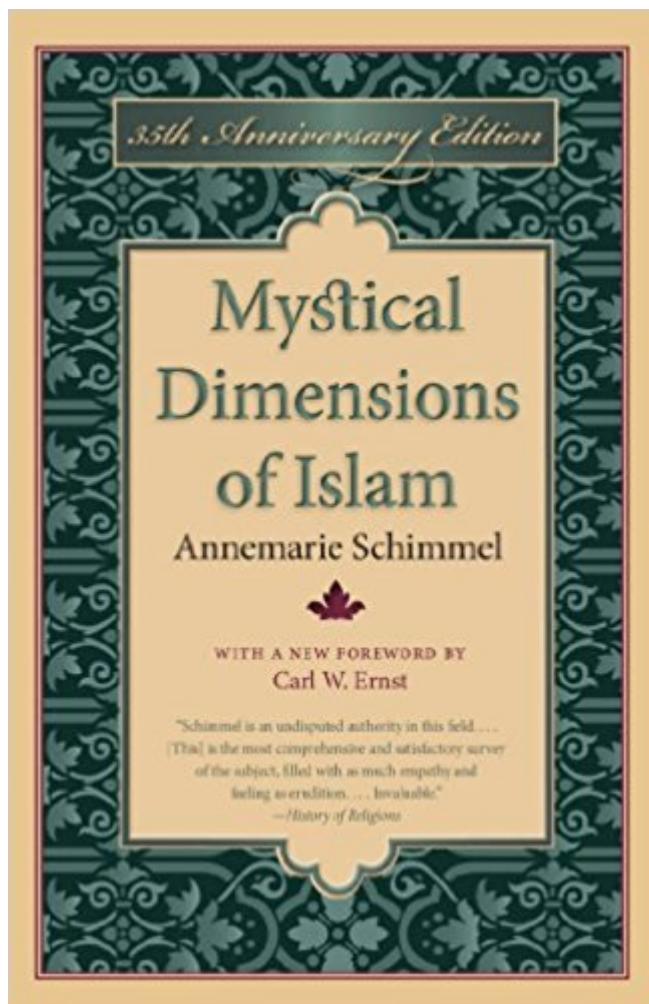


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Mystical Dimensions Of Islam



Synopsis

Thirty-five years after its original publication, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* still stands as the most valuable introduction to Sufism, the main form of Islamic mysticism. This edition brings to a new generation of readers Annemarie Schimmel's historical treatment of the transnational phenomenon of Sufism, from its beginnings through the nineteenth century. Schimmel's sensitivity and deep understanding of Sufism--its origins, development, and historical context--as well as her erudite examination of Sufism as reflected in Islamic poetry, draw readers into the mood, the vision, and the way of the Sufi. In the foreword, distinguished Islam scholar Carl W. Ernst comments on the continuing vitality of Schimmel's book and the advances in the study of Sufism that have occurred since the work first appeared.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Schimmel is an undisputed authority in this field. . . . [This] is the most comprehensive and satisfactory survey of the subject, filled with as much empathy and feeling as erudition. . . . Invaluable.--History of ReligionsComprehensive, detailed, and combines sophistication in religious studies with high-level competence in the original sources. . . . Provides far more detail, depth of analysis, breadth of geographical coverage, and sustained clear explication and interpretation of individual topics than can be found in any other survey [of Sufism] in English.--Journal of Near Eastern StudiesA major addition to the literature on [Sufism], surpassing in scope and detail all general surveys of Sufism that have hitherto been attempted in western languages. It is destined to become not only a standard introductory textbook, but also a primary source of reference for those

who concern themselves, in more specialized manner, with this dimension of Islam. . . . Rich, learned, comprehensive and attractiveâ |a waymark in the western scholarly study of Sufism.--Journal of the American Oriental SocietyBeautifully written. . . . The best and most comprehensive study on Islamic mysticism in the English language.--Religious Studies ReviewStudents of Islam and of comparative religion--as well as those who respond to mysticism--are deeply in the author's debt for giving us what will surely be the standard treatment of Sufism for a long time to come.--AmericaCombines scholarly criticism with sympathetic appreciation. . . . Progresses historically from the rise of Islam to the modern day, with ample commentary and phenomenological discussion." --Journal of the American Academy of ReligionOne of the best general books on Sufism.--The Jewish Quarterly ReviewA superb achievement. . . . The author has read all the mystics in the original, and all the important works by European scholars. Yet this solid scholarship (evidenced also by the very full bibliography) is completely hidden by a charming and eminently readable style, and by a sureness and lightness of touch which retain the interest of the reader and carry him effortless along.--Journal of Semitic StudiesThe approach is comprehensive and informal, the style anecdotal and entertaining, the author's erudition never obtrusive but always reassuringly present." --Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of LondonA truly beautiful book. . . . Radiates an elegance of style. . . . Replete not only with the poetic insight of the author but with her unquestioned scholarly mastery over materials from the vast culture-sphere of Islam.--International Journal for Philosophy of Religion[Assists] the reader in gaining an appreciation of [Sufism's] multifaceted richness. . . . An excellent introduction to the study of the subject.--The International Journal of African Historical StudiesA well-balanced and perceptive general introduction to Sufism. . . . It is more than an historical account of the development of Sufism; it also deals with the cultural manifestations of mysticism in Islam.--Contemporary Sociology

Mystical Dimensions of Islam, from its first appearance in 1975, has become the standard English-language handbook on the subject of Sufism. . . . No scholar in the last half of the twentieth century had a greater impact on the study of Islamic mysticism than Annemarie Schimmel.--Carl W. Ernst, from the foreword

Schimmel's book is a beautiful, respectful, and scholarly study of Sufism, and its related movements within science, mysticism, literature, poetry and state structures. It is a product of many years of insight and erudition, the fruit of dedicated research, and gives vast insight into these mystical and

poetic aspects of Islamic civilisation. It is a very rewarding book. However, it is worth noting that in recent decades, these expressions within Islam are increasingly viewed as heresy, and even as non Islamic, especially since the hardening of attitudes within Islam as a result of being attacked by Western crusaders. The rapidly growing movement towards Wahhabi and Salafi ways of life and belief are putting paid to much of the expression that Schimmel describes in her book. It is accurate to say that many Salafi and Wahhabi adherents would consider much of what Schimmel describes in her research as un- Islamic, and would label it as haram and the lifestyle of the Kaffir, whilst other contemporary scholars might view it as orientalist. It is a beautiful, insightful book that Schimmel has written -- but, it is also somewhat poignant - if one is at all aware of socio political changes of the past decade, one cannot help but get the impression that the Islam she describes is no longer fully accepted in most of the Islamic world. The relentless Western attacks on Muslim society have made Islam far more austere, rigid, and wary of outside influences and free, controversial expressions of spirituality. Read Nir Rosen and Robert Fisk to learn more about the Muslim world's reaction to the savage Western attacks since the late 40's to the present time, and it will be clear why more and more Muslims are turning to an arguably more intolerant, conservative form of religious expression. Nir Rosen(a journalist of Iranian Jewish Mizrahi origin) reports that before the American led attack on Iraq, a number of ancient religions existed and even thrived, together, in harmony. Mandeans, Shia, Sunni, Christian, and other Gnostic sects had lived side by side, with a degree of freedom and respect, that was indeed, sometimes brutally compromised but for the most part, had lasted for centuries. Schimmel's beautiful work seems to represent forms of Islamic expression that have largely decreased now, or, certainly have been put under pressure.

A luminous scholar with poetic sensitivity to her subject.

Good book. Very thorough. Captures the more spiritual side as well as the historical side of this subject.

Still the best book on this subject.

This is an excellent book. Definitely my favorite. I loved reading it. It is an amazing combination of significant content and beautiful English. I recommend start reading from the 3rd chapter. A friend of mine started reading and said: "Sometimes you read a book and say 'Aha!', while reading this book you go 'Aha!... Aha!... Aha!... ...' A must read for those interested in Islam and Muslim culture, and

also for those who are from a Muslim background.

The book is quite good and has lot of information about Sufism and it's route

Where do I begin? This book, although old (and, some would argue - perhaps fairly - a bit dated), is an incredible scholarly work on how various mystics within Islam have understood Islam's central claim: "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is His Prophet". According to Schimmel, all of Islamic mysticism can be summed up as trying to understand this core doctrine. Unlike some scholars today who pay more attention to differences than continuity, Schimmel's book outlines the many, many currents of Islamic thought without coming to conclusions such as "Well, it is really impossible to say what is or is not Islamic mysticism". Instead, she looks at the historical development of mystical Islamic thought, noting both consistencies and deviations, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, the noble and the shameful. The ability to walk the fine line between excessive praise and excessive criticism of a given religious tradition - in this case Islam - is walked with great care and balance by Schimmel. She recognizes that the basic goal of the mystics of Islam was to be true witnesses to Islam's central claim but that this was not always achieved. One of the most fascinating streams of mystical Islamic thought is the understanding of the soul. This topic is discussed many times as Schimmel notes the views of different mystics; for those looking for a way out of the dead end that much of secular psychotherapy has given us, the understanding of people as containing both higher and lower natures - as well as a fundamental need for God - is something that is worth chewing on. That this view is the same as that held by classical Christianity is worth noting (and Schimmel regularly notes similarities to other religious traditions throughout her work). This book is a thick read - in fact, it is highly detailed and can become a bit confusing at points, especially when Schimmel begins to discuss yet another person by the same name; it will take time to get through. Nonetheless, it is a highly rewarding read and, for those that seek to understand the religion of Islam better, this book will help to paint *some* of that picture in a more detailed manner.

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