

History of Al-Kharj Governorate and Its Most Prominent Aspects of Human Heritage

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Abstract

This study aims to present a brief overview of the history of Al-Kharj Governorate and to highlight the most prominent aspects of its human heritage, represented in the customs and traditions of its inhabitants, as well as the crafts and traditional industries they practiced prior to the modern era in which the governorate witnessed notable contemporary development. The study also seeks to explore the extent to which the human heritage of Al-Kharj is connected to the broader heritage of the Najd region.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that Al-Kharj is an important and vital part of the fabric of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It has played a long historical role filled with events, and its role has been influential and effective in various political, economic, social, and cultural aspects of life in the Arabian Peninsula and its surroundings. This is due to its strategic location at the heart of the peninsula, linking its northern and southern regions, as well as its eastern and western parts.

The study reached several important conclusions, including that the history of Al-Kharj Governorate is closely connected to the history of the Riyadh region and city in particular, and to the history of the Najd region in general. Another key finding is that the geographical location of Al-Kharj, situated in the center of the Arabian Peninsula, made it a link between the north and south, and between the east and west. For many centuries, Al-Kharj served as a resting station for trade caravans traveling across the Arabian Peninsula.

Keywords: Arabian Peninsula – Customs and Traditions – Human Heritage – Najd Region – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allah; we praise Him, seek His help, seek His forgiveness, and seek His guidance. We seek refuge in Allah from the evils of our souls and the consequences of our deeds. Whomever Allah guides, none can mislead, and whomever He allows to stray, you will find no protector or guide for him.

Al-Kharj Governorate—this historic region located south of Riyadh, forming the strategic depth and supportive hinterland of the capital of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia—represents a small homeland within a greater homeland under the care of the Kingdom's wise leadership. This region has witnessed remarkable growth and expansion in modern times, as the population and urban development of the governorate have increased at rates surpassing those of many other governorates in the Kingdom. This growth is the result of numerous economic projects it has witnessed and continues to witness, including educational, health, military, and

service sectors. These developments attracted residents, expanded urban areas, and connected cities and villages. They also boosted activity across urban, economic, educational, and social fields—especially after the royal decree upgrading *Al-Dalam* to a governorate within the historical geographic region of Al-Kharj.

Al-Kharj has long been an important agricultural center in both ancient and recent times. It is renowned for its fertile soil and abundant groundwater, making it one of the most fertile areas in central Arabia since antiquity. This contributed to the development of agriculture and the production of diverse crops. In this governorate, the beauty of the Kingdom's landscapes comes together: gardens in its valleys and ravines, and fruits in its plains and hills. It is a desert region interspersed with beautiful oases and serves as one of the country's key sources of food security due to its production of vegetables, grains, dates, and other crops.

It is also a prominent economic center within the Riyadh Region, home to many significant governmental and private economic establishments. It is a recognized industrial base with numerous factories and companies built on its land, including several groundwater bottling plants, and the well-known dairy factories that serve the entire Arabian Gulf region. The governorate also hosts the factories of the General Corporation for Military Industries—the only such complex in the Gulf region—alongside Prince Sultan Air Base, one of the largest air bases in the world. The presence of this major military activity has contributed to the region's economic vitality, urban development, and improved living standards.

The importance of Al-Kharj also lies in its ancient history. Just as it is famous for its agriculture, it is equally renowned for its deep-rooted historical legacy, extending to pre-Islamic and post-Islamic periods. It is considered one of the oldest settlement sites in the Arabian Peninsula, having witnessed numerous successive civilizations, all of which left visible imprints. The archaeological remains scattered across its cities and villages tell the story of the Arab person who lived in this region. Historical evidence indicates the existence of ancient human activity dating back at least to 5000 BCE—around seven thousand years before the present. This long-standing settlement was due to the region's agricultural nature, its availability of water, and its strategic commercial location as a crossroads of trade routes. It was also a place where waves of migrating populations met from all directions—patterns of movement that continue even today. Al-Kharj has always been attractive to settlers, for it is a fertile agricultural area surrounded by an otherwise barren desert.

The human heritage of any region in the world is its beating heart, reflecting the pulse of life flowing through its veins. A thriving nation is one that takes pride in its heritage, considering it an essential component of its history, civilization, and identity. Al-Kharj Governorate is one of the finest regions in the Kingdom in representing the human heritage of our country. The natural environment of this governorate has played an important role in shaping population activities; its location in the midst of the desert, combined with abundant groundwater and fertile soil in most of its areas, has influenced the interests, professions, and crafts of its inhabitants.

Fertile land, plentiful water, and a growing population—these three elements form the foundation upon which urban development rests, in all its economic, social, and political dimensions, wherever it exists. Al-Kharj—along with the broader Najd region—has long been one of the Kingdom's most expressive areas in terms of human heritage, evident in the spread of traditional crafts and industries such as textiles, woodwork, pottery, metalwork, and many other diverse traditional occupations.

The flourishing of these heritage industries and handicrafts—both in Al-Kharj and across the Kingdom’s vast regions—prompted the wise government to support and preserve them as part of national identity and a pillar of its culture, civilization, and heritage. This support was formalized through Royal Decree No. 9 dated 12 Muharram 1421 AH / 16 April 2000 AD, which stipulated in Paragraph 5 of Article Four the need to support efforts that contribute to developing and promoting tourism, preserving tourist sites, traditional crafts, industries, and popular markets, and protecting them from disappearance (General Authority, 2015, p. 14).

At the end of this introduction, it is important to emphasize that many regions and governorates of our beloved Kingdom—foremost among them Al-Kharj—are in need of documenting their history and detailing the rich features of their human heritage. This need grows the further we move away from the modern era, making it essential for Saudi researchers—especially academics—to intensify their studies related to the history of the Kingdom across its various stages and periods, particularly the early and middle phases of Islamic history.

This necessity becomes even more urgent when we realize that the history of Al-Kharj and the wider Najd region is among the most obscure and complex historical periods of Saudi Arabia, due to the scarcity of Najdi historical sources and local documents. Were it not for the migrations of tribes and families, and the chain of events that connected Najd with other regions of the Arabian Peninsula—especially the Hijaz—much of the history and events of the region would have been lost.

The historian of Najd, Sheikh ‘Uthmān ibn Bishr (d. 1290 AH / 1873 AD), lamented this situation,

saying:

“Know that the people of Najd, both ancient and recent, had little concern for documenting the history of their days and homelands: who built them, what occurred within them, who came and who left. Their scholars only wrote rare accounts. When they mention a year, they say: ‘So-and-so was killed,’ without naming him or explaining the cause of his death. When they mention a battle or an event, they say: ‘In this year such-and-such a battle occurred,’ without describing it or identifying its location. We know that from the time of Adam until today, history is full of battles—but we want to know the facts, the causes, the wonders and strange occurrences. All of this is absent from their historical records.” (Ibn Bishr, 1999, Vol. 1, p. 24).

In any case, it is hoped that this research will contribute to highlighting the true and radiant image of Al-Kharj Governorate and help lay a strong foundation within the grand historical edifice of the Kingdom—whose economy continues to advance steadily toward progress and prosperity in line with the vision of 2030.

Preface:

Before examining the most important aspects of the history of Al-Kharj Governorate and some of the features of its rich human heritage—deeply rooted in history and resonant with progress and prosperity—this preface explains the reason behind the name “Al-Kharj” and identifies the geographical location of this governorate within our beloved Kingdom.

1 – Reason for the Name:

The meanings of names given to landmarks in a human environment often reflect the ethnic and cultural origins of the people who coined them. Thus, place names become part of the cultural heritage of the populations that once inhabited those areas. Understanding the

meanings of geographical place names is important for tracing the history of human settlement across different periods—especially in eras lacking historical sources, documents, and archaeological records.

This applies to Al-Kharj Governorate, whose name has been the subject of differing interpretations among historians and researchers. These interpretations include:

A. Some scholars attribute the name to the word “kharāj” meaning “what the land produces in crops on which a tax is levied,” or “a due imposed on the land that must be paid.” (al-Māwardī, 1973, p. 196; al-Farrā’, 2000, p. 162). This appears in the Qur’anic verse: “Or do you ask them for a payment? But the payment of your Lord is better.” [Al-Mu’minun: 72].

This meaning aptly fits the governorate, given that it is an agricultural region known for production and yield; its kharāj historically supplied the needs of the Two Holy Mosques (Ibn Khumays, Tārīkh al-Yamāmah, 1987, vol. 3, p. 320). This explanation is considered the strongest and most likely among the proposed views.

Evidence that the region of Al-Kharj served as a source of grain for Makkah—even before Islam—appears in the Prophet’s biography, in the story of the Islam of Thumamah ibn Athāl, chief of Banu Hanīfah (1), who prevented Quraysh from importing wheat from al-Yamāmah except with the permission of the Prophet. The narrator explains that al-Yamāmah—including the Al-Kharj area, whose center was Al-Hadayb (al-Hudayb, 1994, p. 22)—was considered the “rural farmland of Makkah.” (al-Bayhaqī, 1988, vol. 4, p. 80).

B. Others relate the name to another linguistic meaning of the word “kharj”, referring to a valley with no outlet (Ibn Sīdah, al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ, 1996, p. 107). Wādī Hanīfah, upon reaching its end, flows into a wide area known as Al-Kharj. The term corresponds to “al-tanhiyah,” meaning the place where floodwaters end (Muhammadin, 1992, p. 184). Rainwater flowing eastward into the valleys gathers at Rawdat al-Shahbā(2), east of the city of Al-Saih, where it is blocked by the sands of the famous al-Dahnā’ Desert (al-Bashāyirah & al-Khuzaym, 2013, vol. 1, p. 47).

C. A third opinion is that of the British Muslim orientalist Abdullah H. St. John (Philby), who claimed the name came from the abundance of springs in the region, which appeared like holes (khurūq) in the rock. Locals referred to them as “al-khurūq,” and the letter qāf shifted to jīm in the dialect of some eastern inhabitants, turning “al-khurūq” into “al-kharj.” This resembles the dialectal pronunciation of “al-qidr” (pot) as “al-jidr.” (al-Ghuzzi, 1994, p. 17).

D-The city of Al-Kharj was also known as “Al-Sayh,” and the reason for this name goes back to the abundance of its natural springs, where water flows freely on the surface of the ground without human effort or mechanical means to lift it (Al-Hedayb, 1994, p. 13).

2. Location:

The city and governorate of Al-Kharj are located in the central region of Najd, specifically southeast of Riyadh, at a distance of eighty kilometers, which made it administratively affiliated with the Riyadh Region (Bin Khamees, Mu’jam Al-Yamamah, 1978, vol. 3, p. 327). Its astronomical location is at latitude 24° 11' and longitude 47° 20' (Mohamedien, 1992, p. 83).

The governorate has a rectangular shape, with a length of 150 km from east to west and 130 km from north to south, giving it an area of 19,500 km², which is larger than some Arab countries such as Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and Lebanon (Al-Bashayera & Al-Khuzaim, 2013, vol. 1, p. 105).

It is bordered on the northwest by the city and emirate of Riyadh, on the southwest by Hotat Bani Tamim and Al-Hariq, on the west by the Tuwaiq Mountains, and on the east by the Eastern Province (Al-Riyadh Newspaper, issue 7348, p. 31). (1) The region is surrounded by numerous mountains, hills, and deserts: to the north are the 'Armah, Al-Mughrah, Al-Nakhsh, and others; to the east is the Al-Dahna Desert; to the west are the Tuwaiq Mountains; and to the south lie Al-Biyadh and the Sha'ari Mushakhis hills (Al-Arid, 2000, p. 14).

Al-Kharj lies on elevated stony plateaus rising about 1,350 feet (approximately 620 meters) above sea level, with flat plains connected to the famous Wadi Hanifah(2) from the Riyadh side and Wadi Nisah coming from the Tuwaiq Mountains. The region includes many water tributaries, such as Shu'ayb Al-Awst, Shu'ayb Mawwan, Shu'ayb Othaylan, Shu'ayb Namir, and others (Al-Arid, 1984, p. 34).

In this vast area, the largest and most extensive valleys of Al-'Arid (3) converge, forming flowing springs that nourish the land with growth and greenery (Bin Khamees, Tarikh Al-Yamamah, 1987, vol. 3, p. 320).

With this location, Al-Kharj holds a strategic position in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, being at the intersection of three regional routes: Riyadh, Dammam, and Najran (Group of Authors, 2007, p. 25). Its central position made it a link between north, south, east, and west, as well as a resting station for trade caravans, providing them with services, security, and other necessities (Al-Bashayera & Al-Khuzaim, 2013, vol. 1, p. 19).

Some early Arab geographers located Al-Kharj within the land of Al-Yamamah. Yaqut Al-Hamawi (d. 626 AH / 1228 AD) stated it lies on the route from Basra to Mecca (Al-Hamawi, 1990, vol. 2, p. 357) and described it as "the best valley in Al-Yamamah, its land grows crops and has few palm trees." Al-Zamakhshari (d. 538 AH / 1144 AD) also considered it part of Al-Yamamah, saying: "Al-Kharj is a group of villages in Al-Yamamah with many palm groves belonging to Bakr ibn Wa'il" (Al-Zamakhshari, 1982, p. 13). Ibn Manzur (d. 711 AH / 1311 AD) mentioned it as "the name of a place in Al-Yamamah" (Ibn Manzur, 1988, vol. 2, p. 249). Ibn Khordadbeh (d. 280 AH / 893 AD) considered it the first of fourteen stations connecting Al-Yamamah with Yemen (Ibn Khordadbeh, n.d., p. 62). Ibn Hawqal (d. 367 AH / 977 AD) regarded it as the sixth city of Bahrain(1) (Ibn Hawqal, 1938, p. 29).

(1) Thumamah ibn Athāl ibn al-Nu'mān al-Hanīfī al-Yamāmī was the chief of al-Yamāmāh. Known for his poetry, he remained firm in Islam during the apostasy wars after the death of the Prophet and joined al-'Alā' ibn al-Haḍramī in fighting the apostates of Bahrain. After victory, he purchased a cloak belonging to the enemy leader. Members of Banu Qays ibn Tha'labah mistakenly assumed he had killed their chief and killed him in revenge, in 12 AH / 633 CE. See: Ibn Ḥajar, 1992, vol. 1, p. 526; al-Ziriklī, al-A'lām, 2007, vol. 2, p. 100.

(2) The city of Al-Saih is the modern capital of Al-Kharj Governorate and its largest city. It is the administrative and economic center, renowned primarily for its dairy industry, earning it the title "Dairy Capital of the Arabian Gulf." (Sarah bint Abdullah al-Khuzaym, 2019, vol. 2, p. 231). (1) Bahrain in early Islamic geography refers to the ancient name of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, extending from north of Dammam to south of Jubail, including cities such as Al-Ahsa, Al-Qatif, and Hajr, with many agricultural villages (Hamad Al-Jasir, Al-Mu'jam Al-Jughrafi, 1977, vol. 1, p. 155). (2) Wadi Hanifah is one of the largest valleys descending from the eastern slopes of the northern Tuwaiq Mountains, passing through

Riyadh near Al-Hair and ending in Al-Kharj. It was named after Banu Hanifah of the 'Anazah tribe, who dominated the region (Jum'ah, 1978, p. 11; Bin Khamees, 1978, vol. 1, p. 416).

(3) Al-'Arid refers to the mountainous region of Al-Yamamah, also called Tuwaiq, and sometimes used to refer to Al-Yamamah as a whole. Historically, it referred to the mountain stretching north to south; today, the term refers to part of that mountain—mainly the Riyadh region and its surroundings (Bin Khamees, 1978, vol. 2, p. 129; Hamzah, 1968, p. 157).

First: A Brief Overview of the History of Al-Kharj Governorate

Al-Kharj Governorate has witnessed an ancient and deeply rooted history extending from remote antiquity to the present day. It was home to the two extinct Arab tribes Tasm and Jadis. Jadis settled at the lower end of Wadi Hanifah near the Al-Kharj depression, while Tasm settled in the upper and middle parts of the valley, taking "Hajr al-Yamamah" (Riyadh) as their capital (Al-Bashayera & Al-Khuzaim, 2013, vol. 1, p. 60) (2). At that time, the region was known as "Jaw" or "Jaw al-Yamamah," since the name "Al-Kharj" is believed—according to historians—to be of Islamic origin (Al-Hadib, 1994, p. 21). The region witnessed the bloody conflict between Tasm and Jadis on one side, and between the Tubba' kings on the other (3), which eventually led to the annihilation of Jadis (Bin Khamees, *Tarikh al-Yamamah*, 1987, vol. 3, p. 304).

The long-standing history of Al-Kharj, its depth within the history of Najd in particular and the Arabian Peninsula in general—both before and after Islam—is supported by the poetry of that era. Among the verses referencing Al-Kharj are the following:

- The Mukhadram poet Al-A'sha (1) said:
*"On the day of Al-Kharj, memories stirred within you—
 As a dove, longing, calls out to its mate."*
 (Al-A'sha, 2005, p. 42)
- The Mukhadram poet Al-Namir ibn Tawlab (2) said:
*"I once delighted in her while the homes were united—
 Al-Kharj, then Al-Nabiy, then Al-'Urta', then Al-Dam."*
 (Al-Bakri, 1983, vol. 2, p. 491)
- The Umayyad poet Dhu al-Rumma (3) said:
"...with a waft of Al-Kharj lavender stirred..."
 (Al-Bahili, 1982, vol. 1, p. 397)
- The Umayyad poet Jarir ibn 'Atiyah (4) said:
*"How delightful is Al-Kharj between Al-Dam and Al-Adhmi—
 And the rammath of Barqat al-Rawhan and then Al-Ghuraf."*
 (Jarir, n.d., p. 322)

(2) See Appendix No. (5) in the appendices section at the end of this research.

(3) *Tubba'* (pl. *Tubba'ah* or *Tatabi'ah*): A title given to the ancient kings of Yemen, named so because some followed the ways of earlier kings in rule and conduct (Al-Shami, 1993, vol. 1, p. 132).

(1) *Al-A'sha* (*Abu Basir Maymun ibn Qays*)

A major pre-Islamic poet known as *Al-A'sha al-Kabir*. Born in Manfouhah (Riyadh region). Said to have been Christian and traveled frequently to praise kings in exchange for wealth. He lost his sight late in life. He was highly esteemed—Kufans preferred him, while the people of Hijaz and Najd preferred Zuhayr and Al-Nabighah.

References: Al-Marzubani (1982), Ibn Sallam Al-Jumahi (n.d.).

(2) *Al-Namir ibn Tawlab*

A Mukhadram poet and the poet of the Rabab tribe in pre-Islamic times. Known for generosity and eloquence. He lived a very long life—some said 200 years. He embraced Islam at an old age and praised the Prophet.

References: Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (1992), Ibn Hajar (1992).

(3) *Dhu al-Rumma (Ghaylan ibn ‘Uqbah)*

A major Umayyad-era poet. It was said: “Poetry began with Imru’ al-Qays and ended with Dhu al-Rumma.” Famous for his love poetry, especially about *Mutiya* and later *Al-Kharqā’*. He died in Isfahan in 117 AH / 734 CE at age 40.

References: Ibn Qutaybah (1949), Al-Asfahani (n.d.).

(4) *Jarir ibn ‘Atiyah*

A leading Umayyad poet and rival of Al-Farazdaq and Al-Akhtal. Known for his eulogies and satirical *naqā’id*. He visited Damascus often and praised Umayyad caliphs. Died in Al-Yamamah in 110 AH / 728 CE at age 82.

References: Al-Marzubani (1995), Ibn Qutaybah (1994).

Al-Kharj Governorate—within the Najd region—during the Islamic era was under the rule of the Banu Hanifah princes, who had also governed it before Islam, and their rule was later confirmed by the Rashidun Caliphs (Al-Jasir, *Madinat Riyadh*, 1966, p. 27). This situation continued until the reign of the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (1), who appointed one of his commanders from the people of Al-Yamamah—known as Abu Hafs—to govern the region. Abu Hafs ruled it, and his descendants from the Al-Hafs family continued to govern after him (Bin Khamees, *Tarikh Al-Yamamah*, 1987, vol. 1, p. 225).

Around the year 277 AH / 890 CE, the Al-Akhaidhir family seized control of Al-Kharj, making Al-Khadrama their capital (Bin Khamees, 1987, vol. 1, p. 371). They ruled the region for approximately 214 years (Al-Mas‘udi, 1988, vol. 3, p. 180) until they were displaced by the Qarmatians (2). Some sources indicate that their rule lasted until the mid-5th century AH / 11th century CE, specifically 470 AH / 1077 CE (Al-Jasir, *Madinat Riyadh*, 1966, p. 69).

With the fall of the Banu Akhaidhir, the region fell into chaos and political fragmentation, and leadership became divided among local tribal chiefs and rulers of the Al-Ahsa region (3), such as the Al-‘Uyuni (4) and others (Bin Khamees, 1987, vol. 3, p. 307), a situation that persisted for several centuries (Al-Bashayera & Al-Khuzaim, 2013, vol. 1, p. 86).

This state continued until the 10th century AH / 16th century CE, when the region came under Ottoman influence following the fall of the Al-Jabour Emirate at the hands of the Sharifs of Hijaz affiliated with the Ottoman Empire (Al-Riyadh Newspaper, issue 7348, p. 26). The Sharifs of Hijaz, during periods of strength and stability, conducted periodic military campaigns into Najd. One of these was the campaign of Sharif Hassan ibn Abi Nami (1) against Al-Kharj and its surroundings in 989 AH / 1581 CE (Ibn Bishr, 1999, vol. 1, p. 340). Later, in 1095 AH / 1683 CE, Al-Kharj came under the governance of the Al-‘Aidh family, whose base was Al-Dulam (2), while the Sharifs of Hijaz retained symbolic authority over the region (Bin Khunein, 2009, p. 16).

As for the prosperous Saudi era, the princes of the Saudi state exerted great effort to take control of Al-Kharj, as it was considered the key to controlling the strategic Al-Ahsa region (Al-Gharaibiyah, 1974, p. 65). The first Saudi move toward the region occurred during the

reign of the founding Imam of the First Saudi State, Imam Muhammad ibn Saud (3), specifically in 1165 AH / 1752 CE, when the people of Al-Kharj were attacked, resulting in the killing of thirty men (Ibn Bishr, 1999, vol. 1, p. 64).

In 1173 AH / 1760 CE, Imam Abdul Aziz ibn Muhammad (4) led another attack, killing eight men, and two years later, he attacked again, killing seven more (Ibn Bishr, 1999, vol. 1, p. 83). After the Saudis took control of Riyadh in 1187 AH / 1773 CE, Zaid ibn Zamil(5), the ruler of Al-Dulam and Al-Kharj, pledged allegiance to the Saudi state in 1189 AH / 1775 CE (Al-Othaymeen, 1998, vol. 1, p. 107). However, Zaid soon withdrew his allegiance and allied with Sa'dun ibn 'Uray'(1)ir, the ruler of Al-Ahsa, who sent a message to Imam Abdul Aziz requesting that he not approach the region (Ibn Bishr, 1999, vol. 1, p. 135).

This situation persisted until the killing of Zaid ibn Zamil in 1199 AH / 1785 CE, after which all towns of Al-Kharj submitted to the Saudi state during Dhu al-Hijjah of that year (Ibn Bishr, 1999, vol. 1, p. 156).

After the fall of the First Saudi State in 1233 AH / 1818 CE, chaos and disorder spread throughout Najd, including Al-Kharj. This continued until Imam Turki ibn Abdullah (2) brought Al-Kharj under the authority of the Second Saudi State in 1241 AH / 1826 CE (Ibn 'Isa, *Tarikh Ba'd al-Hawadith*, 1966, p. 155). However, the assassination of Imam Turki in 1249 AH / 1833 CE weakened the state, allowing the Ottoman Empire to extend its control over Al-Kharj. The Ottoman military commander, Khorshid (3), used the region as a base to capture the rest of Najd in 1254 AH / 1838 CE, during which he captured Imam Faisal ibn Turki (4) and took him as a prisoner to Egypt in the same year (Al-Othaymeen, 1998, vol. 1, p. 248; Bin Khamees, *Tarikh Al-Yamamah*, 1987, vol. 3, p. 401).

After Imam Faisal ibn Turki returned from captivity in Egypt to Najd in 1259 AH / 1843 CE, the people of Al-Dulam were the first to pledge allegiance to him, led by their judge Sheikh Abdul Rahman ibn Hassan Al-Sheikh (1) Al-'Askar (1989, p. 95). Saudi control over Al-Kharj and the broader Najd region continued until 1309 AH / 1891 CE, when Abdul Aziz ibn Rashid (2) took control of the entire area, forcing Imam Abdul Rahman ibn Faisal Al Saud (3) to retreat to Kuwait, marking the end of the Second Saudi State (Al-Hanbali, 1959, p. 129).

A few years later, the founding King Abdul Aziz ibn Abdul Rahman Al Saud (4) successfully recaptured Riyadh in 1319 AH / 1902 CE (Al-Zarkali, *Al-Jazirah Al-Arabiyyah*, 1985, vol. 1, p. 23). Al-Kharj was among the foremost regions of Najd to pledge allegiance to him and assist in the war against Ibn Rashid (Al-Hadib, 1994, p. 90). Since then, the region has remained loyal to the kings of Al Saud up to the present day and, God willing, will continue to do so.

(1) **Abdul Malik ibn Marwan ibn Al-Hakam**, the Umayyad Qurayshi, was born in Medina and later moved to Damascus. He was a jurist, widely knowledgeable, devout, and ascetic. Caliph **Muawiyah** appointed him governor of Medina at age 16, and he later succeeded his father as Caliph in **65 AH / 684 CE**, stabilizing the state after the deaths of Mus'ab and Abdullah ibn Al-Zubayr in their conflicts with Al-Hajjaj. He died in Damascus in **86 AH / 704 CE** at the age of 60. See: Ibn Sa'd, 1957, vol. 5, p. 233; Ibn Khayyat, 1993, p. 240.

(2) **The Qarmatians** were a sect of the Isma'ili branch of Shi'a, named after Hamdan ibn Al-Ash'ath, known as Hamdan Qarmat, either from a stroke or step. Hamdan appeared in Kufa in **270 AH / 883 CE**, followed by Abu Sa'id Al-Janabi, who controlled the Bahrayn region and caused destruction until he was killed by a servant in **301 AH / 913 CE**. The Qarmatians entered Mecca in **317 AH / 929 CE**, killing many and taking the Black Stone, which they kept in the desert for years. See: Al-Isfara'ini, 1977, p. 267; Ibn Kathir, 2013, vol. 11, p. 61.

(3) **Al-Ahsa:** Historically, Al-Ahsa referred to Al-Hajar and Al-Bahrain. It was a prosperous city known for abundant water and palm groves, which attracted settlements including the Qarmatians. Today, it is located in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. See: Al-Hamdani, 1974, p. 137; Al-Dakhil, 2002, p. 54.

(4) **The Al-‘Uyoun Dynasty:** Founded by Abdullah ibn Ali Al-‘Uyoun in the early 6th century AH / 12th century CE, his lineage traces back to the ‘Abd Qais tribe. The Al-‘Uyoun were originally nomadic desert dwellers who later settled in Al-Bahrain’s Al-‘Uyoun oasis north of Al-Ahsa, giving the dynasty its name. See: Al-Safadi, 1991, vol. 22, p. 139; Al-Wazzan, 2019, p. 112.

(1) **Hassan ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Nami II Al-Qurashi Al-Makki:** Participated with his father in governance from **961 AH / 1553 CE**, and succeeded him in **992 AH / 1584 CE**, ruling until his death in Mecca in **1010 AH / 1601 CE** at age 80. See: Duhlan, 1887, p. 56; Zambaur, 1951, vol. 1, p. 30.

(2) **Al-Dulam:** One of the main cities of Al-Kharj, located 95 km southeast of Riyadh. It is bordered by Al-Dahi sands to the east, Tuwayq Mountains to the west, Najan to the north, and Hawtat Bani Tamim to the south. See: Al-‘Askar, 1989, p. 28.

(3) **Imam Muhammad ibn Saud:** Founder of the First Saudi State, ruler of Dir‘iyah with his brother Thunayan from **1139 AH / 1726 CE** for 19 years, later titled Imam in **1157 AH / 1745 CE** after allying with Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab to establish monotheism. He unified most of central Najd and died in Dir‘iyah in **1179 AH / 1765 CE**. See: Rashed Ali, Al-Hanbali, 1959, p. 122; Al-Zarkali, 2007, vol. 6, p. 138.

(4) **Abdul Aziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud:** Second Imam of the First Saudi State, ruled from **1179 AH / 1765 CE** after his father’s death. He was assassinated during Fajr prayer in Dir‘iyah in **1218 AH / 1803 CE** at age 85. Under his leadership, the state expanded west to Asir and south to Oman. See: Ibn Bishr, 1999, vol. 2, p. 11; Ibn ‘Isa, 1966, p. 191.

(5) **Zaid ibn Zamil ibn Uthman Al-Dalmi Al-Qahtani:** Emir of Al-Kharj and Al-Dulam, initially hostile to Sheikh Muhammad and the Saudi state, fought several battles, allied intermittently, then reverted to hostility. Killed in **1197 AH / 1782 CE** by the Saudis under Sulayman ibn ‘Afisan during a raid on the Subai‘ tribe. His son, Barak ibn Zaid, succeeded him. See: Authors, 1999, vol. 10, p. 471.

(1) **Al-‘Uray‘ir Family:** Descendants of ‘Uray‘ir ibn Dahin ibn Sa’dun from the Al-Humaid branch of the Adnani tribe, they opposed Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab’s reformist call and, consequently, the First Saudi State. Their rule over Al-Ahsa lasted from **1081 AH / 1670 CE** to **1207 AH / 1792 CE**, when they were expelled by Imam Abdul Aziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud Al-Ahsa’i. See: vol. 1, p. 128; Al-Jasir, 1988, vol. 2, p. 532.

(2) **Imam Turki ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Saud Al-Muraydi Al-Najdi:** Reestablished the Second Saudi State in **1240 AH / 1824 CE** after surviving the fall of Dir‘iyah in **1233 AH / 1818 CE**, when Ibrahim Pasha ended the First Saudi State. Imam Turki moved the Saudi capital from the destroyed Dir‘iyah to Riyadh, consolidating power in his father Abdullah’s line rather than his uncle Abdul Aziz’s. He was brave, intelligent, humble, just, and wise. Assassinated by his nephew Mishari ibn Abdul Rahman ibn Hasan ibn Mishari ibn Saud in **1249 AH / 1834 CE**. See: Ibn Bishr, 1999, vol. 2, p. 49; Jum‘ah, 1978, p. 98.

(3) **Muhammad Khurshid Pasha Al-Albani:** One of Muhammad Ali Pasha’s commanders trained in Egypt by modern methods. Participated in Muhammad Ali’s campaigns in the Hijaz, later appointed governor of Mecca in **1246 AH / 1831 CE**. Failing to suppress a mutiny led

by Turkaja Belmaz, he was recalled to Egypt and became director of Dakahlia. He died in Egypt in **1268 AH / 1851 CE**. See: Al-Zarkali, Al-A'lam, 2007, vol. 1, p. 119.

(4) **Imam Faisal ibn Turki ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Saud Al-Muraydi Al-Najdi**: Strict in justice, supportive of the righteous, honored Quran carriers and scholars, and compassionate toward widows and the poor. He was pledged allegiance as Imam in **1250 AH / 1834 CE** after returning to Riyadh following his father's assassination. Forced to reconcile with Muhammad Ali Pasha in **1254 AH / 1838 CE** after military confrontations, he was exiled to Egypt the following year and returned to rule Riyadh again in **1259 AH / 1843 CE**, remaining in power until his death in **1382 AH / 1865 CE**. See: Ibn Bishr, 1999, vol. 2, p. 13; Jum'ah, 1978, p. 105.

(1) **Abdul Rahman ibn Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab Al-Najdi**: Studied under his grandfather Sheikh Muhammad, as well as Ahmad ibn Mu'ammara, ibn Khamis, and ibn Ghnam. Served as Qadi of Al-Ahsa and Dir'iyah, later traveled to Egypt after Dir'iyah fell. Returned to support Imam Turki in his campaigns, became Qadi of Riyadh, and opposed the enemies of the reformist call, authoring several letters. Died in Riyadh in **1285 AH / 1868 CE**. See: Ibn Bishr, 1999, vol. 1, p. 201; Al-Sheikh, 1972, vol. 4, p. 43.

(2) **Abdul Aziz ibn Mut'ib ibn Rashid Al-Shammari**: Sixth ruler of the Al-Rashid Emirate in Hail, took power after his uncle Muhammad ibn Abdullah Al-Rashid in **1315 AH / 1897 CE**. Known as one of the bravest Arabs of his time, he led many raids and campaigns against the Emir of Kuwait, Ibn Sabah, and King Abdul Aziz, ruling until killed in the Battle of Rawdat Muhanna in **1324 AH / 1906 CE**. See: Al-Rihani, 1988, p. 157; Al-Zarkali, Al-A'lam, 2007, vol. 4, p. 25.

(3) **Abdul Rahman ibn Faisal ibn Turki ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Saud Al-Muraydi Al-Najdi**: Last Imam of the Second Saudi State. Assumed leadership after his brother Abdullah's death, fought the Emir of Hail, Ibn Rashid, and was eventually forced to flee to Kuwait in **1310 AH / 1892 CE**, staying there until his son, King Abdul Aziz, reclaimed Riyadh and continued to support him until his death in **1346 AH / 1928 CE**. See: Ibn 'Isa, 'Uqd al-Durar, 1999, p. 77; Al-Zarkali, Al-A'lam, 2007, vol. 3, p. 322.

(4) **Abdul Aziz ibn Abdul Rahman ibn Faisal ibn Turki ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Saud Al-Muraydi Al-Najdi**: First King of the Third Saudi State and founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Reclaimed Riyadh in **1319 AH / 1902 CE**, unified the region over several years, and declared the establishment of the Kingdom in **1351 AH / 1932 CE**. Died in Ta'if in **1373 AH / 1953 CE**. See: Ibn 'Isa, Tarikh Ba'd al-Hawadith, 1966, p. 102; Unknown, 2008, p. 44.

Secondly. Human Heritage in Al-Kharj Governorate

Due to Al-Kharj's role as a meeting point and resting place for trade caravans since ancient times, the region received numerous waves of settlers from various local and regional areas. This influx encouraged the practice of trades and crafts essential for travelers, such as agriculture, carpentry, blacksmithing, butchery, and others (Al-Barak, 2004, p. 393). The diversity of the population, resulting from intermixing of different human groups and lineages at least since the Neolithic period—over 2,500 years ago—further consolidated these trades (Qabil, 2006, p. 17). Additionally, the long-standing tradition of the locals traveling abroad, particularly to parts of Asia and Africa for livelihood, contributed to both the demographic diversity (Al-Mutairi, 2000, p. 136) and the diversity of crafts and industries.

Below are the most prominent aspects of human heritage in Al-Kharj, focusing on customs, traditional crafts, and local industries:

Customs and Traditions:

Customs and traditions reflect the morals and mentality of a people (Amin, 2013, p. 9). Studying inherited social customs helps document history and clarify aspects of a community's life. Certain social customs hold significant importance, forming a core part of the social organization of human societies. The vast geographical variation across Saudi regions has influenced differences in trades, professions, customs, and social roles (Al-Sadhan, 2008, p. 55).

In Al-Kharj, the lifestyle of its inhabitants predominantly reflects Bedouin traditions, similar to most of Saudi Arabia, making many social practices closely related to Bedouin life. Some of these customs are at risk of disappearing due to modernization, education, and urban development, making it important to document them to preserve part of the region's rich historical heritage.

A. Social Customs:

During gatherings for storytelling and socializing (Musamara), families in the same neighborhood, particularly in nearby houses, would meet to exchange news, share stories, recite poems and proverbs that conveyed long experiences. These gatherings often took place under moonlight for hours, with a special emphasis on solving riddles and puzzles. Some famous riddles in Al-Kharj included:

- “*A matching head with six eyes and twelve legs*” — answer: *a camel with two riders*
 - “*A fair man who neither hears, sees, nor speaks*” — answer: *the scale*
- (Al-Askar, 1989, pp. 216–217)

B. Traditional Cuisine:

The local cuisine in Al-Kharj is predominantly Najdi, based on local production, as imports were minimal. Residents mainly consumed what they cultivated or produced, including meat, milk, and dairy from their livestock. Common crops included wheat, barley, dates, fruits, and vegetables. Family income and agricultural output determined the preparation of specific dishes.

Staple traditional dishes included *Aseedah* or *Ragheedah* (made from wheat, barley, or millet), and other popular dishes—some still prepared today—such as *Jareesh*, *Marqooq*, *Qursan*, *Haneeni*, *Marase'*, *Qurs Bar Majmoor*, and *Abu Bateen*.

Beverages were mainly dairy-based, derived from camels, goats, or cows, serving both as drinks and nutrition. Other key beverages included Arabic coffee (qahwa) and tea. Dates held significant importance historically and remain so today, eaten alone or with coffee and milk (Al-Duraim, 1993, p. 167).

C. Popular Games

These games are associated with youth and children, both boys and girls, each according to what suits them. They are also connected to certain trades and professions, which young people use for entertainment and relaxation. Some of the most notable games include:

- **Entertainment games during plowing:** Farmers face hardship and exhaustion while plowing from sunrise to sunset, so they engage in forms of recreation to relieve boredom among men and youth. Competitions are held to see who reaches the far end of the farm first. Each participant holds a row of furrows called a *janb*, starting from one end of the farm to the other. The first to reach the end with skill wins the wager. During these competitions, men

chant songs and rhymes that invigorate and energize the participants (Al-Khuzaym, 2019, Vol. 2, p. 113).

- **Game “Azeem Serri Ya Lah”:** This game begins by marking a start and end point. Children are divided into two teams, lined up in a row. A small object (the “bone”) is thrown, and competitors race to retrieve it. The one who finds it shouts loudly: “*Azeem Serri Ya Lah!*” and returns to the starting point with their team. The opposing team acts as defenders, trying to capture the one holding the object. If they succeed, roles are reversed and the defending team becomes the attackers (Al-Duraim, 1993, p. 168).

Other traditional youth and children’s games in Al-Kharj include:

- **Al-Muqra’ah:** Played by boys and adults using a thick stick, usually in open spaces after afternoon prayer.
- **Al-Ka’abah:** Using sheep joint bones thrown in a circle with a piece called *as-Sool*.
- **Al-Washashah:** A lightweight round wooden piece spun using two strings.
- **Al-Danana:** Using a used wheel frame pushed forward with a short stick.
- **Al-Zanboor:** A conical wooden piece with a nail on top, spun on the ground by a thin string; the piece that spins the longest wins.
- **Al-Kharoufah:** A game for young girls using wet sand to form shapes decorated with small beads.

There are many other traditional games in the region (Al-Duraim, 1993, pp. 171–172).

D. Al-Zaffa (Celebratory Procession):

This is a celebration marking the completion of the Quran by a student under the supervision of the teacher (*Al-Mutanwī*). Classmates, led by the teacher, gather either at the teacher’s house or the mosque and then proceed to the house of the Quran completer, who is carried on shoulders. During the procession, Quranic prayers are recited, and classmates follow behind for protection. The Quran completer may walk without being carried. Upon arrival, coffee and tea are served, and usually a meal is shared (Al-Duraim, 1993, p. 181).

E. Popular Proverbs

Proverbs are considered the most authentic expression of the customs and traditions of Al-Kharj and the broader Najd region, as well as the character and morals of its inhabitants. They are colloquial expressions reflecting feelings and emotions and form a living, integral part of the region’s history. These proverbs are numerous and associated with various occasions. Some examples include:

- “*Shaf wajh al-‘anz wa ahlib laban*” – “Milk the goat whose face you have seen.”
- “*Man ta’asha tamsha*” – “Whoever has had dinner, walks.”
- “*Ma Marwah illa bi-sabr*” – “No reward without patience.”
- “*Mubarram kbous man tabarram bihi inqata*” – “Forbidden mat, whoever is forbidden by it is cut off.”
- “*Wajh ta’rifuh wa la wajh tankaruh*” – “A face you recognize and a face you don’t.” (Al-Jahiman, 1983, Vols. 4, 7, 10; Al-Duraim, 1993, p. 174)

In conclusion, it is observed that significant changes have occurred in many social practices in Al-Kharj over the last two decades. Some traditional customs have faded, while new customs have emerged across various aspects of life. These changes are due to modernization, education, improved living standards, cultural exchange with urban and external communities, and the influence of social media, which facilitates access to information.

For example, in matters of engagement and marriage:

- Wedding celebrations are now held in dedicated halls equipped for such events.
- Young people increasingly choose spouses outside their tribe, which was previously rare or restricted.
- Brides are now escorted to their husbands' homes on the wedding night, whereas previously this occurred on the seventh night of celebration.
- There is a trend toward delaying marriage for both men and women to pursue education and employment, in contrast to the previous practice of early marriage.
- Engagement announcements and parties are now common, whereas previously engagements were kept strictly private.

2. Handicrafts

The term “*craft*” in Arabic is derived from the word for *professionalism* or *acquisition* (*ih̥tirāf*), meaning to gain or earn a living. Expressions include: “*He crafts for his children*” (Al-Zubaidi, 1945, Vol. 6, p. 69), “*a man of limited earnings*” (Al-Jiyani, 1984, Vol. 1, p. 144), or “*a craftsman*” (*ḥarīf*), meaning one who earns a living through skill (Al-Jawhari, 1999, p. 160). In general, the linguistic meaning of craft refers to earning a livelihood, as it is a means to achieve that. Technically, craft refers to the skill or industry from which one earns a living. Anything that a person works at and benefits from is considered a craft in Arab tradition (Al-Azhari, 2001, Vol. 5, p. 16). It is narrated that Ali ibn Abi Talib said: “*I see a man I admire, so I ask: Does he have a craft? If they say no, he falls from my regard.*” (Al-Zubaidi, 1945, Vol. 23, pp. 133–134; Ali, 1978, Vol. 7, p. 505).

Among the traditional crafts that have been known in Al-Kharj since ancient times and became more established in the modern era are:

A. Agriculture

Farming is one of the oldest professions practiced by humans in the Arabian Peninsula for thousands of years. It is considered one of the most important pillars of food security, which is vital for all countries, both rich and poor (Muhammad, 1984, p. 5). This is affirmed by the Qur’anic verse:

"And a sign for them is the dead earth. We give it life and bring forth from it grain, from which they eat. And We produce therein gardens of date palms and grapes, and We cause springs to gush forth, that they may eat of His fruit and what their hands have made. Will they not then give thanks? Glory be to Him who created all pairs—from what the earth produces and from themselves and from that which they do not know."
[Surah Ya-Sin, 36–39]

Al-Kharj became well-known for agriculture and the diversity of its crops, earning it the nickname “*The City of Springs and Orchards*” (Al-Hudaib, 1994, p. 90). It is the most fertile and extensive region in Najd, with abundant water and highly productive land. This agricultural prosperity was supported by the availability of water from natural springs and numerous surrounding valleys, as well as the large expanse and fertility of its farmlands (Al-Bashaira & Al-Khuzaym, 2013, Vol. 1, p. 31).

Historically, the area was famous for its fertile soil and plentiful water. The Umayyad Caliph Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan (1) even allocated some of its lands in the Dalm region to farmers from loyal families originating from the Levant (Al-‘Askar, 1989, p. 74). Dates and other agricultural products, such as vegetables and cereals, form the economic backbone of the region (Al-Khuzaym, 2019, Vol. 2, p. 110).

Traditional planting begins with preparing the soil using organic fertilizer, followed by sowing the seeds (*badr al-habb*) and plowing the land with the traditional plow known as the “*sharakb*”.

This plow consists of a 3.5-meter wooden beam split at its front end to insert a rope (*al-rasha*), which is pulled by camels or oxen. At the rear of the beam is a wide hole fixed with a half-meter slanted wooden piece with an iron tip for cutting the soil. At the end of the plow, a stick is held by the farmer to guide it in parallel lines.

After plowing, the land is divided into small plots (*hiyadh*) and irrigation channels (*siryān*) are prepared using the *mashāb*. Small ridges called *marwaṣ* separate the plots. In years of abundant rain, irrigation may only be needed shortly before harvest.

Both men and women participate in plowing, especially in the absence of hired labor (boys). Women also feed the camels and prepare food and drink for the men working in the fields (Al-Khuzaym, 2019, Vol. 2, pp. 112–213). Plowing is generally a cooperative activity among farmers, who work without pay unless non-farming workers or relatives are hired, in which case they receive a symbolic daily wage of one to two riyals, a portion of the harvest, or deferred payment until harvest time (Al-Suwaida, 1983, pp. 50–51).

When the first signs of harvest appear, farmers rejoice at the season's arrival. They begin by harvesting barley, followed by soft wheat, and then hard, short-grain wheat (*alqūmi*). Men and women participate together in this cooperative effort, standing in closely packed rows and using sickles known as *al-mikhlab* or *al-maḥaṣh*. The harvested crops are stacked into piles called *ghumūr*. During the harvesting process, they chant songs expressing joy and celebration, such as:

*"O my joy for the precious ones,
Who kept us awake at night,
Now the harvest begins, bless it for us, O Lord."*
(Al-Khuzaym, 2019, Vol. 2, p. 114)

After gathering the crop piles in threshing areas, they are arranged in horizontal circles with the grain heads facing inward and the stalks outward, on circles ranging from two to three meters in diameter. This arrangement protects the crops from livestock. Each pile, or *Umar*, contains approximately two to three *sā'* (traditional units) of grain (Al-Khuzaym, 2019, Vol. 2, p. 115).

In the case of date palm harvesting⁽¹⁾, when it is time to store (*kanṣ*) the dates, the process is accompanied by charming social customs. Groups of children, both boys and girls, go around the houses singing seasonal songs in exchange for small amounts of dates. These dates are then collected and sold, with the proceeds shared or used to buy items agreed upon collectively. Some of the traditional songs they sing include:

*"Hanna, we have carried the best,
People of customs, striking the lands,
Whose date harvest grows,
Stored, stored, then the pebbles are grey,
And whose plantations and produce,
Covered and whose clarified butter plates for trading."*

When the children receive what they request, they would say:

*"O people of the palace, give us,
And bless them with songs."*

(Al-Durayhim, 1993, pp. 172–173)

(1) He is Abu Abd al-Rahman Mu‘awiya ibn Abi Sufyan Ṣakhr ibn Ḥarb ibn Umayya, a Qurayshite Umayyad from Mecca. He, along with his father and mother Hind, embraced Islam on the day of the conquest of Mecca, and he participated with the Prophet in the Battle of Hunayn. He was appointed by Abu Bakr to lead the army in Syria, then by ‘Umar over Jordan and later Damascus. During ‘Uthman’s caliphate, he was appointed over all the Syrian territories. A conflict arose between him and ‘Ali after the assassination of ‘Uthman, which ended with Mu‘awiya assuming the caliphate in Syria while ‘Ali governed Iraq. After ‘Ali’s death and the abdication of his son al-Ḥasan, the caliphate passed to Mu‘awiya in the year 41 AH / 661 CE. He died in Damascus in 60 AH / 679 CE at the age of 80. (See: Ibn Sa‘d, 1957, Vol. 3, p. 32; Ibn Abi Ḥātim, 1952, Vol. 8, p. 377).

(1) The number of date palms in Al-Kharj Governorate in 1411 AH / 1990 CE exceeded 220,000 palms, and the total quantity of dates exported from the date processing factories in Al-Ahsa amounted to 117,000 tons in the same year (Al-Durayhim, 1993, p. 149).

B. The Craft of Herding (1):

The scarcity of rainfall in the Najd region and the Arabian Peninsula in general prevented the establishment of stable agriculture. As a result, most Arabs became accustomed to a life of herding and nomadism, where herders used their inherited skills to make use of semi-arid rangeland vegetation to raise their animals. The Arabian Peninsula represents one of the clearest examples of such environments in which mobile pastoralism and animal husbandry have prevailed since ancient times (Group of Authors, 2000, Vol. 3, p. 718). The Roman historian *Cicero* (16–43 BC) mentioned this fact, saying: “The Arabs were mainly engaged in sheep herding, and they were always roaming across plains and mountains in both summer and winter” (Ibn Suray, 2017, p. 121).

In honor of this craft, most prophets—peace be upon them—practiced herding, and it was the first occupation of Prophet Muhammad before his mission, when he herded the sheep of his uncle Abu Talib out of responsibility and a desire to ease the burden on his guardian. He also herded sheep for the people of Mecca for wages, as indicated in the hadith: “Allah did not send any prophet except that he herded sheep.” They asked, “And you?” He replied, “Yes, I used to herd them for the people of Mecca for qirāts” (2) (Al-Bukhari, 1987, No. 2143). He also praised herding, livestock, and domestic animals in general, saying: “*Camels are a source of honor for their owners, sheep bring blessings, and goodness is tied to the forelocks of horses until the Day of Resurrection.*” (Ibn Mājah, 1975, Vol. 2, p. 773).

Herding was one of the major economic activities practiced by the inhabitants of the Kingdom since ancient times. Studies show that Saudi Arabia has approximately 1,120,000 square kilometers of rangelands, and about 111 million hectares of grazing lands—equivalent to half of its total area (Muhammad, 1984, pp. 219–220). Al-Kharj Governorate is among the areas rich in significant livestock resources, including camels, sheep, and goats (1). This craft was mainly concentrated in the desert regions, where herders would store animal products—often abundant in spring—to sell in urban markets during autumn and early winter (Al-Khuzaim, 2019, Vol. 2, p. 111).

To understand the daily life of herders, we describe their routine and what their animals graze upon. Herders typically had two meals a day: one in the morning after sunrise called *al-ghada’*, and the second after sunset upon returning from the pasture called *al-‘ashā’*. Their food mainly consisted of flour baked into *‘ababid* (2), or porridge cooked in a *maṭ‘ab* (3). If they had milk,

they carried a small vessel (4) from which they drank at noon. As for their camels, they grazed on tree leaves such as *ṭalh* (5), *sidr* (6), *salam* (7), and *samr* (8), the best of which was *al-ranf* (9)—a large tree with broad leaves that improves the camels' milk in both quality and taste. Another valuable plant was *al-ḥamḥam* (10), a short-stemmed plant less than a cubit high, with large, rough, thorny leaves and flowers that produce edible seeds (Al-Salmi, n.d., p. 144).

Included in this craft is firewood gathering (11), which involves collecting grasses and wood from the desert to feed camels and livestock. Men and women would head out separately before dawn to gather firewood. Upon arriving at the chosen site, they would take out their provisions—dates, flatbreads, and various foods—along with small containers of water and milk. After eating, they would begin work with great determination to finish quickly (Al-Khuzaim, 2019, Vol. 2, pp. 119–120). Men also practiced traditional hunting using falcons, Saluki dogs, or old-style hunting rifles (Al-Suwayda', 1983, p. 179).

For women, herding-related tasks included milking livestock, feeding the young animals, churning sour milk to extract butter and ghee, making *aqiṭ* (dried yogurt), spinning goat hair, sheep wool, and camel hair to weave tents (*bayt al-sha'r*), saddle bags, and provisions bags similar to travel pouches. They also wove *hodaj* (1) covers and curtains, woolen carpets (*al-siyāḥ*), and *al-'udūl* (dark-colored mats), along with other household tasks characteristic of Bedouin life (Al-Khuzaim, 2019, Vol. 2, p. 144).

(1) *Herding*: Derived from “to graze,” meaning tending livestock—protecting them, caring for them, and ensuring they eat what benefits them (Ibn Manẓūr, 1988, Vol. 14, p. 325).

(2) *Qarārīṭ* (plural of *qirāṭ*): A unit of weight equal to half a *dāneq*. A dirham equaled twelve grains. In most Eastern regions, a *qirāṭ* was also known as a fraction of a dinar—specifically, one-tenth of a dinar (Fayyumi, 1978, Vol. 2, p. 321; Al-Sharabāsi, 1981, p. 376).

(1) As for cattle, they were rare in the Najd and Hijaz deserts and across the Arabian Peninsula's Bedouin regions. They were mainly found in villages, used by farmers—in particular for plowing land with wooden plows (Ṣāliḥ & Nawwār Al-Salmi, n.d., p. 142).

(2) *Al-'Abābid*: A term used for scattered or assorted items (Al-Azhari, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 140).

(3) *Al-Mata'*: A pot in the dialect of the tribe of Sulaym (Ṣāliḥ & Nawwār Al-Salmi, n.d., p. 147).

(4) *Al-Sa'n*: Plural *sa'nab*. A type of leather water skin cut in half, used for storing liquids, sometimes for drawing water like a bucket. Women often stored their wool or cotton inside it (Al-Jawhari, 1999, p. 312).

(5) *Al-Ṭalh*: Singular *ṭalḥab*. A tall mountain tree known among the Arabs as *Umm Ghilān*. It provides shade for people and camels, has little foliage, a thick trunk, long branches, and thorns resembling palm fibers (Al-Zubaydi, 1945, Vol. 6, p. 579).

(6) *Al-Sidr*: Singular *sidrah*. The well-known lote tree (*nabq*). It is short, with smooth white branches, alternate leaves, small clustered flowers, and sweet edible fruits (Al-Zayyāt et al., n.d., Vol. 2, p. 898).

(7) *Al-Salmr*: Singular *salamab*. A thorny tree with long, thin, sharp spines and fragrant yellow blossoms with a slightly bitter taste (Riḍā, 1938, Vol. 3, p. 200).

(8) *Al-Samr*: Singular *samrah*. A species of the *ṭalh* tree (Al-Zayyāt et al., n.d., Vol. 1, p. 448).

(9) *Al-Ranaf*: Singular *ranafa*. Known also as the *Balakhy Poplar* or *Babramj* (Persian). A mountain tree of two types: one with reddish-tinted bark, the other green with fine blossoms. Both are fragrant (Ibn Manẓūr, 1988, Vol. 9, p. 127).

(10) *Al-Hamḥam* (or *al-ḵhimḵhim*): A moisture-rich herb with coarse fuzz, less than a cubit high. It is particularly favored by camels (Ibn Sīdah, *Al-Muḥkam*, 2000, Vol. 2, p. 557).

(11) In the broader Bedouin culture, water, pasture, and firewood were considered common rights. Water belonged to all unless privately owned; firewood was accessible to everyone—meaning anyone could cut trees or gather wild vegetation so long as it was not protected or privately owned (Ali, 1978, Vol. 13, p. 18).

(1) *Al-Hawḍaj*: Singular of *hawāḍij*, also called *al-maḥmal*. A wooden litter with a square frame, sloping roof, and a central pillar topped with a crescent. It was covered with cloth—silk or otherwise—sometimes decorated with gold and jewels. It was placed on a camel's back during travel (Al-Zayyāt et al., n.d., Vol. 1, p. 416; Blunt, 1987, p. 258).

C – The Trade Profession:

The trade profession in Al-Kharj Province was closely linked to agriculture. Trade in Al-Kharj operated within a settled environment based on the population's practice of storing agricultural products that were abundant at the beginning of summer—such as grains—to be sold in winter when the need for them became urgent. Merchants of Al-Kharj would also store dates in the autumn to market them in the towns and villages of the province during winter and spring. In addition, merchants imported textiles such as fabrics and furnishings, along with other essential goods like weapons, coffee, cardamom, perfumes, and women's cosmetic items, to resell to the inhabitants as useful and important commodities. It is also worth noting that these merchants benefited from the pilgrimage caravans passing through the region, conducting with them the necessary buying and selling transactions (Al-Khuzaim, 2019, vol. 2, p. 111).

Among the most famous old markets of the region was the traditional market in Al-Dillam, held on Mondays and Thursdays since the establishment of the town. Residents of Al-Dillam, the other towns of Al-Kharj, and Bedouin tribes would visit this market to sell their products and purchase their needs of foodstuffs and fabrics (Al-Hadib, 1994, p. 76). Al-Dillam also had another old historical market called “Hajj Market,” where the pilgrimage caravans coming from the Arabian Gulf and Iraq gathered in a place about 40 meters wide, surrounded by a massive wall with high towers (Al-Askar, 1989, p. 133). The area would become active during the pilgrimage seasons each year, and the remains of the market's wall still exist today.

As for the currencies used, historical documents show that the people of Al-Kharj—before the establishment of the First Saudi State—used a currency called *Muḥammadiyah* (1). Each *Muḥammadiyah* was equivalent to eight *Mahaliq*. A document dated 1087 AH / 1676 CE states: “...for an agreed price of five hundred *Muḥammadiyahs*, each *Muḥammadiyah* equal to eight *Mahaliq*; the seller acknowledged receiving them from the buyer” (Al-Duraim, 1993, pp. 189–190). The Najdi historian Ibn Bishr mentions that the ruler of Al-Dillam and Al-Kharj, Zayd ibn Zamil, gave the people of Najran forty thousand gold *ẓar* in 1189 AH / 1775 CE to help him defend his emirate (Ibn Bishr, 1999, vol. 1, p. 169). This currency was widespread throughout the Najd region at that time. Later appeared the *Biyāẓ*, a copper coin, alongside the French riyal and other currencies (Al-Duraim, 1993, p. 190).

D-Building Craft:

The architectural character in Al-Kharj Governorate has long been marked by simplicity and a lack of extravagance in construction and design. The Bedouin and rural nature of the governorate contributed significantly to shaping this simple architectural identity. Cities and villages located inland—away from the seacoast, among mountain valleys and ravines, in lava

fields, and near water sources—were generally built in a modest, functional manner without elaborate decoration (Ghaban, 1993, p. 209).

Construction techniques aligned with the conditions and available materials of the time. Houses were built of mud or stone, designed to be closed from the outside and open toward an inner courtyard. The overall layout of a village or town often carried a military aspect, with a surrounding wall built to protect against external attacks—before the unification of the Arabian Peninsula by King Abdulaziz. Architectural patterns also influenced social relations, especially neighborly ties, kinship connections, and communal recreational practices (Al-Sadhan, 2008, p. 56).

There is no doubt that the architectural style in Al-Kharj and across Najd was shaped by the conservative religious values of the community. The emphasis on privacy, strict separation between men and women, and the deeply rooted principles of hospitality all contributed to designing houses that appeared closed from the outside but open and welcoming on the inside. Limited resources and modest incomes encouraged practical, economical use of all available materials, avoiding waste and maximizing utility (Al-Faqeer, 2006, p. 33).

As previously mentioned, houses in Al-Kharj were characterized by extreme simplicity, suitable for the climate and the traditional lifestyle of its people. A typical house consisted of a single floor surrounding an inner courtyard for ventilation and cooling. Walls were usually thick to support structural loads (Al-Riyadh Newspaper, Issue 14623, p. 6). Houses were commonly built from **mudbrick (adobe)** (1) and **clay**, and the interiors were whitewashed with gypsum. One section was designated for fuel storage and another for keeping livestock (2) (Al-Khuzaym, 2019, Vol. 2, p. 75).

Among the historic buildings in the region is **Ibn Sulayman Palace** in the town of Na'jan, located along the main road between Riyadh and Al-Dalam. Abdullah ibn Sulayman hosted King Abdulaziz and his entourage in this palace during the years of unifying the Kingdom, specifically in 1340 AH / 1921 CE. The palace is roughly rectangular in shape—16 meters long and 14.5 meters wide with an area of 240 square meters. It was built of mud, with roofs made of tamarisk wood, palm fronds, and the wood of the “al-‘ādhir” tree. Its columns are stone covered with gypsum. The rooms are equipped with rectangular ventilation openings (Al-Khuzaym, 2019, Vol. 2, p. 105).

It is worth noting that one traditional custom in Al-Kharj during construction was for laborers and the master builder to chant rhythmic songs to encourage speed and increased productivity. Among the most common chants—especially while laying mudbricks and raising walls—was:

**“Come on, bring a brick and clay,
Here comes your brick, here comes your clay.”**

(Al-Duraim, 1993, p. 178)

(1) **Mahaliq**: Plural of *muhallaq*, a type of silver currency minted in Makkah. Its use began in 883 AH / 1478 CE, but it did not gain prominence among circulating currencies until the early 10th century AH / 16th century CE, when most goods began to be bought and sold using the *muhallaq*. This currency continued to be used in Makkah, across the Hijaz, and in parts of the Arabian Peninsula until the end of the Mamluk period (Al-Zahrani, 1991, p. 32).

(1) **Adobe (Lebn)**: Adobe is made by mixing cohesive, soft clay with *teen* (wheat straw) to reinforce the clay. From this mixture, mudbricks used for construction are formed, and the same material is used to plaster walls to prevent cracking (Al-Duraim, 1993, p. 181).

(2) See Appendix No. 10 in the appendices at the end of this study.

Third– Traditional Industries:

Arabs were familiar with—and excelled in—various crafts before Islam. Undoubtedly, some of these industries continued after the rise of Islam, especially as the Qur'an and the Prophet encouraged work (Hegazi, 1994, vol. 1, p. 17). Before Islam, the Arabs looked down upon crafts and their practitioners—such as blacksmithing, trade, goldsmithing, tailoring, and others. They considered it shameful to marry into families of craftsmen, artisans, or farmers, believing such people to be of lower status (Ali, 1978, vol. 8, p. 198). Crafts were viewed as degrading tasks carried out only by male slaves and female servants, and thus unfit for free men according to their claims (Ali, 1978, vol. 7, p. 543).

However, as Islam became firmly rooted among the Arabs, this attitude faded and disappeared, after the Qur'an and the Prophet strongly emphasized the value of work (Hegazi, 1994, vol. 1, p. 17).

Linguistically, *ṣinā'ah* (industry/craft) in Arabic refers to manual practice used to produce things (Qal'aji & Qunaibi, 1988, p. 277). *Ṣanā'i'* (crafts) refers to everything manufactured, created, or made (Al-Munawi, 1990, p. 463). In technical terminology, industry has been defined as “a psychological faculty from which deliberate actions arise without the need to observe or know the method of work” (Al-Mujaddidi, 2003, p. 131). Any field in which a person gains expertise is described as his *craft* (Al-Ahmad Nakkari, 2000, vol. 2, p. 182). In modern terminology, industry is “a group of activities that produce similar products or provide similar services” (Multiple Authors, 1999, vol. 15, p. 145). The term also refers to skillful handwork; a woman described as *ṣinā'* or *ṣāni'ah* is one skilled and proficient in manual craft (Al-Zayyat et al., n.d., vol. 1, p. 525).

The province of Al-Kharj possessed a number of traditional industries—though they were limited and modest, mainly because manual craftwork was laborious, yielded little income due to its primitive nature (1), and faced external competition as imported goods from various countries entered the Najd region. These industries nevertheless formed a major source of livelihood for the people and served as a lifeline for Najdi society until recently. They fulfilled most of the needs and requirements of the population, except for a small portion that had to be procured from outside the region. Among the most prominent traditional industries practiced since earlier times were:

A– Leatherwork or Tanning: (1)

Leathercraft was an essential activity for both settled and nomadic people at the time, as it was closely tied to life's necessities (Al-Suwaida, 1983, p. 152). Leather containers were used daily and extensively by the inhabitants of the region to store water, honey, oil, and other liquids. Dates were also often kept in various leather containers made specifically for that purpose (Farouq, 1976, p. 538).

Among the most prominent leather vessels used throughout the Arabian Desert was the *qirbah* (waterskin) for keeping water cool. Some distinguished between its sizes, calling the smaller container *badrāh* and the larger one *qirbah* (Ibn Junaidil, 2005, p. 55). The use of *qirab* is still widespread among the Bedouins of the Kingdom, especially in summer, as they rely heavily on cool water. It is rare to find a Bedouin household today without one (Al-Da'jani, 1992, p. 162).

Another leather product was the *gharb* (2), used for drawing water from wells and *sawānī* (3). This bucket was made from three or four tanned hides, fitted with a rope at its top attached to a stone weight, and another rope in its middle with a weight that helped submerge it in the

well. When the *gharb* aged and deteriorated, they would extract the green bark of the *salam* tree, pound it, then boil it until it turned a deep red. The mixture would be poured into the dried *gharb* and left overnight. By morning, the *gharb* would be shaken out and restored to a better state (Salih & Nuwar Al-Sulami, n.d., p. 100).

The tanning process began with washing the hides, salting them, cleaning them, strengthening them, softening them, and dyeing them. Most animals whose meat was consumed also provided usable hides, such as camels, sheep, goats, cattle, gazelles, and others (Burckhardt, 2007, p. 68). In the Najdi region, tanning commonly used dried leaves of the *'uẓn* tree, crushed and boiled until the water became deep red and bitter. *Qirab* made from hides tanned with *'uẓn* were preferred for their distinctive aroma. Other plants were also used, including leaves of the *ardab* tree, fruits of the *karm'* tree, and leaves of the *'aqil* shrub (Al-Suwaida, 1983, pp. 153–154).

Leathercraft also included the work of the *iskāf* (cobbler) or *kbarrāẓ* (leather cutter), who used narrow strips of tanned sheep, camel, or cow hides as straps for sewing and repairing footwear. The cobbler's tools were simple: knives of various shapes and sizes, scissors, awls, a small anvil, and two hammers—one small and one large—along with nails for piercing and decorating. The cobbler produced several types of footwear known in Najd, such as *al-musabba'*, *al-mutawassi'*, and *al-mukhammis*, made from thin sheep leather. He also crafted women's shoes consisting of two straps—one small for the big toe and another larger one across the top of the foot. Women's shoes were given special attention, with fine patterns and decorative designs (Al-Suwaida, 1983, p. 146).

B. Mat Weaving Industry:

The craft of making mats (1) or palm-leaf products ("al-safif") was one of the industries that flourished in Al-Kharj Governorate and throughout the Najd region. It formed an essential part of many buildings of that period. Traditional handicrafts made from the palm tree were numerous—whether from its trunk, stem, fronds, leaves, midribs, fibers, spathes, or even its seeds (Al-Issa, 2004, p. 14). These crafts were important to the farmer, the housewife, the shopkeeper, and the building owner (Al-Suwaida, 1983, p. 150). Among the most important palm-leaf products were mats, baskets, containers, *ẓanabeel* (2) (woven bags), plates, hand fans, types of farmers' footwear, and kohl containers. Palm-leaf products were also used to line ceilings of buildings, *arā'ish* (3) (shade structures), and huts. They were used to build farm fences, sand barriers, and to make brooms, and even served as fuel (Al-Issa, 2004, p. 14).

Among the items made from palm fronds was the "jawāl," a large circular basket whose opening is wider than its base and equipped with handles. It was used in the harvesting of dates, where the date bunch (*qunn*) (4) would be placed inside it and the *'urjūn* (stalk) cut from the palm. Mats of *al-safif* were woven in different sizes and grades depending on the quality of the leaves. They were inexpensive and used to protect valuable carpets from dust, and thus were commonly found among poorer households.

Palm leaves were also used to produce containers for storing dates, known as *al-khasf*. These were sewn into square-shaped bags filled with dates, with a capacity of about fifty kilograms. Farmers used them to transport their dates, and date merchants used them as well (Al-Suwaida, 1983, p. 151).

C. Textile Industry:

This was a craft practiced by both men and women, though it was more widely associated with women (Al-Suwaida, 1983, p. 147). Residents of Al-Kharj had access to large quantities of raw

materials, especially wool, due to the flourishing livestock-herding profession in the region. They benefited from this by spinning the wool according to their capabilities and simple expertise. This industry specialized in all types of wool textiles. Tailors, embroiderers, and carpet makers practiced this craft (Ibn Aqil, 2000, Vol. 1, p. 786).

Urban residents wove carpets and mats in various types and colors. Bedouins also participated in this industry. The Muslim Russian officer “Dolchin” mentioned in 1316 AH / 1899 CE that Bedouins who raised livestock produced thick woolen fabrics for coats, tents, and bags, and they wove large saddle-cloths adorned with many tassels for camels(1) (Rizvan, 1993, p. 113). This description is not limited to the Bedouins of the Hijaz; it applies to Bedouins across most of the Arabian Peninsula, including Najd, whose people excelled in making *bayt al-sha‘r* (black tents), which served as their primary dwellings.

They also produced “al-siyāḥ” (rugs woven from light-colored camel hair), “al-‘udul” (dark-colored mats), and “al-mazwadah” (small woven bags used as a woman’s personal storage container), among many other items (Al-Suwaida, 1983, pp. 148–149).

D. Woodworking or Carpentry Industry:

Woodworking involves shaping and crafting wood pieces (Al-Zayyat et al., n.d., Vol. 2, p. 903). Carpentry refers to working with wood and its fabrication. This craft was well-known among the Arabs historically, and even non-Arabs practiced it in their lands. It is documented that the Quraysh, a few years before the Prophet’s mission, employed a Christian carpenter to make use of wood from a Roman shipwreck near the coast of Al-Shuaybah(2) to roof the Kaaba (Ibn Hisham, 1957, Vol. 1, p. 193).

In Al-Kharj Governorate and the broader Najd region, carpentry held an important role due to its essential contributions to daily life. Farmers needed properly constructed and durable equipment for wells, such as the *maḥalah* (a large pulley for raising water from wells), *darajah* (a smaller pulley similar to the *maḥalah*), *aqtāb*, *a‘mīdah*, and other components. Homeowners required carpenters to make and install doors, windows, beams, and other structural elements. Bedouins also needed wooden items such as *aqtāb*, *al-ashdah*, *al-hawādig*, and water pulleys (Al-Suwaida, 1983, p. 153).

Among wooden utensils crafted were the *karf*, also called *al-miswāt*, a large spoon used for serving and stirring cooked food. Other items included the *al-hawand* and *al-nahr*, which were manual coffee grinders where coffee beans were placed in the *hawand* and pounded with a wooden pestle (*najr*)—used before copper machines became widespread. Another item was the *millstone* (*al-muṭḥinah*), made from a stone called *al-ḥazīyah*, which was carved so that its ends sloped inward (Ṣāliḥ & Nuwār Al-Salmi, n.d., p. 103).

Additionally, wooden incense burners were crafted from a single piece of wood, decorated with circular and square mirrors on their sides. The gaps were filled with *khāriṣīn* (1) granules, and the edges were reinforced with small red and yellow copper nails. These were used particularly for burning *oud al-qamārī* (2) incense (Al-Suwaida, 1983, p. 138).

(1) These are simple crafts resulting from the needs of that society, and their output naturally corresponds to the Bedouin lifestyle; it is incorrect to deny the existence of industry there (Ali, 1978, Vol. 7, p. 268).

(1) **Tanning:** The process of softening animal hides and treating them with *qirṣ* (a tanning substance) or similar materials (Rida, 1938, Vol. 2, p. 374).

(2) **Al-Gharb:** A large bucket made from bull’s hide (Al-Zayyat et al., n.d., Vol. 2, p. 647).

(3) **Al-Sawānī**: Plural of *sāniyah*; these are large buckets (*al-gharb*) mounted on a frame (*al-masnāwiyah*) and pulled by livestock back and forth (Al-Zayyat et al., n.d., Vol. 1, p. 457)

(1) **Palm Fronds (Al-Khush)**: The leaves of the palm tree excluding the fronds, taken from the center of the palm, white and soft in color (Rida, 1938, Vol. 2, p. 355).

(2) **Al-Zanābil**: Plural of *zanbil*; baskets woven from palm fronds (Al-Zayyat et al., n.d., Vol. 2, p. 776).

(3) **Al-‘Arā’ish**: Plural of *arish*; structures providing shade, often roofed with reeds (Al-Zayyat et al., n.d., Vol. 2, p. 593).

(4) **Al-Qanū**: Plural **aqnā’*; the stalk of dates including its moist fruit (Ibn Manẓūr, 1988, Vol. 15, p. 201).

(1) **Al-Hawājīn or Al-Hijān**: Plural of *hijān*; light-bodied, fast-walking white camels (Al-Zayyat et al., n.d., Vol. 2, p. 957).

(2) **Al-Shu‘aybah**: The pre-Islamic port of Mecca on the Red Sea coast, before the establishment of Jeddah as a port during the Caliphate of ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān in 26 AH / 646 CE. It is located about 70 km south of Jeddah and more than 90 km from Mecca (Al-Hamawi, 1990, Vol. 3, p. 250; Imam, n.d., p. 212).

(1) **Al-Khārṣīn**: A metal similar to tin used in chemical reactions and other processes (Al-Zayyat et al., n.d., Vol. 1, p. 227).

(2) **Al-‘Ud al-Qamārī**: One of the finest types of oud, named after Qamār or Qamaron (Cambodia, according to Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī) (Al-Hamawi, 1990, Vol. 4, p. 396).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, through our presentation of the history of Al-Kharj Governorate and the most prominent aspects of its human heritage, represented in its customs, traditions, handicrafts, and traditional industries, the study reached a number of findings, the most important of which are:

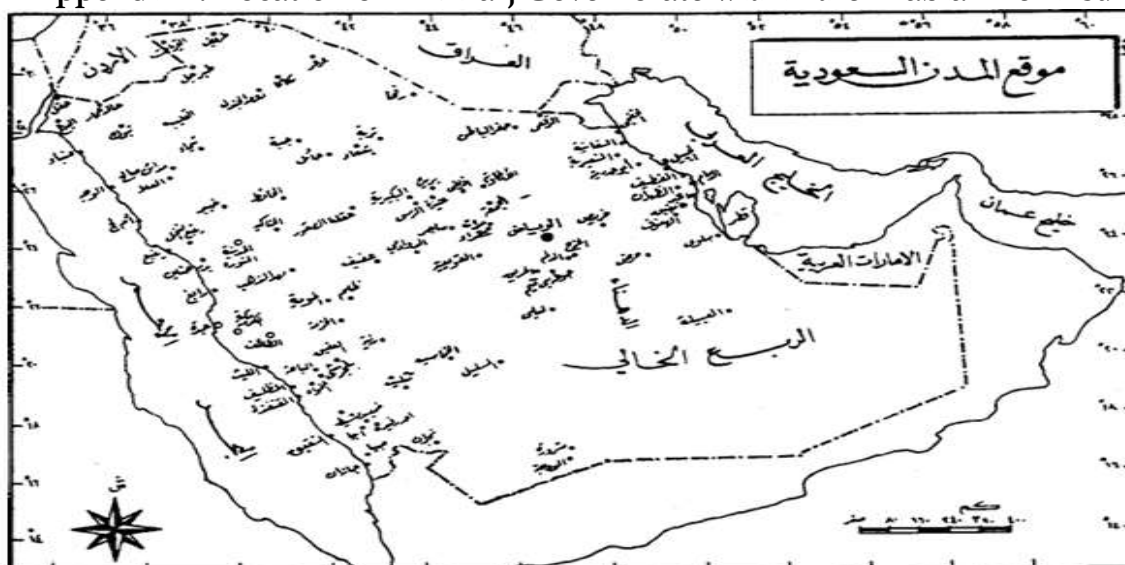
1. The most plausible explanation for the name “Al-Kharj” is that it derives from the word *Kharāj*, which refers to the produce that comes from the land. This characterizes Al-Kharj as a highly fertile area whose agricultural output supplied the needs of the Two Holy Mosques for many centuries.
2. The geographic location of Al-Kharj in the central part of the Arabian Peninsula made it a connecting link between the north, south, east, and west, serving for long periods as a rest stop for commercial caravans traversing the Arabian Peninsula.
3. Al-Kharj is distinguished by its ancient history, both pre-Islamic and post-Islamic, being the homeland of the now-extinct Tasm and Jadīs tribes. Archaeological remains indicate human activity in the area dating back at least five thousand years BCE.
4. The history of Al-Kharj is closely linked to the history of Riyadh in particular and the history of the Najd region in general.
5. Al-Kharj—and the Najd region as a whole—experienced long periods of chaos, unrest, and localized tribal rule until the Al Saud family established control, bringing stability and prosperity, which continue to the present day.

6. Al-Kharj has been the most representative area in the Kingdom in terms of human heritage due to its distinctive social customs and traditions and the prevalence of traditional industries and handicrafts, supported by its fertile land, abundant water, and large population.
7. The most prominent occupation in Al-Kharj from ancient times to the present is agriculture, particularly the cultivation of grains and dates, followed by trade due to the strategic location of the region.
8. The flourishing of agriculture in Al-Kharj is attributed to the fertility of its lands and the abundance of groundwater in a desert and semi-desert environment.
9. Trade in Al-Kharj is as important as agriculture due to its strategic commercial location, historically serving as a crossroads of trade routes in the central Arabian Peninsula.
10. Al-Kharj is home to many traditional industries that reflect the simplicity of life experienced by its residents until recently. These industries include textile, leather, and woodcraft, as well as crafts associated with palm fronds and palm products.

Recommendations

1. Increase investment in agriculture and tourism in the governorate to diversify Saudi Arabia's sources of income, support national and local output, and provide job opportunities for citizens.
2. Establish housing projects in the governorate to reduce the severe population congestion in Riyadh city.
3. Expand archaeological excavations in the governorate and link them to academic research, including master's and doctoral theses for Saudi university students.
4. Establish a general natural and historical museum that showcases the governorate's geological and geographical formations, while also explaining its history and culture. This museum could become a landmark attracting tourists and achieving one of the ambitious goals of Vision 2030.

Appendix 1: Location of Al-Kharj Governorate within the Arabian Peninsula



(From Abdullah Al-Hudaib, *A Brief History of Al-Kharj*, p. 10)

Appendix 2: Location of Al-Kharj Governorate within the Riyadh Region Emirate



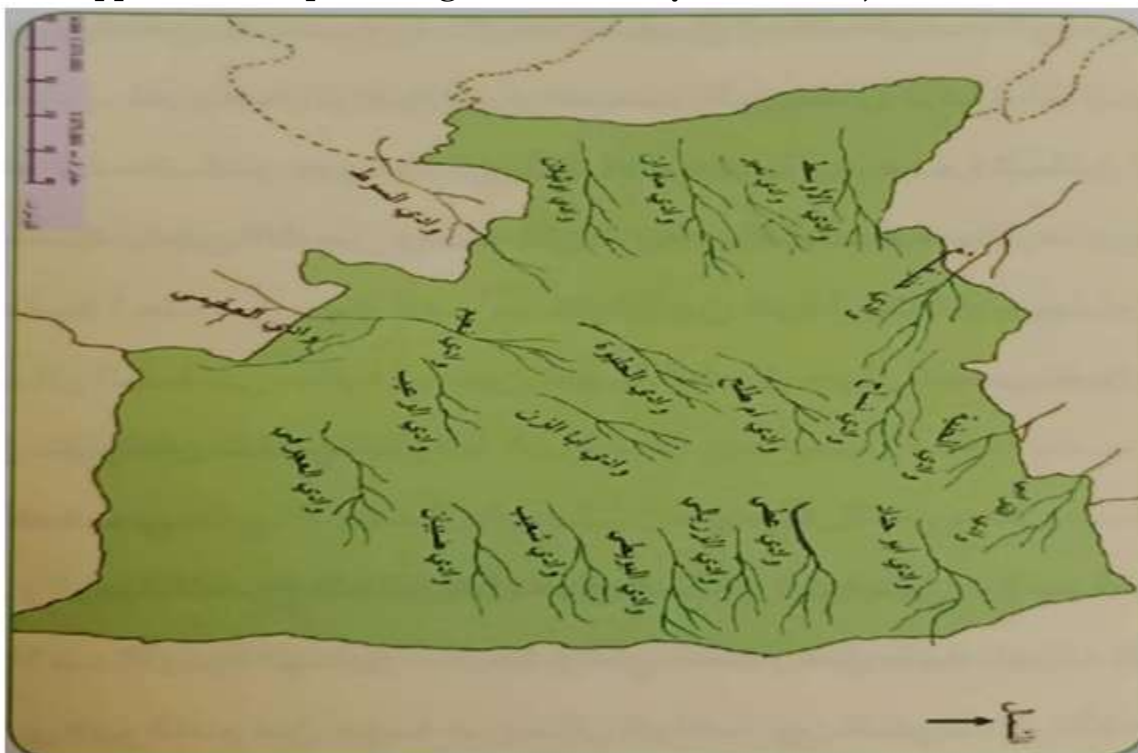
From: Al-Bashaira & Al-Khuzaym, Al-Kharj Governorate: History and Geography, (20/1)

Appendix3: Map showing the location of Al-Kharj Governorate relative to some Saudi cities



(Source: Sarah Al-Khuzaym, Al-Kharj Governorate: Land and People, p. 13/2)

Appendix 6: Map showing the main valleys in Al-Kharj Governorate



Source: Al-Basha'irah & Al-Khuzaym, Al-Kharj Governorate: History and Geography, (1/133)

Appendix 7: Examples of Some of the Famous Water Springs in Al-Kharj Governorate





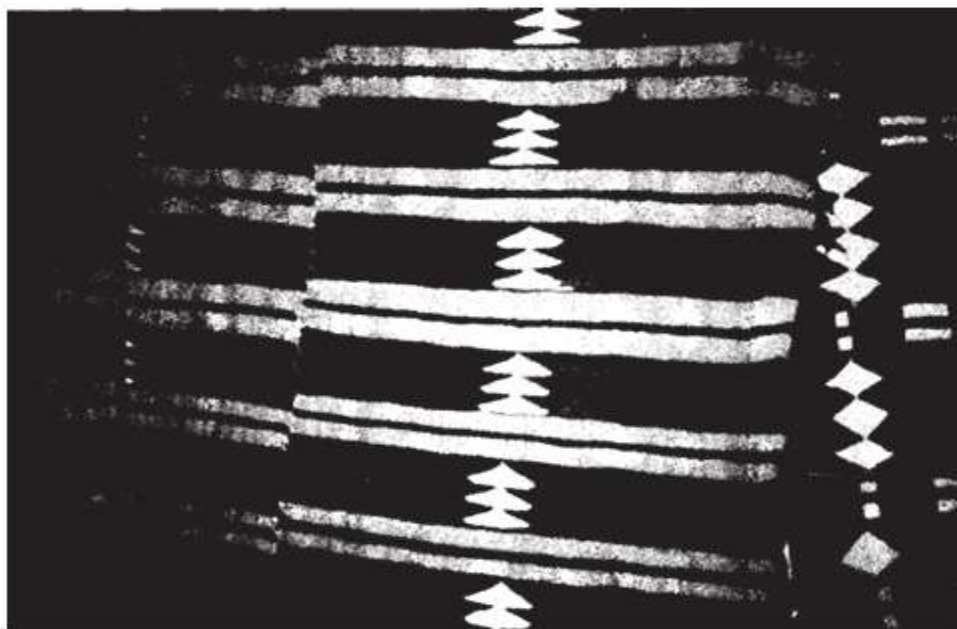
Source: Al-Basha'irah and Al-Khuzaym, Al-Kharj Governorate: History and Geography, (Vol. 1, pp. 44, 170)

Appendix8: Examples of agricultural tools historically used by farmers in Al-Kharj Governorate and throughout the Najd region.



Source: Sarah Al-Khuzaym, Al-Kharj Governorate: Land and People, (Vol. 2, p. 103)

Appendix 9: Example of some traditional woven mats (“Al-Bisat”) in Al-Kharj Governorate



Source: Abdul Rahman Al-Suwaida, *Najd in the Recent Past*, p. 510

Appendix 10: Examples of Traditional House and Market Architecture in Al-Kharj Governorate



House model



Example of a Traditional Market

(Source: Sara Al-Khuzaim, *Al-Kharj Governorate: Land and People*, p. 78/2)

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