

The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries is back in print!

*“One is hard-pressed to name a book that has had a more profound and liberating influence on the women’s movement or the Pagan revival. Budapest’s work remains a ‘Holy Book’ in the truest sense of the term—a book that offers the empowering wisdom of a living prophetess of the Goddess.”—Lon Milo DuQuette, author of *My Life with the Spirits**

*“An opportunity to read the words of a woman who not only writes of the Goddess faith beautifully, but lives the faith on a day-to-day basis. Z. Budapest continues to open pathways for all of us.”—Merlin Stone, author of *When God Was A Woman**

Considered essential reading for Pagans, feminists, and women seeking to learn more about women’s spirituality, **The Holy Book of Women’s Mysteries** contains just about everything you need to know and then some for actualizing a goddess-centered lifestyle—as applicable today as it was thirty years ago. It is filled with mythology and history, stories of feasts and rituals, herbal remedies and spells, poetry and recipes, politics and philosophy, the Sabbaths and the seasons, life and death and everything in between!

Originally written during the early 1970’s by Zsuzsanna Emese Budapest and members of her coven—the Susan B. Anthony Coven—this 2007 edition features a new Preface providing insights into Z’s childhood in Hungary and in particular her relationship with her mother.

Z attracted media attention in 1975 when she was arrested for reading tarot cards on Venice Beach. She fought the charges and, after a nine-year battle, won the right for every tarot reader to read tarot cards legally. The California Institute for Integral Studies recently recognized her as a foremother in the women's spirituality movement.

Meeting the Goddess in Everyday Life: A Conversation with Z. Budapest**Q: How did you go about writing *The Holy Book of Women’s Mysteries*?**

A: I wrote the *Holy Book* along with my coven members. We had breakfast in Malibu at Mama’s Café. During and after breakfast we wrote by hand all the things we thought should be in the book. Then we divided out all the different tasks to each other of who would write on what subject. ... I did the philosophy and the political bent, and I did most of the historical research and added the Hungarian heritage. I wrote down everything that the coven was doing in the old days as far as the Sabbaths and Esbaths were concerned. We had eight Sabbaths and 13 Full Moons that a hefty 21 holydays in a Wheel of the Year.

For example, The *Holy Book* tells you what to do when it is Midsummer - when the sexes gather and they celebrate sexuality and they celebrate the harvest that is going to ripen. They celebrate the sun at its very highest point and you gather the herbs like the St. John's Wort because it blooms at that time and you can create your herb compounds from it.

Many, many good things are in the *Holy Book* including lots of recipes for creating your own occult supplies. There are spells and customs to get pregnant, to nurture the baby, to protect the baby, and to initiate the baby. I talk about death and rituals for death, what to do when someone is dying. In other words, it's a complete view of life. This is the old forest religion back in women's hands where you can live joyously and appreciate what the planet offers and be in harmony with the blue planet.

Q: What does it mean to be practicing in the Dianic tradition?

A: The Dianic tradition is essentially women gathering together and taking care of the business of life and death, and everything in between which comprises a very full calendar! Almost every day was a holiday. Every day was totally imbued with mythology, with an aspect of the goddess - what to pay attention to, which foods are best to eat now, what to look out for in the garden.

Life was totally ordered around Goddess consciousness. And this was not a belief - it was observation. It was based on observation, and *not* on faith. We don't say you have to believe in the goddess or else. No ... you don't. If you plant during the waxing moon then the plant will come up faster and if you plant during the waning moon, well it's going to grow much slower. The same goes for your hair. If you want to save money you get a haircut during the waning moon because it takes longer for your hair to grow out. It's just wisdom accumulated through the ages and passed down woman-to-woman, family-by-family and applied over and over again because it worked. ...

I have a university called Dianic University, online at wicca.zbudapest.com, where I teach women to look outside and identify the trees that they are looking at right now. I am looking at a yucca tree, a century plant - and some plum trees, and a juniper, and some night blooming jasmine. So by identifying and looking up the lore about these plants, especially the trees, you sort of absorb what the old ones have gathered. It's sort of like, "Oh wow, mistletoe is good for the heart. Ah-hah!" We kiss underneath it, it's a heart thing. But too much of mistletoe can kill you. You know it is a good way to receive information through lore, which is what it is. It's condensed history.

Q: How did your Hungarian heritage influence your work?

A: It has totally affected my work, because I am the daughter of an artist-witch. Mother (Masika Szilagyi) was a temple builder. The way Mother made our living was that she created altars for people to buy, take home and hang in their "good room." Peasants especially kept a room clean for special times, celebrations, weddings, and such. . They prayed in front of the little home altars and lit candles. Masika made these Hungarian

Madonna figures, with or without children. If there was a child portrayed, it was always a girl because in Hungarian mythology the 'great glad woman' has a 'little glad woman.' In other words, she is reproducing herself.

I grew up with a classical education because that's what we have in Hungary and everywhere else in Europe. There's a lot of mythology. I learned very early in my life and my mother constantly made images of the Three Fates. We call them the Parcae (Parkak). Mother showed it to me, this way ... "*See here I am, here I'm not anymore, and here I'm back again.*" So this reincarnation idea was also part of what I heard from her.

Q: What role does the High Priestess play?

A: When I say high priestess, it's almost like if you have an orchestra, the director of that orchestra would be called the high priestess if it were a coven. So that's how I see the role of the high priestess. She organizes the talents of everybody present and puts them into a harmonious whole. She starts up with a chant. She starts up with a doing, (sending a kiss around the circle for example) with an action - something that can then be imitated and repeated by everyone else in her own way. It's democratic, but it does need a director to direct the energy.

Q: Can you share how that happens, how you would go about directing the energy when the women came together in your coven?

A: I would call out, "*The Goddess is Alive!*" That's how I usually start. Then I would ask everybody to call out "*The Goddess is Alive!*" and feel the enthusiasm behind it. At first it's just a little bit of effort like ... "Oh, Z told us to say that." Then by the third or fourth time she's saying it, she actually gets to hook in and *feels* the goddess. Then we change it into personal names, for example, "Debra is alive," and call out all the names around the circle. People call out their own names and everybody else answers, and "Magic is afoot!" By the time it goes around, it's very clear to you that the goddesses have been gathered and they are in the circle, and they manifest the Female Principle of the Universe.

It's a very heavy kind of a high feeling. You transcend class. You transcend personality. You suddenly see that all of us belong. All personalities are one personality, fragmentation is gone, and once you come to that point then the joy and the happiness come into your heart, and the rest of it just flows in and out effortlessly.

But you do need to plan how to conduct the energy. Once you raise the energy then you have to send it somewhere.

You cannot just sit on it you know. So as energy happens in the circle I usually ask the goddess for world peace, to create miracles that men turn away from war and recognize that it's obsolete. (As the Dalai Lama always stated, one good awakened male in the world) Nobody wins in wars. The peaceniks were right. And the hippies were right too.

Q: When you began your coven back in 1971, you named it the Susan B. Anthony Coven.

A: Yes. The Susan B. Anthony Coven was fiercely political. She fought for the women's right to vote. She thought that would liberate her totally. It took more than the vote. As feminist witches, we went after mass murderers, rapists and child abusers. With our lighter side, we organized women into joyous sabbat celebrations and taught them their own divinity - that there is a goddess, that they are sacred. We taught them also how we lost it, and how we can get it back. The way we get it back is we switch mythologies, stop believing in male gods, dualities, stop being afraid, get together with other women who are at the same place in development as you are, start the goddess study group, and just start learning what had been taken away from us. That will lead you back to yourself.

Q: What are some of your favorite moments from that time period at the beginning of the Women's Movement or this particular Women's Movement?

A: Certain Sabbaths stand out very clearly. There was this one full moon ... when there was a huge big storm front sweeping the entire Pacific coast. I lived in Santa Monica then, and this was in Malibu on the mountaintop. It was already raining, when we got up there. So I said, "Well, it's getting serious. I don't think we can circle here. Let's just go to the four directions ... and pray to the four directions and say hello we're here. It's the full moon. We've come to worship, but if you would rather rain we understand. We will stand under that tree and wait until you let us know." And we stood under that tree for about fifteen minutes ... when the cauldron that we light for incense suddenly made three foot-high flames! And it was so wet before it would not light at all. The clouds parted over this mountaintop. The big full moon came out shining down on us. I said, "She wants us here. She wants us to worship." And these things are just unbelievable. I couldn't imagine it. We even slept outside in our sleeping bags. Deer came and ate the apples from the altar, ... which was another wonderfulness because the deer is sacred to Artemis, the virgin goddess of the forest. Anyway, I went home and my roommate said, "Well, where have you been? It was soaking rain all night long." I said, "Not where I was. There was not a drop of rain there. We prayed and she parted the clouds."

This kind of big miracle when you are talking to the planet ... and the planet is conscious and listens is when you get your mind blown. That's when you go "Oh Wow!" And you never see the Earth as just the earth anymore.

Q: Where do you see the women's movement today?

A: I am very pleased with the Women's Movement today. We are everywhere. Women started supporting their own culture again. Women create the best sellers in books, we use our votes now not just as an echo of husbands vote. Visibility of women is much better, but even today you can pick up a magazine, and find no mention of any women in it. I noticed this with the respected *Economist*, last week, not a single woman had anything important to say nor reported about. I think that is ridiculous. Men watching

other men, reporting about each other, this blindness towards the majority of humans is going too far. We women are the invisible majority.

However there is one thing that we did lose in the big hustle of coming through the crack in the door that the seventies created to the jobs market. We went through, and thank goddess we did. The women have taken on powers and are climbing up on the management level. In many places women are leading companies. And of course Hillary is going to be President, which would totally change the cultural climate for us.

But we lost sisterhood. And I mean sisterhood in terms of the conscious raising groups that we used to have when we got together - diverse women from totally different backgrounds - and we each told what it was like to grow up as a little girl, what it was like to mature sexually, what happened to you around menstruation, what happened to you around sex and how men dealt with you. In other words, when our stories were told we came to a united front where we saw that being female overrode everything. It didn't matter if we were educated. On the street we were seen as females. We can be raped. We can be called whores. We can be attacked simply because we are females. Being female overrode everything else that we thought made us safe. When we came to that realization we started identifying with the women who didn't fare as well as we did.

We should have those conscious raising groups again. Rename them if you like. You can name them goddess study groups or book clubs - it doesn't matter. As long as you discuss your femaleness and how you have been treated as a female so far. That is all. You don't have to love each other. You don't have to go to bed with each other. You don't have to even like each other. You have to unite over femaleness however.

Q: So, it is really important that *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries* is back in print. I imagine you are quite excited about that.

A: Are you kidding! 36-year-old book comes out in a beautiful new form and it's selling like hotcakes! We've really reframed the seventies for the new generation. *Generation Z* is now attending college, and 72% of them are female. This is their time. They can make a quantum leap ahead. They don't have to pause and be oppressed. I just have every hope, and I hope I live as long, as *Generation Z* takes the reins of this country.

Q: In bringing this conversation to a close, if you had one last thought to share with us, what would you want us to think about?

A: Every time you make a choice you are a goddess.

Z Budapest is teaching on line at ZBudapest.com. Her books, *Summoning the Fates* and the *Holy Book of Women's Mysteries*, are available in bookstores and online.