



Ask Rose Ariadne
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Dianic Witchcraft: The History and the Tradition

Starhawk's New Moon Chant for Diana: "Waxing, waxing, growing, growing, Diana's power is flowing, flowing."

Growth of the pagan movement during the mid 20th Century was strongly supported by the rapidly escalating feminist movement of that time. The 1950s marked a 100 years of campaigning for women's rights and the refusal to be treated by society as second rate citizens. Women were asserting their rights and finding their voices. Some went as far as to cut men out of their lives totally. Commune-style, female only communities emerged. These communities were creative, non-hierarchical, spontaneous, non-violent, pro-earth, and pro-woman. Spiritually, there was no compatibility with the hierarchical patriarchal mainstream religions of the world. Gardner's "Witchcraft Today" published in 1951 resulted in increasing the awareness of Witchcraft. The principle of a Goddess, whose consort is the God, appealed to most pagans as it offered respite from the patriarchy of the mainstream religions. Even so, some feminists were not willing to accept any form of masculinity in their spiritual path. For them "the Goddess grew in importance and the role of the God shrank into obscurity".

This was however NOT the birth of the Dianic Tradition in its modern sense. Unbeknown to many, and unrecognized by most, Egyptologist, folklorist and anthropologist Margaret Murray (1863-1963) should be credited with the early formation of the Dianic Tradition. Murray published "The Witch-Cult in Western Europe" in 1921. In this work, she examined the Inquisition documents and argued that Witchcraft could be traced to pre-Christian times and appeared to be the ancient religion of Western Europe. She went on to explain the evidence that Diana, the feminine Roman deity, was worshiped throughout Europe in 'Dianic cults.' Murray later published "The God of the Witches" in 1933 and "The Divine King of England" in 1954, which claimed that most of British royalty had been members of the Dianic Cult. Murray





died at age 100 in 1963, the same year her autobiography was released, *My First Hundred Years*. Murray was a close friend of Gerald Gardner.

The Dianic Tradition, as it stands today, is covered by two schools of thought. The one is called Dianic Wicca, Feminist Dianic Witchcraft, or Women's Spirituality and the other is Danaanic Wicca or "Old Dianic" Paganism. Both were seeds sown by the works of Margaret Murray.

The Dianic Witchcraft branch is believed to have been founded by a hereditary Witch called Z. Budapest. Z and three of her woman friends established the Susan B. Anthony Coven Number 1. This coven worshiped the Goddess in all her forms. Z. Budapest's Dianic Witchcraft consists of women-only covens. There is a strong lesbian presence, although the majority of the covens are open to all women.

The Danaanic branch was founded by Morgan McFarland. This branch "gives primacy to the Goddess in its theology but honors the Horned God as Her Beloved Consort." Covens can comprise of both male and female members or only of a single gender.

This article will focus on Z. Budapest's Dianic Witchcraft.

Dianic Witches believe that the Goddess is present in every living thing - plants, animals, and humans - as well as the earth itself. They believe that it is from this presence of the Goddess, that life exists. Because the Goddess is present in all beings, Dianics believe that:

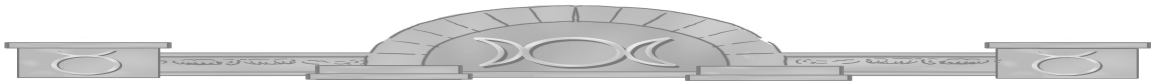
- * All beings must be honored as Divine.
- * All women are Goddesses.
- * All men have the divine feminine within them.

Diana is the Goddess of the Moon. Being representative of Diana in all her aspects, the Moon is held sacred. Dianics view the cycles of the moon as a mirror of the cycles on earth - seasonal, life, the female menstrual cycle etc.

As in the other traditions, Dianics celebrate the 8 Sabbaths on the Wheel of the Year in honor of the movement of the sun through the heavens, which manifests in seasonal changes. For Dianics, the Wheel of the year is also often used to trace the lives of the Divine Mother and Daughter through the stages of Maiden, Mother and Crone, with each Sabbath marking a milestone on life's journey. The names of the days, the meanings of each Sabbath and how each is celebrated could - an very likely will - vary from coven to coven.

- * Ostara - Maiden.
- * Beltane - Maiden.
- * Litha - Mother
- * Lammas - Mother





- * Mabon – Crone.
- * Samhain – Crone.
- * Yule – Crone
- * Imbolc – Maiden

The 13 Esbaths are celebrated during every full Moon. Some covens also hold rituals on the night of the New Moon because it is symbolic of the Virgin/Maiden aspect of the Goddess. Diana is regarded as the Virgin Goddess in addition to being the Goddess of the Hunt.

The independent, non-hierarchical and free nature of Dianic Witchcraft makes it very difficult to describe Dianic worship. It also makes an estimate on how many people are practicing Dianics at present, nearly impossible.

There is nothing neutral about Dianic Witchcraft. It is threatening for some and popular with others. Their strong feminist backing and unconcealed activism around environmental affairs, religious diversity and sexual freedom may have served as a deterrent to some, but these self-same characteristics have found appeal with many others. It is for these very reasons that Dianic paganism is steadily growing in popularity worldwide today.

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