

V. G. JONES, C.ENG, M.I.E.E

BROADCASTING AND TELEVISION— STATE OF QATAR

INTRODUCTION

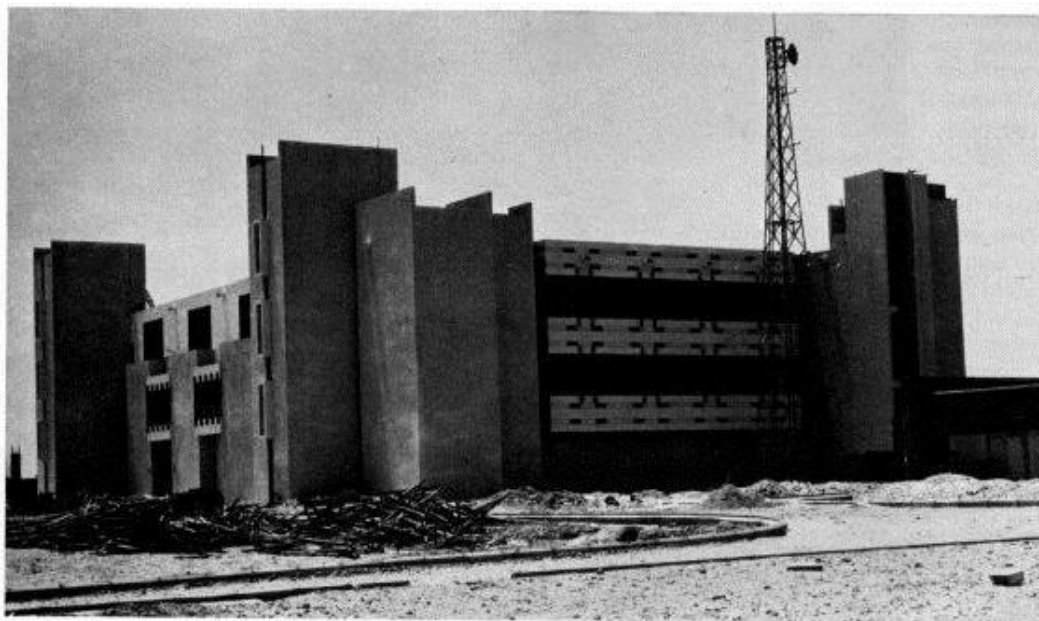
The State of Qatar is a fully independent and sovereign Arab state on the western shore of the Arabian Gulf, with Doha its administrative and commercial capital.

Recent excavations have yielded evidence of prehistoric habitation and, in olden days, Qatar was an important station on the main trade route between East and West. Foreign influence reached Qatar only in the 16th century when the Portuguese founded small colonies, but since the mid-18th century close ties have existed with Britain.

Although the pearling trade still exists in Qatar it has dwindled to become practically a relic of history when compared to the fleet of some 400 ships previously engaged in this industry.

The ruling Al Thani family belongs to the famous Beni Temim tribe and migrated into Qatar in the 18th century from the Yibrin Oasis in Saudi Arabia.

Oil exploration began in Qatar in 1937 and, since the 1960's, the area has been developed to such an extent that Qatar has now become one of the main oil-producing centres of the Middle East. The resultant revenue from oil recovery has been wisely used under the direction of the Emir of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al-Thani, who assumed his constitutional responsibilities as Emir in February, 1972, having previously been Deputy Ruler and Prime Minister. Under his guidance Qatar has grown with astonishing speed. Among the many modern developments have been road construction, housing, hospitals, schools, harbours, airport, recreation facilities, local industries, farming, coupled of course with vast extensions to power supplies, water supplies, communications, broadcasting and television. A National Museum is also under construction.



The new television building in Doha.

BROADCASTING

In 1966 the Government of Qatar arranged for a survey to be carried out for the purpose of establishing an initial broadcasting system. The requirements at this stage were coverage of Doha and its surrounding area, together with general coverage of the neighbouring Middle East territories.

In 1968 a 10kW medium-frequency transmitter feeding a 'T' type antenna, plus a 100kW high-frequency transmitter feeding a quadrant antenna system were installed, together with sound studios, control rooms, link equipment etc. The studio centre is situated on the outskirts of Doha with the transmitter station approximately two miles away on a coastal site.

The sound broadcasting service was augmented in 1969 by the installation of a 50kW medium-frequency transmitter feeding a quarter-wave tower radiator, to extend coverage to the whole of Qatar and also to neighbouring countries in the Arabian Gulf.

The sound broadcasting service will shortly be vastly implemented by the installation of two high-power transmitters. One, a 750kW medium-frequency unit, feeding a six-mast directional system, is to be installed at Al Arish on the northern coast, to give improved daytime coverage generally, coupled with after-dusk services to most Middle East countries. This station will be complete with its own power station comprising two 2.5MW and two 500kW diesel alternators, and the site has been selected to make maximum use of sea-path conductivity to those areas to be served.



His Highness the Emir, Sheikh Khalifa.

The second high-power station will comprise a 250kW high-frequency transmitter feeding dipole arrays, to give coverage to the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. The equipment will be installed at the existing transmitter site near Doha and comprehensive automatic switching will enable the existing 100kW high-frequency transmitter to be fed into any of the new dipole arrays, in addition to the existing antenna system.



Qatari t.v. announcer in front of Marconi Mark V television camera.

TELEVISION

With the establishment of broadcasting in Qatar, and in accordance with the wishes of H. H. Sheikh Khalifa, then Deputy Ruler, extensive studies were carried out to assess the question of television coverage of Qatar and the Arabian Gulf generally.

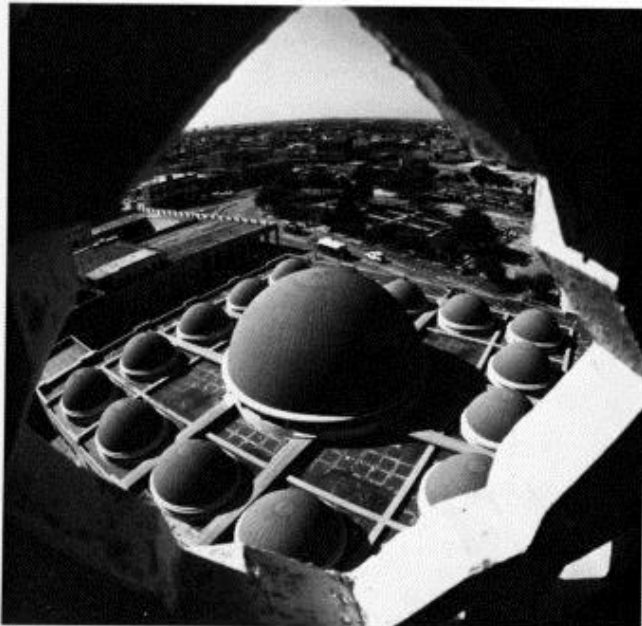
In passing it will, no doubt, be of general interest to mention that, due to the abnormal propagation conditions which are peculiar to the Arabian Gulf, comprising elevated atmospheric inversion layers and ground based ducts, anomalous propagation of signals in the v.h.f bands takes place resulting in coverage over considerable distances with very little attenuation. These abnormal conditions prevail only at certain times of the year.

In November 1969 The Marconi Company were awarded a contract for the supply of a complete 'black-and-white' television project to be implemented in two stages – first a pilot scheme and second a major scheme.

The pilot scheme, comprising a small transmitter and temporary studios, was inaugurated by H. H. Sheikh Khalifa on 15th August 1970.

A television transmitter extension was built at the existing broadcasting transmitter station and now comprises two parallel 5kW Band 111 transmitters, feeding a quadrant antenna system, giving an estimated radiated power of 200kW. The television transmitters are linked to the television studios by microwave links.

During the last two years a Main Television Studio Centre has been built at an adjoining site which, when completed, will be one of the finest and most modern in the Middle East. In addition to two large studios, control rooms, central apparatus rooms, scenery docks, etc it will also house extensive administrative offices, restaurant and lecture room. The new building, together with the existing broadcasting and television studios, will be con-



The Grand Mosque in Doha.

tained in one extensive compound, attractively landscaped, which will also provide very adequate parking facilities.

Initially black-and-white transmissions will originate from this new studio complex early in 1974, followed by colour transmission shortly afterwards.

PROGRAMMING

Since the outset of radio broadcasting in 1968, and television transmissions operative from August 1970, programme hours have increased significantly owing to the public's enthusiastic response, expansion of station personnel and equipment, and the continual co-operation with the Ministry of Information, which is directly responsible for the media.

Radio and television programmes have proved to be an effective entertainment which help in filling leisure hours with useful pastimes, and the services of both these programmes are planned in such a way that they cater for the interests of all.

Sound broadcasting transmissions operate fourteen hours daily in Arabic, with two additional hours for English programmes, and include five separate divisions:

- (a) Information (news bulletins, public affairs, sports)
- (b) Education (for schools, children, young people and adults)
- (c) Light entertainment (music and comedy, drama and serials, games and quizzes)
- (d) Arts, letters and sciences (music, dancing, poetry, story telling, general discussions etc)
- (e) Broadcasts for special audiences (religious, women, children, Bedouin).

Thus all members of the family, each with his or her individual taste, can listen to a programme of their liking.

Television transmissions, running five-and-a-half hours per day, follow similar lines in terms of the variety of entertainment and information provided. They include Arabic feature films and serials imported from Arabic States, America, the United Kingdom, France etc, together with documentary programmes, locally made programmes, interviews and general information for the public.

EQUIPMENT

The transmitter and antenna equipment, for both broadcasting and television, has been supplied by Marconi who have also supplied the majority of the studio equipment, including the Mark V black-and-white cameras, together with Mark VIII colour cameras which will be installed in an Ampex outside broadcast vehicle, scheduled for delivery early in 1974.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author is indebted to the Ministry of Information, State of Qatar, for their help in compiling this article and for providing the photographs.