



Ask Rose Ariadne
<http://www.askroseariadne.com>

Book of Shadows

Traditionally, the Book of Shadows is a journal that belongs to a High Priestess or a High Priest of the Wicca Religion. The Book of shadows is also called the "Black Book". In earlier times, people who were initiated into witchcraft were requested to copy the entire book by hand.

This book consisted of the thoughts and meditations of the person who initiated the new follower to the Wicca religion. It was assumed that all the knowledge of the Initiator would be passed on to the new Witch in the process of copying each of the pages filled with ancient knowledge. This book used to be kept a secret and the information in it written in a coded or jumbled manner to prevent non-believers from abusing them.

As Witches succeed in creating new spells, they may append these spells and rituals to their individual Book of Shadows. Later in life, if they become a High Priest or High Priestess and initiate other Wiccans, this book may be copied by hand by the new followers of the religion. In this way, the original information is passed down from generation to generation.

The term "Book of Shadows" originated with Gerald Gardner who helped spread Wicca all over the world. He is believed to have based the name on a Sanskrit manual that defines the length of a man's life by the length of his shadow. Gerald Gardner's Book of Shadows is published online at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/gbos/> . It includes information on Casting the Circle, Drawing Down the Moon, Initiations, the tradition of Cakes and Wine, Sabbat Rituals, Chants, Helping the sick, the Scourge and the Kiss, The Eightfold Way, the Meeting Dance, Skyclad, etc. As he constantly updated his Book of Shadows, we can see the additions and appropriate changes that are made to the information to keep it current.

In his Book of Shadows, Gerald Gardner explains The Eightfold path:





Meditation or Concentration

Trance States, Clairvoyance, Projection of the Astral etc.

Drugs, Wine, Incense

Dance, Performing Rites

Chants, Spells, etc

Blood control, Breath Control

Scourge

The Great Rite

Regarding Casting of the Circle, he mentions this: "It is most convenient to mark the circle with chalk, paint or otherwise, to show where it is; but marks on the carpet may be utilized. Furniture may be placed to indicate the bounds. The only circle that matters is the one that is drawn before every ceremony with either a duly consecrated Magic Sword or Athame. The circle is usually nine feet in diameter, unless made for some very special purpose. There are two outer circles, each six inches apart, so the third circle has a diameter of eleven feet."

There are a few rules for Witches regarding The Book of Shadows. One can only write into the journal. None of the information may be deleted from it. In the event of a witch's death, the Book of Shadows may be handed over to her children or grand-children or kept in the Coven's treasury depending on the wishes of the owner of the book.

The tradition of writing this book is believed to have started with Gerald Gardner, who considered it his personal cookbook of spells. His own Book of Shadows contained recipes for magickal potions, methods of creating talismans and charms, advice for witches who were brought to trial, his experiments with herbs, etc.

In modern times, this book is not copied word for word from the one who initiates a person into witchcraft. Instead, this book is an assimilation of all the experiences a person following the Craft goes through, as they slowly get accustomed to the magickal environment. It is good to have a daily journal of our successes and powerful thoughts as well as the disappointments and difficulties when preparing altars, casting circles, creating spells, etc.

As a witch grows, so will this Book of Knowledge. Some witches create and update this book on the internet, in electronic form, rather than a hand





written document. Also, recently, some Wiccans have related their experiences through regularly updated Website Blogs.

Some Wiccans keep two separate "Book of Shadows". One that has copy of the core rituals that have been around for centuries and the other for adding new material learned from others in the same Coven.

As we can see, the Book of Shadows is a very personal and powerful book that contains a lot of useful information that chronicle our spiritual adventures in search of the ultimate Truth and Meaning of Life.

Blessed Be!

Mastering The Magick Of Witchcraft

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