary forms of ritual include the Blót and the Symbel. Some groups identifying as *Ásatrú* have been associated with neo-Nazi movements, particularly in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the prison system, where *Ásatrú* services were often used as an opportunity to plan attacks on other inmates. Despite this previous association many *Ásatrú* groups have made great strides in driving out racist and sexist behavior from their groups.²⁵

Discordianism, also known as Discordia, is a parody religion that was essentially founded around 1958–1959 by Malaclypse the Younger (AKA Gregory Hill).²⁶ Its principal text, the *Principia Discordia* was the primary catalyst for the foundation of modern Discordia. The beliefs of Discordia are based on the idea that chaos is just as important as order. The original sect of Discordia founded by Malaclypse the Younger is called the *Paratheo-Anametamystikhood Of Eris Esoteric* (POEE), a “Non-prophet Irreligious Disorganisation.”²⁷ Eris, Greek goddess of strife is the principle deity of this path, though many Discordians are also practitioners of other traditions. Fundamentally, Discordians try to teach themselves and others to not take themselves too seriously (i.e. to dispel “the curse of Greyface”²⁸).

Question 6: Discuss the origins and practices of hermetic or ceremonial magic, and how they have influenced Neopaganism. (minimum 300 words)

Hermetic or ceremonial magic are terms used to describe a broad assortment of lengthy, intricate rituals. ‘Ceremonial magic’ is a label used to identify magical practices that are conducted in ceremonial fashion, often with the accompaniment of a number of specific accoutrements and accessories that are deemed necessary for the proper observance of these rites. Ceremonial magic enjoyed a revival in the nineteenth century. During this time books like Francis Barrett's *The Magus* influenced the Neopagan movement dramatically.²⁹ *The Magus*, which is a treatise of alchemical, astrological, and Kabalistic knowledge, has been especially influential on the development of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, one of the most well

²⁴ Herne. What is Wicca? <<http://www.wicca.com/celtic/wicca/wicca.htm>>.

²⁵ Campbell, Erich. What is Asatru? Retrieved 15 June 2008. <<http://www.erichshall.com/whatis.htm>>.

²⁶ Irreverend Hugh, KSC. Discordianism/Erisianism. November 22nd. 2003. Retrieved 25 June 2008. <http://www.witchvox.com/va/dt_va.html?a=usil&c=trads&id=7358>.

²⁷ Miller, Joelle. Sorting out the Pagan Traditions. 1999, 2002. Retrieved 16 September 2008. <<http://www.joellessacredgrove.com/pagantraditions.html>>.

²⁸ Thudthwacker, Episkopos Aloysius. Greyface. <<http://jubal.westnet.com/hyperdiscordia/greyface.html>>.

²⁹ Barrett, Francis. The Magus. London: Lackington, alley, and Co., 1801. Retrieved 5 June 2008. <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/grim/magus/>>.

known organizations to practice this type of magic.³⁰ A much earlier work, Cornelius Agrippa's *de Occulta Philosophia*³¹ may have been the primary source for *The Magus*.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn is an order of the late 19th and early 20th centuries³² that practiced a type of theurgy, magic performed with the aid of beneficent spirits with the intent of intervening on human affairs. They also practiced meditation and other spiritual practices meant to enhance spiritual development and mental discipline. This organization had one of the greatest influences on western occultism and its concepts of magic. For example, the widely held belief in a number of modern Neopagan religions that the God and Goddess are merely the masculine and feminine aspects of a greater deity and that the many gods and goddesses of the various pantheons are merely aspects of those divine powers is very similar to the Hermetic belief that archangels, angels, and demons are all aspects of one all-powerful deity. Additionally, the Hermetics also use a number of signs, sigils, herbs, stones, amulets, and animals to draw various types of power into these symbols; this practice is shadowed in modern Wiccan practice.

Question 7: Discuss the influence of the Pagan festival movement, and how the festivals changed Paganism in the 1980s. (minimum 100 words)

Prior to the 1980's when Pagan festivals became more common there were few ways to connect with other Pagans. Many were closeted and wore no identifying jewelry, clothing, or marks to distinguish themselves so discovering who was Pagan in your region was difficult and risky. Risky because you chanced exposing yourself as a Pagan to someone who was not.

With the advent of Pagan festivals suddenly we were able to meet other people who shared our beliefs and to feel free to express ourselves, share our ideas openly, and form long-lasting groups that have helped shape the face of Paganism today. Modern Neopagan culture has been greatly impacted by the events that have occurred at Pagan festivals.

Question 8: Discuss the influence of the Internet, and how it has changed Paganism in the 1990s (minimum 100 words)

Having been a Pagan at the time that the internet first came into common use I can offer first hand experiences of how it has changed Paganism and continues to do so. When I first became a Pagan it was 1991 and there were not many sources available in local bookstores or libraries. I had to rely a great deal on my aunt's instruction and the few tattered books she was able to pass to me.

When the internet first became widely available I was suddenly able to talk to other Pagans, read other people's rituals, hear Pagan music for the first time and connect with the greater Pagan community in a way that was previously not possible.

Without the internet most of us would probably still be underground. Paganism has started to go main stream and more people are able to find alternatives to their childhood religions thanks to the influence of the internet.

³⁰ Hutton, Ronald. *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1999. 69-70.

³¹ Ibid. 80.

³² Hutton, Ronald. *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1999. 77-83.

Question 9: Discuss the origins of the Druidic revival in 18th and 19th century England, naming its key players and describing their contributions. (minimum 600 words)

The Druidic revival in the 16th-19th centuries has influenced Neopagan Druidry in many ways, most especially in their magical practice. Even the RDNA was in some ways an outgrowth of these organizations and shared some elements with Mesopagan traditions.

The revival of Druidry really began during the renaissance, in the 16th-17th centuries, when a revival of interest in ancient Greek and Latin writers such as Pliny, Tacitus, and Julius Caesar brought attention to their descriptions of the Celtic world.

It seems that Druidic traditions seem to have survived in Wales, perhaps more so than in other areas of Celtic Europe. It seems that Bardic courts had even existed in Wales during the 12th century and at one time assemblies (called an *eisteddfod*) of bards and musicians were proclaimed throughout Celtic Europe to gather together in Wales. Later, in 1568, Queen Elizabeth, granted a commission to a few people in Wales to hold an eisteddfod “to grant licenses to bards in order to distinguish them from the vagrant beggars.”³³ In 1789, a sizeable eisteddfod, held in Corwen, was organized by Thomas Jones and sponsored by Gwyneddigion, a London-based Welsh society.³⁴ In 1624 in England, Edmond Bolton declared that Stonehenge was the monument of the Celtic warrior queen Boudicca. In 1649, John Aubrey suggested that the Druids may have been responsible for building Stonehenge and various other stone monuments in England.³⁵

Later, in England and Wales during the 18th century, William Stukeley³⁶ and John Toland³⁷ spread John Aubrey’s earlier view that Stonehenge and other similar monuments might have been connected to the Druids. “The Order of Druids” was allegedly founded in 1717 by William Stukley though no written records survive to verify this date. In the same year John Toland also founded “The Universal Druid Bond”, supposedly composed of representatives from “Wales, Cornwall, Brittany, Ireland, Scotland, Anglesey, Man, York, Oxford and London.”³⁸

The “Ancient Order of Druids” was founded in 1781 by Henry Hurle who was deeply influenced by Freemasonry.³⁹ By 1839, this group divided and one faction formed “The United Order of Druids,” and lodges were established in the United States and Australia. The United Order of Druids still operates as an international charitable organization. The Ancient Order of Druids also persisted through the 19th century and into the 20th.⁴⁰ Later “The Society of Druids”, founded on the practices of Freemasonry and Deism, was founded in New York. So, even America was influenced by Mesodruidism around this time.

³³ Ellis, Peter Beresford. The Druids. London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1994. 266-267.

³⁴ Ibid. 267.

³⁵ John Aubrey, Thomas Gale, John Evelyn, John Fowles, & Rodney Legg. Monumenta Britannica: A Miscellany of British Antiquities. New York: Dorset Pub. Co. 1982.

³⁶ Witcombe, Dr. Christopher L. C. E. Stonehenge and the Druids. Retrieved 25 June 2008. <<http://witcombe.sbc.edu/earthmysteries/EMStonehengeC.html>>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Bonewitz, Isaac. A Very Brief History of Mesopagan Druidism. 1974. Retrieved 05 June 2008. <<http://www.neopagan.net/MesoDruids.html>>.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Popular culture began to feature Druids in increasing numbers and novels like François-René Chateaubriand's, *Les Martyrs* (1809),⁴¹ which featured Druids as main characters in stories of romance and adventure. Druids even figured in the opera of this period as in Giovanni Pacini's *La Sacerdotessa d'Irminsul* (The Priestess of Irminsul)⁴² and Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma*.⁴³

Several charlatans also graced the stage of the Druidic revival. Many of these eccentric men made bizarre claims and produced "historical" documents which were later proved forgeries. Edward Williams, also known as Iolo Morganwg created the *Gorsedd of the Bards* in 1792 and claimed to have received ancient knowledge from Bards in the Isles of Britain.⁴⁴ Much of his work was obviously fabricated, mistranslated, or forged though some of his work may have been genuine. Despite the disreputable character of its founder, the Gorsedd continues today and is an important source of Welsh literary and poetic work. Later writers such as Robert Graves and Gerald Gardner were influenced by Morganwg's work.

Much of the ceremony and belief that was formed during this period of Druidic revival later influenced hermeticism, ceremonial magic, and even the RDNA. Religious groups with roots in these traditions continue to perform many elements of these earlier Mesopagan customs.

Question 10: Discuss the origins of the RDNA, and the influence of Isaac Bonewits, and the founding of ADF. (minimum 600 words)

The *Reformed Druids of North America* (RDNA) originated in 1963 as a form of protest against coerced religion at Carleton College. The College mandated church attendance as part of the school's requirements and a group of people who disagreed with this policy started the RDNA as a form of protest against this policy.⁴⁵

The RDNA combined Zen meditation, Native American beliefs and traditions, honoring the Earth-Mother and the old Celtic deities, and Christian mystical writings. After winning their battle with the college many of the Druids wanted to continue the movement as it now represented a significant part of their spirituality. So the movement continued and other Groves were founded. A number of changes took place over the years and in 1971, equal status to female Druids in the Third Order and higher orders was granted, even though by 1969 5 female Druids had already been admitted to the Third Order and one had held the position of Archdruid in Carleton.⁴⁶

In 1966, Robert Larson, a priest of the Carleton Grove, moved to Berkeley, California. There he met Isaac Bonewits and together they founded the Berkeley Grove. During the period of the "Isaac Affairs" of 1974-1977, Isaac Bonewits began to formulate concepts that would later

⁴¹ Chateaubriand, François-René. *The Martyrs*. English Edition. O.W. Wright (Ed.). New York: Derby & Jackson. 1859.

⁴² *La Sacerdotessa d'Irminsul*. By Giovanni Pacini.

⁴³ *Norma*. By Vincenzo Bellini.

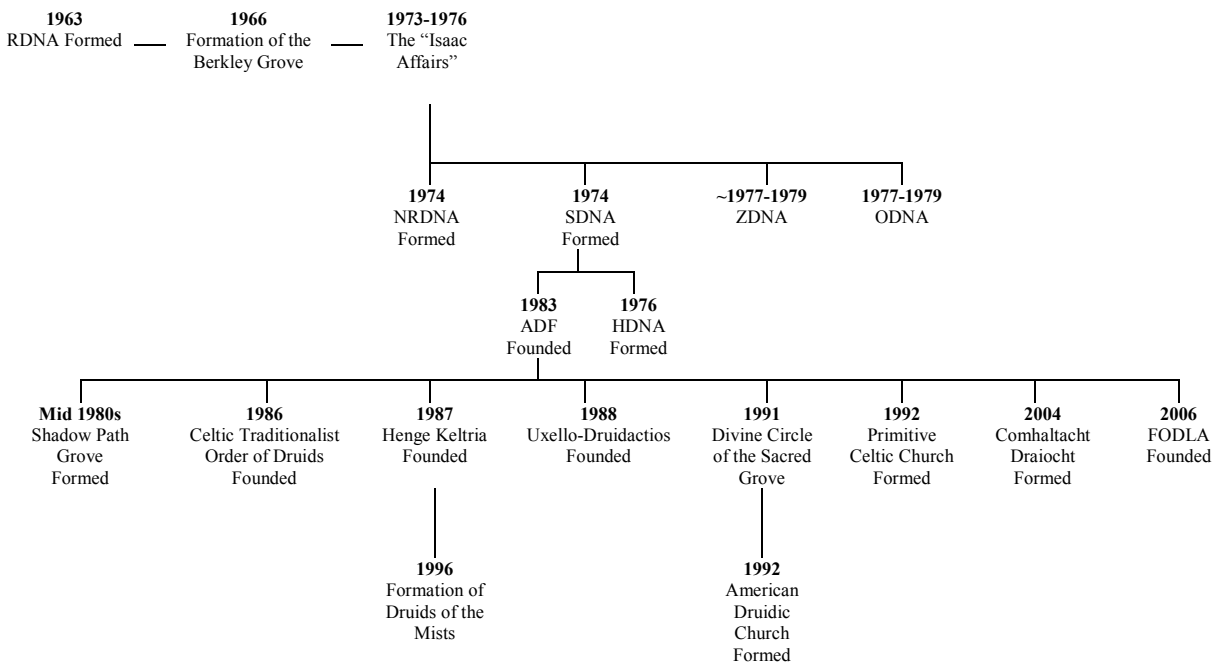
⁴⁴ National Museum of Wales. *Gorsedd of the Bards, Beginnings - Iolo Morganwg (Edward Williams)*. Retrieved 25 June 2008. <<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/884/>>.

⁴⁵ The Reformed Druids of North America. *What Is Reformed Druidism?* 1965. Retrieved 12 June 2008. <<http://orgs.carleton.edu/druids/pamp.html>>.

⁴⁶ The Reformed Druids of North America. *Part Eight, A General History of Reformed Druidism in America, aka The Gregarious Epistle of Michael or the Adventures of Prolix the Druid*. The Drynemtum Press. 347. Retrieved 12 June 2008. <<http://orgs.carleton.edu/druids/ARDA/ARDA-08.pdf>>.

develop into Ár nDraíocht Féin.⁴⁷ He began to question the informal nature of RDNA and wished to increase the religiosity and organization of the association.

However, a number of RDNA Druids were opposed to the degree of formalism he wanted to insert into their organization. Isaac wanted to see established ceremonies, various orders of priesthood, and stronger administration from the leadership.⁴⁸ In many ways the changes he proposed were antithetical to the light-hearted and bureaucracy-free purpose of the RDNA. The Carleton Druids grew increasingly concerned when Isaac began consecrating many of his pagan friends to the Third Order (which made up the legislative body, the Council of Dalon Ap Landu, of the RDNA). This was seen as an attempt to take over the council and, consequentially, the RDNA. However, since the Council of Dalon Ap Landu operated by consensus instead of simple majority or 2/3 majority, he was unable to effect the changes he wanted even with the ever increasing number of Neopagans in the RDNA.⁴⁹



At this time there were numerous schisms and factions within the RDNA and it was split into three groups.⁵⁰ One of these groups wished the RDNA to continue operating as it had in the past, these continued on as the RDNA, one wanted to have more interaction between the Groves and the collective body of all Third Order Druids (the Council of Dalon Ap Landu); this group called itself the *New Reformed Druids of North America* (NRDNA) but they did not want to identify themselves as specifically Neopagan.⁵¹ Another group that formed during this time was

⁴⁷ Ibid. 362.

⁴⁸ The Reformed Druids of North America. Part Ten, Oral Histories. The Drynemtum Press. 469. Retrieved 12 June 2008. < <http://orgs.carleton.edu/druids/ARDA/ARDA-10.pdf>>.

⁴⁹ The Reformed Druids of North America. Part Ten, Oral Histories. The Drynemtum Press. 470. Retrieved 12 June 2008. < <http://orgs.carleton.edu/druids/ARDA/ARDA-10.pdf>>.

⁵⁰ The Reformed Druids of North America. Part Two, The Books of The Apocrypha. The Drynemtum Press. 38. Retrieved 12 June 2008. < <http://orgs.carleton.edu/druids/ARDA/ARDA-02.pdf>>.

⁵¹ Ibid. 38.

the *Schizmatic Druids of North America* (SDNA) which also wished to have more organization and interactions between the Groves and leadership but in addition wanted the organization to identify solidly as Neopagan.⁵² The SDNA was led by Isaac Bonewits which spawned the now defunct *Hasidic Druids of North America* (HDNA).⁵³ The *Other Druids of North America* (ODNA) and the *Zen Druids of North America* (ZDNA) also formed during this time.⁵⁴ In 1979, most of these groups were later reabsorbed by the NRDNA.⁵⁵

Members of the SDNA later formed *Ár nDraíocht Féin* under the direction of Isaac Bonewits.⁵⁶ When Isaac Bonewits founded ADF he did so with the intent of an organized Neodruidic religion, one that encompassed all of the European branches of the Indo-Europeans. Since that time ADF has grown to include the Indic and Iranic branches as well. Many elements from the original RDNA rituals were incorporated into ADF rites including the waters of life and veneration of the Earth Mother.

Since the founding of ADF many other Neopagan Druid organizations and churches have formed in America, several are offshoots of ADF itself. Effectually, Isaac Bonewits is the founder of Neopagan Druidry in America.

Question 11: Describe the groups that have split off from ADF, their history and work. (minimum 600 words)

Despite best intentions and best efforts, members of groups often find themselves at odds. Sometimes these disagreements are not worked out or are not resolvable in the first place. This can result in a schism in the group.

Other times people join an organization with the understanding that it is not quite what they are looking for but with the belief that they may be able to influence it or change it. Sometimes they are right and their suggestions make the group stronger, other times their expectations are unattainable and that member chooses to leave the group, occasionally taking others with him.

These changes are a normal part of group development and are even necessary to the growth of an organization. Those who do not share the common vision of a given group should leave and should form groups of their own or join existing groups that are a better fit. Just like a tree, organizations bear better fruit when pruned properly; however, the appropriate nourishment is also required. *Ár nDraíocht Féin* has experienced this phenomenon and there are several members who have broken away to form groups of their own.

Shadow Path Grove, mid 1980s - The Shadow Path Grove was one of the first groups to break off from ADF in the mid 80s. It seems that they have one Grove in Connecticut and have not

⁵² Ibid. 38.

⁵³ The Reformed Druids of North America. Part Five, The Great Druish Books. Drynemetum Press. 1. Retrieved 12 June 2008. <<http://orgs.carleton.edu/druids/ARDA/ARDA-05.pdf>>.

⁵⁴ The Reformed Druids of North America. Part Nine, The Books of the Latter-Day Druids. Drynemetum Press. 404. Retrieved 12 June 2008. <<http://orgs.carleton.edu/druids/ARDA/ARDA-09.pdf>>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ The Reformed Druids of North America. Part Two, The Books of the Apocrypha. Drynemetum Press. 38. Retrieved 12 June 2008. <<http://orgs.carleton.edu/druids/ARDA/ARDA-02.pdf>>.

made attempts to form other Groves. The primary reason why they chose to break off is because they did not want to hold public rites.⁵⁷

The Celtic Traditionalist Order of Druids, 1986 - While not really an offshoot of ADF since the founders claim it was created before their involvement in ADF, was founded by Vickie & Howard Meith. Vickie Meith served as Vice-Archdruid for ADF at one time but later returned to the Celtic Traditionalist Order.⁵⁸ The 9 branches of their study program are Health, Hearth, History, Creativity, Compassion, Communication, Magic, Musecraft and Management. A Google search of the words ‘Celtic Traditionalist Order of Druids’ did not reveal a website or any other information about this organization to indicate that it is still in existence.

Henge Keltria, 1988 - The largest of the groups that have broken away from ADF is Henge Keltria, which one might describe as a full schism. At the Pagan Spirit Gathering in 1986 several members of ADF compiled a list of concerns about the practices of *Ár nDraíocht Féin* and delivered it to Isaac Boenwits, founder of ADF, by affixing it to his van door. They outlined thirteen concerns, numbered 1-12 & 95. This group became *Henge Keltria* a year later when none of the concerns they’d expressed were addressed. The primary concern was that ADF embraced many pantheons of the indo-European culture and they believed that Druidism should be Celtic in nature. They also believed that ritual should not be public; one of the foci of ADF practice is public ritual. At the time, ADF also did not have a magical practice; the founders of *Henge Keltria* believed that the mystical arts should be part of Druidic custom.⁵⁹

Uxello-Druidactios, 1988 - Druidactios was founded by Tadhg MacCrossan (Tom Cross) in 1988 after a very short membership with ADF. He later published book *The Sacred Cauldron: Secrets of the Druid*. MacCrossan has spent most of the years since writing letters and articles about the deficiencies of other Druid organizations; in regards to how they are “infected” with Wiccan influences. This group is similar to the RDNA in that the group does not consider itself Neopagan.⁶⁰

Divine Circle of the Sacred Grove, 1991 - This group attempted to use the phrase “A Druid Fellowship,” in its name for a time but it discontinued its use in 1992. DCotSG claimed false ADF credentials, claiming tax exemption as an ADF Grove. The group came under inquiry by the IRS and disappeared shortly thereafter. Fragments of the group then formed a new organization, The American Druidic Church.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Ibid. 366.

⁵⁸ Meith, Vickie & Howard Meith 1999. The Origins of the Celtic Traditionalist Order of Druids. Retrieved 1 September 2008. <<http://www.neopagan.net/OriginsCTOD.html>>.

⁵⁹ Hopman, Ellen Evert. The Origins of the Henge of Keltria: An Interview with Tony Taylor. 2005 c.e. Retrieved 9 July 2008. <<http://www.neopagan.net/OriginsKeltria.html>>.

⁶⁰ The Reformed Druids of North America. Part Eight, A General History of Reformed Druidism in America, aka The Gregarious Epistle of Michael or the Adventures of Prolix the Druid. The Drynemtum Press. 366. Retrieved 12 June 2008. <<http://orgs.carleton.edu/druids/ARDA/ARDA-08.pdf>>.

⁶¹ Ibid. 367.

American Druidic Church, 1992 - Jay Tibbles and Patricia Fields were the founders of the American Druidic Church, formed from the fragments of the Divine Circle of the Sacred Grove. In their early days they relied heavily upon help from ADF and OBOD. They are currently working out their own customs and organization.⁶²

Primitive Celtic Church, 1992 - The Primitive Celtic Church, like Keltria, broke off of ADF to spend more time focusing on the Celtic aspects of Druidism. Like the Divine Circle of the Sacred Grove and the American Druidic Church they are also from the Seattle area. There are recent claims that they have disbanded.⁶³

Druids of the Mists, 1996 - The Druids of the Mists are actually an offshoot of *Henge Keltria* who formed their own organization in June of 1996. The group remains small at this time and there is little information about the reason for the split.⁶⁴

Comhaltacht Draiocht, 2004 - Rob Barton, former preceptor and ordained Priest of ADF (inducted at Wellspring Gathering 2002),⁶⁵ founded a new Druid order and called *Comhaltacht Draiocht* (Fellowship of Druidry) which is a “polytheistic and animistic cosmic religion focused primarily on life and existence as expression of the sacred.”⁶⁶ Since this organization is relatively new there is little information on the site about the belief structure and the site makes no mention of ADF, though it seems natural that some elements of *Comhaltacht Draiocht* were at least influenced by Mr. Barton’s experiences with *Ár nDraíocht Féin*.

Fellowship of Druidism for the Latter Age (FODLA), 2006 - While not recognizing ADF as their progenitor in any of its literature, *FODLA* was founded by Todd Covert in 2006.⁶⁷ There is no information available on his or ADF’s sites about the reason for Todd’s split from ADF; however, on an online forum called “The Cauldron: A Pagan Forum” he says that he had felt that there were “too much politics at the expense of spirituality and the pursuit of excellence among its leadership.”⁶⁸ Members of *FODLA* believe in the commitment to study, piety, and hospitality. *FODLA* is a relatively new organization and little information about their order of ritual is available on their website. Todd Covert also founded an educational organization called *The Druid Academy*, a school that offers classes on Neodruidry.⁶⁹

⁶² Ibid. 367.

⁶³ Ibid. 367.

⁶⁴ About the Druids of the Mists. Retrieved 12 September 2008. <www.druidsofthemists.org/about.shtml>.

⁶⁵ Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship. Mother Grove Vote History April `02 - May `02. Retrieved 17 September 2008. <<http://www.adf.org/members/org/mg/minutes/2002-Q2.txt>>.

⁶⁶ Comhaltacht-Draiocht Homepage. Retrieved 12 September 2008. <<http://www.comhaltacht-draiocht.org/>>.

⁶⁷ Covert, Todd. *Fellowship of Druidism for the Latter Age*. April 2006. Retrieved 12 September 2008. <<http://fodla.org/vision.pdf>>.

⁶⁸ Covert, Todd. Re: ADF and FoDLA? The Cauldron: A Pagan Forum. Posted May 25, 2007, 09:32:12 pm. Retrieved 02 September 2008. <<http://www.ecauldron.net/forum/index.php?topic=1165.new>>.

⁶⁹ *The Druid Academy*. Retrieved 12 September 2008. <<http://druidacademy.org/>>.