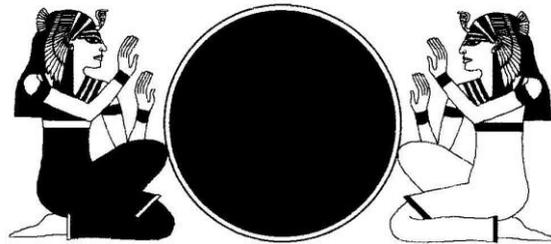


Temple of the Dark Moon



The Alexandrian Tradition of Wicca

By Frances Billingham © 2004

The following is based on an article written by a collective of Alexandrian Elders that was in the public domain but which has since been removed. A more detailed version of this article is provided within "The Wytch's Circle" training programme of the Temple of the Dark Moon

What is Wicca?

Alexandrians define "Wicca" as a Pagan Mystery faith that is initiatory, oath bound and experimental in nature, with ancient roots originating in the British Isles. However, the term "Wicca" has been used by the popular Pagan/neo-Wiccan movement that has grown significantly in the past 20 years or so. To differentiate the original Wiccan traditions from the newer non-initiatory groups, the term "Traditional Wicca" (TW) or British Traditional Wicca (BTW) in the United States.

History of the Alexandrian Tradition of Wicca

"Traditions" did not exist at the beginning of the "Alexandrian" tradition. Our Tradition has its roots in what is now called "Gardnerian Wicca" which, at the time, was simply called "The Wica" or "The Old Religion". The name "Alexandrian" is generally viewed as a reference to the "founder", Alex Sanders himself, as well as a reference to the Great Library of Alexandria, Egypt, which was the centre of occult knowledge in the ancient world.

Alex Sanders was initiated into Wicca in the early 1960s and was given title "King of the Witches" by some of his covens in the late 1960s. He was flamboyant and played the press at every opportunity much to the dismay of more conservative Wiccan Elders of the time. Alex also was known for being a healer, a diviner, and a powerful Witch and ceremonial magickian. Alex, together with his wife Maxine, were largely responsible for bringing the Craft into the public eye for the first time. An excerpt from the profile of Maxine Sanders (www.maxinesanders.co.uk) puts it well:

"Despite the extreme interest of the paparazzi, the many sincere initiations performed in Maxine and Alex's covensteads during and since that periods saw the inception and fashioned a lineage of Witchcraft that has since spread throughout the world."

The term “Alexandrian” was said to have been coined by Stewart Farrar during the writing of the book *What Witches Do* in 1970.

The Alexandrian Tradition has been both fortunate and unfortunate to be one of the most documented Wiccan Tradition to date. Naturally many misconceptions have arisen about our Tradition.

Alex Sanders passed beyond the veil on Bealtaine Eve, 30 April 1988, after suffering from lung cancer. Upon his death, a council of British Elders of the Alexandrian Tradition was convened, which issued the following document:

Statement of the Council of Elders of the Alexandrian Tradition

A meeting of the Elders of the Alexandrian Tradition was held on Thursday, 12th May 1988. The Law of the Craft has always been that a King is chosen by the Craft when need arises. After due consideration, a unanimous motion was carried that there is no need for a King of the Witches. This is fortunate, as there is no one properly prepared for the role. Alex Sanders led the Hidden Children of the Goddess into the light. It was a task well done and was his last and most earnest wish that they should continue their work into the light.

Such a council has never again been convened.

Training and Magickal Work

Alex was constantly evolving his own magickal practices and passed newly found knowledge and techniques to his initiates. This resulted in many different lineages descending from him, each with its own unique particulars but all sharing the same Traditional Wiccan core.

Training has always been a hallmark of the Alexandrian tradition, with each new generation adding onto the previous generation’s knowledge, making for more informed and well rounded Priests, Priestesses and Witches.

Core Beliefs

Traditionally, we work with and worship the Old Gods of Europe, primarily focusing on Our Lady of the Moon and her Consort the Horned One. Alexandrian initiates may work with other Deities on a personal or group basis as well.

We believe in the power of magick and use both traditional and experimental techniques to achieve our goals.

Organisation of Groups

The Alexandrian Tradition is organised into covens. Some groups work skyclad while others prefer to work robed. Regardless of personal coven preference, certain rites are performed skyclad by all recognised Alexandrian covens.

To become an Alexandrian initiate, one must be initiated by a properly prepared and authorised Alexandrian High Priestess or Priest in a cross-gendered initiation. Our traditional initiatory rites must be used without subtraction, as passed through each lineage from the original Alexandrian coven. It is not possible to “self initiate” into Alexandrian Wicca.

Our Tradition consists of three grades known as “Degrees”. A First Degree initiate is a Priest or Priestess of the Tradition, a Second Degree is a High Priest or Priestess of the Tradition, and a coven elder. The Third Degree is often reserved for coven leaders. The time between each degree can vary greatly from one lineage to another and depends on each line’s and coven’s focus and views on the initiatory and training experience. In the Alexandrian Tradition, one progresses through the Degrees not through time in the grade, but through growth within oneself and the Gods.

Contrary to popular belief, one cannot purchase an Alexandrian Book of Shadows nor download one from the Internet. While these books exist, they are constructed from published information. The only way to obtain a complete Alexandrian Book of Shadows is to be initiated in the time-honoured way.

Training has always been strongly emphasised within the Alexandrian Tradition, second only to service to the Gods. Most covens have a strong family feel, as well as the feeling of being part of a larger, international extended family.

Ways of Worship

The Alexandrian Tradition is an oath bound Mystery Tradition; therefore many of the details of how and why we work are secret. This secrecy among initiates of Traditional Wicca has been a target for detractors, implying that either we have something to hide, or maintain a veneer of secrecy for the purpose of ego-stroking. Neither of these is true.

References:

- *What Witches Do* by Stewart Farrar
- *King of the Witches* by June Johns
- *Maxine, the Witch Queen* by Maxine Sanders
- *Keepers of the Flame* by Morganna Davies and Aradia Lynch
- *A Voice in the Forest* by Jimalhl di Fiosa

About the Author:

Frances has been a student of metaphysics and the occult for most of her life, with her formal training having commenced in 1993. She has been initiated into the Alexandrian Wicca tradition, with interests also in ceremonial magick, the Qabalah and traditional Wytchcraft.

After founding the Temple of the Dark Moon in 1999, Frances spent some six years as secretary for the Pagan Alliance Inc (SA) where she worked closely with both the Police and Attorney General with respect to changes in legislation. She has led rituals with Chief Druid, Philip Carr-Gomm, and occult philosophy Ramsay Dukes, as well as presented lectures at various national and international events.

Frances regularly writes for *Insight*, Australia's number one spiritual lifestyle magazine, with her articles also appearing in over 10 separate publications, including *Spellcraft*, *The Cauldron*, *Circle* and the Llewellyn's *Witch's Calendar*. She has further essays in a number of anthologies including *The Faerie Queens*, *Unto Herself: A Devotional Anthology for Independent Goddesses*, and *Memento Mori*.

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