



MIROIR DE L'ORIENT MUSULMAN

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About a century before the four canonical books of the Shī'a were composed, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Barqī (d. 888 or 894 CE), a scholar from the city of Qum, compiled a large collection of Imāmī traditions embracing all aspects of religious life, from cosmogony and cosmology to the minutest details of daily life. This compilation, of which only ten percent has come down to us, forms one of the earliest Shī'ī texts extant, and is the basis for Vilozny's delineation of the Shī'ī worldview in this formative, pre-Twelve era. Shī'ī ideology, the author argues, did not grow in a vacuum but resulted from the fusion of Islamic Arab elements with pre-Islamic, mythic and gnostic traditions. The book discusses at length three fundamental notions which permeate every part of al-Barqī's work: the Shī'a are God's elect; an eternal fierce battle is waged between good and evil on both the universal and individual levels; and the history of humankind, from before creation to the end of time, was predetermined by God. As shown by the author, the Shī'ī attempt to accommodate all three ideas within its world perception often resulted in glaring contradictions to which only partial solutions could be provided at the time.

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CONSTRUCTING A WORLDVIEW
Al-Barqī's Role in the Making of Early Shī'ī Faith



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