



Arab Extension of "Arabistan" Region

Carsten Niebuhr:

"Our geographers made a mistake when they portrayed that part of the Arabian Peninsula is under Persian rule"

The Arab region of Ahvaz is considered an extension of Iraq to the east, in the areas between Zagros Mountains and Bakhtaria. It is a natural outlet and a strategic passage connecting to Iraq. That is why every invader from the east was keen to occupy Ahvaz to be a base for attacking Iraq whenever the opportunity arose, which is what the commander of Al-Ma'mun's army, Taher ibn Al-Hassan, did, as well as Yaqoub ibn Al-Laith Al-Saffar, and Ahmed ibn Buyah also succeeded in controlling Iraq through Ahvaz. This was severally repeated in the Buwayhid dynasty's control over the Abbasid state.

Accordingly, Ahvaz is the Arab world side in the east, so the Abbasid state was keen to strengthen and preserve it, while its enemies were keen to station themselves therein and prepare for any invasion or attempt to control Iraq and its capital, Baghdad.

The area located on the west coast of the Arabian Gulf was called Ahvaz because it remained, since before the conquests, purely Arab in the possession of the Arab tribes that migrated from the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula to the opposite coasts during their commercial trips and owned the region 1,500 years ago. German traveler, Carsten Niebuhr, who toured the Arabian Peninsula in (1762), says about the Arabs of Ahvaz: "I cannot pass by similar silence by the most important Arab-colonies, which despite being established outside the borders of the Arabian Peninsula, are the closest thereto. By this I mean the Arabs living on the southern coast of Persia, who are mostly allied with the neighboring sheikhs or subject thereto. Different circumstances agree to indicate that these tribes settled on the Gulf before the conquests of the caliphs and have always maintained their independence. It is funny that our geographers depict a part of Arabia as subject to the rule of the Persian kings, while those kings could never be masters of the sea coast in their own state. Rather, they patiently tolerated that this coast should remain in the possession of the Arabs".

He also said: "I think our geographers made a mistake when they depicted for us a part of the Arabian Peninsula under the rule of the Persians, because the Arabs are the ones who own, otherwise, all sea coasts of the Persian Empire, almost from the mouth of the Euphrates to the mouth of the Indus (in India). It is true that the settlements located on the Persian coasts do not belong to the Arabian Peninsula itself, but given that it is independent from Persia, where its people have the language and customs of the Arabs, I was keen to give a brief overview of them. It is impossible to determine the time when the Arabs established these colonies on the coast. It was stated in the ancient biographies that they established it ages ago. Based on the few glimpses that were mentioned in ancient history, it is possible to guess that these Arab colonies arose during the era of the first kings of the Persians".

In the past, Ahvaz region was known as (Elam), which is a name that came from the Sumerians and Akkadians. The region was subject to Akkadian Empire, after which Elam was subjected to the rule of the Kutites, then to the Babylonian kingdom during the era of Hammurabi and then to the Assyrian kingdom. When the Chaldeans and the Medes destroyed the Assyrian kingdom, Elam became under their control until the Achaemenid Persians took control thereof in the year (539 BC) and Al-Sous became the capital of the region. Despite Ahvaz subordination to the Persians, its region remained autonomous and its people continued to use their Syriac language, which is strongly connected to the Arabic language. The Achaemenids could not impose their Zoroastrian religion on its people.

The Persians did not control Ahvaz in the past, except in the era of the Achaemenid state

Arab liberation of Ahvaz from the Persians:

The history of the Arab conquests launched against the Sassanids with the aim of restoring Ahvaz dates back to the days of the Islamic Caliphate and its liberation was linked to the liberation of Basra, as Bakr Ibn Wael tribe that settled in (Al-Abla) launched raids on the western outskirts of the Sasanian Empire.

Among the most prominent Arab leaders in those battles was Qutbah ibn Qatada, to whom Umar ibn Al-Khattab, immediately after assuming the caliphate with support, sent a support led by Shuraih ibn Amer, who was killed in one of his battles in Ahvaz. Then he sent him a major force led by Utbah ibn Ghazwan, who settled in Basra, and then began tribal migrations flowed from Tamim, Bakr and the Hijaz tribes, who formed the army that liberated Ahvaz through successive battles.

After the victory of the Arabs in the Battle of Al-Qadisiyah, Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari conquered Ahvaz and the region remained from the year (637) to (1258) under the rule of the Arabs, subordinate to the state of Basra, until the days of the Mongol invasion. Then the Arab Mosh'a'a state arose therein (1724-1436) and the Safavid and Ottoman states recognized it and its independence. Then the Ka'abite state arose (1925-1724) and maintained its independence as well.

Ahvaz preserved its Arab identity and remained administratively under the banner of the Iraqi city of Basra for several periods. It was divided into six regions, where each was ruled by a governor subordinate to the Arab state (Umayyad and Abbasid). For a long time, Ahvaz remained a base for competition over the rule of Baghdad, as it is the Arab population reservoir and the natural passage to Iraq towards the coasts. It also witnessed the decisive battle between the sons of Al-Rashid, Al-Amin and Al-Ma'mun, in the year (812), which later resulted in murdering Al-Amin and the victory of Al-Ma'mun.

The strategic location of Ahvaz, in its mediation between India and China in the east, the strategic Arabian Peninsula in the west and its extension to Iraq in the north, gave it great importance and economic role in the region and the world. Ahvas is a major point of contact between the Near and Far East, in addition to being Arab bridge in Asia.

In addition, Ahvaz is a reservoir of wealth that Persian Iran feeds on today and fears its secession or the cessation of its control thereover due to the region's richness in raw materials and huge agricultural and fisheries potentials. Its status increased after oil and gas were discovered therein early in the nineteenth century, which were firstly found in (1908), in Suleiman Mosque area, which is one of the cities of Ahvaz, located 150 km from the head of the Arabian Gulf. Oil pipelines were extended in Ahvaz (Arabistan) in the year (1912) from the oil regions therein to the Abadan Port, in order to transport crude oil therefrom abroad through a dock for ships established for that purpose. An oil refinery was also built therein as Ahvaz fields contain a huge amount of oil and gas.

The Persians conquer the Arabism of Ahvaz:

Ahmed Al-Muzaffar' book, Ahvaz, reveals that the Persians gave Ahvaz different names with the intention of erasing its Arab identity; such as (Khuzestan), which means the state of castles and forts. However, during the reign of Shah Ismail the Safavid, the region regained its Arabic name, yet in the Persian pronunciation, so it was called (Arabistan), which means the region of the Arabs, in an indication of the intense presence of Arabs and their originality in Ahvaz.

The author points out that Ahvaz region is located, according to the ancient geographical divisions, between Karun River and Tab River up to the city of Maysan, where its borders have been subjected to change and alteration according to administrative developments and new organizations in both Basra and Wasit, resulting from the expansion of the modern Arab state and the emergence of administrative organizations related to collection system.

Among the key cities in the region (Ahvaz), which the Persians later changed its name to a Persian name, is (Harmuz Shahr). It is located in a middle place between Basra, on the one hand, and the regions of the southern outskirts of the Iranian plateau, on the other. This is in addition to the very ancient cities of Sus, (Testur), (Jund Yasapur), (Ramhormes), (Mothoth) and many others.

Historical researcher, Ahmed Al-Muzaffar, points out that one of the Sasanian kings before Islam displaced some Arab tribes from Taghlib, Abd al-Qais and Bakr, and dispersed them in the regions of Tuj, Kerman and Ahvaz, with the aim of limiting their authority and their maritime and commercial activity in the waters of the Arabian Gulf. Arabs also spread in Ahvaz by Islamic conquests. Arab stability in the region began with the era of Caliph Umar ibn Al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased therewith.



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