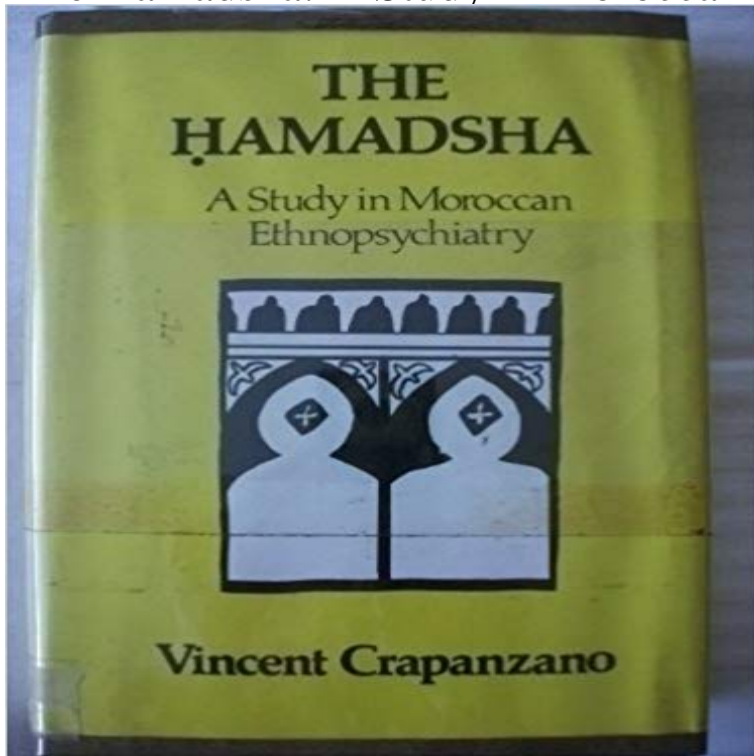


The Hamadsha: A Study in Moroccan Ethnopsychiatry



The book was published 40 years ago. The Hamadsha, members of a Moroccan religious brotherhood that traces its spiritual ancestry back to two Muslim saints of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, have achieved a certain notoriety for their head-slashing and other acts of self-mutilation while in entranced states. Appealing largely to the illiterate Arab masses, the Hamadsha brotherhood has been regarded by scholars as a degenerate offshoot of the Islamic mystical tradition. Its beliefs and practices have been viewed as an unstructured amalgam of beliefs and practices of the ancient Mediterranean and of sub-Saharan Africa with others of Islam. The author, Mr. Crapanzano sees Hamadsha beliefs and practices as forming a structured symbolic set interpretive of their experiential world. Unlike many other North African religious brotherhoods, the Hamadsha are concerned less with mystical union with Allah than with curing the demon-struck and demon-possessed. Saints, demons, and a mana-like quality called baraka, chartered by hagiographic legends and intergrated with the socio-economic organization of the brotherhood, explain reactions that the Western observer would often classify as hysterical, depressive, or even schizophrenic. (Inside front flap)

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