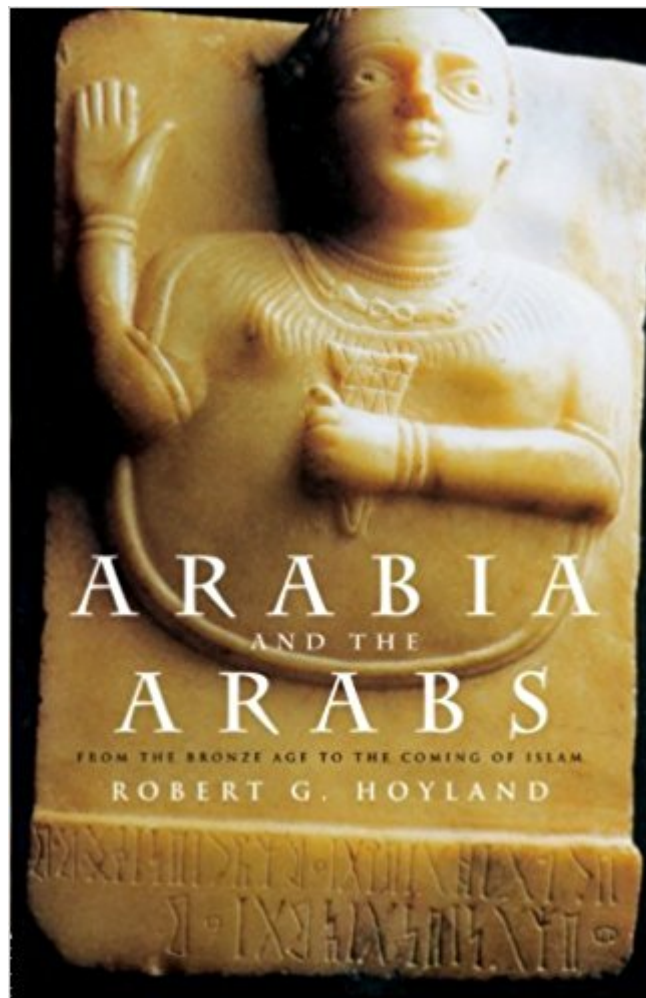




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Arabia And The Arabs: From The Bronze Age To The Coming Of Islam (Peoples Of The Ancient World)



Synopsis

Long before Muhammed preached the religion of Islam, the inhabitants of his native Arabia had played an important role in world history as both merchants and warriors. Arabia and the Arabs provides the only up-to-date, one-volume survey of the region and its peoples, from prehistory to the coming of Islam. Using a wide range of sources - inscriptions, poetry, histories, and archaeological evidence - Robert Hoyland explores the main cultural areas of Arabia, from ancient Sheba in the south, to the deserts and oases of the north. He then examines the major themes of the economy, society, religion, art, architecture and artefacts, language and literature, Arabhood and Arabisation. The volume is illustrated with more than 50 photographs, drawings and maps.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Arabia and the Arabs have been the subject of numerous historical studies by Western scholars. Some focus on Islam, others consider more secular and modern dimensions, but few examine the pre-Islamic period. In this highly original book, Hoyland (Seeing Islam as Others Saw It), a research fellow at St. John's College, Oxford, and the author of several books on the history of the Middle East, gives us a rare glimpse into the society and culture of Arabia before the advent of Islam in the seventh century. Hoyland challenges the myth of pre-Islamic Arabia as culturally barren and demonstrates the social vitality of everyday life in the area. This one-volume survey is based on the author's fieldwork as well as an impressive array of primary and secondary sources. The narrative is enhanced by numerous maps, figures, and plates. Highly recommended for academic and large

public libraries. Nader Entessar, Spring Hill Coll., Mobile, AL Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"In this highly original book, Hoyland gives us a rare glimpse into the society and culture of Arabia before the advent of Islam in the seventh century. Hoyland challenges the myth of pre-Islamic Arabia as culturally barren and demonstrates the social vitality of everyday life in the area. The narrative is enhanced by numerous maps, figures and plates. Highly recommended for academic and large public libraries." - Library Journal

First off, this is really the only comprehensive book on Arabia I could find. It was academically well-written, and concise. Secondly, if I could have chosen another name for this book, I would've called it: Arabia from the Outside, Arabia to the Romans, A Western Glimpse at Arabia. It's hard to be too critical because there aren't any substantial precedents (that I know of), and at the same time, the extent of archeological findings in Arabia is very very meager compared to what is known about the West for example. The author remained consistently to-the-point throughout the book which was very helpful. I couldn't help but feel that the tone of the book was slightly condescending towards actual "Arabia and the Arabs", the extensive highlight of Roman and Christian references that paint Arabia and its people in a very inferior view. Also there was a passage near the end that, if I am not mistaken equated the Quran to literature which I think, as a Muslim, comes across very offensive because like anyone of religious disposition one does not equate God's revelation to "literature", nor would a person of faith compare it (their holy book) to "literature". The reader must keep in mind, that the author is of the Revisionist school of historians, who are critical of the Islamic chronicling of pre-Islamic Arabian history. All in all, you've heard of "Gateway Drugs", well this a good gateway book, for the Pre-Islamic Arabian enthusiast.

It is not easy to find objective literature on Arabian history that doesn't force everything Islam right down your throat from beginning to end (no different with Jewish history and the Old Testament). Fortunately, "Arabia and the Arabs" is objective literature. Its emphasis is on pre-islamic history, and the level of scholarship is impressive. It particularly shows in the section on language and literature, plus its genuinely massive bibliography. However that also means that it isn't an easy, relaxing read. It requires that one follows the author as he first presents the evidence at hand, then how he reasons what picture one can assemble from it. More often than not this picture must remain incomplete until further evidence, be that through excavations, language analysis or other

discoveries, comes to light and is understood in the proper context. Such reading takes concentration and some patience. Of particular interest to me was the last chapter on Arabhood and Arabisation. It did much to illuminate the mistaken but widely held impression that "the Arabs" some day just burst out of their peninsula and onto the scene of European history. After I was done with the book I definitely felt that the realistic understanding it conveyed was well worth the time and effort.

Finding sources on pre-Islamic Arabia is incredibly difficult, and finding sources in English is doubly so. This is an excellent overview of the subject, well written and well organized. The author gives the broader picture, tying the various peoples of Arabia in to the larger world in each time period, showing ties of diplomacy, war and trade, as well as focusing on what the different groups were doing individually and among themselves. The book is organized in a very standard and useful fashion, giving chapters on each region (internally organized by time period) before moving on to topic-focused chapters. This is a book which rewards a cover-to-cover reading, and is understandable to a novice on the subject; now that I've been through it once, I'll probably read it again at least once in its entirety, as well as using it as a look-up reference for individual bits of information. The notes are interesting and worth reading, without this being a case of all the good stuff being in the footnotes. The only complaint I have is that I'd have liked for each place mentioned more than in passing in the text to have been marked somewhere on one of the maps. More maps and some more detail would have been nice. This isn't an insurmountable problem, however, for anyone who has a good historical atlas, or access to the internet. For someone who's writing a journal article or a dissertation, this is probably too elementary a source. For a person with some historical background who's familiar with the ancient world in general, but lacking foundation knowledge of ancient Arabia, this is an excellent first source and provides many jumping-off points for further research. This is a keeper for me, and I'm sure it'll get a lot of use.

This is totally scholarly and probably too dense for some but it provides an excellent look at pre-Islamic Arabia. This subject is shockingly undercovered other than this book since most histories of the Arab Middle East start with Muhammad. Ancient Yemen is particularly fascinating.

As an international business consultant I wanted to learn more about the Arabian history. Hoyland's work provided a excellent scholastic view into how historical events have shaped the political, economic, and cultural demographics found today in the Middle East, Arabia, and North Africa.

Very informative about a subject that is rarely covered!! Very recommended.

I am an amateur archeologist, constantly on the lookout for practical, well researched books on the history of the Arabian Peninsula. What is difficult for any writer on Ancient Arabia, is the fact that there are very few texts available on this subject. However, the writer has delved into the society, mores, trade, cultural traditions, and other components of this unique land. All in all, I vote five stars for the effort and interesting writing style.

I tried reading this more than a few times, but when I tried reading it to my spouse it was a quick way to bring on sleep! Boring was the complaint. I'd have to agree that this is very detailed and not the easiest book to read. I was hoping for something a little different, but it is certainly detailed. I haven't picked it up and again, but perhaps someday I will. I think you have to be in the mood for this one.

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