

The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, a Search for Salvation

Shafique N. Virani

None of that people should be spared, not even the babe in its cradle. With these chilling words, the Mongol warlord Genghis Khan declared his intention to destroy the Ismailis, one of the most intellectually and politically significant Muslim communities of medieval Islamdom. The massacres that followed convinced observers that this powerful voice of Shii Islam had been forever silenced. Little was heard of these people for centuries, until their recent and dramatic emergence from obscurity. Today they exist as a dynamic and thriving community established in over twenty-five countries. Yet the interval between what appeared to have been their total annihilation, and their modern, seemingly phoenix-like renaissance, has remained shrouded in mystery. Drawing on an astonishing array of sources gathered from many countries around the globe, *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, A Search for Salvation* is a richly nuanced and compelling study of the murkiest portion of this era. In probing the period from the dark days when the Ismaili fortresses in Iran fell before the marauding Mongol hordes, to the emergence at Anjudan of the Ismaili Imams who provided a spiritual centre to a scattered community, this work explores the motivations, passions and presumptions of historical actors. With penetrating insight, Shafique N. Virani examines the rich esoteric thought that animated the Ismailis and enabled them to persevere. A work of remarkable erudition, this landmark book is essential reading for scholars of Islamic history and spirituality, Shiism and Iran. Both specialists and informed lay readers will take pleasure not only in its scholarly perception, but in its lively anecdotes, quotations of delightful poetry, and gripping narrative style. This is an extraordinary book of historical beauty and spiritual vision.

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Editorial

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