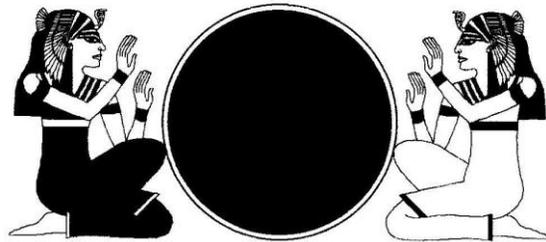


# Temple of the Dark Moon



## Pagan Magickal Working Tools - Part I

*By Frances Billingham © 2004*

Within most magickal traditions specific tools are used to aid the practitioner in their work. These tools often hold symbolic meanings and are used as channels to direct the power or energy raised. Within many Pagan traditions, such as Wicca, there are four main tools that most practitioners consider to be the main working tools, that being the athame (or ritual dagger), the pentacle, the wand and the cup or chalice. These tools symbolise the four main Elements (Fire, Earth, Air and Water) as well as balancing the polarity of the masculine and feminine energies (that of the God and the Goddess).

### **Athame**

Of all the tools attributed to many Pagan traditions, the athame (general pronunciation is "ath-am-ay") is probably the most important. One of the earliest images depicting the use of the athame can be found on a Greek vase dating back to the 2nd century. On this vase is an image depicting two women saluting the Moon. One of these women is holding a branch (which could be interpreted as a wand), while the other holds a short sword (which has been interpreted as an athame).

The athame is traditionally double-edged blade with a black hilt, and is often inscribed with various symbols and lettering personalising it to its owner and or to the magickal path that they are following. Due to the importance of this magickal working tool, most practitioners believe that once consecrated, the athame should only be handled by its owner.

The athame is considered to be a masculine symbol and represents either the element of Fire or Air depending in tradition. In ritual use, the athame is used for casting or banishing circles, and is never be used for cutting or drawing blood.

In many parts of Australia current knife laws actually make it illegal to possess a double-edged blade, and this makes obtaining one to use as an athame difficult. While these laws

were brought into force mainly due to a raise in violent knife attacks, the Police in many States and Territories are becoming aware of various spiritual and religious traditions that do use a knife in their rituals. Still, I strongly recommend that commonsense should be used, especially if you wish to use your athame in public.

While obtaining a double-edged bladed athame may be difficult, suitable substitutes can be found in specialised shops. Another alternative is to use something like a letter opener as there are a number of ornamental letter openers around in the shape of knives that are more than suitable to use.

### **Chalice or Cup**

The chalice or cup represents not only the element of Water and the female aspect, but also creation and manifestation. It is used to hold the wine or fruit juice which is blessed at the end of the ritual. Some people have two chalices, one for this purpose, and the other to hold water used to consecrate the working space. Chalices can be made out of be glass, pottery, pewter, or even wood. In more ceremonial magickal practices, the chalice is made of blue glass.

### **Pentacle**

This is a flat disk which is commonly made from copper, brass or wood inscribed with a pentagram (five pointed star which represents the four elements and spirit). Other symbols representing various initiated degrees, the Triple Goddess and the Horned God, astrological signs and the like, can also be inscribed upon the pentacle. The pentacle is a feminine tool and represents the element of Earth.

The pentacle is a symbol of protection and is the centre point of the altar upon which items that are to be consecrated are placed. Some people use the pentacle to hold salt, which is used in consecrating the working area, but as salt is corrosive, the use a small dish for this purpose is recommended if your pentacle could rust.

Making your own pentacle can be as easy as taking a pottery plant saucer and painting a pentagram on its base, although more expensive pentacles can be obtained through specialist occult suppliers.

### **Wand**

Normally a wand is made from wood with the traditional the length of your arm from elbow to the fingertip and is used to channel power. Some woods are reported to have magickal powers but whatever you choose, it is important to "ask permission" from the tree before cutting and then to leave a small gift, such as a small quartz crystal, in honour of the tree spirit.

It is considering important that you should put some effort into creating your own wand, even if it is only polishing or varnishing the finished object.

A wand can also be made from a piece of dowel purchased from a hardware store. It can be decorated with crystals, feathers or inscribed with symbols. Some wands have a phallic symbol at one end (using an acorn or crystal) and a yoni symbol at the other. Such a wand

is often called a "baculum". Some people even prefer use crystal "healing" wands, which can be obtained from New Age shops.

The wand is a masculine tool and represents the element of Air (or Fire depending on the tradition you are following).

There are also other tools that magickal practitioners use, such as candles, incense burners, of course, the Book of Shadows, in which rituals and other magickal information is contained.

If you are following the path of Wicca, and in particular traditional Wicca (ie, Gardnerian, Alexandrian or one of the recognised branches) then the use and purpose of these four "traditional" tools will actually encapsulate a deeper meaning. Such meaning is disclosed to the Wiccan upon initiation and therefore will not be discussed here.

For those who are not following a traditional Wicca path, they may find themselves drawn to natural objects such as feathers, crystals and pieces of wood rather than the tools outlined above. Whatever you choose, remember that magickal tools need not be expensive or exotic in design. While having an ornate silver chalice and jewel encrusted ritual dagger may be your dream, be guided by your financial status, as a simple pottery cup and ordinary kitchen knife will work just as well. After all, the essence and actual power of all magick comes from within the magickal practitioner.

#### 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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