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The culture of Omanis and their communication throughout history

Author: Humaid bin Saif al Nofali
The Oman National Commission for Education,
Culture and Science

Revision:
Dr. Said bin Mohammed al Hashmi
Sultan Qaboos University

Translated by:
Mostafa Kamel Abdul Hady

Book No. 13
Muscat - 2010

A special publication on the occasion of the International
Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, 2010

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Omanis are known for their rich history, culture, communication with the world and tolerance. They always interact with the history movement and ride the bridges of communication among cultures to remain always a dignified nation. From its strategic location, Oman has its great contribution to the world culture. Oman is regarded as the heart of the world. Oman has always been the land of diversity that captures the world with the magic of its land.

Introduction

The many researches done by anthropologists in Oman and eastern parts of the Arabian Peninsula – besides the archeological researches in Egypt and Syria which focused on monuments – point out the old man in this land enjoyed a deep-rooted culture. This is very clear from its style of living, construction and the utilization of the available human resources. This is always translated as 'lifestyle'. There is another trend which is not less important than this one. The Omani old man has succeeded in acclimating with the socioeconomic conditions around him. While he was affected by such conditions, he has also his contribution to them. The Omani man benefited from the human and cultural experiences he was exposed to. Throughout history, the Omani culture has two aspects. First, the cultural aspects through which we get to know about the strong mentality of the Omani man. Second, the environmental aspect which reflected the interaction of the Omani man with all the elements around him.

This interaction, which covered all aspects of life, is an impressive achievement made by the Omani man at that time. We are also amazed by the way the Omani man interacted with distant cultures despite the vast distances that separate between him and those cultures. The Omani man has also affected the other cultures and was also affected by them. This proves the brilliance of the Omani human settlements throughout the different ages. This community culture has its impact on the individual attitudes and behaviors in general.

The prestigious culture of the Omanis, throughout the different ages, points out that Omanis has been forward-looking people wherever they were. This prestigious culture has its reflection on the various aspects of their life namely

- ❖ Tools and equipment

- ❖ Architectural designs
- ❖ Tombs
- ❖ Burying the dead and other rituals
- ❖ Relation with the environment
- ❖ Animal raising especially the Arabian camels.
- ❖ Land reclamation.
- ❖ Irrigation culture
- ❖ The masterpieces by Omanis.
- ❖ Communication with the others.

A country that reached such a distance in setting up bridges of communication with the world around him since early history is surely a coherent country both on the domestic and regional levels; thanks to the long experience it gained from peaceful coexistence with others and the shared interests they have. This noble country is Oman of today; the sound of wisdom and logic.

Throughout the different ages till date, Omanis are by nature tolerant and peace loving people. They take inspiration for their rich history and prepare with such tolerance and love to a brighter future. Ralph Linton, the renowned thinker once said 'without the culture reminiscent of the past and the fuel for future, there would have been no difference between man and other creatures.

It is a good coincidence that these innate characteristics of Omanis are part and parcel of the leadership style of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said who is a renowned international figure for his good contribution and service to peace and justice.

This book aims at tracing the cultural contributions of Omanis throughout ages and their interaction with the world around them. It also aims at

assessing the interaction and communication between Oman and the other culture and the impact of the same on the current generation.

Preamble

1- Culture

Culture is the fuel that ensures the sustainability of any given society. It is the most important element if you want to understand any society. If we are to understand the culture of a certain society, we need to understand its way of living, the monuments that defied the historic, geographical and biological effects.

The world defines culture as a basic element for the sustainable development process. The growth of all aspects of life is an indicator that this society has a healthy approach towards all components of culture. If there is a misbalance between such components or inertia in dealing with, then the society will suffer from certain kind of deficiency.

If we defined culture as the integrated model for knowledge, beliefs and human behavior then the traits of any given society become evident from the style of living it leads. Since the early beginning of man, the current thought, habits and costumes of any given society are always inspired from its past heritage. These traditions and habits are transmitted from one generation to the other. Some may prefer to describe culture as the mirror through which you can assess the progress made by any given country. This means that culture and life are inseparable components.

There is a common agreement that the components of any given society unite together to form what is called culture. The basic components of culture include lifestyles, religious beliefs, art, science as well as social, scientific and political effects.

Language plays a pivotal role in transferring the elements of culture in two different ways; horizontal which is among peoples and cultures in the same age and vertical, which transmits from one generation to the other. Language is then the main factor that plays a double important role. The surrounding environment also plays a very important role in shaping the culture of any given society. The time factor and its dictates have a similar effect on the cultural components.

There is another bright aspect of culture, usually termed as 'physical culture'. This physical culture is reflected in the masterpieces of art, craft works, occupations, weapons, textile and professions.

We can not ignore also the importance of the mutual relations among cultures and nations especially the development of any nation is measure by such relation. This contributes a great deal to rapprochement among culture. The world today realized the importance of activating and ensuring rapprochement among cultures and nations especially we are living in an age where interest have become sophisticated.

UNESCO's dedication of 2010 as the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures reflects the need of the world to rapprochement and understanding. This book will give an insight on the Omani man's deep rooted culture and his communication with other cultures regardless of the long distance and the difference in culture.

The complexity of the cultural organization and its difference from a society to the other help in assessing these societies. It also helps in differentiating between civilized and non-civilized societies. Man has no option but to cope with the outcome of modern science and knowledge. If man failed to keep pace with such developments, he will be far away from being modernized. Theoretically speaking, this applies to all nations and cultures throughout the

long history of man. The culture of nations and peoples are therefore their accumulated cultural achievements.

When we apply this to the Omani culture, we will find many evidences that support such argument. The discoveries mirrored the bright cultural face of Oman since the dawn of history either in terms of tangible or intangible cultures or in terms of affecting and being affected by other cultures. For example, some mini statues, glasses, plates and weapons that were unearthed in Iraq, were made of copper produced in Oman. Moreover, a head of an ox made of copper that traces back to the 2500 BC was found in Bahrain. A good evidence for the presence of Omani products worldwide is Jodia's, King of Lagash, statue in Louvre Museum in Paris. There is a phrase inscribed on the clothes saying ' These black stones were brought from the Land of Majan' (the old name of Oman). This statue was made in the period from 2144-2124 BC¹.

Historic overview

The history of Oman is an integral part of the world history. The archeological studies conducted in Oman and the Arabian Peninsula during the 70s and 80s urged many archeologists to rethink of the maxims they had about the history of the Middle East region. It became very evident to them that the culture of Oman and the Arabian Peninsula is an integral part of the old world culture in the region extending from the Mediterranean to the Indus Wadi, in the Sub Indian Continent and beyond².

Throughout history, Oman has interacted with the world and communicated with different culture. Oman was known to the world in many names. In the Sumerian manuscripts, it was called Majan or ' the Copper Mountain' or "Copper Land". The Pharoic manuscripts describe it as the Land of Frankincense. In Persian culture, they called it ' Mazoon'.

¹ Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Guide to Sohar Castle Museum , 1996.

² Arab House for Advertisement , Muscat Book , The Tale of A City , 2007.

Many early historians believe that the old inhabitants of Iraq called it " Majan'. This refers to copper they procured from Oman. The archeological studies point out that copper was found in large quantities after discovering old copper mines and smelters.

The name Majan dates back to 3000 BC, during the Sumerian culture in Southern Iraq and Elam culture in Southern Iran. At the same time, it reflects the strong trade exchange between Oman and these two cultures. Some sources³ point out that Sumerians were in bad need for copper therefore they explored and found it in the northern parts of Oman. It is no strange then that copper treasures, which were found in some parts of the Gulf such as Iraq and Bahrain, were sourced from the northern mountains in Oman.

Geologists give a logical explanation to the abundance of copper in Oman. They argue that after separation of land from the sea, copper residues came out from the depth of the ocean and formed copper carbonates and acids near the surface. The rocks and minerals near the ophiolitic rock layers provided a good source of income for Oman. There have been conflicts among rulers to have control over copper and its main components (copper, water, black stones and the fire rocks used in making statues for strong rulers). This point out that copper has been an abundant mineral and was as source of wealth for more than 4000 years.

This also indicates that the land of Oman has always been part of the interest of the world. Some considers Oman a transit point in the migration of the Arab tribes from Yemen to the northern and north eastern parts of the Gulf towards Iraq, Persia and Levant. It was also a transit point for the migration of the first man who came from Asia and Africa through Bab Al Mandab.

³ Guide to Sohar Fort Museum

It is clear that the land of Oman was not only a transit point but rather a place that attracts people to settle in it; thanks to a number of factors such as the abundant natural resources as well as open and protected location. There are many tribes that decided to settle in Oman for ever especially after the damage of Maarib Dam in Yemen. Some tribes came also from Persia and India and settled here.

2- The geography of the location

The Sultanate Oman is situated at the eastern south corner of the Arabian Peninsula. It overlooks the Sea of Oman, the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. The Arabian Peninsula is part of Jinduanan continent⁴ which was drifted towards the equator during the second geological age.

Geologically speaking, the history of Oman started more than 100 million years when the Arabian Peninsula was separated from the Indo-European continent (Iran and Pakistan now) by Theetys. One million year ago, the ocean started formation⁵. It led to cracks at the ocean crust which formed the bed of the ocean. This cracking resulted in the formation of ophiolitic rocks in parts of Oman northern mountains.

The strategic location of a given country gives it a regional and international privilege over the rest of the world. In some cases the strategic location may be the reason for being conquered by the super powers. As far as Oman is concerned, its mid position between east and west and its location on the trade route helped it to play a key role in history. Oman is the center for communication among culture in the different ages. It has been the point where different cultures met and coexisted.

⁴ Ali bin Rashid al Medaiwli, Gamdat Nussar Culture in Oman 3200-2700 BC, Ministry of Heritage and Culture 2007.

⁵ Guide to Sohar Fort Museum

The unique location of Oman earned it a unique position in the old and modern history. Many Arab and foreign books highlighted the prominent role of Oman and its communication with other culture. This communication has become a salient feature of the Omani culture that transmits from one generation to the other.

Chapter 1

The culture of the old Omani; amazing truths

This chapter covers

First: The architecture of the old Omanis

- ❖ Settlements
- ❖ Buildings and fortifications
- ❖ The old Omani house from inside

Second: Activities of Oman inhabitants throughout ages

- ❖ Mining
- ❖ Industry
- ❖ Fishing

Third: The environmental dimension in the culture of the old Omanis

- ❖ Agriculture
- ❖ Irrigation.
- ❖ Pasturing

First: The architecture of the old Omanis

Throughout ages, the Omani man has his unique culture at which he reflects his unique architecture. Since early ages, the Omani man has built the settlements in a unique way either in terms of the general appearance of the

settlement or the components of such settlements such as buildings , fortifications, boundaries and other utilities.

Although the Omani architecture did not reach the level of Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley levels in terms of the historic cities, the Omani old man has also built human settlements in a simple manner. This is attributed to two main reasons;

First: The tough terrain especially mountains formed the large part of his settlement area. .

Second: The Omani man was much absorbed in areas other than grandeur buildings. He was occupied with how to earn his living and carrying out the various business activities such as production of copper, different types of stones, dairy production and agricultural crops especially the ear was marked by prosperity. On the foreign level, he was absorbed in enhancing foreign trade and establishing links with the rest of the world.

Samples of the Omani old settlements

Archeologists discovered a number of old settlements built by the old Omanis. There might have been many other settlements that remain unearthed yet. The most important unearthed settlements are

- ❖ Wattiyah
- ❖ Ras al Hamra
- ❖ Bowshar
- ❖ Zakeet
- ❖ Bahla
- ❖ Wadi Endam
- ❖ Samad
- ❖ Lazgh
- ❖ Bat

- ❖ Majan , which includes settlements at Arja, Aseel and Baidhaa
- ❖ Samarham
- ❖ Maysir
- ❖ Ras al Jinz

We will cover in brief the last two settlements as models for the old Omani settlement based on the book called ' Culture of Jamdat Nasser in Oman'

1- Maysir settlement

Maysir settlement in the eastern parts of the south of Oman is one of the areas that received intensified exploration activities by the German expedition. The settlement dates back to 3000-2000 BC. It was most likely affected by the culture in Wadi al Sanad. This effect remained clear till 2000 BC.

The German expedition led by Weisgerber did valuable work at the site. Weisgerber said that the main reasons for working in this location were the debate among geologist about the exact location of Majan, its relation with Mesopotamia, Melokha, Delmon and the need to give interpretations for some monuments.

2- Ras al Jinz

A number of French and Italian archeologists did considerable work in the area which has been a valuable source of information for researchers and scientists with interest in the pre-stone and early bronze ages in Oman. The excavation works proved that settlements continued from the fourth millennium BC to the first millennium BC. A pinky piece of pottery engraved with lines relating to Indus valley civilization. This type of pottery is called (al-Haraban). It is one of the oldest carved out pottery to be found in Oman and this stresses the relation between Oman and India. This pottery piece dates back to 3000 BC and may date back to the last period of the Hamngodar in India

This points out that the old Omani man was interested in architectural but without overestimation or exaggeration.

In their book ' Oman in the third Millennium BC ' Weisgerber and his co authors wrote that simplicity is the common feature among all the Omani settlements including the buildings and fortifications that date back to the third millennium B.C.

We will point out in brief to some features of the Omani settlements

A- Features of the Omani old settlements

- ❖ All settlements have access to water and to a depressed land that can be planted and irrigated with running water or rain.
- ❖ The remains of the settlements in al Batinah coast were exposed to more ruin compared to the settlements in the al Dakhiliyah due to fragile land and construction activities.
- ❖ There is nothing in most of the Omani settlements that suggest the presence of any defensive installations. This affirms the common belief among archeologists that the old Omani was living in prosperity.
- ❖ Some settlements in the al Sharqiyah region were constructed on rocky hills such as wadi Endam 1. This proves that the old Omani man settled in mountains and valleys.
- ❖ Some of the settlements in the al Sharqiyah region did not use aflajs. They tend to get water from simple open canals, which might have led him to invent the aflaj system.
- ❖ Samad settlement which dates back to the third Millennium has remains of some dams built in tones. This proves the strategic thinking of the old Omani man and his attempt to save water to the time of need and protect himself against flood.

- ❖ Wadi Ibra settlement 2 is located near a natural dam over a plain valley.
- ❖ Most of the settlements in Oman are located within areas that can be farmed. Some settlements were forsaken due to lack of water.
- ❖ Some settlements have high boundaries surrounded by shorter structures that might have been used as houses for the rulers and rich people.
- ❖ Some settlements include great tombs.
- ❖ There are evidences in some settlements north Oman that point out to some activities such as mining mines, copper melting ovens.
- ❖ You may find great differences between the fertility of the land in the settlements in North Oman. The soil in the first Millennium BC was more fertile due to the growing mining activity which badly affected the soil.
- ❖ Some pottery pieces were found. They are very similar to the pottery of Mesopotamia in terms of design. The Omani settlements remained unique and homogenous.

B- Features of buildings and fortifications

The buildings and fortifications in Oman have some common features that distinguish them from the others.

- ❖ Most houses were build of plates lines one beside the other.
- ❖ The local stones extracted from the nearby surroundings were used. The rock can be easily affected by the weather conditions.
- ❖ The construction was simple but strong. The foundation used two rows of normal stones. The walls were made of bricks and mud. They may explain why the structures of the old Omanis were not grandeur.
- ❖ The semi forts used large pieces of rocks.

- ❖ Despite the ruin and destruction, still parts of the walls are evident in some sites which allow researcher to get a good idea about the structural designs at that time.
- ❖ Samad settlement building in the Sharqiyah region included great boundaries for round halls whose purpose is not known. Weisenger believes that they were used as celebration halls.
- ❖ Some surveys found walls built of red brick mixed with ceramic. Most of the bricks were imported from China, India and some Islamic countries such as Iran and Iraq.

C- A look at the Omani house from inside (Sohar houses in the first, middle ages as a model).

After getting an idea about the salient features of the Omani settlements in the pre history era, it is now the time to get an idea about the Omani house from inside.

There are some evidences that give us an indication about how the old Omani house looked from inside as well as its contents especially during the periods before and after Islam. We will cover Sohar houses as models for Omani houses especially Sohar witnessed a booming mining industry in the third Millennium BC. Sohar flourished from exporting copper to Mesopotamia. Sohar then restored its prestigious place as an important link in the trade relations with China, India, Africa, the Arabian Gulf and Persia.

This historic background highlights the great role played by Sohar, the center of trade in Oman earlier. Many rich traders lived in Sohar in multi-storey buildings of red bricks and wood.

The multi-storey buildings were on the outskirts of the city as craftsmen and retailers were living in the city center. It is no strange that that the houses of

these traders were decorated with antiques and décor items brought from India, Africa and China.

To put it in a nutshell, the Omani old man has his own architectural design that developed over ages. The architectural design moved from one generation to the other. This argument is supported by the fact that there are many forts and castles in the different parts of Oman that were built in different ages. Even when the old Omani traveled to distant areas, he carried with him his architectural design to maintain his uniqueness. This is also very evident in the places built by Omanis in East Africa such as Al Matoni palace, the palace of wonders in Zanzibar and others that carry the unique Omani style.

Second: Population activities

1- Mining

Mountains play an important role for the old Oman man therefore he did his best to make the best use of them. The old Omani man was very brilliant and managed to turn the rocks into treasures and sources of income.

Ophiolitic rocks were commercially utilized in the production of copper, black stones and fire rocks that were used by kings in making statues for them. This may explain the conflicts among rulers and kings to have control over the copper mines in the land of Majan. It proves also that copper has been one of the commercially utilized and abundant minerals for more than 4000 years.

The archeological expeditions found many traces in Aseel and Arja sites in the al Batina region. The surveys also found that most of these monuments date back to the pre Islam eras with some of them dating back to the third millennium BC. The archeologists⁶ believe that the old Omani man used an

⁶ Guide to Sohar Fort Museum

advanced technology for the production of copper in the medieval age. The residues of copper smelting activities prove that copper was commercially utilized. About 40,000 tons were found in the mining areas in Sohar. A furnace for mineral smelting was also unearthed in the said site. A wooden pulley was also found for lifting copper from the mine. This pulley was found 87 meters below the earth surface level.

Copper was not the only mineral extracted from the mountains in Oman. Besides copper, the mountains have silver (which was extracted from al Jabal al Akhdhar), iron and sulfur. Tin and lead were also found in Wadi al Hawasnah in al Batinah and Seeh Hatat behind Muscat city. Lead was also found in Wadi Udai in addition to different quantities of iron and lead.

Means of extracting copper

The surveys point out that the traces of mineral activities date back to the pre Islam period with some of them tracing back to the third millennium. The old Omani man used developed methods compared to the tools used in his age. Dr. Wilkinson ⁷says ' The old history of copper and its relation with discovering the site of old Majan city is beyond questioning. The modern tools and equipment used by Omanis in copper exploration and production are analyzed by Dr. Jirrir from Deutsches Bergbau-Museum, Bochum University in Germany. The mine might have been in operation till the beginning of the 12th century.

The history of mining in Oman

Mining has been an old activity as Omanis carried out a number of mining activities from the third millennium B.C. The traces of mining activities prove that the activity was very organized but still not continuous.

⁷ Dr. John Wilkinson, Sohar History and Culture, Vol 22 , Ministry of Heritage and Culture , Oman.

Dr. Abdullah al Harthi believes that the utilization of mineral resources was very evident in three main periods ⁸namely

The first period: Before Islam.

The second Period: During Islam. It is divided into two periods

A- The first Islamic period (9-447 H/ 630-1055 G), known as the Buwihhi or Abbasi.

B- The Middle Islamic Era known as the Hurmuzian Era (447-906 H / 1055-1500 G). It is also called Nabhani ear

The third stage: in the modern age, known as the Portuguese era in the 16th and 17th century. Many small furnaces were found like, about 1 meter in diameter and height. They were mostly found near the mountain with part of it inside the mountain.

The mining method ⁹

The Omanis have their own way in dealing with the elements of environment around them. The scientists found that the mining activity in Oman has some salient features in each stage. They are as follows

A- The construction of the mine

Some corridors about 20 to 30 meters deeps (some of which are 88 meters deep) were found in al Aseel area. The most striking element about these corridors is that they were supported with acacia wood. Each corridor was covered by date palm leaves. There were also lifts to lift the extracted copper and take water and food to workers underground.

B- Heating

⁸ Dr. Abdullah bin Nasser bin Sulaiman al Harthi, Oman at the Era of Bani Nabhan, 1154-1624, the Political and Economic Conditions, a historic study, Sultan Qaboos University, the Omani Studies Center, 2004.

⁹ Guide to Sohar Fort Museum

After producing copper from the mine / corridor, it was heated before being smelted to remove the impurities, separate copper from iron and turn iron into metals. This way of copper processing was not followed in all copper extraction sites. This may lead us to argue that certain sites were known for high quality production for which there was a great demand by the Sumerian and other cultures.

C- Smelting copper

Remains of smelters and furnaces with slope ground were discovered. The slope design was meant to ensure stability of the smelter and thermal insulation. Ground opening was also discovered beside the smelter, which was used as oven to set fire in the smelter and ensure smooth flow of the smelted material to vessels placed outside the smelter. What is most striking is that the residue of the smelted liquid were collected and smelted again to turn it into copper plates and rods.

D-The culture of mine management

The mining activity was not only limited to copper production and sale but also included a system for managing the mine and investing the income generating from the lease contract. The manuscripts at the Ministry of Heritage and Culture point out those rich traders in Sohar utilized the profits generated from leading mines in enhancing their trade. They used to lease the mines against 10% of the net profits. They also relied on the income from agricultural activities which were flourishing at that time.

The mining industry was between the hammer of flourishing and the anvil of harming the environment. Some historic resources point out that the flourishing copper activity has many economic impacts on the region. It may be said also that the region witnessed remarkable population growth to meet the need for labors. This also entailed more interest in farming activities and

raising animals to meet the needs of the population growth. Large capitals were also invested in trade during that time.

If we analyzed the activity, we will discover that man, at that age, harmed the surrounding environment by the metal, non recycled wastes and the removal of the plantation cover by cutting big trees to provide fuel for the smelter. This explains the residues of forsaken mining sties from many centuries.

It may be concluded that the way the old Omani man designed and built his smelters reflect his brilliance and uniqueness especially such brilliance was at a time humans were still primitive.

2- Industry

Industry has been one of the old activities of the Omani man. Omanis succeeded in setting up some sort of developed industries that ensured them self-sufficiency... Many Omani cities were known for certain flourishing industries. One of the foreign historians described the existing industries at one of the Omani villages by saying ¹⁰ They are good models of the developed rural community. The residents are independent, equal and skillful in making use of the available resources. They live in harmony with their environment and strike a rare balance between current and future needs. We will shed light in brief on some of these industries.

A- Maine industry

Besides being the most important food for Omanis, fish is the source of living of many families. While Omanis excelled in fishing, they also set up a number of fishing related industries such as manufacture of nets, boats and ships.

The fish processing industry flourished in Oman, thanks to the abundance of fish catch and the local salt. After catching large sardine and other, they start

¹⁰ The same reference as above

drying and canning them before packing and selling them in small packs. While some of their products are used as food humans, other parts are also used as fodder and fertilizers.

B- Agricultural industries

The agricultural industry is not isolated from the other industries. The Omani man have tried to make use of the local materials .In agricultural field, he made some tools that help him in plowing and reclamation of land such as the plough and the sickle. He also manufactured tools for wood cutting such as the saw, knife and adze.

C- Manufacture of personal accessories

On the personal level, he invented tools for hunting and fruit collection. He also invented tools to defend himself such as arrows, daggers and swords. At a latter stage he invented shields and other tools for horse riding. These industries moved from one generation to the other till they become part of the national identity of Omanis. It is no strange then that you may one of shepherd in the tough mountainous areas using the same tools used by his ancestors.

D- Copper industries

While copper industries are less common in the previous eras , the copper tools are many including utensils , trays , plats , spoons , jars , cups and other beauty materials like incense burners and rose water sprayers. Copper was also used in coinage; thanks to the abundance of copper in Oman. It should be noted that a coinage center was set up at the Buwihan period.

E- Silver industries

The sliver industry is one of the major and most diversified industries in Oman. It was transmitted from one generation to the other and managed to maintain its salient features till date.

Although silver industry is common in most Omani cities, still Sur, Nizwa and Muttrah are considered the major centers for such industry due to three factors namely the high population density, their important location as trade centers and the quality of products. While each center excels in some areas of this industry, the decorations and forms used may be similar in many products.

Possession of silver items reflects the high prestigious state of the person and his good standards of living especially silver, whether it is a coin or product, have its value. It may be turned into money at hard times.

Models of silver industries

1- Beauty items

Most of the jewelry and precious items used by Omani women in the Medieval and late ages are made of silver such as

Dangling: It should be noted that the Omani dangling are thicker than the Arab dangling.

Bracelets: the Omani excelled in making different kinds of bracelets with designs that are very similar to those found in Bat Tombs in the wilayat of Ibri, which date back to the third millennium B.C. This indicates that the Omanis inherited such arts one generation after the other.

The earrings, rings and necklaces. The Omani style in making such products is very unique and you can easily distinguish between the Omani and other products.

2- Beauty items for man

The Dagger: The Omani man is known by the dagger on his waist. The dagger is still worn at the different occasions till date.

Swords: The dagger handles are made of ivory. The sheath is made of reinforced leather and decorated with silver.

3- House utensils

Many Omani cities, especially Nizwa, are known for silver products such as jars, cups, rose water sprayers and incense burners. They mirror the social status of the person and the standard of living they lead.

F- Pottery and ceramic industries

The Omani man has manufactured pottery and ceramic items long time ago. Many pottery items, which date back to the period from 630 to 1055 G, were found on al Batina coast between al Mesanaa and Barka. They are very similar to the pottery found in Samaraa.

The unearthed items include a utensil with thick walls , similar to those found in Ras al Had , Lamo Island in north Africa and Seeraf which overlooks the Persian Sea. Archeologists believe that this piece of pottery proves that Oman has strong trade relations with the external world. It also proves the sophisticated interests between the coastal and interior areas.

G- Shipbuilding

Oman is differentiated from the rest of the Gulf countries for its agricultural activity with abundant date palm trees farms and nabk trees. The Omani man used the components of the date palm and coconut trees in ship building.

One of the important factors that contributed to promoting the shipbuilding industry in Oman is the close relationship between the Omani man and the

sea. The strategic location, as well as the availability of wood, contributed to the growth and flourishing of the ship the building industry.

The Omani ships are known for being of high quality and endurance.

The shipbuilders used ropes to connect its different components. Nails were not used at all.

The sails were made of date palm and concoct trees leaves. They were made of cloth at a later stage. The sails at the front and back of the ship are very similar; both of them are narrow and pointed.

One may ask ' Why the Omanis used ropes and not nails in shipbuilding?

There has been an endless debate among historians for the reasons behind such trend. Some believed that the old Omanis' use of ropes instead of nail is attributed to economic reasons; the high cost of nails compared to coconut threads.

This explanation sounds logical than others. This was also the opinion of Captain Tem Sifrin who sailed with the ship Sohar to China in 1980¹¹. The ship has no nails at its body. The most famous Omani ships without ships are Boom, Snabooq, Ghanga, Baghla, Baqarah, Shahooof, Zarwaqah, Hori, Shasha and Mashou.

H- Wood Industries

The Omanis excelled in wood industries especially home furniture. The main reason behind this is the abundance of high quality local wood as well as imported lumbar from India and Africa. There are also a number of skilled Omanis in such industry. The most prominent wood industries are:-

¹¹ Tim Sifrin, Sindbad Journey , the Ministry of Heritage and Culture , 2002

Mandoos (closet): The wooden closets are used for keeping clothes and personal belongings. They were manufactured mainly for rich people and were decorated with silver copper. The most expensive closets were decorated with silver plates. There are small closet which were used for keeping precious items such as coins and jewelry.

Beds: They were known for their expressing decoration. They are different in size as some of them were manufactured for child use and others for adult use.

Doors: The Omani doors are known for being magnificent, delicate designs especially those used in castles, forts and rich people houses.

Windows: Window manufacturing is the most common wood industry in Oman especially in big cities. They are decorated with engraved plant decorations.

Farming tools: They include the sickle handles and those placed on the back of donkeys and camels.

I- Textile industry

The textile industry is very common in Oman especially it is one of the basic necessities for man. The industry flourished to a number of reasons such as the availability of cotton, wool, linen and skilled human resources. It should be noted that Omanis also imported silk from the neighboring countries such as India and Iran.

The industry witnessed a remarkable growth in most of the Omani cities. Each city tried to meet the need of the local markets and export the excess products to the neighboring cities or countries. The Omani textile industry

earned a good respect in the different regions. Our Prophet Peace Be upon Him used to present the Omani textile products as gifts to the delegations that come to him. Our Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) gave a piece of Omani cloth to a delegation of some tribes from Yemen.

Our Prophet also used one of the Sohari thoubes which were very common at that time. He used to wear such thoubes on Fridays and Eids.

During the Hajj trip, our prophet also wore Hajj dress from Sohar and was wrapped upon death in three Sohari thoubes.

Ibn Batota wrote about these thoubes and said ' They are very nice thoubes made of silk, cotton and linen'.

There is also some head covers made of pure cotton. The high demand for such products contributed to the flourishing of cotton plantations in Dakhiliyah regions such as Nizwa, Manah, Sumail and others.

J- Wool industries

The Omanis were very brilliant in making use of the local materials such as wool and others. The wool industry is one of the by products of the pasturing activities. The Bedouins and shepherds are very skilled in this industry. They discovered that the goat hair is one of the best sources for wool industry especially it is easy to weave and mix with other soft threads.

K- Dye industry

The dye industry is very much related to textile industry. It represents the brilliance of the Omanis in dealing with the elements of the environment. Omanis extracted the indigo from bluing and Alzam trees which grow in some parts in the Sultanate. The yellow color was extracted from Foua tree and the black color was extracted from a material called Fijaj.

L- Leather industries

The old Omani made good investment of cattle and sheep herds in shows, buckets, straps, swords and daggers manufacture. There are other industries as well such as

Burses. There are two kinds of burses; the small and decorated one for money keeping and the big one used for keeping dates and butter. He also made water bags from goat skin which has a cooling effect on water.

M- Date palm leaves industries

Omanis used date palm leaves to produce baskets of different sizes. The baskets are used mainly in transferring cereals, dates, soil and fertilizers. There are smaller sizes of these baskets.

The carpets and rugs. The Omani man made rugs from date palm leaves.

Sieves: Omanis manufactured and used sieves in filtering cereals and crops from the impurities and dust.

Envelop bags which are used in storing dates. They can be easily carried on donkeys.

Hand made ventilation fans which are commonly used in summer to bring fresh air.

N- Manufacture of table and construction tools

The Omani man excelled in making use of the natural resources in his environment. He used such materials in the construction of forts, castles and buildings which defied ages till date. Some of the historic forts date back to the pre Islam era like Bahla fort.

The construction industries include
Al Noorah and other building material
The Omani plaster
The Omani sarooj
The date palm leaves and wood products

O- Food industries

The Omani man tried to deal with the components of nature in a creative manner. The major agricultural industries include

Sugar: It is extracted from sugar cane and filtered. It is sold fresh as a juice or treated to be the sugar we use in sweating now.

The Omani halwa: It is one of the most famous industries in Oman till date. The manufacture of Halwa, which is a very lucrative business, requires skilled labors and considerable investments.

Basoor: It is based on cooking certain kinds of dates (Mabsali) in specially designed places. The product is then dried in the sun for days then packed for export. The industry is still vivid till date. It is exported to U.S.A, India and European countries.

P- Aromatic industries

Omani has known aroma industry since ages. The major industries which are still vivid till date include

Incense industry

Incense is made from some aromatic materials mixed with each others such as Dhofari frankincense, oud, musk and other floral and aromatic materials. The Omani frankincense was used in the old temples.

Rose water

It is one of the major sources of perfumes since ages. Arabs, Greek and Romans used rose water either as a perfume or a flavor for their foods. In Oman, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is considered the center of this industry. The rose water distillation activity is still vivid till date.

F- Fishing

Oman has a very long coast that is home for many marine species including fish. Omanis were described by some travelers as ' the fish eaters' because fish was the main food for them.

Omanis practiced fishing since ages and used on fish as a basics source of food. Whatever excess fish beyond their need, they used to sell it either grilled or salted or dried. Fish which is not fit for human use is used as animal fodder or fertilizers.

Omanis use certain fishing techniques which reflect their accumulated knowledge and skill in fishing. The Omanis fishing techniques cover four types of fishing area;

- 1- Near the coasts
- 2- Open seas.
- 3- Surface areas
- 4- Deep areas.

The fishing nets therefore differ according to the area of fishing. It is amazing to see the different kinds and sizes of nets as well as the fishing techniques used in hooking each type of fish. This may be termed as ' the culture of having multiple tools for multiple purposes'. The Omanis also excelled in making use of the local materials in the environment such as

First: Fishing nets

Fishing net is the main tool used by Omanis since ages regardless of the fact that they are differing in size and form. The use of the nets are very simple;- The fishermen connect the nets together to catch the largest possible quantities of fish. They sometimes make it semi round. They then select the best place for fishing depending on their long experience in the field. The nets used in al Batina coast and sandy beaches are long with small openings called ' Leekh'. They use the wide opening nets in the rocky beaches.

They use also certain nets called ' Faroh'. The fishermen connect the net pieces together to catch big fishes. Al Ashari or Al Ghbot net is used for catching big fishes in the depth of the sea. This type has wide opening. Al Taroal, a cone nets with small openings and wide pockets, is used for hooking small fish like sardine.

Some nets such as Garjour are placed in water for two days and then dragged to the shore. The net is round and basket like to catch fish of different sizes.

Al Hadra net is made of date palm leaves. They are connected to each other and placed in deep water near the coast. They retain the fish behind them.

Second: The hook

Besides nets, the Omanis use the hook for individual fishing.

Third: The Bayonet

The Omanis has long experience in fishing therefore he might have been exposed to the most common fish species. He tried to use the suitable material for each type of fish. He used the bayonet for catching very big fishes such as whales and sharks. He might have used it to defend himself.

This deep knowledge of sea and its sciences point out to the fact that the Omani man has been forward thinking and pioneer compared to others living in the same age.

This knowledge was transmitted from one generation to the other. It is no strange then that many still maintain the profession of their ancestors and rely on fishing as a major source for income.

Third: The environmental dimension in the culture of the Omani man throughout ages

1- Agriculture

Agriculture is one of the oldest professions known by man. There is a strong relationship between agricultural activity and settlements. We will shed light on how Omanis excelled in the field of agriculture and was a forward looking compared to others especially in the pre history ear. The old Omani man was very brilliant in a number of areas such as

A- Land reclamation

The strategic location of Oman, its diverse topography, the availability of water and fertile land encouraged the old Omani man to settle and plant the land around him. He was very skilled in land reclamation. There are strong evidences that there have been many villages vivid with life in the third millennium BC. The relationship between the old Omani man and the land was unique as he needed great skills to reclaim the land and overcome the tough terrains. Histingers¹² -in his book ' Oman in the Third Millennium BC - said that inhabitants used to move between the wadis. They did not settle at one place for many years. There is nothing that may indicate that they followed certain mode in their movement. They used to move from areas where the soil has become exhausted to virgin and more fertile land.

¹² Histingers ' Oman in the Third Millennium BC, Ministry of Heritage and Culture, 1983.

B- Utilizing the diverse climate conditions and topography in agricultural production

Oman is one of the most diversified countries of the world in terms of topography. It has the high mountains, the wadis, the rocks and the plain valleys. The climate of Oman is also diverse depending on the topography. The temperature varies from one part to the other. It might be moderate in high areas and tropical in other areas.

The Omani man succeeded in making use of the land around his settlements. He started to plant crops that can withstand the weather conditions at his settlement. This may justify the kind of crops planted in Oman since ages ago and till date.

Speaking about the characteristics of the climate in Oman, Al Askhari said ' Oman is a very hot country. I heard that some parts of it are very far from the sea and might have witnessed hail rains. Ibn Hawkal said the same. This points out that there is a remarkable variance in temperature between the interior and coastal parts on one hand and the depressed areas near the sea and the high areas that are far away from the sea.

C- Introducing new plants

The Omani man, who maintained contacts and relations with other civilizations, introduced new plants that were known to him. This includes

Wheat: Wheat seeds were imported from east Africa to the south Arabian Peninsula and India. It is most striking to know that the Omani man planted wheat in the fourth millennium BC¹³ although the origin of wheat dates back to North Africa. The digging works in Ras al Hamra settlements in the fourth

¹³ Ministry of Heritage and Culture , UNESCO Silk Road Study Project, the recommendations of the International Symposium on the Silk Road, Sultan Qaboos University 20-21 November 1991.

millennium BC found some seeds. This proves that they brought this plant from Africa to the Arabian Peninsula, Oman and then to India.

Aromatic plants

The first man of Oman planted Jasmine, rose, frankincense and other aromatic plants which are still planted in Oman till date. Many industries were set up to benefit from such plants such as rose water distillation and frankincense.

The major aromatic plants that are still common till now include Alzam, Alalan, Shoua, basil, Rawas, sandal, Mahlab As, Saql and others. While these plants might be rare to some extent, still they are very useful as aromas and medication as well.

Medical plants

One of the most striking elements in the thinking of the Omani man is his tendency to experimentation. He tried to use some plants and herbs as medicine. He identified scores of herbs that may be used to treat many diseases. This culture was transmitted from one generation to the other. We have many book titles that speak about the different herbs in Oman and the diseases they provide treatment for. These books are considered major medical references

Frankincense has been and is still used as both incense and medicine as well. Chewing frankincense helps the body to digest food efficiently. It is also boiled with water to reduce the severity of cough. It is also used as medicine for treating and healing wounds. It is also used as one of the components of some medicines, oils and candles.

It is worth mentioning that woman - throughout the different ages- helped man in the collection of the crop and packing it. Frankincense also provides a lot of job opportunities for locals in Dhofar region.

Environment Preservation Culture

Irrigation

The major irrigation system used by the old Omani man depended on water canals that are specifically designed to meet his needs. This system is known as 'Aflaj'. Falaj is a man-made canal that originates at the base of the mountain. The underground water is then lifted and discharged in open canals that irrigate farms in the nearby areas. Many believe that the system was originated in Persia in the age of Akhmandiyeen¹⁴. It should be noted that the aflaj system which emerged in the Iron Age has been the main reason for the continuation of settlements throughout the different ages till our date.

Irrigation system in valleys

The Omani man needed to maintain the irrigation system to ensure sustainability of farming at the coastal plain. The farmers used to transfer wadi water to the canals that irrigate farms. The archeological expeditions found some waterwheels at these canals. These waterwheels point out to the modern irrigation methods at that time. In al Batinah plain – for example- 12 waterwheels were found which prove that the agricultural activities flourished in this region.

Modern irrigation system

Most of the agricultural areas in Oman are known for their unique environmental diversity as they are considered extension of the fertile plain that extends from Yemen in the Southern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. Moreover, the cultivated areas benefit from the underground transferred to the surface through canals that are usually close to the mountainous chains. Mayls 1878 believes that the history of Aflajs dates back to the Pre Islam era.

Extracting water from water wells

¹⁴ Hinstingers and others, the same reference above.

The old Omani man identified ways that help him to benefit from the water in the mountains and transferring it to the cultivated areas and oasis despite the difficulties which he might have faced. The water wells are the main and most common sources for getting the underground water.

There are square and round underground water wells. When the well is used for irrigation purpose, it is square and deep. The water is extracted by animals such as oxen, donkeys and camels. The bucket is lifted by a machine called ' Al Zagirah'. Ibn Batota said that he saw in Dhofar a number of men doing this task.

Irrigation with Aflaj

While Oman's aflaj system is ancient, still it is one of the most effective water management techniques. The irrigation system consists of Individual falaj, or water channels. This irrigation network extends from the mountain tops and wadis to populated areas. Oman's aflaj are dug in a way that ensures that water is carried by the earth's gravity and the natural incline of the land for long distances without using pumps or any other mechanical means.

Omanis have been very brilliant in dealing with the system. To this end, they used a number of techniques to ensure its sustainability such as

Timings

The Omani man throughout the ages has been very civilized in dealing with the environment around him. He was very keen to ensure equal distribution of water onto the planted farms. To meet such a need, he invented a system called ' Alathar' or ' Timings '.

These timings do not depend on the Sun or stars but rather on a brass bowl with a hole in the bottom. This hole has four threads at equal distances with each others. This bowl is placed in a small water basin. The water then leaks

from the water basin to inside the bowl. If water rises to the first thread, it means that one of the timing of the ' Timing' is over. If it reached the second thread, this means that half of the timing allocated for the farm is over and so on. The system is very similar to the hydrometer.

Two men are always in charge of this " Timing'. They keep close watch on the system day and night to ensure meeting the needs of all farmers.

The good management of aflaj

The more the demand for falaj water, the more is the rent value for the falaj. This depends to a great extent on the availability of water at the falaj. When there are heavy rains or floods, the demand for aflaj water will become less but when the rain water is less the demand for aflaj water will become high. This means that the rate is governed by supply and demand. . To ensure non monopoly of the aflajs by rich farmers, the turn is increased from 8 to 9 days.

It should be noted that the rent value differs from one season to the other. In summer, the demand for water becomes higher which results in increase of the rent value and vice versa in winter.

The mission of the falaj agent

The falaj agent is a person delegated by the residents to carry out the required maintenance works that always do not cost much money. The works that need much money will be made in coordination with the stakeholders of the falaj. The agent is also responsible for prosecuting whoever infringes the falaj. The agent also receives one tenth of the income generated as compensation for his efforts.

3- Pasturing

The old Omani man raised animals. Archeologists believe that man has strong relation with animals in this land. They found drawings of animals in historic

sites and old settlements such as al Wattiyah settlement which dates back to the tenth millennium BC. They also believe that the Omani man has excelled in raising the Arab camel at the ages before history. There is also close relationship between man in Oman and some wild animals throughout ages.¹⁵

The shepherds' movement

Since ages, shepherds used to move from one place to the other looking for green areas that help them pasture their animals. After summer is over, they return back to their homes in the desert. Each Bedouin tribe has its own camping place around which they pasture their animals which are mainly camels. In Dhofar cows are very common followed by cattle and sheep contrary to the situation in the pasturing areas in the northern and interior parts in Oman.

Pasturing culture

The pasturing system is not new to Oman but has always been the trend of life thousand of years ago. Histingers and others believe that the movement between the coast and the interior has been very active and continuous. This transportation from one place to the other helped in exchange of goods and commodities. The Bedouins in the interior regions still follow the same pasturing style especially those at Um Al Samim, Qarat Al Milh and Qarat al Kabreet.

Hunting and security dogs

Shepherds used to raise dogs to accompany the herds while pasturing and provide security to them. Dogs are also used in hunting animals. The Omanis are not interested in raising dogs inside their houses and inside the cities except for security purposes. Many poems and verses highlight this habit by Omanis.

¹⁵ Al Harthi, the same reference above.

Moreover, Omanis considered the dog the honest guard for their herds. Dogs are also the faithful friends of man. Omanis have also strong relations with camels, sheep, horses and other wild animals. This close relation has become an integral part of his life and culture.

Chapter 2- Cultural Communication of the Omanis throughout the Ages

This chapter includes the following points:

First: a rapprochement with the cultures of the world; an authentic feature for the

- (1) Oman relations with prehistoric civilizations:
- (2) Oman relations in the Islamic era
- (3) Success factors of cultural interaction
- (4) Oman and its presence in the world:

Second: Omani forms of communication with the world through the ages:

- (1) Trade relations
- (2) Religious outreach
- (3) Cultural communication
- (4) Diplomatic and political communication
- (5) Omani exploration, trips and adventures

Omanis have rich history of communication with the peoples and other civilizations in the East and West of the world. This communication was the result of long-range maritime activities followed by exchanges of

knowledge, commercial and cultural wealth. This led to a series of positive interaction operations. No doubt that Omani first man roamed the seas and oceans, the length and breadth. Not surprisingly, they crossed the Red Sea since ancient times to the beyond. They arrived to the port of Canton in Chinese in the eighth century AD. They also traveled east to the coast of Africa until they reached the port of New York in the United States of America. This was in the first half of the nineteenth century AD. The Omani ships docked during the same period in some ports of Europe such as the port of London, United Kingdom and the port of Marseille, France.

While the convergence with other cultures is an authentic Omani feature; however, the geographical location of Oman played a major role in helping Omanis to achieve this convergence and reap its fruits today. Oman mediates the export zones in the east of the globe (such as India, China and the Indo Chinese and East Africa, and the areas of import in the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq and Persia. They also transported goods to Egypt and the Levant. The merchandise then crossed the Mediterranean Sea to the ports of Western Europe.

This site made the ports of Oman important centers of transit trade, export and import activities. However, this did not stop the Omanis to bring their needs from the East. They cover the needs of their markets and took the excess trade to other areas benefiting from the strategic location of their country. On the other hand Eden and the Omani ports located in the southern region of Dhofar maintained their positions as important centers for the collection of commercial goods and supplying the ships in transit with water and other supplies.

First: a rapprochement with the cultures of the world, an authentic Omani feature:

There is a common agreement that Oman had connections with the world since the dawn of history; thanks to the booming trade and economic development as well as the spread of trade routes between East and West such as the Silk Road and other world-famous trade routes. This confirms that the Omani had boarded the sea since that man came to know the ship and sail.

(1) Oman relations with prehistoric civilizations:

The following paragraphs will show how Omanis connected with other and how far this communication is an authentic feature of Oman and its people since the dawn of history.

Oman communications with the civilizations of Mesopotamia:

Omani ships reached Mesopotamia in the third millennium BC. Accordingly Majan civilization has flourished in the South East of the Arabian Peninsula during the period between the third and second millennia BC. Majan was mentioned in the Sumerian legends, such as Paradise and the Epic of Gilgamesh.

Acadian writings during the reign of King Sargon I (2334 - 2279 BC) pointed out that Majan, Delmon, and Mlokha ships anchored in the port of Okada. Majan was also mentioned as the land of Mountain in the reign of King Manchetso (2269-2255 BC). The Acadian literature pointed out that the major exports of Majan were copper, and Durajt stones , and tortoise shells. Majan was also mentioned in the Assyrian sources in the reign of King Tikulti Ninurta I (1244-1208 BC), King Esarhaddon (680-669 BC) and King Ashurbanipal (669-626 BC).

Oman relations with the Indus Valley Civilization¹⁶:

¹⁶ Ministry of Heritage and Culture, The outcome of a seminar on the monuments of the Arabian Peninsula throughout Ages, May 2006, Muscat, Oman.

Oman has also established active business relationships with the civilization based in Indus Valley (Pakistan and Sindh now); in the second millennium BC, commercial goods moved from Oman to Muhinjudaro in Pakistan, where Indus River Basin civilization was flourishing at the time. The movement was active probably because of the proximity distance between them and their participation in the same marine space as well as direct and easy navigation without having to stop at stations and ports.

Oman's ties with India:¹⁷

The relationship between Oman and the Indian cities dates back to ancient times. It might be logical to assume that this region has been the first to establish relations with Oman because of the maritime boundary between them. Moreover, Oman had links with other civilizations and kingdoms far since the first ages. It is logical then that the Omanis' relationship with India is older. It should be noted Omanis were able to exploit the monsoon and take advantage of it in sailing since very early times.

Oman relations with the civilization of the Nile Valley:

Despite the geographical distance between Oman and the Nile Valley; the dire need of the Egyptian temples for the Omani frankincense has made the relationship inevitable and shortened the distance. There are evidences of maritime trade between Oman and Egypt during this period. Pictures of vessels from Oman loaded with frankincense, myrrh, perfumes and timber were found on the walls of the Deir el-Bahari Temple in southern Egypt. These goods were requested by Queen Hatshepsut, who ruled Egypt in the late fifteenth century BC.

Oman relations with Persia:

¹⁷ Sohar Fort Museum Guide

Oman has close links with the Kingdom of Maysan in Persia (129 BC. M - 222/223 AD) so that King Miradats, who is one of the kings of Maysan, earned the title King of Omanis and recorded this on the coins. The kings of Maysan include King of Maja (195-210 m), a reference to Majan. After the Persian controlled the Arabian Peninsula, the Persian re-named Majan as Maka. These sources said that Majan was among the states of the Persian state in the reign of Darius I (521-485 C) and Ohchuirc I (485-465 BC. m).

Oman relations with the kingdoms of East Africa:

Oman relations with the kingdoms in the east African coast are old and deep. While most commercial activities in the coast were carried out by Indonesians in early times, however, the Arabs in general and Omani in particular imposed a monopoly on the trade from eastern Africa. It is true that the direct trade route between Indonesia and South China passes through the Indian Ocean, and stops in Madagascar, which is very far from Oman. Still the Omanis had their presence there.¹⁸

In addition; there had been several migrations by Omanis who settled in the cities and kingdoms of the east coast of Africa. Such migrations had a deep impact on the Arabization of some symbols of African culture and the Arab character which is still there to this day. This may be due more to the mating which took place between Omani immigrants and African. Such mating formed a social class, which is a mixture of both cultures.

(2) Oman relations in the Islamic era:

Oman has expanded its relations in early historical times and the Islamic era. The Omanis maintained relations with other civilizations such as China and the Malay Archipelago, etc. We will talk about such relations in brief

Oman relation with China

¹⁸ Oman and its Marine Glory, the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, 2005.

Chinese sources ¹⁹point out that more than thirty Arab embassies arrived in China during the period between from 031 to 798 AD.

These links have continued on the rise. The mutual trade relations have reached its peak during the reign of Singh's family in China who ruled in the period between (1386-1644). Perhaps what is striking in the reign of this family is that in the year (1412 AD), the official delegation representing Dhofar visited China. Emperor Ming requested an official Chinese delegation to visit Dhofar and take with them gifts and official papers for their accreditation as delegates of China to Dhofar.

Oman relations with the Malay Archipelago:²⁰

The Arab traders not only brought Islam to the Malay Archipelago but also brought Islam to the East Indian Islands. The sources mention that an old Omani man who lived in Sumatra. He managed, with his wisdom, intelligence and foresight, to convince its king to give special treatment to Muslims. This event coincided with the presence of the Arab traveler Ibn Battuta in the region

(3) Success factors for the cultural interaction of the ancient Omanis²¹

There are several factors that the Omanis exploited to communicate with the world through the age. We will mention briefly the most important of these factors:-

(A) The sea, as a medium for communication

The world trade moved from North East to Iraq through the Gulf, thanks to the excellence of Omanis in trade and seafaring. The trade also flourished from Oman to Iraq, the Mediterranean and then to the rest of Europe. Without

¹⁹ UNESCO Silk Road Project

²⁰ The seminar on the Arabian Peninsula monuments, the above reference.

²¹ Arab House for Advertising, the above reference.

the excellence of Omani seafarers, the Mediterranean might have lost its importance in the late historic and middle ages.

(B) Trade:

Since early history, Omanis were famous for being excellent traders. When their trade declines with certain civilization, they shift to another civilization. This strategy has ensured them booming trade all the time. It should be noted that such way of thinking is forward-looking, brilliant and worthy of praise.

(C) Tolerance:

The people of Oman, through the eras of history, have been and are still a nation open to the outside. Oman has witnessed many historical mass migrations due to its location midway between the continents and civilizations of the ancient world. Although many races have coexisted on the land of Oman; they fused to form a society characterized by diversity of races and acceptance of others and tolerance with him at the same time.

(D) Being affected and affecting the other

Those who study the Omani communication with the early peoples and civilizations of the world since the dawn of history can easily discover the richness of the Omani experience. The Omani experience is an effective model for rapprochement with the cultures of the world. If you look closely at this rich experience, you will easily discover that it was influencing and being influenced by the cultures of other nations, particularly the nearby ones. For example the archaeological sites in the Arabian Peninsula in general and Oman in particular show that there is a difference in the impact of other cultures on the culture of neighboring civilizations. However this effect was apparent on sites in the coastal and northern areas of Oman compared to the interior sites. There are also signs that point out to a sort of communication and being affected by the Egyptian culture.

(4) Oman and its presence in the world:

Oman communication with the world is ancient. This communication has taken different shapes. We will talk in brief about these forms

A- Majan in the old texts

Majan was mentioned in several texts²², the most important of which

- ❖ In the Sumerian texts during the second half of the third millennium BC.
- ❖ In Memorial of Shalla Egypt (Shallfa) to commemorate the construction of the canal, which links the Red Sea to River Nile in the reign of Darius the First.
- ❖ In some aspects of the royal tombs (Achaemenian) in the rocky terraces of the Berspols in Iran.
- ❖ At the base of a statue of Darius I discovered in 1972 in Susa, Iran.
- ❖ In the inscriptions of a building decorating Razostr in Iraq during the reign of the Sassanid king Chahpour. (It was called Mazoon).
- ❖ In a pottery jar from the era of the reign of King Jodia ' from Majan mountain and Malaga to bring wood to build Nunn Jurs temple...".

(B) Old Oman products in the museums of the world:

Copper products from Oman were among the discoveries in several areas of the Gulf as Iraq. This came as a result of the communications between Oman and the world's civilizations. The studies have proven that some of the cups, saucers and some of the different types of weapons that were found in some parts of Iraq are made of copper mixed with nickel, a characteristic of the copper of Oman. The head of a bull made of copper that dates back to the second half of the third millennium BC was found at the "Castle barbarians" in Bahrain.

Perhaps the most prominent evidence of the spread of the Omani civilization

²² Sohar Fort Museum Guide

to the different parts of the world are found at Louver in Paris such as the Statue of Judea, the king of Agash,. The following statement was inscribed on his clothes t: "the King ordered this black stone from the land of Majan²³. Majan is the name of the old Oman. This statue was made in the period 2144-2124 BC.

Oman was an integral part of the civilization of the ancient world; it was in the heart of world events since ancient times. The Omani man was not isolated from the ancient world around him. He even went away and built bridges of cooperation and communication very early. He has played an active role in the transfer of culture. He reached a common understanding with the rest of the world.

Second: Omani forms of communication with the world:

The communication of the people of Oman with the outside world took different shapes through the ages. In the following paragraphs, I will highlight in brief the forms of communication among Oman and other nations, civilizations and peoples.

(1) Trade Communication:

If you consider the sophisticated relationship between trade and communication among cultures, you will feel that there is no difference²⁴. There is a common saying that ' trade is the bridge of culture'. The trader carries his thoughts, beliefs and customs alongside with his merchandise wherever he goes. He returns to his country with foreign beliefs and thoughts as well. This is the nature of cultural communications among nations. As for the Omani people, they benefited from this communication especially Oman has been a transit point for traders from different

²³ The same reference above

²⁴ UNESCO Silk Road study project.

countries. The minds of Omani have become more exposed to different cultures.

Through the trade relations, Omanis exchanged thoughts and ideas with foreign traders. Dr. Abdullah al Harthi says ' when the demand for frankincense became high from China, the Chinese Emperor Sing Zo (1403-1424 G) sent a delegation to exchange the Chinese product for the butter and frankincense from Dhofar. The Chinese also called the marine route between Oman and China, the incense route due to the great importance of frankincense in the Chinese culture.

As for the historic relations between Oman and other cultures, Clauzio and Tozi ²⁵pointed out to the trade relations between Sinda and Oman. There are strong evidences for the same such as the ceramic bowels in the different parts of Omani (1900-1800 BC).

Omanis play the role of the trade mediator

Beside their main business as traders, the Omanis also played the role of trade brokers. They used to procure products from China, India, East Africa, Yemen and other ports. When the vessels disembark at the Omani ports, they used to unload the products needed by the Omani markets. They then load the products from Oman. Thee Omanis used also to play the role of brokers among different traders from the East and the West.

The most renowned Omani traders throughout the history

The Omani copper traders were very famous in Mesopotamia in the third millennium BC. They used to export high quality frankincense to the temples of the Pharos and Romans. It is no strange then that there has been high demand for Omani products at the Indian, Persian and Chinese markets. The Omani traders were also known for being fair, honest and

²⁵ The same source

faithful. A number of Omani traders traveled to China at early age and settled there.

We will give only two examples of those traders namely Abu Ubaidah Abdullah bin Al Qasim and Al Nadhr bin Maimoun.

A- Abu Ubaidah al Saghir

There is a common agreement among historical sources that Abdullah bin Al Qasim, nick named as Abu Ubaidah Al Saghir was the most famous trader. He was born in Saya , a small village near Bahla in the interior region. He was also one of the famous Ibbadhi sheikhs in that period. He had big trade with China. He traveled to China himself in 750 G. He had many remarkable deeds in Canton in China. The historical sources ²⁶affirm that he traded in wood, oud and other commodities. He lived in China for years and later came back to Oman.

Abu Ubaidah was the first Omani trader to reach China and stay there. Tim Sifrin wrote in his book ' Sindbad' ' No doubt that the first Arab to reach China was Abu Ubaidah from Oman at the mid of the 8th century. He is a wood trader.

The Chinese documents immortalized two Omanis namely Sindbad and Abdullah bin Al Qasim who visited China.

There are three Chinese sources that spoke about the life of Abu Abdullah bin Al Qasim

The first one is a book titled ' The History of Bowan Dynasty of Mogul'.

The second is the book by the Korean historian Zahi Lnizhi titled ' The History of Korea. The book was published in 1451.

²⁶ Dr. Jaafar Karar Ahmed, the Cultural Role of Omanis in China, NCECS 2007.

There is also a lost manuscript. The original text of the manuscript is documented by the Chinese writer Lio Minz Hung²⁷.

There is a story about this trader and his relations with other traders. 'He has a number of partners who were always trying to underestimate his merchandise to get it at the lowest price. When they buy the merchandise, they speak high of it and try to sell it at the highest price. Sheikh Abdullah bin Al Qasim was not happy with this, therefore he decided to terminate the partnership with them. Dr. Jaafar Karar quotes from the Chinese historic sources that ' an Omani trader lived in China for sometime He owned million worth merchandise. He was the head of the Arab community in Canton. He presented a valuable gift to the Emperor of China Sin Chin Zon. He was therefore granted the title ' General of the Good Morals'. He was the first foreign trader to get a military rank. Upon his return, the Emperor presented him a white horse with saddle.

B- Al Nadhr Bin Maimun

The second trader who stayed in China was Al Nadhr bin Maimun. He arrived to China shortly after Abu Ubaidah.

He lived in Basra before his journey to China at the late 8th century and early 9th century. No doubt that those traders played a major role in disseminating Islam to these regions.

The old trade caravan routes

There have been several routes for the trade between East and West. The Omanis have their contributions to these routes especially they were known for being outstanding navigators and seafarers.

1- Copper route

²⁷ UNESCO Silk Road Study Project

Copper has been one of the major exports of Oman since early ages. The copper industry flourished at these ages especially copper mines were abundant in Oman. Mining and copper production was the main profession for Omanis at that time. Copper was exported through two routes²⁸

A- **The marine route through Sohar.** Unfortunately, this port was not found due to the floods of the coastal valleys.

B- **The land route:** To Umm Al Nar in the U.A.E now and then to Delmon (Bahrain) and then to Sumar and Eilam kingdoms.

2- The Silk Road

This is the long trade route that connects the eastern borders of the old world (China and India) to the western borders (Europe and Mediterranean countries).

The main purpose of this route was to exchange products between East and West namely the silk. It has been proved that the Mediterranean countries had ties with India and China through land and marine routes²⁹.

The most important routes are

- ❖ The route coming out of China. It is the route that comes from China and crosses Kharasan; the Iranian Plateau till it reaches the middle of Iraq. The route then moves northward to the ports at the Mediterranean. The route moves from China to Samarqand, Bukhara, Maro, Nesabor, Rai, Hamdhan and Baghdad where it branches out. The most important of these branches were the branch that heads towards Caspian Sea, Folja River and Balghar. There was another branch that heads to the Black Sea and its ports.

²⁸ Sohar Fort Museum Guide

²⁹ Abdul Rahman Abdul Karim, the Role of Chinese in Navigation and Islamic Trade till the 14th Hijra century, Ministry of Heritage and Culture.

- ❖ The route from India. It has two branches.
 - 1- The road from India to Sind and Kharasan.
 - 2- The coastal road in the Gulf to Iraq, which crosses Sind, Karman, Fares and Ahwaz to Basra and Baghdad.

The sea routes, they are two ways, both very important for Oman:

The first way: from the Persian Gulf to China across the Indian Ocean, then to Kolm Mali. It will then head to southern part of the island of Serendib (Ceylon), and then to the Malacca Strait, through China Sea and the end it will reach Canton port in China.

The second way is the Arabian Sea road (the Sea of Oman for now) through the Strait of Bab and across the Red Sea Ports and till it reaches the Mediterranean Sea ports.

The importance of Oman to the Silk Roads³⁰:

First: Oman geographic location between the continents of Asia, Africa and along the northern part of the entrance to the Persian Gulf, which leads to Iraq and the Fertile Crescent.

Second: The location of some of its ports on the Sea of Oman such as Muscat and Sohar Ports. Muscat Port was a safe haven for ships against the rough seas. Sohar port provides travelers with rations, supplies and commercial goods intended for export.

Third: The ships masters benefited from the Omanis vast experience of sea and navigation on the one hand and their good treatment.

(2): Religious outreach:

(A) Religious outreach with ancient civilizations:

³⁰ UNSECO Silk Road Project

Since prehistoric times, frankincense played a serious role in bringing civilization of Oman and other civilizations close to each others. Frankincense was used in religious rituals in ancient civilizations such as the ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamia civilizations and elsewhere. It was also used in the rituals of Christianity. This explains its use in Europe. It is also used in Islamic religious occasions such as Eids, wedding and other ceremonies. The Omani frankincense fame spread east and west, especially in India and Persia and the Arabian Peninsula, especially in the Hijaz, Yemen, Egypt and the Levant as well as Europe.

If you look at the communication established by the ancient Omani, you will find that it is purely commercial. It should be noted that the cause of this communication is purely religious. The product that helped in the rapprochement between these civilizations - the frankincense - was used in religious ceremonies.

(B) Religious outreach in Africa:

The Islamic influence in Africa in general and in the eastern parts in particular is very evident especially in Uganda and Mombassa and Zanzibar and neighboring kingdoms. This is clear from the prestigious and distinctive status of the Omani merchants. Some of them were advisers and among those who are very close to the rulers and kings.

The most important Omani personalities who had a major cultural influence in the African community were

Sheikh Khamis bin Juma, The King, "Mutisia I", King of Uganda embraced Islam because of this man. . His successor also embraced Islam. When this successor came to power, the first thing he did was to order the construction of mosques and disseminate Islamic rituals (1856 AH / 1884).

He also ordered his subjects to abide by the morality of Islam in their daily transactions and social living. He also began dating, according to the Hijra calendar. He did not only spread Islam within the kingdom but he also disseminated it to the other kingdoms through some of the kings of those kingdoms.

Sheikh Abdurrahman bin Obaid bin Hamoud, who was a personal envoy for Sayyid Burghash bin Said, Sultan of Zanzibar to the King "Kabarryja" King of Bezeboro, He then became a close adviser to King mentioned above.

Sheikh Ahmed bin Ibrahim Al-Ameri, His promotion efforts for Islam attracted a large number of leaders of African tribes. He is one of the first Omani preachers who have left an impact on the spread of Islam in Uganda. He arrived from Zanzibar to the court of King Sana in the Kingdom of Uganda 1843 G. His arrival was a turning point in the history of this kingdom as it marks the beginning of Islam there.

Sheikh Hamad bin Mohammed bin Juma Almrajabi known as "Niboteeb", the conqueror of Congo. He is one of the most famous Omani preachers and traders.

Sheikh Mohammed bins Khalfan Al Barwani. He was a personal aide for the conqueror Hamad al Marhabi and his agent as well. The two people established an Arab Islamic emirate in the Upper Congo.

(C) Religious outreach with Asia:

Oman has rich navigational history. The Omanis established links with the civilized peoples of the ancient and modern world alike. The Omani vessels reached the kingdoms of India, Ceylon, the Malay Archipelago and Canton in China in the eighth century AD.

The pieces of pottery discovered in Sohar are good evidences for the direct navigation routes between Oman and China since the beginning of the fourth or fifth century AD.

Although the trip between Oman and China used to take one hundred and twenty days (from the port of Muscat, the port of Canton China through the port of Malacca - Singapore. Despite the many risks and difficulties facing their ships at the time; Omani journeys continued and rarely stopped.

An Omani, the founder of the first mosque in China:

The Omani sailors and traders were the first Arabs to arrive in China. They have brought with them their culture. During their stay there since the eighth century, they practiced their Islamic rituals freely and easily. They founded the Great Mosque in Canton; the first mosque established in China. The mosque is still standing till date³¹.

(3) Cultural communication:

The Omani Arabs had played a big role in spreading the Arabic language in East Africa, after the spread of education in this area through the schools built by the Omanis in particular and Arabs in general. In the era of Al Busaid state, the Arabic language was the medium of teaching. The Arab culture and Arabic language spread through the Arab teachers.

The Arabic language spread among large segments of the population in East Africa, with the extension of power and influence of Oman since the mid-nineteenth century AD³². Al Busaid state in the reign of Sultan Said bin Sultan, extended to the East and Central Africa as a whole. Zanzibar

³¹ Tim Sifrin , the above reference

³² Mohammed al Mahrouqi , an Article at Nizwa magazine ,issue No 51 OPPAE, Muscat 2007

has been the capital of the state. The Arabic language has been the language of the court. The rulers made their cities take the Arabic and Islamic identity. Their capital has become a lighthouse for Arabic language and literature. Arabic has also become the language of the elite thinkers and men of letters. It has also become the language of the government. Such activities introduced some Arabic vocabularies to the Swahili language such as rich (- (Mtajiri trade (Utajiri) - Market - (Soko) money (Mali, Gali (Ghali) - shop (Duka) - cheap (Rahisi)

If the impact of the Arabic language in the Swahili language is evident especially in trade, its impact is also evident in fields such as education, literature, management and Islamic terminology: such as prayer, fasting, Hajj, Zakat, and other acts of worship. It is also evident in the fields of art... etc...

It is worth mentioning that many studies ³³were made on Swahili language, its dialects and its relationship with the Arabic language. These studies concluded that Swahili has been closely linked to the Arabic language since its early years.

In summary; the Arab sailors and seafarers, particularly from Oman, succeeded in setting up trade settlements in the African islands opposite to the east African coast. They also made settlements along the coast of East Africa and the Horn of Africa to protect their business interests. This led to the emergence of what is known as the Islamic emirates model in Abyssinia.

The situation in most capitals of the Asian continent is not different from African kingdoms. The settlement of some Arab merchants, including Omanis in India, China, Ceylon and some islands of East Asia made the

³³ UNESCO Silk Road Study Project.

Arabic language, the language of trade in the majority of ports in those areas.

(4) Diplomatic and political communication:

The Chinese records ³⁴especially those related to Sang Dynasty (349-678 AH), which is known Bassanj - Shi (or history of Sang Dynasty) the name Mazoon (Muscat) In Chinese is pronounced as Ma-jun. Sohar and Oman are also mentioned there.

These records point out that Mazoon (Muscat) dispatched two embassies (delegations) to Sang Dynasty, the first in (402 AH / 1011 G) and the second in (465 AH / 1072 G). In the first delegation, an Omani ship led by an Omani captain called Abu al-Qasim visited the capital of Sang Dynasty.

The second Omani Embassy was represented by a person named Hashim bin Abdullah who presented a gift to the King of China. His gift included a set of pearls and dates, rose water, fabrics and other things. The King of China also presented valuable gifts to that embassy.

This explains that Omanis trade went beyond wood and spice in their dealings with India, Southeast Asia and China in the fifth century to the extent they sent an official embassy that was received with of respect and admiration by the king of China.

Dr. Jaafar Karar Ahmed points out that the Chinese historian (Chau-Ju-Kua) stated in his blog written between (640-656 AH) and (1242-1258 AD) the names of peoples and countries that have had direct trade with China. He also spoke about the types of mutual trades between China and these countries.

³⁴ The same source above

He mentioned Sohar as Wu-Pa , Oman as Wong-li , the island of Kish as Ki-shi , Shahr as Shi-Fa, , Qalhat as Kle-Hi-Ki, Iraq as -L- Lu) and Bahrain as Pai-Lien in Chinese.

(5) Expeditions:

The Omani is an adventurer by nature. The Omani's riding of land and sea is a good evidence of this. Since the periods of prehistory, the Omani man has known the sea and rode the waves. He made individual and mass migrations to the East African and other areas. We will highlight in brief, some of these journeys.

In the jungles of Africa:

The environment of East Africa, known for its agricultural, animal and mineral wealth helped to revitalize the business relationship between them and Oman. The Omani vessels carried them to many areas of eastern Africa including Zela , Suakin, and Berbera, , Zanzibar, the Comoros, Madagascar , Baraawe, Malindi , Mombassa and Kilwa . They did not suffice with this but rather went to Safalah in Mozambique, and Madagascar.

The Omani toured the jungles of Eastern Africa and its forests. They discovered their lakes and reached the River Congo. They wrote about the lakes and mountains which tops were covered with snow. They have reached these places long time before the Europeans reach there. Moreover, they have taught the Europeans about these areas and worked as their guides. The most famous examples for this are Sheikh / Hamad bin Mohammed bins Juma Almrajabi known to Africans as "Tbuteb" and his colleague Sheikh / Mohammed bin Khalfan Al Barwani.

The dedication of Omanis and their adventurous spirit are kept

immortalized in history. There is no doubt that their discovery of the eastern African parts was likened by some historians to the discovery of a sea of darkness.

Unfortunately, Omanis were not interested in documenting their biographies and adventures. If they had written down everything they saw, we would now have a precious treasure of news, information, and biographies.

The period of Al Busaid in East Africa witnessed an important stage in terms of the spread of Islam in these areas. Islam became known to the people in Uganda, Congo Upper River, Rwanda and Burundi as well as inland areas in Tanzania, thanks to the efforts made by Omanis.

Tiputeb, the conqueror and adventurer as a model³⁵

Hamad bin Mohammed Al Almarjabi is one of the most famous Omani traders in East Africa in the early nineteenth century. He was born in Zanzibar in 1840. He had leadership qualities. He had a brave start in the field of commerce as he started his trade career when he was 12. He began trading in salt and then Ivory, beads and various goods. He lived a life full of adventure, challenge, difficulties, hardships and risks. His biography is a series in the chain of the Omani presence in East Africa. He was at close relation with the European adventurers. He used to provide them with security service and labor force working in the field of mining. This earned him a good position with the Sultans of the regions in the eastern coasts of Africa and the African tribes as well.

In the capitals of Asia:

³⁵ Hamad Mohammed al Marjabi, *An Omani Adventurer in the African Jungles*, an autobiography, translated by Mohammed al Mahrouqi, 2005.

Geographers confirm that Arab traders knew a lot about China's trade. For them this country was the second Asian kingdom after India that was worth sailing for to enhance trade with it.

For Arabs, the borders of China start at the end of the borders of India. It extends until the end of the known parts of the world at that time. The Arab geographers described the China Sea as the sea of storms as it was full of storms that break ships into small pieces³⁶.

The Omani sailors and geographers gave us accurate descriptions of ports and cities in India, Indonesia and China. I will give a brief reference to some of those cities and towns which were mentioned by Tim Severn in his book Voyage of Sinbad; He sailed on board of the Omani ship 'Sohar' from Muscat Port in 1980. He visited Indian ports and beyond till he disembarked at the port of Canton in China. This adventurous journey was made in the contemporary age by a person who is still alive. The major cities he visited with this vessel, which was a prototype of the sail boats in the medieval ages.

Calcutta. The largest city on the west coast of India. Vasco Da Gama disembarked in it in 1498 with the first fleet of European merchandise to the Indian Ocean. It should be noted that the Arabs have trade links with this part of the world several centuries before Vasco Da Gama

Minnikoy: Minnikoy is one of the islands supplying the Arab medieval vessels with ropes made of coconut husk. This type of rope still exists; as it represents the only exported product by this island. It is also the island from which the ropes were brought for the ship Sohar which sailed from Muscat to Canton in China in 1980 in an eight-month journey known as Sinbad Journey.

³⁶ Tim Sifrin, the reference above.

Canton: It is the largest port in China in the ancient times. The port is still vivid with activity. The port was abundant with foreign traders. Thousands of traders, businessmen at the commercial market were Arabs, Persians and Indians.

Malacca: now known as Singapore, has maintained its economic status since the age of the famous Omani sailor Ahmed Bin Majid. It is one of the most active business cities in Asia and the world. Bin Majid spoke about it when he talked about the Asian port at the route of the Omani ships. In certain times, it was the most important port in south East Asia.

The adventures of Omanis are still continuing:

In any case; the adventures of Oman did not stop as Omani passion for adventure and love of exploration transmits from one generation to the other. The last journey to , discover the Asian including the large cities , small villages , fields, rivers, valleys and high mountains was in the year 2010 (The journey will not be the last, of course). The land journey by Mohammed al Zubair alongside with some Omani adventurers toured seven Asian countries. The journey coincided with UNESCO Year of International Rapprochement among Cultures 2010.

Those travelers carried with them some of the features of the Omani culture. They met with many people from different nations to exchange gifts. This trip in fact is a live example for the rapprochement among cultures. It was also a great opportunity to learn about the lifestyles of those peoples. He termed it a cultural adventure.

It is worth mentioning that the team traveled by car from Singapore to Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and China, the final destination of the journey³⁷.

Chapter 3

Oman in the memory of the world

This chapter includes

First: Journeys made to Oman

- ❖ Group journeys
- ❖ Individual journeys

Second: Oman treasures at the world museums

Third: Thought and cultural contribution of Omanis to the other cultures

First: Group journeys to Oman

Since the emergence of modern Oman in the 70s, Oman received a number of journeys for different purposes. This mirrors Oman's openness to the world and the keen desire to exchange knowledge and science with other.

The delegations include scientists in geology, environment, seas and archeologists. The scientists still pour to Oman to take part at the different scientific gatherings and forums.

The number of tourists visiting Oman is also witnessed a rapid growth especially Oman has become of the major tourist destinations; thanks to the cultural diversity in Oman.

³⁷ A Cultural Adventure , Al Zubair House Est. 2010

Oman is known for its unique topography which ranges from mountain tips, where the temperature is very low, to the desert, where the humidity is high to the interior plains and wadis, known for moderate climate. This helped Oman to have diverse plants and crops.

We will talk about the archeological expeditions that visited Oman during the last half of the 20th century.

The archeological expeditions

Many scientific expeditions visited Oman to conduct archeological surveys. The major expeditions include

1- The American Expedition for the Study of Man visited Oman in 1952. The expedition was led by Wendell Phillips. Although the expedition's surveys did not reach tangible outcomes and were limited to Sohar, they conducted surveys on some used in the interior and south of Oman. They then focused their surveys on the southern areas in Oman such as Blaid, Khur Ruri and al Mughaisel.

Wendell Phillips' writings about Oman are very important especially he visited Oman at the time when oil was discovered for the first time in Oman. He has witnessed the socioeconomic changes associated with the emergence of oil. Wendell Phillips' journeys inside Oman mirror the growth and developments witnessed by Omanis due to the socioeconomic changes.

On the other hand, Wendell Phillips has been very keen on writing down his remarks about the sites he visited. He wrote for example that he saw many tombs, forts and castles. In Al Jabal al Akhdhar, he saw tough terrains full of

tombs. He saw many tombs also near Sohar; which might be the remains of Persians during the 9th or the 11th centuries³⁸.

The encouraging results have formed the base on which the other expeditions started their work especially after the modern Renaissance in Oman in 1970. Since that time, many expeditions visited Oman to discover the heritage of the first man, which proved beyond questioning the rich history and culture of Oman.

Denmark expedition

The Denmark expedition led by Frifelt visited Oman in 1972 and conducted a number of surveys on the northern parts of the south of Oman to trace the culture of Umm Elnar , on the road of the old tribes , which connects north and south of Oman. The expedition unearthed Bat historic sites in Ibri. They found a graveyard that includes a hundred tombs built of stones. The tombs date back to the late fourth millennium BC and the beginning of the third millennium. They also found six stone buildings that might have been used as security towers. The site was enlisted at the World Heritage List in 1988.

3- Harvard University Expedition

Harvard University Expedition, which visited Oman in 1973, is one of the pioneering expeditions that visited Oman in the modern age.

The expedition's surveys helped to discover a number of important historic sites that date back to the third millennium BC. They reached a preliminary conclusion that the settlements at the third millennium BC were usually close to water sources. This proves that the Omani man knew agriculture and pasturing since long time.

4- The French expedition for monuments

³⁸ Ali Al Medaiwli 1428 H/2007

The expedition was delegated with the task of exploring the monuments in Sohar. They dug a ditch at the top of the hill close to the current city. They believed that the area has been the most populated area in Oman. When they reached 10 meter-deep, they managed to read to the full history of the city when they decoded the symbols and the writings on the walls of this trench. The writings date back to the pre Islamic era.

The findings of those cemeteries included red pottery pieces which resemble the pottery of Jamdat Nasr site in Iraq. A well manufactured red pottery ornamented with horizontal black lines and other pieces with hangers were also found. Such type of jars was prevalent in the cemeteries and settlements of the um al-Nar period in Oman.

This material is very similar to the ceramic used in Italy in the first century. The expedition also found remains of some Chinese porcelain that date back to the medieval ages. The porcelain came through the long route from China³⁹. This proves that Majan culture was very flourishing and has strong ties with China.

5- Expedition of Dr. Piatri De Cardi

In 1974, Dr. Piatri led a scientific archeological expedition that conducted a number of surveys on the northern west parts of Oman namely the sites extending from the wilayat of Izki to the wilayat of Ibri. They reached valuable conclusions about the lifestyles of the old Omani man in the interior regions in Oman. They found 79 historic sites in 1976 only.

6- The joint Euro Commission⁴⁰

The team was formed in 1984 from three European countries namely France, Italy and U.K to study Ras Al Hadd, in the coastal area. They focused on

³⁹ Sindbad journey.

⁴⁰ Ali Al Midaiwli, the reference above.

studying the old trade routes that connected the Omani coasts and Wadi al Sanad and Wadi al Rafidain cultures. The team was led by S.Cleuziou of France, M.Tosi of Italy and J.Raid of U.K.

7- Birmingham University Expedition ⁴¹

During the 80s, this expedition conducted a number of surveys and some digging works in Besba area near Bahla in the Al Dakhiliyah region. The expedition focused on studying the features of the cultures in the third millennium BC, namely Um al Nar culture. They tended also to study the burial ceremonies during this era. The expedition found some tombs and defensive towers that date back to Um El Nar culture in Oman.

8- The French exploration team ⁴²

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture implemented a 10-year exploration project in the interior areas of Sohar city. The project was carried out by a number of Omani archeologists. There was also another French team that conducts a number of digging works in the districts of the city; where traders used to live. The findings proved that the place has abundant natural resources and fertile water that helped population to settle in the interior areas. Archeological findings have proved that Sohar used to be an active commercial centre at that time. Traders` stamps and well manufactured red pottery were found at the site, as well as Chinese porcelain which was discovered in the strata dating back to the first centuries of Islam which has stressed that trading with China continued to develop until the mid of 13th century AD. The French team found a small bottle and a statute of a Buddhist sitting on lotus flower and reclining on a statute of two lions.

2- The individual journeys

⁴¹ Same reference

⁴² Same reference

It is impossible to shed light on the individuals' journeys made to Oman throughout history. In the following paragraphs, I will try to shed light on the most prominent Arab and foreign travelers who visited Oman.

A- Arab travelers

Many Arab geographers spoke about Oman in their books. Many geographers such as Ibn al Mujawir, Al Maqdisi, Ibn Al Faqih, Al Hamdhani, Al Hamawi, Astakhri, Al Bushri, Al Yaqubi, Al Qazwini and Ibn Maswih developed maps. Following is a brief overview about the prominent Arab travelers who visited Oman in the different ages.

- ❖ Al Maqdisi: He visited Oman during the 4th Hijra century (10th AD). He gave full description of the cities, architectural designs, houses, mosques, markets, fruits, gardens and irrigation canals (Aflaj).
- ❖ Al Masoudi: He visited Oman in the 10th century AD and mentioned that copper was extracted from Oman. He spoke about agricultural activities, crops, markets and the export of cereals and fruits abroad.
- ❖ Ibn Batota; He is a renowned Arab travelers who visited Oman in the 14th century AD. He had many interesting writings about his visit to Oman.
- ❖ Al Antaki. He visited Dhofar and described frankincense production in detail. He wrote ' they have the frankincense trees which they hit with an iron piece till the liquid pours. They leave it for 10 days after which they hit the external layer. They leave it again for another 10 days and then collect it. The collection period takes about five months.
- ❖ Many other travelers visited and still visit Oman till date.

B- International travelers ⁴³

Many international travelers visited Oman for different purposes. We will try to shed light on their journey according to the purpose of the visit

1- Diplomats

- ❖ Edward Hinderson.
- ❖ Sir Donald Hawley who wrote a book titled ' Oman & Its Renaissance
- ❖ Wishnbiurger. He visited Muscat in 1835 and met with Sayyid Said bin Sultan. He spoke well about Muscat and its people.
- ❖ Sadler of U.K . He visited Muscat in 1819. Most likely he was delegated by the U.K government to Sayyid Said bin Sultan.
- ❖ Samuel Part Mayls. He was a political commissioner in Muscat for 8 years from 1872 to 1880. He toured most of the Omani regions and wrote many books about the history of Oman and the Gulf region. His writings are still the main reference for researchers in the Gulf and Omani region. He wrote ' Gulf, its countries and tribes. His books were translated by Mohammed Amin Abdullah and were published by the Ministry of Heritage in 1983.

2- Doctors

- ❖ Dr. Kark Kramer of Denmark visited Muscat in 1761.
- ❖ Dr. Nostis of U.S visited Muscat in 1836 with her husband Dr. Hills. She gave full description of the woman ward inside the royal place.

3- Scientists, thinkers and journalist

- ❖ The Swedish botanist Peter Forskal who visited Muscat in 1761.
- ❖ The German painter George Vilham who visited Muscat in 1761.
- ❖ Professor Christian Van Havin of Denmark who visited Muscat in 1761.

⁴³ Ahmed al Falahi, an article titled ' The description of Omani travelers to Oman at the last five centuries, Nizwa magazine. Issue 62- 2010.

- ❖ James Silk Binkingham, a renowned journalist and writer in U.K who visited Muscat in 1816.
- ❖ The Irish writer, Gartin Jerry, who visited Muscat in 1878. He was working as an editor for Times newspaper of India.
- ❖ Remis Usher Iloy visited Muscat in March 1838. He was looking at al Jabal al Akhdhar and the surrounding areas for the rare plants prescribed for him. He found more than 250 plants. He recorded 150,000 of plants he has seen during his journey to Egypt, Levant, Morocco, Turkey, Iran and central Asia. He sent all of them together with his remarks to the Natural Science Museum in Paris before his death in 1839.
- ❖ The U.K journalist James Morris.

4- Explorers and Adventurers

- ❖ Marco Paulo who visited Oman and described Qalhat as ' a city at which rich traders live. Marco Paulo, who was a companion to Vasco Da Gama, described the rare method for ship building before 700 years ago⁴⁴. He documented his adventures at these areas. These writing aroused the interest of Europeans in Asia during the 14th century AD.
- ❖ Parbosa of Portugal who visited Quriyat and Muscat. He wrote about on this visit.
- ❖ Bador Taksira who arrived in Muscat in 1587, at the time the Portuguese rule was coming to an end.
- ❖ Martin Francois of France who visited Muscat in 1669 and was an eye witness for the battles between Oman and the Portuguese.
- ❖ Johan Ofingiton of Briton who visited Oman in 1693 and wrote about the morals of Omanis.
- ❖ Carstin Naybor, the Danish traveler, who visited Muscat in 1765 and wrote a book about the area in this period.

⁴⁴ UNESCO Silk Road Study Project

- ❖ The Italian traveler Finzo who visited Muscat at early 19th century. He wrote a book about Sayyid Said bin Sultan.
- ❖ Windil Philips, the U.S explorer who discovered oil. He wrote a number of books including ' Balqais Treasures ', A Journey to Oman and The Unknown Oman. He gave detailed description of frankincense extraction.
- ❖ Alfred Thisger: He is one of the most renowned British adventurers in the last century. He managed to cross the vacant quarter deserts.
- ❖ Bertram Thomas, he wrote a book about his visit to Dhofar. He wrote
- ❖ Dhofar is a lucky area. It has a unique climate with wind blowing during the summer season resulting in heavy rain that turns the place into a paradise. The frankincense trees, which are abundant in this area, contributed to the fame of this area. This valuable crop is the source of prosperity for Dhofar.

The Omani treasures in the world

1- An overview on the history of currencies in Oman

As said above, the Omanis established contacts and communicated with the rest of the world many centuries ago. This earned them good fame. They were also active traders of frankincense and copper to cultures such as Mesopotamia, Nile Valley, India, China and Africa. They also imported many products from these cultures. Besides the barter system, they also used currencies in their trade either in their group or individual transactions. In the following paragraphs, we will shed light on the currencies in Oman throughout the different ages.

Currencies in Oman throughout the different ages ⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Professor Mohammed Abu Alfarj, Omani Coins in the Islamic History, Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Muscat, Oman.

The Arabs including Omanis knew the Sasani derhams and Dinars as well as Flous of Bezan. The Sasani currencies were most common in Oman and were used in their trade with

At the era of Khalifa Omar Bin Al Khattab, the Arabs started coining. They coined the Sasani Derhams and added to them the Hijra dates. His is an important thing because the dates used in such Derhams were based on the years of rule for each king. You may not know the date unless you compare the date with the list of those kings.

As far as Oman is concerned, coinage started in the Ummayat era. The first coin struck in Oman was dated 90H. Dr. Mohammed Abu Al Faraj believes that this is attributed to the fact that Oman and its Imams and rulers became independent and not under the rule of the Ummayat rule.

The sources indicate that many coins were struck in Oman in the different eras especially the Abbasis age at which about 30 different coins were struck. The Buwihan also struck coins. The trend continued in the subsequent ages.

The Omani coins

The Omani Imams and rulers in the Islamic ages had limited number of special coins for them. The historian attributes this to a number of reasons such as

- A- They might have been lost.
- B- They might have been smelted or re coined.
- C- The rulers may have the religious tendency that prevented them from imitating the other rulers.

This may justify the limited number of coins, the most important of which are⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Same reference

- 1- The Ibadhi Derham that bears the name of Radhwan bin Jaafar. It was struck in Oman in 345 H.
- 2- The Ibadhi Omani Derham, which bears the name of Radhwan bin Jaafar and was struck in Oman in 348 H.
- 3- The Ibadhi Omani Derham which bears the name of Radhwan Bin Jaafar. The place of coinage is unknown. It is 15.5 m wide and 1.28 gram heavy (This derham is kept at Qatar National Museum).

2- The Omani coins in the museums of the world

It is most striking to know that the world museums have many Omani coins that were struck at different dates. It should be noted that the striking coins at an early age and having a house for coinage striking and setting up trade exchanges with other cultures and kingdoms reflect a modern and full fledged state.

Only few pieces of coin were unveiled at some of the world museums. Historians still believe that many coins were not properly maintained for different reasons; a tragedy in itself. The Omani coins at the world museums include

- 1- Abbasi derham that bears the name of Al Muqtadir Billah & Sabkari, struck in Oman in 298 H, 27 m and 3.3 grams.
- 2- Abbasi derham that bears the name of Al Muqtadir Billah & Sabkari, struck in Oman in 298, 24.5 m and 2.42 grams.
- 3- Abbasi derham that bears the name of Al Muqtadir Billah & Ahmed bin Khalil struck in Oman in Oman in 299 H, 25 m and 3.25 gm.
- 4- Abbasi derham that bears the name of Al Motea Lillah and Mohamed bin Yousef, Struck in Oman in 336 H, 25 m and 3.75 grams.

- 5- Ibbadhi Omani derham that bears the name of Radhwan bin Jaafar, the place of coinage is unknown. It is 16.5 mmm and 1.28 grams.

The Omani coins in Berlin Museum

- 1- Abbasi derham that bears the name of Al Mutaqi Billah and Yousef , struck in Oman 332 H
- 2- Buwihan derham that bears the name of Al Taea Lilah , Adhod Al Dawlah and Simsam Al Dawlat, struck in Oman in 368 H.
- 3- Buwihan derham that bears the name of Al Qadir Billah, Simsam Al Dawlah and Fakhr Al Dawlah, struck in Oman in 383 H.
- 4- Buwihan derham that bears the name of Al Qadir Billah, Simsam al Dawlah and Fakhr al Dawlat, struck in Oman in 386 H.

The Omani coins in Istanbul museum

- 1- Abbasi derham that bears the name of al Mutaqi Billah, Yousef ibn Wajih and his son Mohammed, Struck in Oman in 331 H.
- 2- Abbasi dinar that bears the name of al Motea Lilah and Omar bin Yousef, struck in Oman in 345 H.
- 3- Abbasi dinar bears the name of al Motea Lilah and Omar bin Yousef, struck in Oman in 346 H.
- 4- Abbasi dinar bears the name of al Motea Lilah and Omar bin Yousef, struck in Oman in 347 H.
- 5- Buwihan dinar that bears the name of Al Talea Lilah, Adhodh Al Dawlah & Al Marzaban bin Adhodh al Dawlah, struck in Oman in 367 H.

The Omani coins kept in the honors museum in Paris

- 1- Abbasi derham that bears the name of Al Mutaqi Billah, Yousef Ibn Wajih and his son Mohammed, struck in Oman in 330 H.

- 2- Buwihan dinar that bears the name of Al Motea Lillah, Rukn Al Dawlah and Adhud Al Dawlah, struck in Oman in 360 H.
- 3- Buwihan Dinar that bears the name of Al Taea Lillah, Rukn Al Dawlah and Adhud al Dawlah and Simsam Al Dawlah (AL Marzaban), struck in Oman in 364.

The Omani coins kept in the museum of the American Coinage Association in New York

- A- One quarter of an Abbasi dinar that bears the name of Al Motea Lillah and Omar bin Yousef, struck in Oman (year unknown), 14 mlm and 0.92 grams.
- B- Buwihan dinar that bears that name of Al Qadir Billah, Bahaa Al Dawlah and Quwam Eddin Abu Nasr, struck in Oman in 395 H.
- C- Derham Abbasi that bears the name of Al Mutaqi Billah and Mohammed bin Yousef, struck in Oman in 333 H, 24 mlm and 2.10 grams. One of Rashad Bik collection (There are two similar derhams, the first in Istanbul Museum and the second in Paris Museum).
- D- An Abbasi derham that bears the name of Al Mutaqi Billah, Yousef and his son Mohammed, struck in Oman in 329 H. A similar one was found.
- E- An Abbasi dinar that bears the name of Al Mutaqi Billah and Mohammed bin Yousef, struck in Oman in 333 H. (It was part of treasure found in Sweden in 1855 G).

The cultural and thought contributions of Omanis with the other peoples

Oman should feel proud that it had scientists and thinkers who had their contribution to Sharia, jurisprudence, language and marines sciences as well

Abu 'Abd Ar-Rahman al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi (more commonly known as al-Farahidi, was a philologist from southern Arabia (modern day Oman). His best known contributions are Kitab al-'Ayn (Arabic: كتاب

العين, considered the first dictionary of the Arabic language), the current standard for Harakat (vowel marks in Arabic script), and the invention al-'arud (the study of Arabic prosody). He moved to Basra, Iraq, he was Ibadhi. Sibawayhand Al-Asma'i was among his students. The Omanis after him played an important role in disseminating Arab language and make it the language of trade and economy in the African horn. The Omanis interest in Arabic language is recognized by all visitors to Oman throughout ages.

Ahmad ibn Mājid

Ahmad ibn Mājid was an Omani navigator and cartographer. He was raised with a family famous for seafaring; at the age of 17 he was able to navigate ships. He was so famous that he was known as the first Arab seaman. The exact date is not known, but bin Majid probably died in 1500. He became famous in the West as the navigator who has been associated with helping Vasco Da Gama find his way from Africa to India. He was the author of nearly forty works of poetry and prose.

His most important work was Kitab al-Fawa'id fi Usul 'Ilm al-Bahr wa 'l-Qawa'id (Book of Useful Information on the Principles and Rules of Navigation), written in 1490. It is a navigation encyclopedia, describing the history and basic principles of navigation, lunar mansions, rhumb lines, the difference between coastal and open-sea sailing, the locations of ports from East Africa to Indonesia, star positions, accounts of the monsoon and other seasonal winds, typhoons and other topics for professional navigators. He drew from his own experience and that of his father, also a famous navigator, and the lore of generations of Indian Ocean sailors.

Bin Majid wrote several books on marine science and the movements of ships, which helped people of the Persian Gulf to reach the coasts of India,

East Africa and other destinations. Among his many books on oceanography, the *Fawa'dh fi-Usl Ilm al-Bahrwa-al-Qawaidah* (The Book of the Benefits of the Principles of Seamanship) is considered as one of his best. He wrote also 'The Three Fruits in Knowing the Sea' and 'The Big Noniyah'. The first was translated into English by J a Tiyeet (The Arab Navigation).⁴⁷

He grew very famous and was fondly called *Shabab Al Dein* (The Shooting Star) for his fearlessness, strength and experience as a sailor who excelled in the art of navigation.

Ahmed bin Majid's efforts in the mid-15th century helped the Portuguese navigator Vasco Da Gama in completing the first all water trade route between Europe and India by using an Arab map then unknown to European sailors.

Two of his famous hand-written books are now prominent exhibits in the National Library in Paris.

3- Jabir Ibn Zaid

Jabir Ibn Zaid is the Imam of the Ibadhi creed. He was born in Firq village in Nizwa (641). He traveled to Basra with his family where he received knowledge. He moved also to Madinah and met with senior companions of our prophets (PBUH).

He played a big role in promoting for Islam. He disseminated his views and religious opinions inside and outside Basra. He had strong relations with scholars in Basra and Oman; most of them were from Azd ad officials at the Umayyad regime. He died in 718 G and was buried in Basra.

⁴⁷ UNESCO Silk Road Study Project

His journey from Oman to Basra and Medina is a model for scientific journeys for seeking knowledge.

Chapter 4

Fruits of the cultural communication with other cultures

This chapters includes

First: Omanis as traders and seafarers throughout ages.

Second: Oman cultural projects

- ❖ Sultan Qaboos Scientific Chairs
- ❖ Sultan Qaboos Encyclopedia of Arab Names.
- ❖ Participation of the Silk Road project
- ❖ Ras Al Hadd settlement study project

Third: Ambassadors of Friendship and Peace

- ❖ The Vessel Sultana
- ❖ The Vessel Sohar
- ❖ The Vessel Fulk al Salamah
- ❖ Shabab Oman.

- ❖ Jawharat Muscat

Fourth: The culture of tolerance, love and peace

- ❖ Tolerance and its impact on rapprochement among cultures
- ❖ The rich thought in Oman today

First: Professionalism in navigation and trade throughout the ages

It is not easy to separate the commercial activity for a marine nation like Oman for its navigation activity. The navigation was meant for certain purposes, the foremost of which was business. The trade exchange between Oman and other nations were at its peak; thanks to the brilliance of Omanis in riding seas and oceans.

Although it is difficult to address navigation and trade independently, still we can highlight the salient features for both of them. In this chapter, I will focus light on each business independently to show how Omanis were modern and civilized people since ages. We will also show how they communicated with the cultures of the world and extended bridges of dialogue and understanding with them.

1- Marine navigation

Oman is known for its strategic location as it lays mid way between East and West. The Omanis are by nature fond of trade. The location of Oman helped them to establish direct links with the east African coasts as well as countries like India, Sri Lanka, China and Singapore (previously known as Malqa). Omanis also established links with Sind, Persia, Gulf, Iraq, the Nile Valley and Levant.

The archeological studies point out that Omanis were the leaders in riding the sea in the Indian Sea. They were the first to bring the products of the eastern parts to the other parts, during their early journeys. After Islam, the Arabs in

general and Omanis in particular remained masters of the Indian Sea (from the 7th century to the 16th century AD). They established trade ties with ports such as Calcutta, Malabar, Malaqa, Canton and others.

The cities at the western coasts of India were among the most important Arab trade centers at the Indian Ocean. The proximity of Oman to the Indian Continent and Persia helped the ships to make to journeys at one year. If they did not stop at the destination port, they might increase the number of journeys to four and five a year (as mentioned by Ibn Majid).

The journey from the Omani ports to the Indian ports with the sail vessels used to take two weeks at least. The two-way journey, including the stops for trade exchanges, used to take three to four months. The modern and contemporary references point out that the journey from the Omani ports to the Indian ports takes between 28 days to one month with the common sail boats⁴⁸.

The role played by Omanis in the marine navigation is as old as the history of this nation. There is a common agreement among historians that Omani rode the sea when man invented ships and sails. The geographical location of Oman helped it to be an ideal transit point in the trade caravans between East and West. They found in Oman the secure place where they will feel safe and get their logistic needs.

The close relationship between the Omani and the sea helped Omanis to have profound knowledge of the sea. The Omani captains know when the wind will blow and when waves will be high. While onboard, the Omani ship masters observe the stars and planets movement to identify his destination. He is also very familiar with sea signs and signals. Ibn Majid made reference to some marine signs such as ebb and flow, wind, islands, coastal rocks, the

⁴⁸ The same reference above

color of water, the birds of the sea, the fish and other element which were used to guide the ship master in his journey.

The Omani ship masters also used some simple tools to measure the angles. They were very skillful in dealing with such tools and devises and reach their targeted destination safely. This profound knowledge of the sea was transmitted from one generation to the other.

We will give one example from the journey of the vessel Sohar in 1980 ⁴⁹to show how these signs are very helpful. When the vessel Sohar approached Malabar coasts near Calcutta, the ship crew, as described by Ahmed Bin Majid, ⁵⁰saw some marine snake. This gave them assurance that they are about to reach the Indian coasts. The biologist who was onboard affirmed the same and told the ship crew that these snakes live in shallow water (about 10-30 meter deep).

2- Marine Trade

Trade is a source of living not only for traders but to different sectors of society such as navigators, shipping laborers, guards and store keepers. The shipbuilders also played an important role in the flourishing of marine trade. The business also provided job opportunities for carpenters and rope makers. The marine trade is therefore a major source for economic boom in Oman throughout the different ages.

The old Omanis felt very proud of the location of their country, at the cross road between East and West. It is not strange therefore that most of the Omani coastal cities, if not all, were important transit points especially for vessels that need to get logistic support such as potable water and food. These

⁴⁹ We will cover Sindbad journey in another part of the book.

⁵⁰ When there is a mention of the Omani navigation, there is a mention of Ahmed bin Majid. The Omani renowned navigator who had more than 50 years experience in navigation filed.

cities/ ports include Deba, Sohar, Muttrah, Muscat, Quriyat, Qalhat, Sur, Masirah, Samarham, Mirbat and others.

3-Salient features of the Omani trade

The Omanis, throughout ages, were known for their noble dealing with customers from different nationalities. This habit moved from one generation to the other. This culture helped Omanis to win the trust and confidence of their customers. The salient features of the Omani trade is as follows

A- Welcoming people

The Omanis used to give warm welcome to the trade ships that stay in transit at their ports. The Arab renowned traveler, Ibn Batota wrote ' Most Omanis are working in trade, which is the major source of their income. They trade at the commodities imported from India. They express their happiness when any ship disembarks at their ports'.

B- Seals

The Omanis used seals to authenticate the documents and approve the different statements. In wadi Maysir in the al Sharqiyah region, seals made of mud were found⁵¹. These seals date back to the third millennium BC. The archeologists believe that these seals were used in trade and export.

C- Market organization

Since ages, Omanis used to divide their markets into permanent and temporary ones. The permanent markets open their doors on daily basis. These markets are mostly located in big cities and trade centers such as Nizwa in the al Dakhiliyah region, Muscat and Sohar in the coastal areas. The markets at the interior cities used to operate in the afternoon till sunset as farmers used to work in their farms during daytime.

⁵¹ UNSECO Silk Road Study Project

D- Barter system

The historian, Al Masoudi, wrote that Omani and Arab traders used to carry their products to India and China. They used to barter such products with the silk and cotton thoubes. They don't sell such products for dirhams or dinars⁵². The Arabs then used coins which were later replaced with currencies (the Kaghid of China- 25 Khaghid were equal to one dinar).

Second: Oman Cultural Projects

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos is known for his interest in religion, languages, history, art, astronomy and environment. This is evident from the support accorded by His Majesty the Sultan to the many cultural projects which are implemented by Oman or in collaboration with world organizations such as UNESCO. The major cultural projects include

1- Sultan Qaboos Scientific Chairs

Oman is proud of its deep-rooted history and its cultural heritage, especially with respect to the Arabic language and Muslim religion. The Sultanate is aware of its responsibility as a member of the international community and realizes that this role means encouraging mutual understanding and developing a culture of peace and cooperation among different nations. The Sultanate supports high level academic research around the world, and seeks practical opportunities to contribute to the development of a worthy international academic heritage for the benefit of all humankind. To achieve this aim, the Sultanate has so far established fourteen Academic Chairs and scholarships - in the name of the architect of Oman's modern Renaissance; His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

The Chairs are endowed at prestigious universities around the world that specialize in appropriate fields of knowledge including political, religious,

⁵² The same reference

cultural and economic studies. The objective that is common to all the Sultan Qaboos Chairs is to encourage the creation of a contemporary global community living in peace and governed by mutual understanding and tolerance. Another major aim is to present contemporary views on how the 'voice' of Arabs can be perceived in a more enlightened way for the sake of understanding and tolerance in this age of globalisation.

The establishment of the Sultan Qaboos Academic Chairs celebrates the contribution of the Sultanate in enhancing and developing Arabic language studies, Islamic culture, and Arab heritage, along with related spheres of study. The wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has enabled Oman to play this leading role; and indeed, it is because of His Majesty's patronage and care that the Sultanate has been able to regain its glory, preserve its historical heritage, and keep pace with partner nations all over the world.

At present, there are fourteen academic chairs carrying the name of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos at a number of international universities. The Chairs are listed below, in the order of their establishment⁵³:

- 1- Sultan Qaboos Chair for Arabic and Islamic Studies, Georgetown University, United States of America (USA), 1980.
- 2- Sultan Qaboos Chair for Arabic Language, Georgetown University, USA 1993
- 3- Sultan Qaboos Chair in Desert Farming, Arabian Gulf University, Bahrain , 1994
- 4- The Sultanate of Oman Chair (Oman Studies Unit), Al Bait University, Jordan , 1997
- 5- The Sultan of Oman Chair for Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Melbourne, Australia 2003.

⁵³ Roayl supplement, published by Oman newspaper twice a month (2/11/2010).

- 6- The Sultan of Oman Professorship in International Relations, Harvard University, USA, 2003.
- 7- The Sultan of Oman Fellowship for Islamic Studies, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Oxford University, United Kingdom, 2004.
- 8- The Sultan Qaboos Information Technology Chair, the University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan, 2004.
- 9- The Oman Information Technology Chair, NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi, Pakistan, 2004.
- 10- The Sultan Qaboos Chair of Quantitative Water Management, Utrecht University, the Netherlands, 2005
- 11- The Sultan Qaboos bin Said Chair of Arabic Studies, Beijing University, China , 2007
- 12- The Sultan of Oman Chair of Oriental Studies, Leiden University, The Netherlands , 2008
- 13- The Sultan Qaboos bin Said Chair in Middle Eastern Studies, University of Tokyo, Japan, 2010.
- 14- The Sultan Qaboos bin Said Professorship of Modern Arabic Studies, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Activities of the Sultan Qaboos Academic Chairs include various areas of study in the scientific, religious, economic and cultural domains, including the arts and humanities. The Academic Chairs contribute to the development of academic programs as well as research and development in these fields, especially with respect to their conceptual, cultural, ethical, and religious aspects.

In more specific terms, these activities include research in the areas of specialization of the holders of the chairs. This includes publishing books; and organising conferences, symposiums, lectures, and forums. These activities have a positive impact on the Sultanate and reflect the virtues of Omani society.

2- Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environment Protection

Oman is also working on reinforcing the principle of cooperation and teamwork between government and private agencies with regional and international organisations to confirm the environmental dimension as one of national priorities in developmental work in the Sultanate.

It also works to maintain the balance between development requirements and the integrity of the environment.

Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Protection is the culmination of the Sultanate's efforts in preserving the environment. It also expressed appreciation of His Majesty for those interested in environmental affairs at the global level.

The award "Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Protection" affirms His Majesty's belief in the importance of preserving the world environment, sustaining its assets and maintaining its resources to ensure their optimum utilisation.

The award is a message from His Majesty the Sultan to all humanity and an exemplary model for the collaboration of efforts to preserve the world environment and maintain its resources fresh and renewable.

It is worth mentioning that the award was founded as per the generous initiative unveiled by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said during his visit to the UNESCO Headquarters in 1989, as an integration of the interest in environment which is linked to welfare and happiness of humanity.

The purpose of the prize is to recognise outstanding contributions by individuals, groups of individuals, institutes or organisations in the

management and preservation of the environment, consistent with the policies, aims and objectives of the UNESCO.⁵⁴

The prize which is presented biennially by the UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme include a diploma scholarship and money prize. Since 2003, the awarding of HM the Sultan's Prize for Environment Protection coincides with the World Scientific Day for Peace and Development in Budapest, Hungary.

Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental launched from 1991 at the level of the five continents of the world where this international award will remain a source of inspiration to the owners of sincerity and resolve sincere.

It seeks to preserve the environment of the planet and its resources and a renewed call for the humanity for the need to cooperate and exert more effort and work to protect the biosphere in which we live.

Laureates

- ❖ 1991: Instituto de Ecología, A.C. (Mexico).
- ❖ 1993: Jan Jeník (Czech Republic).
- ❖ 1995: Lake Malawi National Park (Malawi).
- ❖ 1997: Department of Environmental Sciences, Alexandria University (Egypt) and Forest Department (Sri Lanka).
- ❖ 1999: Charles Darwin Foundation (Ecuador)
- ❖ 2001: Chad Association of Volunteers for the Protection of the Environment (Chad).
- ❖ 2003: Center for Ecology (Venezuela) and Peter Johan Schei (Norway).
- ❖ 2005: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (Australia) and Ernesto Enkerlin (Mexico).

⁵⁴ <http://www.omanet.om/Arabic/hmsg/hmsg5.asp?cat=hmsg>

- ❖ 2007: Institute of Biodiversity Conservation (Ethiopia) and Julius Oszlányi (Slovakia).
- ❖ 2009: The National Gardens Organisation, supervised by the Rural and Marine Regions at the Ministry of Environment in Spain.

The Sultanate was selected one of the top 10 countries in the world that show interest in preserving environment ; thanks to the Sultanate's efforts to preserve the environment which earned it world respect and recognition.

Sultan Qaboos Encyclopedia for Arab names

The Sultanate has been very keen on enriching the cultural life and Arabic library with important sources. The Sultan Qaboos Encyclopedia for Arab Names is a personal initiative by His Majesty the Sultan. The project started on October 1983. The encyclopedia is the outcome of an extensive research by 150 researchers from the different Arab countries. They compiled and analyzed about 7 million Arab names.

The Encyclopedia is a pioneering project that fills a gap in the Arab library. It presented a model for distinguished cooperation among researchers from diverse fields. Scientists and professors from Sultanate of Oman, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Iraq, Yemen, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar compiled the scientific material from 12 Arab countries.

The Encyclopedia is divided into two parts; the lexicon of the Arab names. It addresses more than 18,000 names. It tackles the Arab names in terms of their origin⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ The same reference above

The name ' Mohammed ' came on top of the most common used names. The name ' Amal' was the common used name for Arab ladies. A copy of the encyclopedia was gifted to UNESCO in a special celebration that was held in Paris in 1995. The reference is kept at UNESCO library.

The encyclopedia received good response from Arab readers and researchers in the different humanity sciences. The Arab radio made many programs depending on this encyclopedia, which is considered a pioneering initiative in the Arab modern history. It is also a valuable reference for the Arab library.

4- Participation at the Silk Road

The Sultanate made positive response to the call made by UNESCO to study the old trade route ' The Silk Road'. Out of the major role it played in the communication between the East and West throughout ages and its strategic location, it played a pioneering role in funding the Silk Road project. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has donated the royal yacht Fulk al Salama with all its crew for this journey. Fulk al Salama vessel followed the same road of Marko Polo in his quest for silk and spices. The vessel disembarked in Salalah on 13/11/1990 with more than 70 scientists on board. They spend one full day in Salalah during which they visited Samarham port, Al Blaid monument; the two sites which played an important role in the communication among peoples and cultures.

On 17/11/1990, Fulk Al Salama disembarked at Sultan Qaboos Port... The vessel continued its journey to the remaining ports in Pakistan, India and Middle East. The journey included 21 ports in 16 countries (17,500 miles).

The four-month journey produced 182 researchers and 19 international seminars on the cultural communication among countries of the world on the Silk Road route. Many researches were also done onboard of the ship by the scientists, thinkers and other participants.

The journey aimed at identifying the effects of communication among the different cultures and the knowledge transmitted from one culture to the other through trade exchange especially silk which was a very expensive commodity in the second millennium BC. .

5- Ras Al Hadd settlement study

Ras al-Hadd is situated 25 km to the North of Ras al-Jinzz. Excavations at the site led to finding sites dating back to the 3000, 2000 and 1000 BC and to various Islamic periods. These findings included various types of burnished pottery which dated back to the Sasanic Islamic period, east African pottery, Chinese porcelain, stone beads and garnet.

Some round shaped cemeteries dating back to 3000 BC were also found at the site, beside other oval ones which dated back to the Iran age, in addition to pottery pieces, bronze chips and beads.

Those findings reflect on the trade and economic importance of the site which was linked to the centers of ancient civilizations at Indus valley and the Mesopotamia

It is located on the eastern side of Safran Mountain, 300 m to the line facing the Indian Ocean. The site provides good source to study the trade contacts between Oman and the Indian sub- continent. The archeological excavations in the site were preceded by a general survey in 1981 which led to finding the archeological remains surrounding Ras al-Jinzz such as the settlement sites which dated back to the Bronze era and a large number of cemeteries. The sedimentation of the coastal hill at the site was dated back to 4000 and 5000 BC. The pottery of Wadi Souq and pieces of the soft soap stone found at the site indicate the existence of settlement since the start of the second millennium BC. The ministry has conducted several excavations which led to

finding many archeological pieces such as a pinky piece of pottery engraved with lines relating to Indus valley civilization.

A number of products found date back to Mesopotamian and India⁵⁶. It is most likely that Ras al Hadd and Ras Al Jinz were centers for trade for the imported items from these countries.

The archeologists also found red pottery with dark lines and drawings was also found. It is one of the best types of pottery used in the areas overlooking the Arabian Sea. Some burnished pottery dating back to the Islamic Sasanic period, East African pottery and Chinese porcelain was also found in the site.

2- Ambassadors of friendship and peace to the world

1- Sultana vessels

Sultana vessel was the best and strongest vessel owned by Sayyid Said bin Sultan, who ruled during the period from 1806 to 1856. He named it Sultana on the name of his first wife Sultana Azzah daughter of Prince Seif, the ruler of Shiraz city of Persia. The vessel was provided with great sails which the U.S captain who sailed with it to New York described as ' hugging the wind to take the vessels wherever it wants to go'.

The vessel was built in Mumbai in 1833 on the European and Omani style. Sayyid Said used the vessel in his long journeys. The vessel may be described as ' Tran-oceans'. It made many journeys between Muscat and Zanzibar crossing the eastern costs of Africa, Yemen and the long coasts of Oman till Makran and Persian coasts. It is no strange then that Sayyid Said selected the vessel to the two long journeys to New York and England.

A-New York journey ⁵⁷

⁵⁶ UNESCO Silk Road Study Project

⁵⁷ Herman Fredrich, Sultana in New York, Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Muscat 2005.

At a late time during Sayyid Said bin Sultan rule, Ahmed bin Nuaman al Kaabi traveled on board of Sultana as the first Arab and Omani envoy to the U.S.A. He traveled on board of the ship early in February 1840. The ship did many long journeys until it made an accident in 1855 on its way back from India.

The journey

Sultana went on a strait line from Zanzibar to New York in a non-stop journey. The only port it disembarked at before New York was Saint Hillman. Ahmed bin Nuaman paid a visit to its ruler and presented him a bottle of perfume as a gift from Sayyid Said.

The duration of the journey

The journey took only 87 days, the same number of days by the great U.S navy vessels.

Sultana in the U.S magazines

There has been official interest in Sultana. The U.S president then , Van Yurin , in his speech to the ship crew said ' the arrival of a vessel that carry the flag of your Sultan and its entrance to New York port express your desire to establish good relations with us. We are looking forward for everlasting bilateral relations'.

At the time Sultana disembarked in New York, 10 newspapers published many article about the vessel. Many evidences prove that the vessel has been the subject of talk for many U.S natives at that time.

Herald wrote in its editorial ' it is an exciting surprise for us, the Americans. The Post published news about the assistance provided years ago to the U.S vessel Peacock which drifted 50 miles away from Masirah. Sultana dragged Peacock to Muscat port in a successful attempt to rescue the U.S vessel.

New York newspaper also said ' We have to provide every possible assistance to the first mission by an Arab ruler for trade with the new world.

The consignment onboard of the ship

Sultana was loaded with several commercial commodities in addition to gifts Omani commodities

- ❖ 1300 bag of dates
- ❖ 21 Iranian carpets.
- ❖ 100 jars of Arabian coffee
- ❖ 108 peace of ivory
- ❖ 81 bags of Arabian glue
- ❖ 135 bag of carnation
- ❖ 1000 piece of dried and non tanned leather.

Most of these goods were familiar in the U.S markets save as the Persian carpets which made its first appearance in the U.S markets. The value of the load amounted to \$25,957.

The Omani gifts

Sultana load to New York included a number of gifts from Sayyid Said bin Sultan , the ruler of Oman and Zanzibar to the U.S government and people.

The most important of these gifts were;

- ❖ Two Arabian race horses, a pearl necklace with two big pearls.
- ❖ 120 gem stones with different colors.
- ❖ Pure gold bar , silk carpet , rose water bottle and six Abayas adorned with Kashmiri embroidery
- ❖ A sword adorned with gold.

The vessel load during its return journey

The vessel returned loaded with commodities, the most important of which were

- ❖ 125 bundles of grey fabric
- ❖ 24 pieces of crimson fabrics
- ❖ 13 bags of red, white and blue beads and ceramic plates.
- ❖ 20 packages of pint plates
- ❖ 300 traditional guns
- ❖ 25 gun powder bags.

The total value of purchases amounted to \$11,177.

It was also loaded with some items for personal use of Sayyid Said and his son Sayyid Khalid along with some purchases for some traders and rich people in Zanzibar.

The U.S gifts

The vessel was also loaded with some gifts from the U.S government and people to express their sincere desire for having good relations with Oman.

They included

- ❖ A 31 feet long boat, coated with red silk. The ropes were also made of silk.
- ❖ Some traditional weapons on which some inscriptions in Arabic such as ' A gift from U.S president to Imam of Muscat.
- ❖ Two valuable mirrors and some decorated chandeliers

The vessel was also loaded with some personal gifts from U.S individuals and institutions including a metal box filled with 50 boxes of high quality sweets (from the pharmacy of the renowned pharmacist Austin Chairman.

The gifts sent by Sayyid Said to New York on board of Sultan were considered gifts to the U.S government. Most of them are still preserved till

date. They are kept at the U.S national museum. They are considered some of the most beautiful items at the museum.

B- Sultana vessel journey to London ⁵⁸

After the return of Sultana from New York, it was sent in February 1842 to England as a military vessel that carries on board the special envoy of Sayyid Said to Queen Victoria. It was loaded with some gifts including a number of Arabian breed horses. The captain of the vessel was a U.S national called Wilson. Although it broke down at Saint Helena port in April, it disembarked in Times in June. It was then dragged to Saint Katrina port for maintenance. After accomplishing its mission, it returned safely to Zanzibar.

The success of the two official journeys has positive effect on paving the way for the friendship relations between Oman and U.S.A as well as Oman and England. The relations are still growing till date.

Sohar vessel journey to China ⁵⁹

The vessel Sohar is a sail boat that was built on the medieval style. A replica of the journey was made in 1980 and it was funded by the Omani government.

The building of the vessel

The hull of the vessel was sculptured of wood brought Indian forests. This wood was processed in wooden plates that were placed beside each other. Each plate was sworn to the other with a rope of coconut fibers. The builders used more than 75,000 coconut fruits and 4 tons of coconut fibers that were used as ropes for the sails. The builders did not use a single nail to fix the parts of the vessel. The main sail of the vessel was 75-feet long.

⁵⁸ The symposium on the monuments of the Arabian Peninsula, the same source.

⁵⁹ Tim Sifrin, the same reference

Sohar vessel was built in Sur, which was a center for building many ships in the medieval ages such as Bagla, Ghanja and Alboom. The building of the ship took 165 days on a hill, few meters above the sea level. A number of skilled Omani and Indian shipbuilders took part in the building of this shop. They were led by an Oman ship master.

The sail boat was not provided with engine and relied mainly on sails. It is therefore a replica of the Medieval Arabian sail ships. The captain of the ship, Tim Siren commented on it by saying ' I was really impressed with its performance. It is really an ideal model for the Arab commercial vessel described in thousand and One Nights tales. It was the only one in the world that can carry me with my crew members (7) to China through the Seen Sea.

4- Fulk Al Salamah ⁶⁰

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said loaned Fulk al Salama to Silk Road study team, which was sponsored by UNESCO and Oman.

The aim of the project was to study the cultural communication between peoples in the old world and the commercial and cultural bonds among them. A number of renowned scientists and researchers from different parts of the world took part at the journey.

The journey started from Venice in Italy on 23/10/1990 and disembarked at Osaka in Japan on 3/3/1991. During this journey, the vessel disembarked at a number of the old world ports. At each stop, a number of activities were organized to raise awareness of the culture of the old different countries of the world.

The vessel had an official and public reception in Muscat on 17/11/1990 as it coincided with the Sultanate's celebrations of its 20th National Day. A cultural

⁶⁰ UNESCO Silk Road Study Project , the same reference

exhibition and a seminar were held in Sultan Qaboos University on the Silk Road. Many researchers from the Sultanate and foreign countries participated at the forum. The speakers highlighted the Omanis' contribution to the world culture and the old trade road.

Fulk al Salama vessel followed the same road of Marko Polo in his quest for silk and spices. The vessel disembarked in Salalah on 13/11/1990 with more than 70 scientists on board. They spend one full day in Salalah during which they visited Samarham port, Al Blaid monument; the two sites which played an important role in the communication among peoples and cultures.

On 17/11/1990, Fulk Al Salama disembarked at Sultan Qaboos Port. A two-day seminar was held on 20th November on ' the importance of the Omani marine heritage for the Silk Road'. The vessel continued its journey to the remaining ports in Pakistan, India and Middle East. The journey included 21 ports in 16 countries (17,500 miles). The load of the 130 meter long vessel is 10864 tons. The maximum speed is 19.5 knots per hour.

The four-month journey produced 182 researchers and 19 international seminars on the cultural communication among countries of the world on the Silk Road route. Many researches were also done onboard of the ship by the scientists, thinkers and other participants.

5- Shabab Oman⁶¹

The RNO sail training vessel "RNOV Shabab Oman" is one of the largest vessels of its era in the world, which is still seaworthy and in active service. She is considered an important ambassador for Oman, visiting ports in Arab and friendly countries as part of its training programme, seeks to promote cultural contacts with other peoples and stimulate world interest in Oman, and acts as a reminder of Oman's ancient maritime history.

⁶¹ <http://mo.gov.om/Arabic/Topics/Participation/Shabab.php>

Since joining the Navy, Shabab Oman has traveled to many countries in four continents during which it played many media and diplomatic roles. It was a messenger of peace and security to the world.

The vessel has 14 sails, the total size of which is 840 meters. They are known for the Sultanate's imprinted emblem. . This makes the vessel easy spotted from distance. .

The ship was built in 1971 in Scotland from Scottish Oak and pine from Uruguay. She was first under the dictate of the Ministry for Youth, but in 1979, she was transferred to the Royal Navy of Oman for use as a training ship, teaching the trainees important navigational skills and providing experience to sail the seas.

The vessel started its operation with a long journey to U.S.A in 1986 to take part at the marine parade which was held to mark the 100th anniversary of the Liberty Statute in New York.

Since that time the vessel visited more than 140 ports around the world and traveled more than 250,000 knots. The vessel participation was crowned by capturing the International Friendship Award four times.

- ❖ 1996 in Russia.
- ❖ 1997 in Japan
- ❖ 2001 in Denmark.
- ❖ 2005 in the U.K

Participations

Year	Place	Event
2005	Spain	Torbi Santinder race to mark the 250 anniversary for Saintander Port.

2005	Holland	Seven Sea festivals alongside with about 600 vessels of different sizes and types.
2005	Norway	The international race for sail boats. It captured the Friendship Award for the fourth time.
2005	U.K	The marine parade
2001	U.K	Celebration in Dindi in Scotland.
2001	U.K	Marine celebrations in Portsmouth
2001	Denmark	Long sail vessel international completion at which it captured the friendship award for the third time.
2001	Monaco	The weekly exhibition for traditional vessels.
1997	Japan	Asia first race for long sail boats to mark the 100 th anniversary of Osaka port. The vessel captured the international friendship award for the second time.
1996	Russia	The long sail vessels race to mark the 300 th anniversary for establishing the Russian navy. It captured the international friendship award for the first time.
1994	France	Shabab's second visit to France coincided with the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Normandy Landings of World War II. Shabab Oman was visited by approximately one million visitors.
1992	Spain and U.S.A	The sail vessels trans Atlantic race - from Spain to Saint Juan. Boston - Liverpool race to mark the 500 th anniversary of Christopher Columbus journey to discover America.
1989	U.K	The anniversary to mark the 800 th anniversary of London Mayorship.

1989	France	The second anniversary for the French Revolution and the World Declaration for Human Rights.
1987	Australia	The long sail vessels forum and Hobart - Sydney race to mark the 2 nd anniversary of Australia.
1986	U.S.A	The marine parade to mark the 100 th anniversary of the Liberty Statute.

5- Jawharat Muscat ⁶²

Jawharat Muscat' Omani Ship recalls the glory of the Omani merchants who fared the seas and oceans amid the Ninth Century from the Ports of Muscat, Qalhat, Sohar and Sur to India through 'Jaffna Island', the Bay of Bengal, and Strait of Malaqa between Sumatra and the Malayan Peninsula, thereby, becoming the trade partners with Singapore, Vietnam and China.

In 1998, the archeologists found a vessel that dates back to the 9th century. The vessel was part of the trade fleet on the Silk Road. This discovery helped to revive Jawharat Muscat vessel project which aims at providing the younger generation with the opportunity to train on the traditional ships that use sails. It also aims at deepening the ties between the Arabian Peninsula and the West Indian Ocean region.

'Jawharat Muscat' Ship is designed as a ship that was built in the Ninth Century AC on the Indian Ocean's Shores. It carries 60,000 pieces of Ceramic, golden antiques, and spices besides other goods, now known as 'Treasures of Chinese Tang Imperial Dynasty'. The Ship was spotted in 1998 in the Indian Ocean. The first timber plate of 'Jawharat Muscat' was built on October 21st, 2008. Timber and fiber materials, a prototype of the materials used in building the ancient ships, have been used to build 'Jawharat Muscat'. The ship

⁶² www.jewelof Muscat.tv

designing was based on the ancient evidences found along with the wreckage of 'Ship Pilitang' in the Indonesian waters in 1998.

More than 70,000 stitches and more than 100 km long of hand-made ropes were used in the building of the ship which took about 50,000 hours of work. The sails extend up to 13.5 meters above the surface. The sails size amount to 160 square meters. The vessel is also 18 meters long and can carry 55 tons. The crew members use the traditional navigation techniques of the Ninth Century utilizing 'Al Kamal' device to find the route, which is a tiny wooden piece tied to a thread in a particular way which measures the Latitude. Besides, crew members will utilize stars, the Sun, sky, sea colour, marine habitat, bird's behaviors and wind direction as enhancing elements. Modern navigation techniques will only be used to ensure that navigation route is going as planned.

During its journey to Singapore, the crew members, comprised of Omani youths, followed the same traditions of their ancestors. The journey from Muscat to Kochin in India took about 4 weeks. After disembarking at Kochin, the vessel was taken for maintenance and painting the body. The ship then sailed in a two-week long journey to Sri Lanka then in a four-week long journey to Malaysia. The final destination of the ship was Singapore.

The Omani youths paid farewell to the vessel which was gifted to the Singaporean people. A special museum for it was built there to mirror the friendship relations between Oman and this beautiful part of the world.

Jawharat Muscat project is a unique one as it demonstrates how the old Omanis contributed to the communication among cultures. The Omani generation now has also managed to build a modern state.

The project helped many of those who worked in the project to learn how to build traditional ships that may be placed in museum. They also acquired the skills that enable also to ensure sustainability of this rich marine history. It also made Omanis proud of their rich marine history.

A number of educational programs on the rich marine history were also developed by a number of schools. Students were introduced to Jawharat Muscat, its importance and the key role it played as a symbol for the unique rich marine history of Oman.

Third: Tolerance, love and peace culture

The Omanis' tolerance and openness to other cultures are the fruits of the progress and prosperity achieved by Omanis throughout ages. Many travelers, literary men and thinkers who visited Oman at different ages wrote about this.

As said earlier, the trade and marine activity in India and east African coasts was mastered by Persian and Arab especially Omanis. They earned the respect of traders in China and India. Throughout its long history and till date, Omanis remained opened to the world. They managed to merge with other cultures and give an example of tolerance.

The role played by the Arab traders and navigators⁶³ is very great especially they served as mediators between the East and West. Besides the contributions of the Arab traders to the international trade, they served the Islamic culture by providing ideal models of Muslims and Arabs. They managed to win love and sympathy of most of those who came across with them.

The culture of peace and love

⁶³ UNESCO Silk Road Study Project

Promotion of peace has always been the cornerstone of the Omani police on the GCC, regional and international levels. The Sultanate had the courage to express its stances towards the different GCC and world development very frankly. It also worked to put into force the mechanisms that enhance its relations with the rest of the world on the bases of the Omani fundamentals.

An important recognition of the Sultanate's effort to the service of peace came when 33 universities, research centers and organizations decided to grant the International Peace Award to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos⁶⁴. The decision does not only reflect the consensus about His Majesty's personality on the national and international levels but also the prestigious independent organizations. These organizations including the prestigious Harvard University play an important role in shaping the U.S and international policies

This nomination has many strong implications ⁶⁵either in terms of the prestigious organizations that made such decision or in terms of the importance of the decision to nominate His Majesty the Sultan, as the first leader to be conferred the International Peace Award, which was constituted in 1998.

The National Council for the U.S Arab Relations, led by a number of public and NGOs and universities coordinated the procedures for this award. The ex U.S president Jimmy Carter handed over the award in a historic event in Washington on 16th October 1998. The award was received by Yousef bin Abdullah bin Alawi , Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs on behalf of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

⁶⁴ <http://www.omanet.om/Arabic/hmsq/hmsq5.asp?cat=hms>

⁶⁵ The universities, centers and organizations that participated in making nomination for the award are George Washington, Georgia, Harvard, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, California as well as ME Policies Council, Carter, Kennedy, Nixon Centers, U.S Marine Academy, US Air Force, ME Institute, Arab American Institute, the American Islamic Center, ME Peace Establishment, National Council for Arab U.S relations, U.S Gulf Companies Cooperation Committee and others.

It is worth mentioning that His Majesty Sultan Qaboos received also the peace award from the Russian International Organization in recognition of His Majesty's contribution to serving peace issues on the world level. The award was received in a special ceremony organized in Moscow on 18th July 2007 by Responsible for Foreign Affairs on behalf of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

The richness of culture and thought in Oman today

The aspects of culture and its different fields witnessed a remarkable growth; thanks to the official and local interest in the various elements of the Omani culture. The examples for the cultural and thought prosperity are many including

1- The cultural encyclopedias in Oman.⁶⁶

A- Sultan Qaboos encyclopedia for Arab names.

This encyclopedia was published in 1990. It includes 8 volumes that comprise 18509 names that have been extracted from 12 Arab countries.

B- The land of Oman encyclopedia

This encyclopedia was published in 2006, as part of the celebrations organized to mark Muscat as the capital of Arab culture. The encyclopedia covers the names of the cities and villages in Oman.

C- The Omani Encyclopedia

The Omani encyclopedia aims at providing a comprehensive reference about Oman the land and the man. The encyclopedia covers all the aspects related to the Omani man and the salient features of the society he lives in. It also covers everything related to man, his history and the elements of life such as religion, economy, politics and arts.

⁶⁶ Oman 2009-2010 , Ministry of Information

The Omani encyclopedia covered everything related to Oman, its components and traits such as animals, plants, land, sea and environment. It provides researchers, students and readers with valuable information.

2- Cultural clubs

A- The Cultural Club

It was established in 1983 in a bid to raise cultural awareness of the different sectors of society and promote the cultural and literary talents. The Cultural Club plays an important role in reviving the literary events. It is also the ideal platform that gathers all those interested in literary fields.

B- The Literary Forum

It was established in 1985 in a bid to develop the creative work of the Omani poets, men-of-letters and historian and provide the conducive milieu for the development of the cultural activity in Oman. It organizes many courses and events and invites thinkers and scientists to benefit from their experiences and knowledge.

C- Journalism Club

It plays an important role in promoting the Omani rich culture and art. It also enhances the skills of Omani media men through organizing courses, forums and panel discussions at which senior Omani and foreign journalist take part. A number of associations fall under the umbrella of the Omani Journalism Club such as the Omani Film Society, the Omani Journalists Society, the Omani Media Men Society, the Omani Authors and Men of Letters Society (2006), the Omani Theatre Society and the Omani Fine Arts Association.

E- The Scientific Club

It was opened I 1989 in a bid to promote the scientific activities for the youth, spot talents and encourage innovation. It also aimed at encouraging youth to be entrepreneurs.

3- Cultural Tourism and its role in the sustainable development

The tourist sector plays a key role in the GDP especially after the thrust and momentum it received by the government and the efforts made to utilize the abundant potentials of the Sultanate. The Omani government has undertaken a number of initiatives to promote historic tourism⁶⁷. This resulted in

- 5- Renovation of 8 historic buildings in Muscat governorate.
- 6- Renovation of 23 historic building in Al Batina region.
- 7- Renovation of 17 historic building in Al Dakhiliyah region.
- 8- Renovation of 11 historic building in al Sharqiyah region.
- 9- Renovation of 8 historic building in al Dhahirah region.
- 10- Renovation of 3 historic building in Musandam governorate.
- 11- Renovation of 5 building in the southern region.

There many building that have good tourism potentials including those on the historic sites such as Nizwa, Bahla, Sohar, Muscat and Samarham. Many archeological sites are listed with UNESCO such as Samarham historic city.

Samarham as a model for cultural tourism

As per the records, the first study was done by a U.S expedition led by Windil Philips in the 60s. The expedition found the main gate of the city and a temple inside.

The city is located on a hill close to the sea. It is surrounded by a strong boundary and has some towers at the northern edge of the town. The boundary has been built as per a detailed plan. The boundary has three main entrances with three main entrances with big doors. There is a narrow aisle between the doors to allow those walking on foot to enter the city when the doors are closed.

⁶⁷ The symposium on the monuments of the Arab Peninsula , the reference above

The expedition⁶⁸ believes that the structure may be a temple or a palace. There are evidences that it was a palace such as the manuscript which was found nearby. The main walls do not have internal rooms. There is no opening for windows for these walls.

The site plays an important role in promoting tourism due to its historic and cultural importance.

Conclusion

Great nations shape their current and future to get its deserved position for its generations. The Oman man, throughout ages, shaped the happy destiny for this great land. He has many experiences that enriched his life.

The Omani experience has been rich with very meaning of the world. This was reflected onto his living styles. He became a source of inspiration for other nations. The Omani culture earned the respect and recognition of other cultures.

The Omani man's culture maintained contacts with other cultures. He conveyed the elements of his culture, through land, sea and air, to the different horizons. The effect of the Omani culture is still evident in different areas in Asia and Africa.

To ensure better evaluation of the Omani man communication with other culture, we have to assess the implication of this culture on the different peoples and cultures. We have also to assess how far the Omanis benefited from others' culture and the reflection of the same onto his social, economic and political life. This is called ' affecting and being affected by other cultures and peoples'.

⁶⁸ UNESCO Silk Road Study Project , the reference above

It will be easy then for those tracing the Omani man communication with other cultures to identify the richness and uniqueness of his experience and his contribution to the human culture. No one can deny the important role played by Omanis now in bridging the communication gap among cultures. Omanis do their best to spread the culture of peace, tolerance and friendship. They are always regarded as messengers of friendship and ambassadors of peace.

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