



Teachings of Sufism

By Carl W. Ernst Ph.D.

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The prose and verse readings in this book were chosen to interest the many people who have become attracted to Sufi teachings through their exposure to popular Sufi poetry, music, and dance. The selections—mostly from the Middle East and India, ranging from the tenth to the twentieth century—provide a sampling of Sufi thought on some of the basic aspects of this spiritual path.

Most of the readings are published here in English for the first time. Brief introductory remarks place each selection into its historical and religious context, and an index of Qur'anic passages helps the reader to trace the extensive allusions to the Islamic holy scriptures.

The topics covered include:

- The nature of mystical love
- Meditation
- Listening to music as a spiritual practice
- Ethical teachings of Sufism
- Pitfalls on the spiritual path
- Spiritual companionship and the master-disciple relationship
- The importance of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad
- Biographical accounts of great mystics, including the poet Rumi as well as several female saints

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In Carl Ernst's well-received *Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, he laments the scarcity of traditional Sufi texts in English. In *Teachings of Sufism*, Ernst sets out to make amends. His reach is broad, spanning three languages, 10 centuries, and numerous countries and cultures. He divides his brief texts into sections such as Spiritual Practice, Mastery and Discipleship, and Lives of the Saints, with special attention given to his section on listening to sacred music, which "becomes a way of transporting oneself back to that moment of harmony with God in pre-eternity." Also included are selections on lives of Sufi women and the prominent role of the Qur'an in Sufi mysticism. A scholar first, Ernst never himself crosses the line into sectarianism or proselytizing in his introductions, but the unflagging devotion that imbues the pages of his translations is enough to attune anyone's ear to the divine music of life. --*Brian Bruya*

From Library Journal

With only a few exceptions, the mystical tradition of Sufism has received little attention outside Muslim countries. Ernst's carefully constructed anthology and Barks and Green's entertaining volume are among the best recent examples of new interest in--and improved publications about--the subject. Ernst (religious studies, Univ. of North Carolina) uses translations from primary sources and his own fine connecting material to shed crucial light on topics such as ethics, music, the mystical understanding of the Qur'an, and saints. (He is especially good on the lives of Sufism's women saints.) This book, which does not dilute or Westernize the originals, should become an essential introduction. Barks and Green's work is more popular in approach and limited in scope, but it is a delightful, skillfully written, and imaginatively illustrated book; it too seems indispensable for a beginner in the mystical traditions of Islam. For most collections. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

About the Author

Carl W. Ernst, Ph.D., is professor and chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A specialist in Islamic mysticism, he has spent research tours in Pakistan, India, and Turkey. He is also the author of *Words and Ecstasy in Sufism* and the translator of *The Unveiling of Secrets: Diary of a Sufi Master* by Ruzbihan Baqli.

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