

Traditional Architecture of the Arabian Gulf

*Building
on
Desert Tides*

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Foreword



“A nation that ignores its traditions and its past has no future.” This statement by the founding president of the United Arab Emirates, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayan, expresses our strong commitment in the Arabian Gulf to study our history, to preserve our heritage, and to be proud of our traditions.

For centuries, we who live in the Gulf region have drawn strength and inspiration from the fact that our region has always been a bridge between East and West, where people have lived in peace and harmony with the environment – sailing on voyages of trade and exploration and making great contributions to human civilizations.

Traditional Architecture in the Gulf represents an important link in the study of the history and traditions of the region. It also brings to us a special understanding of our national identity, giving us an appreciation of our place in history and endowing us with special pride in our national heritage.

Academic interest in traditional architecture in the Gulf, however, is relatively recent. It was only when the Gulf States began to build their cities after the discovery of oil that the study of traditional architecture and heritage became relevant and necessary. I am very pleased to present this pioneering book, which describes an important period in architectural development in the Gulf, namely the period after the expulsion of the

Portuguese in the early 1600's. The author, Dr. Ronald Hawker, has succeeded in linking the different forms of traditional architecture with the new and modern architecture going up in the cities of the Gulf, with particular focus on Dubai. This linkage is important as it helps the reader to appreciate the cultural and historical thread connecting our past and our present.

I am very pleased to note in this book a clear appreciation and admiration of Gulf traditional architecture – an appreciation and admiration that all of us who live and work here share. Readers will enjoy the opportunity to learn about this fascinating topic. I am also very pleased that Dr. Hawker has undertaken the writing of this book while on the faculty of Zayed University – some illustrations in the book were completed by students in his classes. His work reveals how our universities are very active in the study of our traditions and heritage and are committed to expanding the base for research and education that is relevant to the United Arab Emirates and the Arabian Gulf.

I thank the author for this most interesting volume that brings about a proper understanding of the architectural heritage of the Arabian Gulf. The book is an excellent addition to the literature about the region. It is my sincere hope that it will help to stimulate interest in the subject and to promote sustained and continued efforts to explore our past and preserve our heritage and traditions.

Nahayan Mabarak Al-Nahayan

Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research
and President of Zayed University
United Arab Emirates

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