



The 'Alids: The First Family of Islam, 750-1200

By Teresa Bernheimer

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The 'Alids are the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, the elite family of Islam. The respect and veneration they are accorded is unparalleled in Islamic society, regardless of political or religious affiliation. They have played a major role in Islamic history: famous early rebels and founders of major Islamic sects, and many rulers - such as the 10th-century Fatimids in Egypt, the current kings of Jordan and Morocco, Ayatollah Khomeini and the Aga Khan - all claimed 'Alid descent.

This first in-depth study of the 'Alids focuses on the crucial formative period from the Abbasid Revolution to the Saljuq period, 750-1100. Exploring the rise of the 'Alids as a social phenomenon, the author asks how this family attained and extended its status over the centuries.

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Review

"The study is meticulous and well-referenced, with ample support from primary sources in addition to active engagement with contemporary literature... valuable to anyone wishing to study the social phenomenon of the 'Alids or medieval Islamic history in general." - Amina Inloes, American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences

"Bernheimer has produced a short, readable, and captivating study of an often overlooked aspect of medieval Islamic societies... In particular, the book would supplement a class on Shi'ism, elegantly making a point about the extent to which most Muslims held the family of the Prophet in high esteem, regardless of their sectarian affiliation." -- Adam Gaiser, Journal of the American Oriental Society

About the Author

Teresa Bernheimer is Lecturer in the History of the Near and Middle East in the Early Islamic Period at SOAS, University of London. She is co-editor of Late Antiquity: Eastern Perspectives (2011).

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