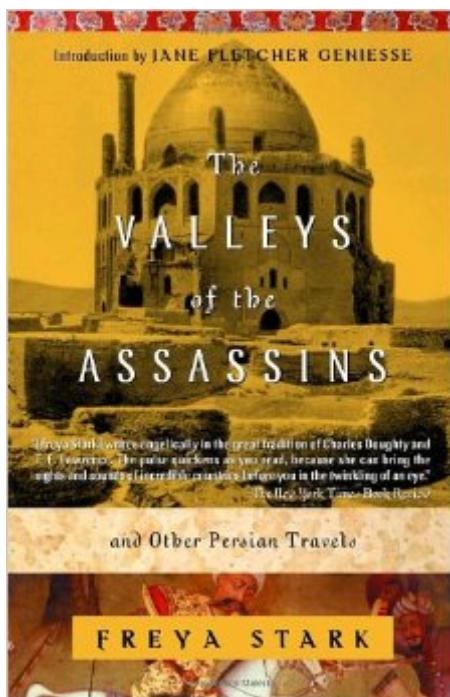


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The Valleys Of The Assassins: And Other Persian Travels (Modern Library Paperbacks)



Synopsis

Hailed as a classic upon its first publication in 1934, *The Valleys of the Assassins* firmly established Freya Stark as one of her generation's most intrepid explorers. The book chronicles her travels into Luristan, the mountainous terrain nestled between Iraq and present-day Iran, often with only a single guide and on a shoestring budget. Stark writes engagingly of the nomadic peoples who inhabit the region's valleys and brings to life the stories of the ancient kingdoms of the Middle East, including that of the Lords of Alamut, a band of hashish-eating terrorists whose stronghold in the Elburz Mountains Stark was the first to document for the Royal Geographical Society. Her account is at once a highly readable travel narrative and a richly drawn, sympathetic portrait of a people told from their own compelling point of view. This edition includes a new Introduction by Jane Fletcher Geniesse, Stark's biographer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've read two other volumes by Freya Stark ("Alexander's Path" and "Rome on the Euphrates") and thoroughly enjoyed both of them. But I can't quite give this volume an unequivocal rave. I think the main problem was that I was led into false expectations both by the title and the subject matter heading (HISTORY/LITERATURE) that appears on the back of this paperback edition. While any book by Freya Stark will afford significant pleasures, prospective readers should be aware that there really isn't very much history in this volume, and what there is isn't always reliable (serious historians don't believe the Assassins smoked hashish, or that their chief deceived them with a

pleasure garden that they thought was a foretaste of paradise). Thus, if you're primarily interested in learning about the fascinating medieval heretical/terrorist sect known as the Assassins or the archaeology of its storied castles in Iran's Elburz Mountains, you should look elsewhere (to Bernard Lewis's "The Assassins", for a general history, and to Peter Willey's "The Castles of the Assassins" for archaeological information). Stark does deserve credit for rediscovering the site of the Assassin castle of Lamiasar (of which the book does include a good sketch plan), but the two chapters which deal with Lamiasar and the main Assassin castle of Alamut comprise barely a seventh of the book. The implied emphasis in the title - "The Valleys of the Assassins and Other Persian Travels" - is thus exactly the opposite of what it should be, for it's the "Other Persian Travels" that are the focus of the book.

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