



The Origins of the Sh?'a: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century K?fa (Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization)

Najam Haider

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The Sunni-Shi'a schism is often framed as a dispute over the identity of the successor to Muhammad. In reality, however, this fracture only materialized a century later in the important southern Iraqi city of Kufa (present-day Najaf). This book explores the birth and development of Shi'i identity. Through a critical analysis of legal texts, whose provenance has only recently been confirmed, the study shows how the early Shi'a carved out independent religious and social identities through specific ritual practices and within separate sacred spaces. In this way, the book addresses two seminal controversies in the study of early Islam, namely the dating of Kufan Shi'i identity and the means by which the Shi'a differentiated themselves from mainstream Kufan society. This is an important, original and path-breaking book that marks a significant development in the study of early Islamic society.

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