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## Fakhr

*Fakhr* or *iftikhār* (self-praise) is a genre of premodern Arabic poetry that flourished especially in pre-Islamic, early Islamic, and Umayyad times (sixth to mid-eighth centuries C.E.). Even though *fakhr* was the dominant genre of early Arabic poetry, it began to lose its importance in the Umayyad period (41–132/661–750), for both religious and social reasons. The predominance of *fakhr* gives early Arabic poetry a special tenor that distinguishes it from the poetry of the ‘Abbāsid (132–656/750–1258) and later periods. *Fakhr* was, in fact, the most genuine expression of the pre-Islamic Bedouin ethos. The early poets portrayed themselves as embodying all the virtues valued in pre-Islamic Bedouin society, virtues indispensable for the survival of individuals and their tribes in the inhospitable desert environment. Construed as facets of *murū’a* (manliness), the ideal which early Arab poets claimed to personify and which they verbalised and propagated in their poetry, these virtues included, first and foremost, integrity, altruism, fidelity to the tribe, sagacity, justice, bravery,

generosity, and self-restraint (*hilm*). Faced with the inevitability of death, which to them meant annihilation, the early poets depicted themselves as defiant of adversities and dangers and ready to challenge Fate—the all-destroying Time (*dahr*)—in order to achieve their goals and stay true to their ideals.

These poets employed a great variety of framing themes to highlight their moral, mental, and physical superiority, describing concrete situations in which they had demonstrated these qualities. Participating in warfare against other tribes—including raiding, keeping sentries, and seeking blood revenge—showed one’s intrepidity and valour. Dangerous and arduous journeys through the desert provided evidence of fortitude, resolve, ambition, and industriousness. Protecting the weak or one’s clients indicated integrity. Feeding the poor and entertaining guests lavishly testified to largesse. The early poets also boasted about the excellence and pugnacity of their poetry, with which they glorified and defended their tribe and attacked its enemies, and more generally about the sagacity and eloquence they showed when advising the tribe or negotiating on