

BRIDGING THE GAP: A SOCIOCULTURAL EXPLORATION OF THE AL-SHIHUH TRIBE'S TRANSITION FROM MOUNTAIN DWELLERS TO MODERNITY IN THE UAE"

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Abstract

The Al-Shihuh tribe in the United Arab Emirates is transforming significantly from traditional to modern society. This article comprehensively explores their journey, touching on their origins, historical evolution, socioeconomic structures, and cultural identity. It investigates the influential factors driving this transformation, revealing a delicate balance between preserving their cultural heritage and adapting to contemporary life. Through in-depth analysis of scholarly literature and primary data, the research uncovers the intricate dynamics underpinning the Al-Shihuh tribe's path to modernisation. Key findings highlight the role of historical territorial changes, the establishment of the UAE, expanded education, and economic considerations in catalysing their modernisation while challenging deep-rooted traditions. In response to these challenges, the study proposes practical strategies to maintain the tribe's cultural identity. These strategies emphasise parental involvement, active community engagement, adaptability, and preserving symbolic cultural elements.

Furthermore, it examines the profound impact of the UAE's formation on traditional tribal communities, particularly the Al-Shihuh tribe, as they adapt to rapid modernisation policies, introducing economic resources, technological advancements, and external cultural influences. Interviews and surveys within the community reveal the challenges faced by the Al-Shihuh tribe and the adaptive strategies they employ to preserve their heritage while meeting the demands of modernity. These findings underscore the tribe's resilience and the potential risks of cultural erosion, emphasising the need for comprehensive policy reforms to support indigenous communities' nation-building and modernisation journey.

Keywords: Al-Shihuh tribe, United Arab Emirates, modernity, cultural preservation, indigenous communities, tradition, origin, policy reforms, education, transformation, cultural identity, historical trajectory, globalisation, urbanisation, adaptation, challenges, resilience.

Introduction:

The indigenous groups of the United Arab Emirates embody distinct narratives, identities, and roles within the nation's diverse cultural framework. The Al-Shihuh tribe, settled in the UAE's mountainous northern territories, stands out due to its relatively understudied status in scholarly discourse. This paper aims to bridge this knowledge gap by delving into the Al-Shihuh tribe's historical journey, exploring their roots, heritage, cultural customs, social and economic organisation, and their transition from seclusion to an integrated presence within the modern context of the UAE.

This article comprehensively examines the Al-Shihuh tribe, delving into aspects such as tribal identity, geographical settlement, societal structure, cultural norms, economic practices, and the external factors that have influenced the Shihuh community's development. By integrating firsthand data from surveys and interviews with tribe members and scholarly research, the study provides a multifaceted view of this indigenous group. It brings to the forefront the intricate balance between maintaining traditional cultural values and adapting to modern ways of life. The findings of this research have significant implications for policy-making, advocating for strategies that uphold the Shihuh tribe's cultural integrity while promoting their smooth assimilation into the broader, dynamically changing society. This work not only deepens the scholarly understanding of the Al-Shihuh tribe's past and present but also contributes to the ongoing dialogue on how tradition and progress can coexist harmoniously..

The scholarly synthesis suggests that post-1971—marked by the formation of the United Arab Emirates and significant oil discoveries—the nation has experienced rapid modernisation, marked by robust economic growth and comprehensive infrastructure expansion. This brisk transformation has notably impacted the region's indigenous tribes, which have a long trade history, pastoralism, and self-contained governance systems. A striking example of this shift is observed in the Al-Shihuh tribe from the northern Emirates, who have moved from relative seclusion in their mountainous homelands to becoming an integral part of the UAE's cosmopolitan and interconnected society.

This article primarily focuses on the relatively understudied Al-Shihuh indigenous community, offering a historical analysis of the factors that have driven their transition. It explores their evolving relationship with Dubai, their integration into national structures, the impact of oil economies, globalisation, and detribalisation policies as critical forces that have disrupted their once-isolated way of life. The article critically examines the disruptive shocks brought about by modernisation policies, cultural diffusion, and detribalisation, shedding light on the challenges faced by the Al-Shihuh tribe. However, amidst these challenges, the tribe has exhibited remarkable resilience, adapting culturally and socially to the forces of change. In sum, this article provides insight into the unique journey of an indigenous tribe as they navigate the abrupt transition from tradition to modernity.

Literature Review

The Al-Shihuh Tribe: Origins, Kinship, and Geographic Distribution

The available literature indicates that the Al-Shihuh tribe has been residing in the northern regions of the UAE for centuries, forming strong bonds through kinship and geographical ties. However, scholarly discussions regarding their origins persist due to limited historical records. Particularly during the British colonisation of the trucial states, now the UAE, exploring the historical roots of tribes in the region requires a meticulous examination of J. G. Lorimer's *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*—an authoritative source for regional studies. Lorimer's

'Geographical and Statistical' volume systematically catalogues tribes, towns, and regions, providing extensive statistical insights into nomadic and settled populations, religious and racial distinctions, counts of boats and houses, weights and measures, financial details, and military resources. Amidst this wealth of information, Lorimer's research identifies the Shihuh as one of the ancient tribes in the area. To fully grasp the significance of this historical data, understanding the context in which the Gazetteer was produced becomes essential. Furthermore, Lorimer's meticulous examination reveals that the Shihuh tribe can be classified into two main sections: the Bani Hadiyah and the Bani Shatair, with additional subdivisions. While coastal Shihuh members align with their villages, those inland adopt a more intricate classification system based on subsections, as illustrated in Table 1, Division of the Shihuh Tribe into Two Main Sections: Bani Hadiyah and Bani Shatair, and Table 2, The Distribution of Shihuh in Villages. Lorimar (1908)

Table 1 Division of the Shihuh Tribe into Two Main Sections: Bani Hadiyah and Bani Shatair

Hadiyah (Bani)	Shatair (Bani)
'Abaid- Bani Muhammad	Khanābilah
'Ali (Bani)	Kumazirah
Ham Mazyüd Shatair (Bani)	Mahābib
Khanazirah	Magādihah
Including a group known as Habus.	others

Source Data from Lorimer, J. (1908). Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf. Vol. II. Geographical and Statistical (J. Lorimer, Ed.). British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/L/PS/20/C91/4. In Qatar Digital Library https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100023515720.0x000081.p

Table 2 The distribution of Shihuh in villages.

Lineage/Individuals	Villages	Population- Est
Kadeed	Al-Masghareen, Sal Hamdan, Al-Muaqqal, Sal Hour, etc.	250
Khat	Haramsha.	80
Khinazra	Al-Harf, Al-Saffard, Al-Banah	50
Khinazra	Wadi Shah	30
Al-Radiyun	Al-Rawdah	60
Al-Habous	Various settlements Ras Alkhaima's mountains	200
Shihaytir	Ayni, Dibafi (Al-Wa'b)	180
Al-Asim	Mountains between Khat and Al-Bi'ah	150
Ahl Al-Maqam	Karshi, Zaghah, Hafi (villages)	Not specified

Source Data from Lorimer, J. (1908). *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf*. Vol. II. Geographical and Statistical (J. Lorimer, Ed.). British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/L/PS/20/C91/4. In Qatar Digital Library https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100023515720.0x000081

Heard-Bey challenged Lorimer's population statistics for the Shihuh tribe, disputing the accuracy of his estimates. Lorimer claimed that at the turn of the century, the Shihuh numbered around 21,500 people, with approximately 7,000 being nomadic and residing in the interior. Heard-Bey expressed scepticism about the validity of Lorimer's figures, suggesting that these population estimates were likely exaggerated. However, she pointed out that the Shihuh population in the UAE has grown due to increased employment opportunities and stability, especially evident in the 1968 census, which recorded 6,030 Shihuh, Habus, and Dhauriyin, with 5,845 residing in Ras Al Khaimah, where they predominantly settled.

McCoy (2008) presents a comprehensive view of the Shihuh, positioning them as the third largest 'Arab tribe' in the United Arab Emirates, based on census data. Their concentration in the rural villages of Ras al-Khaimah, albeit with limited regional influence, showcases a unique cultural amalgamation. This amalgamation, highlighted by McCoy, reflects a complex blend of Arab, Persian, and Baluch elements at ethnic and linguistic levels, providing a nuanced understanding of the tribe's identity formation within the UAE.

Several Arab historians and scholars challenge the assertion that the Shihuh in the United Arab Emirates represents an intricate fusion of Arab, Persian, and Baluch elements. In contrast, Ghabash (2004) contends that the term "Shihuh" originates in their apical ancestor, Shih bin Malik, tracing their lineage to the esteemed leader Malik bin Fahm. An alternative viewpoint associates the Shihuh with the esteemed Hamiri Arabs of Yemen. Despite the ongoing debates over etymology, these narratives converge on the tribe's noble lineage and its early establishment in the region. Alhajri (2012) argues that the Shihuh strategically settled in Ru'ūs al-Jibāl- "Heads of the Mountains" -lie east and northeast of Ras al Khaimah town, partly in UAE and partly in Oman, forming their ancestral heartland. The profound connection to this terrain holds substantial geographic and cultural significance, adding complexity to discussions about the Shihuh's origins. See the figure 1.

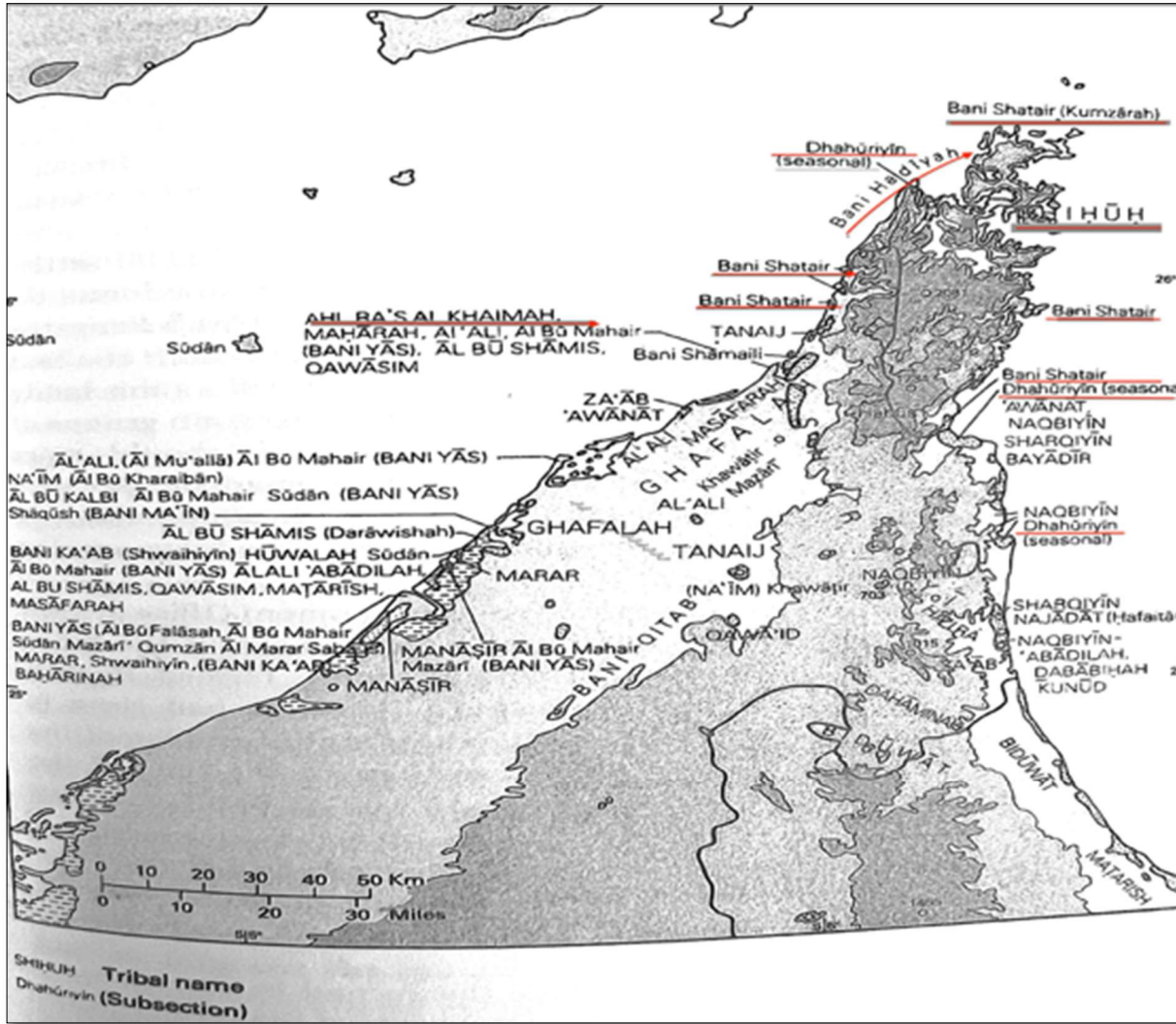


Figure 1: Map from Heard-Bey, F. (2004) From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates: A Society in Transition. Dubai: Motivate.p71

The Socioeconomic Pillars of the Al-Shihuh Tribe

The Al-Shihuh Tribe, nestled within the diverse landscapes of the United Arab Emirates, weaves a rich tapestry of social and economic activities shaped by the unique topography of mountains and coastlines. The interplay between these geographical features intricately defines the livelihoods and community dynamics of the Shihuh. The rugged Hajar Mountains are silent sentinels, influencing agricultural practices, resource utilisation, and communal ties. Simultaneously, the expansive coastal plains provide a gateway to maritime activities, fostering trade, fishing, and a symbiotic relationship with the azure waters of the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. (Lancaster, W., & Lancaster, F., 2011).

In embracing these contrasting terrains, the Shihuh have crafted a socioeconomic structure that mirrors the harmonious coexistence of tradition and adaptation. The mountains, with their fertile

valleys, offer a sanctuary for agriculture and goat herding, sustaining the community's basic needs. The strategic use of terraced fields showcases the Shihuh's ingenuity in maximising arable land on steep slopes. Simultaneously, the coast unfolds opportunities for pearling, fishing, and trade, connecting the tribe to the broader economic currents of the region. The Shihuh's identity is deeply intertwined with these geographical influences, echoing in their kinship systems, cultural practices, and resource management strategies. (Lancaster, W., & Lancaster, F., 2011).

The winds of change swept through the tranquil landscapes of the Al-Shihuh Tribe with the discovery of oil, heralding an era of unprecedented transformation and modernisation. The socio-economic pillars of the tribe, once firmly rooted in traditional practices, faced the tremors of industrialisation and economic diversification. Oil revenues infused the region with newfound wealth, reshaping economic landscapes and the very fabric of Shihuh society.

The traditional occupations of farming, herding, and fishing encountered a seismic shift as the tribe navigated the complexities of a modern economy. The Union Cement Company, strategically established in 1972, marked the foray into industrial ventures, utilising the natural resources of the Hajar Mountains. This move reflected the Shihuh's adaptability, embracing emerging sectors while preserving their connection to the land. The subsequent establishment of RAK Ceramics in 1991 propelled the tribe onto the global stage, transforming a local enterprise into the world's largest ceramics manufacturer. Oxford Business Group. (2015).

However, the influx of oil wealth and modernisation brought with it a nuanced set of challenges. The delicate balance between preserving cultural heritage and embracing progress became a central theme. The Shihuh, accustomed to the simplicity of their mountainous existence, grappled with the complexities of urbanisation, changing family structures, and the inevitable cultural shifts accompanying economic prosperity.

In conclusion, the Al-Shihuh Tribe's socioeconomic journey reflects the intricate dance between topography, tradition, and modernisation. The mountains and coastlines have shaped their economic activities and are a poignant backdrop to the tribe's resilience and adaptability. The impact of oil and modernisation, while propelling the tribe into new frontiers, necessitates a thoughtful navigation of evolving identities and the preservation of the cultural tapestry that defines the essence of the Shihuh.

Methodology

This research methodology is a mixed-methods strategy that blends qualitative and quantitative insights to examine the Al-Shihuh tribe's lineage, cultural identity, historical development, and adaptation to modern times. A purposive sampling method was utilised to ensure the participation of Shihuh tribe members in the survey, which was circulated via social media and academic networks, specifically targeting individuals with the surname "Shihi." To validate the Shihuh

lineage of the respondents, the survey was designed with tailored questions to affirm their tribal affiliation. Conducted via the online platform "Monkey Survey," the survey gathered responses from 77 individuals, 97.4% of whom confirmed their identity as Shihuh tribe members. The survey probes into the socio-economic facets of life, with a deliberate focus on the era preceding the discovery of oil. A snowball sampling method was employed to widen the research scope, where participants recommended other potential respondents who could offer valuable contributions.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were held to allow for a more natural and engaging dialogue, thereby ensuring a comfortable environment for participants to share openly. This element of the study encompassed a range of subjects, including individual tribe members, family units, and esteemed societal figures such as Sheikh Mohammed Ahmed bin Hamdan Al Malik Al Shehhi. These discussions offered intricate views into the life of the Shihuh, anchored in both personal and communal experiences.

Secondary data sources were meticulously chosen for their depth and authority, with J.G. Lorimer's "Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf" as a seminal reference, providing essential historical statistics and insights. The criteria for source selection focused on relevance and the richness of the information regarding the Shihuh and the broader regional history. The work of esteemed historian Frauke Heard-Bey and the Lancasters' detailed examination in "Honor is in Contentment" were also integral, contributing profound insights into the socio-economic conditions before the oil era in the region.

The analytical process incorporated content analysis of documents, and the survey data were examined through descriptive statistics, employing software tools to generate comprehensive summaries, tables, and graphs. This robust amalgamation of primary data collection with scholarly literature, including articles, images, and video materials, offers an enriched perspective on the Shihuh tribe's cultural legacy and their journey through the tides of change.

Findings

This investigation delves into the Al-Shihuh Tribe's historical evolution, capturing their transition against a backdrop of evolving settlement dynamics and a complex array of forces propelling them towards contemporary existence. Drawing from a rich fabric of primary data sourced from surveys and interviews with prominent members of the Shihuh tribe, this study takes us on an enlightening exploration of their societal development. At the heart of this transformation lies a series of critical factors, most notably the UAE's unification, which has ignited substantial shifts in the tribe's traditional lifestyle. The research probes deeply into the nuances of their evolving settlement patterns and the impactful sway of external elements that have moulded their sociocultural framework. In traversing through this research, we uncover the Al-Shihuh Tribe's remarkable capacity for resilience and adaptability, safeguarding their cultural legacy as they navigate the currents of change.

Historical Transformation of the Al-Shihuh Tribe

The Shihuh tribe has undergone profound historical changes, influencing their geographic distribution, economic activities, and cultural evolution. Two significant historical milestones emerged in the analysis: altering settlement patterns and the establishment of the UAE.

Changing Settlement Patterns

The Shihuh historically practised seasonal migration between mountain and coastal areas driven by the absence of mountain wells and limited rainfall. Dostal (1972) noted that Shihuh settlements in coastal zones displayed a trend of nucleation, where various tribes and local groups would temporarily integrate, except for a few permanent fishermen settlements. The Shihuh use a classificatory system to distinguish between "Bulaidah" (a settlement occupied by a single extended family), "Jidrah" (winter settlement), and "Masyaf" (summer settlement). "Bulaidah" and "harah" settlements consist of multiple extended families divided into quarters (Fariq), forming local groups based on significant segments of lineages (see Fig. 2). (Dostal (1972)

However, recent decades have seen a transition towards permanent urban housing. Government infrastructure projects provide modern homes, electricity, and amenities (Alhajri, 2012). Consequently, migrant work and fixed incomes have reduced local labour needs, enabling relocated families' long-term stays in coastal cities, as noted by (Lancaster et al., 2011). Urbanisation has catalysed changes in social dynamics and traditional structures. While permanent housing provides conveniences, it has weakened neighbourly bonds and community cohesion. During a moving conversation, a Shihuh elder described life earlier, painting a vivid portrait of the tribe's nomadic traditions. She spoke wistfully about the days when winter homes were constructed from the earth itself - mud and stone - topped with sturdy wooden roofs nestled in the challenging mountain landscape. When summer's heat arrived, the tribe would journey to the coast, transitioning to dwellings made of woven palm leaves, known as 'arish.' This cyclical migration between the mountains and the coast transcended mere environmental necessity, imbuing their lives with a rhythm that brought joy and fulfilment.

She warmly recounted the evenings of yesteryear when lanterns cast a gentle glow, and stoves hummed with life, fostering a sense of communal warmth and unity. Their belongings were kept with deliberate care in chests that held more than garments; they were repositories of memories and tradition. This bygone epoch was marked by contentment and profound kinship, a time when their daily rhythms were in sync with the natural world. The elder spoke of current times, where the once itinerant lifestyle has evolved into a stationary one, with the entire community living under a single, permanent roof. Despite the advantages of modern living, there's a lingering yearning for the simplicity and connection of their nomadic past. (see Fig.3)

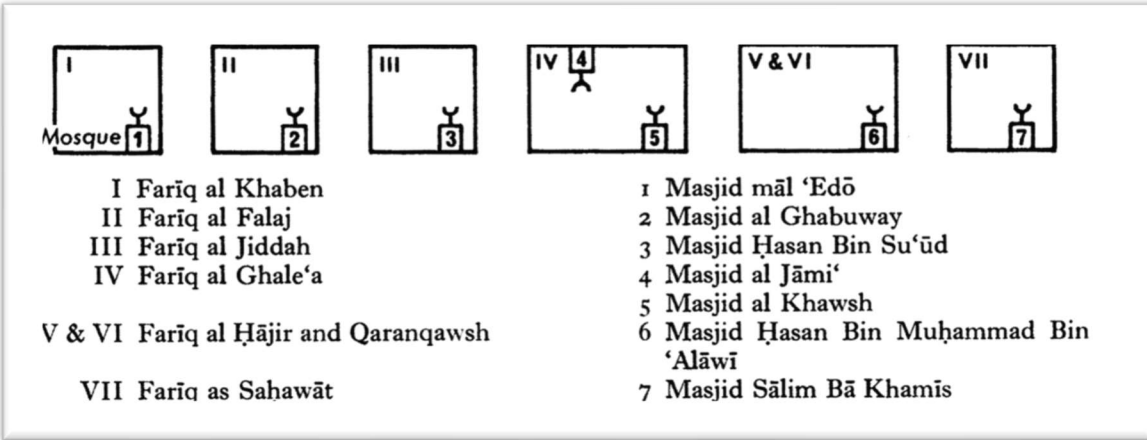


Figure 2. Schematic sketch of the settlement of Ghalila. Source: Dostal, W. 1972. "The Shiḥūḥ of Northern Oman: A Contribution to Cultural Ecology." *The Geographical Journal*. p 4



Figure 3. Source: photo by author, 13th June 2023, Shihuh stone house in the mountain vs Shihuh Modern villa at the foothills of the mountains.

The Unification of the UAE

In the early years of its formation in 1971, the UAE aimed for a centralised approach to achieve rapid material and social development. Decision-makers saw the entire country as a single entity, and there was a desire for uniform modernisation benefiting all emirates, driven by the newfound oil wealth. This approach aimed to diminish the tribal basis of individual emirates' political existence, which was considered outdated. Sheikh Zayed, the first UAE President, was dedicated to building a solid state. He generously used Abu Dhabi's growing wealth to support nationwide projects and travelled extensively to oversee progress and gather feedback from the people. This approach made him famous, particularly in the less affluent northern like Ras al-Khaimah emirate and eastern emirates, as they saw Abu Dhabi and the "Union" as their path to a better life. (Heard-Bey 2004)

The UAE Constitution (UAE et al.) outlined political and social policies, placing indigenous tribes within new societal frameworks of rights and responsibilities. This transformation benefited the formerly isolated Al-Shihuh, as they gained access to the nation's oil wealth, public infrastructure, and social services, changing power dynamics and enhancing living standards across all emirates.

Factors Influencing the Al-Shihuh Tribe's Transition to Modernity

Education, economic developments, government policies, and globalisation have shaped the Shihuh's gradual modernisation. These factors provide valuable insights into their evolution and adaptive strategies.

Education Expansion

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), recognised as one of the most prosperous countries in the Middle East, has undergone remarkable transformations in various sectors since the 1960s, primarily attributed to the discovery of oil (Ashour, 2020). Notably, the nation has recently focused on higher education, embarking on an ambitious journey to expand its higher education system internationally, starting in 1997, by enticing prestigious foreign universities to establish campuses within its 'free zones' (Ashour, 2020). This strategic investment aligns with the UAE's overarching commitment to positioning itself as a global knowledge-based society, a vision endorsed by the Emirates Competitiveness Council in 2014 (Ashour, 2020).

Central to this educational revolution is the National Strategy for Higher Education 2030, a comprehensive plan launched by the UAE's Ministry of Education in 2017 (Ashour, 2020). This strategy underscores the nation's unwavering dedication to fostering high-quality higher education, particularly emphasising research and the overarching goal of transforming into a knowledge economy (Ashour, 2020). The strategy's multifaceted approach focuses on nurturing students, forging robust connections between academia and the labour market, engaging the private sector in curriculum development, expanding research endeavours, and enhancing the global competitiveness of UAE's higher education institutions through innovative academic programs (Ashour, 2020). This educational expansion aims to produce a cadre of specialised and proficient graduates capable of excelling in global sectors through research, entrepreneurship, and seamless integration into the workforce.

However, these lofty educational objectives are not without their challenges. The UAE grapples with the issue of a relatively small percentage of nationals in its population and a notable disparity between students' aspirations and their readiness to meet the demands of these aspirations (Ashour, 2020). To bridge this gap and fulfill its ambitions of becoming a knowledge-based society and economy, the UAE must align its higher education system with its unique cultural, economic, and institutional context, necessitating collaborative efforts between the private sector and the government (Ashour, 2020).

Meanwhile, in the heart of Ras al-Khaimah, the Shihuh community has experienced the positive impact of the UAE's educational development initiatives. In a poignant interview, a Shihuh woman fondly recollected her memories of education in the region. She recalled a time before the union of the emirates when a school was built, offering mixed-gender education, and students would make their way to school by foot. This educational establishment played a pivotal role in imparting essential knowledge, encompassing reading, Arabic language, mathematics, and writing. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan generously funded the school's operations, earning deep gratitude from the local populace. The school's significance extended beyond its immediate vicinity, as students from nearby areas commuted to partake in the valuable educational opportunities it provided.

Furthermore, Sheikh Zayed's commitment to education transcended the local level. In 1968, he initiated a program that sent students from various emirates abroad to pursue higher education. Two students hailing from the mountainous region of Musandam, studying in a religious institute in Kuwait, were selected to complete their high school and university education in Cairo, Egypt, under this scholarship program. This initiative aimed to create opportunities for academic growth and was instrumental in nurturing skilled professionals within the Shihuh community. Notably, one of the beneficiaries of this endeavour was Abdullah bin Ahmed Al Shihhi, a visually impaired student who graduated from the Faculty of Sharia at Al-Azhar University and significantly contributed to the judiciary in Ras Al Khaimah.

The educational landscape further transformed with the establishment of UAE University in Al Ain and subsequent Higher Colleges of Technologies in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Ras Al-Khaimah. This expansion gave Emirati youth, including the Shihuh community, the freedom to pursue diverse domestic and international educational avenues, setting them apart from their counterparts in other Arab nations. The UAE's unwavering commitment to education and its welfare state approach ensured equal educational opportunities for all citizens, effectively transcending geographical and economic disparities (Heard-Bey, 2013).

As highlighted during the interview with a Shihuh woman, this educational transformation has been instrumental in reshaping the community. The shift from religious learning to formal educational institutions, the emphasis on Quranic literacy under the guidance of local mutawa teachers, and the infusion of diverse ideas and teaching approaches by Egyptian and foreign teachers have significantly enriched the educational landscape within the Shihuh community. The transformative power of education is evident in the opportunities it has created, particularly for women, who have been empowered to become teachers and professionals, thereby achieving increased financial independence. Nevertheless, this shift has also precipitated changes in certain traditional practices within the community.

In conclusion, education has emerged as a potent force of change within the Shihuh community, ultimately shaping its future. The UAE's steadfast commitment to education and its initiatives to enhance educational access has proven instrumental in equipping the Shihuh community with the tools and opportunities needed to integrate into modern sectors and achieve personal and professional growth.

Economic Transformations

The discovery of oil in the 1950s had a transformative impact on the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a country that has since undergone significant economic and social changes (Lancaster & Lancaster, 2011). The newfound oil wealth provided rulers and tribal sheikhs with substantial income through oil concessions, allowing for large-scale infrastructure development and the establishment of the Trucial Oman Scouts to maintain internal peace. As the economy transformed, political power shifted towards rulers, who exerted greater control through oil concessions, defined borders, and the issuance of passports for migrant workers. The UAE federation's formation in 1971 marked a pivotal moment, uniting local communities into a single nation-state (Lancaster & Lancaster, 2011). This transformation, driven by Western technologies and newfound wealth, reshaped the political landscape and redefined the roles of rulers and citizens within the evolving UAE.

Modernisation efforts in Abu Dhabi, one of the oil-producing emirates, led to significant infrastructure development, including roads, electricity, and piped water (Lancaster & Lancaster, 2011). The process began with establishing lorry services along various routes, enhancing transportation and accessibility. Electricity infrastructure also saw substantial progress, shifting from private generators to state-provided electricity, resulting in the modernisation of homes and businesses (Lancaster & Lancaster, 2011).

The development of roads and efficient lorry transport revolutionised the movement of goods, replacing traditional camel and donkey transport (Lancaster & Lancaster, 2011). This transformation led to declining local coasting traffic, except in regions like Musandam, where boats remained essential due to limited road infrastructure. With the road network's expansion, people transitioned from camel-based cultivation to modern agriculture supported by irrigation from new wells (Lancaster & Lancaster, 2011).

Moreover, technological advancements brought about profound changes in traditional livelihoods such as pearling, sea trading, land transportation, and agriculture (Heard-Bey, 2004). The integration of modern technologies and the region's growing participation in the global economy led to a shift in economic activities. Individuals adapted to new working conditions, acquired new skills, and diversified their sources of income (Heard-Bey, 2004).

As formal employment opportunities emerged, families experienced lasting transformations, with consumer goods flooding the markets and infrastructure, healthcare, education, and other facilities

improving all aspects of life (Heard-Bey, 2004). The transition to modernity in the Gulf region integrated global influences into local societies, resulting in far-reaching societal and cultural transformations (Heard-Bey, 2004).

While Ras Al-Khaimah did not directly benefit from oil revenues, it adopted a diversified economic approach, focusing on tourism, manufacturing, and export-oriented sectors to sustain economic growth (Heard-Bey, 2004). This approach created employment opportunities, developed infrastructure, and fostered societal changes driven by industrial development, impacting the transformation of societies and tribes, including the Shihuh, in modernised emirates (Heard-Bey, 2004).

In summary, the discovery and commercialisation of oil in the UAE have brought about profound political, economic, and social changes, transforming traditional societies into modern ones through technological advancements, economic diversification, and infrastructure development..

Government Policies

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has emerged as a global leader in human development, achieving an impressive 26th rank on the Human Development Index (HDI). This remarkable achievement reflects the UAE's commitment to progress and sets it as a leading example in the Arab world. The nation's HDI score has significantly increased, rising from 0.890 to an impressive 0.911 (out of 1), firmly placing the UAE in the category of "Very High Human Development" countries. Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre. (n.d.). This transformation is not a stroke of luck but the result of deliberate government policies and visionary strategies outlined in the UAE Vision 2030 and, more recently, the UAE Vision 2071.

Central to this success story is the unwavering dedication of the UAE government to propel the nation into modernity. Their relentless efforts are evident in various facets of society, ranging from ambitious infrastructure projects that span the emirates to forward-thinking social policies and an emphasis on accessible public services. The government's comprehensive approach encompasses state-of-the-art housing initiatives, ensuring universal access to electricity, constructing well-maintained road networks, delivering high-quality healthcare services, and enhancing educational opportunities nationwide. All of these endeavours converge with a singular goal: to elevate living standards and catalyse a fundamental societal transformation.

While these policies have undoubtedly led to a substantial improvement in the overall quality of life for UAE residents, they have also brought about significant social changes. The promotion of nuclear families and active encouragement of detribalisation, aimed at forging a unified national identity, have reshaped traditional social structures. As one Shihuh woman poignantly expressed during an interview, "No one enters our house except for our blessed children." The transition from

traditional dwellings to modern villas has subtly altered the dynamics of neighbourhood life, with individuals now more immersed in their daily routines than ever before.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge and commend the pivotal role played by the state in driving these modernisation efforts forward. The UAE government's vision and unwavering dedication have propelled the nation to the forefront of global development and set a remarkable example for others to follow. As envisaged in UAE Vision 2071, the future promises to be even more transformative as the country strives for excellence on the world stage.

In summary, the UAE's remarkable rise in global human development rankings is a testament to the government's strategic vision and unwavering commitment to modernisation. While these efforts have led to substantial improvements in living standards, they have also brought about notable social changes. Nevertheless, the UAE's dedication to progress continues to set a shining example for the world, and its ambitious goals for the future ensure that its journey towards excellence is far from over.

The Al-Shihuh Tribe's Relationship with Dubai.

The Al-Shihuh tribe's inhabitation of the northern Emirati mountains fostered historical ties with coastal settlements. The relationship between Dubai and the Shihuh tribe is multifaceted and has influenced political, economic, and social aspects. Politically, Sheikh Saeed bin Maktoum bin Hasher Al, ruler of Dubai from 1912 -1957, showed interest in the Hajar Mountains region, particularly regarding the ruling family of Khasab. Economically, Dubai exempted its products from taxes in the Hajar Mountains, and Dubai families' summer visits stimulated the region's economy (Alhajri, 2012).

However, Dubai's discovery of oil reserves and strategic reignition of its mercantile economy transformed the city into a globalised commercial and tourism hub. This supported investments in infrastructure, trade networks, and aviation to establish Dubai as the business and financial centre of the Middle East. Meanwhile, Al-Shihuh communities maintained largely traditional lifestyles based on date palm cultivation, fishing, animal herding, and seasonal architecture, migrating between mountain and coastal dwellings.

Nonetheless, Dubai's rising cosmopolitanism and availability of imported goods trickling into Shihuh village markets through trade introduced new products, ideas, and cultural influences. The long-standing symbiotic relationship with Dubai thus exposed the Al-Shihuh tribe to globalisation and external cultures much earlier than other Emirati tribal groups. Shihuh members adapted by embracing education and employment opportunities in Dubai's urban centres while retaining their village roots. This early exposure to regional and global networks catalysed a gradual integration into modern society.

The Impact of Oil Economies

The discovery and export of oil reserves profoundly reshaped the Arabian Gulf's social, economic, and political terrains. The resulting influx of wealth, technologies, foreign expertise, and labour catalysed a process of rapid modernisation. For Dubai and Abu Dhabi, massive oil revenues financed infrastructure upgrading and public service expansion, enabling swift transitions to contemporary living standards and globalised diversified economies.

However, the effects permeated beyond oil-rich emirates, transforming surrounding areas. Although the Al-Shihuh inhabited mountains lacking oil reserves, the spread of modernisation of neighbouring regions integrated their community into new economic networks. Infrastructural connectivity through road systems ending the isolation of their villages enabled mobility. State expenditures redistributed oil profits across emirates, providing the Al-Shihuh with housing, healthcare, education, telecommunications, stable employment, and improved living standards.

Traditional livelihoods also declined with new transportation technologies and market integration. Economic activities like pearling, camel transport, and local agriculture diminished, with the tribe transitioning to urbanised living supported by oil-generated wealth. The profits and infrastructure from the energy-based economy thus acted as the impetus that catapulted traditional tribal communities into contemporary lifestyles.

Cultural Diffusion and Globalization

Globalisation has influenced cultural diffusion in the UAE, leading to the adoption of external ideas and contemporary lifestyles. This has been particularly evident in transforming traditional practices, such as weddings and cultural customs, to reflect more modern identities. However, despite these changes, the core cultural elements of Emirati society, including family, governance, and societal values, have remained strong, demonstrating the country's resilience in the face of globalisation. Al-Khazraji (2009). Claim that the UAE has effectively managed these global pressures while preserving its cultural heritage, creating a unique blend of influences. This balance between modernity and tradition is expected to persist, showcasing the UAE's ability to adapt and protect its cultural values in a globalised world.

Globalisation's Impact on UAE Cultural Diffusion and Resilience

Globalisation has significantly accelerated cultural diffusion and the assimilation of external ideas within localised tribal communities in the UAE. This impact has been effectively managed, allowing the preservation of the country's cultural heritage. Although some transformations have occurred, fundamental cultural aspects such as family, society, and governance remain robust. The UAE has embraced globalisation while safeguarding its cultural values, resulting in a harmonious blend of influences. Al-Khazraji (2009) claimed that the balance between modernity and tradition is expected to endure in the face of future challenges, highlighting the resilience of the UAE's distinctive cultural heritage in the globalised world. Additionally, Mourtada-Sabbah et al. (2008)

suggested that the UAE, as a cosmopolitan trading hub, attracted diverse populations, knowledge systems, and products, leading to changes in consumption patterns as global brands, cuisines, and lifestyles were seamlessly integrated into the local culture.

The Al-Shihuh, an indigenous tribe residing in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have experienced significant cultural transformations influenced by globalisation and the pervasive presence of media. This essay delves into the profound impact of globalisation and media on the Al-Shihuh culture, exploring how it has shaped various aspects of their lives.

One of the most noticeable changes in Al-Shihuh culture has been the integration of contemporary and foreign elements into their traditional practices. Music, poetry, clothing, architecture, social relations, and even wedding traditions have gradually evolved. The blending of local heritage with modern identities is emblematic of their adaptability to the changing world.

In interviews with members of the Al-Shihuh community, it becomes evident that the younger generation has embraced technological advancements with enthusiasm. Smartphones, laptops, and iPads have become cherished possessions, often prioritised over face-to-face communication with their parents or heeding their advice. The influence of media, mainly through images on phones and television, has significantly impacted the way they dress. While incorporating modern fashion trends, they continue to adhere to Islamic principles, maintaining modest attire.

However, this shift towards modernity has not been without its challenges. The generational gap has widened, with some young individuals perceiving their fathers as backward and ignorant. This perception disregards the efforts of their parents in providing for them and striving to offer better opportunities in life. Nevertheless, there is recognition and appreciation for those children who have contributed to their country's progress through hard work and dedication, whether locally or abroad.

The advent of digital technologies, social media, and online platforms has enabled Al-Shihuh youth to connect with the global networks of their peers. This interconnectedness has led to the reshaping of their worldviews as they are exposed to diverse perspectives and ideas worldwide. It has provided them with opportunities for self-expression and participation in broader discussions.

Despite these benefits, some traditional practices and customs have weakened as Al-Shihuh youth increasingly prioritise new ideas over ancestral traditions. Tribal elders, who have witnessed the transformation firsthand, lament the loss of certain songs, rituals, oral history practices, and community participation that were once integral to their culture. The traditional gathering space known as the "majles" has seen a decline in attendance, as young individuals now spend more time in coffee shops with their friends, influenced by global trends and modern lifestyles.

In conclusion, the Al-Shihuh tribe's culture has been significantly influenced by globalisation and media. The integration of contemporary elements into their traditions reflects their adaptability to change. While the younger generation embraces technological advancements and global connectivity, it has also led to generational gaps and the erosion of some traditional customs. The impact of globalisation and media on the Al-Shihuh culture underscores the complex interplay between tradition and modernity in a rapidly evolving world.

Detribalization Policies and Consequences

A crucial dimension of the UAE's post-independence nation-building strategy was instituting policies to replace tribal allegiances and social organisation with a unitary national identity. This process of detribalisation sought to transcend traditional kin-based support systems, which were perceived as inhibiting modernisation and national cohesion; while well-intentioned, these reforms also risked unintended consequences. (Heard-Bey 2005)

The establishment of federal authority, identification cards, and military and civil service integration gave citizens direct membership within national structures, bypassing traditional tribes. The exploitation of mineral resources in the Gulf countries, as Heard-Bey (2004) described, has led to significant transformations in the region. Initially, these changes were subtle, with locals finding employment in sectors like oil exploration and construction for foreign companies. People adapted to new roles, acquiring new skills to meet the organisations' demands. For example, former pearl dhow captains became motorboat pilots and took on maintenance tasks for foreign-made vehicles. Sons of pearl merchants became accountants or store clerks, managing inventories of imported goods needed for the oil and construction industries. These changes started with those directly involved with foreign personnel but eventually impacted local employees' families as new products and practices became part of their daily lives. It is important to note that the consequences of detribalisation policies can vary widely depending on the specific policies, the cultural context, and the degree of implementation and enforcement. These policies have been implemented in different parts of the world, often as part of broader efforts to modernise or transform societies. The consequences are not always harmful but can significantly impact the affected communities and their way of life.

The scholarly review and testimonies from interviewees suggest that policies promoting urbanisation, which favour smaller nuclear family units within cities, have led to the fragmentation of traditional extended family living arrangements. This shift has weakened the ties within tribal communities. As young people have become more integrated into non-tribal education systems, and the gap between generations has widened, the passing down of cultural knowledge from parents to children has diminished. The transition from a lifestyle of subsistence farming and pastoralism to state employment has altered the economic and social fabric. Although modernisation efforts have successfully shifted the focus of political organisations towards the national level, they have also disrupted the connection between indigenous groups and their long-

standing cultural practices. This is particularly evident in the case of marginalised tribes such as the Al-Shihuh. The reforms may have failed to fully appreciate the potential for traditional practices to coexist and integrate with modern societal structures meaningfully, leading to a potential loss of cultural identity.

Community Perspectives on Change

The perspectives gathered from the Al-Shihuh tribe through primary research, such as interviews and surveys, shed light on the community's adaptation to the forces of modernisation and their strategies for preserving their heritage. The members of the Al-Shihuh tribe acknowledge the substantial benefits of modernisation, including enhanced living standards, educational opportunities, better connectivity, and broader economic prospects. These advances are seen as instrumental in equipping the younger generation with new skills and broader worldviews.

Despite recognising these benefits, the community also stresses the importance of maintaining cultural and historical connections amidst these changes. There is a significant emphasis on the vital role that parents and elders play in imparting knowledge about the tribe's linguistic roots, oral traditions, customs, music, and values to the younger generation. This cultural education is seen as critical and should be included in school curricula and community events.

The tribe suggests a variety of initiatives to raise awareness and preserve endangered traditions. These include media campaigns, lectures, projects focused on oral documentation, and the formation of heritage clubs. Such measures are intended to reinforce the tribe's cultural identity and ensure its continuity.

Furthermore, the Al-Shihuh highlight the necessity for adaptability, which involves wisely incorporating modern advancements while protecting the significant emblems of their history. The overarching vision for the United Arab Emirates' progression is to embrace both the uniqueness of local identities and the breadth of globalised opportunities. This balanced approach aims to foster a society that respects its roots while effectively navigating the tides of change.

Discussion

The Al-Shihuh tribe's transitional journey involves complex dynamics between cultural continuity and adaptation to contemporary lifestyles. Traditional practices and heritage form the community's bedrock, connecting them to their lineage and terrain. However, integration into the UAE's national structures and exposure to external forces have catalysed a gradual modernisation process. Education, economic development, and globalisation have equipped the Shihuh with knowledge, resources, and perspectives to engage with modernity, thereby transforming social structures.

Nonetheless, this change threatens cultural dilution, necessitating active preservation. Strategies proposed by survey participants emphasise parental responsibility, community involvement,

balance between adaptation and preservation, and reinforcing cultural symbols. Elders' knowledge transmission to youth remains critical for cultural continuity. Adaptability and gradual change allow the integration of modern practices while sustaining heritage. Expanded educational opportunities must balance modern subjects and cultural knowledge to nurture dual identities. Preserving tangible and intangible cultural elements, such as poetry, architecture, attire, artefacts, and stories, is paramount. The Shihuh's cultural resilience over centuries inspires confidence in their ability to maintain their identity even as lifestyles evolve. However, concerted efforts are vital for cultural continuity and community cohesion through ongoing modernisation.

The formation of the UAE catalysed a monumental transition for the nation's traditional tribal communities through integration into national structures and exposure to globalised modernity. For the indigenous Al-Shihuh tribe, this profoundly disrupted their isolated agricultural, fishing and pastoral way of life maintained for centuries in northern Emirati mountain villages. However, the analysis reveals disruptive challenges and adaptive capacities emerging within the community.

Initiatives aimed at detribalisation and cultural homogenisation to build national identity illustrate policy limitations in understanding indigenous perspectives. Top-down reforms severed community bonds and generational knowledge flows that could have been integrated through dialogical approaches valuing tradition within modernity. Nonetheless, culture proved resilient, as Al-Shihuh members strategically sustain heritage through parental guidance, syncretism and retrieving folk knowledge.

The relationship with Dubai and early exposure to global forces enabled gradual acclimation for the tribe, unlike abrupt reforms. This cultural conditioning readied the Al-Shihuh for integrative adaptation ahead of interior regions. Infrastructural connectivity and redistributed oil wealth supported transitions to settled urban employment. Modernisation impacts permeated indirectly, yet profoundly, transforming traditional livelihoods.

Thus, the Al-Shihuh tribe's journey reveals a complex navigation of modernising forces and traditional identity. While contemporary living standards, education, technology, and opportunity are embraced, cultural bonds remain deeply valued. This dialectic between heritage and modernity continues as the UAE envisions its future. Al-Shihuh's experiences offer vital insights into policies that holistically integrate indigeneity within modernisation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides a detailed examination of the Al-Shihuh tribe's journey from their historic mountain settlements to their roles in the modern landscape of the UAE. By integrating firsthand accounts with academic insights, the research reveals the subtle yet powerful ways in which the Al-Shihuh have adapted and persevered. It also highlights the critical need for policy interventions to support these traditional practices amidst rapid change. As the UAE

continues to evolve into a society that values diversity and looks to the future, it must also recognise the importance of incorporating the rich cultural heritage of its native populations.

The experience of the Al-Shihuh, adept at managing change, is an inspiring example of how to honour one's heritage while progressing into the future. Their story of survival and adaptation parallels the UAE's remarkable development. This nation could lead by example, showing how a society can progress technologically and economically while still preserving its people's cultural identities and histories. The Al-Shihuh tribe, with their profound connection to the land and their heritage, stands as a beacon of how the spirit of the past can inform and enrich a dynamic, modern society.

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