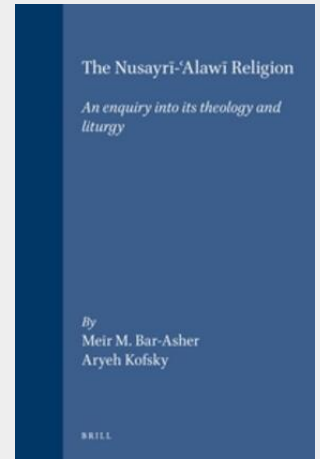


The Nusayri-ʿAlawi Religion: An Enquiry Into Its Theology and Liturgy

The Nusayris - also known as 'Alawis -have been in power in Syria for the past three decades. Little is known of their origins or their long history, while their religious creeds and thought are somewhat better known. The main reason for our fragmentary knowledge of the Nusayri religion is that, since its beginnings, it has always been the secret faith of a self-conscious elite that zealously guarded its sectarian literature. The Nusayri-'Alawi faith is a clear example of a syncretistic religion. It combines and fuses elements of cults and creeds of very disparate, and remote, origins. Among these are various pagan beliefs (residues of ancient Mesopotamian and Syrian cults), as well as Persian, Christian, Gnostic, and Muslim - both Sunni and Shi'i - religious precepts and practices. All these components have been brought together in a syncretistic religious system that has assumed a heterodox Shi'i garb. The present volume presents a mosaic of fundamental aspects of Nusayri theology and liturgy. It demonstrates the complexity of Nusayri theology and the diversity of religious thought within the Nusayri fold.

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185,50 €

173,36 € (zzgl. MwSt.)

Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9789004125520

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-90-04-12552-0

Verlag: Brill

Erscheinungstermin: 30.06.2002

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 2002

Serie: Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture

Produktform: Gebunden

Gewicht: 625 g

Seiten: 244

Format (B x H): 164 x 245 mm

