QATAR CULTURAL FIELD GUIDE

Published: August 2010

Prepared by: Marine Corps Intelligence Activity,
2033 Barnett Avenue,
Quantico, VA 22134-5103

Comments and Suggestions: feedback@mcia.osis.gov
To order additional copies of this field guide, call (703) 784-6167,
DSN: 278-6167.

DOD-2634-QAT-016-10

Foreword

The Qatar Cultural Field Guide is designed to provide deploying military personnel an overview of Qatar's cultural terrain. In this field guide, Qatar's cultural history has been synopsized to capture the more significant aspects of the country's cultural environment, with emphasis on factors having the greatest potential to impact operations.

The field guide presents background information to show the Qatar mind-set through its history, language, and religion. It also contains practical sections on lifestyle, customs and habits. For those seeking more extensive information, MCIA produces a series of cultural intelligence studies on Qatar that explore the dynamics of Qatar culture at a deeper level.

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INTRODUCTION

The State of Qatar is a small country on a peninsula in the Arabian Gulf. As of 2009, its population was more than 800,000 people. Although English is widely spoken, the official language is Arabic. The official religion is Islam. Approximately 85 percent of Qatari citizens are Sunni Muslims, who follow the Wahhabi form of Islam, and 15 percent are Shi'a Muslims. Qatar has been ruled by the al-Thani family for more than a century. Today, the emir of Qatar and members of his family control nearly all aspects of the government. During al-Thani rule, Qatar has been transformed from a collection of underdeveloped coastal villages subsisting on pearling and fishing to one of the wealthiest oil- and gas-producing states in the world. Qatari citizens have the second highest per capita income in the world—US$121,400 (2009 estimate).

Wealth from oil and gas has profoundly affected the population of Qatar, spurring urbanization, development, and growth of the central state. Qatar is highly urbanized: 93 percent of the population is urban, with 80 percent of the population living in the capital city of Doha. In addition, Qatar's wealth has supported a significant increase in infant survival rates, which initiated a population growth


49° 30'
50° 00'
50° 30'
26° 00'
25° 30'
25° 00'
Persian Gulf
BAHRAIN
Gulf of Bahrain
Hawar
(disputed between Qatar and Bahrain)
SAUDI ARABIA
U.A.E.
in dispute
Madinat ash Shamal
Al Khuwayr
Al Ghashamiyah
Ra's Ushayriq
Al Ka'ban
Al Ghuwairiyah
Al Busayyir
Al Khawr
Umm Sawnah
Al Jumailiyah
Ar Rufayq
Bi'r Zekrit
Dukhan
Umm Salal Mohammed
Ash Shahaniyah
Al Gharrafah
Ar Rayyan
DOHA
Umm Bab
Al Wakrah
Al Wukayr
Al Kir'anah
Umm Said
Al Kharrarah
Qatar
National capital
City
Primary road
Secondary road
Maritime boundary
0 10 20 km
0 15 mi

Qatar

of 528 percent between 1950 and 1997. Today, nearly 60 percent of Qataris are between the ages of 18 and 45. Oil wealth has also accelerated the growth of the non-citizen population, which has been significant throughout Qatar's history.

Approximately 200,000 citizens of Qatar are the beneficiaries of a vast welfare state. In contrast, non-citizens, who currently make up approximately 80 percent of the population, lack the legal protections, access to wealth, and right to social services enjoyed by citizens. Qatar's non-citizen population is ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse. This sector of the population is roughly 20 percent Arab, 20 percent Indian, 13 percent Nepalese, 10 percent Filipino, 7 percent Pakistani, 5 percent Sri Lankan, and 5 percent other nationalities. High rates of immigration have also distorted Qatar's gender balance, resulting in a ratio of 200 men to 100 women as of 2004.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population	833,300 (2009 estimates)
Population growth (annual %)	.957
Life expectancy at birth	75 years
Birth rate, (per 1,000 population)	15.6
Death rate, (per 1,000 population)	2.46

At approximately 11,500 square kilometers (approximately 4,400 square miles: 35 miles long and 3 to 4 miles across), Qatar is slightly smaller than Connecticut. It is surrounded by several small islands, only one of which, Hahlul, is inhabited. Qatar's interior has remained largely uninhabited. Qatar borders Saudi Arabia to the south and the Arabian Gulf to the north, east, and west. Its land-

Qatar Desert

scape is mostly made up of limestone, gravel, rocks, sand, and, occasionally, salt flats. Qatar has little rain and no natural arable land; therefore, agricultural production depends on irrigation. Because date gardens, grass, and short brushwood are the only natural vegetation, Qatar has historically depended on neighbors for necessities like food and firewood. Qatar, which usually is hot and humid most of the year, is frequently swept by a strong northwest wind (*shamal*).

CULTURAL HISTORY

Even though Qatar's desert environment has a limited ability to support settlements, the peninsula has been inhabited by small populations since the Stone Age. Because it is strategically located along multiple trade routes, its people have been linked to many civilizations. Qatar's connection to the neighboring island of Bahrain dates to the 3^{d} millennium B.C., when the ancient trad-

ing center of Dilmun thrived in Bahrain. Later, Qatar traded with ancient Greece; it is mentioned in the works of famed historians, such as Herodotus, Pliny the Elder, and Ptolemy. In the 3d and 4th centuries A.D., Qatar was linked to the Sassanid Empire in the present-day Islamic Republic of Iran.

> *"No history, no present."*
>
> **– *Qatari saying***

Modern Qataris possess a strong Muslim identity. They believe that, in 622 A.D., the Prophet Muhammad sent an emissary to convert the entire population to Islam and that the Prophet and his wife Aisha wore clothing woven in Qatar. Qataris are proud of their long-standing ties to the Islamic civilization. Qatari warriors fought for the Umayyad Empire (661–750) and many Qataris maintained connections to both the Abbasid Empire (720–1258) in Baghdad and the Ottoman Empire (1299–1922).

Throughout its history, Qatar's population has been small and unstable, at times dwindling to less than 1,000. Until the 19th century, Qatar had no centralized authority and few permanent settlements.

Many modern Qataris are descendants of the Arab tribes that immigrated in the 18th century from present-day Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman. Often, these tribes came to Qatar in search of refuge from instability elsewhere in the Gulf. In addition, an estimated 20 percent of Qatar's citizens are believed to have descended from black slaves brought from East Africa in the 19th and early 20th centuries to work in the pearl industry.

Another segment of the citizenry descended from Huwala Arabs, Sunni Arabs from the Gulf who migrated to, and remained for centuries in, neighboring Persia before returning to live in Qatar in the 1900s. Other Qataris are descendants of Persians, usually Shi'a, who came to Qatar from the Persian coast.

Most Qataris settled in small villages and depended primarily on the sea for their survival. (Due to Qatar's dry climate, little agriculture was cultivated until the introduction of mechanized irrigation in the 20th century.) Some coastal villages were walled to protect inhabitants from periodic attacks by Bedouin nomads. One or two tribes dominated each of Qatar's main towns, such as al-Bida (later known as Doha), Wakrah, and al-Fuwayrit.

> *"Enough, enough, oh sea! It's already been two months... Don't you fear God? Bring them back, bring them back!"*
>
> ***– Song of a pearl diver's wife***

Although a few families were able to gain wealth and prestige as merchants, most of the population worked as impoverished pearl divers or fishermen. Pearling was grueling and dangerous. Pearl divers were at sea, away from their families, from May to October and risked their lives with each dive. While nearly the entire male population was at sea, females remained at home to care for their families and property. Most Qatari women hated and feared the sea because it was so dangerous for their men.

Not everyone worked in the seafaring trades. Some Qataris worked as artisans; others survived as nomadic Bedouin herders. Qatar's Bedouin tribes mostly lived in the interior of the Arabian Peninsula and migrated to Qatar only in the winter to graze their animals, a practice that continues to a limited extent today.

In the 18th century, the al-Thani and al-Khalifa tribes arrived in Qatar. Battling for control of Qatar over the next two centuries, they permanently altered the country's development. The al-Thani arrived from Saudi Arabia and established themselves as a wealthy pearl merchant family. The al-Khalifa, relations of the ruling family of modern Kuwait, arrived permanently in 1776. They settled in the village of Zubarah, on the northwest coast, and established

a prosperous trading center. The rulers of the neighboring island of Bahrain, who felt threatened by Zubarah's growing wealth and influence, attacked Zubarah. In 1783, the al-Khalifa retaliated and conquered the island. While most of the al-Khalifa relocated to Bahrain, they periodically attempted to regain control of Qatar until the mid-19th century.

After the departure of the al-Khalifa for Bahrain, Qatar had no center of authority. Local sheikhs, including the al-Thanis, ruled and brought Qatar under the nominal control of the Ottoman Empire. A key local ruling sheikh was Rahmah Bin Jabir. Called a pirate by his enemies, he is seen by modern Qataris as a hero of Qatari nationalism. Although Bin Jabir had aided the al-Khalifa in their attack on Bahrain, he was denied an opportunity to rule the island. Angered, he returned to Qatar as the sworn enemy of the al-Khalifa. Bin Jabir spent the rest of his long life attacking al-Khalifa ships from his base in Qatar. For most Qataris, these attacks created a separation between Bahrain and Qatar, laying the groundwork for the development of a distinct Qatari identity. As part of his quest to seek revenge against the al-Khalifa, Bin Jabir also periodically aligned himself with the Wahhabis in neighboring Saudi Arabia, forging an ongoing connection between Qatar and Wahhabism that continues today.

Fort in Zubarah

During this period, Great Britain became involved in the affairs of the Gulf sheikhdoms. Britain had begun to compete with Portugal, Holland, and France for control of the region in 1498, when Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope. At that point, the Europeans realized that the Gulf was on a strategic trade route to India. After their empire expanded to India, the British sought to preserve access to the Gulf by dividing and weakening the various Gulf sheikhdoms.

Qatar lacked a central government but the al-Khalifa of Bahrain continued to assert their rule over the peninsula. As a result, the British considered Qatar as part of Bahrain, despite the history of conflict and violence between the two Gulf areas. By holding the Qataris responsible for treaties that Bahrain had signed, the British caused much confusion throughout the region. In 1821, the British East India Company accused Qatar of violating a Bahrain-

Reproduction of a Qatar Souk

signed treaty, of which the Qataris were completely unaware, and sacked the city of Doha. In addition, Bahrain repeatedly attacked Doha, Wakrah, and other parts of Qatar after Qataris refused to pay tribute to Bahrain. Qatar's deteriorating relationships with Great Britain and Bahrain culminated in 1868, when infuriated Qataris sailed to and attacked their neighbor in response to the repeated Bahraini raids.

Alarmed by the spiraling violence in the Gulf, the British sent Colonel Lewis Pelly to intervene between Qatar and Bahrain. The resulting negotiations and treaty remain among the defining events in the emergence of a Qatari nation and identity. When Pelly arrived in Qatar, he asked to speak with the leader of the people. He was presented with Muhammad bin Thani, one of the major sheikhs on the peninsula. On 12 September 1868, Pelly signed an agreement with Muhammad bin Thani that recognized the sheikh as the Qatar's leader. The agreement also acknowledged Qatar as autonomous from Bahrain. As a result, Qatar took its first step toward becoming independent at the same time that the al-Thani family began to cement its position as the ruler of Qatar.

Although the 1868 treaty recognized local al-Thani authority over Qatar, Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and Bahrain continued to vie for control. Muhammad bin Thani desired total independence for Qatar; he decided, however, to accept nominal Ottoman jurisdiction in return for aid against British and Bahraini encroachment. The Ottomans made Muhammad bin Thani's son, Qasim bin Muhammad al-Thani, governor of Qatar from 1871–1892. While the Ottomans maintained nominal control, Qasim gradually solidified his position as the leader of the Qatari people. He fended off attacks from Bedouin tribes based in Qatar's interior and from rival local sheikhs. In 1872, the Qataris ceased to

pay tribute to the al-Khalifa in Bahrain. In 1878, they attacked and destroyed the town of Zubarah, the remaining al-Khalifa stronghold on the peninsula.

Free from Bahraini claims, Qasim turned against his Ottoman rulers, whom he resented for both their constant interference in Qatar's internal affairs and their demands for tribute. In 1893, the Ottomans sent a force to confront the resistant Qatari leader, who fled into hiding. The Ottomans responded by kidnapping his brother and 12 other notables. When the Ottomans went after Qasim, however, his subjects rose up and, against significant odds, defeated the Ottoman forces. On 19 July 1913, the Ottomans renounced their claims to Qatar in the Anglo-Turkish Convention. The Convention also stated that the Qataris would not have to pay tribute to Bahrain and recognized Qasim as the ruler of Qatar. With this act, Qasim became the founding emir of Qatar; many Qatari regard him as a founding father of the Qatari state.

Key Leaders from the al-Thani Family

- Sheikh Thani bin Muhammad (1825–1850)
- Sheikh Muhammad bin Thani (1850–1878)
- H.H Sheikh Qasim bin Muhammad Al Thani (1878–1913)
- H.H Sheikh Muhammad bin Qasim Al Thani (1913–1914)
- H.H Sheikh Abdullah bin Qasim Al Thani (1914–1945)
- H.H Sheikh Hamad bin Abdullah Al Thani (1945–1946)
- H.H Sheikh Abdullah bin Qasim Al Thani (1946–1949)
- H.H Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah Al Thani (1949–1960)
- H.H Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani, (1960–1972)
- H.H Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, (1972–1995)
- H.H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995–Present)

The newly independent emir was in a precarious position. Qatar was a small state caught between the British and the neighboring Wahhabis, under the leadership of Abdel Aziz al-Saud. Emir Qasim aligned with the Saudis against the British and converted to Wahhabism. Most of Qatar's Sunni population soon followed his example. Emir Qasim also felt threatened, however, by his Saudi neighbor's growing power and barely disguised intentions to annex Qatar. Emir Qasim also resented the tribute that the Saudis extracted. Exhausted, the octogenarian Emir Qasim forced his reluctant son, Abdullah bin Qasim al- Thani, to ascend the throne in 1913. The father then aided his son in forging a pivotal agreement with Great Britain in an attempt to preserve Qatar's independence.

On 3 November 1916, Qatar signed an agreement with Great Britain that would shape the small country's history for the next 55 years and ultimately result in Qatar's emergence as an independent state. Qatar was the last of the Gulf states to enter into a direct agreement with Britain, surrendering control of its foreign policy to the British in return for promises of protection. Qatar was also promised permanent independence from Bahrain and a seven-gun salute for the emir. Despite repeated pleas to his new allies for protection against the Saudis, however, the emir was still compelled to pay a secret tribute to prevent the neighboring kingdom from annexing his country.

Qatar was hit by a double blow in the 1930s, when the combined disasters of the Great Depression and the development of Japan's cultured pearl industry caused the collapse of Qatar's pearl-based economy. Qatar's small population was left with fishing as its only livelihood. Qatar's economic difficulties were exacerbated in 1935, when Bahrain revived its claim to Zubarah and formed a blockade around the Qatar peninsula. As starvation spread, Qataris became so impoverished that they sold the rafters of their homes. Rumors

indicated that even the emir became so poor that he had to mortgage his home to pay his debts. By 1939, many Qataris emigrated; the population dropped to 10,000 villagers, living on the coast and surviving on limited amounts of imported food. Qatar received financial assistance from Britain during this challenging period.

Qatari fortunes changed radically with the discovery and production of oil. The discovery allowed the ruling al-Thani family to cement its hold over the country and deepened the relationship between Qatar and Great Britain. With these changes, Qatar began the transformation from one of the poorest to one of the richest nations in the world.

Although Britain had signed oil concessions with many of the other Gulf states, it had never seriously believed that Qatar possessed large oil reserves. Nevertheless, on 17 May 1935, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company signed a concession with Qatar that allowed the company 75 years of access to Qatar's yet-undiscovered oil fields. The British were motivated by a desire to prevent the United States from signing any agreements with the Qataris that would challenge Britain's presence in the region. In turn, Emir Abdullah received from Britain renewed guarantees of protection from outside interference and help against any rival family members who sought to place themselves on the throne.

Although oil was discovered in Qatar in 1939, the Great Depression and World War II hindered production. Emir Abdullah did not live to see the transformation of his country. The emir chose his favorite son, Hamad, to succeed him, despite the fact that many Qatari citizens disliked Hamad for his focus on personal financial gain. Hamad died of diabetes in 1948, however, before he was able to ascend the throne. In 1949, Emir Abdullah abdicated and his eldest son, Ali bin Abdullah al-Thani, ascended to power in return

for a promise to make Hamad's young son, Khalifa, the heir. That same year, oil production began, ushering in a new era under the leadership of Emir Ali.

The production of oil would eventually alter the lives of all Qataris. Prior to oil production, Qatar's capital city, Doha, barely had paved roads, electricity, or more than a handful of radios. With the advent of oil wealth, the government undertook massive infrastructure projects, including the construction of roadways, buildings, and a significant increase in public services. The first boys' school opened in 1952 for primary students; the first girls' school opened in 1955. During this period, Qatar also made early attempts to diversify its economy by building a cement factory and promoting agriculture and fishing. In 1954, the last pearling ship sailed from Qatar.

New forms of Qatari identity, nationalism, and social structure emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. Most oil workers came from the lower rungs of Qatari society and were laborers who had suffered the most from the collapse of the pearl economy. Some of them were slaves now contracted to the oil companies by their owners. Although the laborers worked for a British oil company, they were employed directly by wealthy Qatari middlemen from distinguished merchant families. The oil workers soon discovered that, for the first time, they could exert political pressure on the emir and the British by uniting and striking for improved wages and working conditions. Ironically, many of the new oil workers were supported in their strikes by their owners, who confis-

> *"On the occasion of the oil company's reneging on its promise to raise wages after completing excavation work on well number two."*
>
> ***– Title of poem by an oil worker***

cated the workers' wages and, therefore, stood to gain from any increase in salaries.

Threatened by this newfound alliance between the slaves and their owners—and under pressure from the British—the emir freed all Qatari slaves. By doing so, the emir gained the freed slaves' loyalty. He also used the oil wealth to compensate the slave owners for their lost "property," thereby establishing a precedent for government distribution of the country's oil wealth to the population.

As strikes became increasingly common across Qatar's industries, many of the protests took on a nationalist tone, which shaped the emerging national identity. After Qataris went on strike to protest the employment of non-Qatari workers, the oil companies promised to prioritize Qataris in their recruitment and employment practices. These promises culminated in a series of laws that distinguished citizens from non-citizens. Other strikes took on an Arab-nationalist and anti-British tone.

In addition to the strikes, Emir Ali faced threats from within the royal family. Conflict over succession had periodically rocked the al-Thani family for decades. Most of the money earned from oil production initially went into the personal bank accounts of the emir. Instability within the royal family increased as family members fought for greater shares of Qatar's wealth. Family members demanded large sums of money from the oil revenues in return for their loyalty. The threats from his own family drove the emir closer to his British allies and contributed to his decision to abdicate in favor of his son, Ahmad, in 1960. This decision was controversial both within the al-Thani royal family and the wider public because Emir Ali had previously promised his father, Emir Abdullah, that his nephew, Khalifa, would succeed him. The conflict within the al-Thani family over the distribution of oil revenues and the suc-

cession of Ahmad eventually spilled into the streets of Qatar, fueling many popular protests throughout the country.

In 1963, oil workers, dissidents, and distant members of the al-Thani family united to demand a reduction in foreign workers; increased social services, trade unions, and budgets; representation in the government; a movie theater; and a television station. In response, Emir Ahmad bin Ali al-Thani initiated a narrow series of reforms. With the reforms and the gradual increases in the distribution of oil revenues among the citizenry, the intensity of the strikes waned.

In 1968, Qataris were shocked by Great Britain's announcement to end agreements with the Gulf states and pull out of the region by 1971. Initially, Qatar and the eight other Gulf states (Bahrain and the seven emirates that make up the present-day United Arab Emirates) discussed unification. Qatar, however, chose not to enter into an agreement with the other states because of their lack of development. Qatar also feared that its long-standing rival, Bahrain, would once again try to exert undue influence over the peninsula. Qatar became independent on 3 September 1971.

Despite the transition to full independence, Emir Ahmad remained, in the eyes of many Qataris, more interested in his personal wealth than in the affairs of the state. On 22 February 1972, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad al-Thani took over the government from his cousin while Emir Ahmad was falcon hunting in Iran.

Emir Khalifa moved to stabilize Qatar by cutting his family's allowances and investing more in social services, health, education, and the country's infrastructure. He also filled the government with close relatives who supported his rule. Still, Emir Khalifa's reforms remained limited. Through his personal accounts, the emir directly controlled Qatar's government funds.

In 1981, Qatar became a founding member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a defense, security, and commercial trade organization that included Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

> *Money supply is strictly controlled by the amir in such a personal way that bankers claim to be able to tell when he is on a holiday, through no other way than the effect that three weeks of his now [sic] signing any cheques has on liquidity.*

Qatar's extraordinary oil wealth continues to shape the lives, culture, and identity of Qataris. The country's North Gas Field, which became operational in 1991, is the largest concentration of natural gas in the world and comprises 5 to 15 percent of the world's total gas reserves.

Within a relatively short time after attaining its independence, Qatar experienced significant growth in income, infrastructure, social services, and engagement with the outside world. This rapid change produced a generational divide: the life experiences of older Qataris were radically different from those of their grandchildren. In 1970, for instance, the literacy rate for Qataris older than 50 years was just 15 percent; for those between the ages of 15 and 19, it was 80 percent, thus indicating the success of modern education. By 1988, 100 percent of Qatari children were enrolled in primary or secondary schools and the country had a higher *per capita* rate of students attending university than any other Gulf state.

The oil boom also contributed to the extensive growth of Qatar's already significant foreign population. By 1970, on the eve of the nation's independence, only 45,000 of the 111,000 people living in Qatar were citizens. The non-citizen population came from the Middle East, Asia, and Europe. Some Qataris believed that these non-citizens posed a threat to Qatari cultural integrity and the dis-

tinct sense of national identity that had developed in the latter half of the 20th century.

Instability within the ruling al-Thani family continued through 1995. That year, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani took over Qatar's government in a bloodless coup after making allegations that his father, Emir Khalifa, was corrupt. The former emir left Qatar with as much as US$3 billion of Qatar's foreign reserves in his personal account.

The new emir quickly cultivated a reputation as a young, energetic, and reform-minded leader, concentrating on women's rights, public transparency, and public participation. Before becoming the emir, he was in charge of modernizing Qatar's military and economy. He had led Qatar's military in the 1990 Gulf War against Iraq.

> *Year after year everything changed for the better in our life here. The government tries to make people's lives more comfortable and it does. The government builds a lot of facilities, like clubs, schools, airports, hotels, hospitals and shops. There is everything any person could want to be happy. And there is the university here.*
>
> ***– Qatari Grandmother***

In 1999, Emir Hamad granted Qatari women the right to vote and the country held the first election for a 29-member municipal council. On 29 April 2003, 97 percent of Qataris voted to approve the constitution, which granted Qatari women formal equality and established a legislative advisory council (with elected and appointed members) to the emir.

One of Emir Hamad's three wives, Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser al-Missned, is also a well-known champion of reform. She is now the head of the Qatar Foundation. Responsible for Education City, the foundation has brought numerous prestigious U.S. university branches to Qatar.

Emir Hamad also embarked on a deliberate strategy to raise Qatar's international profile and diversify the economy. He funded, for example, the establishment of the controversial satellite television channel Al-Jazeera, which—the emir argues—encourages transparency and debate across the Middle East. In addition, Qatar has hosted many international meetings and sporting events. For example, it hosted the World Trade Organization meeting, known as the "Doha Round" (2001); the Organization of the Islamic Conference (2003); and the Second South Summit of the Group of 77 (2005).

High-profile sporting events include the ExxonMobil Open tournament (since 1996), the Qatar Masters (since 1998), and the Asian Games (2006). Abd Allah bin Hamad al-Attiya, Qatar's minister of Energy, Industry, Water, and Electricity, has played a key role in the country's successful energy strategy and in building the nation's infrastructure.

Qatar has also become active in international diplomacy: it has brokered a deal between feuding Lebanese political groups; negotiated with rebel forces in Morocco, Yemen, and the Philippines; and opened an Israeli trade mission in Doha. Much of the international and diplomatic success of Qatar has been due to the second most influential government leader in Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Qasim bin Jabir al-Thani, who has been foreign minister since 1992 and prime minister since 2007.

Finally, the government has made efforts to enrich Qataris' cultural experiences. It has constructed several museums that focus on the history, art, and culture of Qatar and Islam and has established high-quality educational and research institutions.

CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS

Traditional Values

Qataris are proud of their culture, traditions, and beliefs, which promote what they see as the traditional Arab and Islamic values of hospitality, generosity, loyalty, connection to family, and respect for elders. These values have survived, even in the face of rapid modernization, widespread globalization, and Qatari citizens' status as a minority population within their own country. Although values and beliefs vary between individuals, Qataris generally place an emphasis on hierarchies that privilege the old over the young and men over women.

Most Qataris highly value their honor and reputations, which are maintained by upholding social norms, particularly those surrounding interactions between men and women. Men are expected to treat women with respect; women are expected to be modest and chaste.

Many Qataris lament what they see as the culture's growing focus on material possessions and the increasing popularity of malls, jet-skis, cafes, cars, and television. Some young Qataris express a growing sense of boredom and aimlessness despite (or, perhaps, because of) their wealth, which can remove some of life's daily challenges. Intergenerational conflict between Qatari children, parents, and grandparents is becomming increasingly common.

> *Life back then was more difficult than it was [sic] today. People now don't have to work as hard as our parents and grandparents did. However, back then people were like a loving and caring family. Life was simple and peaceful, and its simplicity was what gave it a special flavor.*
>
> ***– Qatari Grandfather***

Upon gaining its independence in 1971, the state found that Qatar's small, diverse, and unstable population had few myths, symbols, and traditions that could unite the population and give its citizens a sense of national identity. Today, Qataris use certain symbols, directly promoted by the state, to express their ties to Qatar's traditions and culture. Drawing upon the country's history as a seafaring and desert-dwelling society, the key symbols include: the pearl, boating, falconry, the oryx (a desert antelope), camel racing, horse racing, palm trees, and Gulf national dress.

These symbols are seen in popular television shows that depict a romanticized version of traditional Qatari life, such as camel and horse races, sponsored by wealthy Qataris; the *dhows* (boats) sailing out of Doha's harbor; weekend camping trips to the desert; and "Bedouin" events in the desert, staged by non-citizen workers. Qataris too young to remember the poverty of pre-oil Qatar are likely to sentimentalize lives of their ancestors.

A Dhow in the Doha Harbor

Qataris also tend to quickly adopt new national symbols as the nation's archetecture evolves. The Corniche (a waterfront promenade in Doha), Doha's downtown skyline, and Qatar's growing number of museums are recent symbols of Qatar's rich economic, social, and educational development. One key symbol is the Qatar National Museum, which is housed in a former royal palace and contains items donated by Qataris. Those old enough to remember the nation's history serve as museum staff. Many Qataris are also particularly proud of Education City, a unique campus that includes local branches of Texas A&M University, Cornell University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Carnegie Mellon University, Georgetown University, and the Rand Qatar Policy Institute.

Affiliations and Identity

Qatari Citizens

Qatar has long had a diverse population due to its history as a trading center, a refuge for nomadic tribes, and a hub for slaves sent to work in the pearling industry. Citizens, defined by the 1961 citizenship law as those who can trace their family's presence in

Doha's Corniche at Night

Qatar back to the 1930s, comprise approximately 20 percent of the current population. Although differences are not often acknowledged in official rhetoric, citizens come from many backgrounds.

Qatari Citizens

Bedouin (Bedu)

Although Qatari Bedouin are estimated to comprise less than 10 percent of the population, they have taken on an iconic status in Qatari culture and history. A large portion of the peninsula's Arab population has descended from tribes that migrated in the 18th century from what is currently known as the Najd, the central region of the Arabian Peninsula, and from al-Hasa, an oasis region in the eastern Arabian Peninsula. Today, Qatari descendants of these nomadic Bedouin tribes, known collectively as the *Bedu*, maintain family ties, homes, and even passports in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Many *Bedu* view themselves as noble, hospitable, honorable, and "pure" Arabs. They look down on the traditionally settled population (the *hadar*), believing it to be corrupted by urban and Persian influences. Intermarriage between these groups is rare.

At the beginning of the 20th century, most *bedu* immigrated from the interior of the Arabian Peninsula. Some Qatari Bedouin traveled between Qatar and Bahrain by boat. With the first wave of

economic expansion in the mid- and late 20th century, many *bedu* men took up work in either the oil industry or the police, army, or security services. Today, while still prominent in those fields, the younger generations are well integrated across Qatari society. In the 1960s, the government settled *bedu* families in state housing and forbid practice of the nomadic lifestyle. Many of Qatar's modern *bedu* live in urban areas, but they return to the interior desert for extended vacations. They believe that this allows them to remain faithful to their Bedouin roots.

Hadar

The *hadar* are a diverse group of Qatari citizens that includes those of Baharna, Huwala, Ajam, and African descent. The Baharna Arabs are indigenous to Qatar. Unlike most of their fellow Qatari Arabs, who are Sunnis, they are members of the Shi'a sect of Islam. As a result, they have occasionally faced discrimination from the dominant Sunni population.

Qatar's Huwala Arab population descended from Sunni Arabs that had once migrated from the Gulf to Persia and then, in the 19th and

Bedouin with Camel

20th centuries, came to Qatar. Other Qatari Sunni Arabs have historically seen themselves as more "pure" than the Huwala Arabs, whom they believe were tainted by Persian culture. In the early and mid-20th century, the Huwala Arabs tended to be wealthier and better educated than other Arabs because of their involvement in merchant and pearling activities. This economic advantage faded slightly as the pearling industry declined and education became more broadly available within Qatar.

Clamshell Statue

Another significant group among the Qatari citizenry is composed of ethnic Shi'a Persians; they are known as Ajam. Many of them were active in the boat-building industry. In addition to Arabic, many Ajam continue to speak Farsi. They are sometimes referred to as "Irani-Qataris."

The significant African population descended from slaves brought from east Africa to work in the pearling industry. While this group is sometimes looked down on and considered "less" Qatari by Arabs descended from Gulf Arab populations, most Qataris perceive those with African heritage to be legitimate fellow citizens.

Despite occasional tensions, the Baharna, Huwala, Ajam, and Africans are well integrated into Qatar's society. Intermarriage between different groups is increasing. In addition, these Persian

and African populations influence local dress, food, art, folklore, home construction, and customs.

Globalization and Non-citizens

Qataris embrace the economic and educational benefits that great wealth has brought to their country. Many regularly travel abroad and take advantage of cutting-edge technology, consumer products, and the internet. At the same time, they seek to maintain a sense of Qatari culture and tradition, which they often identify with their interpretation of Islamic and Arab practices. Most Qataris believe that their country has dealt well with the challenges of globalization. Some look at the neighboring Gulf Emirate of Dubai as an example of a Gulf state that has allowed too many foreign practices, such as the widespread availability of alcohol, to change its culture. Others, however, envy the progress that Dubai has made as an international center of finance and tourism and would like to emulate its success.

Although Qatari citizens interact daily with non-citizens in the workplace, most citizens and foreign workers lead parallel but separate lives. Intermarriage is rare, particularly with non-Arabs. Close friendships are often guarded. Many citizens seek to maintain distance from foreign residents to "protect" their culture from outside influences.

An unofficial hierarchy, which ranks Qatari citizens above non-citizens, also greatly determines how an individual non-citizen is treated and what kind of employment he may be offered. Fellow Gulf Arabs are at the top of the hierarchy. Next in rank are Westerners, comprising less than one percent of Qatar's population, who often come to Qatar for employment in the oil industry, engineering, or international business. Following Westerners in the hierarchy are Arabs from outside the Gulf. Next are South Asians,

many of whom work as doctors, lawyers, and engineers. Most Filipinos work in the service and hospitality industries as hostesses, travel agents, waitresses, and nannies; they are considered by many to rank next-to-last. At the bottom are laborers, who mainly come from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Egypt, and Jordan.

> *"I barely deal with locals on an average day, and see more foreign workers and immigrants than I do Qataris. The working class consists of foreigners mainly, and if there are any working locals you barley see them because they occupy only high positions. The Qatari (receptionists)...get paid twice as much, if not more, than the 'foreign' receptionists[;] ...the distinction between locals and non-locals I feel is extreme in this country."*
>
> ***– Qatari woman***

Religious Identity

Religion is a vital aspect of Qatari identity. Some Qataris identify themselves as Muslims before they identify as Qataris or Arabs. Islamic-influenced prayer, rituals, education, and holidays are seen in daily life. Most Qataris, including the ruling al-Thani royal family, practice the Wahhabi form of Sunni Islam, which is also common in neighboring Saudi Arabia. In contrast to Saudi Arabia, cultural and religious practices that differ from Wahhabism are generally more tolerated in Qatar. Qatar, for example formally recognizes other religions, permits females to drive, and allows the sale of alcohol.

Estimates of Qatar's Shi'a Muslim population range from 10 to 20 percent. As a minority community, Shi'a Muslims are subject to some discrimination. For example, the Shi'a are prohibited from practicing their rituals in public, including the self-flagellation ritual during *Ashura*, which commemorates the death of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Imam Hussein, at the Battle of Karbala.

Qatar's large non-citizen population includes Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and a few Jews and Baha'is. The government formally recognizes Catholics, Anglicans, Copts, Orthodox, and Asian Christians. In 2008, the first Christian church was built in the country. Non-citizen members of other religions are permitted to practice and worship in private.

GOVERNMENT

The al-Thani Family

For centuries, Qatar's emirs—all of whom are from the al-Thani family—have embodied the government. While Qatar has developed from a small and impoverished country to occupy a place of prominence in the global economy, the al-Thani family has maintained a constant presence in the government. The al-Thani leadership has survived conflicts with neighboring powers, British interference, and significant social and economic change.

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani

The extended al-Thani family is large; membership estimates range from 5,000 to approximately half the citizen population. Members of the family are dispersed widely throughout the government and military. Succession within the family is a sensitive issue that has contributed to ongoing instability and power struggles. The 2004

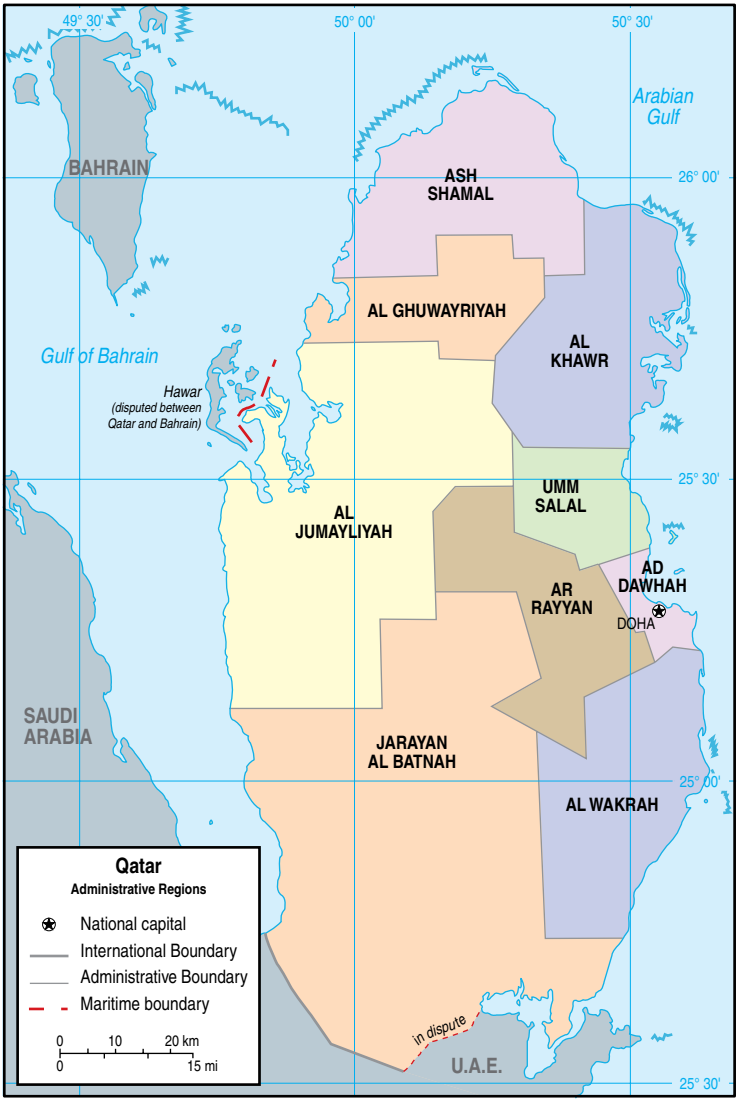
constitution specifies that the ruler must be a male descendant of the current emir.

Government and Society

Centralized bureaucracy and national government are relatively recent developments in Qatar. Although the emir retains significant authority, he is expected to confer with the Qatari people when deciding affairs of state. Traditionally, the emir consulted with members of the royal family, other notables, merchant families, and religious leaders. As the al-Thani family was originally a successful pearl merchant family, the emir continues to maintain particularly close ties with the merchant class. Members of these prominent merchant families occupy key positions in the state bureaucracy. Since the discovery of oil, however, power and wealth has been increasingly concentrated in the hands of the al-Thani family.

The Qatari people have worked to increase their participation and influence in the government. In 1991, fifty-four Qatari notables signed a petition to the emir requesting increased freedom of expression and the creation of a consultative body with the legislative power to draft a permanent constitution. In 1998, the emir issued a decree establishing a 29-member municipal council that would be elected by Qatari citizens older than 25. Elections were held in March 1999. Soon after, the emir appointed a special council to write a new constitution. The draft was approved by popular referendum in 2003 and issued in 2004. Council elections took place again in 2003 and 2007. In all three instances, the elections were free and fair. Campaigns are run on an individual basis because political parties are banned.

Despite the recent reforms, rights to freedom of speech and assembly are limited. Demonstrations and opposition parties, deemed by the government to be unnecessary, are banned. Non-



Administrative Regions

governmental organizations and human rights groups must obtain a license from the government to operate; these licenses are rarely granted. When licenses are given, the groups and their activities are closely watched. In addition, the State Security Agency monitors the Qatari population. Similar to the military and police, this governing body reports directly to the emir and is not supervised by the judiciary.

Although denied by the government, both reform and opposition movements are present in Qatar. Some Qataris quietly and carefully work to increase transparency and representation within the government. Others call themselves "traditionalists" and oppose the reforms that the government has undertaken. Some traditionalists also oppose the presence of the U.S. military in Qatar.

Rule of Law

Qatar's legal system, which is ultimately accountable to the emir, combines *Shari'a* (Islamic law) and Western practices. From 1916 to the British departure in 1971, Muslim Qataris were tried under *Shari'a;* non-Muslim foreigners, under British law. To deal with Qatar's large non-Muslim population, the emir created the *adlia* (civil) court system. Based on Western civil law, the *adlia* court was considered unique in comparison to other Gulf states, largely because the emir did not have direct control. *Shari'a* courts relied on the Islamic-influenced and educated views of the judge rather than the case law used in the *adlia* courts.

The Judicial Authority Law of 2003 abolished the *Shari'a* courts and created a judiciary system. Under the Supreme Judiciary Council and the Ministry of Justice, it is made up of a Preliminary Court, Appellate Court, and Supreme Court. *Shari'a*, however, continues to influence cases involving family issues; it often favors men. The judicial independence of the legal system is hampered

because most judges are foreign nationals from other Arab countries. These judges know that, if their rulings do not conform to government preferences, they may be deported. Also, the foreign nationals who make up most of Qatar's population are denied the same rights and legal protections afforded to citizens.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Family Structure

For most Qataris, family is the center of life and a primary source of identification and social interaction. Their definition of family is expansive and flexible, including the nuclear, extended, and patrilineal family. In general, families are large and close. Most Qataris prefer to live with or near their families and most homes include at least one extended family member. Families that stay together are admired; living alone without family is rare and carries a social stigma. A small (but increasing) number of young Qataris are asserting their independence by living farther away from their parents and, even, choosing their own spouses.

The family structure is hierarchical; elderly relatives and older siblings garner a special amount of deference. Qataris consider the father to be the head of the family. A man is expected to care for his nuclear and extended family's material well-being and reputation. A mother organizes her family's daily activities, cares for her children, and helps choose spouses for her children. A child is expected to obey his parents and maintain his family's good reputation by being hospitable, respectful of elders, helpful to neighbors, and well behaved. Marriage, too, is central: many Qataris do not consider young people to be full adults until they have married and had children.

Most Qataris socialize regularly within the family. Fridays and Saturdays, now official holidays, are considered family days, often spent at the beach or picnicking in the desert. On weekday evenings, men socialize primarily with the male members of their extended families; women socialize with their female friends and relatives. After giving birth, married women frequently visit their birth families and often stay with their parents when their husbands are out of town.

Women in Qatari Society

Qatar Literacy (2005): Male – 84.9%, Female – 82.3%

Due to the largely non-citizen workforce, men outnumber women 2 to 1 in Qatar. Even so, Qatari women play significant roles in the family and broader society. As the center of the family, women have a powerful behind-the-scenes role as wives, mothers, and the selector of their children's spouses. Women are publicly influential, too. Qatar was the first Arab Gulf state to grant women the right to vote.

Qatari women are also allowed to own their own property and businesses and to control their income. Because oil income allows many Qataris to hire household help, women are increasingly free to pursue education, employment, and business ventures. Women make up 73 percent of the students at the University of Qatar and the average woman is more educated and successful in school than the average man. Qatar has passed laws encouraging women to enter the workforce. In 2000, women made up 15 percent of the workforce; they typically only find employment, however, in teaching, nursing, childcare, and the public service sector, where they can work in single-gender environments. The number of women who own their own businesses is rising. From 2003 to 2005, women comprised 17 percent of Qatari entrepreneurs.

Although Qatar has passed many laws to promote gender equality, Qatari women still face restrictions. Article 35 of Qatar's constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex; however, no mechanisms enforce this statute. Workplaces, schools, restaurants, and banks often have separate spaces or times for women to use their services. While foreign women are allowed to drive in Qatar with no restriction, a Qatari woman must have the permission of her male guardian to obtain a driver's license.

Women must be particularly careful not to violate Qatari social norms because transgressions bring dishonor to their families. Improper behavior by a daughter will shame an entire family more than improper behavior by a son.

Qatar has no law against domestic violence because the government views it as a family matter. There are no domestic violence shelters in the country. Studies have found that up to 95 percent of the violence experienced by women is not reported to the police.

Up to 33 percent of Qatari marriages end in divorce. Although women can petition for the right to divorce, courts rarely grant divorces initiated by women. Divorce stigmatizes women and isolates them from valuable family support. Qatar's few poor citizens are often widows or divorced women.

CULTURAL ECONOMY

Natural Resources

In the past 50 years, Qatar's abundant natural resources have transformed the tiny state from a collection of small villages to a sophisticated economic powerhouse. Qatar, now one of the richest countries in the world, has 3.3 to 4.3 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, which is 4 percent of the world's total. Qatar also has the

third largest gas reserve in the world, accounting for between 5 and 15 percent of the world's total. Qatar's combined oil and gas reserves are expected to last for at least another century. Oil and gas account for more than 60 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), 70 percent of government revenue, and 85 percent of export income. These assets position Qatar as a key player in the financial services industry and spur the growth of "downstream industries," such as construction, insurance, personal services, hotels, communication, transportation, and shipping. The wealth profoundly affects Qatari society and culture, facilitating urbanization, industrialization, development, education, and distribution of income and benefits to the citizenry.

Statistics

GDP US$101 billion (2009)

Annual GDP growth 9.2%

Inflation Rate: -3.9%

Exports of goods and services US$37.43 billion

Imports of goods and services US$20.87 billion

In 1997, the government implemented a plan to increase the number of citizens in the workforce to 20 percent of the population. Currently, citizens comprise only 12 percent of the workforce. Consequently, Qatar depends on many foreign workers to sustain economic development and to maintain oil and gas production. More than 90 percent of working males and 76 percent of working females are non-citizens. Concerned that the large

> *In the beginning, we were completely and totally dependent on foreign consultants. We had no databases, no technicians.... So, we just turned everything over to them.... [Eventually,] with more Qataris returning from being educated abroad, these educated Qataris began to take positions....*
>
> ***– Qatari citizen working in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs***

Vendor at a Fruit Market

population of non-citizen and non-Arab workers threatens or dilutes Qatar's cultural identity, the government decided to increase the number of Arab workers in the foreign labor force in the 1960s and 1970s. Qatar signed agreements with Arab countries, such as Egypt and Tunisia, to annually provide foreign workers, including skilled workers, such as doctors and engineers. Many Asian workers, however, are in the private sector because they demand much lower wages than their Arab counterparts. In 1995, approximately 75 percent of the foreign workforce was of Asian descent.

Oil's Effect on Employment

Qatar's oil wealth has significantly affected the economic activities of its population. Only 25 percent of Qatari citizens are classified as economically active; in most industrialized countries, the figure is half the population. Income from Qatar's natural resourc-

es supports a sophisticated and robust welfare system that subsidizes the lifestyles of Qatari citizens. This system includes free or subsidized education, health care, services, water, and electricity.

Most working citizens are employed by the government in the public sector. Qataris view public sector jobs as more respectable than most private sector jobs, particularly those that require manual labor.

Most foreign workers are employed in the low-skill and service sectors: 30 percent work in the construction industry, 14 percent work in trade, and 14 percent work as servants. Employers view foreign workers as harder working than citizens. Because many foreign workers lack legal protections and are isolated by differences in language and culture, they are vulnerable to exploitation by their employers. Female domestic workers and children are particularly susceptible. Despite regulations to the contrary, employers frequently confiscate employees' passports upon entry into the country and control access to exit visas.

Urban

Over the past 50 years, Qatar has become an urban nation: nearly all Qataris live in urban areas. Eighty percent of the population lives in the capital city of Doha and its suburb, al-Rayyan. Other primary cities include Dukhan, in the southwest; Ras Laffan and al-Khor, in the north; and al-Wakrah, which is south of Doha. The urban areas are highly developed with wide roads, tall skyscrapers, and large shopping malls. Though most Qataris have lived in settled coastal vil-

Signs of Urbanization

91% Urban, 9% Rural (2005)

Mobile cellular subscriptions 1.683 million (2008 estimates)

Internet users 432,000

West Bay

lages for generations, many maintain a sense of nostalgia for what they see as their nomadic Bedouin past. Symbols of this past, such as falconry, camel racing, and camping, are popular weekend activities for many urban dwellers.

Education

The first private schools opened in 1952; the state launched its own educational system in 1956. In 1958, soon after oil production began, only 630 Qataris were literate. The government has devoted considerable attention and resources to the development of public and private education and Qatar has significant accomplishments to show for this effort. During the 1960s, the number of teachers in Qatar doubled. The state began to subsidize education for all citizens because educated workers were needed in the new economy. By 2004, 98.2 percent of Qataris between the ages of 15 and 19 could read.

Many Qataris shun practical vocational training or advanced degrees in science and engineering in favor of the humanities. In 2002, only 3 percent of Qatari college students graduated with a science or engineering degree. There is, therefore, a gap between the type of worker needed in Qatar and the education that most Qataris receive. The government has responded by launching training programs in English and offering classes in computer skills; it has also ended the automatic employment of all university graduates in the public sector. The government is also starting to reach out to its young boys, who drop out of school at three times the rate of girls. Only 27 percent of men between the ages of 19 and 26 attend school; 43 percent of women are enrolled. From 2005 to 2006, fewer than 17 percent of Qatar University's student body was male.

Media

Although the government supports Al-Jazeera's involvement on an international level, it limits press and media freedom inside Qatar. Some allege that Al-Jazeera purposely avoids reporting on Qatar. Formal censorship laws were lifted in 1995; however, the Qatar media, including Al-Jazeera, typically practice self-censorship and refrain from criticizing the emir, the government, and most citizens.

Newspapers and journalists who have violated these unspoken rules have reported being pressured and shut down by the government. In addition, most of Qatar's media outlets are owned by the government and typically present government-supported positions.

Qatar is known internationally as the home of Al-Jazeera, the groundbreaking Arab satellite news channel. Al-Jazeera first went on air in 1996. The station was an idea born from a partnership between a Saudi station and the British Broadcasting Service, which launched an Arabic service. That service, how-

ever, collapsed. Emir Hamad offered the network a subsidy and base of operations in his country. The emir hoped that the network would raise Qatar's international profile and give the country a reputation of having a cutting-edge, open, and sophisticated society. Al-Jazeera's reputation for spirited debate and willingness to criticize Arab governments soon made it the most widely viewed news network within the Arab community. The emir has been pleased that Al-Jazeera has given Qatar a more visible presence throughout the world. As a result, he has continued to fund the station and largely refrains from direct interference with its content.

> *"This is al-Jazeera television from Qatar"*
>
> ***– The opening of each al-Jazeera newscast***

CUSTOMS

Language

Arabic is the official and most widely spoken language. Modern Standard Arabic is taught in government schools. Since there is a significant population of Arabic speakers from numerous Arab nations, however, a mix of Arabic dialects is spoken throughout the country. In addition, Qatari Arabic is highly influenced by the diverse non-citizen population, including speakers of Farsi, Urdu, and Tagalog. Qataris frequently speak English in business settings, shops, and streets.

Dwellings

Since most daily social interactions are centered on family, the home is the main physical space for most Qataris. In 1964, the government began subsidizing the purchase of homes for citizens.

> *"Neighbors are more important than the house."*
>
> ***– Qatari proverb***

The government grants land to all those deemed the head of a household (primarily young, newly married men) and offers a zero-interest loan to build homes. Some Qataris fear that this policy will shift the focus from the extended family to the nuclear family, as the scarcity of land often forces young couples to build homes far from their parents.

Many Qataris, young and old, express a desire to live with or near their extended families. They idealize this lifestyle as part of their traditional culture. Young couples often live with the groom's parents for the first years of marriage, while their homes are being built. Some couples forgo government subsidies to build their homes near their family or on family compounds. Others have even built their own apartments inside parents' houses.

At the beginning of the 20th century, most homes were built around courtyards with thick rock walls to control the heat. While architecture continues to emphasize a light and airy feel to give shelter from the heat, large two-story villas with service annexes for the house staff and high walls for privacy are favored by most modern Qataris. Increasing numbers of families live in gated and secured compounds for privacy and security. Inside, homes typically include a majlis, a public sitting room for the men of the family and their guests. Citizens often prefer to live separate from non-citizens. Non-citizens are concentrated in the more densely urbanized areas in the center of old Doha or in dorms and camps near their places of employment.

Food

Qatar's cuisine reflects centuries of diverse influences on the peninsula. Persian, Egyptian, Lebanese, Indian, and Bedouin cuisines

are some of the strongest influences. Western fast-food restaurants, such as McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken, are also common. One restaurant in Doha even serves curried spaghetti Bolognese. Chicken, lamb, fish, saffron rice, bread, chickpeas, fruit, and pickled vegetables are the mainstays of most meals. Bread pudding (Umm Ali) is a popular dessert. Lunch is the main meal of the day; it is served on large shared plates, either on the floor or a table, and often eaten without using cutlery. Coffee with cardamom, tea, and dates are typically served to guests as a sign of hospitality.

Clothing

Men

Qatari men see their national clothing, which is similar to that worn by citizens across the Arab Gulf, as a reflection of their heri-

Man Wearing a Thaub and Aqal

tage and a way to distinguish themselves from non-citizens. Most Qatari men wear a long, loose, white robe (thaub or dishdasha). Underneath the robe, they typically wear a long, white shirt and pants. On their heads, men wear a piece of white or, sometimes, red and white checkered cloth held in place by a black cord (aqal).

Women

Qatari women see clothing as a way to display their modesty and individuality. Most Qatari women wear a long, black cloak (*abayah*), under which they wear often Western-style clothing, including pants, jeans, or skirts. Most Qatari women cover their heads with a black cloth (*shayla*). A few women cover their faces with a black cloth (*niqab*). Some older women continue to wear the *batulah,* a shiny, dark, indigo face mask that is sometimes identified with traditional Bedouin culture.

Qatari Woman Wearing a Niqab

Non-citizens

Non-citizens, who make up approximately 80 percent of the population, typically dress as they would in their home countries. A mixture of Western, Arab, Pakistani, Indian, and Filipino dress can be seen on most streets. Lower-level workers, generally from South Asia, often wear work uniforms, jumpsuits, and helmets.

Ceremonies

Qataris view ceremonies (in particular, wedding ceremonies) as an opportunity to express their cultural heritage. Wedding ceremonies take place in hotels, private homes, or outdoors in large tents; guests are separated according to gender. The ceremonies typically last several days and include banquets, large quantities of gifts, processions, and dancing. During some traditional dances, men stand in a line and dance with swords. Other dances are influenced by east African traditions. During many key ceremonies, folk songs that date from the time of pearling are played on pipes, tambourines, drums, strings, and flutes.

Non-citizens Wearing Clothing from their Home Country

Holidays

Public holidays include Independence Day (3 September) and the Muslim holidays of Ramadan, *Eid al-Adha*, and *Eid al fitr.* Independence Day is celebrated over 2 days with public banners, military shows, and folk dancing. *Eid al-Adha* commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. The holiday is celebrated by offering a sacrificial sheep; its meat is distributed to the community and the poor.

Eid al fitr marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan, the month of fasting. Halfway through Ramadan, Qataris celebrate Garangao, when children go door-to-door singing and collecting candy and nuts. Families also buy new clothes and celebrate with large meals. Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and other foreigners celebrate their respective religious holidays privately. In recent years, Christmas music and symbols, such as decorated trees, have become prevalent in the large shopping malls used extensively by foreigners.

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