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"A History of the Hima Conservation System"

Gari, Lutfallah

Gari, Lutfallah. "A History of the Hima Conservation System." *Environment and History* 12, no. 2 (May, 2006): 213–28. doi:10.3197/096734006776680236 . A hima is a reserved pasture, where trees and grazing lands are protected from indiscriminate harvest on a temporary or permanent basis. It existed in the Middle East before Islam; but it was treated as a private reserve for powerful chieftains who were said to have used it as a tool of oppression. With the emergence of Islam, its function changed; it became a property dedicated to the well-being of the whole community around it. Tribes had their own himas with the permission of the state, and acted as self-governing in the absence of state control. This institution flourished through the first half of the twentieth century, when major political, economical and social changes took place in the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula. The paper reviews the changes that have taken place in Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen with regard to the hima. Modern researchers and consultants of governments in the region still recommend using this traditional institution, because they believe that its revival and extension for land improvement based on cultural principles would be successful; it would not require the introduction of alien social institutions or values. But this paper recommends some modifications required to adopt this traditional system in the current societies of the region. All rights reserved. © 2006 The White Horse Press

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