

# THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM

## THREE

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only several thousand, and there were only a few permanent structures, one of which was the ruler's fortress-like palace. The 2005 census put the population of Abu Dhabi emirate at 1,300,000, but by 2013 the population of Abu Dhabi city alone was estimated at 2,000,000.

Abu Dhabi is by far the largest of the seven UAE emirates, comprising more than 85 percent of the total land area of the UAE; it shares land boundaries with Oman to the east, Saudi Arabia to the south and west, and fellow UAE member Dubai (Dubayy) to the north. Three of the eight villages in al-Buraymī oasis, 150 kilometres east of Abu Dhabi city, belong to Abu Dhabi and five to the Sultanate of Oman. The Abu Dhabi portion of the oasis is known as al-ʿAyn; it has grown into a large city with an international airport and is the home of the University of the United Arab Emirates. Al-Zafra, the western portion of the emirate, has few inhabitants, mostly involved in oil production or living in the small villages of al-Jiwāʾ (al-Liwāʾ) oasis. Most of the emirate consists of sand dunes and gravel plains, although there are hills in the extreme east. The southern edge lies in the immense sand desert of al-Rubʿ al-Khalī (the Empty Quarter).

The indigenous population is largely tribal in origin. In the past, most inhabitants were nomadic, but there were also agriculturalists in the oases, and fishing and pearling were important on the coast. Many tribes included both nomadic and settled divisions, and even the nomadic Bedouin spent part of the year tending palm orchards or pearling. The largest tribe is the Banī Yās, originally concentrated in al-Zafra but expanding over the last two centuries across the entire emirate. The ruling families of both Abu Dhabi and Dubai belong to this tribe. The Banī

## Abu Dhabi

**Abu Dhabi** (Abū Z̧abī) is a city (24°29' N, 54°22' E) and a constituent emirate of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on the southern littoral of the Persian/Arabian Gulf. Until the late 1960s, the population of Abu Dhabi town was

Yās is a confederal tribe, with important subsections including the Āl Bū Falāḥ, Āl Bū Falāsa, al-Rumaythāt, al-Qubaysāt, al-Mazāri<sup>ʿ</sup>, and al-Hawāmil. The tribe has grown to include al-Sūdān, from which several government officials have been drawn in recent years. Other important tribes include al-Manāṣīr, largely nomadic in the past, and al-Zawāhir, found principally in the villages of al-Buraymī.

Abu Dhabi citizens form only an estimated 10 to 20 percent of the total population. The great majority are expatriate inhabitants drawn from a multitude of countries, particularly India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Egypt and other northern Arab states; there are also sizeable communities of Americans and Europeans.

Abu Dhabi town is said to have been founded about 1174–5/1761 by the Banī Yās, when a small source of potable water was discovered in the vicinity. No evidence points to any earlier settlement on the site, which lay on the seaward side of a triangular island separated from the mainland by a narrow strait (al-Maqṭa<sup>ʿ</sup>). The island was relatively secure from attacks by land and had a partially protected harbour for small craft. The *shaykhs* (chiefs) of the Banī Yās continued to reside in the interior until the accession of Shakhbūt b. Dhiyāb of Āl Bū Falāḥ, the ruling clan, about 1209–10/1795. The Wahhābīs of Najd first appeared along the coast about 1800, but they developed close ties with the Qawāsīm rulers to the northeast and the people of al-Buraymī oasis rather than with Abu Dhabi. In 1833, the Āl Bū Falāsa, a rival faction of the Banī Yās, left for Dubai, 150 kilometres northwest along the Gulf coast, and seceded from Abu Dhabi. There has been a long history of animosity between the two emirates.

Shakhbūt b. Dhiyāb signed the General Treaty of Peace sponsored by the British in 1820 following the British expedition against al-Qawāsīm in Ra's al-Khayma. In 1835, Abu Dhabi adhered to the first Maritime Truce. This gave the name Trucial Coast (or Trucial Oman) to what had been known as the Oman Coast (or, pejoratively, the Pirate Coast) and presently constitutes the UAE. An exclusive agreement in 1892 gave Britain special rights in Abu Dhabi, which was, like the other Trucial States, considered to be independent although under British protection. Britain was responsible for defence and foreign affairs.

Zāyid b. Khalīfa (d. 1909), during his reign of fifty-three years (1855–1909), made Abu Dhabi the leading power on the Trucial Coast, but, during the successive reigns of his four sons, Abu Dhabi was surpassed in importance by al-Shāriqa (Sharjah) and Dubai, which developed more rapidly their relations with the modern world. Shakhbūt b. Sulṭān (d. 1989), a grandson of Zāyid, succeeded an assassinated brother as ruler in 1928 and administered the shaykhdom competently until oil revenues began in the 1960s. His refusal to spend money on development led to widespread dissatisfaction and caused his brother, Zāyid b. Sulṭān (d. 2004), to overthrow him in 1966, with British assistance. Shakhbūt went into exile but, after some years, was permitted to return to Abu Dhabi, where he died.

Zāyid quickly put oil income to work and began to develop Abu Dhabi into a modern state. A strong backer of unity among the Trucial States, Zāyid was chosen by the other six rulers as the first president of the United Arab Emirates when it was formed in 1971. He was reappointed to the position at five-year intervals and

continued to push for stronger integration and Abu Dhabi influence in the union. Upon his death, he was succeeded by his son Khalīfa b. Zāyid as *amīr* of Abu Dhabi and UAE president. Khalīfa appointed his half-brother, Muḥammad b. Zāyid, as heir apparent in the same year. Muḥammad also became chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, which functions much like a local government for the emirate. The ruling family is the Āl Nahyān.

Oil wealth transformed what had been a small fishing and pearling settlement with a tribal hinterland into a modern metropolis and fuelled the rapid development of both the emirate and the UAE. Petroleum Concessions Ltd., a subsidiary of the Iraq Petroleum Company, acquired a seventy-five-year concession for Abu Dhabi in 1939, and the company, under the name Petroleum Development (Trucial Coast), began drilling in 1949 and eventually discovered exploitable oil reserves in 1960. The company was renamed Abu Dhabi Petroleum Company (later Abu Dhabi Company for Onshore Oil Operations), and exports began in 1963. Another concession agreement was signed with D'Arcy Exploration Company in 1953 to create Abu Dhabi Marine Areas (ADMA), which began crude-oil exports in 1962. The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) was established in 1971, and a few years later it was given responsibility for the emirate's controlling interest in all producing companies. In 2012, the UAE produced more than 3.3 million barrels a day of crude oil, the seventh highest total in the world; of that, 2.8 million barrels a day came from Abu Dhabi. The UAE is a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC).

The British withdrawal from the Gulf, announced in 1968 and executed in 1971, ended the protected status of Abu Dhabi and the other Trucial States. They were encouraged to merge into the UAE in late 1971. Abu Dhabi's large oil income allowed it to dominate the UAE government and the other emirates by providing the funding for and authority over federal services and activities. For many years, Dubai resisted surrendering control over its finance, armed forces, and local services to the federal government, which would have placed it under Abu Dhabi's influence, but it gradually has accepted federal authority.

Since 1971, Abu Dhabi has improved relations with its neighbours outside the UAE. Several times in the nineteenth century, the Al Su'ūd of Najd swept through Abu Dhabi. Relations were disturbed again in 1952 when a Sa'ūdī military unit occupied one of the villages of al-Buraymī oasis, presumably to expand Sa'ūdī claims to territory in Abu Dhabi and Oman because of the possibility of oil. The party was expelled from the oasis in 1955 by the British-officered Trucial Oman Levies (later the Trucial Oman Scouts). Although the boundary treaty signed with Saudi Arabia in 1974 was never made public, Abu Dhabi apparently agreed to cede the area of Khawr al-'Udayd to Saudi Arabia, thus creating a Sa'ūdī territorial wedge between Abu Dhabi and Qatar. Abu Dhabi subsequently has contested this arrangement.

Relations with the Sultanate of Oman remained frequently tense well into the post-1971 era, although they seemed to improve with the signing of a comprehensive border treaty in 1999. Both Oman and Saudi Arabia joined the UAE, along with Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait, in the

Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981. Ties to Britain remained close after independence, and relations with the United States grew steadily closer, particularly as the UAE and Abu Dhabi offered military facilities to the United States and provided military assistance during the 1991 Kuwait War. Relations with Iran remain troubled, particularly because of the Iranian occupation of three islands claimed by other members of the UAE; Abu Dhabi has insisted on the return of the islands, while Dubai has been more accommodating towards Iran.

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