

## Sources and Scientific References:

- "The Title of Glory in the History of Najd" by Othman ibn Bishr, edited by Abdul Rahman bin Abdul Latif Al Sheikh, King Abdulaziz Foundation, Riyadh (1402AH/1982 CE).
- "Local Sources for the History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" by Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al Khwaiteer, Al-Darah Journal, Issue Three, Year 26, King Abdulaziz Dara (library), Riyadh (1421AH/2001 CE).
- "Does the History of the Kingdom Need More Studies?" by Dalal bint Mukhled Al Harbi, Al-Dariya Journal, Issue Thirteen, Year Four, Riyadh (1422AH/1992 CE).
- Official Website of the professor Ibrahim Al-Sama'il:  
<https://ebraheemalsmaeel.com>

journey to document the social history of the region. It still requires someone to analyze these documents to paint a picture of the reality of daily life and the practices of individuals in the community. Completing the social image through the analysis of expenditure patterns, the nature of endowments, their sizes, and the types and social and economic levels of the endowers is essential. This aspect reveals corners of society and is a task that is not insurmountable, especially if the writer is from the same environment. It is an invitation to researchers from other regions of the Kingdom to delve into the social history of their communities. Understanding the nature of life in the past is a reason to be grateful for the present reality, and this gratitude is a call to continue doing good, as it is through gratitude that blessings endure.

Before conclusion, it is essential to commend the efforts of Mr. Ibrahim bin Muhammad Al-Sama'il in compiling the endowment documents in the town of Ushaiqer. His remarkable dedication to researching and documenting these documents, profiling their benefactors, supervisors, expenditures, and unveiling the mysteries of the endowment history of the region is truly commendable. This includes his work on the document "Endowment of the Sons of Ahmad bin Isma'il in their well-known property called (Al-Jufrah in Ushaiqer) (Diwan of the Endowments of Al-Sawam in Ushaiqer), the series (Endowments of Ushaiqer) (Suruj, Dila, and Masai), (Document of the Right of the Guest in Ushaiqer), and (Document of the Endowment of Ramitha bin Qudayb). His scholarly contribution in the field of endowments is worthy of scientific acclaim.

**And may God bless you and grant you success**

use or have been almost forgotten with the passage of time. It is difficult to grasp the true essence, content, and magnitude of endowment documents without an understanding of these terms. Examples include: "Al-Bayza," and "Al-Tiflisiya," and "Al-Jadeeda, (three names of currencies)" - "Al-Shahiya," - "Al-Hayala (small cultivated land)" "Al-Howayyet (small cultivated land)" - "Al-Jakhor," "Al-Jabiya," "Al-Rakiya," "Al-Qrawa (sinks that made of stone to collect the water)" - "Al-Zarnoq (a kind of wood to be put over the well to help withdrawing the water)," "Al-Shatn," "Al-Shiqs (a part of palm tree)" - "Al-Eidanah (a very long palm tree)" and many more.

Through the endowment documents, the book paints a geographical picture of Shaqra's farms, neighborhoods, boundaries, and the extent of agriculture during that historical period. It delves into the types of crops, the varieties of palm trees prevalent at that time, and the preferred types. The people were keen on endowing the finest of their palm trees. For instance, the book mentions a type of palm tree, no longer present today, known as (Al-Khawli) confirming that endowment documents contain more than just declarations or endorsements of endowments, their usage, and supervisors. They represent a wealth of social, geographical, architectural, and economic information.

Furthermore, the book provides a glimpse into the nature of people's lives and their priorities by observing the expenditures of endowments. These expenditures were directed towards filling the most pressing gaps in the hierarchy of people's daily livelihood, and overall essential needs.

This valuable book represents the first step in an academic

religiosity, commitment to goodness, ingrained Islamic values, and the presence of a compassionate spirit are all underscored by these documents. They exemplify the community's dedication to implementing Islam fully in their lives.

The significance of the book becomes evident through its meticulous tracking of judges and scholars who played a crucial role in preserving and caring for the endowment registers (divan). They undertook the responsibility of renewing and safeguarding these registers to prevent their loss or encroachment, ensuring the continuity of their benefits as intended by their endowers. The author documented their biographies, provided their profiles, numbering twenty judges who successively supervised these endowments until they were handed over to the branch of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowments in Shaqra. The author expresses gratitude to this ministry for preserving and maintaining these registers over the years, preventing their deterioration.

The author's exploration of the documentary journey, the process of copying the registers, and their contents reveal the immense efforts of these exceptional individuals. They were the true and trustworthy custodians who passed down this legacy to those who came after them. The author also highlights the most notable supervisors of the endowment registers in Shaqra and those who assumed responsibilities for charitable deeds within the endowment.

The author demonstrated great insight by providing definitions for several terms found in the endowment documents, especially considering that many of these terms have fallen out of common

registers had been left in their original state, they would have likely succumbed to the ravages of time, much like others have.

The registers (divans) consist of four ancient notebooks and a collection of scattered documents, inscribed from the twelfth to the fourteenth century of the Hijri calendar. The author notes that the original source is a small notebook comprising (27) pages, penned by the Washm judge, Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al-Hussein Zuhqi, who passed away in the year (1237 H, 1821 CE). He commenced writing it around the year (1170 H).

The significance of this book lies in the fact that endowments, their channel of expenditures, and the actions of their superintendents' supervisors contain the minutiae of daily life within the community. They portray a natural and unpretentious image of the interpersonal interactions among individuals in society. It is a mistake to perceive these endowment documents merely as papers defining the type and usage of endowments; they extend far beyond that into social, historical, and cultural dimensions, surpassing them by leaps and bounds.

These documents highlight the spirit of compassion among individuals despite monetary weakness, scarcity, poverty, and the limited resources characterizing the society during the period covered by the endowment records. They showcase a sense of solidarity among people, touching upon the needs that were met through the endowments, despite their simplicity. These endowments, although basic, fulfilled crucial and genuine needs for members of the community. There were no governmental service ministries as exists in the present-day state. The community's

**It Can Be Said:**

To this day, we find a hazy image of the essence of Saudi society, and undoubtedly, this lack of clarity in understanding societal life is an extension of the documentary weakness in the preceding period. Studying society at that time required an exploration of its various facets to establish connections, forming a clear picture by understanding societal determinants, patterns, interrelationships, and the reciprocal impact and influence of each element. This process enables the creation of a social map that depicts the intricacies of the community.

I present this introduction on the deficiency in documenting the social history of Saudi society, and as I gaze optimistically into the book "Registers of Ancient Endowments in the Washm Region (Shaqla as a Model)," prepared by Professor Yusuf bin Abdulaziz Al-Muhanna, spanning over (500) pages. The book involves research, exploration, documentation, and verification of the ancient endowment registers in the Washm region in general, and the city of Shaqla in particular.

The significance of this book, both scientifically and historically, lies in its role of reviving a heritage that was on the brink of disappearance. One marvels at the author's effort and patience in discovering these registers, the story of his quest, and his dedication in delivering them to the King Abdulaziz Dara (Library), which graciously took on the task of restoring them as part of the social history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This thoughtful act of documentation by the author acknowledges the (library) Dara's expertise as a documentation hub for the Kingdom's history. If the

It echoes his remarks in the introduction to his book titled (The Title of Glory in the History of Najd). In this work, he highlighted the scant attention given to the history of the region in general and Najd in particular. He pointed out that the focus of writings about the region was limited to aspects of battles and conflicts. He stated, "Know that the people of Najd, both ancient and modern scholars among them, did not have much concern for documenting the history of their days, their lands, their constructions, what occurred therein, or the comings and goings. Except for some oddities recorded by a few scholars, because when they mention a year, they say: so-and-so was killed in it, without mentioning his name or the reason for his killing. And when they talk about a battle or an incident, they say: in this year, the so-and-so incident occurred. We know that from the time of Adam until today, there has been constant conflict, but we want to know the truth, the reasons, and the peculiar and astonishing events that took place in their history, all of which are absent."

The deficiency in documenting social history, as highlighted by historian Ibn Bishr, extends beyond hesitation or scientific reluctance, and can be generalized to the rest of the Kingdom. This implies that Ibn Bishr's lament holds true: the focus of those chronicling the region's history often fixates on recording incidents, killings, and battles without delving into details or celebrating other social, economic, and educational aspects of life. Except for sparse indications and subtle hints, scarcely mentioned, these narratives fall short of meeting the demands of the social analyst or observer eager to capture the evolution of society.

to capture social life either focused on isolated regions, severely limited in scope, or were found within the writings of intrepid foreign wanderers who explored the Arabian Peninsula or the Gulf. Yet, their narratives typically fixated on the political or geographical facets of the regions they traversed, offering only fleeting glimpses into the social fabric. These studies, however, fall short of satiating the researcher's curiosity, given their fleeting presence, insufficient for painting a comprehensive picture of the social landscape in the visited realms.

Mentioning this, His Excellency Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Khuwaiter, in one of his lectures on historical documentation in the Kingdom at large, notes that aspects of Saudi history vary in the attention they've received. Some have been thoroughly explored, while others have only grazed the surface, awaiting further scholarly consideration. Undoubtedly, the social dimension and its evolution fall into the third category, eagerly anticipating the scholarly and written focus from researchers and scholars.

Dr. Dalal Al-Harbi reinforces this need, highlighting that the history of the Kingdom still awaits numerous studies. However, these studies must be temporally and geographically delimited, with a specific emphasis on economic, scientific, and social facets.

This scientific report, authored by contemporary scholars passionate about documenting the social history of the Kingdom, serves as a confirmation of the statement made by the historian Othman ibn Bishr, who passed away in the year (1290 H, 1873 CE).

## **A Reading in the Book: The Registers of Ancient Endowments in the Washam Region (Shaqra divan as a Model)<sup>(1)</sup>**

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Despite the existence of several studies that have addressed Saudi society over the past three centuries, it is noteworthy that most of these writings tend to focus more on the historical and purely political aspects than on others. Following that, the scientific, cultural, and social aspects come in the third position in terms of attention, documentation, and observation. As for social studies on Saudi society during the past three centuries, they are relatively scarce.

In the tapestry of the past three centuries and beyond, one notices a dearth of studies delving into the societal tapestry of that era. Deep, analytical social studies of the community were scarce during that time, leaving a knowledge void for specialists attempting to sketch a vivid social portrait. The few available studies that dared

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(1) This article was previously published in the Saudi newspaper Al-Jazirah on the 11th of Sha'ban 1433, Issue No. 14521. It has been subsequently updated to reflect the scientific developments in the field of endowments.