



Imaginary Muslims: The Uwaysi Sufis of Central Asia

Julian Baldick

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The Uwaysis--who take their name from Uways, a contemporary of the prophet Mohammad who is reputed to have communicated with him telepathically--are Muslim mystics who look for instruction to the spirit of the dead or physically absent person. Julian Baldick here surveys the legend of Uways and the Uwaysi phenomenon within Sufism, Islam's main mystical tradition.

Baldick examines the Uwaysi movement in 16th-century East Turkistan (now Xinjiang in northwest China) and then discusses the book the central text in the development of the sect, History of the Uwaysis, written by Ahmad of Uzgen around 1600. Analyzing the intricate combination of Biblical motifs, shamanistic initiation rites, and Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist legends, Baldick argues that an understanding of the Uwaysi sect reveals many of the paradoxes which lie at the heart of Islam. The first definitive study of this important sect, IMAGINARY MUSLIMS will be of central interest to all those concerned with Islamic studies, the Middle East, and the history of religion



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