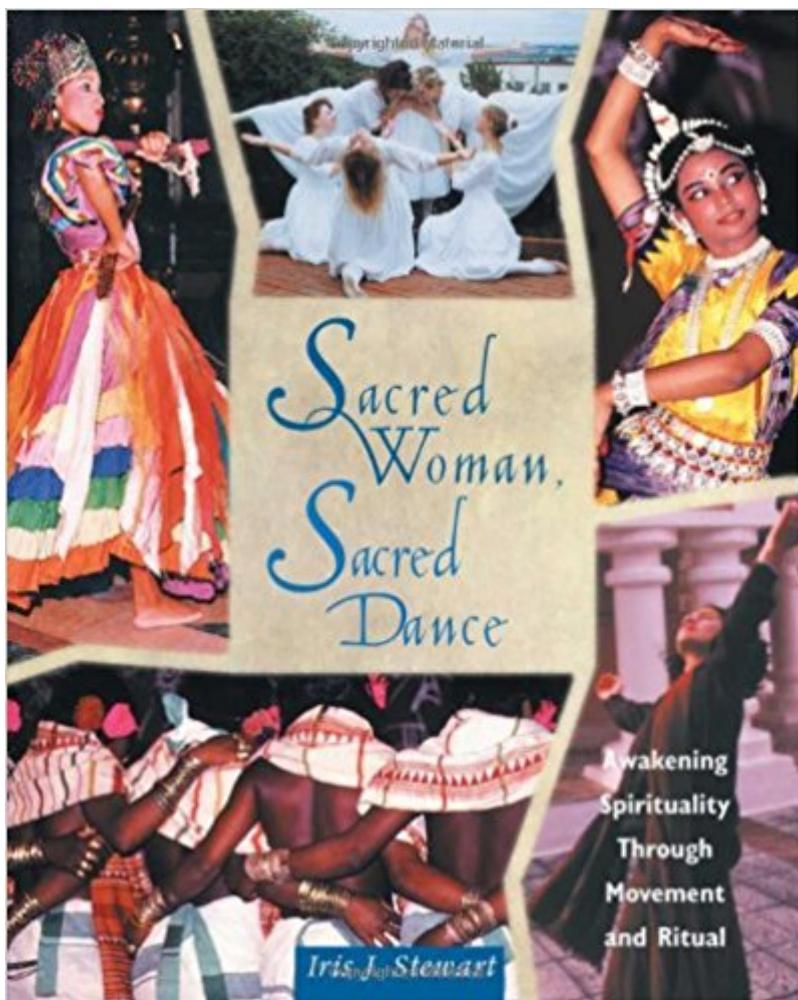


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# Sacred Woman, Sacred Dance: Awakening Spirituality Through Movement And Ritual



## **Synopsis**

Shows how dance, the highest expression of spirituality in cultures and traditions all over the world, is being integrated into the lives of women today. The first book to explore women's spiritual expression--women's ways--through a study of dance. Investigates how dance came to be excluded from worship, and reveals how dance is once again being brought into spiritual practices. Includes resources for further instruction in sacred dance. Today we primarily think of dance as a form of entertainment or as a way to exercise or socialize. There was a time, however, when dance was considered the way to commune with the divine, a part of life's journey, celebrating the seasons and rhythms of the year and the rhythms of our lives. Dance is a language that reunites the body, mind, and soul. While the role of women's sacred dance was most valued in goddess-worshipping cultures where women served as priestesses and healers, dance was once an integral part of religious ritual and ceremonial expression in cultures all over the world, including Judaism and Christianity. In this book the author investigates how dance came to be excluded from worship and reveals how dance is once again being integrated into spiritual practices. *Sacred Woman, Sacred Dance* is the first book to explore women's spiritual expression--women's ways--through a study of dance. It describes sacred circles, birth rituals, ecstatic dances, and dances of loss and grief (in groups and individually) that allow women to integrate the movements of faith, healing, and power into their daily life.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"If we seek the real source of the dance, if we go to nature, we find that the dance of the future is the dance of the past, the dance of eternity, and has been and will always be the same." (Isadora Duncan)"This is a marvelous and unique exploration of women's spirituality through a study of dance. It is beautifully illustrated with inspirational photos of sacred dancers. This is an excellent addition to the study of the many forms and expressions of Women's Spirituality." (Circle Magazine, Winter 2000/2001)"Her bibliography and notes are extensive. She doesn't leave hanging the reader who wants to learn more about or participate in sacred dance, but offers several pages of resources. The book is not only a history of women and dance, but a textbook for performing sacred dances." (Katie Watts, Argus-Courier Online)"Exceptional." (Today's Books, August 2000)"This book is the first to explore women's spiritual expression in the study of dance. In reclaiming our connection to sacred dance, we regain a valuable spiritual expression. A wonderful book!" (Catholic Women's NETWORK, January/February 2001)"Although a wealth of research is behind the text it is conveyed in a very digestible form. Myths, history, symbolism together with ancient and modern forms of dance from all cultures are drawn together to uncover the meaning behind the dance." (Frances Fawkes, The Grapevine Magazine)"Stewart has provided a multitude of lovely pictures and illustrations to underscore her discovery of the existence of earlier sacred dance and her aspiration to encourage its growth. Although all of what she describes is available elsewhere, she has performed a valuable service by bringing it together under a single cover." (Anne Apynys., Ph.D., Habibi, A Journal for Lovers of Middle Eastern Dance & Arts, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2000)"Richly illustrated with graphics and photographs from around the world (some taken at the sites by the author), this book is a record of Iris Stewart's search for evidence of the sacred- logically, historically and experientially." (Dance Magazine, March 2001, Vol. 75, No. 3)"... includes extensive source notes, bibliography and other resources, such that it could be considered a bible of sacred dance!" (The Midwest Book Review, May 2002)"Dancers will find it of special interest, but it's delightful for everyone else as well. Highly recommended." (Elizabeth Barrette, SageWoman, Summer 2002)"I don't know of another book like this one--don't miss it." (Mary K. Greer, Tarot Newsletter, Summer 2001)

WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY / DANCE   " If we seek the real source of the dance, if we go to nature, we find that the dance of the future is the dance of the past, the dance of eternity, and has been and will always be the same." --Isadora Duncan Today we primarily think of dance as a form of entertainment or as a way to exercise or socialize. There was a time, however, when dance was considered the highest expression of our spirituality in our search for the communion

with the divine, a part of life's journey, celebrating the seasons and rhythms of the year and the rhythms of our lives. Dance is a language that reunites the body, mind, and soul. Through dance we experience a different dimension. *Sacred Woman, Sacred Dance* is the first book to explore women's spiritual expression--women's ways--through a study of dance. While the role of women's sacred dance was most valued in goddess-worshipping cultures where women served as priestesses and healers, dance was once an integral part of religious ritual and ceremonial expression in cultures all over the world, including Judaism and Christianity. In this book the author investigates how dance came to be excluded from worship and reveals how dance is once again being integrated into spiritual practices, both in public forums and on a deeply personal and private level. There are sacred dances for all occasions in life's passages. Stewart describes sacred circles, birth rituals, ecstatic dances, and dances of loss and grief (in groups and individually) that allow us to integrate the movements of faith, healing, and power into our daily life. IRIS J. STEWART has taught dance and lectured on women's subjects for over twenty years. She is the founder of WomanDance, a troupe which performs interpretive dances that explore women's spirituality. To research this book, Stewart visited archaeological sites throughout Europe, the Middle East, and South America. She lives in northern California.

An excellent resource for anyone wanting to know the history of sacred dance through the present day.

Great read

The book is in great shape! Also, the price was wonderful. This book was a bargain to buy! Thank you

nice resource, on time!

I enjoyed this book because it had a very different paradigm from other books on the origins of belly dance. Very informational and inspiring.

This book was suggested to me to read by my dance teacher. We are about to embark on sacred dance, something I have never tried before, this book was very helpful to me. This book has a lot of information in it and it is a nice read.

This book has an unusual approach to the history of dance. It has lovely photos/illustrations, and thorough notations throughout. I recommend it for its unique approach to dance, but not for its (sometimes suspect) history. It's an interesting book, with a lot of information. I can see using this book as a form of meditation I suppose that's as spiritual as you want it to be. There are interesting ideas here, and women who are exploring the meaning and origin of dance will probably find it a good read. As women's studies (which is one of the subjects this book falls into), it's a little lacking. She doesn't really provide enough hard evidence with some of her theories and interpretations to consider this a scholarly work. Women who are interested in the goddess will also find value in this book. I recommend it as an interesting read, as long as the reader understands that much of what she writes is an interpretation of history, and cobbled together from whatever sources were available. Since much of women's history was never written, interpretation is necessary, of course, but I don't know how much is interpretation and how much is embellishment.

This is an extraordinary book. Just picking the book up for the first time, we see that it is filled with illustrations, from the most ancient to the most contemporary, of the sacred dances of the world's greatest cultural traditions. We are struck immediately by the powerful, feminine nature of dance, ultimately the celebration of the mystery of the feminine. The text, at once scholarly, informed, personal and at times touching the ecstatic, takes us to the inner spirit of the dance as a uniquely feminine expression. Lines like the following from the book leap out at the reader: "The belly dance in the context of the birth ritual...was done not to project eroticism or to present the woman as a lure but to display a consciousness of the wonder of birth and the awesom power of motherhood." (p. 83) This book definitely opens our eyes to the sacred nature of dance and to its importance down through the ages for celebrating and teaching the great mysteries that defy verbal expression or scientific scrutiny. If we dare take it seriously, and Iris Stewart gives us every reason that we should, then it may be one of the most effective ways open to us for healing our relationship to nature. Because the book is so beautifully designed and illustrated, in an oversized format, it is a wonderful gift--but not your usual "gift book" or innocuous "coffee table" book. Its beauty extends deep into a brilliant text.

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