

A review of the history of asir history essay



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In today's world, Asir is part of Saudi Arabia and is located in the southwestern part of the region. However, in the early times, Asir was not in any way a part of Saudi Arabia as we know it today. In the early times, Asir was characterized as a region dominated by tribesmen. These tribesmen rely on the Asir region's fine land and water resources in order to domesticate crops and livestock. Furthermore, Asir was also characterized to have a favorable climate for agriculture and a constant supply of rainwater. These natural resources were maximized the tribesmen of Asir and this made them a moderately advanced civilization in terms of agriculture. Asir, due to its resources, were also regarded as a powerful land inhabited by tribes. These tribes were rich in resources brought about by Agriculture.[1] This made them capable of constructing barrier for war, defense systems as well as houses for their families. Furthermore, Asir is divided into climactic levels but generally speaking the highlands represent the varying climates that region will experience. Generally, Asir is considered a highland with soft sloping highlands despite some plains in the region. Geographically, it is located between the borders of Yemen and covers areas from south to north. Its western portion is dominated by trees and inhabited by diverse animals and plants. Additionally, the western portion of Asir is also near the Red Sea. Traveling across Asir, it has been stated that a lot of individual settlements will be encountered as well as small towns and villages. These settlements cater to the numerous needs of the tribesmen in the area.[2]

In the early times, the tribesmen of Asir were always engaged in tribe wars in their region. This was traced back due to the dispute regarding land and the leadership of the region. Asir's surrounding regions were succumbing to

Islam conquerors and slowly but surely their idol worship Gods were destroyed and phased out. Islam was rapidly disseminated as a religion. Numerous battles took place in the surrounding region which started with Surad Al-Azadi who declared their support for Islam. Al-Azadi then urged his supporters to fight everyone against Islam which included the tribesmen and other worshippers.[3] This included Jarash, the centre of Asir region. Al-Azadi was able to conquer the heart of Asir and it was a pivotal step in his mission of spreading Islam in the southwestern Arabic region. After Al-Azadi's term as the leader of the Islam Asir region, he was followed by Ibn Thawr. He led the people to various fights against non-Muslim regions and later Asir was joined to Makkah , one of its neighboring regions.

Dynasty after dynasty, the Asir region witnessed a lot of changes in its ruling class but one thing remained constant - Islam. Throughout the subsequent dynasties, particularly the Umayyad dynasty, the tribesmen of Asir participated in the expansion moves of Islam throughout the Arab regions. When the expansion was done, the tribesmen returned to their homelands and maintained peace with the ruling Islam class. During 274 A. H. Asir fell to the Tulunid dynasty and was separated in to two regions - East and West. [4] This was primarily due to the decline in ruling power of the previous dynasty, the Abbasid dynasty. Further shifting of power took place in the succeeding years as the Abbasid dynasty regained power and lost its power gain over the Asir region.[5] It was also followed by the Ikshids and then the Fatimids dynasty. Succeeding years were also the same for Asir, there were always attempts to take the power away from its current leader and this happened many times. Ghuzz tribes and Camathinian tribes also attempted

to conquer Asir but they failed due to the tenacious resistance of the Asir tribesmen who were led by their prince.

The early history of Asir was filled by power shifts and numerous battles. Overall, there has been no long period of stability in the region not until the early 1900's. The same cycle went over and over again in a span of over ninety years and various changes in leadership were still present. It was then in 1800 that Asir came under the control of Al-Saud and it was converted to an Ottoman empire after which various attempts to take control prevailed. This caused frequent shifts in power however in the end; it was the allies of Al-Saud that won. This was in 1921 where the final attempt to regain control of the Asir region over the Ottoman tribes. Prince Abdul-Aziz successfully conquered Asir and from then on, he was able leadership as Prince and prevented any overthrow attempts.[6]It was in Prince Aziz' term that Asir was combined under one unifying state, Saudi Arabia. The early history of Asir is split in to two timelines: before the Saudi Arabia and after Saudi Arabia.

Role of Women

During the early history of Asir, the role of women was extensive as far as the society is concerned. Women play a significant role in the tribesmen's culture and family. Even during the early period of Islam in Asir, women still function in the society. Women do the field work of farming, they were also responsible for welcoming the guests, and they were responsible for the household as well. However, in the late 1800's up to the time when Saudi Arabia was formed and joined with Asir, the role of women in Asir declined and became stricter in terms of function. Furthermore, the revolutionizing of

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Islam in Asir (and Saudi Arabia) after the Al-Saud paved way for greater imbalance on the equality of men and women.[7]In analyzing this situation, Asir, as a part of Saudi Arabia has also followed the rules and standards of living and these included the seclusion of women's functions and right.

Moreover, throughout the history of Asir, women have been the subject of discrimination and abuse. Starting from the family up to the society, the role of women was very limited as they were succumbing to the male figure in their household of family. Essentially, in early 1900's and mid-21st century, Asir (and also Saudi Arabia) women's rights have been the focus of international matter and feminist movements have also played a great role in trying to revolutionize the role of women in Asir. Looking back at the early history of Asir, it has been stated that the role of women we far greater compared to the present day Asir and the era after Al-Saud.

On the other hand, this " imbalance" of male and female treatment in Asir and Saudi Arabia has been successfully defended by ministers and also women from Saudi Arabia. The reason behind this treatment of women was said to be based more on their culture rather than the rules of their religion which is Islam.[8]Furthermore, in the historical context of Asir (and Saudi Arabia), portrays that the basic decision of who to marry doesn't rely on women but rather on their patriarchs who decide for them. Strict rules for women regarding clothing can already be traced back before the Al-Saud era. However, societal function indeed decreased after Asir became officially part of Saudi Arabia. The reasons behind this were the strict implementation of cultural and religious rules with regards to all aspects of male and female life in the Middle-East.

However, there were portions of the female population in Asir and in Saudi who claim that the view of the role of women in their society (which was negative to start with) was a mismatch. Several evidences were utilized like the growth in government positions of women, key business owners and managers were women, and other important societal functions. This is true but based from the overall context of the Asir and Saudi, the role of women today is still limited. Evidence to this is the overall status and responsibility of women in Saudi which is to take care of the household and the children. Key decisions in the society still reside in the hands of men and strict rules are still provisioned for women like: mobility, transportation, marriage, vote representation, employment, education, and discrimination.[9]The role of women also suffered from various transitions of power starting from the early Asir setup of tribesmen and then followed by the numerous invasions and shifts of power and lastly the influence of Islam in their society.[10]In a quick note, the role of women disappeared in the Asir region when it was merged with Saudi Arabia. This is because the culture and norms of Saudi Arabia takes into account the strict implementation of religious rules backed up the cultural background of the Arabic regions. This was very different from Asir which was not able to really feel a government that was implementing rules due to power shifts and continuous instabilities. Furthermore, the priority during the early history of Asir was to expand and not to focus on the internal affairs of the society; when Asir was merged with Saudi, it was a perfect time for the controlling government to implement their rules; and these rules include the decline and almost “ disappearance” the roles of women in the society.

Asir at the Present

The changes that were observed in throughout the history of Asir before and after the merging with Saudi Arabia were more positively accepted rather than negative. The history of Asir was full of imbalance and their economy was really not stable back in the early times primarily due to conflicts.

[11]Presently, the early history of Asir will only be a reflection of what should be improved in terms of the role of women which disappeared greatly. The need for an evaluation of the roles of women together with its implications should be done. Looking back in the history of Asir, as a tribal region, gender was not an issue beforehand due to the equal or impartial treatment of women. However, immersion in the society together with Islam has brought about major changes to the role of women.[12]

Furthermore, Asir, being grounded to their tribal ways and culture can still provide an opportunity to women to be treated as equal. During pre-Al-Saud era, women were not regarded as “ things”; but rather important people who have roles in the society and make key decisions. However, the post-Al-Saud era portrays that culture and religion towers over the thought of having equality and there is no sign of a great change.