

Doha: perspectives on the city as a living museum

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Investment in cultural heritage in the Gulf, and particularly Qatar, is visibly increasing with the construction of museums, generous subsidy of archaeological research projects, and ongoing programmes of restoration of buildings considered to have historical significance, mainly forts and elite dwellings. Little attention has been paid to the existing urban fabric of Old Doha, or to the archaeological remains that lie within it. Uniquely among the towns of the Gulf, Doha possesses a significant quantity of traditional buildings surviving from the pre-oil or early oil era, and a complete archaeological sequence survives in the centre of the town. This archaeological site encompassing a significant proportion of the footprint of the original settlement, and its sequence potentially gives the full story of Doha's development from its foundation through to the coming of oil revenues. This presentation will outline the work of UCL Qatar's Origins of Doha project in investigating the urban heritage of Doha, through archaeological excavation and the recording of surviving traditional architecture, and will suggest some ways in which it could be developed as a cultural heritage resource.