



## **The Ikhwan al-Safa and their Rasa'il: An Introduction (Epistles of the Brethren of Purity)**

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## **The Ikhwan al-Safa and their Rasa'il: An Introduction (Epistles of the Brethren of Purity)**

Ikhwan al-Safa' (The Brethren of Purity) were the anonymous adepts of a tenth-century esoteric fraternity of lettered urbanites that was principally based in Basra and Baghdad. This brotherhood occupied a prominent station in the history of science and philosophy in Islam due to the wide reception and assimilation of their monumental encyclopedia: *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa'* (*The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*). This compendium contained fifty-two epistles that offered synoptic explications of the classical sciences and philosophies of the age. Divided into four classificatory parts, it treated themes in mathematics, logic, natural philosophy, psychology, metaphysics and theology, in addition to moral and didactic fables. The Ikhwan were learned compilers of scientific and philosophical knowledge, and their *Rasa'il* constituted a paradigmatic legacy in the canonization of philosophy and the sciences in mediaeval Islamic civilization.

This present volume gathers studies by leading philosophers, historians and scholars of Islamic Studies, who are also the editors and translators of the first Arabic critical editions and first complete annotated English translations of the *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa'*, which will be published in the OUP Series that this present volume initiates, as well as being members of the Editorial Board.

The chapters of this present volume explore the conceptual and historical aspects of the philosophical and scientific contents of the *Rasa'il* and their classification, as well as investigating the authorship and dating of this corpus and the impact that the Ikhwan's intellectual tradition exercised in the unfolding of the history of ideas in Islam.

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