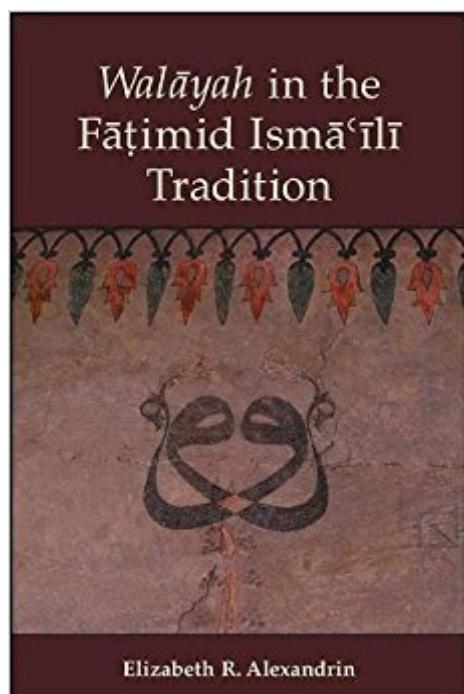


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Walayah In The Fatimid Isma'ili Tradition



Synopsis

In this original study, Elizabeth R. Alexandrin examines the complex relationships that can be inscribed between medieval Ismā'īlī thought as an intellectual tradition with a devotional practice of reliance on the imām, and as a politico-esoteric system that redefined governance during the Fātimid caliphate in the eleventh century. Alexandrin's work is a departure from recent Western scholarship that focuses on similarities among early Islamic traditions. She argues instead that, under the guidance of the Fātimid Ismā'īlī chief missionary al-Mu'ayyad fī al-Dār al-Shāfi'iyya (d. 1078 CE), the concept of walāyah (divine guidance) became closely associated with religio-political authority, on the one hand, and the perfection of the individual human being, on the other. By signaling and affirming how the Fātimid caliph-imāms were the heirs of walāyah and by proposing new definitions of the "seal of God's friends" (khātim al-awliyā' Allāh), al-Mu'ayyad broadened the contexts of making esoteric knowledge public and shifted the apocalyptic frameworks of Islamic messianism.

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