



# **Kitab al-Ma'arif by Abu Sa'id Maymun b. Qasim al-Tabarani: Critical Edition with an Introduction (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta)**

*M Bar-Asher*

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The Nusayri-'Alawi faith is an excellent example of a syncretistic esoteric religion with self-conscious elite who zealously guarded its sectarian literature. The faith fuses elements of cults and creeds of ancient pagan religions, Persian religion, Christianity, Gnosticism, Sunni and especially Shi'i Islam, in a syncretistic system that is clothed in heterodox Shi'i garb. This book presents a critical edition and study of Kitab al-Ma'arif (Book of Knowledge), authored by the early 11th century sage Abu Sa'id Maymun b. Qasim al-Tabarani. Al-Tabarani was an outstanding communal leader and theologian in the formative period of the Nusayri religion, and became a prominent figure in the golden chain of Nusayri tradition. This seminal work is a compendium of Nusayri theology and liturgy, forming part of al-Tabarani's larger project to systematize the beliefs and practices of the developing religion and to consolidate its self-definition through a corpus of religious paideia. As such, this work, together with al-Tabarani's other writings, played a crucial role in transforming the meaning and practice of Islam by shaping the new religion's identity as the true Shi'a, reminiscent of antinomian Pauline Christianity and its definition of verus Israel.

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