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Volume 58, Issue 2, 1 April 2014, Pages 95-127**The origin of the Arabs: A critical evaluation of the sources** (Article)

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Abstract

Jawwad Ali, the author of the *Abridged History of the Arabs before Islam* (*al-Mufakkal fi tarikh al-Arab qabl al-islam*) suggests that the Arabs can be divided into three major groups: namely the 'lost Arabs' (*al-Arab al-baladah*), the 'true Arabs' (*al-Arab al-Sanibah*) and the 'Arabised Arabs' (*al-Arab al-mustacrabah*). Evidence for this division is recorded in Ibn Ishaq's and Ibn Hisham's *Biography of the Prophet* (*al-Sirah nabawiyyah*) and at-Tabari's *History of the Communities and Kingdoms* (*Tarikh al-Ummah wal-Mulk*). Such other scholars as Ibn al-Salam al-Jumabi (a critic of early poetry) disagreed with Ibn Ishaq that poems by 'Ad and Thamud proved the existence of the Arabs as a people before the time of the Prophet Abraham. The biographer Ibn Nadir considered the verses cited by Ibn Israq to be fraudulent. The corpus of ancient Arabic poetry suffered greatly at the hands of forgers, plagiarists, misguided philologists and dishonest narrators. A number of poems were falsely ascribed to Hassan ibn Thabit, the Prophet's poet. This study examines and assesses the validity of Muslim sources on the origins of Arabs as a people.

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