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INTRODUCTION

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EARLY SOUTHERN ARABIAN LANGUAGES AND CLASSICAL ARABIC SOURCES

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF LITERARY
AND LEXICOGRAPHICAL SOURCES BY COMPARISON
WITH THE INSCRIPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Scope and Result of Study

This is a study of the material which is stated or claimed to be of South Arabian origin or directly associated with South Arabia as attested in the lexica of classical Arabic and in other sources of classical Arabic which treat of usages attested in pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry, traditions or texts. The purpose is to examine this material by comparison with the linguistic and lexicographical information now available from Epigraphic South Arabian (ESA) material.

The material attested in the Arabic sources for this purpose has been divided into four categories: Abyssinian, Ḥimyarī, and Yamanī, according to the language or dialect of origin claimed for them, and then usages accruing in South Arabian contexts. The material under the first three categories has been investigated thoroughly, while the material under the last category, that of the South Arabian context, has been left out from the detailed examination, except for a brief discussion and for few usages selected as specimen and because they are related to usages discussed elsewhere in this study.

Much of this material proved to be incomparable with ESA material, either because the usages in the Arabic sources derive from roots not attested in ESA, which is the majority of the cases, or because the usages from comparable roots in ESA are completely different. But in over eighty cases, discussed here in articles by roots, the material in the Arabic sources shows varying degree of resemblance. In a considerable number of cases the corresponding usages in both materials proved to be exact equivalents.