



## The Formation of Islamic Hermeneutics

### How Sunni Legal Theorists Imagined a Revealed Law

by David Vishanoff

#### DESCRIPTION:

This book is the first historical analysis of those parts of Islamic legal theory that deal with the language of revelation, and a milestone in reconstructing the missing history of legal theory in the ninth and tenth centuries. It offers a fresh interpretation of al-Shafii's seminal thought, and traces the development of four different responses to his hermeneutic, culminating in the works of Ibn Hazm, Abd al-Jabbar, al-Baqillani, and Abu Yala Ibn al-Farra. It reveals startling connections between rationalism and literalism, and documents how the remarkable diversity that characterized even traditionalist schools of law was eclipsed in the fifth/eleventh century by a pragmatic hermeneutic that gave jurists the interpretive power and flexibility they needed to claim revealed status for their legal doctrines. More than a detailed and richly documented history, this book opens new avenues for the comparative study of legal and hermeneutical theories, and offers new insights into unstated premises that shape and restrict Muslim legal discourse today. The book is of interest to all occupied with classical Islam, the development of Islamic law, and comparative hermeneutical research.

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