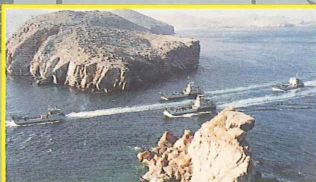
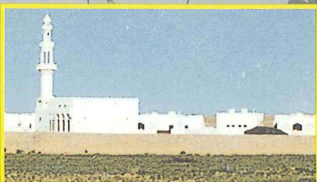
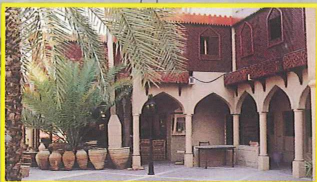
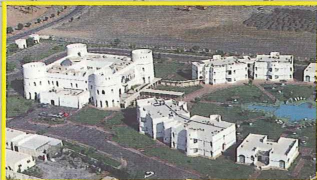
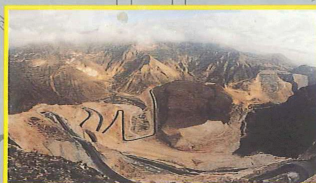
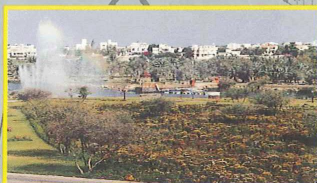
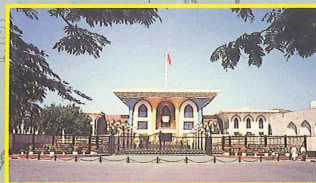


Sultanate
of Oman

Years of Endeavour and Achievement



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Years of Endeavour and Achievement



Dhofar



PROLOGUE

In an age when miracles have ceased, Oman has been privileged to witness its own miraculous transformation. The phenomenal successes of the past quarter of a century must be seen by any standards as constituting a remarkable period in history, certainly one with no parallel in modern times.

To assess the scale of what has been accomplished during the course of the Renaissance inspired and led by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, we must look beyond the physical landmarks, beyond even the time in which it was achieved, and view the human and cultural dimensions of the transformation. There we find the dedication and strength of purpose and also the pride in their country which has ever characterised the Omani people. The twenty five years which followed the new dawn which came on 23 July 1970 have been the formative years of a regenerated Oman, years which saw the successful struggle to regain the glories of the past and build the foundations of a future full of promise. In this review of the past 25 years, the Ministry of

Information has pleasure in presenting this set of ten volumes, "Years of Endeavour and Achievement" which recount the major episodes of Oman's history and its arduous path to its modern reconstruction, which include a brief resume of the geography and special features of each of the provinces.

These modest volumes do not aspire to contain more than the highlights of Oman's long and illustrious history and the successes of the Renaissance which has conferred such proud achievements on the land and people of Oman. "Years of Endeavour and Achievement" continues, and with it, it is confidently hoped, will come increasing prosperity, and the continued blessing of peace and stability. Today, as Oman advances towards the horizons of the 21st century, every Omani can take courage and faith from the leadership and solicitude for their future of their beloved leader, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.





Years of Endeavour and Achievement

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has been determined from the moment of his accession to improve the standard of living of his people and to provide coming generations with a full, fruitful and happy life. This achievement - the salvation of his country from its years of stagnation - has required a dedication and unity of effort by His Majesty and his people almost unparalleled in history.

The circumstances in which the country found itself in 1970 demanded what amounted to a declaration of a state of emergency. The situation was such that the desperate need for education and health care overrode any question of cost.



Today the success of those efforts can be seen in every aspect of the Sultanate's life - health care, education, housing, roads and communications, a variety of social services geared towards raising the standard of living of the Omani people, are all in place. It can be said that no fundamental need exists which has not been met in the Renaissance launched, led and stimulated by the Sultan's example.

Thus all of the needs for a healthy, literate and culturally satisfying life are today available to all Omanis, from the Shams mountains in the interior and the Qamar mountains in the remote south western corner of Dhofar; to the citizens of the stark rocky peaks of Musandam in the far north east. The fruits of development now belong in equal measure to the tiniest island of the Arabian Sea, to Thamrait and Muqshin and the settlements and towns of the western desert which challenge the harsh sands of the Rub' Al Khali or Empty Quarter. This is the tangible reality which is today part of the experience of every Omani citizen, irrespective of his origins or domicile, a mere 25 years from the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

All this, of course, could not have been achieved without the massive injection of capital investment. Now the time has come when the responsibility for development must be shared as a collective obligation by all. Provision must be made for the increasing and youthful population to have the opportunities to play their full part in Omani's future in the knowledge that the fate of their country rests largely with their efforts, and careful measures must be taken to ensure that economic factors are taken fully into account.

The coming five-year Plan which will take effect

in January 1996, will pursue this road to balanced development, particularly now that the members of the Majlis Ash'Shura - representing the various regions and provinces - have contributed to its preparation, and in the process have expressed the opinions of their constituents.

It is important that the meaning of the term 'balanced development' be clarified in this context. It does not mean that development projects must be equally spread in the same number and type in every region, all of them enjoying permanent immunity against cutbacks. Development must be applied selectively for the benefit of the whole nation in those areas and in those forms when this can best be achieved.

Balanced development in the true sense cannot be achieved without the discipline of economic planning. The first consideration in assessing a region for investment must be to take account of its population; for a region populated by three thousand people cannot reasonably expect to obtain State investment of the same order of magnitude as a region with a population of fifty thousand. There has to be a sense of proportion in the allocation of funds.

Secondly, it would not be rational or fair to propose that equivalent quotas of State funding be allocated to regions of arid desert, coastal plain and rough mountain terrain. Every region demands an individual response to its specific development requirements, in line with the characteristics of the region and with a view to achieving a balance between satisfying as far as possible the needs of the regions and the needs and interests of the nation as a whole.

Thirdly, balanced development, with its projects



and priorities, and as it is anticipated that it will be effected in the Sultanate, will be preceded and supported by scientific studies to assess its economic viability and, in recognition of the two points outlined above, the relative natural advantages of each region will be examined and exploited.

Finally, and this is of the greatest importance, we cannot escape from the reality that resources, irrespective of the rate at which they might be expected to grow, will remain limited in the face of rising needs, a factor which makes it imperative that we are careful to choose the most appropriate plan. We have a difficult balance to strike between the two sides of the development equation: the resources available on the one hand and escalating needs on the other.

Over and above these controls, Oman is today faced by a challenge it shares with many other countries. It is being forced to review the schedule of its priorities and to tighten the reins on expenditure to more closely reflect available resources, while paying due respect to the needs and requirements of the coming stage of development. The challenge is presented by the instability of world oil prices and the fact that the future of these is no longer easily predictable as a consequence of a variety of international and regional factors.

Here in Oman, it has become necessary to acknowledge the sometimes unpalatable truth that it is no longer possible to achieve a result by taking short cuts or departing from the path of scientific development, with its specific programmes and precise methods.

To an equal extent it has become necessary to

acknowledge the logic of cost controls and to understand that proper development will never be the reward of misguided planning.

Efficient development is directly related to and subject to the level of economic activity. To expect otherwise or to attempt to purchase it by going into debt would not only fail, but would lead to disaster.



Dhofar Reveals its Secrets



Addendum Obesum



The three outstanding features which make Dhofar Governorate unique need to become the focus of patient investment by the private sector, from which it might be expected that truly far-reaching development initiatives could be launched.



This systematic account of the features which distinguish each of Oman's administrative districts will have achieved its objectives if it can help clear a perspective in the continuing search for better ways to exploit our God-given resources.

Dhofar Governorate has been favoured with more than one unique feature.

The discovery of underground reservoirs of water in the Najd region brings with it good auspices for the realisation of a long cherished hope, that an agricultural revolution can truly take place in this region - and in the foreseeable future. If the private sector can be persuaded to pull its weight alongside the government sector in the service of this purpose, the desert can indeed be transformed, for the underground reservoirs identified are capable in the short and longer term of irrigating 2,500 hectares of the Dhofari desert.

The second distinguishing feature of the Dhofar region is represented in its livestock herds and its fisheries, both vast and lucrative resources which would benefit currently from well appointed reinvestment in superior methods of exploitation. There is potential for the installation of a variety of food processing industries, perhaps through the aegis of joint stock companies, the success of which would be virtually assured.

Thirdly archaeological excavation work has lifted the impenetrable curtain which has for long disguised the secrets of this once vigorous centre of population and trade. Over the past decades the desert has given up some of its secrets - and they speak of the existence of civilisations here from as early as the Late Stone Age.

These discoveries have the potential to draw tourists in great numbers to this region, which has other attractions to offer them, including a varied and pleasant climate rare in the Arabian Peninsula. The average year-round temperature throughout the Governorate does not exceed 30°C. Moreover throughout the three autumn months the province

wears a lush cover of grass and low green vegetation beneath an umbrella of mist and light drizzle.

These three rich resources do, however, require an injection of confidence from the private sector, in the form of long term investment, if their true potential is to be realised. If this occurs, far-reaching development initiatives in the truest sense can be the outcome, and bring rich returns to country and people - and investor.



Ancient culture of Oman



Oman's natural beauty



The Place - and the Coastal Strip

The Governorate of Dhofar lies 460 miles by sea to the west of Oman's capital city, Muscat. On its western side it adjoins the Sultanate's border with the Yemen Republic and on the north its border with Saudi Arabia across the Rub' Al Khali.

Dhofar is distinguished by the diversity of its geography and social customs, the nature of which will be described in detail later, and of its economic life.

This geographical, social and economic diversity will perhaps be better understood if we view the Governorate in the context of three natural landscapes: the coastal strip, the mountain district, and the Najd or the Dhofari desert.

The coastal strip is around 560 kms long, having an area of 1,500 sq kms, or 1.2% of the total area of the Governorate. Monsoon rains affect around 130 kms, or 23% of the total area.

All along the coastal plain are well populated towns and villages. Foremost amongst these must be Salalah, the administrative capital of Dhofar and control centre of a complex administrative network. At the head of this administrative operation is the Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar, who delegates the many affairs of the province to Walis and deputies and officials throughout the Governorate, ensuring in this way that government authority extends to every corner of this vast region, while facilitating communication between the various population centres and the central administrative apparatus in Salalah.

Salalah also has directorates and departments representing the central government Ministries in Muscat, by which their policy directives are channelled directly to the population, testifying to their commitment and accountability. Salalah is also counted the commercial centre of the Governorate and is home to a multiplicity of public and private sector establishments.

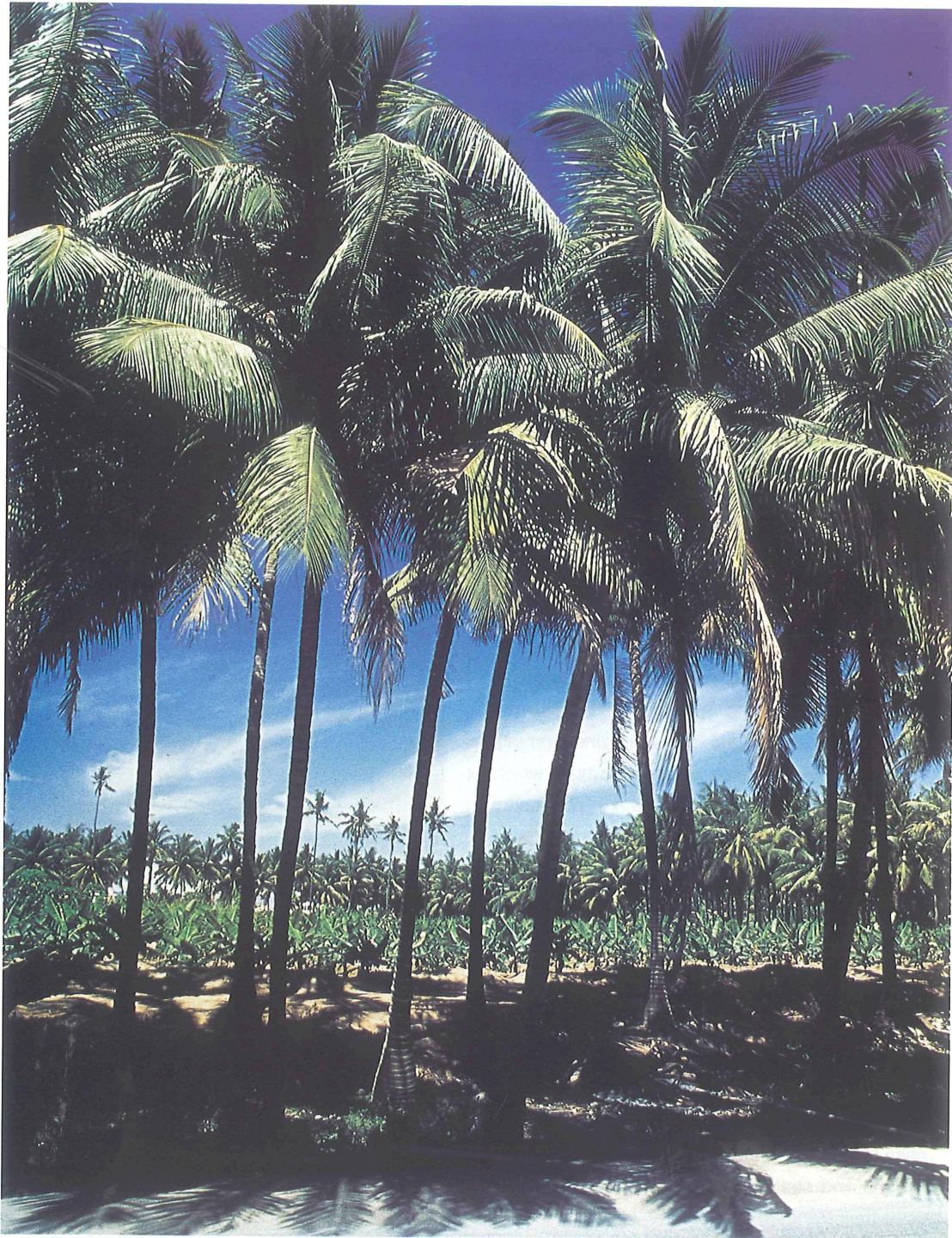
There are five Wilayatt along the coastal strip, these being Taqah, Marbat, Sadah, which lie to the east of Salalah, and Rakhyut and Dhalkut to the west. These five Wilayatt are in the nature of supply centres (for the interior), windows to the mountainous region which extends from Dharba on the west to the plains of Al Jazer in the east.

The coast of Dhofar abounds in fish, open as it is to the rich fishing grounds of the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. Sardine are so abundant here that the inhabitants use this catch as fodder for their cattle and fertiliser for their plantations. Elsewhere the sardine has not lost its popularity for human consumption, being a rich source of protein and phosphates.

Other species of fish abound also, particularly Sharkhah, Safilah and Rubiyan, and fish now has become an export revenue earner for the Sultanate.

Most of the agricultural plantation in the coastal region is in the Salalah Plain and is watered from two sources, from freshwater wells and from springs which issue from the mountain foothills and combine into streams to flow down to the coastal plain.

Agriculture in the Salalah Plain focuses on the production of grains, coconut and papayas, bananas, sugar cane and other fruit, as well as animal fodder which because of its critical function is counted a strategic commodity by the inhabitants. The mountain people view it as a source of nutrition on the one hand and a source of wealth on the other.



Light and shade



The Green Mountains

The mountain region consists of a high sierra 400 kms long, west to east, approximately half of this being the contribution of the Jabal Al Khadra, which rise up from the western frontier adjoining the Yemen and run eastwards across Dhofar. This ridge of mountains is around 20 to 30 kms across and occupies a total area of 2,300 sq. kms. It is this highland area which encounters the monsoon rains. After the rains, water springs gush forth here and there amongst the foothills, covering the ground with a carpet of grass and small plants. There is a dense ground cover in the wadis of woody shrubs as well as other vegetation. The local inhabitants use the branches of these shrubs as roofing material for their homes, and they manufacture timber door and window panels from the trunks.

The rest of the mountain area is affected by the relative humidity which lingers in the atmosphere as a result of the monsoon rains and so in a part of this region the olibanum or frankincense tree grows as well as pasture vegetation for camels and goats.

The Dhohal mountains receive the greatest amount of rainfall from the monsoon rains, and this is accompanied by dense clouds and mists which are almost continuous throughout the three months of "autumn", running from the end of June to the end of September. It is during these months that the springs gush forth in the mountains and these springs continue to provide plentiful water for many months of the year, though they are affected by the average rainfall in any year.

In the autumn months the spread of green pasture plays an important economic role indirectly in terms of its provision for the region's herds and in turn their production of dairy products and meat. These constitute a principal source of income for the Dhofaris and contribute in a fundamental way to raising their standard of living.

Agriculture in the coastal plains of Dhofar plays an important role. The local inhabitants depend on it to provide them with grain, for their own consumption and for marketing.

The rural environment in the Dhofari mountains and other districts and regions where water and vegetation are plentiful provides a suitable habitat for settlement, and from centuries past the mountain dwellers have divided this region amongst the various tribes, each tribe living in a specific area with its individual lifestyle, with water and pasture for their herds as well as caves to which they retire in the winter to shelter from torrential rains and the regular assaults of gales and storms. They also make huts from the branches of trees which they then cover with a layer of dried vegetation, and these are habit-



Cattle peacefully graze



able once the weather stabilises and daily life returns to normal.

The indigenous customs and folklore of the Dhofari mountain areas do not differ substantially from those of the citydwellers or desert dwellers or nomadic herdsmen. The differentials are limited and relative from one environment to another and fixed ultimately by the lifestyles which characterise each social group.

Despite the harshness of the terrain in the mountainous regions of Dhofar, which can be as high as 2,500 to 3,000 feet (above sea level), these regions are nevertheless served by a considerable network of roads which range from paved to passable, allowing and facilitating communications and interaction between the various mountain districts on the one

hand and the coastal cities on the other as well as the population centres at the desert's edge in the northern Najd region. This wide network of modern roads was not known to the Dhofaris before the Renaissance of Sultan Qaboos.

In this context a number of administrative centres have been established in the mountain areas which provide the local inhabitants with a range of essential services in situ. These include, along with the administrative office, a school, a health clinic and mosque, as well as goods stores maintained under government supervision as represented by the office of the Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar.





Modern buildings, part of the comprehensive development in the Governorate of Dhofar





Nature's Line?

The Najd extends from the northernmost part of the mountain lowlands to the Rub' Al Khali desert and constitutes the greater part of the Governorate of Dhofar.

The mountains of Dhofar could be termed Nature's Dividing Line, determining the distribution of water between the mountain region and the Najd. By the time the clouds coming in from the direction of the coast have traversed the Dhofar mountains they have discharged the greater part of their moisture in the form of rainfall on the southern foothills. Those clouds which succeed in crossing the mountains or in surmounting them rain on the northern foothills, that is to say on the southern rim of the Najd desert territory, generating a formidable rise in the humidity of this desert region, and this in turn raises the temperature.

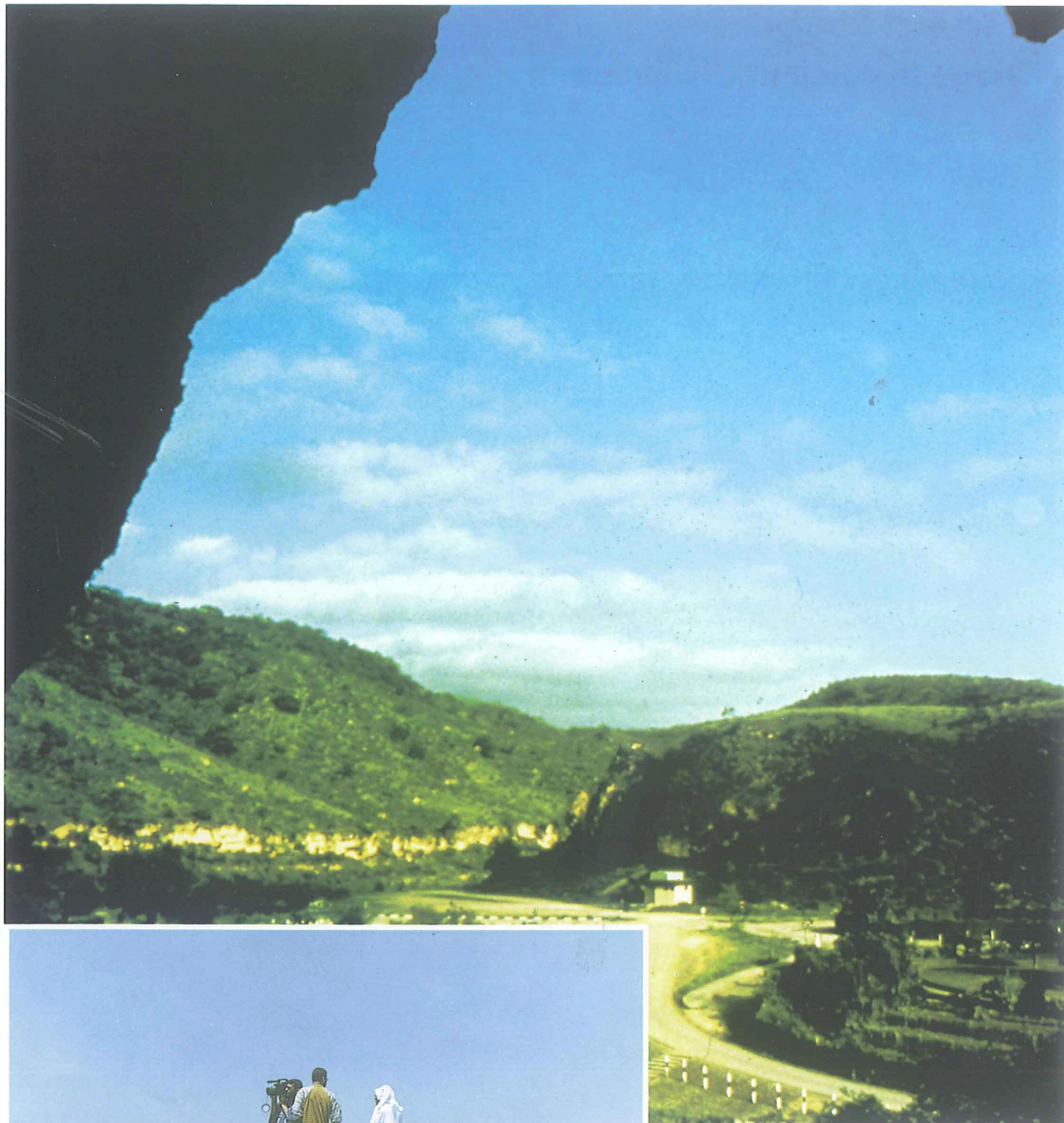
Along this natural line and in order to separate the waters of the southern district from the Najd desert the celebrated olibanum or frankincense tree is grown, though it is not confined to here and is grown also in the administrative districts and along the mountain foothills to the west and east of Dhofar.

The story of this remarkable tree goes back many thousands of years in time, to when the empire of frankincense flourished between Dhofar and Yemen, when Nero burnt huge quantities of frankincense on the tomb of his wife Poppaea and Bilqis, the Queen of Sheba, sent a boat laden with it to Solomon son of David.

Dhofar's nine Wilayats encompass between them 22 administrative sub-districts, each responsible for the provision of services to the local inhabitants in the various population centres and for attending to their affairs.



Traditional handicrafts



A scene from Dhofar

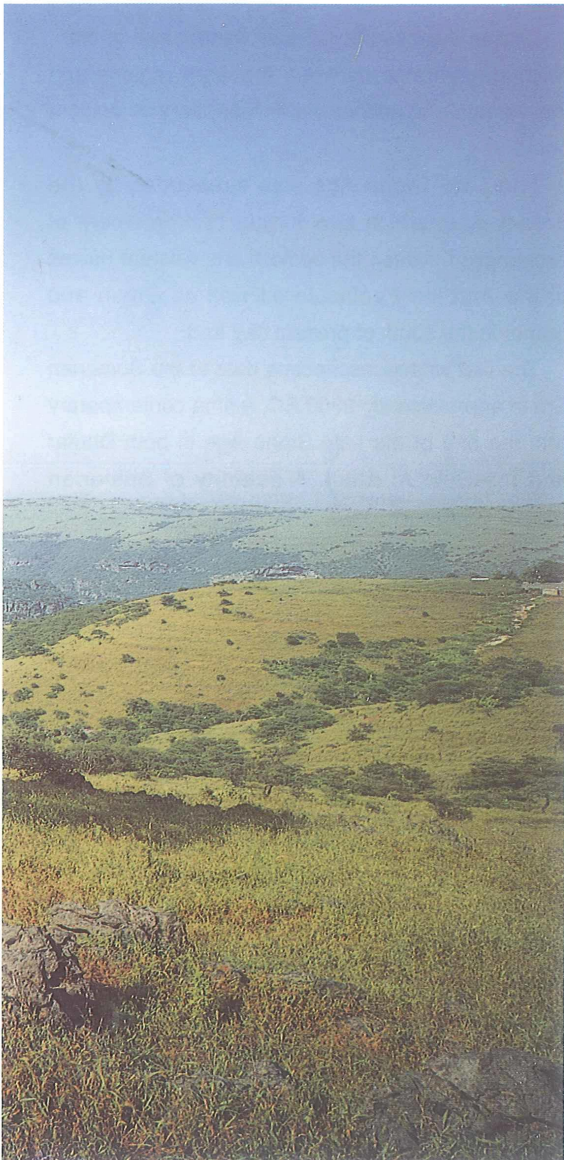
Dhofar – A great tourist attraction



The Tree of Dhofar... a Bridge to Ancient Civilisations



The Frankincense tree



The frankincense tree - and its crop - is the subject of an extraordinary and wonderful history in which it served to bridge the civilisations of the ancient world more than 7,000 years ago. Because of this precious commodity, immense caravans went forth in splendid procession to travel from Dhofar to the southern shores of Iraq and Sham and Ancient Egypt and even to the coast of Gaza, whence ships laden with the Dhofari crop embarked for Europe, in particular to Ancient Rome.

So what can be the full story of this unique plant that grows to this day on the deserts and mountains of Dhofar?



The inhabitants of Dhofar have known the frankincense tree from time immemorial, though large scale exploitation of its crop did not begin until the Late Stone Age (approximately 8,000 years ago). When trade caravans proliferated in the Islamic Era the trade routes still did not differ substantially from those of the Late Stone Age and the routes used by the Arabs and the Romans were again the same ancient ones. These were essentially good passable roads, abandoned at certain times in their long history to neglect and decay, and at other times resurrected for use once again.

Yaq'ut Al Hamawi in his *Tarikh* (History) says that the Arabs made regular crossings of the Rub' Al Khali or Empty Quarter in journeys which lasted for 45 days, from Wadi Al Dawaser in the north to the borders of Mehra in the south. They knew the entire route from Raysut to Baghdad across the Rub' Al Khali up to the nineteen thirties of this century. This route was the same one once plied by the trade caravans carrying merchandise from India to

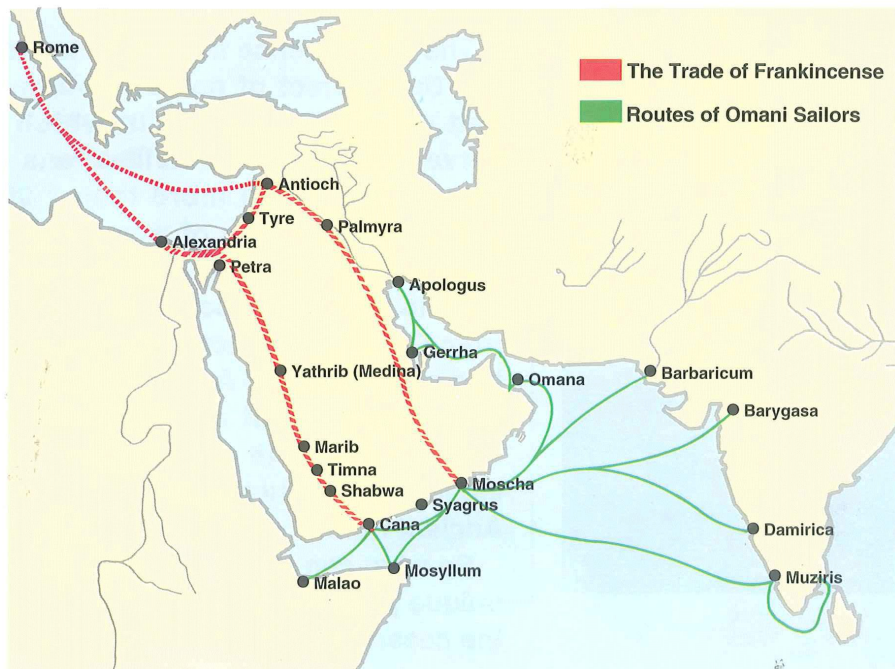
Baghdad by way of Raysut.

The historian Ibn Majawar refers to the existence of a route between Marbat and Old Taqah which went on to Kufa, with branches going off to the Ahsa and Ta'if Oases. These latter were used by the Arabs twice a year to collect horses which they bartered for perfumes and other precious commodities.

Dhofari incense played a prominent role in commercial enterprise between the Arab regions and the various civilisations on its periphery in ancient times.

The Late Stone Age was succeeded by the Bronze Age, which saw further reinforcement of exchanges between the eastern and western halves of the Arabian Peninsula as well as Oman and Sumer in the south of present day Iraq.

The first written inscriptions date to the Sumerian Era in approximately 2300 BC, a time contemporary with the end of the Late Stone Age in both Dhofar and the Rub' Al Khali. A quantity of Sumerian





inscribed tablets was found bearing the word bokhur (or incense). In other records there is a precise reference to "incense which is extracted from the olibanum tree," and again: "the incense which is required by rulers and priests."

The earliest written references to incense tell us that it was measured by weighing. It was prepared by blending with oil or tallow and was used for special purposes in religious rituals and as a medication and aromatic. The use of the word "gum" did not occur before the late Assyrian writings around 1800 BC.

Professor Juris Zarins of South West Missouri University in the United States puts forth the view in a scholarly report on the recent archaeological discoveries in Dhofar Governorate that the written inscriptions prove that frankincense was exported to Sumer and parts of ancient Iraq by sea, with the ships calling in to ports in Bahrain and the east of the Arabian Peninsula. Furthermore, recent discoveries, identified by satellite pictures, prove that this trade was also conducted overland.

In summary then, from approximately 5000 BC and up to around 1800 BC, a span of 3,200 years, the demand in ancient Iraq for perfumes supplied from the eastern side of the Arabian Peninsula, Dhofar and the Rub' Al Khali grew. And it is certain that Dhofar was familiar with the incense trade at the time of the Late Stone Age.

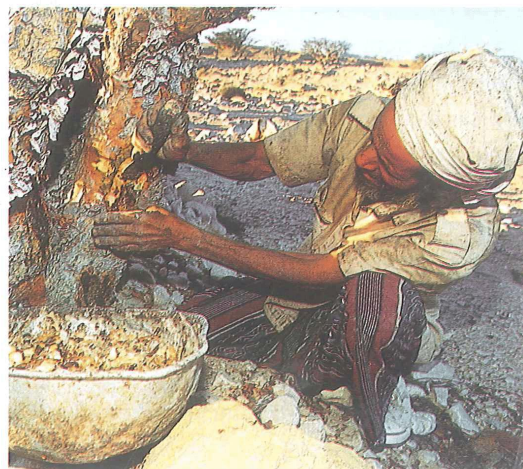
The Story of an Amazing Tree

The frankincense tree - and its crop - is the subject of an extraordinary and wonderful history in which it served to bridge the civilisations of the ancient world more than 7,000 years ago. Because of this precious commodity, immense caravans went forth in splendid procession to travel from Dhofar to the southern shores of Iraq and Sham and Ancient Egypt and even to the coast of Gaza, whence ships laden with the Dhofari crop embarked for Europe, in particular Ancient Rome.

So what can be the full story of this unique plant that grows to this day on the deserts and mountains of Dhofar?

At the beginning of April every year when the temperature is beginning to rise, field labourers begin the process of harvesting the crop of lubban or olibanum by making a number of incisions in the bark of the frankincense tree. Between 10 and 30 incisions are made, depending on the age of the tree, by means of a small implement known as a manqaf or tapping instrument. The manqaf has a wooden handle and a sharp round metal head.

The first strike of the tree is known as al tawqia, or signature, and its purpose is to remove the outer bark of the limb and trunk. This strike releases a



Harvesting the Frankincense crop



sticky resinous fluid of a milky colour which quickly congeals. It is left thus for around 14 days, when stage two of this process begins, with a view to extracting the crop from the parts of the shrub stripped in the tawqia stage of the operation.

The resin released is scraped off onto the ground and a second series of incisions is made - to yield a second grade crop, this latter not being of a quality comparable to the first, nor indeed of a commercially viable quantity.

The harvesting now begins in earnest, two weeks after the "second incision", when the tree is tapped for a third time. This time the milky fluid is of prime quality and is deemed tradeable on a number of grounds. Its colour tends to yellow. It soon begins to harden, on the tree itself or as it drips to the ground "if the tree is especially prolific." The second and subsequent hits are called al sa'f (or backup).

The harvesting of frankincense is by no means a haphazard operation. Rather it is a highly skilled activity requiring expertise and care. Mistakes made at this stage are harmful to the tree and can render it sterile. The cropper needs to be careful also not to cause a fatal injury to the tree and for this he needs to vary the intensity of the tap from tree to tree depending on the size of each.

The harvest season continues for three months, sometimes from April to October, every year and when the harvesting is complete the crop is assembled systematically. The dried lubban is gathered in a round basket-like dish known in the local dialect as a qafir.

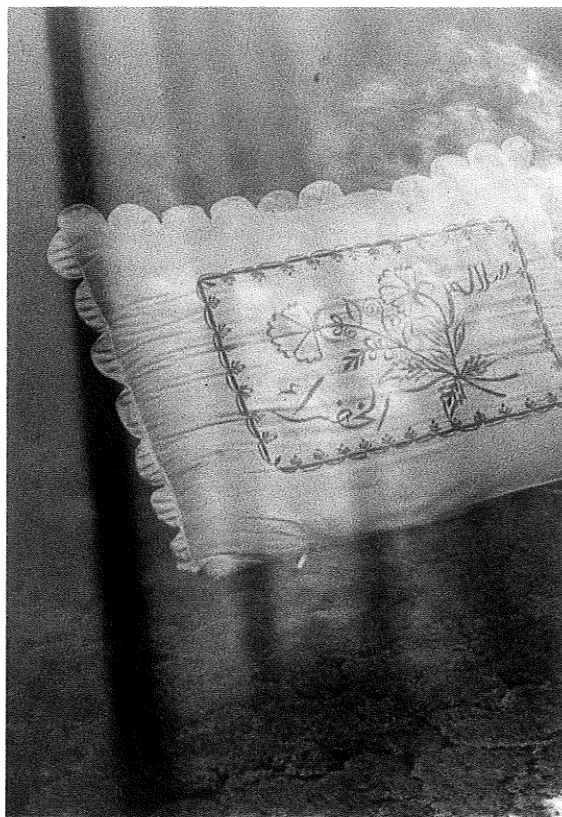
One tree on average yields 10 kgs of crop, some as much as 20 kgs. The annual harvest of Dhofar Governorate can be as high as around 7,000 tonnes, having an estimated value of around 30 million Omani rials.

The inhabitants of Dhofar province use the olibanum in their drinking water, adding three or four lumps to a measure of water. It is thought to have diuretic properties and it makes the water cool and

pure in the summer months.

The Najdis, or Dhofari Bedouin, use it as incense on all sorts of ceremonial and other occasions. In the past they burnt it at gathering places for livestock to protect them from harm and they still use it liberally in their homes as an aromatic and no doubt to cast out evil spirits.

One of the customs associated with it in Dhofar occurs at a man's first marriage when huge ceramic



incense burners are prepared. These are filled with a quantity of ash, above which are burning wooden embers on which sit cloves of pure olibanum. As they dissolve, clouds of fragrant and wonderful incense billow forth. Usually the incense carriers who walk with the lighted burners on their heads are women who hire out their services professionally for such occasions and their shrill cries fill the air as they sway along behind the wedding procession.

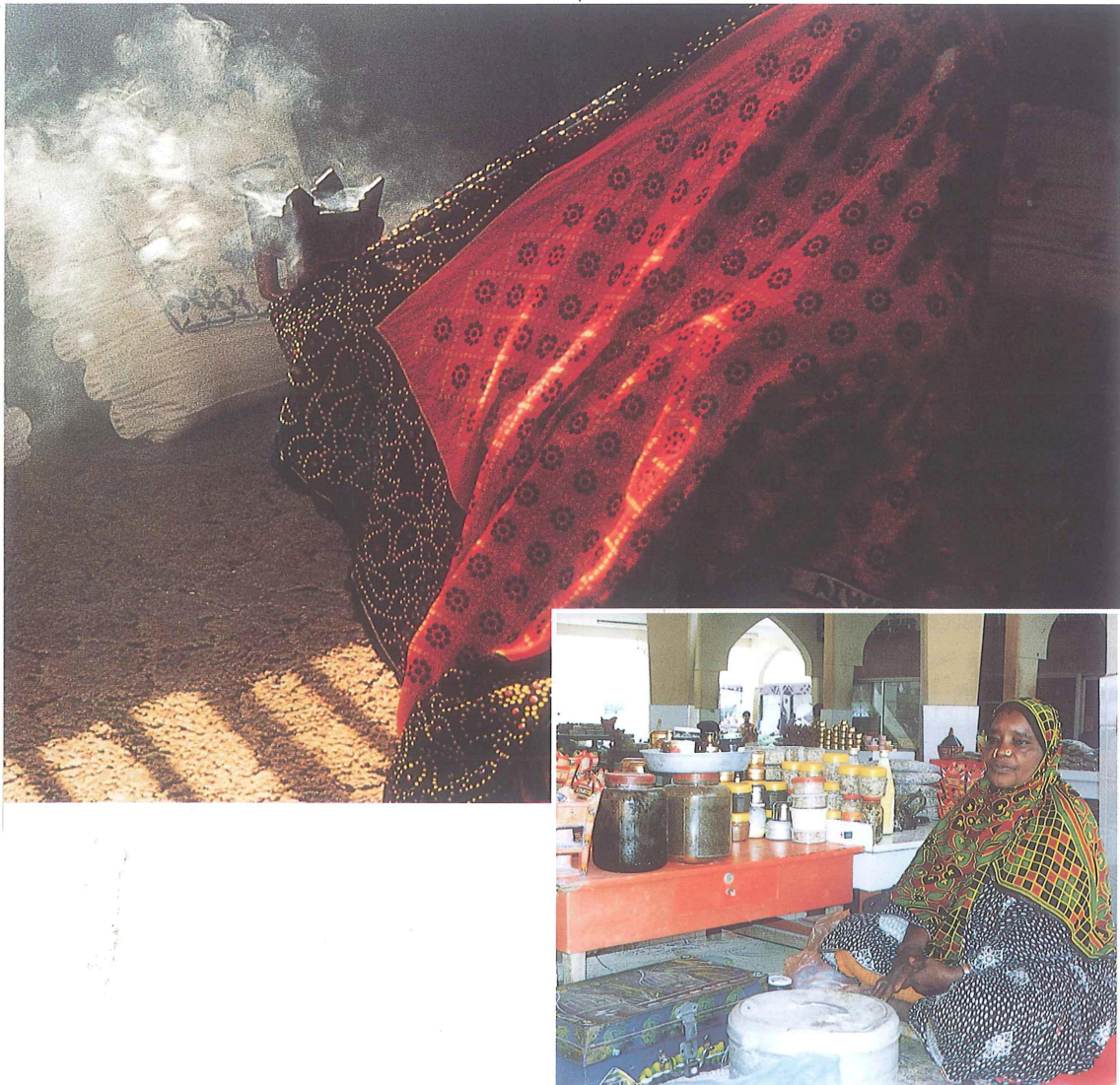


The Habout dance is performed by forming a large circle, having a diameter of around 100 metres. At its centre is placed the incense burner, where it is allowed to burn from the time of the afternoon prayer until sundown.

Wedding feasts are a social tradition and are marked by a general spirit of cooperation and the giving of gifts of money to support the (cost of the) wedding party.

Incense is again an important feature of birth celebrations. The incense burner is kept close to the infant's cradle and has the dual function of scenting the air and keeping away evil spirits.

In the city of Salalah it was the custom of the inhabitants to waft incense around the doors of their homes early in the morning in the belief that it would bring harmony to the family for all of that day. These people make sure to retain a portion of the annual



A Frankinsence seller



crop for use in their homes, to protect them from harm and to keep vermin away. This latter belief is grounded in reality for it is a fact that poisonous insects are repelled by the scent of this extraordinary crop.

Many secrets of this amazing plant and its wonderful fruit are recounted by Breasted in his book History of Egypt in which he says that balls of incense were found in the tomb of Tutankhamun and that the use of frankincense for religious purposes was mentioned in the writings of Ancient Egypt, at the time of the fifth and sixth dynasties. Land expeditions covered the journey to Dhofar in Oman after 2800 BC. The use of incense in Egyptian burial rites did not manifest until approximately one thousand years after the discovery of the mummification process.

Incense was used to scent the couch of Sulaiman bin Dawud (Solomon) and is mentioned in the Song of Solomon. In the Gospel of Matthew it is said that this commodity was given, along with gold, as a gift to the new-born Christ. Pliny reports that in 66 AD the Emperor Nero burnt a quantity of incense exceeding the annual output of the whole of southern Arabia on the funeral pyre of his wife Poppaea.

To this day Omani frankincense is in demand. It is used in the Vatican and Roman Catholic churches during religious services and the great congregational assemblies; its use deriving from the prevailing Church wisdom that incense banishes devils.

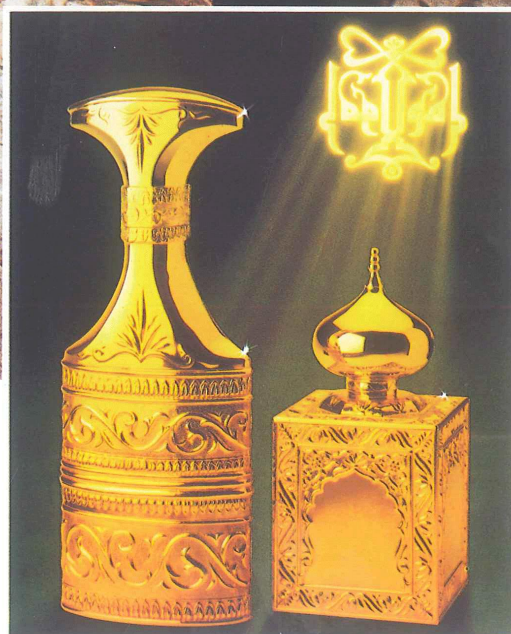
This belief no doubt is taken from the Arabs and from their absolute conviction in the merits of Dhofari incense. Ibn Sina said of it that it "cures all ills", ailments of the stomach and heart, asthma and many other medical conditions. Moreover it staunches internal and external haemorrhaging, banishes inflammation of the spleen and of the joints. An infusion of Dhofari olibanum enhances the elimination and clarification of fat and cures forgetfulness.





It remains only to add that industrial nations today still use incense in the pharmaceutical industry and in the manufacture of oils and powders, perfumes and special waxes; while some religious sects hold it in reverential awe. Each of these is significant insofar as it suggests an area of potential for the growth of this traditional industry so as to become a source of national income. For there was once a time when trade caravans went out from

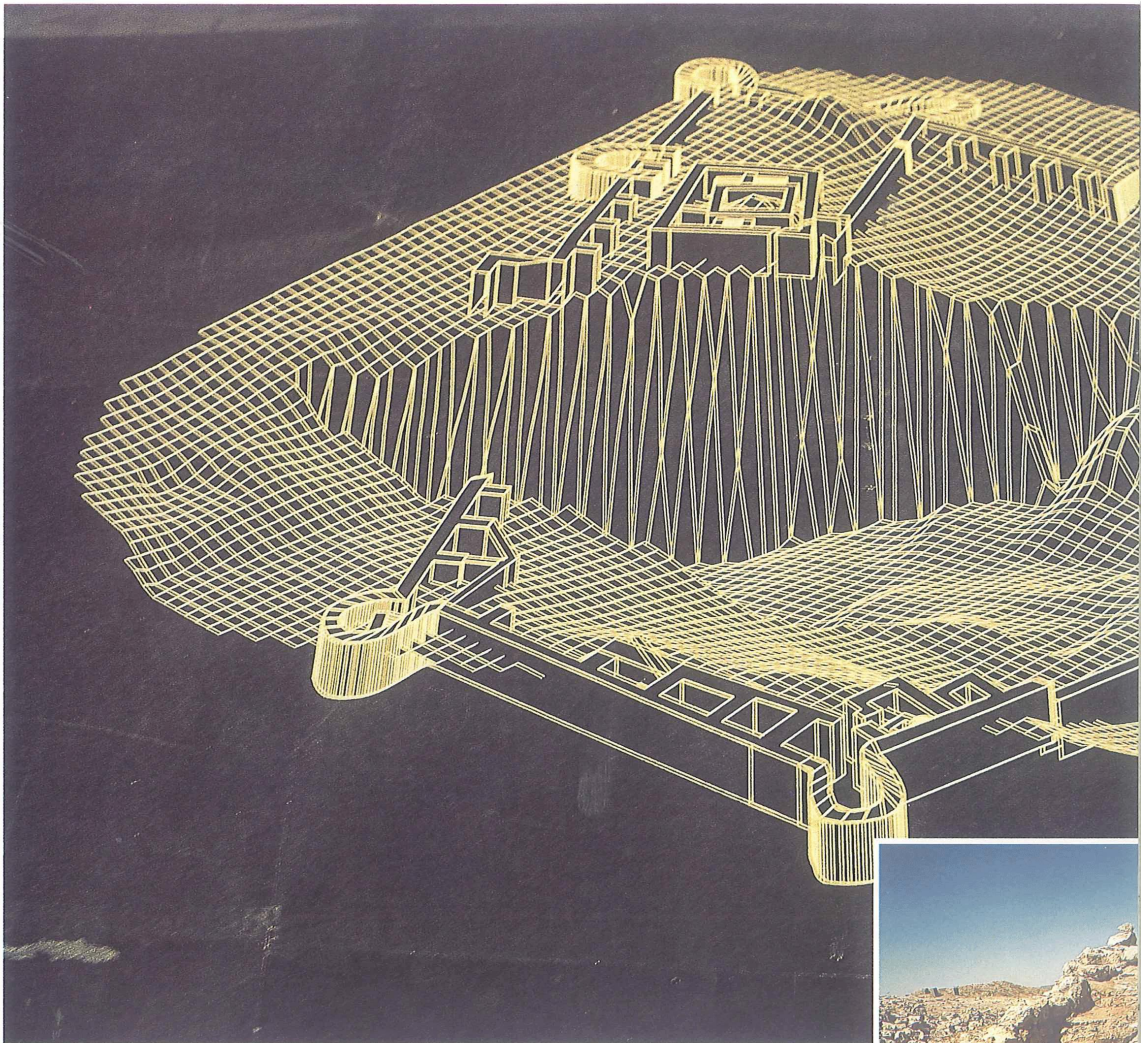
Dhofar carrying frankincense to Gaza, passing north of Yemen, and when this fabled district was known as the Sultanate of Frankincense from the lucrative taxes imposed by the people of the district on the incense trade.



Amouage – The most expensive perfume in the world

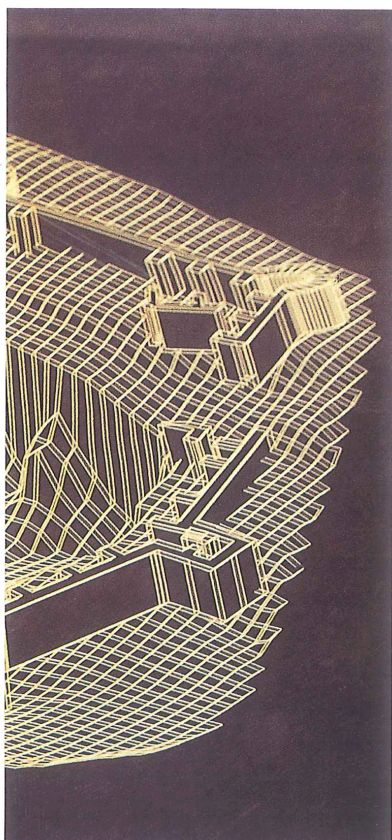


The Sands of the Rub' Al Khali in Dhofar... Truth and Fable



*Importance is attached to the conservation of
archaeological sites*





Throughout Dhofar are sites of historical mausoleums and shrines of religious prophets and saints. Many of these are in the region of Salalah which is home to the mausoleums of the Prophets Hud, Ayoub and Umrān and the camel of the Prophet Saleh. The district of Al Ahqaf is in the Najd Desert region of Dhofar, this being the Ahqaf which was mentioned in the Holy Qur'an

The gold was beaten into bricks which Shaddad bin Aa'd used to construct the city, whose walls were decorated with beryl and carnelian. Room was built above room... He then excavated beneath the city a wadi into which he ran water beneath the ground from a distance of forty parasang as the basis for a great canal...

When Shaddad, with his men and his entourage, approached the promised city and entered it from one side, at that very instant a great clamour was heard in the sky and Shaddad and all who accompanied him were struck down - and the city sank below the ground.



The systematic and scientific work of archaeological exploration which has taken place in the desert, mountain and coastal regions of Dhofar Governorate, and the discoveries made over the past 25 years, must be considered among the real accomplishments of Sultan Qaboos's reign; for a diamond of whatever purity or size is nonetheless a worthless thing until it is uncovered. The true value of the treasures of antiquity, even where these treasures take the form of historical information, await for their assessment the light of discovery and revelation. Only when they are uncovered from beneath the piling sands can their splendour be restored and can they be presented in a manner appropriate to their great value to mankind.

We have mentioned the importance of these monuments in the context of tourism, particularly so now that our country has come to look to this sector of the economy as a vital source of income.

We can be certain of one thing, that the archaeological discoveries that have been made in the Omani sands of Dhofar - as well as the ongoing explorations in the mountain areas and plains - are not the accidental outcome of sand excavations or excursions in the hills, but belong to a serious and vital long-term investment.

The True Beginning

The directives of Sultan Qaboos on the formation of a national committee to oversee a survey of the Sultanate's monuments under the chairmanship of the Minister of Information was the true beginning of the systematised scientific work of archaeological and historical discovery in Dhofar Governorate; although previous work had been carried out in this area, as evidenced by a diverse body of studies since 1989 and by preliminary works undertaken by the TransArabia expedition in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

In 1992 controversy arose surrounding a discovery, the announcement of which was not made by Oman.

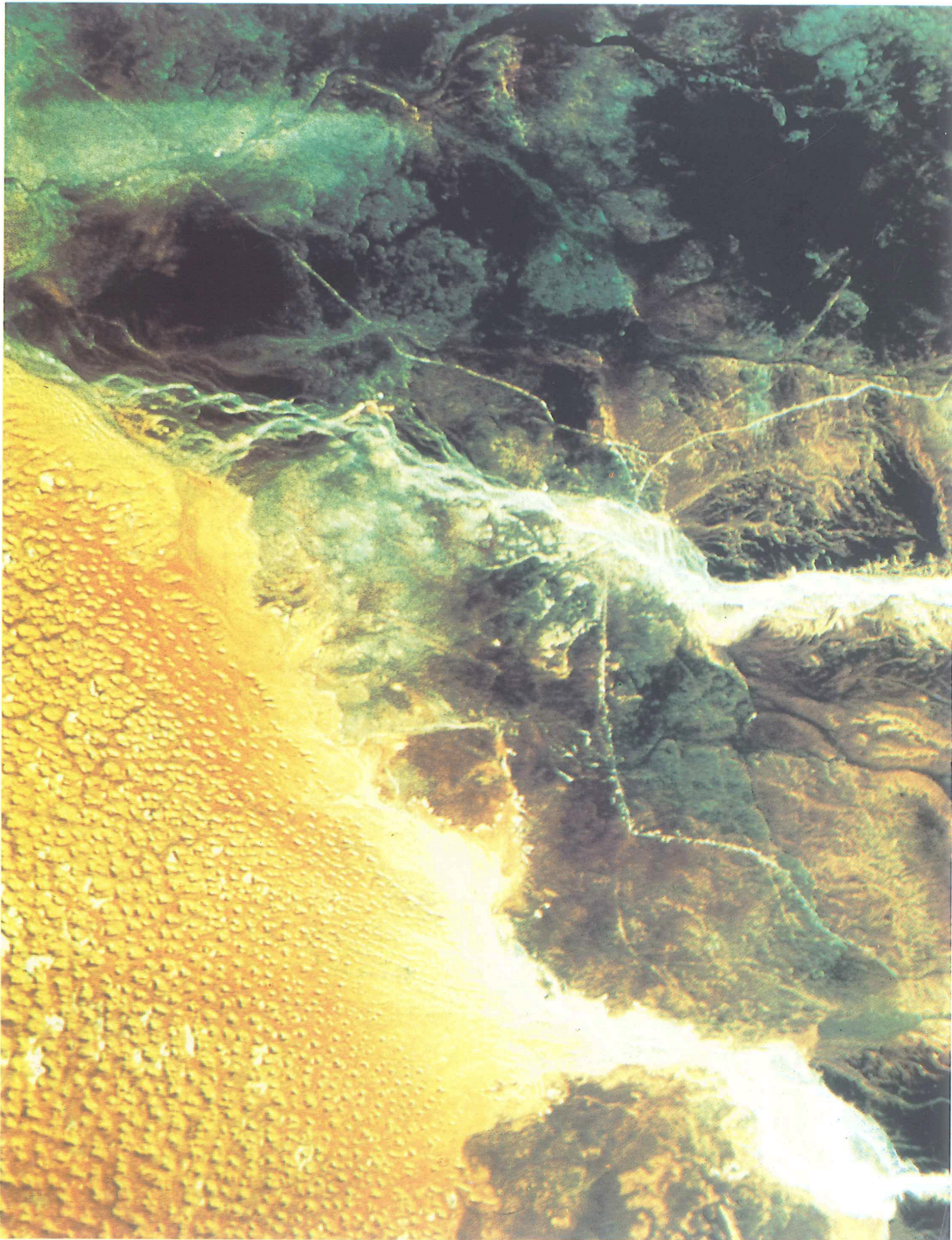
On this occasion the international media transmitted news that an American expedition exploring for antiquities had uncovered the remains of a city submerged in the Omani sands of Dhofar and that this city was distinguished by high columns and massive walls. This led to immediate speculation that the city was Iram Dhat Al Emad which was mentioned in the Qur'an. The discovery team had made use of a set of American satellite pictures which had been taken in the Omani sector of the Rub' Al Khali.

So where is the truth in all of this? What do the discoveries actually say? And what do the historical narratives have to say on the matter?

Discoveries ... and Realities

A survey carried out in 1990 established the presence of no less than three types of pottery. Walls 90 cms wide and 50 cms long were then uncovered. This was followed by the discovery of the remnants of a tower, followed by those of another tower in the northeast corner. It was evident that the towers were both part of a formidable structure. Subsequently bricks were found which had fallen from the ceiling, then a third square-based tower and a number of rooms which were probably built around the same time. The discovery team were able to clear the forecourt of the citadel and the main entrance gate and then to find the fourth tower, which was horseshoe shaped, followed by two other towers. The principal buildings were enclosed by a great wall in the form of an elongated chain of rooms.

These then were the archaeological findings, made beneath the sands of Shisr in Dhofar Governorate. Their importance has ensured that this locality has been the site of ongoing excavation work since 6 December 1992. Since last year, 1994, the team of excavators have focused on the study of these substantial buildings with their six observation towers, hoping to establish the date of their con-



Satellite photographs reveal archaeological sites



struction and the reason for their existence in this place.

Professor Uris Zarens from the University of South West Missouri in the United States, which has taken part in exploration work in the Shisr region (in Dhofar) says in a special study on the subject of these discoveries which he published at the end of last year: "We have managed to establish the historical period to which the building belongs from the evidence of implements and pottery and glass vessels and from incense pots. It dates from between 100 BC and the Islamic Era (900 to 1400 AD).

He adds: "It seems that the city was struck by a light earthquake, which destroyed it."

Perhaps what the Professor refers to as a light earthquake was the "clamour" referred to in the Qur'an which destroyed the city of Iram.

The archaeologists were able to record and identify around 2,500 items and pots found on the site in two seasons of digging and these combine both ceramic and stone objects, as well as animal bones, rare shells and samples of other Late Stone Age tools such as stone axes, blades and knives, mirrors made from stone or metal and grindstones. These objects are testimony that the site was settled at the time of the Stone Age, 5,000 years before Christ, continued to be populated in the subsequent Late Stone Age and up to around 200 BC.

It would seem if we are to believe the archaeological team in Dhofar that the first principal construction began after 1500BC and with the arrival of the Iron Age around 500 BC was still occupied, as evidenced by the presence of ceramic pots with a reddish burnish, all bowl-shaped and some decorated in a spotted pattern. This latter type is known to have been in existence in Oman during the Bronze Age. In Dhofar the same pots were in use up to the onset of the Iron Age.

As well as the ceramic pots, other items contemporary with these were discovered including lamps

made from sandstone, incense burners, stone pots and other vessels. Most of these objects and ornamental vessels date to the first century BC and later, up to the early centuries AD.

Carbon-14 dating has established that the district around Shisr in Dhofar was contemporary with the Graeco-Roman eras up to the fifth century AD. The last historical period in Shisr goes back to the period from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century AD. This is supported by archaeological discoveries of vessels of Chinese origin as well as green coloured glass which demonstrate the growth of trade, according to the archaeologists.

The archaeologists working in the Shisr explorations believe that Shisr was the principal centre for the northbound overland trade which dates to the Late Stone Age and which confirms the existence of trading contacts between Dhofar and the north of



An ancient Dhofari artefact



the Arabian Peninsula and with the Sumerian civilisation in the south of ancient Iraq.

In its first era, the trade consisted entirely of aromatics - principally frankincense - and the trading links between Dhofar and Sumer confirm the extension of this trade westwards to "Gaza and Palestine and Ancient Egypt."

The discovery team maintain that the Shisr district continued to flourish during the Islamic era - through the trade in incense and Arabian horses. It was linked to the Rub' Al Khali on the one hand and the coast of Dhofar on the other. The Shisr district was abandoned at the start of the sixteenth century AD. In investigations at a number of other nearby locations, a site was indentified some 25 kms east of Shisr dating to the Late Stone Age. Stone implements were also found of very great age. All of this suggests, in the view of Professor Zarins, that Omani man has been present in this place since between 30,000 and 50,000 years ago.

Still the Controversy Goes on

A number of historical sources refer to the "people of Ad" and their activities in trade and incense and refer to them as inhabiting the district of Ubar or Wabar, this reference coming under the heading of "Al Ahqaf."

The Holy Qur'an states that the People of Ad were exposed to destruction and ruin, without its identifying their geographical home. If Al Ahqaf has been located in the region north of the Dhofar mountains which extends as far as the Yemeni border, we find that this is the same location where the American archaeological expedition on the evidence of satellite pictures discovered a building of stout pillars lying beneath the sand.

The Holy Qur'an does not specify a historical period in respect of its reference to the people of Ad though it does speak of them as contemporaries of the Bani Hud (the people of the Prophet Hud). The

tomb of this Prophet is also to be found in Dhofar.

In the view of Professor Zarins, the Qur'anic reference to "Iram Dhat Al Emad which is without peer in all the world" and its identification with a particular site in Dhofar "is a matter of controversy which still continues."

Narrative and Legend

In the wake of archaeological discoveries, what do the historians say?

The narratives and claims are all confusing in mtheir references to Iram Dhat Al Emad, home of the people of Ad. The most well known of the accounts - though it cannot be said to be reliable in its description of the city of Iram - is the account given in Yaqut Al Hamawi's *Buldan Al Yamania*.

This account says that "Iram Dhat Al Emad, which is without peer in all the world" was situated at a location between Dhofar Governorate and the territory extending westwards of it into Yemen.

By what manner was this city built? And who built it? According to the narrative: Shaddad bin Ad was a tyrant who, when he heard of Paradise and of what Allah had prepared for the first among the faithful - mansions of gold and silver and dwellings beneath which flowed rivers, rooms above rooms - he said to the elders: Such a city as this Paradise I will build on earth. And so he delegated the task to one hundred of his officers, each of these commanding a thousand conscripts and, instructing them to choose the most suitable location in the land, he furnished them with the means to carry out his orders.

The account goes on to say that Shaddad bin Ad wrote to his three viceregents Ghanem bin Ulwan, Al Dhahak bin Ulwan and Walid bin Riyan, directing them to write to their lieutenants in the farthest corners of the land and to instruct them to assemble all of the gold and silver, pearls and sapphires, musk and amber and saffron in their respective territories and dispatch them to him. He then set about extracting the pure metal from the gold and silver



sent to him and once again ordered his viceregents to send out divers to gather what treasures they could from the sea. Mountains of pearls and precious jewels were collected in this way and all of this treasure was assembled and sent to Shaddad bin Ad. He then sent out miners to the sapphire and chrysolite and other mines and these also yielded a vast hoard of gems. The gold was beaten into bricks which he now used to construct the city, whose walls were decorated with beryl and carnelian. He built room above room, all of them supported on columns of chrysolite and sapphire. He then excavated beneath the city a wadi into which he ran water beneath the ground from a distance of forty farsakh as the basis for a great canal. When he gave the order rivulets of pure water ran from this wadi along the paths and streets and corridors of the city. He ordered that the edges of these pathways be trimmed with red gold. The pebbles were multicoloured precious stones of red and yellow and green. The borders of the river he planted with golden trees from which hung down bunches of sapphires and other precious stones. The city was 12 parsang in length and 12 in breadth. He enclosed it within a high wall inside of which were built three hundred thousand mansions decorated inside and out with precious stones - all three hundred thousand of them. He then built for himself at the centre of the city and on the banks of the river a high palace which looked down on all of the three hundred thousand below. Its door, with its two golden panels encrusted with sapphires, led out onto the wadi at a pleasing open spot. He ordered that beads of musk and saffron be scattered about the streets and pathways of the town. The houses of the city rose three hundred cubits into the air and the walls were also three hundred cubits high, decorated inside and outside with sapphires and precious jewels. A wall was now erected around the city with sentry towers that rose high into the sky built of gold and silver ingots. This city took five hundred years to build.

So what happened?

The story goes on that Allah remonstrated with Shaddad, calling on him to repent and become His deputy on earth. He delegated Hud to go to him, since Hud was one of the nobles of his tribe. In some of the accounts of the authorised transmitters, as in Al Hamawi's book, Hud's full lineage was given as: Hud bin Khaled bin Al Khaloud bin Al Aas 'Amliq bin Ad bin Iram bin Sam bin Nuh.

The important point in all of this is that Hud went to Shaddad bin Ad and called on him to adopt the ways of Allah and directed him to declare his faith in Allah and in His Divinity, His glory and Supremacy and Oneness. But Shaddad was not to be moved and persisted in his godless state. At this time his reign had lasted for 700 years. Hud warned him of



Pre-historic Inscriptions



punishment and of the extinction of his rule, but this did not dissuade him, nor Hod from doing what he was required to do. When the viceregents delegated to build the city approached to announce that they had completed the construction as desired Shaddad resolved to go forth and see it in the company of his guard.

So with an escort of 300,000 of his guard and men he set out in a grand procession in the direction of the city after he had first deputed a successor in Hadramaut; while his son, Murthad bin Shaddad, who had accepted the message of Hod, roamed the Arab lands, in Al Hamawi's account. When Shaddad, with his men and his entourage, approached the promised city and entered it from one side, at that very instant a great clamour was heard in the sky and Shaddad and all who accompanied him were struck down - and the city sank below the ground. This is the first account.

If we return to the interpretation of Al Qurtabi and the best of the interpretations of Surat Al Fajr, which is in the thirtieth volume of the Qur'an, we find the interpretation of Iram Dhat Al-Emad (Iram of the Columns) given as meaning that it had "lofty buildings". Its inhabitants dwelt in Al Ahqaf, this being the desert which extends between Oman and the Hadramaut.

The interpretation given of "the like of which were not produced in all the land", is the like of whose inhabitants were not known elsewhere in God's creation, for their strength and power and bodily stature. The description was intended, if we stay with the foremost of the interpretations and with Al Qurtabi - to intimidate the people of Mecca by bringing to their attention how Allah had created the Ad or the people of Iram, who were longer lived and stronger than the infidels of Mecca.

It was said also that Iram was Sam bin Nuh Ad bin Iram bin Awadh bin Sam bin Nuh. Says Ibn Ishaq: "Sam bin Nuh had sons, among whom was Iram bin Sam and amongst his sons were the Amlaqa and the Fara'ina and the Jababera. There is mention also in the ancient book of the period of the "Age of the Jababera."



Curiously decorated bowl recently excavated

Ibn Ishaq goes on to describe them saying: "The men among them were 50 cubits tall (35 metres), the shortest of them 30 cubits (21 metres)." It was also said that the people of Ad, for their longevity and physical strength, were such that a hundred years would pass among them without a funeral. That is the second story.

The third story recounts that Ad had two sons, Shaddad and Shadid, and when Shadid died affairs passed into the hands of Shaddad who had heard of Paradise, and who said: "Build me the like of it", and so Iram was built in a part of the desert.

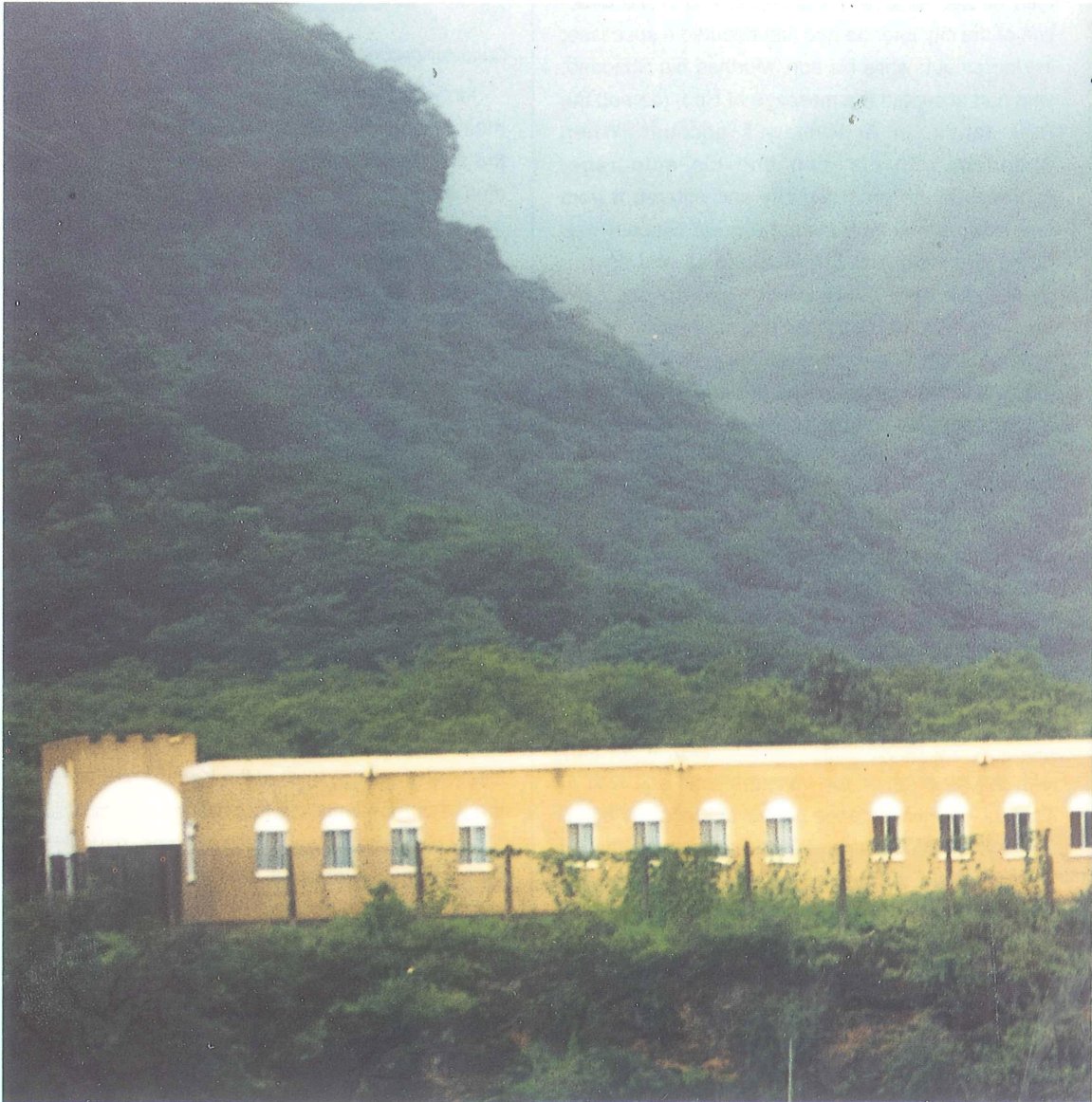
This narrative describes Iram as a mighty city, with palaces of gold and silver encrusted with beryl and sapphire. When they had built it Shaddad set out with the citizens of the kingdom and when they had been in the procession for a day and a night, Allah sent a calamity down from the sky upon them and they perished.

The fourth and last account is contained in the first volume of Al Bidaya Wa Al Nahaya (The Beginning and the End) of Ibn Kathir and it says that the Ad of Iram were the first nation to worship idols: "They were coarse and profane Arabs, haughty and recalcitrant." Allah sent among them one of their own to call them (to the truth) but they refuted him and opposed him.

Ibn Kathir is certain that the Ad of Iram dwelt in "columns" whether these be the columns of tents or of lofty buildings, and he supports accounts of the longevity of the Ad and their strength of body, but refutes the claim that their city Iram was made of gold or silver.



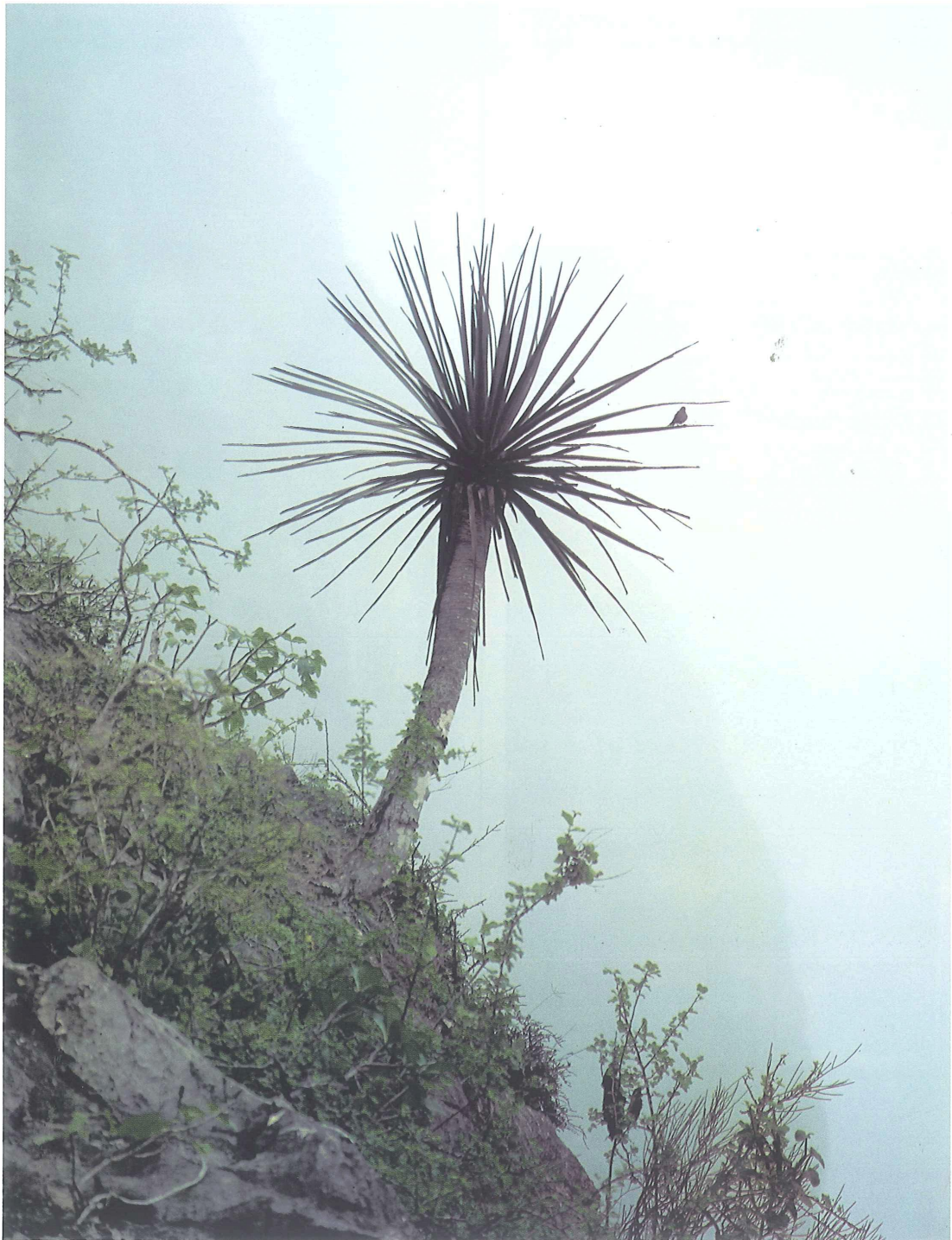
The Nine Wilayatts and the Imprint of the Modern Era



Local administration headquarters. Dhofar



Dhofar, with its nine Wilayats, is distinguished by a remarkable model of local administration, as symbolised by the presence of the apparatus of State in even the smallest population centre. This fact alone reflects the leadership's commitment to extend basic services to every citizen of Oman and to maintain a continuing dialogue with every sector of the population.



Mist-shrouded mountains of Dhofar



Dhofar Governorate is not simply a place of historical interest. All of its nine Wilayats display the clear imprint of the Renaissance. No mountain, plain, stretch of coast or border post, even as far as the sands of the Rub' Al Khali, has been neglected.

The outstanding feature of the development process undergone by Dhofar and its nine Wilayats is the extent to which this process shows balance and harmony, the extent to which it has been influenced by the demographic and geographic realities represented in the disparity between upland and plain.

It is also distinguished by a remarkable model of local administration, as symbolised by the presence of the apparatus of State in even the smallest population centre. This fact alone reflects the leadership's commitment to extend basic services to every citizen of Oman and to maintain a continuing dialogue with every sector of the population.

The population of the Governorate of Dhofar, in line with figures derived from the National Census carried out at the end of 1994, is 189,094 persons.

Of the Governorate's nine Wilayats its administrative capital, Salalah, has the highest population density, with a count of 131,813



Traditional window in this area



Wilayat Salalah



Modern Salalah



The city of Salalah, capital of Dhofar, has two middle-level colleges, one each for boys and girls. In addition the Vocational Training Authority has built a Technical College here and the Sultan Qaboos Institute for Islamic Studies.



A mountain road, Dhofar



The Wilayat of Salalah is on the Arabian Sea, around 1,040 kms from Muscat overland. It is the administrative capital of the Governorate, adjoining on the northern border the Wilayat of Thamrait and on the west the Wilayat of Rakhyut; to the east is Taqah. It has a number of sub-districts, at Taytam, Ghaddu, Hajif, Qairun Hirti, Zeik, Al San and two administrative centres, one in each of Ambashaq and Jabnin. The total population of the Wilayat of Salalah is 131,813.

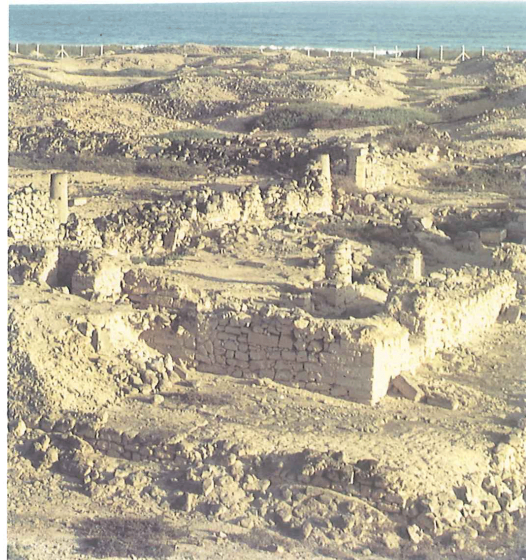
Various studies and surveys by scientists and scholars have explored the history of this ancient city and the evidence from inscriptions and ancient writings and signs from the pre-Islamic period and later point to a number of independent civilisations having succeeded one another in this place. Today the process of scientific exploration continues, with a view to identifying precisely the historical periods to which these civilisations belonged. These include the Manjawi civilisation which had its base in the district of Belid in the period between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. Commerce flourished at this time, and there is evidence that the region enjoyed a thriving import and export trade. Frankincense and pure-bred Arabian horses were the principal commodities of the export trade to the markets of antiquity, along with some spices and other agricultural products for which Salalah was noted. It is said that Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Haboudhi rebuilt the city and named it Al Mansourah (the Victorious) and the status of the city in the ancient world was confirmed by several travellers and historians, including Marco Polo and Ibn Batuta in their writings about it.

The monuments of the city of Rabat suggest the existence of another civilisation which co-existed with that of the Manjavis. Between the sixth and eighth centuries AH the city of Rabat itself was counted among the most important centres of learning in the south of the Arabian Peninsula.

The Belid district is prominent among the archaeological sites testifying to the historical standing of this region which was demolished by the action of sudden calamities and of which today the remains of the port quays, mosques, buildings, and tombs lie spread over a large area.

The vestiges of past ages multiply in a striking way when we get to Salalah city. There are three archaeological sites in Al Mughsil and traces of an ancient wall, as well as pre-Islamic tombs in Razzat and the remains of Old Rabat city. At Ain Hamran are the ruins of an ancient fort and more pre-Islamic tombs; at Hasila, where the Prophet Saleh's camel was slaughtered, a wall, irrigation channels and a well at the entrance to Wadi Nahiz. There are also three mosques, one of which, at Dahariz, is dedicated to Abdelaziz bin Ahmed. Another, the Aqil Mosque, is at East Salalah and the third is the Mosque of Abdullah Al Yamani in Awqad.

There are five religious mausoleums erected for, respectively: the Prophet Ayoub at Ghadwa; Salem bin Ahmed bin Arabia at Raysut; Hud bin Amer at Qairun Hirti; the Prophet Umran at Al



Al Belid Archaeological site



Quf; and Junayd at Al Hosn.

Salalah has more than picturesque ruins to offer by way of enchantment. The city is set against a land and seascape of great natural beauty. Especially striking are the coast of Raysut and Dahariz and Maghsil and Salalah; the scenery of Mughsil and Awqad and Belid and Salalah and Qurum; the springs of Razzat, Hamran, Jarziz, Aishint and Sahnout; the wadis: Razzat, Nahiz, Arbut, Jarziz, Adwanb and Ashuq; and the uplands beyond Wadi Nahiz, as well as Mount Hamrir and Mount Atin.

The splendour of this setting is complemented by the many landscaped gardens and parks which enhance the city itself. Salalah Public Park, Saada Public Park, Daharis, Ain Razzat and the New Salalah, Quf and Moatazza Gardens are examples of these.

These natural attractions, in combination with the accommodating climate of the Dhofar region, have caused Salalah to become a favoured resort for tourists from within the country and from abroad.



An historical place of visit



A renovated old mosque in Salalah



A spectacular blow-hole, Mughsayl



Salalah is noted for a diversity of traditional livelihoods and crafts, industries, arts and folk customs still practised in the city and its environs. Traditional livelihoods include commerce, blacksmithing, the herding and breeding of livestock, needlework and embroidery and agriculture.

Among the indigenous Industries are boat and skiff building, pottery, palm-weaving, rope-making, dairy production, the making of fishing nets, confectionery, silver and gold jewellery work, woodcarving and leatherwork.

The most well-known of the traditional arts and customs are: Al Bar'aa, Al Habout, Al Sharh, Al Dan Dan, Al Robouba, Al Zonouj, Al Muadar, Al Shibania, Al Tabbal, Ahmed Al Kebir, Lawlai and Al Dabraret.

Chief among the agricultural crops for which this region is noted are coconuts, bananas, papayas, lemon, sweet potato, corn, wheat, dairy produce and a variety of grasses.

Animal and fish products include meats, milk and dairy products, honey and fish, in particular Lobster and sardine.

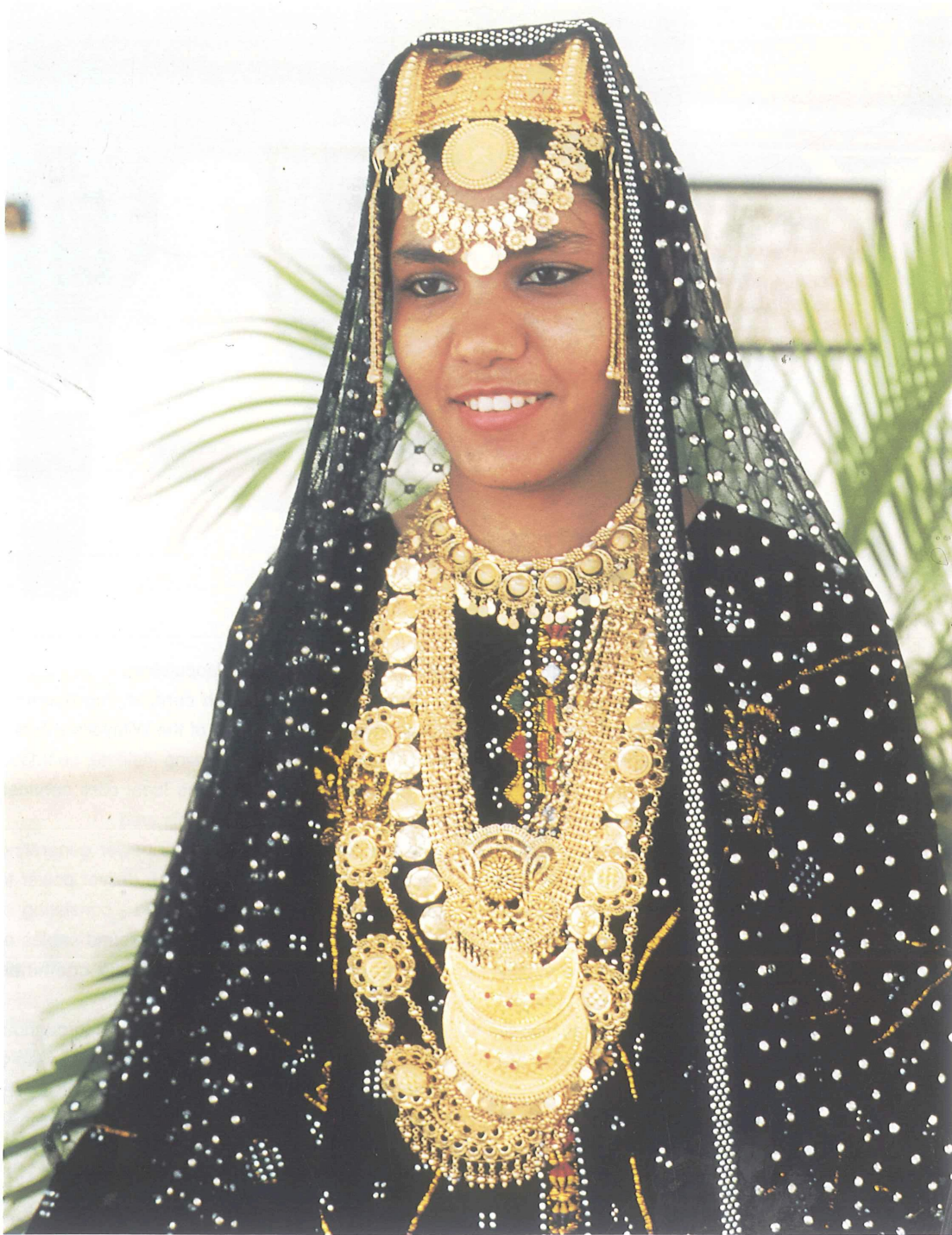
As with the other local Wilayatt Salalah has received appropriate attention in the Five Year Development Plans and its natural potential and regional standing have been enhanced by the Renaissance launched and led by Sultan Qaboos. Modernisation has taken place in many different areas, not by a means which violates the past but, on the contrary, to a degree which recognises and preserves the past as a vital element of Oman's priceless heritage.

The State administrative offices located throughout this region have been actively involved in the execution of advanced service projects which have contributed directly to raising the standard of living of the inhabitants of the Wilayat.

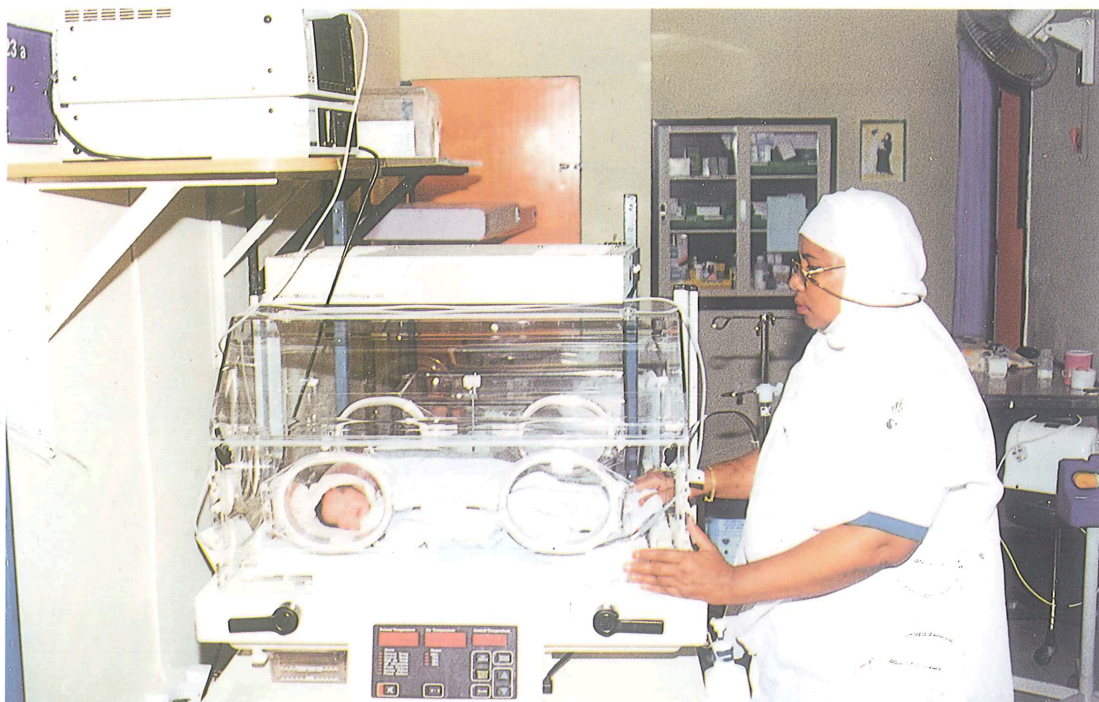
In the water services sector the Directorate-General for Water and Transportation at the Office



Basket Weaving



A Dhofari girl proudly displays her national dress



Child-care

of the Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar was responsible for the installation of a new water distribution network covering most parts of the city of Salalah and its new suburbs and supplying the area serviced with drinking water. The water is sourced from artesian wells drilled in the plain outside the city. Central reservoirs were constructed as part of the scheme and many artesian wells were dug throughout the Wilayat to supplement the supply of drinking water, these latter being monitored constantly by the Health authorities. They also supply the substantial herds which constitute a principal source of income for the local inhabitants, as indeed is herding a principal livelihood throughout the province of Dhofar.

The Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah is a monument to the improvements that have taken place in the health services. This hospital is the principal referral hospital for the Governorate of Dhofar and has 316 beds serving the provincial population. In addition it can offer treatment in most of the medical

specialisations to the local population.

There are also 8 health centres, representing approximately one for each of the Wilayat's sub-districts. Salalah also has a nursing institute, contributing to the development of the local care services while upgrading local skills in this area.

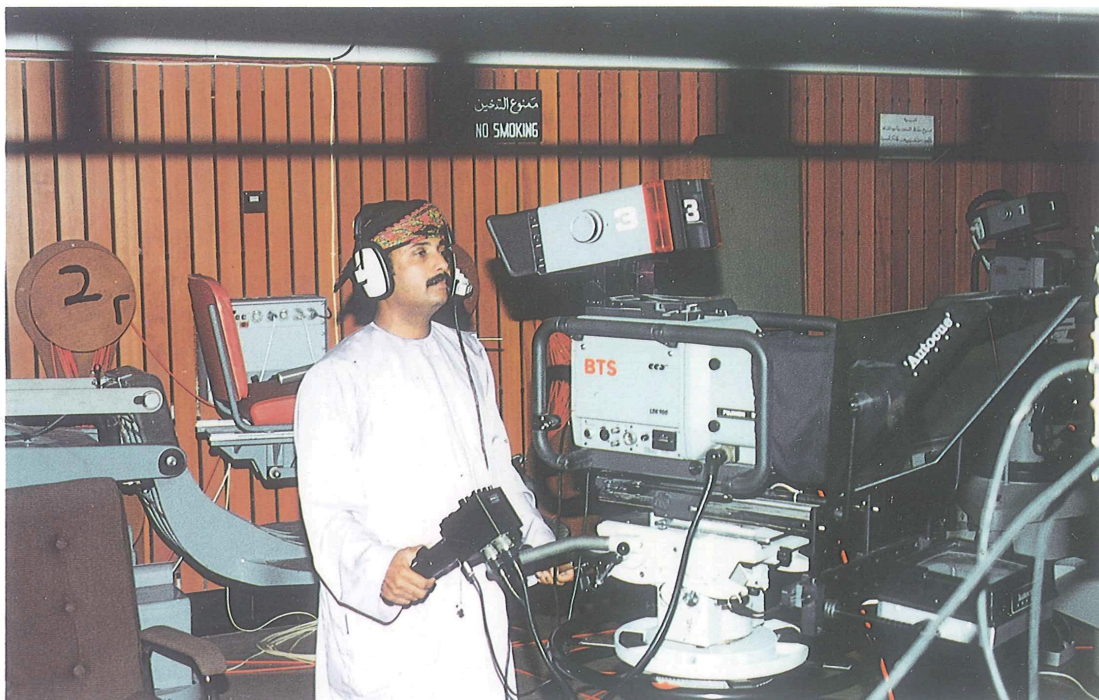
In the electricity sector, three power generating stations have been installed which deliver power to the city over a modern power grid - consisting of over 1,905 kms of overhead and ground cables at the end of 1994 - and which have a combined capacity of 128,000 kws.

In 1970, as we know, communications throughout Oman were practically non-existent. Since then a telephone network has been extended to every quarter of the city with a number of exchanges installed. The services included support for cellular phone, fax, telex and public announcement systems.

A general post office is sited at Salalah, providing a first class service to the local residents and facili-



Directorate-General of Social Affairs and Labour, Salalah



Oman T.V. Studios

tating communications with the rest of the country and with the outside world.

Welfare benefit has been broadened to cover every person in genuine need of assistance. Woman and child schemes were also instituted along with local community development schemes.

The five social service schemes in operation are administered on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour through the aegis of the Omani Women's Association, the Handicapped Care Centre, the Local Community Development Centre, the centres for the training of women in needlework and embroidery and traditional crafts training centres.

In the labour sector Salalah is home to a regional branch of the authority set up to oversee implementation of recent labour legislation which will monitor its implementation throughout the Governorate.

Housing development has taken the form of the mapping and distribution of parcels of land for resi-

dential, industrial, commercial and agricultural use in New Salalah, Al Quf, Al Qaradh, Al Zawiya, Al Wadi, North and South Dahariz, North Awqadin, Al Saada, Raysut, Sahnut, Al Belid and Mughsil.

A total of 19,029 plots of land have been given out in this way, of which 17,200 were residential, 515 agricultural, 720 industrial and 594 commercial. Families of limited income have benefited through the construction of 260 public housing units or through the allocation of building assistance or grants, of which 145 have been approved.

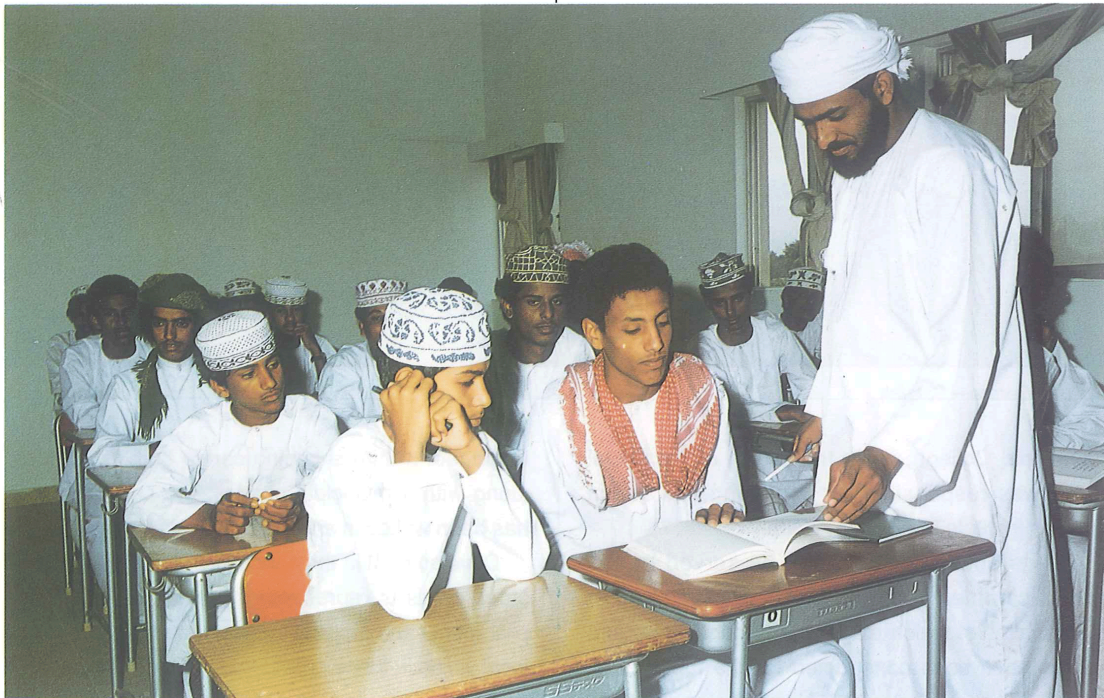
The year 1971 was a launching pad for many innovations in Oman. It was the year that Sultan Qaboos announced the start of a new era and communicated this to the nation by means of a broadcast transmitted from the Salalah-based Radio Oman to every part of the country, as indeed have the accomplishments of the past 25 years since then penetrated also to every part of Oman.

Since 1971 the Omani broadcasting media - for



Oman Radio was joined by Oman Television in 1975 - have continued to broadcast from Salalah from a station equipped with state-of-the-art technology, mirroring the government's belief in the importance of providing credible news reports and objective commentary on both radio and TV. Awareness programmes as well as educational/instructional and entertainment programmes have come in this time to play a more and more important role in the use of

Affairs, in its concern to provide each region with its quota of State assistance to the religious community, undertook construction of a large mosque at Al Zawia, while assisting with the construction of many other smaller mosques and furnishing essential services for their upkeep, and in particular the provision of learning facilities. Over and above the government's role the Diwan of the Royal Court has been separately responsible for the construction of many



Education is a right for all citizens

information to raise awareness of the challenges facing the nation and its people.

The Ministry of Information has installed a network of booster stations in the Salalah region, linked in to 12 main booster stations, amongst these Salalah and Dahariz.

Salalah also has a branch office of the Oman News Agency (ONA) and a regional office of the Arabic-language national daily "Oman."

The Ministry of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic

small and large mosques in Salalah, among them the Salalah, Hafa, Shorouq and Afif Mosques, along with several mausoleums and shrines.

In the educational arena the Ministry of Education has built 66 schools in the Wilayat,

of which 31 are primary, 30 preparatory and five secondary.

The region also has two Teacher Training Institutes, one for men and one for women, and the Vocational Training Authority has set up a



Cultural Centre – Salalah

Vocational College; while the Diwan of the Royal Court was responsible for instituting the Sultan Qaboos Institute for Islamic Affairs.

Sports and youth will soon be served by the sports complex which is under construction in Salalah city, of which stage one is completed, and homes have been constructed for the four district athletic clubs, respectively Al Nasr, Dhofar, Al Ittihad and Al Hilal.

The Municipality of Dhofar has carried out a number of important projects, the most important of these being the installation of two large market-places in Salalah, one of them a main shopping centre and the other a secondary one. It has also laid out three public parks, one each in Salalah, Saada and Dahariz; and several public gardens scattered about the various quarters of the city. The seaside at Mughsil has resthouses and beach facilities and the city is well landscaped and planted with trees. Street roundabouts and lighting have been

upgraded, a third shopping centre built at Al Hosn, along with a municipal abattoir, the cemetery area has been walled in and organic pools installed.

Development in the agriculture, fisheries and live-stock areas is represented in a series of accomplishments and projects geared towards augmenting local yields in these areas.

There is an agricultural research station, along with a number of agricultural advice centres and three experimental farms, in, respectively, Belid, Rabat and Qairun Hirti. Additionally the region has massawarat or selected walled enclosures where agricultural research is carried out in a number of the Wilayat's sub-districts. Several projects and schemes are under way for the rationalisation of water consumption through the revamping of the irrigation system and proffering of technical knowhow, as well as funding support to farmers.

To promote the fisheries, ice factories have been built along with a maintenance workshop for fishing



equipment. There are also support schemes for those engaged in the fishing industry in the form of grant and easy loan facilities for the purchase of boats and fishing equipment as well as the provision of data and advice of benefit to fishermen.

The veterinary hospital in Salalah is a crucial support facility for the livestock sector and there are veterinary centres in the many sub-districts throughout the Wilayat, as well as a number of model enclosures for small farmers. Meanwhile a comprehensive programme to improve the herd and support breeders continues here as elsewhere throughout the Sultanate.

Trade and industry are supported chiefly in the shape of the Raysut Industrial Estate which has a number of manufacturing units currently in production. It is also home to a mineral laboratory with a special interest in precious metals, based here in an act of confidence in the area's stability and out of concern to maintain Oman's leading edge in this industry.

In the domain of heritage and culture, a National Heritage and Culture Centre has been established here which encompasses a museum, theatre, libraries, auditoria and administrative offices.

The communications sector has also been served through construction of an urban network of modern roads covering 268 kms of Salalah city and reaching all quarters of the city. The district network of roads is also extensive, linking Salalah with its eight sub-districts as well as the other Wilayat in the Governorate, a total of 714 kms of modern roadway in all.

Dhofar Governorate has 145 schools covering the various educational stages. It is common knowledge that this Governorate had only a solitary school in 1970



Salalah Airport



Raysut Port

Airport and Seaport

Two installations vital to its contact with the rest of the country and with the outside world are present in Salalah. These are Salalah Civilian Airport and Raysut Port.

Expansion at Salalah Civilian Airport has given it the capacity to accommodate three aircraft, a 9,000 ft runway with an east-west orientation and an air observation and communications tower; central runway and border lighting as well as a lighting system for the area adjoining the landing strip, automatic landing and map-reading equipment, equipment for gauging the relative humidity and rainfall and assessing runway visibility, radar detection equipment, a complete mobile command unit supplied with wireless equipment for use in emergencies and procedures for in-airport emergencies, and modern fire fighting vehicles. Meanwhile the Fire and Rescue division has been equipped with the modern equipment required to raise its capability and level of preparedness. A high frequency remote control station has been installed at Jebel Samhan, and

attached to Salalah Airport is a vast goods storage area and a service and welding training workshop.

Raysut Port was constructed and subsequently developed to receive ships year round, prior to which the Governorate of Dhofar was effectively closed to shipping for six months of the year, due to rough weather and high seas which prevented ships from reaching shore.

The Port now has five landing quays, one 10 metres deep and 520 metres long with berthing for three ships carrying loads of up to 15,000 tonnes.

The second quay has a depth of 8 metres, is 200 metres long and can berth one ship loaded to a maximum of 6,000 tonnes.

The third is 4 metres deep and 460 metres long and can berth 4 ships with maximum 1,500 tonnes load.

The fourth is 3 metres deep and 260 metres long and has a number of berths for smaller boats.

The fifth quay has a depth of 12 m and is reserved specifically for the loading of oil to a maximum capacity of 35,000 tonnes. Finally there is one other small pier, 3 metres deep, for fishing boats



and trawlers together with a slipway for lowering boats into the harbour.

The Port area has four goods warehouses, each with a floor area of 3,000 square metres, for the storage of perishable goods. An additional 200,000 sq ms of external goods storage space has been prepared for non-perishable goods.

The Port has a modern container bay and this is supplied with a 35-tonne capacity gantry crane for the transfer of containers of various sizes. There are four other electric goods transfer cranes with capacities of 6 to 15 tonnes, a group of mobile cranes of 15 to 150 tonnes capacity, as well as forklifts of varying capacities, from 2 to 30 tonnes. The dock-side area also has 27 electricity supply points for refrigerated containers carrying fresh produce. The Port can land and evacuate five ships simultaneously and can dock four ships on full loads of up to 1,500 tonnes. Two breakwaters are in the course of being built, the eastern one 1,400 metres long and the northern 1,600 metres. The maximum capacity load that the facility can handle at present is 35,000 tonnes. A new Port Administration building has been completed and it is anticipated that this will upgrade the services and facilities and eliminate delays.

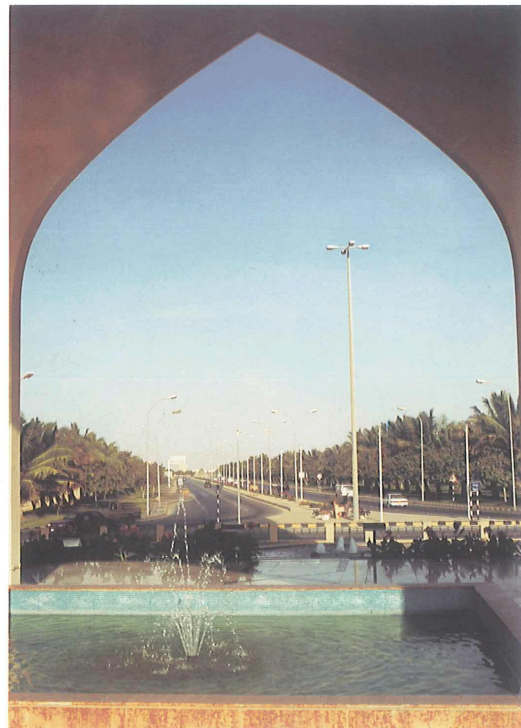
The construction plan for Raysut Port has also taken into consideration the fact that new quays could be built inside the northern breakwater to service ships carrying up to 22,000 tonnes of cargo.

Several of the government Ministries have representative offices in Salalah to relay services to the local population in the Wilayat and to the Governorate as a whole, in particular in the fields of environment, oil and minerals. There is also a branch of the Tender Board and of the Summary

Salalah has three main electricity generating stations, which have a combined output of 128,000 kws, and has 1,905 kms of air and ground cables serving the telephone network.

Court; police and army barracks; and the national folk ensembles are based here. The Central Bank of Oman and the General Directorate for Finance are represented also and two specialised banks have branches here, the Housing Bank and the Agriculture and Fisheries Bank.

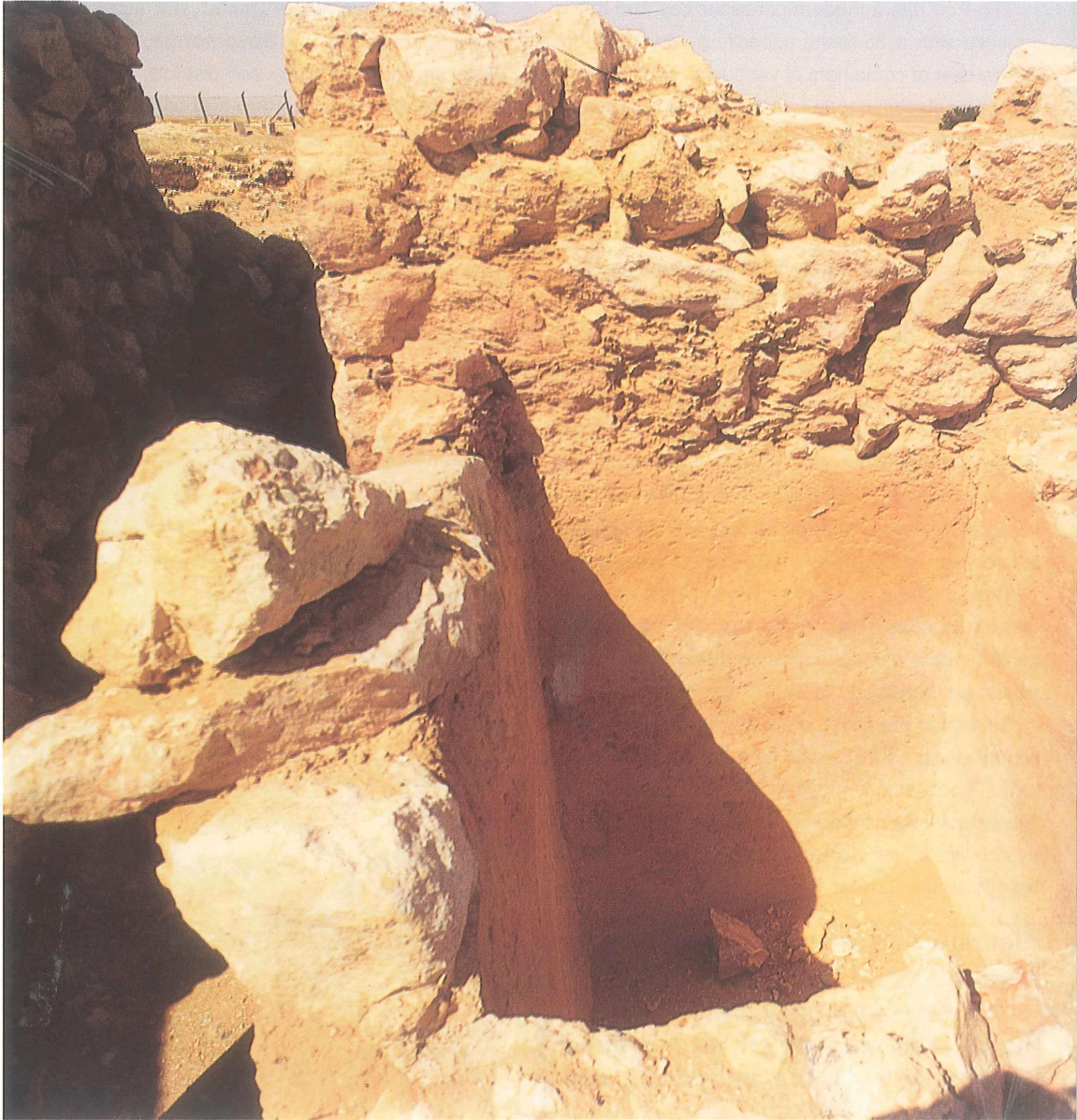
Salalah city is the official base of the Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar and administrative headquarters for the Governorate, with its nine Wilayatt and their many sub-districts. In this it is a working model for the system of controlled amalgamation of local administrative systems for which the Sultanate is distinguished. Equally it is an exemplary model of strong government presence in even the remotest districts and smallest population centres and of a service network which can provide the basic necessities to a widely scattered population and attend to their affairs efficiently and promptly.



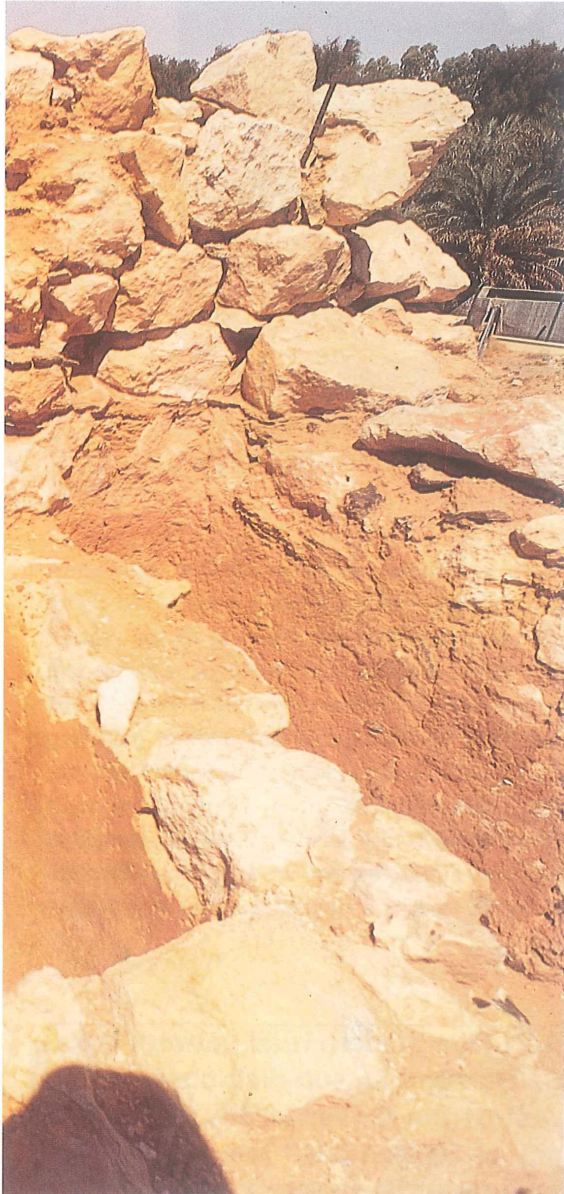
A Dhofari vista



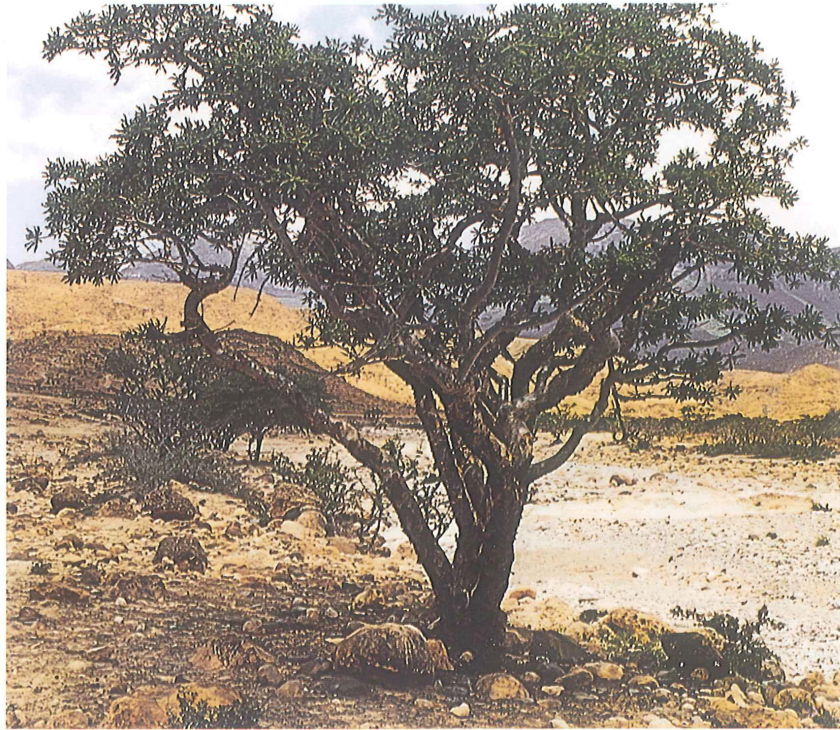
Wilayat Thamrait



A scene in Thamrait



In Dhofar there are 74 elementary illiteracy classes representing 246 men and 1048 women



A frankincense tree from which the famous incense is harvested

This Wilayat is north of Salalah and west of Shalim and the Halaniat Islands, east of the sub-district of Al Maziouna and south of Muqshin. Its importance derives from its position at the juncture of the principal roads linking the Governorate of Dhofar to the rest of the Sultanate. The sub-district of Shisr falls within its jurisdiction, as does Madhi, Halouf and Masshiliya and the (administrative) centre of Qatbit. Its population is 7,439.

Its fame in times past related to its status as a forwarding post on the overland caravan routes to the ports of shipment on the Arabian Sea. Archaeological excavations in Hamoun and Shisr and Madhi have produced evidence of a civilisation with roots in antiquity which was responsible for leading a revival of economic life in the desert region and which made of this inland trading centre an important link between the northern and southern parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

The Wilayat of Thamrait in the far desert of

Dhofar is characterised by the historical significance of the region. It was at Shisr that the fabled city of Ubar was unearthed and the most recent excavations there demonstrate it to have been an important trading centre for frankincense and a desert trading post. The Hamoun Oasis was another gathering point for frankincense in ancient times. There are also Islamic remains here, among them mausoleums and domed shrines at Madhi. Mashdid in the same sub-district has water springs which are renowned for their depth and spectacular meanderings.

A 714 km modern road network links Salalah and its sub-districts with the rest of the Governorate, while the city of Salalah itself has 268 kms of internal surfaced roads and streets



Thamrait Administrative Headquarters



The Wilayat has many signs to display of the development that has taken place over the past quarter of a century of Renaissance.

Three administrative centres were built here, one each in Thamrait, Shisr and Madhi, and an office in Qatbit, as well as a police station, electricity generating station, a branch of Dhofar local authority, a telephone and post office building, three health centres, in Thamrait, Shisr and Madhi respectively, a number of schools covering the various educational levels, in Thamrait, Shisr, Madhi and Qatbit. Many wells have been excavated throughout the Wilayat, and State housing built at Thamrait, Shisr and Madhi. There is a Social Affairs and Labour (Ministry) centre in Thamrait as well as a Housing (Ministry) office which handles the parcelling and distribution of land for various categories of use; a radio transmission booster station, an experimental farm at Sein Al Khayrat along with a veterinary centre and a separate agricultural advice centre; and a water resources evaluation centre at Sein al Khayrat. Moreover the Wilayat has been linked to its



Service for the visitor



A senior class



outlying sub-districts by a network of modern roads.

The principal agricultural centres of this Wilayat are at Sein Al Khayrat, Hila Al Raka, Hanafit, Shisir and Duka, and the principal crops are vegetables, fruits and grasses.

The people of Thamrait still engage in a number of crafts and industries practised traditionally in this locality. Livestock herding and breeding is a principal livelihood, along with the harvesting of frankincense and the overland caravan trade.

The spinning and weaving of wool is an indigenous local industry, along with tent-making, palm-frond weaving and the leather industry.

Traditional dance customs kept alive by the local inhabitants include Al Habout, Al Zamel, Al Taghroud, Al Tasmia, Al Hawrabiya and Luluwa.



Administrative services



Various facilities for the service of the citizen



Wilayat Taqah



A legacy of the past embraces modern life in Taqah





Salalah, with the mountains of the Jebel in the background

Taqah occupies the strip of the Dhofari coastline that falls between Salalah and Marbat along the Arabian Sea. Dhahaboun and Barbazoum lie to the north of it. It is 30 kms from Salalah itself and has two administrative sub-districts, Al Haq town and Jibjat, while it also oversees two administrative centres, in Shaihait and Khabratet respectively. It has a population count of 15,668.

There are archaeological remains close to the tomb of Sheikh Aissa above Taqah Bay which identify it as the city known also in antiquity as Taqah.

Al Tayeb Bamkhataru, in his book *Al Solouk fi Tabaqat al Ulema wa al Mulouk* (Etiquette among the Classes of Religious Savants and Kings), demonstrates the importance of Taqa as a port in those distant times, especially if we read his account through the interpretation of the Taqah preacher and jurispudent Mohammed bin Hamdi of

718 AH.

In another work *Al 'Amda Al Mehria fi Dhabt Qawa'id Al Bahria* (The Issue of Mehra in Establishing the Principles of Navigation) mentions the port of Taqah amongst the renowned ports of the Arabian Peninsula and its neighbouring territories, when it was a significant trading centre of the ancient world.

The most well known of the ancient remains in this district is Samhuran, with its famed seaport. This was one of the oldest cities in the ancient world, and is thought to date to approximately the third millennium BC, and yet the inscriptions are to this day visible on the walls and columns of the citadel which is there.

Its ports were the most ancient in the south of the Arabian Peninsula and were used to export local produce to all of the known world beyond. Chief



amongst these commodities no doubt was luban or frankincense which at the time found its way to Pharaonic Egypt, particularly at the time of Queen Hatshepsut in the fifteenth century BC. This latter fact is confirmed by the discovery of a drawing of a Pharaonic ship anchored at the port of Samhuran. This drawing is still visible in one of the temples of the Valley of the Kings at Luxor in Egypt.

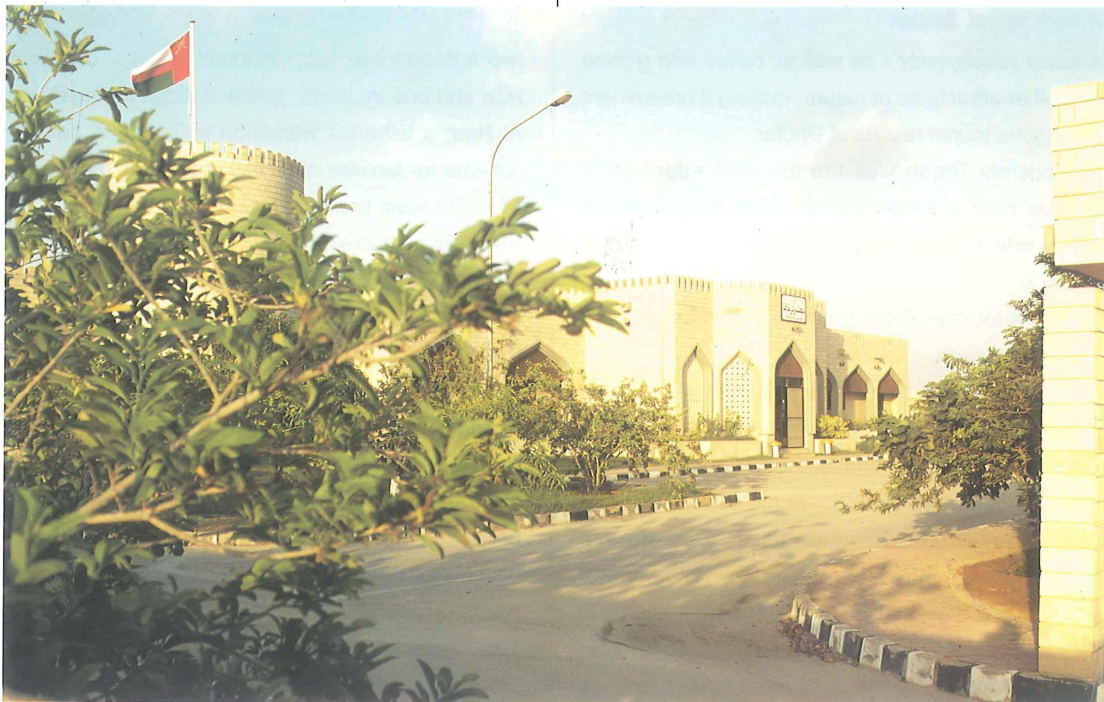
It is said also that the boatload of Omani frankincense sent to the Queen of Sheba Bilqis was loaded at Samhuran port. The Queen dispatched it as a gift to the Prophet Solomon bin Dawud (son of David) who at the time occupied the throne of Lagan.

The geographers of Greece, Ptolemy and Strabo, gave Samhuran the name "Moscha", which to archaeologists and historians emphasise the importance of this port as an administrative centre for the frankincense producing region.

A number of archaeological expeditions were

dedicated to the search for the city of Taqah and its dependencies. The most important of the exploration teams was that of American Foundation for the Study of Man which in 1952 found the remains of stone sculptures and carvings here to identify the site. The well serving the ruined citadel at this site displays evidence of remarkable engineering skills and is, with its stone basins, a superb example of the superior architectural skills of the time. It is thought also that the two mounds at the entrance to the port are the remains of fortification walls. The stronghold of Taqah and the remains of the Citadel of Ghasbar at the town of Al Haq are archaeological ruins. And there are early tombs dating to pre-Islamic times to the east and west of Sulī Bay.

If the tombs mentioned previously belong to the city of Taqah and its port, Samhuran, then this place must be listed as a potentially important one on the tourist trail. In addition Taqah has unspoilt silver beaches, water springs - at Dirbat, Tobruq and



Modern buildings serve the people



A boys' school, Salalah

Athoum respectively - as well as caves and grottos and other attractions of nature, making it preeminent among the tourist resorts of Dhofar.

Recently Taqah was the focus of attention of another kind in Omani reports when it became the burial site of Her Majesty the mother of Sultan Qaboos.

Taqah too has seen its share of the bounties of the last 25 years.

The city has a new electrical power grid, a telephone network and piped water supply. The town of Al Haq has a hospital and, of the two health centres, one is in Taqa and the other in the second sub-district of Jabjit. The two sub-districts each have administrative centres furnishing a full range of services. There is also a branch of the local authority in Taqah, a woman's cooperative, and a local community development centre in Al Haq; three branches of the post office, one each in Taqah and each of its

two sub-districts; two veterinary clinics, one in Al Haq and one in Jabjit; police stations in Taqah and Al Haq; a fisheries workshop in Taqah, a housing scheme for families of limited income in Taqah; and all of the main population centres in the Wilayat are linked by asphalted roads.

The Wilayat has nine schools covering the primary, preparatory and secondary stages between them. The most important of these is the Her Majesty Mayzoun bint Ahmed bin Ali Al Maashani's Secondary School for Girls. Many parcels of land have been given out here as elsewhere for residential, industrial and commercial use. Wells have been drilled in all of the administrative districts and sub-districts of this Wilayat for drinking and other purposes. The office and residence of the Wali are in Taqah itself.

Taqah has a rich diversity of traditional livelihoods, industries and crafts, customs and folk arts.



Fishing, herding and breeding, carpentry and the production of dairy produce and honey are foremost amongst the indigenous livelihoods of this locality.

Traditional industries include the making of leather goods and basketwork from palm-fronds, fishing nets, bedouin occupations, needlework and embroidery.

The dances native to this region and performed on ritual or national occasions are Al Habout, Al Dan Dun, Al Ra'bout, Raqsat Al Zonouj, Al Madar Al Dabrarat, Al Robouba, Al Bar'aa, Tabal Al Nisaa and Al Sharh.

Agriculture is no more than a seasonal pursuit here, the most important crops being beans, corn and cucumber, as well as coconuts, bananas, papayas, fruit and vegetables.



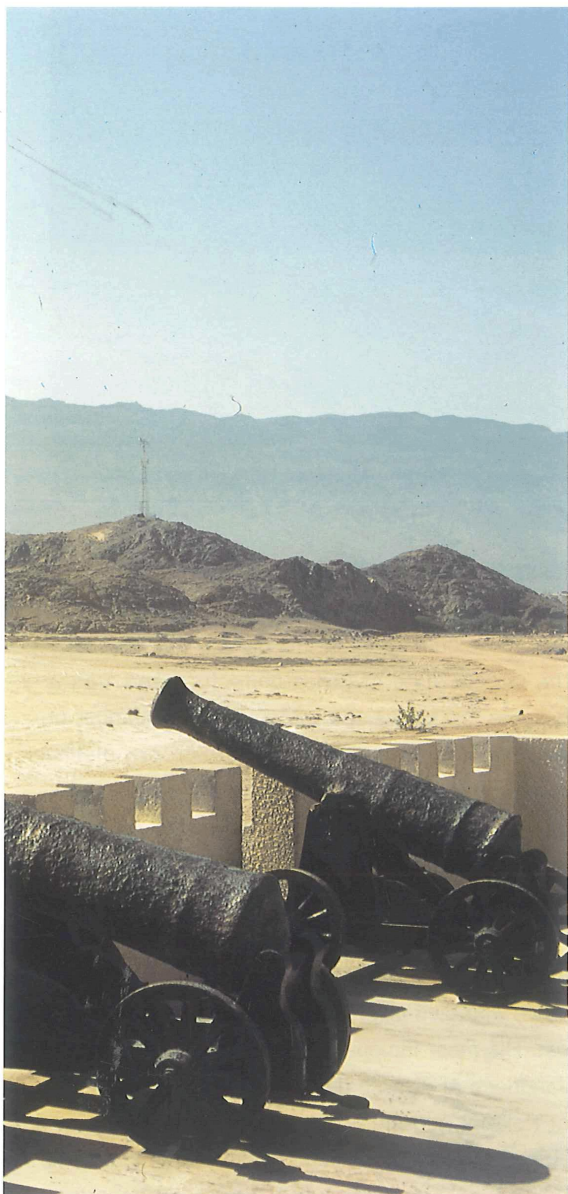
Taqah Folk Dance



Wilayat Marbat



Ancient cannon still watch for the invader





The golden sands of Dhofar

Marbat is on the central strip of the Dhofari coast, 76 kms east of Salalah. On its eastern border it adjoins the Wilayat of Sadah and on the west Taqah. To the north are the highlands of Jebel Samhan and the sub-district of Jibjat which is affiliated to the Wilayat of Taqah, and to the south the Arabian Sea. Its population is 11,300, of whom 9,716 or 86% are Omanis, and it has one administrative sub-district, Tawi A'teer.

It is thought that the name Marbat came from the proliferation of marabat al khail (which means literally places where horses are tied up) in this district, which was famed for the breeding and exporting of horses in the past. As a result Marbat came to occupy an important status in the ancient world, and this fact we know from the evidence of historical information. It was known far and wide for its trade in pure-bred Arabian horses, as well as frankincense and other local produce, which were exported in

return for merchandise from India and East Africa.

The Citadel of Marbat is one of the more noteworthy historical sites in this district. It is built after the Omani style of fort architecture and was a defence fort for the town. Marbat has a number of additional historical buildings which are distinguished by the Arab-Islamic style of architecture, and throughout the Wilayat also are to be found mausoleums and tombs of historical interest. The most important of the former is the mausoleum of Ibn Ali, which dates to the sixth century AH. The tomb of the Ulama Abu Abdullah Mohammed Al 'Ala'i, who died in 577 AH is also of historical interest. His most famous publication was *Al R'iasa fi Tahdheeb Al Siyassa* (Leadership in the Refinement of Politics) and the book *Tahdheeb Al Alfadh* (The Refinement of Enunciation). Also in this district is the mausoleum of Abdullah Zuheir, an important shrine to the local population and also to visitors



from outside the district.

The citadel and old buildings and mausoleums are tourist attractions in their own right, but Marbat has a spectacular natural landscape, of great beauty and variety, from the beaches and headlands and little bays of the coastline to the highlands and peaks of Jebel Samhan which stands at 4,754 ft. The district also has natural springs, grottos and caves scattered about the mountains and valleys of the interior.

In 1970 the Governorate of Dhofar did not have a single telephone line.

The first line was installed in Dhofar in 1971, when work began on the installation of 42 lines.

At the end of 1994, there were 12,483 active telephone lines in Dhofar.

Marbat has had its share of the benefits of the last 25 years of development and revival under the government of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

The sub-district of Tawi A'teer has an administrative centre offering a full range of services, along with a hospital. Marbat town has a health centre and the Wilayat has five schools covering the three stages; two police stations, one in Marbat and one in its sub-district. Tawi A'teer and Marbat each have a post office and Tawi A'teer has a veterinary clinic. There is a fishing port, a workshop for repairing fishing equipment, a power station and a modern water supply network in Marbat. Wells have been drilled in Tawi A'teer and livestock drinking troughs installed - the area is renowned for the rearing of camels, cows, sheep and goats. A network of fine asphalted roads connects the various parts of the Wilayat, which has many mosques, including one in the sub-district of Tawi A'teer. Marbat has a branch of the



School parade



Dhofar local authority which oversees the provision of a range of services. It has another branch in Tawi A'teer. Marbat has a full telephone service and a branch of the women's cooperative and the sub-district has a local community development centre.

The sub-division and distribution of land for residential, commercial and industrial purposes to the inhabitants of Marbat has been effected and social housing schemes built in a number of locations. Marbat moreover has a local sports club.

The office and residence of the Wali is also in Marbat.

The crafts and local industries of Marbat include the herding and breeding of livestock, and diving to extract Safilah.

Small boats are built here, and Omani daggers made by local craftsmen. Other products of the local craft industry are fish baskets, ceramic censers (for burning incense) and a selection of wooden and stone implements used in building.

Local dances performed include Al Silam, Al Qasaba, Al Anzia, Al Madar, Al Masha'eer, Al Wamkaboor, Al Zonouj and the various versions of Al Robouba.

Agriculture is limited to Tawi A'teer and it is mostly seasonal, practised in the autumn only, with beans, mango, corn and cucumber being the main crops.

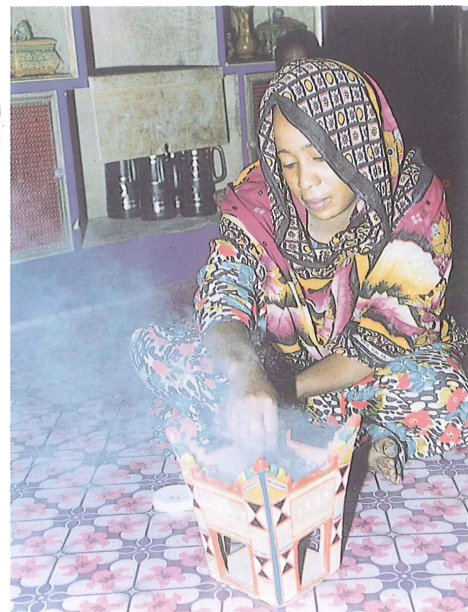


Fishing boats at rest



Dhofari incense burners

Dhofar Governorate has five hospitals with a combined capacity of around 376 beds. It also has seven veterinary clinics.





Wilayat Sadah



A sheltered harbour





The legacy of the Nation (remains of an old settlement)

Sadah is 135 kms from Salalah. It has a sub-district, Hasek, and an administrative centre in Jufa and one in Hadabin. The population of the Wilayat is 4,370, of whom 3,588 are Omanis, or 82%.

Sadah lies next to the Wilayat of Shalim and the Halaniat Islands on its eastern side and adjoins Marbat on the west. To the south is the Arabian Sea and to the north the Jebel Samhan and the Wilayat of Shalim and the Halaniat Islands also.

Sadah, like the other coastal cities of Dhofar, was a trading port for the collecting and export of frankincense in times past. Then the twin ports of Sadah and Hasek were known to seafarers as a natural sheltered anchorage where ships could take refuge from storms.

Its fort is of historical interest, and bears the stamp of the traditional Omani style of fort design. In the past this fort was an important arm of the

defence of the small town from external threat.

Around 7 kms east of Sadah is the remains of the town of Al Mahla. Hasek also has vestiges of an ancient city as well as a mausoleum to the Prophet Saleh bin Hud on the slopes of Jebel Nous east of Hadabin.

Sadah also has fine beaches and a dramatic coastline of cliffs and bays. It has natural springs, including Ain Laja', which is deemed to be the source water of the drinking supply for the city, and Ma' Ghait. The mountains and wadian have caves and grottos.

Amongst the visible benefits of the Renaissance in this Wilayat are a hospital with a capacity of 20 beds and the latest medical equipment, including a radiography unit and laboratories, which serves local needs adequately, and is staffed by an emergency team and specialist technicians.



Hasek, Soub and Hadabin each have a health centre, all of them fully supplied with medicines, essential medical equipment and trained personnel.

The Wilayat has nine schools, distributed among Sadah, Hadabin, Jufa, Hasek and Soub; and three administrative centres, in Sadah, Hasek and Jufa respectively. The centres incorporate offices, government accommodation and other public service related amenities. State services are represented in electricity supply to both Sadah and Hasek, local authority branch offices, water supply, housing, a postal service and a community development centre at Jufa. The Royal Oman Police are represented here, and the district also has a veterinary clinic, marine workshop and ice factory.

In the area of indigenous industries, crafts and social customs, Sadah still engages in the frankincense trade to this day, as well as sea fishing. In view of its good returns, diving - in particular for Safilah - is first amongst the traditional livelihoods still practised. Honey production is also popular here, and livestock breeding and herding. Fish baskets and nets are made, and tanning, plaster quarrying, palm frond weaving, pottery, weaving and embroidery are practised.

The popular local dances are Al Habout, Al Bar'aa, Al Danadun, Al Naanaa, Al Taghroud, Al N'ari, Al Raqsat Al Bahria (the dances of the sea-coast) and Al Dabraret.

The Governorate of Dhofar has a varied landscape of mountains, wadis, coast and desert. It enjoys a relatively moderate climate



A rural school



The land around Sadah is poor in agricultural terms due to the geological structure which tends to steep cliffs and soaring uplands.



There are 50 adult education centres in Dhofar of which 34 are for men and 58 for women. In total Dhofar's adult education centres have an enrolment of 3,275 students.

A finely carved balcony



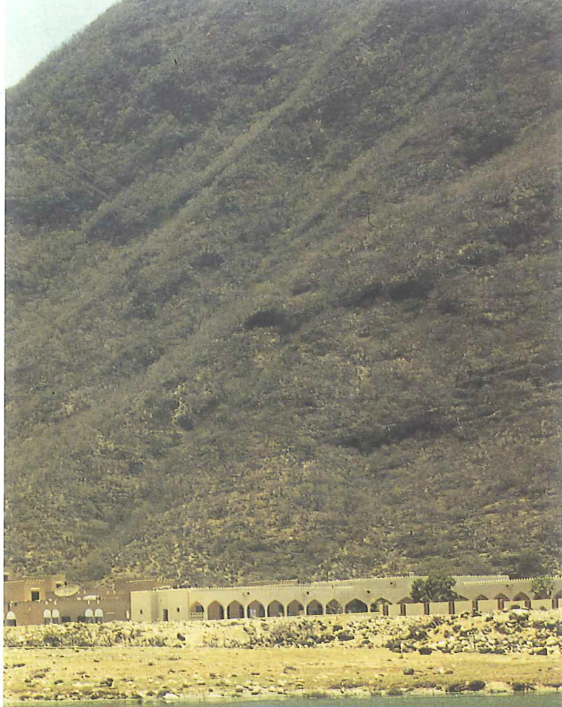
Sadah Fort



Wilayat Rakhyut



A Dhofari village





Rakhyut

Rakhyut is in the south western portion of Dhofar Governorate, adjacent to Salalah on its eastern side and with the Wilayat of Dhalkut to the west. To the north is Harweeb sub-district. It is on the Arabian Sea, 135 kms west of Salalah city. It has a single sub-district, Shahab Asa'eeb, and a population for the whole Wilayat of 4,110 inhabitants, of whom 83%, or 3,397, are Omanis.

Historically the city of Rakhyut was a seaport station on the sea caravan route to the neighbouring countries, in particular for the export trade in frankincense and other locally produced merchandise. The district has undergone pre-historic archaeological exploration at Thitinti, as well as having a number of early tombs and towers and the mausoleum of Bin Osman at Al Hota.

The landscape is a combination of mountainous and coastal terrain, the latter pierced by small bays and inlets. Inland are natural springs, among them

Ma' Minhal, and Ma' Roub and Ma' Inharat Springs; and many caves and grottos, the most famous of which are the Sharout, Ikharat and Hartoum Caves.

A number of development projects are evident which display a mutual compatibility and a harmony with the demographic environment and landscape of the region, while providing the local population with a full range of basic services.

Rakhyut has a hospital and there are five schools in the Wilayat, an administrative centre offering a full package of services at Shahab Asa'eeb, a branch of the local authority, an electrical power station, water supply network, chilling store for fish, police centre, local community development centre, veterinary clinic and post office. All of these are in the town of Rakhyut. Throughout the district drinking wells have been drilled to serve both the population and the livestock of the locality, for herding is one of the principal activities of this region. Shahab Asa'eeb



has a well-equipped health centre staffed by trained technicians.

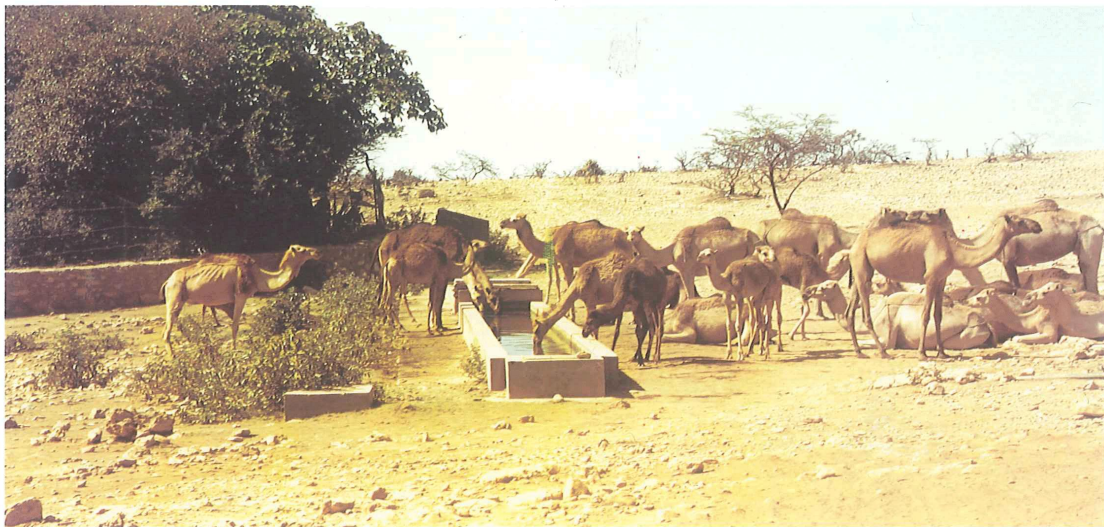
Local crafts and traditional livelihoods include livestock breeding, fishing and pearl-diving, the harvesting of frankincense and honey and a small amount of farming - of beans and corn and cucumber. This latter is a seasonal activity practised only in the autumn, and one which is dependent on the appropriate rainfall.

Traditional products are dairy produce, leather goods, ceramic ware and ropes.

The most popular traditional music and dance practices of the region are Al Habout, Al Bar'aa, Al Dan Dun, Al Robouba, Al Taghroud, Al Ra'bout, Al Tabbal, Al Naanaa and the various dances of the sea coast.



A cascade reaches the sea



Refreshment at day's end



Wilayat Dhalkut



The beauty of nature





A silent beach

This Wilayat is tucked into the far western corner of Dhofar province, adjacent on its eastern side to Rakhyut and on the west to the Sultanate's borders with Yemen. To the north is the sub-district of Harweeb and to the south the Arabian Sea. Khadrafi is a sub-district of this Wilayat which has a population of 2,692, of whom 2,189 are Omanis.

By virtue of its geographical location, Dhalkut in ancient times was a stopping place for the caravans arriving from various directions laden with Dhofari frankincense, leather goods and grains en route to Yemen. The caravans would stop here again on their return carrying new merchandise for the local or onward markets.

This Wilayat had its own merchant sea trade with the ports of the Gulf, Yemen and India when it exported leather, honey, frankincense and animal ghee, figs and seasonal crops; and imported other foodstuffs, such as sugar, tea, rice, candy and

spices.

Dhalkut has a historic mosque which is more than 350 years old and the remains of the enclosure of a walled tomb in Khair Fout.

This Wilayat is distinguished by a contrasting landscape of high ground, represented in the lower reaches of the Jebel Al Akhdar on one side and the shores of the Arabian Sea on another. It has many natural springs which issue forth from the ground in the wadian of the Jebel Al Qamar (Mountain of the Moon). Some of these are well known outside the district, Kharfout, Mughsil, Khodrafi and Sarfit among them. In this part of the Wilayat also are caves and natural grottos which in times past served as refuges for both shepherds and herds from adverse weather conditions. Today, with its springs and beaches and the Jebel Al Akhdar, Dhalkut is a prime tourist spot.

The most renowned caves are Shaisa'a,

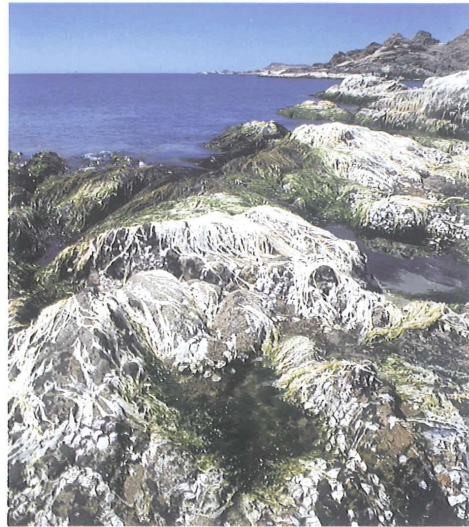


A secondary school

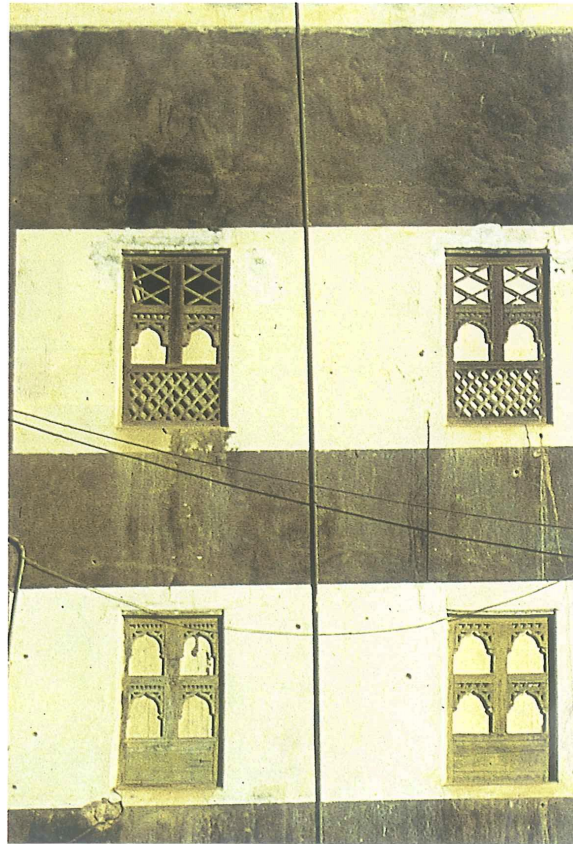


Mashloul and Asbir, which have wall inscriptions.

In the past 25 years of development under the government of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, progress has transformed this Wilayat in its distant corner of the Sultanate, in the shape of an administrative centre incorporating a primary, preparatory and secondary school, which functions as a boys' institution in daytime and as a girls' school in the evenings. The complex also has a health centre, teaching staff accommodation for both men and women, a police station, shops, residential accommodation for the doctor and nurses, an office and residence for the Wali, a staff residence and one for other working personnel, a mosque and an electrical power station which now services the entire city.



Over the past 25 years 300 housing units were built by the state for limited income families. Non-repayable housing loans are also made available to means tested applicants and 145 cases have availed of these.



Buildings of historic interest are carefully preserved



Medical care is available for all

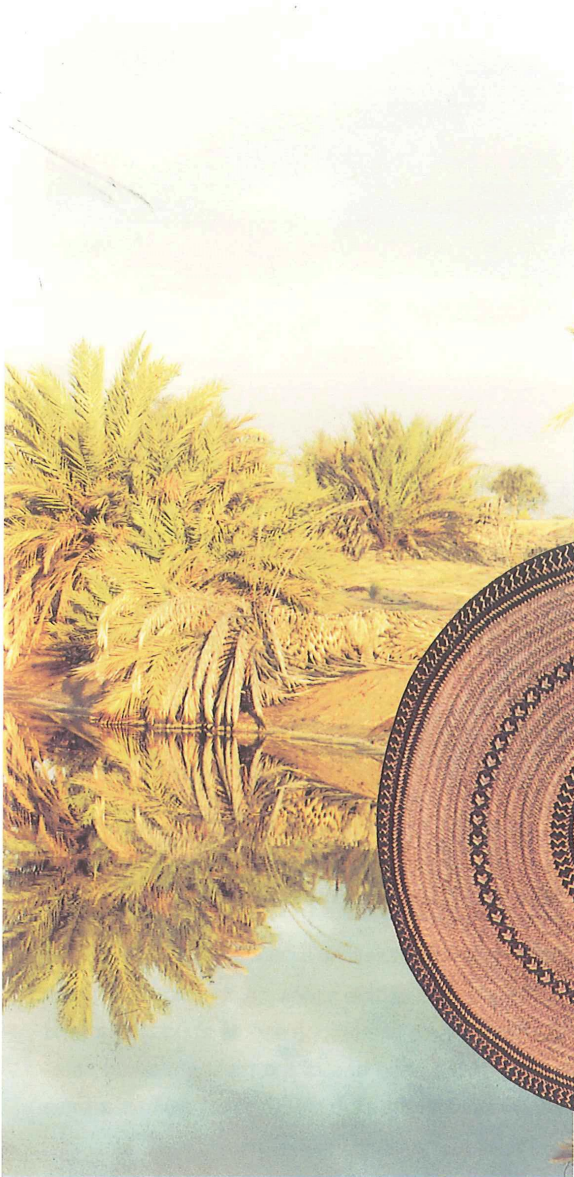




Wilayat Muqshin



The beauty of nature in Muqshin

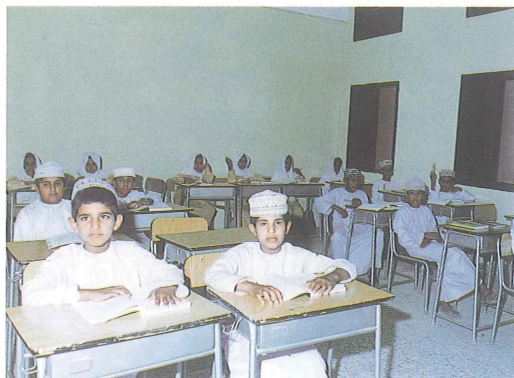




Roads, criss-cross the mountains

This sandy border Wilayat lies along the Sultanate's border with Saudi Arabia on its north western side, with the Wilayat of Hima to its east. It is the farthest north of the Wilayat of Dhofar and is 350 kms distant from Salalah. It has four sub-districts, these being Ramlet Muqshin, Marsudad, Al Hofra and Al Shash. The population of the whole Wilayat is 5,304 persons, of whom 4,433 are Omanis, or 84%.

More than 20,000 parcels of land have been handed out to citizens of Dhofar over the past 25 years, of which 18,000 were for residential purposes. The balance were in the categories of industry, commerce and agriculture.



Children are keen to attend school

This is one of the oases celebrated from times past for its date plantations and its abundant ground water. It was once one of the most important caravan centres in the Rub' Al Khali, as well as a base camp for explorers of this desert.

Vestiges of an ancient past have been unearthed here at Muqshin, including engravings and imple-



ments dating to the Stone Age. The Wilayat has many wells and springs, spectacular sand dunes, wadian and cliffs. It is famous for its dates, some citrus fruits and grasses.

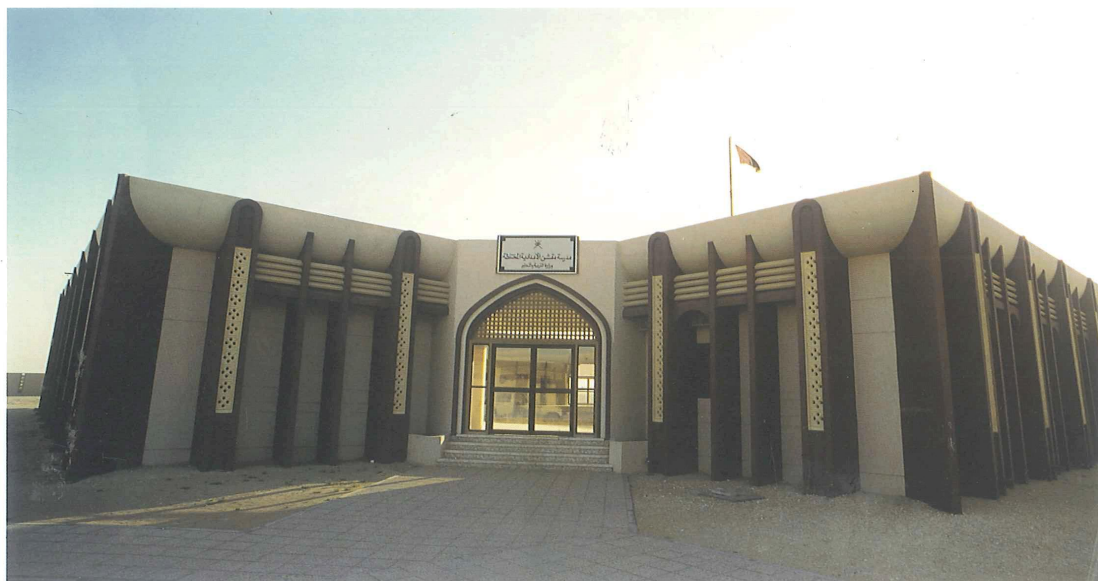
Progress has come to this place also, in the shape of an administrative centre which is home to several public services. It incorporates a branch of the local authority, a mosque, health centre, preparatory school, electricity generating station, staff residential quarters and the Wali's office. Thirty State-built housing units have been provided for low income families and attached to these is a mosque and some shops. Drinking water comes from artesian wells drilled for this purpose.

The sub-districts have administrative centres also which relay the basic services to the local population.

The inhabitants here are for the most part herders and breeders, particularly of camels, as well as planters of dates and grasses. They also manufacture goods from leather and palm fronds. The local ceremonial customs and practices are influenced by the badawi tradition, and include Al Hedaa, Al Hubal singing, and the Al Habout and Al Taghroud dances.



Expert medical care



Local administration building



Wilayat Shalim and the Halaniat Islands



Beauty of nature



 *Welcome*





Rural housing

In the far eastern corner of Dhofar, some 310 kms from Salalah, is the Wilayat of Shalim and the Halaniat Islands.

It has three sub-districts, Dimit, Al Shawaymia and Sharbatat, and the Halaniat Islands. The total population of this Wilayat is 6,409. From ancient times its inhabitants were renowned for their exports of dried fish and charcoal, as well as Dhofari frankincense, which were traded with Africa and other overseas markets.

The region has a number of historical sites, several of them pre-Islamic. Its natural attractions range from desert to highlands to the offshore islands, as well as natural springs, beaches, cliffs and scenic coastline. The Halaniat Islands are famed for their bird and terrestrial wildlife as well as rare sea turtles.

Shalim and the Halaniat Islands have benefited from many aspects of the national development plan executed over the past 25 years.

The fully serviced administrative centre at Shalim

incorporates the office and residence of the Wali, as well as staff accommodation, a branch of the local authority, a mosque and suq furnished with electricity and water supply.

A local housing scheme for low income families has a mosque attached to it as well as shops and a town hall. The Wilayat furthermore has eight schools, five health centres, a veterinary centre, ice factories serving the fishing community in Shawaymia, Sharbatat, and the Halaniat Islands. Artesian wells have been drilled in various parts of the Wilayat as required by the neighbouring population. Shawaymia has an administrative centre and a number of State housing units. Dimit also has an administrative centre, as have the Halaniat Islands, which also have State housing units and a water distillation plant. There is a police centre in Shalim.

The most prominent of the traditional livelihoods engaged in by the local population is the raising of camels, sheep and goats, pearl-diving, the harvesting of frankincense, palm-frond weaving and the

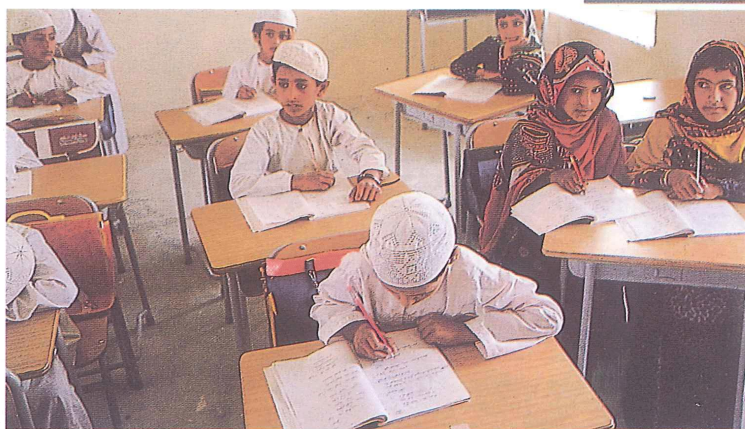
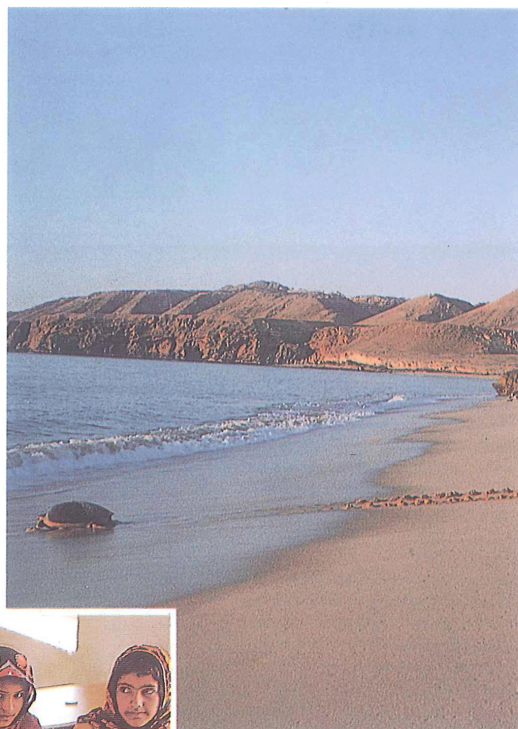


making of leather goods, and a variety of needle-crafts engaged in by the women of the region.

Three of the traditional dancing customs are popular here: Al Razha, Al Habout and Al Bar'aa.

An experimental farm has been created in Rahab, producing grasses and some vegetables and fruits. Perhaps it will become a model for the expansion of agricultural pursuits into the waste regions of the Wilayat, if circumstances allow.

Tranquility



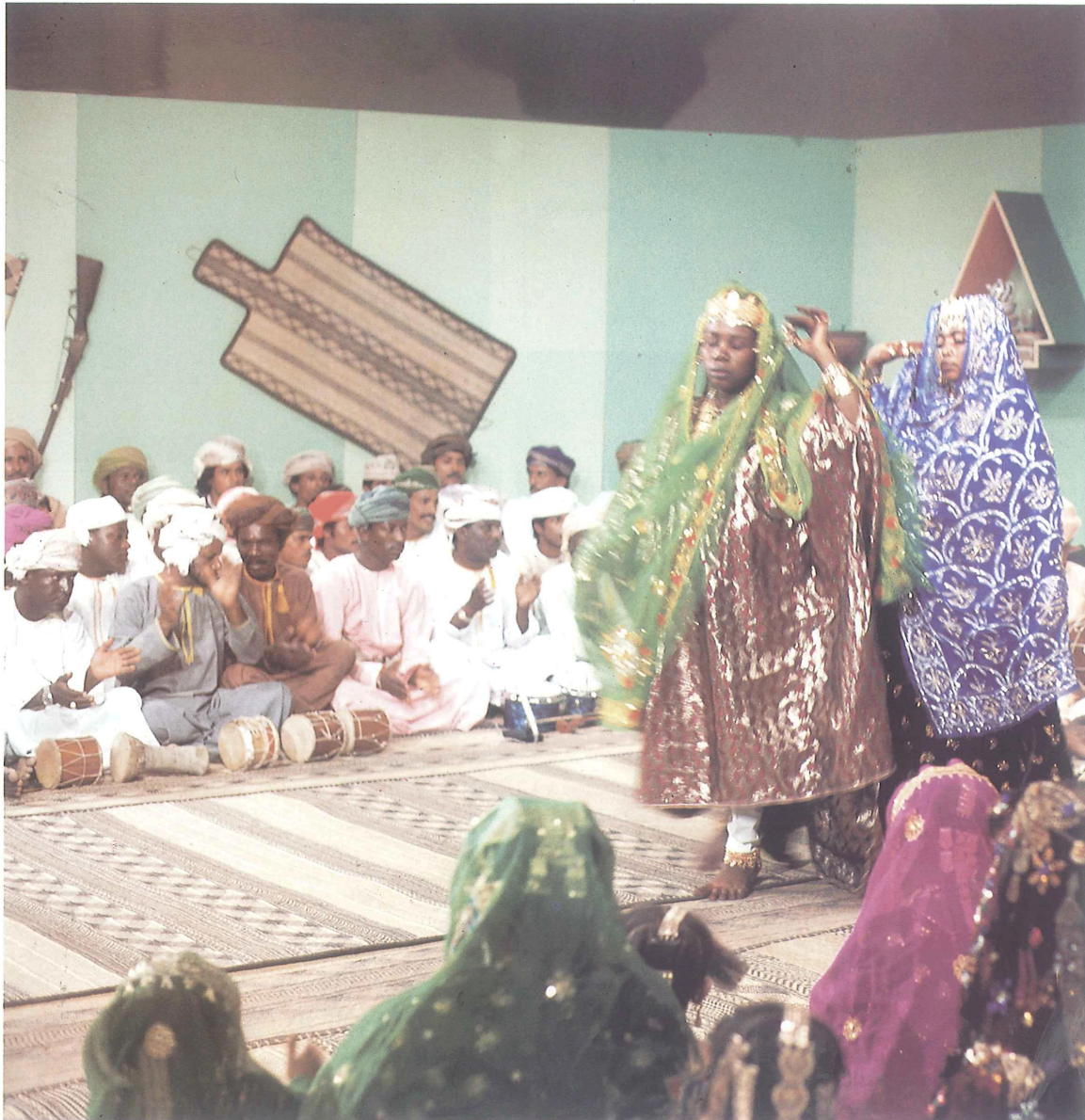
Eager to learn



A Modern Government building



Folk Arts



An elegant dance





AL Habout

This is best described as a form of singing procession in which the participants align themselves in short horizontal rows, systematically ordered one behind the other. In the forward rows are the elders and more senior participants, and these are followed by the rest, in descending order of rank and age, with the youngest participants in the last rows.

In the Habout the participants carry sabres, rifles and khanjars, or daggers, which are brought to them by a group of younger dancers who precede them carrying the weapons. The dance then proceeds with vigorous synchronised leaps in the air accompanied by brandishing movements of the swords.

A particular local version of the Habout is performed by the Dhofaris when they are setting out on a mission of mercy and this version goes by the name of Habout Al Najda from the word "to assist."

Every Habout has a poet associated with it and the poets compete with one another to produce the most appropriate poem for each occasion on which the Habout is performed, in particular at the festi-

ties associated with National Day.

The poetry of the Habout demands a special rhythmic rendition which varies in meter and delivery as the proceedings develop, accelerating a little towards the end of the performance.

Al Bar'aa

This dance is a celebration of youth and is performed by two (dancers) together, each holding a dagger in his right hand, while in his left he holds his dishdasha (robe) fixed at the waist.

The characteristic movement of the Bar'aa is a powerful one-footed leap in the air. The two performers move in a synchronised series of steps, advancing and retreating while each dancer makes full revolutions. At a specified moment the pair bow down in unison before the musicians whose soloists come forward to sing and keep time.

The troupe which performs the Bar'aa consists of players of the qasaba, a form of reed pipe, along with two or more marwas drummers, the marwas being a small drum, and two or more players on the



Al Habout, a famous Dhofari singing procession



larger mahjar drum, and one on a small bell tambourine.

The Bar'aa is performed on all occasions when young people gather for nightly entertainment and other social occasions such as wedding festivities. Most of the songs in this performance are love songs.

Al Sharh

This dance is performed by two men who start up with slow, graceful series of movements executed while poetry is sung to the accompaniment of the qasaba and the rhythmic tempo of the marwas and mahjar drums. The marwas is beaten with the palm of one hand while the other hand turns it in the air, while the larger mahjar is played with the palms of both hands, the player having placed the drum across his two knees. Together with a small bell tambourine, the drums combine to produce a hollow rhythm.

Each pair of dancers assumes a demonstration of the Sharh attired in a sash of embroidered wool or silk, holding a corner of the sash in his left hand. The gentle, dignified dance begins as the dancers bow down before the musicians then glide off together in a choreographed movement of three basic steps interspersed with small curtsies from the



Al Bar'aa Dance



Al Shobania celebration for the safe return of sailors



knee and a light full turn of the body on straightening up.

The Sharh is performed in two versions, the *qasaba* and the *qabus*, the only difference between these being the lyrics of the songs. In the first version these lyrics are love songs and in the second they are mostly invocational.

Al Rabouba

The title of this performance suggests that in the past it was performed to the accompaniment of the *rababa*, a stringed instrument composed of a sound-box and solitary string played with a hair bow. The name *Rabouba* is a corruption of the word *rababa*, and it is by the latter name that the inhabitants of *Rakhyut* still know this traditional dance.

The dance movements of the *Rabouba* are complex and demand great precision and disciplined timing. Four of the male performers form a row and face a similar row of four women. Then to the sound of the music and beat of the drums the two rows move forward towards one another and pass through to the other side, each woman passing between two men and vice versa. As they move forward through the gap and back to their original positions the dancers make slow full revolutions.

There is a triple beat associated with the *Rabouba* which is provided by the *waqaf*, *jaghoub*, *rahmani*, and *kaser* drums and the rhythm is accentuated by clapping and the shrill high pitched sound of the women's *zagharid*.

Raqs Al Zanj

This belongs to the grand ceremonial occasions, grandest among them the festivities of National Day when Omani men, women, young people and children carrying drums arrange themselves at the performance site into two separate and different rows. One of these groups sings unaccompanied by a drumbeat while the other group beat drums and sing and dance to the rhythm.

The first group performs in a long bow-shaped chorus stretched out along one side of the arena. In

front of the chorus a solo performer from the group steps forward to sing and the rest respond in chorus. In the centre of the arena sit the drummers, beating the *musando* drum, which is of African origin, as well as the *rahmani* and *kaser*, while they sing along.

Two rows of young dancers now face one another on either side of the drummers and begin to dance, now retreating back from the seated group, now closing in again, now forming a circle enclosing them and circulating around them in a vigorous dance.

Between these two rows of men in a clear space between them the women circulate in a gentle and dignified sequence of movements, behind them the young girls circulating in an anti-clockwise direction, with the drummers between them at the centre of the circle. Between the circles of women dancers the young men now perform a show of bravery with sabres, interspersed with high leaps and cries.

This intricate and disciplined arrangement of *Zanji* choreography has roots in history, but its principal charm is in the way in which it so graphically depicts what customarily happened when ships returned safely to shore after a long voyage. The drummers and the young dancers around them sing for joy at the safe return of the seamen, sending a message in song across the port to the families and friends of the returning seamen in their homes along the coast, informing them of the ship's safe arrival in Omani waters.

The message reaches its destination and the men go out from their homes in a bow-shaped line. One of them raises his voice and the rest respond in a chorus which goes out across the air to their seafaring brethren who are still at the entrance to the port.

The women and children of the sailors, mothers, wives and daughters, now dance out in a series of movements which express their uncontained joy and delight at the safe return of the men.

The words of the *Zanji* songs are a blend of Swahili and Arabic. The songs sung by the drum-



mers and young dancers around them are different in both lyrics and melody from those of the solo singer and his chorus. The singing of the group which performs without drums does not interfere with the output of the centre stage group, which takes the form of a rhythmic drumbeat interspersed with outbursts from trumpets made from seashells.

Al Madar

Al Madar is a custom of the inhabitants of Salalah and consists of a parade of singing and dancing in which men, women, adolescents and children take part. At the centre of the throng is a group of musando, kaser and rahmani drummers and the male and female singers and dancers proceed swiftly and gracefully in waves undulating forwards and backwards as the parade proceeds. They hold aloft sticks, daggers and swords while the women raise their arms aloft in proud sweeping movements, and so the procession moves forward until it reaches the site of the festivities.

The Madar is performed on religious occasions such as the Aid Al Fitr at the end of Ramadan or the Aid Al Adha during the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, and on occasions of national celebration and on welcoming important visitors to Dhofar.

Al Shobania

This custom is associated with the coastal dwellers of Dhofar and is executed in celebration of the safe return of sailors from a long sea journey. The inhabitants gather on the seashore or at the house of the chief mariner and the men beat the kaser and rahmani drums to an alternating brisk rhythm while the whole group sings songs celebrating the safe return of the voyagers and thanking Allah for protecting seafarers and praising His Prophet Mohammed.

The small daughters of the sailors and of their relatives and friends take part as dancers in the Shobania, all dressed in the traditional attire of Dhofar with its golden ornamentation and dancing in unison. Sometimes there are as many as eight children, dancing in fours or in pairs.

The movements are simple, one step forward and a small curtsy from the knees to a secondary rhythm - executed on the kaser and rahmani drums, a demure full turn of the body. Each child holds in her left hand either a golden chain or a strand of her long hair and each one moves freely to the rhythm within the group which itself has no fixed pattern of movement.

When the young girls have completed their part of the performance, the men and young men join in with a dance of their own, which is based on three



Children learn traditional dance



successive rising leaps in the air followed by a pause equivalent to the time of one leap. The dance progresses according to this basic pattern. Every man holds a stick (bakoura) in his hand and two or three men at a time join in a game of fencing; and when one wishes to withdraw from the game, he invites another to take his place.

The two dancers, accompanied by the children or men, proceed to a space where the performers halt in the shape of a horseshoe or closed circle, depending on the nature of the arena in which the Shoubania is taking place.

Ahmed Al Kebir (Ahmed the Great)

This is an allusion to Al Sayed Ahmed Al Badawi whose tomb is located at Tanta in Egypt inside a large mosque of the same name. He was a holy man of the faith with disciples and adherents throughout the Islamic world.

Salalah has a particular version of the tariqa or

ritual dance of Al Sayed Ahmed Al Badawi or Ahmed Al Kebir which is inherited and performed on specific occasions, in particular two prominent ones, the second day of the Aid Al Adha (Feast of the Slaughter) and the National Day of Oman.

The performers arrange themselves into two or more long horizontal rows as the stage or ground where the pageant of Ahmed Al Kebir is being performed allows.

Those in the back row carry tambourines - as many as twenty - while the front row recite Sufi verses intoning these to a musical air which has been transmitted from antiquity down through the generations. Some of the participants carry censers - incense burners - and these move among the performers in the procession wafting the fragrant clouds of incense towards them.



A Dhofari folklore dance



Raqs Al Nisaa (The Women's Dance)

This is one of the most well known of the Dhofari ceremonial dances as witnessed by the number of professional troupes that perform it, and spectators take delight in it at special evening performances.

The women of the troupe sit down alongside their tabla or tambourine drummers, who can be either men or women, with their principal solo performer at the centre of the group. The soloist sings and the

it, they sit down to allow two others to begin their dance, and so on.

Al Lawlau

This is a musical rendering, mostly performed by fathers, or at any rate men. It is in essence a recitation of verse, rendered to pacify a crying infant. The recitation is performed by the father at a gentle rhythmic pace and proceeds until the child quietens



Traditional dance

rest respond in chorus while the dancers move amongst the seated participants, decked in gold, dancing in pairs in subtle, measured steps. Each dancer holds in one hand a corner of the veil which covers her head while making small movements with her feet. The movements of the two dancers are made in perfect harmony and unison, truly "as though they were one."

When the dancers have finished their circulation of the area where the troupe is seated or one side of

and falls sleep.

The poetry of Lawlau contains a story which the father conveys to his child with all of the love and care, sincerity and good will he feels for the infant.



The traditional Dhofari dress





The beauty of nature in Dhofar





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