

## ::: The Black Madonnas

A **Black Madonna** is a statue or painting of Mary in which she is depicted with dark or black skin. This name applies in particular to European statues or pictures of a Madonna which are of special interest because her dark face and hands are thought by some to be her true color. In this specialized sense “Black Madonna” applies to images of the Virgin Mary portrayed as explicitly Black African, which are popular in Africa, and areas with large black populations, such as the United States. In this opinion, related evidence supports European Black Madonna’s’ with their roots in African traditions.

Some statues get their color from the material used, such as ebony or other dark wood, but there is debate about whether this choice of material is significant, because white scholars do not want to admit that she was black. Black Madonna’s portray images of Mother and Child. Their faces tend to have recognizably African features. There are about 450-500 Black Madonna’s in Europe, depending on how they are classified. There are at least 180 *Vierges Noires* in France. A few are in museums, but most are in churches or shrines and are venerated by devotees. Many are associated with miracles and some attract substantial numbers of pilgrims.

Theories about the Black Madonna’s:

Interest in studying Black Madonna’s revived in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Scholars of comparative religion have suggested that Black Madonna’s are descendants of pre-Christian mother or earth goddesses. Some have highlighted Isis as the key ancestor-goddess. Although these approaches have stimulated academic interest, there is no well-established consensus about motives for carving or painting Black Madonna’s. Maybe some day soon they will admit the truth, which is that Mary and Jesus are from lands where the people are black, which means they were black.

Although no direct Catholic theological sources are available, it has also been suggested by many authors that the veneration of Black Madonna’s was in response to a line from the Song of Songs 1:5 in the Old Testament: “I am black but comely, O daughters of Jerusalem, ...” or “*Nigra sum sed formosa*” in Latin, words discussed at length in the sermons of Bernard of Clairvaux. Several surviving Black Madonna’s are inscribed with these words.

Many writers seeking to unveil the ethnicity of the Black Madonna’s suggest some combination of the following elements:

- Black Madonna’s derive from the Egyptian goddess Isis. The dark skin may echo an African archetypal mother figure. Professor Stephen Benko among others says that early Christian pictures of a seated mother and child were influenced by images of Isis and Horus.
- Black Madonna’s portrayed the original skin tone of the Virgin Mary, thus placing the figures in apt historical contexts, as Jesus’ family was more likely than not to have African colors and features.

- Black Madonna's express a feminine beauty and power not fully conveyed by a pale-skinned Mary, who seems to symbolize gentler qualities like obedience and submission. The suggestion that Black Madonna's represent feminine power may be linked with the earth goddesses and attributed to the archetypal "great mother" who presides not only over fertility, but over life and death. These ideas overlap with "feminist spirituality" or "women's spirituality".
- Some Black Madonna's were created because the artists had knowledge of the African lineage of Mary and the son Jesus.

The fact that Jesus was a made and initiated in the African Mystery System; that Jesus was taught and did study at various subsidiary lodges of the Grand Lodge of Luxor in Africa. The fact that it was in Africa that Jesus was identified as an Essene, whom were Black Africans and largely responsible for much of the teachings credited to Jesus, brings me to realize Africa as the geographical home of Jesus, and his journey through life.

**The African Mystery System was the Educational System of Africa. It was called a 'mystery' by E. Budge, the Famous white Egyptologist, and other European scholars; but it was not a mystery to Africans. It encompassed many branches of knowledge, including all of the sciences, philosophy, and physics; all of the liberal arts; and of course, religion, various languages, and metaphysics. The foundation of that which was later called Greek philosophy comes directly from the African Mystery System. This is the type of environment you should expect a man like Jesus to retain and evangelize.**