

The modern state of Abu Dhabi traces its origins to the rise of an important tribal confederation, the Bani Yas, in the 18th century. The Bani Yas probably did not have a common ancestry, instead representing an ancient coalition of smaller tribes, across the peninsula brought together by geography, circumstance and mutual interest; today there are nearly 30 identifiable component family groups within the Bani Yas, one of which – the Al Nahyan family – came to dominate the group when Nahyan al Falah became sheikh in the mid 18th century. The current rulership of Abu Dhabi continues in the Al Nahyan line, but other sections of the Bani Yas (some of which today consider themselves tribes in their own right) are well represented in government and business, notably the Al Suwaidi, along with other tribes outside the Bani Yas but traditionally allied with the grouping – particularly the Manasir and the Dhawahir.