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Tradition Book: Verbena (Mage: The Ascension)



Synopsis

The Verbena witches are heir to the secrets of the druids, the power of nature, and the wisdom of the Great Goddess and the Horned God. Theirs is the rage of the storm, the resilience of the oak and the cunning of the fox. But charmed they're not. Amoral as nature itself, Verbena covens gather in moonlit groves, working magic to hasten the return of the old ways.

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Customer Reviews

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Continuing the phenomenal revised Trad books, this one takes a look at the witches and pagans of the Verbena. Beginning with a prologue telling the tale of New Hope Farms (the Verbena introduced in the original book; nice touch) and their confrontation with the death of the Old Ways on Beltane night, this book shifts to the introduction, complete with a pagan lexicon and mention of living life to its fullest and preserving the Old Ways in the face of modernity. The book then goes to the Verbena history, told by New Hope Farms. It starts with the Wyck and the Aeduna, ancestors of the Verbena, and then shifts into classical Greece and Rome. Sidebars tell of the Olympian Gods special to the Verbena, famous Verbena (Medea, Hippocrates, Merlin, etc) and even the question of Lilith's existence (many Verbena don't believe in her actually). The book then looks at the Celts (and the

House Diedne fiasco), the dark ages (with a sidebar on the Old Faith for Dark Ages: Mage players), the Burning Times, the Tradition's formation under Nightshade, the schism caused by Nazi rune carvers in WW II, gay rights movements and the modern rebirth of paganism. It then closes out looking at religion, medicine and relationships with the others (and their common roots with the Dreamspeakers, Ecstatics, Euthanatoi and the Progenitors). The second chapter is really juicy, containing details on Verbena culture, organization, Circles of note (small groups focusing on Asatru, bardic traditions, Voudon, etc) and Verbena around the world. Sacred sites like Stonehenge, Salem, Glastonbury Tor and the Pacific Northwest are mentioned, followed by their advantage: the Paths of the Wyck, which lets them travel from pagan site to pagan site. Then we see the four factions of the Verbena: the Gardeners of the Tree who preserve their family's pagan traditions, the primordial shamans of the Twisters of Fate, the new-ager Moon-Seekers who adapt modern beliefs to the Old Ways, and the Lifeweavers who eschew culture and rites in favor of spontaneous life magics (like shapeshifting). A great write up of the Verbena Paradigm is written up, complete with views on the Craft, the Tellurium, the Spheres and various pagan Foci. There's also a really cool look at Life Magics in general, like healing, shape-shifting, etc. Verbena Rotes are given (as well as Old Faith systems for Dark Ages players), details on Familiars, plus some new Merits/Flaws. Other Trad Books probably should have included all these cool bits, but alas. The third Chapter takes a look at Verbena of note, like Medea, Merlin, Nightshade and the signature character, a Candomble priest called Hector de Xango. Details for all-Verbena chronicles are given, like major themes, sex & sexuality, related Traditions (like the Dreamspeakers or Ecstatics) and even a look at Verbena traditions from around the world and historical Chronicles (like the Burning Times, WW II, ancient Rome and even long range Chronicles following the Avatars incarnations). There's also a sample cabal, New Hope Farms, an organic farming commune made up of the Verbena from the old splat book (but updated and much cooler) who now train young Verbena. The book gives some interesting, if predictable, templates: the rune-carver, Voudon priestess, storm witch, shapeshifter, eco-activist, new-ager, etc. Nothing unexpected really. There's also the ending (bringing the story full circle) and a brief mention of Wicca and various Wiccan/pagan/new age references: The Wicker Man, Scott Cunningham, Frazer's Golden Bough, Starhawk, etc. Again, this is stuff most people probably would expect, but nice to have anyway. Over all, this is a wonderful book for Mage, and even people who don't play Verbena (or related Traditions) will find use in things like the exploration of pagan beliefs, the ancient history section and Life Magic.

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