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Earth in Flower - The Divine Mystery of the Cambodian Dance Drama

Paul Cravath

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An extraordinary account of Southeast Asia's most esoteric female performing art: the ancient Cambodian ballet. Since the dawn of recorded history, Khmer royalty nurtured a spiritual dance unique to their kingdom. Today, people worldwide instantly recognize the style, mistakenly associating it with Siam and Thailand. In fact, the Siamese captured the mystical dancers and their secrets upon conquering the Khmers in the 15th Century. In 1975, another wartime twist of fate gave University of Hawaii researcher Paul Cravath rare access to the formerly sequestered troupe of royal dancers, their teachers, theater and archives. The author thoroughly covers the topics of choreography, musicology, costuming and stagecraft. More surprising is learning how profoundly these women affected regional history for a millennium, as goddesses, priestesses, queens, concubines, hostages and diplomats. Earth in Flower gives new insights into this beautiful art, its dancers and how their rituals balance the Khmer relationship between heaven and earth.

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