



People from the Desert : Pre-Islamic Arabs in History and Culture

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To explore Pre-Islamic Arabia is quite a challenge for two reasons. First, the written sources which provide us with a historical account of the period are essentially written by non-local (e.g., Greeks, Romans) historians rather than Arabs. Pre-Islamic texts, essentially poetry, are perhaps the only ancient Arab documents that help us understand the history of that period. Second, the puzzling almost paradoxical structure of the Pre-Islamic society makes it even more challenging to analyze it or give a logical account of it. This explains the importance of this book. *People from the Desert: Pre-Islamic Arabs in History and Culture* represents a significant contribution to Arabic pre-Islamic culture and literature. The book provides a variety of studies that address different aspects of the history, culture and literature of the period. Some of the contributions focus on pre-Islamic religions while others explore trade, women, and literature. A number of well-known pre-Islamic poets are studied, such as Imru I-Qays, Antarah and al-Khansa. The 13 scholars who participate in this book come from different countries (Egypt, Germany, Greece, Jordan, South Africa, Spain), as well as different disciplines (Linguistics, Literature, History of the Middle East, Arabic and Islamic Studies), representing a rich variety of ideas, perspectives and research-approaches used in the book. What they all have in common is that their studies are text based. This book is the second of the series *Textualia: Jews, Christians and Muslims in their texts*, which is dedicated for the text-based study of the culture of each of these three religions and the complex multiculturalism produced by the co-existence of these different religions through history. The present book is yet another attempt to approach an era where Christians, Jews and Pre-Islamic people lived and co-lived based on the texts produced during that era. The book can be of great interest for Arabists everywhere, the students of Arabic as a native language or a foreign language, students and professors of Arabic culture and literature, the students at departments of Semitic studies, Islamic studies and Middle Eastern studies at all universities. It can be also of interest for scholars studying geography, history and literature in general. The contributions presented in this book are simply eye opening, whetting our appetite for more. They definitely demonstrate that this period of Arab history is still almost a virgin field of study, providing various research ideas to pursue.

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