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A Short History Of The Ismailis: Traditions Of A Muslim Community (The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys)



Synopsis

Despite being one of the key Shi'i Muslim communities, the Ismailis were until recently studied primarily on the basis of the accounts of their enemies. This new introduction is the first to be based on modern scholarship, taking account of recently recovered Ismaili texts. It covers all the main developments in the major phases of Ismaili history, from the early formative period, through the Fatamid golden age and the Alamut and post-Alamut periods, to more recent history. Dealing only with the most important historical developments, this is a comprehensive and accessible survey for all newcomers to the subject.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the mind-bogglingly complicated world of Islam there is perhaps no more difficult group to understand than the Ismailis. Yet Daftary has made a good fist of doing so here and gets top marks for his efforts. Make no mistake, this is an extremely dense book with a wealth of academic detail. It would be easy to lose the reader with a subject such as this, but Daftary has that rarest of skills - he writes extremely well and has great style, even though this is most definitely a scholarly work. That combination alone is a rare thing indeed...The Ismailis are one of many Shiite groups and one of the smaller and less understood Shiite groups at that. The majority of Shiites today are to be found in Iran, where the so-called "Twelver" system prevails. What this means is that most Shiites believe that there were twelve Imams, the first being Ali, the twelfth being the Mahdi, who is currently in a state of occultation and will return on the day of judgement. By contrast, the Ismailis are known as

"Seveners", after a schism within the Shiite sphere following a disagreement about who should be the seventh Imam. The "Seveners" proclaimed Ismail to be the rightful Imam, hence their name. Another major group within the Shiite world are the "Fivers", who also disputed the succession of Imams and followed Zayd - hence their being known as the Zaydis. The Zaydis are still commonly found today in Morocco and Yemen, but up until the time of the Safavids, some 500 years ago, they were the largest Shiite group. Of these major Shiite denominations the "Ismaili Seveners" have the most colorful history.

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