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Sommario/riassunto	This first in-depth study of the 'Alids focuses on the crucial formative period from the Abbasid Revolution to the end of the Seljuq period. Exploring their rise from both a religious point of view and as a social phenomenon, Bernheimer investigates how they attained and extended the family's status over the centuries. 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. And they have played a major role Islamic history, from famous early rebels to the founders and eponyms of major Islamic sects, and from 9th-century Moroccan and 10th-century Egyptian rulers to the current King of Jordan, the Ayatollah Khomeini and the Aga Khan.