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## **The Power of Perception and Origin Myth: Re-Reconsidering the Origins of the Arthurian Legend**

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Oral Presentation 1.4

**THE POWER OF PERCEPTION AND ORIGIN MYTH: RE-RECONSIDERING  
THE ORIGINS OF THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND**

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Any quest to discover a historical identity for Arthur, King of the Britains, must combat the romantic and mythical images that accompany the Arthurian literary and historical traditions. Scholars such as O.J. Padel, Geoffrey Ashe, Leslie Alcock, C. Scott Littleton, and Linda A. Malcor have used etymology, geography and archeology to gather evidence for the existence of a historical Arthur. However, decades of scholarly research have only resulted in fragile claims for a historical Arthur, but these attempts are valuable for they reveal a crucial assumption implicit in the question, "Who was the historical prototype for the Arthur that became the legendary King of the Britains?"

By assuming there was a "who," scholars presuppose Arthurs origins are mortal. Given scholars inability to construct a convincing argument for a historical prototype, it is time to consider that they have been asking the wrong question. Before one can assume there was a "who," there must be evidence that Arthurs origins cannot be legendary. Thus, a new question must first be answered: "Was the prototype for a historical and subsequently mythical Arthur derived from legend?" This question addresses the possibility that Arthurs beginnings were first legendary and that his historicity may be contrived by political and social motivations.

This study answers this new question, provides convincing evidence for Arthurs legendary origins, and concludes that, indeed, scholars have been attempting to answer the wrong question. As a legendary figure historicized, Arthur has helped fulfill the Britons past and present need for a heroic national and racial identity.