

*In these studies Michael Macdonald examines the extraordinary flowering of literacy in both the settled and nomadic populations of western Arabia in the years before the birth of Islam, when a larger proportion of the population could read and write than in any other part of the ancient Near.*

This image is often paired with that of writing traces which are illegible and indistinguishable from camp remains or animal droppings, an unspeaking writing which is visually and semantically indistinguishable from its material support. Taking a media history approach allows us to see a preference for leather, recycled materials, and domestic artifacts as writing supports. This helps us understand why writing in these practices is not purely linguistic, abstract text but is associated with its visual effects, materials, and the physical activity of creating it rather than with reading it. Shoes According to medieval Islamic literature, some eighth-century scholars were known for an excessive zeal in recording religious knowledge, which led them to take notes on their leather sandals and boots fig. Coptic leather sandals, 6th CE, Egypt, P Suzanne Petersen and Celina Hoang. The accounts of disapproval of the practice of writing on shoes are part of a learned debate on the merits of purely oral transmission and memorization. In this article, rather than replicating the conceptual categories of this medieval debate, I wish to investigate the conditions for the creation of these categories. Taking into consideration that the shoes may be a trope representing the deplorable nature of taking any written notes and acting as a familiar argumentative point in the medieval debate, we can still investigate the nature of the activity that these reports describe. Were these notes that threatened to supplant memory and oral tradition even meant to be read? The reports focus on the act of writing rather than the use made of the notes, and the image of the anonymous student scribbling with his spit calls attention to the bodily activity of writing rather than the product of that writing. Perhaps it is not legibility but locality that is most significant to these practitioners. But to their wearers, their material may have been their most obvious characteristic. Vegetable-tanned leather was one of the most plentiful and convenient writing supports available in late antique Arabia, perhaps the only writing support available in certain situations. The multiple uses of a material can influence the ways in which it is used as a writing support as well as how writing itself is conceived, especially in an economy in which written literature has not been commercialized. The shoes matter because they are made of leather. In a culture and economy that sees significant re-use and recycling of leather, shoes may well attract multi-functionality. As such they are comparable to other kinds of recycled leather as a writing support. Thus this article attempts to flip the kind of question we can pose about ancient writing practices, by following the media rather than the content of writing. Asking where writing occurs rather than what it says or what is said about it allows us to divert the discussion away from a focus on the categories that we ourselves bring to this material as historians. Tracking the locations of writing brings into focus occasions where writing is unread, illegible, or otherwise indistinguishable from its media in pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia, Iraq, and Syria. The technologies of writing, particularly the recyclability of writing supports, are what create the conditions for these characteristics of writing. Leather in Domestic Material Culture The archaeological record for leather in Arabia is scarce, and so the chance of a surviving shoe carrying written text is low. The bulk of the fighting occurred in Syria, which formed the frontier zone between the two competing empires. The fourth to sixth centuries CE saw the rise of the free tribe, the obsolescence of kingdoms, the decline of urban centers, 26 and the end of the long-distance incense and luxury-goods trade which had enriched the ancient South Arabian kingdoms and the caravan cities of Arabia and Syria. Comparable to the reports on shoes, in which the concern is where the text is rather than what it contains, these references are concerned with what the documents look like, are made out of, and are used for rather than what they say. For example, the Prophet is said to have written a document for two men of the Bakr b. Yet these mini-narratives take place against the background of a culture of recycling and re-use where writing does not change the ontological or material status of a piece of leather. The handling of texts as personal objects and as objects of material culture whose linguistic contents appear secondary to their physical material most strikingly could even apply to scripture. But beyond the exegetical and legal debate this story is part of,

its dissemination reveals that such treatment of written scripture was commonplace enough to remain unremarked. The leather sandals and patches and scraps of waste do not become written objects when written upon but remain whatever objects of mundane use or disuse they are. These traditions are remnants of a culture that, although understanding writing as a carrier of linguistic meaning, could also privilege the material of writing over its linguistic contents. Resisting the parameters of the classical Islamic debate on memorization, I argue that we should not make sense of these practices by assigning the rightful place of text in this culture to interiority, such as the human voice and memory, and thus explain away these seemingly contradictory notions of writing as illustrative of an anxiety over the unembodied, depersonalized written text. In these pre-Islamic and early Islamic examples, the medium is privileged, even while writing as reflective of speech is never quite forgotten. What is striking in these practices is the absence of anxiety. Ruined Abodes Perhaps it is not in spite of writing that written texts are transitive and recycled but because of it. Poetry can show us how to read these objectsâ€”the notebook shoes, document patches, and scripture as refuseâ€”by not privileging the activity of reading. The relation between thought and emotion on the one hand and materiality on the other bypasses linguistic content altogether. This poetic motif reveals cultural assumptions about the materiality and nonlinguistic nature of writing which challenge our modern categories of matter, thought, speech, and coherence. Yes, over ruins, there I halted and questioned, But not all that are asked have ears to hear. The faded traces are revived through a process that resembles renewal but represents the deep past. The simile again blurs the lines between human and nonhuman activity. The imagery here simultaneously holds this reference to scribal culture and envisions writing as illegible and emptied of semantic content. Oostersch Instituut, Universitaire Bibliotheken Leiden. A variety of other terms function in the same way. In the pre-Islamic odes, it is transformative materiality as such that has agency, and not the linguistic content of writing. In these images, writing is not a term in a simile, and it is explicitly read, has cognitive and moral effects, and serves as evidence for past actions. Writing as something noncognitive and nonlinguistic is therefore not necessarily normative in this culture, but neither can we argue that the semantic and linguistic meanings of writing are always primary. Written traces are deeply felt and imagined but mute, empty, worn away even while being illuminated and rewritten, and intimately interrelated to other things. Writing here is three-dimensional. What appears to be a solely visual experience of writing is a prioritization of the materiality of writing over its semantic content. Documentary evidence indicates that literacy in ancient Arabia may have been greater than it has been assumed to be, and terminology for different script styles and writing materials used in the pre-Islamic odes corroborates this familiarity. However, these poetic references to writing are not to literacy. The imagery refuses to create a unique relation between writing and human thought and expression. Although convention determines that the written traces in the prelude are illegible, in their rich, layered relationships the images that construct this motif can provide an entry point for theorizing materiality. It both references the pragmatic uses of Syrian parchment and Yemeni hide and praises the nonutility of these materials, the resonance of the image resulting from this overlap of qualities. Such references to writing materials are often characterized by modern scholars as representative of the perspective of illiterate poets whose experience of writing is solely visual or aesthetic, and as indicative of writing as a marginalized practice. Many of the arguments that attribute the imagery of illegible writing to illiteracy do not engage with published graffiti texts in Ancient North Arabian ANA languages and scripts. Northwest Arabia had multiple native scripts as well as the imported Aramaic, Greek, and South Arabian alphabets. There are tens of thousands of graffiti in just one of the ANA languages, Safaitic. Often he weaves his text amongst the letters of the first. For the writers of the Safaitic graffiti, their language and script would also have been incomprehensible to their settled Aramaic- and Greek-speaking neighbors, and was probably not used in matters of trade. Writing is thus a category that we can apply to these images, but perhaps it is not native to them. In the ruined abodes, writing is not something carried by material substrates but is the same thing as matter. The prevalence of this conception finds explanation in a media history of writing materials in ancient Arabia. The archaeological record shows a scarcity of ostraca and a preference for more durable vessels of stone, wood, metal, and leather. Most mundane writing that was accessible to unschooled individuals was performed on the remnants of everyday life, on portable objects of material culture, on footwear, and on

objects of the natural landscape. Writing that held primarily legal, practical, or intellectual significance certainly existed, but writing was not always perceived as a product of a distinct type, and the practices explored above illustrate a focus on writing as act. Writing did not have to be strictly representative of human meanings; it was not necessarily meant to be communicative and phonologically related to human speech, nor a signifier of phenomena that preceded it ontologically or representative of something external to the actual physical traces of writing. The eighth and ninth centuries CE in the Islamic world saw a media transition through the development and institutionalization of writing technologies, particularly with the spread of paper. Medieval Islamic accounts of the discovery of paper center on the following narrative. Much of this took place under the aegis of the state and the emerging class of professionalized secretaries and translators. The period of this media transition also saw the rise of a professional class of religious scholars, whose popularity and rising social status allowed them to influence the development of critical and scientific standards that also set the standard for other fields such as poetry and history. Islamic learning processes, even up to the nationalizing reforms of the nineteenth century, are assumed to have institutionalized an oral tradition invested with an authority and authenticity denied to written texts. Paul Heck describes the debate on the morality of writing as less about the actual use of books than about authoritative discourse. The debate was shaped by concurrent theological and philosophical debates on the division between revealed knowledge and the rational verification of knowledge. Derrida explores writing as a moral question, writing as drug, as nonpresence and nontruth, in Plato. The distrust of written media grew with its availability. One characteristic shared by the pre-Islamic and early Islamic practices described in this article is that the resulting written products cannot be transmitted, disseminated, or sold. If they are portable, they are portable not as texts but as household objects or apparel, and in those cases their written aspect is secondary rather than primary. With the commercialization of the text comes its abstraction. The economy and mechanics of writing in the pre-paper age allow us to see how writing escapes abstraction. The prevalence of noncommercial writing, and the use of recycled materials, household objects, and the landscape as media, enabled practices of writing in which matter was not simply a carrier for written text nor was writing necessarily or always representational of human thought. These cases exhibit a lack of distinction between the medium and content of writing, and thus the absence of an anxiety over this gap which typifies classical Islamic debates on textuality, orality, and memory. These are some of the artifacts of a culture in which writing cannot be differentiated from the stuff of mundane life. Sarah Mirza is associate professor of religious studies at the College of Wooster. Macdonald at the University of Oxford, and Arnoud Vrolijk at Leiden University Library for their generosity with images and permissions; and to the two anonymous reviewers for comments and questions that have helped refine and clarify the argument. Brill, 2014, p. 40. Reaktion Books, 2014. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006. This holds only for vegetable-tanned leathers. Alum-tanned and oiled leathers survive only in dry and airless conditions. BAR, 43, 43-44. Cairn showing evidence of pilgrimage and Safaitic graffiti, including staff, begging bowl, spoon, and leather waterskin Plate II, 6 and 7; Plate IV, 1. This find includes a codex cover, fragments of a codex cover, and several leather items buried in graves, including a leather pillow, a leather purse, a pair of sandals, square-toed knee boots, a soft leather shoe, and a leather belt.

**Chapter 2 : Ancient Arabia: Languages and Cultures - Projects**

*with literacy in the pristine oral Arabian environment; a reassessment of the epigraphic evidence in the construction of the history of the nomads and the  $\alpha\epsilon\phi$  awr n in the late Hellenistic.*

Jewish colonies flourished in the Arabian peninsula long before Mohammed strode onto the proscenium of history. The Arabian peninsula consists largely of vast expanses of arid wastelands. Here and there water wells up through the hot sands, forming oases that make bedouin life possible. These fertile havens served as trading posts for foreign traders to exchange goods with the Bedouins. The watering holes provided respite for the traders and for their heavily-laden beasts of burden on their way to other sites. Jewish traders traversed the trying trails from oasis to oasis well before the Common Era. They established bustling communities at those which had enough water to sustain agriculture. They were headed from Babylonia and from Judah for Himyara, a country on the southwestern rim of the peninsula where strips of arable areas had fostered a viable civilization. Himyara, referred to in the Bible as Ophir, was the source of exotic aromatic substances that were in demand in the western civilizations. The remote corner of the Arabian peninsula also provided access to the spices from the Far East, for it was strategically situated on the seacoast at the junction of important sea-lanes. The peoples at its ports enjoyed a lucrative overseas commerce that flowed into it from all directions. The ancient Mesopotamian civilizations lay to the north. Judah lay to the northwest and to the southwest across the Red Sea lay the Abyssinian corner of Africa, home to an ancient Ethiopian civilization. Across the sea to the east lay the vast subcontinent of India, a land where many ancient peoples had achieved high levels of civilization. The Himyarites occupied the area encompassing present-day Yemen. Two factors made civilization possible in that remote region. Arable areas nested among its mountain ranges and along its coast. Its ports provided access to the sea routes to Africa and India. Some of the associated tribes occupying the coastal regions adjoining Himyara, and other tribes who dwelled in the desert immediately surrounding Himyara are also encompassed within the general term "Himyarites." The resources of Himyara, especially the aromatic substances for which the region was anciently famous, spurred the Jews of Babylonia and Judah to venture across the desolate desert and to establish friendly relationships with its nomadic Arab tribes. Contact with the Bedouins was essentially benign, and a mutually beneficial relationship evolved between them over the course of many centuries. The Jews formed colonies at the oases, and introduced irrigation and agriculture. They stocked their farms with new plants, among which the date-palm became a staple for the desert peoples. The artisans and smiths among the Jews provided tools and implements to ease nomadic life. They introduced new fabrics and goods that enhanced the Bedouins living conditions. The Jews were not averse to proselytization, and the influence of Judaism spread throughout the peninsula. These powers became interested in capturing control of the overland and overseas trade routes that led to the sources of these products. They embarked upon aggressive military campaigns to establish hegemony over the peoples along the routes. When Christianity arrived upon the scene behind the Roman and Byzantine forces, Judaism had already won a considerable Arab following. The indigenous Arabic tribes generally sided with the Jews against the forces that were regarded as conquerors rather than as commercial partners. The Arabic tribes may well have gone on to a wide acceptance of Judaism. It is impossible to fathom the future that such an eventuality would have fostered. There is the intriguing thought that perhaps the massive pool of black riches hidden under the drifting sand would eventually have welled up in towering Jewish derricks. History, however, took a new and unexpected turn with the intervention of a poor and illiterate camel-driver who had a vision. The revered pioneer archaeologist and excavator of ancient Ur, Sir Leonard Wooley, reported that: By the time of the Akkadian Dynasty, if not before, trade between Sumer and the Indus valley had attained such proportions that there may have been agents from the distant region resident in Mesopotamia. It provided an important stage of the trade between India and Mesopotamia. The island was then named Dilmun, and is the present Bahrein. Dilmun was described in the classic five-thousand-year-old epic of Gilgamesh, who termed it "the land of immortality" when he visited it in his quest for immortal life. Recent digs have proved the existence of a very organized life style with well ordered roads, proper houses, workshops and a central

marketplace. Equally significant is the discovery of thousands of burial mounds. Mesopotamia likewise suffered reverses during this and the immediately following period. Trade of consequence between Mesopotamia with distant India appears to have been virtually suspended for many centuries. A year old story similar to that of the biblical Garden of Eden, in which the God Enki nibbles forbidden plants on the idyllic island of Dilmun now Bahrein. Against this historical background credence can be given to the Bible account of Judahite contact with Himyara. It is the earliest direct documentary record of a fraternal association between the two peoples. It comes down to us not through the Bible, but through an inscription by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser about his defeat of the forces ranged against him by the Judahite King Ahab.. Albeit there are some questions about the chronology of the event, the details serve to confirm an alliance between the Judahites and the Arabs at the time. This - the battle of Karkar in Syria - which took place in the year B. A spurt of activity took place following the rise of an Assyrian empire under Ashurbanipal referred to in Ezra 4: Following the freeing of the Jews by Cyrus in Babylonia in B. Most of the Jews stayed behind in Babylonia, for they had become a vibrant, productive element in the ancient Land of the Two Rivers. Great Jewish trading and banking houses developed, and triggered an expansion of Babylonian agriculture and industry, and, to an extraordinary degree, international commerce. Jewish traders were instrumental in pioneering the so-called "Silk Route" to the Far East from the fifth century B. Bustling colonies were established at a string of oases that provided havens for caravans destined for Himyara. At these oases they continued to befriend and carry on a mutually beneficial commercial relationship with the nomadic Bedouin Arab tribes of the desert lands. The scene might well have been depicted years earlier! Petra lay along one of the main routes into Arabia. These Nabateans had originally been an Arab people, but adopted the Aramaic language [the lingua franca of the Jews] In addition to their linguistic assimilation, these Nabateans settled down; and so completely were they submerged in the predominant civilization that, some centuries later, the word "Nabati," Nabatean, signified in the language of the Muslim Arabs an Aramaic-speaking peasant. The evidence for both Judaic and Nabatean presence in the desert and intercourse with the Bedouins and Himyarites takes the form of graffiti found throughout the desert wasteland along the natural trade routes between the Mediterranean coast and Himyara. A typical example is a tombstone inscription of a "Yehudaya," erected in Al-Hijr, ascribed to either 45 B. During the first few centuries of the Common Era, Judaic agricultural and artisan communities burgeoned at sites along the route to Himyara. In addition to replenishing the caravans that passed through, these colonies flourished as trading posts for the Bedouins. By the first century C. The extent to which the Jews of Arabia remained as vital intermediaries between the West and the Far East is evidenced by the fact that for many centuries, the Jewish traders kept the Greeks and the Romans entirely ignorant of the true provenance of spices such as cinnamon and cassia, spices that Jewish traders were obtaining from the Far East. Both the well-traveled Herodotus B. E and the great Greek philosopher Theophastrus B. The fact is that "there is not a trace of cinnamon there nor could there be; the plants require a degree of moisture not to be found in that parched peninsula. They alternately labored under the illusion that the spices came from East Africa. Strabo, in fact, terms Somalia and Ethiopia Abyssinia and Sudan , the region he considered the southernmost part of the world, as "Cinnamon Country! Two other Greek writers, erudite physicians who discoursed at great length on the substances, Dioscaides 1st c. The Greeks and Romans were likewise unaware that another avidly sought spice, malabathron, was made from the leaves of the same tree from whose bark cinnamon and cassia were made. The physician Dioscorides presumed that the spice came from the spikenard plant of Mesopotamia. The spikenard plant and the spices, cinnamon and cassia, figure prominently in the Bible. The Mishnah has many references not only to the familiarity of the Judaic sages with spikenard and the other plants but names the sages that traded in the products. The Jews obviously were adept at keeping a secret! The very origin of the Roman and Greek names of spices from the East point to the Jews as the traders who brought them to the West. Kiddh becomes the Greek Kitt, a cheap grade of cassia. Herodotus was the first to identify the origin of the Greek word kinnammon from the Canaanite [therefore Hebrew] language. Isadore forthwith authored The Parthian Stations, which served for centuries as a guide to the Far East. The familiarity of the Judahites with the routes through Arabia is evidenced by the arrangements for a Roman military expedition into southern Arabia under the command of Aelius Gallus,

proconsul of Egypt. Its purpose was to counter the opposition of and competition by the Ethiopians in obtaining aromatics and precious stones from Himyara and to expand Roman hegemony over the area. An army of 10,000 Roman soldiers were assigned to the task. The Romans knew little about the region. Gallus turned to Herod for assistance. Herod obliged by supplying Gallus with Jewish troops as scouts to augment the Nabateans in his formidable army. The Judaic contingent was undoubtedly intended to facilitate the expedition through intimate knowledge of the routes and byways of the Arabian peninsula. They were valued for their contacts with the Bedouins and the local sedentary populations and for their familiarity with the indigenous languages. The military adventure took place in B.C. Nonetheless, it was ignorance of desert conditions that defeated the Romans. Disease and the lack of water disastrously ended the expedition. The Judahite Jews under Roman rule collaborated with their Babylonian compatriots in the expansion of Judaic influence among the Arabs. Bishop Simeon of Beth Arsam in Syria, inveighed against the Judahites, registering loud and bitter complaints about their abetting of the Babylonian Jewish influence among the Arabs. For example, a remarkable third-century inscription and monogram of a Himyarite Jewish elder, Menahem, was recovered from the catacombs in Beth Shearim, in which he had been interred along with the revered redactors of the Mishnah. The Christian hierarchy took the matter seriously. They demanded that "the chief priests in Tiberias and in the remainder of the country be cast into prison Nabatean inscriptions themselves attest to a process by which Jewish traders had become so well established that they became the very representatives of the Nabateans in Hejaz after C. Citing two of these Nabatean inscriptions, Werner Caskel notes that "These are the beginnings of the Jewish population [of the region], which later occupied all the oases in the northwest, including Medinah. For example, a settlement referred to in Egyptian sources as Athribis, and recorded in Greek literature as Yathrib, became the Arabicized but Hebraic el-Medina meaning "urban district".

**Chapter 3 : M.C.A Macdonald (Author of Literacy and Identity in Pre-Islamic Arabia)**

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With shame does he hide himself from his people, because of the bad news he has received! Shall he keep this [child] despite the contempt [which he feels for it] or shall he bury it in the dust? Oh, evil is indeed whatever they decide! As appalling as it is, however, female infanticide should not be the sole basis for assessing the status of women in the society before Islam. To claim that Arab women were universally inferior to men, and had absolutely no rights before Islam is too simplistic, and does not do justice to the women of this period. Their status, therefore, deserves a more careful analysis. It must be noted at the outset that most of the information about the Arabian society before Islam is not uniformly accepted by all scholars in the field. In many cases, the factual information and evidence presented by some scholars have been refuted or contradicted by others. This has to do with the sources of information about this period in Arab history, known as the age of ignorance "Jahiliyyah". Some writers tend to rely on the Quran and Hadith to arrive at their conclusions about pre-Islamic Arabia. But their conclusions are not always accurate, for they are inclined to take what is mentioned in the Quran or hadith as what was commonly practiced in the society, which may not necessarily be true. The Quran and hadith may address certain issues because of their moral importance or far-reaching implications, regardless of the frequency of their occurrence. Hence, to get a true sense of the Arab society before Islam, one has to consider other sources. Since the Arabs had no fully developed system of writing, the sources for this period are limited to traditions, legends, proverbs and above all to poems. The oldest poems of which there is any record were composed in about AD. London, McMillan and Co. These poems, however, were not immune to error and corruption, since they were not recorded in writing until two to four hundred years later, during the second and third centuries of the Hijrah. Consequently, obtaining accurate, factual information about this era has become a challenging task. However, some general conclusions can be made, which are presented in this chapter.

**Diversity of Arabian Society** One of the few facts that is universally agreed upon is the diversity of the Arabian society prior to Islam. Arabia was comprised of diverse communities with different customs, languages and lifestyles. To better understand this diversity and its impact on women, a brief overview of the pre-Islamic Arab society is in order. Generally speaking, the Arab peninsula was divided into two regions, the arid area of the north and the rain-fed area of the south. The southern region was blessed with resources of soil and climate. Because of its fertile land, its proximity to the sea and its strategic location on the commerce routes, the south had enjoyed throughout its earlier history a developed form of political life and an advanced culture. As a confederation of states, the region was heavily populated, and governed by different kingdoms at different times in its history. It was, as a result, greatly influenced by foreign cultures and religions such as Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Judaism. The people of the south were not Arabs, but Sabians or Himyarites of Semitic descent, and spoke a Semitic language of their own. The northern region, on the other hand, was inhabited primarily by two groups: The Bedouins were tough, resourceful and as shepherds, constantly on the move. On the outskirts of the deserts, there was a ring of oases where the tribes had settled. The settled tribes relied on agriculture or commerce for their livelihood. Their spoken language was Arabic. The inhabitants of north and south, however, were constantly interacting with each other. There were Arabs who lived in the south and there were Sabian communities in the north. In fact, it was the south that helped urbanize the north-west by opening up the deserts to trade and shifting the world commerce route to western Arabia. This, in turn, created among the Arabs of the north, a new type of settlement, the caravan city, and a new type of community, the community of traders. In the sixth century, with the outbreak of international wars and the weakening of major powers that controlled the south, the region began to disintegrate and experienced a breakdown of its political and economic structure. At the same time, Mecca emerged as a new economic and social force in Arabia. Its geographical position on the spice route, half-way between Yathrib and Najran, the strongholds of Judaism and Christianity, respectively, made

Mecca a caravan station and a holy city at the same time. The religious life was based on idolatry and polytheism; the object of worship was a trio of goddesses, al-Lat, al-Uzza, and Manat, considered to be daughters of a deity called Allah. During some months of the year, known as the Sacred Months, the Arabs would flock to Mecca and the neighboring region. This further promoted the supremacy of Mecca, and helped unify the Arabs. The perfection of the classical Arabic and the art of poetry by the Bedouins also contributed to the Arab unity. The Bedouins of central Arabia, who for centuries had been associated with foreign powers or Arab clients of foreign powers, were now drawn to the Arabs of Mecca who were independent of foreign rule and whose indigenous Arab culture the Bedouins could relate to. Holt, et al, ed. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, , p. As the dominant power in Arabia in the century before Islam, Mecca, as well as other tribes in the north, deserve the most attention when examining the status of women. The tribe was the main unit of the society before Islam. Each tribe consisted of a group of kindred clans; every clan was made up of members of a "hayy" which was an encampment of tents; each tent represented a family. The fact that certain clans prefixed their names with feminine names is perhaps an indication of an ancient matriarchal culture that existed in Arabia long before Islam. Group solidarity "asabiyah" was the spirit of the tribe. It signified unconditional loyalty to fellow tribesmen. There was no centralized infrastructure to protect people and their property. In order to survive, every individual had to be affiliated with a tribe. Although some form of customary arbitration existed between different tribes, both Bedouins as well as the settled populations of Mecca and Medina often resorted to warfare as a means of settling disputes and maintaining order. Laws and customs in this tribal society varied from one area to another. On the one hand, there are indications that women held high positions in the society and exerted great influence. They freely chose their husbands, had the right to divorce, and could return to their own people if they were not happy or well-treated. In some cases, they even proposed marriage. They were regarded as equals, not as slaves and were the inspiration of many poets and warriors. An example of a brave woman from this era is Fukayha who protected a man seeking refuge in her tent while being pursued by the enemy. She courageously covered him with her smock, and with her sword drawn, prevented his pursuers from capturing him until her brothers came to his defense, thereby saving his life. Many women had the gift of poetry, which they often dedicated to the dead. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, reprinted , p. It seems reasonable to expect that a natural byproduct of such society would be the oppression of women. In fact, alongside the examples of strong and independent women, there are numerous reports of women having an inferior status. Female infanticide, for instance, was practiced by fathers who did not value their daughters as much as they valued their sons. In areas, such as marriage, divorce and inheritance, women were often deprived of their basic rights- to choose their husbands freely, to divorce if ill-treated or to inherit from their families. Even the poetry praising women focused primarily on their physical attributes; seldom was there any appreciation of moral beauty Nicholson, p. We will now address the specific issues related to women in this society. Female Infanticide There is no doubt that Arabs committed infanticide before Islam. It was not a new thing nor was it limited to one group of tribes. Young girls were usually the victims of this dreadful practice, however, young boys may have also been killed once there were no more girls left. It was said proverbially, "The dispatch of daughters is a kindness" and "The burial of daughters is a noble deed. Often the grave was ready by the side of the bed on which the daughter was born. London, Adam and Charles Black, , p. Female infanticide was usually prompted by one of two reasons: The first reason is associated with the frequent famines caused by lack of rain and the fear of poverty that would result from providing for girls who were viewed as less productive than boys. Fathers were afraid that they would have useless mouths to feed, since daughters were considered mere "ornaments," as pointed out in the Quran: Hence, do not kill your children for fear of poverty: Verily, killing them is a great sin. The murder of female children for fear of disgrace began with Qais Bin Assem, a leader of Tamim, as related in the following story Smith, p. When Qais came to ransom her, she refused to leave her husband. Qais was so indignant that he killed all his girls by burying them alive and never again allowed a daughter to live. Years passed on till the girl grew up and came one day to visit her mother. Her mother had plaited her hair, and put rings in the side-locks, and strung them with sea-shells and put on her a chain of cowries, and given her a necklace of dried dates. I said, "who is this pretty girl? So I waited till the mother ceased to be anxious about

her, then I led her out one day and dug a grave and laid her in it, she crying, "Father , what are you doing with me? Are you going to leave me alone and go away? It seems reasonable to conclude that the murder of a daughter to avoid shame, under the horrible circumstances described in this story, is altogether different from the ordinary type of infanticide practiced on newborn infants in primitive nations. This suggests that the two motives for infanticide were unrelated. The scarcity of food during famines had perhaps more to do with the origin of infanticide than family pride, since the nomads of Arabia suffered constantly from hunger during most of the year. In fact, infanticide was not limited to Arabia. It was and continues to be practiced in many different cultures. Japanese farmers spoke of infanticide as "thinning out" as they did with their rice fields. In India, many daughters were not allowed to live. Eskimos left babies out in the snow, while in the Brazilian jungle, undesired infants were left under the trees. In London, in the s, dead infants were a common sight in parks and ditches.

*He describes the many different languages and the distinct family of alphabets used in ancient Arabia, and discusses the connections between the use of particular languages or scripts and expressions of personal and communal identity.*

Recent Pre-Islamic Period c. It is often assumed to have been located in Oman. Because of the Mycenaean motifs on what is referred to as Midianite pottery, some scholars including George Mendenhall, [3] Peter Parr, [4] and Beno Rothenberg [5] have suggested that the Midianites were originally Sea Peoples who migrated from the Aegean region and imposed themselves on a pre-existing Semitic stratum. The question of the origin of the Midianites still remains open. Overview of major kingdoms[ edit ] The history of Pre-Islamic Arabia before the rise of Islam in the s is not known in great detail. Archaeological exploration in the Arabian peninsula has been sparse; indigenous written sources are limited to the many inscriptions and coins from southern Arabia. Existing material consists primarily of written sources from other traditions such as Egyptians, Greeks, Persians, Romans, etc. Many small kingdoms prospered from Red sea and Indian Ocean trade. Dilmun appears first in Sumerian cuneiform clay tablets dated to the end of 4th millennium BC, found in the temple of goddess Inanna, in the city of Uruk. The adjective Dilmun refers to a type of axe and one specific official; in addition, there are lists of rations of wool issued to people connected with Dilmun. It was finally conquered by the Himyarites in the late 3rd century. The ancient Kingdom of Awsan with a capital at Hagar Yahirr in the wadi Markha, to the south of the wadi Bayhan, is now marked by a tell or artificial mound, which is locally named Hagar Asfal. Once it was one of the most important small kingdoms of South Arabia. It conquered neighbouring Saba Sheba in c. Its political fortunes relative to Saba changed frequently until it finally conquered the Sabaeen Kingdom around AD. The economy was based on agriculture. Foreign trade was based on the export of frankincense and myrrh. For many years it was also the major intermediary linking East Africa and the Mediterranean world. This trade largely consisted of exporting ivory from Africa to be sold in the Roman Empire. Ships from Himyar regularly traveled the East African coast, and the state also exerted a considerable amount of political control of the trading cities of East Africa. The Nabataean origins remain obscure. On the similarity of sounds, Jerome suggested a connection with the tribe Nebaioth mentioned in Genesis, but modern historians are cautious about an early Nabatean history. The Babylonian captivity that began in BC opened a power vacuum in Judah, and as Edomites moved into Judaeen grazing lands, Nabataean inscriptions began to be left in Edomite territory earlier than BC, when they were attacked at Petra without success by Antigonos I. The first definite appearance was in BC, when Hieronymus of Cardia, a Seleucid officer, mentioned the Nabateans in a battle report. This migration, the date of which cannot be determined, also made them masters of the shores of the Gulf of Aqaba and the important harbor of Elath. Here, according to Agatharchides, they were for a time very troublesome, as wreckers and pirates, to the reopened commerce between Egypt and the East, until they were chastised by the Ptolemaic rulers of Alexandria. The Lakhmid Kingdom was founded by the Lakhum tribe that immigrated out of Yemen in the 2nd century and ruled by the Banu Lakhm, hence the name given it. It was formed of a group of Arab Christians who lived in Southern Iraq, and made al-Hirah their capital in. Gradually the whole city converted to that faith. The Ghassanids were a group of South Arabian Christian tribes that emigrated in the early 3rd century from Yemen to the Hauran in southern Syria, Jordan and the Holy Land where they intermarried with Hellenized Roman settlers and Greek-speaking Early Christian communities. The Ghassanid emigration has been passed down in the rich oral tradition of southern Syria. There was a dam in this city, however one year there was so much rain that the dam was carried away by the ensuing flood. Thus the people there had to leave. The inhabitants emigrated seeking to live in less arid lands and became scattered far and wide. The proverb "They were scattered like the people of Saba" refers to that exodus in history. The emigrants were from the southern Arab tribe of Azd of the Kahlan branch of Qahtani tribes. Eastern Arabia and Christians in the Persian Gulf The sedentary people of pre-Islamic Eastern Arabia were mainly Aramaic speakers and to some degree Persian speakers while Syriac functioned as a liturgical language. Other archaeological assemblages cannot be clearly brought clearly into larger context, such as the Samad Late Iron Age. Dilmun

Dilmun and its neighbors in the 10th century BCE. The Dilmun civilization was an important trading centre [21] which at the height of its power controlled the Persian Gulf trading routes. The adjective "Dilmun" is used to describe a type of axe and one specific official; in addition there are lists of rations of wool issued to people connected with Dilmun. The Dilmun civilization was the centre of commercial activities linking traditional agriculture of the land with maritime trade between diverse regions as the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia in the early period and China and the Mediterranean in the later period from the 3rd to the 16th century CE. The names referred to are Akkadian. These letters and other documents, hint at an administrative relationship between Dilmun and Babylon at that time. Following the collapse of the Kassite dynasty, Mesopotamian documents make no mention of Dilmun with the exception of Assyrian inscriptions dated to BCE which proclaimed the Assyrian king to be king of Dilmun and Meluhha. Assyrian inscriptions recorded tribute from Dilmun. The promise of Enki to Ninhursag, the Earth Mother: Ninlil, the Sumerian goddess of air and south wind had her home in Dilmun. It is also featured in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Gerra and its neighbors in 1 CE. More accurately, the ancient city of Gerra has been determined to have existed near or under the present fort of Uqair. This site was first proposed by R E Cheesman in Gerra and Uqair are archaeological sites on the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. It is currently unknown exactly when Gerra fell, but the area was under Sassanid Persian control after CE. Gerra was described by Strabo [33] as inhabited by Chaldean exiles from Babylon, who built their houses of salt and repaired them by the application of salt water. Pliny the Elder lists Gerra was destroyed by the Qarmatians in the end of the 9th century where all inhabitants were massacred, Bahrain was referred to by the Greeks as Tylos, the centre of pearl trading, when Nearchus came to discover it serving under Alexander the Great. The use of these is not confined to India, but extends to Arabia. According to the Persians best informed in history, the Phoenicians began the quarrel. These people, who had formerly dwelt on the shores of the Erythraean Sea the eastern part of the Arabia peninsula, having migrated to the Mediterranean and settled in the parts which they now inhabit, began at once, they say, to adventure on long voyages, freighting their vessels with the wares of Egypt and Assyria. A building inscription found in Bahrain indicates that Hyspaosines occupied the islands, and it also mentions his wife, Thalassia. The Parthian dynasty brought the Persian Gulf under their control and extended their influence as far as Oman. Because they needed to control the Persian Gulf trade route, the Parthians established garrisons in the southern coast of Persian Gulf. Shapur constructed a new city there and named it Batan Ardashir after his father.

**Chapter 5 : HHF Factpaper: The Arabs and the Jews; Part I: The Pre-Islamic Period**

*Table of contents for Literacy and identity in pre-Islamic Arabia / by M. C. A. Macdonald. Bibliographic record and links to related information available from the Library of Congress catalog. Note: Contents data are machine generated based on pre-publication provided by the publisher.*

On one hand, ethnicity supposedly defines us and binds us to our communities, but it is also an idea which we can shape and change. Likewise, members of one ethnic community do tend to rally around a shared set of established values, beliefs and behaviours, but the touchstones of an ethnic identity can change dramatically over time. Ethnicities are natural, inasmuch as groups seek to demarcate themselves from others, but ethnicities are also plastic since their membership and meaning can be manipulated. An ethnic identity is accordingly both a capricious intellectual construct and a potent force that shapes how people organise themselves and interact with others. When studying a group of people, it is therefore imperative to investigate how they have perceived themselves across time, and the subject of my research, funded by a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship, pursues the origin of Arabs and questions what being an Arab meant during the formative centuries of Islam. It would be remarkable for a social group at the centre of those changes to maintain one cohesive and culturally conservative community, and I suspected that Arab history has been approached too simplistically. My hypothesis was bolstered by recent anthropological research in the modern Middle East. Those studies demonstrated that modern Arabs are heterogeneous and impossible to define in tidy categories – so why should we continue to assume that pre-modern Arabs conversely constituted one cohesive ethnic community? The challenge calls for a radical reappraisal of the literature and history about early Islam, applying the theoretical rigour of modern methodology to interrogate the notion of Arab identity embedded in those sources and to evaluate the social impact of the new faith and empire. Starting from first principles, my research began with broad questions: Was Arab identity at the dawn of Islam contested and fluid? How did consciousness of Arab community interact with the interests of Muslim elites? My findings unearthed some unexpected results. It seems that the Muslim faith originally spread amongst different groups living in what is now the Arabian Peninsula, Syria and Iraq, and the very first Muslims saw themselves as a broad-based faith community akin to Christians, instead of one interrelated ethnic group possessing an exclusive religion akin to Judaism. But the situation soon changed: Akin to other ethnic identities around the world, Arabness would keep changing as Muslim societies developed. My British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship will expand the enquiry into two directions: This research, drawn from early Arabic poetry, historical and genealogical sources, uncovers the different responses individuals and groups articulated when confronted by the opportunity to embrace an Arab identity. In the Arab case, the familiar impressions of their origin as pre-Islamic Bedouin astride camels in the desert is one such myth which Muslims created to forget the fact that consciousness of Arab identity only coalesced in the Islamic-era, and to understand the place of Islam in the sweep of world history. My project critically reviews the vast corpus of medieval Arabic literature about Arab history via narratological, mythopoeic and aesthetic theories to uncover how Muslims forged notions of their origins and identities by converting memories of pre-Islam into Islamic origin myths. The Medieval Origins of Europe. Sacred Sources of National Identity. On Arabs and early Islam: Cambridge UP, , Ethnic Identity and the Rise of Islam. Peter Webb is an Arabist who studies the cultures, literatures and history of the classical Muslim world.

**Chapter 6 : Religion in pre-Islamic Arabia - Wikipedia**

*John F. Healey; M.C.A. Macdonald, Literacy and Identity in Pre-Islamic Arabia (Variorum Collected Studies Series CS), Journal of Semitic Studies, Volume 10, 1975. We use cookies to enhance your experience on our website.*

Peters, "one of the characteristics of Arab paganism as it has come down to us is the absence of a mythology, narratives that might serve to explain the origin or history of the gods. This according to him led to the rise of idol worship. Based on this, it may be probable that Arabs originally venerated stones, later adopting idol-worship under foreign influences. The relationship between a god and a stone as his representation can be seen from the third-century work called the Syriac homily of Pseudo-Meliton where he describes the pagan faiths of Syriac-speakers in northern Mesopotamia, who were mostly Arabs. List of pre-Islamic Arabian deities

The pre-Islamic Arab religion was polytheistic, venerating many deities and spirits through statues, baetylus and natural phenomena. According to the Book of Idols, there are two known types of statues; idols sanam and images wathan. Allah Some scholars postulate that in pre-Islamic Arabia, including in Mecca, Allah was considered to be a deity, possibly a creator deity or a supreme deity in a polytheistic pantheon. It also considers some of his characteristics to be seemingly based on lunar deities like Ilmugah, Kahil, Shaker, Wadd and Warah. Wellhausen states that Allah was known from Jewish and Christian sources and was known to pagan Arabs as the supreme god. Hughes states that scholars are unsure whether he developed from the earlier polytheistic systems or developed due to the increasing significance of the Christian and Jewish communities. He also adds that it is difficult to establish whether Allah was linked to Rahmanan. It has also been associated with the "idol of jealousy" erected in the temple of Jerusalem according to the Book of Ezekiel, which was offered an oblation of barley-meal by the husband who suspected his wife of infidelity. It was used as a title for the goddesses Asherah and Athirat. From Safaitic and Himaic inscriptions, it is probable that she was worshiped as Lat It. According to tradition, the Kaaba was a cube-like, originally roofless structure housing a black stone venerated as a fetish. According to one hypothesis, which goes back to Julius Wellhausen, Allah the supreme deity of the tribal federation around Quraysh was a designation that consecrated the superiority of Hubal the supreme deity of Quraysh over the other gods. Menstruating women were forbidden from coming near his idol. In pre-Islamic times pilgrims used to halt at the "hill of Quzah" before sunrise. They believe in no other gods except Dionysus and the Heavenly Aphrodite; and they say that they wear their hair as Dionysus does his, cutting it round the head and shaving the temples. They call Dionysus, Orotalt; and Aphrodite, Alilat. I, calls her Alilat and equates her with the Assyrian goddess Mylitta and the Persian goddess Mitra. Origen stated they worshipped Dionysus and Urania. Suwa is an important god of the Banu Hudhayl tribe. Apparently, animal sacrifice was also practiced. According to the Book of Idols, animals such as camels and sheep would be sacrificed before the deity, often performed on an altar. Both tribes were devout worshippers of the goddess Manat. The civilizations of South Arabia had the most developed pantheon in the Arabian peninsula. Hawkam was invoked alongside Anbay as gods of "command and decision" and his name is derived from the root word "to be wise".

**Chapter 7 : Essay - Historical Background**

*In these studies Michael Macdonald examines the extraordinary flowering of literacy in both the settled and nomadic populations of western Arabia in the years before the birth of Islam, when a larger proportion of the population could read and write than in any other part of the ancient Near East.*

We resume our discussion concerning the identity of the pre-Islamic Allah worshiped by the pagans at Mecca. The data we presented also indicates that the pagans took Hubal as the lord of the kabah, since they viewed this to be his very own sanctuary. Now this creates problems for the Muslim assertion that Allah was the presiding deity of Mecca and that the kabah was actually his shrine. The practice of the polytheists who were of a patriarchal bent was to build a sanctuary around a single male deity, specifically the one they viewed as the chief or greatest of all the gods. There is absolutely no example of a pre-Islamic shrine, whether a stone or building, built for two male deities at the same time. Rather, all the evidence shows that the houses that the polytheists built accommodated only one male deity along with his female consort. This means that if, as Muslims believe, Allah and Hubal were two separate deities then they could not both be the chief god of Mecca and the lord of the kabah at the same time. After all, if the pagans did believe that Allah was the supreme god of their pantheon, as well as the god of the kabah, then they would not have forced him to share his shrine with another male deity. Therefore, it seems reasonably certain that the pagans identified Hubal as Allah, which explains why the Islamic literature associates the Meccan shrine with both. The following citations from Philip K. Hitti puts this all together quite nicely: Beside him stood ritual arrows used for divination by the soothsayers kahin, from Aramaic who drew lots by means of them. Allah allah, al-ilah, the god was the principal, though not the only, deity of Makkah. The name is an ancient one. Lihyan, which evidently got the god from Syria, was the first center of the worship of this deity in Arabia. The name occurs as Hallah in the Safa inscriptions five centuries before Islam and also in a pre-Islamic Christian Arabic inscription found in umm-al-Jimal, Syria, and ascribed to the sixth century. The esteem in which Allah was held by the pre-Islamic Makkans as the creator and supreme provider and the one to be invoked in time of special peril may be inferred from such koranic passages as Evidently he was the tribal deity of the Quraysh. Note the following syllogism: Hubal was the chief deity of the Quraysh. Allah was the chief deity of the Quraysh. Therefore, Hubal was Allah in pre-Islamic times. This explains why many scholars believe that the Meccans used the titles Hubal and Allah interchangeably in respect to the same deity: So let them worship the lord of this House. The lord is evidently Allah, whereas the House is evidently the Kaba. But the fact that Allah should be referred to as the lord of the Kaba and not merely as Allah must have a special significance, which has to be clarified. It seems that the Quran deliberately mentions the House in order to allude to the origin of the position of Quraysh as ahl al-haram. For, it was the Kaba from which Quraysh derived their prestige among the Arabs. Moreover, it seems that already in pre-Islamic times, Quraysh attributed their sacred position to the benevolence of the deity of the Kaba, to whom they used to refer as Hubal and whose statue was situated inside the Kaba. The pre-Islamic talbiya of those who worshipped Hubal, i. The conclusion is that they must turn this deity into their sole object of veneration. This means that they must give up shirk, i. As Muqatil puts it: Uri Rubin, *The Ilaf of Quraysh: Qarmatians in the fourth [Muslim] century, and restored by them after many years; it may be doubted whether the stone which they returned was the same stone which they removed. It is very probable that Hubal had a human form. Wellhausen thinks that Hubal originally was the Black Stone that, as we have already remarked, is more ancient than the idol. The Prophet rallied against the homage rendered at the Kaaba to the goddesses al-Lat, Manat, and al-Uzza, whom the pagan Arabs called the daughters of God, but Muhammad stopped short of attacking the cult of Hubal. The pilgrim during his circuit frequently kissed or caressed the idol. Sir William Muir thinks that the seven circuits of the Kaaba "were probably emblematical of the revolutions of the planetary bodies. There was the cult of the planet Venus which was revered as a great goddess under the name of al-Uzza. Shams was the titular goddess of several tribes honored with a sanctuary and an idol. The god Dharrih was probably the rising sun. The Muslim rites of running between Arafat and Muzdalifah, and Muzdalifah and Mina had to be accomplished after sunset and*

before sunrise. This was the deliberate change introduced by Muhammad to suppress this association with the pagan solar rite, whose significance we shall examine later. The worship of the moon is also attested to by proper names of people such as Hilal, a crescent, Qamar, a moon, and so on. This view is lent plausibility by the fact that the pagan pilgrimage originally coincided with the autumnal equinox. We have evidence that it entered into numerous personal names in Northern Arabia and among the Nabatians. It occurs among the Arabs of later times, in theophorus names and on its own. Wellhausen also cites pre-Islamic literature where Allah is mentioned as a great deity. We also have the testimony of the Koran itself where He is recognized as a giver of rain, a creator, and so on; the Meccans only crime was to worship other gods beside Him. What they tried to do was disassociate the Muslim deity from Hubal. However, in separating Hubal from Allah, Muhammad and his followers created major problems for their position, namely, the Meccan shrine accommodating two separate gods. Renowned Islamicist Patricia Crone notices these problems in her book: The Meccan shrine accommodated Hubal, and there are supposed to have been several minor divinities in its vicinity, their number becoming prodigious in some sources. In other words, they reacted by mobilizing all the deities in whom they had no vested interest against the very God they were supposed to represent. The tradition clearly has a problem on its hands in that it wishes to describe Quraysh as monotheists and polytheists alike: They cannot have been both in historical fact. But this hypothesis is also problematic. Allah is associated with a black stone, and some traditions hold that originally this stone was sacrificial. This suggests that it was the stone rather than the building around it which was bayt Allah, the house of God, and this gives us a perfect parallel with the Old Testament Bethel. The cult of the Arab god Dusares Dhu Shara also seems to have centered on a black sacrificial stone. Indeed, what was the building doing? No sacrifices can be made over a stone immured in a wall, and a building accommodating Hubal makes no sense around a stone representing Allah. Naturally Quraysh were polytheists, but the deities of polytheist Arabia preferred to be housed separately. No pre-Islamic sanctuary, be it stone or building, is known to have accommodated more than one male god, as opposed to one male god and female consort. The Allah who is attested in an inscription of the late second century A. And the shrines of Islamic Arabia are similarly formed around the tomb of a single saint. If Allah was a pagan god like any other, Quraysh would not have allowed Hubal to share the sanctuary with him—not because they were proto-monotheists, but precisely because they were pagans. On the one hand, Allah might simply be another name for Hubal, as Wellhausen suggested: But as Wellhausen himself noted, Allah had long ceased to be a label that could be applied to any deity. If Hubal and Allah had been one and the same deity, Hubal ought to have survived as an epithet of Allah, which he did not. And moreover, there would not have been traditions in which people are asked to renounce the one for the other. This is, in fact, how Wellhausen saw him, and he has been similarly represented by Watt. If we accept this view, however, we are up against the problem that he is unlikely to have had guardians of his own in this capacity. Viewed as a high god, Allah was too universal, too neutral, and too impartial to be the object of a particular cult, as Wellhausen noted; no sanctuary was devoted to him except insofar as he had come to be identified with ordinary deities. A high god in Arabia was apparently one who neither needed nor benefitted from cultic links with a specific group of devotees. Wellhausen may of course be wrong: But if so, we are back at the problem of why Allah was made to share these links with Hubal. But as has been seen, they do not appear to have been guardians of Hubal, and Hubal was not identified with Allah, nor did his cult assist that of Allah in any way. The fact is that the Hubal-Allah sanctuary of Mecca is an oddity; can such a shrine have existed in historical fact? There would seem to be at least two sanctuaries behind the one depicted in the tradition, and Quraysh do not come across as guardians of either. The way to solve this dilemma is to admit the fact that the Arabs initially viewed the word Allah as a generic term which could be used for any deity who was believed to be the greatest. Scholars pretty much agree that Allah was a name used by different Arab pagans for one of their local deities, specifically the chief or high god. They further recognize that Muhammad took the pagan Allah worshiped by his particular tribe and transformed him into the one true God worshiped by all monotheists, so that he ended up divorcing his god from any similarly named pagan deity. Muhammad more precisely, the unclean spirit which inspired him did this so as to get the Jews and Christians to join his religion as well: The source of this goes back to pre-Muslim times. Noldeke has shown. Muhammad

found the Meccans believing in a supreme god whom they called Allah, thus already contracted. With Allah, however, they associated minor deities, some evidently tribal, others called daughters of Allah. But that Allah is a proper name, applicable only to their peculiar God, they are certain, and they mostly recognize that its force as a proper name has arisen through contraction in form and limitation in usage. Clark, Edinburgh, ], Volume I. It is therefore particularly unfortunate that we have so little information respecting him. Had he not been accustomed from his youth to the idea of Allah as the Supreme God, in particular of Mecca, it may well be doubted whether he would ever have come forward as the preacher of Monotheism. He was already known, by antonomasia, as the God, al-Ilah the most likely etymology; another suggestion is the Aramaic Alaha. Some scholars trace the name of the South Arabian Ilah, a title of the Moon god, but this is a matter of antiquarian interest. In Arabia Allah was known from Jewish and Christian sources as the one god, and there can be no doubt whatever that he was known to pagan Arabs of Mecca as the supreme being. Islamic name for God. Is derived from Semitic El, and originally applied to the moon; he seems to have been preceded by Ilmaqah, the moon god. Whether he was an abstraction or a development from some individual god, such as Hubal, need not here be considered. But they also recognized and tended to worship more fervently and directly other strictly subordinate gods. It is certain that they regarded particular deities mentioned in sura liii.

#### Chapter 8 : Arab Origins: Identity, History and Islam | The British Academy

*A further interesting objective of this book is to question the assumption of subordination of women in pre-Islamic Arabia. Category: History Literacy And Identity In Pre Islamic Arabia.*

#### Chapter 9 : Pre-Islamic Arabia - Wikipedia

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