



OMAN

YEARS OF PROGRESS & DEVELOPMENT

(MASIRAT AL-KHAIR)

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MUSCAT

SULTANATE OF OMAN

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In the Name of God,
the Compassionate, the Merciful

*"As to those who believe
and work righteousness,
surely we shall not suffer
to perish the reward of any
who do a (single)
righteous deed"*

(Holy Qur'an)

Surah 18 (Al Khaf), Aayat 30



FOREWORD

The Ministry of Information is pleased to present the reader of this book with a brief tour of the main achievements of the past 40 years under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said who is the driving force behind its Renaissance, the man who has inspired and will inspire future generations.

This book is issued every five years and portrays the beauty, progress and development of Oman's governorates and regions in both pictures and words.

Achieving 1st place in the world for its rate of progress in human development, as assessed by the 2010 United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report, titled The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development, is clear evidence of how far Oman has come in building, improving and progressing the lives of its people.

Ministry of Information





THE SULTANATE OF OMAN
A HISTORY MAPPED BY GEOGRAPHY

8



THE GOVERNORATE
OF MUSCAT
OMAN'S BEAUTIFUL CAPITAL

108



QABOOS
THE LEADER AND THE MAN

28



THE GOVERNORATE
OF DHOFAR
LAND OF FRANKINCENSE –
AND THE AROMA OF HISTORY

200



DEFENCE AND SECURITY
A PIVOTAL ELEMENT IN ENSURING
OMAN'S STABILITY

80



THE GOVERNORATE OF
MUSANDAM
THE REALITY VERSUS FANTASY CONTEST

264

CONTENTS



THE GOVERNORATE OF AL BURAYMI 296

A TIMELESS PAST, A BRIGHT FUTURE



THE DAKHILIYYAH REGION 434



THE DHAHIRAH REGION 322

A CROSSROADS FOR
CARAVAN ROUTES



THE SHARQIYYAH REGION 498

AL SALEEL NATURAL PARK



THE BATINAH REGION 368

BOUNTIES OF THE LAND AND SEA



THE WUSTA REGION 556

A MAGICAL EXCURSION TO
SHORELINE, ISLANDS AND CAVES

CONTENTS

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

A HISTORY MAPPED BY GEOGRAPHY



The History of Oman: Knowledge and Consequence

An enlightened reading of history will shine a spotlight on the past and reveal patterns in the laws that have governed and classified human communities and the affairs of peoples and nations as they progressed from the nomadic to the settled state.

Over long millennia, the history of Oman is a story of significant marks made in many fields of endeavour. During chapters of power, when the country flourished with dynamic activity, this success was defined against a backdrop of national unity and social consensus, while periods of retreat and constraint were born of upheaval, when events had torn down the internal structures of society.

A 37-piece 4th century BC necklace made of seashells and stones, found at the Ras al Hamra archaeological site in Qurm, Muscat



NATURAL AND HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Oman, if we speak in terms of its geological make-up and history, is not a young country. On the contrary, even in the popular mind it is an ancient land, its oldest known civilization dating to 4000 BC. Artefacts have been assembled from sites throughout the whole of the Sultanate. The land had trading ties and commerce with the ancient world - Omani ships reached China, India and Mesopotamia - as well as links with cultures in the East Mediterranean, the Nile Valley and North Africa.

The name Oman, as mentioned in Yaaqout Al Hamawi's *Mo'jam Al-Buldan* (Encyclopaedia of Countries), derived from a reference to Oman bin Ibrahim Al Khalil or, in another attribution, to Oman bin Saba bin Yaghtan bin Ibrahim Al Khalil.

At many stages of its history Oman contributed to civilization in a significant way. There were times

when it was a major political force on the high seas and its links extended to most of the countries of the known world, as well as to China, America, Britain and France in early historical periods.

The bridge that connects the various historical ages and binds the modern Omani Renaissance to periods of exuberance in the past is the leadership's ability to achieve national unity, build autonomy and establish a strong economy on a ground base of security and stability, and to govern all areas wisely and knowledgeably.

Oman's history consists of a sequence of linked chapters similar to the history of other nations and peoples who made a mark on civilization. The Ya'rubia State which emerged in 1624 AD was remarkable for its success in expelling the Portuguese from coastal Oman, the Arabian Gulf, East Africa and the Indian Ocean. The Al Busaidi state founded by the Imam Ahmed bin Said in 1744 AD had a transformative effect, deftly interacting with the realities of the time to attain dominance as a regional power. It has remained in government from the mid-eighteenth century up to the present day, surviving intermittent periods of weakness and political introversion that preoccupied it from time to time.

THE KEY TO OMAN'S GEOGRAPHIC PERSONALITY

A map is no mere collection of lines and elevations, rocky heights and depths, mountains, plains and valleys. Before all else, it tells the story of man's



OMAN'S NAMES

Oman has been known by several names over the course of its history. The best known are Magan, Mezoun and Oman, each of which has a specific cultural or historical connotation.

The Sumerians had extensive trading and maritime links with Oman and in their language the name Magan was associated with the ship-building and copper smelting for which the country was famous. Sumerian tablets refer to present-day Oman as the Land of Magan.

Mezoun is derived from the word *muzn*, which means clouds and abundant flowing water – reflecting the fact that water was plentiful in Oman

in earlier times in comparison with neighbouring Arab countries. This could account for Oman's agricultural prosperity from earlier times, as well as the development of its civilization.

The name Oman has been linked to the migration of Arab tribes from a place in Yemen called Uman. Some of these tribes lived on the plains and earned their livelihood from agriculture and fishing, while others settled in the interior and desert regions working as herdsmen and shepherds.

It has also been suggested that Oman may have been named after Uman the son of the Prophet Abraham or Uman the son of Saba, who was the son of Abraham's son Joktan.



The Muslim geographer, cartographer, Egyptologist and traveller, Abu Abdullah Mohammed ibn Sharif al Idrisi's world map, rectangular, 1192AD, oriented with South at the top.



NAMES OF THE IMAMS AND SULTANS OF THE AL BUSAID STATE

Name	Reign From/To AD	Reign From/to AH
1 Imam Ahmed bin Said bin Ahmed Albusaidi	1744-1775	1157-1189
2 Imam Said bin Ahmed bin Said Albusaidi	1775-1779	1189-1193
3 Sayyid Hamad bin Said bin Ahmed Albusaidi	1779-1792	1193-1207
4 Sayyid Sultan bin Ahmed bin Said Albusaidi	1792-1804	1207-1219
5 Sayyid Badr bin Saif bin Ahmed Albusaidi	1804-1807	1219-1222
6 Sayyid Said bin Sultan bin Ahmed Albusaidi	1807-1856	1222-1273
7 Sayyid Thuwaini bin Said bin Sultan Albusaidi	1856-1866	1273-1283
8 Sayyid Salim bin Thuwaini bin Said Albusaidi	1866-1868	1283-1285
9 Imam Azzan bin Qais bin Azzan Albusaidi	1868-1871	1285-1288
10 Sayyid Turki bin Said bin Sultan Albusaidi	1871-1888	1288-1306
11 Sayyid Faisal bin Turki bin Said Albusaidi	1888-1913	1306-1332
12 Sayyid Taimour bin Faisal bin Turki Albusaidi	1913-1932	1332-1351
13 Sayyid Said bin Taimour bin Faisal Albusaidi	1932-1970	1351-1390
14 HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said	1970	1930

IMAMS of the 18th CENTURY AD (12th Century Hijra)

Sultan bin Murshid Al Yarubi
 Bilarab bin Himyar Al Yarubi
 Saif bin Sultan bin Saif bin Sultan bin
 Malik Al Yarubi
 Mohammed bin Nasser bin Amer bin
 Ramthah bin Khamis Al Ghafri
 Yarub bin Bilarab bin Sultan bin Saif
 bin Malik Al Yarubi
 Al Muhannah bin Sultan Al Yarubi
 Sultan bin Saif Sultan Al Yarubi
 Saif bin Sultan Qaid Al Ardhi Al Yarubi

IMAMS of the 17th CENTURY AD (11th Century Hijra)

Bilarab bin Sultan bin Saif al Yarubi
 Sultan bin Saif bin Malik Al Yarubi
 Nassir bin Murshid Al Yarubi

IMAMS of the 16th CENTURY AD (10th Century Hijra)

Abdullah bin Mohammed Al
 Qurn Al Manhi
 Oman bin Al Qasim
 Barakat bin Mohammed bin
 Ismail al Kharusi

*Left to right – His Majesty
 Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Sayyid
 Taimur bin Faisal al Busaidi,
 Sayyid Taimur bin Faisal bin
 Turki al Busaidi, Sayyid Faisal
 bin Turki bin Said al Busaidi,
 Sayyid Turki bin Said bin Sultan
 al Busaidi, Sayyid bin Sultan bin
 Ahmed al Busaidi.*



10/11

Mohammed bin Ismail bin Abdullah
bin Mohammed Al Haderi Al Kharusi

IMAMS of the 15th CENTURY AD (9th Century Hijra)

Abu Al Hassan bin Abdulsalam Al
Nazwi
Ahmed bin Omar bin Mohammed Al
Dhanki
Omar Al Sharif
Mohammed bin Suleiman bin Ahmed
Omar bin Khatab bin Mohammed bin
Hamed
Shadhan bin Salt bin Malik Al Kharusi
Abu Al Hassan bin Khamis bin Amer
Malik bin Hawari bin Malik
Al Hawari bin Malik

KINGS OF THE NABHAN DYNASTY

Makhzum bin Falah
Mudhafar bin Suleiman
Arar bin Falah
Suleiman bin Mudhafar
Falah bin Mushin bin Suleiman (one of
the most famous Nabhan Kings)
Sultan bin Sultan
Tahmas bin Sultan
Mudhafar bin Sultan
Sultan bin Mohsin bin Suleiman bin
Nabhan

KINGS OF OMAN FROM THE 13th and 14th CENTURIES AD (7th to the 9th Centuries Hijra)

Suleiman bin Suleiman bin Mudhafar
Al Nabhani
Husam bin Suleiman bin Mudhafar

Suleiman bin Mudhafar bin Suleiman
Mudhafar bin Suleiman bin Mudhafar
Abu Mohamed bin Nabhan
Kahlan bin Omar bin Nabhan
Omar bin Nabhan
Abu Al Ma'ali Kahlan bin Nabhan
Abu Mohammed Nabhan bin Dhuhl
Abu Abdullah Mohammed bin Ahmed
bin Omar
Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Abi Omar bin
Muamar bin Mohammed bin Amer bin
Nabhan
Abu Al Arab Yanb bin Omar
Abu Al Hassan Dhuhail bin Omar
Abu Al Qasim bin Omar bin
Mohammed bin Amr bin Nabhan
Abu Mohammed Nabhan bin Omar bin
Nabhan
Abu Hussein Ahmed bin Omar bin
Nabhan

IMAMS of the 12th CENTURY AD (6th Century Hijra)

Mohammed bin Khanbash bin
Mohammed
Khanbash bin Mohammed bin Hisham
Moosa bin Abi Al Ma'aly bin Moosa bin
Nejad
Mohammed bin Abi Ghassan Al
Kharusi (of the people of Manah)

IMAMS of the 11th CENTURY AD (5th Century Hijra)

Al Khalil bin Abdullah bin Omar bin
Mohammed bin Al Imam Al Khalil bin
Shadhan Al Kharusi
Mohammed bin Ghassan bin Abdullah

al Kharusi
Amir bin Rashid bin Al Waleed Al Kharusi
Rashid bin Ali Al Kharusi
Hafs bin Rashid bin Said
Rashid bin Said al Yahmadi
Al Khalil bin Shadhan bin Al Salt bin Malik Al Kharusi

**IMAMS of the 10th CENTURY AD
(4th Century Hijra)**

Rashid bin Al Waleed Al Kindi
Said bin Al Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Mahboob Al Quraishi

**IMAMS of the 9th CENTURY AD
(3rd Century Hijra)**

Al Hakim bin Al Milaa Al Bahri (who settled in Su'al, near Nizwa)
Mohammed bin Yazd Al Kindy (who settled in Nizwa)
Omar bin Mohammed bin Matraf
Al Hawari bin Matraf Al Hadani (who settled in Nizwa)
Al Hassan bin Said Al Sahtani (who settled in Nizwa, but who was originally from Bani Kharos)
Al Salt bin Qasim Al Kharusi
Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Hadani, known as Abi Said Al Qurmati
Azzan bin Al Hazbar Al Malik (from Kalb Al Yamad)
Al Salt bin Al Qasim Al Kharusi (from the people of Nizwa)
Mohammed bin Al Hassan al Kharusi (from the Fasha family of Rustaq)
Azzan bin Tamim Al Kharusi

Rashid bin Al Nadhar Al Yahmadi Al Kharusi
Al Salt bin Malik Al Kharusi
Al Muhanna bin Jaifar Al Yahmadi
Abdulmalik bin Humaid (from Bani Ali bin Sawda)

**IMAMS of the 8th CENTURY AD
(2nd Century Hijra)**

Ghassan bin Abdullah Al Kharusi
Al Warith bin Ka'ab Al Kharusi
Mohammed bin Abi Affan (from Al Yamad)
Al Julanda bin Masood bin Jaifar bin Al Julanda bin Bani Al Julanda bin Ma'awalah Ibn Shams

IMAMS of the 7th CENTURY AD (1st Century Hijra)

Mohammed bin Janah Al Hinai
Janah bin Abbad bin Qais bin Amer Al Hinai
Ziyad bin Al Muhalb
Suleiman and Said (sons of Abbad bin Abd bin Al Julanda)
Abbad bin Abd Al Julanda
Jaifar and Abd, sons of Al Julanda bin Al Mustakbir

PRE-ISLAM

Abd Izz bin Ma'awalah bin Shams
Hunna'ah bin Malik bin Fahm
Malik bin Fahm bin Ghanem bin Dus
bin Adnan bin Abdullah bin Zahran
bin Ka'ab bin Harith
bin Abdullah bin Nasr bin Azz

interaction with the land. The men of this country tamed nature and marked the land indelibly and in many diverse ways over time and tide.

Oman occupies an exceptionally strategic position, and this is reflected in the politics and choices it has made and the manner in which it has handled many issues and developments. It sits to the far south east of the Arabian Peninsula between latitudes 16.40N and 26.20N and longitudes 51.50E and 59.40 E. Its 3,165 kms of coastline extend from the far south east, where the Arabian Sea meets the Indian Ocean, to the Gulf of Oman, running north as far as Musandam along the Strait of Hormuz, which marks the entrance to the Arab Gulf. Beyond its south western border lies the Republic of Yemen. To the west is Saudi Arabia, to the north the United Arab Emirates. It owns a few small islands in the Gulf of Oman and Strait of Hormuz, including Salama and its 'daughters,' Masirah and the Hallinyaat group in the Arabian Sea. It straddles the Tropic of Cancer, sharing a place with the planet's hot, arid zones, and a tropical climate extends to the south of the country.

It is from this location that some of the world's oldest and most important sea trading lanes have been controlled, for example the sea route between the Arab Gulf and Indian Ocean. Here also was the departure point of the caravans that followed routes across the Arabian Peninsula to link its eastern and western shores and north with south. Oman has an area of 309,500 sq km. The Hajar mountain range arches down from the Ru'us Al Jibal in Ras

Musandam alongside the Strait of Hormuz from the country's north eastern to south western extremities, reaching a height of 3,000 metres in the Jabal Al Akhdar region.

In the Musandam governorate, comprising the provinces of Khasab, Madha, Daba and Bukha, the mountains soar 1,800 metres above sea level. The Strait of Hormuz separates the coasts of Oman and Iran, with the navigable portion lying closer to the Omani shore.

To Omanis, the Hajar chain of mountains resembles a vertebral column. So the district fringing the shore of the Oman Gulf became known as the Batinah, ie the 'belly' of the mountain, while the land to the west of the highlands is Ad Dhahirah (or 'back'). The Batinah is the coastal shoreline carved out by the valleys that slope down from the mountains. It pushes inland to a depth of from 15 to 80 kms and is more than 300 kms long. It is the Sultanate's principal agricultural area and contains the gardens irrigated by ground waters that range northwards from Muscat to the border of the UAE.

Ad Dhahirah – the 'back' of the Hajar mountains, skirts the interior length of the range and is composed of alluvial plains and valleys that trail off in the easterly direction to meet the desert. The mountain chain itself is cut by several valleys, the broadest of which is Wadi Samail, connecting the coastal city of Muscat with Izki and Nizwa in the interior. The mountainous highlands that strike out to the west from this valley are known as the West Hajar. Another series of mountains to the east



of Wadi Samail defines an area known as Al Hajar As Sharqi or Eastern Hajar. The highest point of the Al Hajar range is Jabal Shams in the interior, rising to 3,000 metres above sea level.

The shoreline narrows at the Al Qurm heights at Muscat, where the rocky coastline is fretted with inlets, resembling Ras Musandam at the northern extremity of the country. It then broadens gradually south of Muscat to Ras Al Hadd.

From Ras Al Hadd to Al Mudayrib in the east to the Masirah Gulf coast the Rimal Al Sharqiyyah or Eastern Sands extend as far as the eye can see. Southwest of Masirah island lies a remote area of level, rocky ground which goes by the name of Jiddat Al Harasis. West of the Rimal Al Sharqiyyah or Eastern Sands, a broad stretch of flat stony land is crossed by a series of north-south *wadis*, Wadi Halfayn and Wadi Andam being notable among them.

On the shoreline of the Arabian Sea a 560-km stretch of the Sultanate is watered by copious seasonal rains. It divides into a coastal plain some eight to ten kilometres deep and is home to Salalah and the other *wilayat* of Dhofar Governorate.

WATER AND SAND – A NEVER-ENDING STANDOFF

The diversity of the Sultanate's different regions was a dominant factor in creating from Oman's geography a national resource – 3,165 kms of coastline cut by long and deep bays; inland the mountains where man settled rocky uplands from the most ancient times,



The diverse landscape of Oman: – Jebel Shams, burgeoning vegetation after the monsoon in Dhofar, and a perfect sunset at the Barr Al Hikman.



14/15





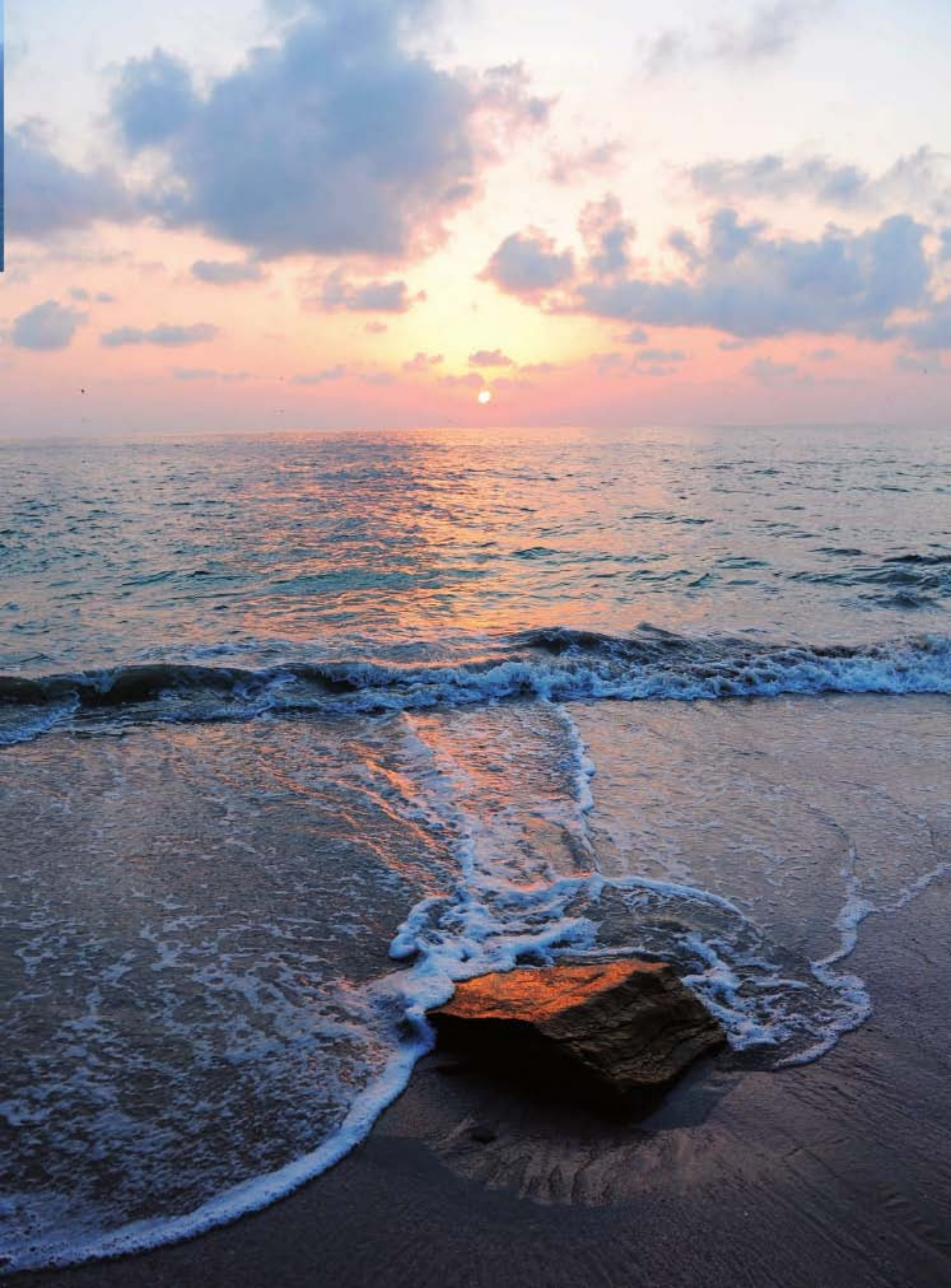
The beauty of Barr Al Jissah in Muscat, Wadi Dayqah in Wadi Dama Wa At Taiyyin, and sunrise at Khaluf in the Wusta region.

to valleys carved from these mountains and deserts, all combining to form a complete natural landscape.

This reach and diversity shaped a natural and political capital resource; became a provider of national wealth, fostered a network of regional and national connection. As a significant consequence of their homeland's unique coordinates, Omanis sailed the high seas, conquered oceans and benefited as the Sultanate became a pivotal portal between two worlds – on the one hand the Far East, represented by In-

dia, China and South East Asia, and on the other East Africa, Egypt and, beyond, Western Europe.

It was Oman's destiny that it should become an amphibious power, one foot on land and the other on the water; its power straddling features of earth and sea to alternating degrees. And if it was the call of the sea that for the most part prevailed over the draw of the land – and during every period when the Omanis left the land and crossed the oceans, sea and land shared an alternating resonance - the







land lent crucial depth to the progress of man's development, to the evolution of farming and the advance of civilization. The sea was a living medium for the export of this civilization and its human values. And all of the significant works accomplished took place when land and sea interacted smoothly against the background of an ideal geographical landscape.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES

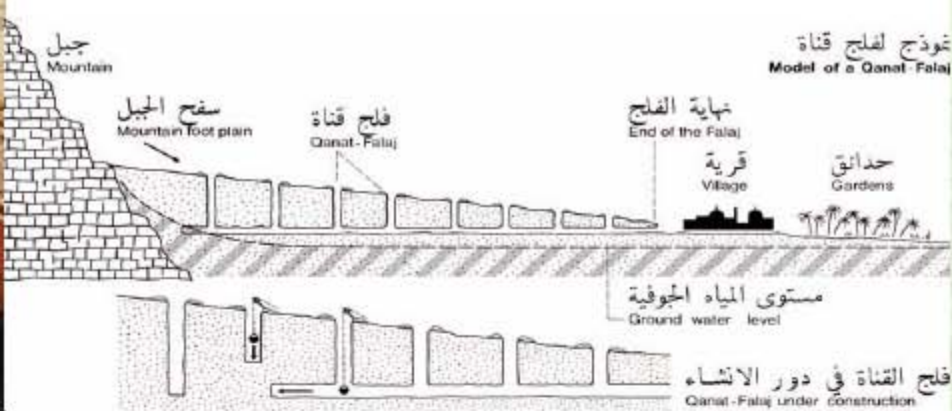
Oman's ancient history would have remained shrouded in darkness

were it not for the generous capacity of ancient Arab sources and some foreign sources to provide information that was sometimes missing and sometimes incorrect. From the start of the modern Omani Renaissance, scientific expeditions have continued to uncover archaeological remains and have succeeded in uncovering evidence of populous communities along Oman's eastern and western shores going back as far as the sixth millennium BC. Excavations have found other communities at the Al Qurm site near Muscat

The Eastern Sands in the Sharqiyah region and the Hufi in the Wusta region.



*(Top) Rock art dated to the 1st Millennium BC in Shannah, Al Qabil in the Shariqiyyah region.
(Below) Copper earring and necklace found in Samad As Shan, Al Mudhaibi (300BC-793AD) and a crescent-shaped ivory comb decorated with hollowed double circles which was imported from India but discovered at Ras al Jinz, Sur (3rd millennium BC).*



20/21

that date to the fifth millennium BC, with the unearthing of burial sites and the remains of food and personal items suggesting that the settlers of this site engaged in fishing, while some hunted for gazelle in the valleys of Oman's interior. Male and female jewellery was found, pointing to a certain degree of technical prowess and sophistication.

Published studies describe a harvest of archaeological finds that confirm the existence of ancient communities who engaged in an organised manner in economic and political activity and maintained external relations with many other lands. In a study published by P. Costa and T.J. Wilkinson on the Sohar district, the authors furnished abundant information on mining and agricultural and merchant communities in the region whose historical origins go back to the deepest past and continue all the way up to the Islamic era.

Similar studies conducted in Iraq show the use of copper from the fourth century BC, shipped from Oman by way of the Gulf.

From the middle of the second millennium BC the use of iron began to have broader influence, especially for the manufacture of weapons. This was to reduce demand for copper and new commodities emerged for trading. The focus of Oman's trading activity began to reorient itself for the most part towards the west and north, to join up with the far-reaching caravan trade from the south of the Arabian Peninsula that passed by way of the Frankincense Route. With the falloff in demand for copper, Omanis found a replacement

in frankincense, horses and Indian and Chinese products. Later it would turn its attention to the spice trade and the export of traditional crafts, such as the product of the farming crafts practised by Omanis since the earliest times. They excelled at the delivery of water by way of *aflaj* and springs. Evidence portrayed in contemporary studies strongly confirms the Omanis' special ability to interact with nature and their adeptness at exploiting it to create settled communities of a civilizational model which all indications point to having been highly advanced.

LAND OF TIMBER, PRECIOUS STONES AND SEAGOING SHIPS

It is an established historical fact that Oman had trading links with the other states of the Arab Gulf before the southern parts of Iraq became organised in or around 5000 BC, and that Omani ships visited the ancient cities of Iraq. When this area became settled and rural farming communities began to transform gradually into cities, their need for timber and copper and precious stones grew in importance.

Ships from Majan and Dilmun would drop anchor in Iraq's ports. Cuneiform texts refer to Omani cities and their extensive reach into the trade that linked Iraq with other Gulf ports before the emergence of Sumerian merchant activity. Among the most important of these cities was Maloukha, which in the cuneiform texts means 'the purest materials.' It is a description which resonates closely with the type of goods which the inhabitants of Mesopotamia were importing from Maloukha – the

Several types of falaj (water channel) exist in Oman. Here a cross section of a qanat (underground) falaj which taps water from below ground, ie either underground springs or areas where the water table in the gravels close to the mountains is above the ground level on the plains.



(Top) *The mountains of Dhofar*

(Above) *'The architect with a plan', the headless diorite statue of Gudea, Prince of Lagash, circa 2100BC. Gudea left the longest known inscriptions in Sumerian.*

ancient name for the Ras Al Hadd region. Sargon, the Akkadian monarch, recorded that he had imported teak and marble from Maloukha. Gudea, Prince of Lagash, 2125/2110 BC, noted in turn that among the commodities he had imported from Maloukha were precious stones, garments, lapis lazuli, copper, zinc and gold and that these items were characterised by purity, clarity and good quality.

In the writings of Gudea also appears the name of the town, Joban, immediately following the city Maloukha and Majan. He refers to it as the home of the *khaloub* or *balout* tree, which was imported from Majan. Experts in cuneiform studies pinpointed the location of the city of Joban in the Jabal Al Akhdar region, because this region was the only one in the south of the Arabian Peninsula which had trees producing the timbers sought by Iraq. It should be said that the name of this region is not mentioned in the cuneiform sources which preceded the rule of Prince Gudea. As such it is likely that this city began to assume its commercial importance in the last quarter of the 3rd millennium BC. Prior to this it was Majan that exported wood. Cuneiform studies confirm that trade in the Arab Gulf in ancient times was limited to Oman and Iraq. As to the rest of the cities, they were merely anchorages.

Early cuneiform experts are agreed that the modern name for ancient Majan is Oman and that the merchants of Mesopotamia imported diorite from there and it was supplied by Omani ships at the request of Iraqi merchants as far back as 2284/2340 BC. The Iraqis favoured diorite over gold, using it to manufacture cylindrical seals and weights – because of its hardness and scarcity in Iraq – in order to pre-empt forgery and corruption.

The traders of Maloukha also supplied Iraq with timber, choosing select varieties and shipping these from India. Meanwhile, the cuneiform characters with which the city of Majan was written confirm its renown as a centre of merchant ship-building. The city title was presented in the form of two characters, 'Ma', meaning 'ship', and 'jan', meaning a 'skeleton' or 'frame.' So Majan meant 'ship skeleton.'

Supporting this thesis is the fact that Oman during the Abbassid era and up to the beginning of the 19th century was known for its ship-building expertise and on that basis it is possible to say that it was Majan that supplied Dilmun – present-day Bahrain – with seagoing vessels, as it did the other trading centres of the Arab Gulf in early times.

THE TRADE IN FRANKINCENSE

Dhofar played an effective role in ancient history as a principal source of frankincense and gum, prime commodities enjoying major significance in the ancient world. In this way it gained the attention of historians beginning in



22/23

400 BC with Herodotus, to Pliny and Ptolemy and up to Strabo and Diodorus. All of these remarked on the importance of frankincense and gum in early trade and jointly conceded that the demand for frankincense did not compare with that of any other commodity. The port of Ras Fortak, Jabal Qamar, was where the frankincense and gum was shipped to the scattered ports of the ancient world. The overland route began west of Dhofar, heading south to the tip of the Arabian Peninsula, then northwards towards Najran and on to Gaza, thence to Egypt. One of the most important routes described by early geographers was the route linking Dhofar on the eastern side of the Peninsula with Sumer in Iraq.

Omanis did not limit themselves to the export of raw frankincense. They added to it lubricants that transformed it into the incense used in religious rituals, medical treatments and the healing arts. This commodity gained great significance in the commerce of the Late Stone Age. Studies of early cuneiform point to Iraq's being reliant on the frankincense and gum supplied by Dhofar

from around 5000 BC, as its demand grew for incense, perfumes and gum.

The Message of the Prophet (PBUH) to the People of Oman

Historical sources say that the Prophet (PBUH) sent a letter with Abi Zayd Al Ansari to Jaifar and Abd Al Julanda in 6AH/627AD, then sent another with Amr bin Al 'Aas in 8AH/629AD and a third to the people of Oman, which was described by Abu Shaddad Al Damani of the Dama clan as saying, 'From Mohamed the Messenger of Allah to the people of Oman, Declare the testimony that there is no God but Allah and that I am the Messenger of Allah. Give the *zakat* and frequent the

(Top) Globules of Dhofari frankincense, and (Below) A model of the Ghaujah-type of dhow.

(Overleaf) Khawr Rawri (Sunkharun) in Dhofar was a settlement of major importance between the 3rd century BC and the 5th century AD.









mosque or you will face invasion.' A fourth letter was received by Abdallah bin Ali Al Thamali and Messellia bin Hazzan when, approaching the Prophet (PBUH) with a party of their tribespeople, they converted to Islam and offered the allegiance of their tribe. The Prophet wrote to them and imposed on them the obligation to give alms from their wealth.

As a consequence of this letter and arising from direct contact with the Prophet (PBUH) by some Omanis, individually and in groups, Islam took hold in Oman and spread far and wide. Instrumental in this spread was the fact that the Prophet was responsible for the Al Julanda succeeding to the rule of Oman subject to their adopting Islam and he delegated Amr bin Al'Aas to collect *zakat* from the country's wealthy and distribute it to its poor and needy inhabitants.

And so it is no surprise that we find the Prophet calling on the people of Oman, saying, 'Allah was merciful to the people of Ghubaira – of Oman. They believed in me and they did not dissimulate.'

The Prophet's call to the people of Oman would not have been good had it not been for the fact that it was supported by their adoption of Islam in a manner that was sincere and unblemished.

The Omani State played a crucial role in the propagation of Islam in East Africa. In the 7th century AH many Omanis migrated to East Africa and the exodus to the African coast continued beyond that date. Omanis were mostly responsible for the spread of Islam in Uganda, the Upper Congo,

Rwanda and Burundi, as well as the Tanganyikan interior, especially after Zanzibar became a central beacon of Islam and civilization with the extension of Oman's power to East Africa in 1248 AH/1832 AD under Sayyid Said bin Sultan.

For long ages Oman drew to itself the attention of explorers and imperialists. Portugal's reach extended to Oman's coastal cities. Under the rule of the Ya'ruba, from 1624 AD, the Portuguese were successfully expelled from the coast.

Imam Ahmed bin Said Al Busaidi, who became the acknowledged leader of the Imamate in 1744 AD, managed to put down internal strife and to unify the country and build a solid naval power. He succeeded in restoring trade to the Omani coast. Over a period of two and a half centuries the Al Busaidi State maintained its place among the list of countries that had a demonstrable and significant impact in the modern civilised world. It opened up relations with Europe and America. In 1840, under the reign of Sayyid Said bin Sultan, the *M/V Sultana* was dispatched to America carrying gifts, and this marked the start of a strong friendship maintained with the New World to this time.

In the Renaissance era of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said (commencing on 23rd July 1970), may Allah preserve and protect him, the Sultanate of Oman is passing through a new and unprecedented time, a time in which dignity has been restored, in which Oman has returned to international significance and influence.

The renovated Al Midhmar Mosque in Sunail is believed to be the first built in Oman.

والله الرحمن الرحيم

بسم

الله الحنيفة
الحق
اتبع الهدى
ادعوا بلذاته
تسلما فاني
الناس كافة
حيا وحق
الكافرين
بالاسلام
ايتما فان
زالوا وخلي
وتظهر
ملككم

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
من محمد رسول الله
الى حمير و عبد الله الحارثي
وسلام على من اسع البعدى
اما بعد فاني ادعوكم الى
عامة الاسلام اسلمنا مسلما
بي رسول الله الى الناس
خافه لا يدرك من كان
وكون المولى على الكافرين
فابكموا ان اقر ربنا بالا
سلام ولسكم و ان اسفها
فان ملككم راي و كيلي
كل ساسا حكمكم و يظهر
بي على ملككم

من محمد رسول
وعبد الله
سلام على من
اما بعد فاني
الاسلام اسلمنا
رسول الله الى
لا يذير من كان
القول على
وانك ان اقرعنا
وليكن وان
ملككم
تحمل باحقنا
سوي على



نسخة من رسالة النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم
إلى ملكي عمان عبيد وجعفر أبناء الجلندي
لدعوة أهل عمان إلى الإسلام 630 م
Copy of the letter addressed by
Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him)
to Abd and Jefer sons of Al-Julunda rulers of
Oman inviting them to Islam 630 AD

QABOOS

THE LEADER AND THE MAN

Over the forty years of its modern Renaissance Oman has never strayed from the core vision set forth by its leader – a vision rooted in the need to confront backwardness with progress, to replace fragmentation with national unity and cohesiveness, to leave behind ignorance and obscurity and emerge into the light of a contemporary state, with its complex laws and institutions. The way forward was one in which a fundamental shift in culture had to be acknowledged as a destiny that could not be avoided. There could be no standing on the sidelines, leaving the past to clear its own debris. The new Oman would excavate the neglected treasures buried beneath its sands, use science and system rather than random favour to harvest the fruits of land and sea. At a practical level, there were many compelling needs: a need to undertake the restoration and maintenance of the country's many historic citadels, forts and mosques; a need to rescue Oman's majestic oryx, its rare and unique birdlife, the green turtles in its bays, and to protect them in their native habitat. There were roads to be paved, villages to be electrified, new hospitals to be built, universities, airports, sea ports to be inaugurated, even as history and tradition were honoured in the regeneration of decaying citadels and ancient songs.

In short, it was crucial that Oman be brought into alignment with the contemporary world, that it learn to speak its language and adopt its technology, while retaining its time-old heart and the marks of its illustrious and singular history.

This was the spirit in which His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, on 23 July 1970, embarked on a voyage that would mark him as an inspired leader, marked by destiny and the destiny of his country to steer a course, with wise and calm intelligence, that would guide it to safe waters

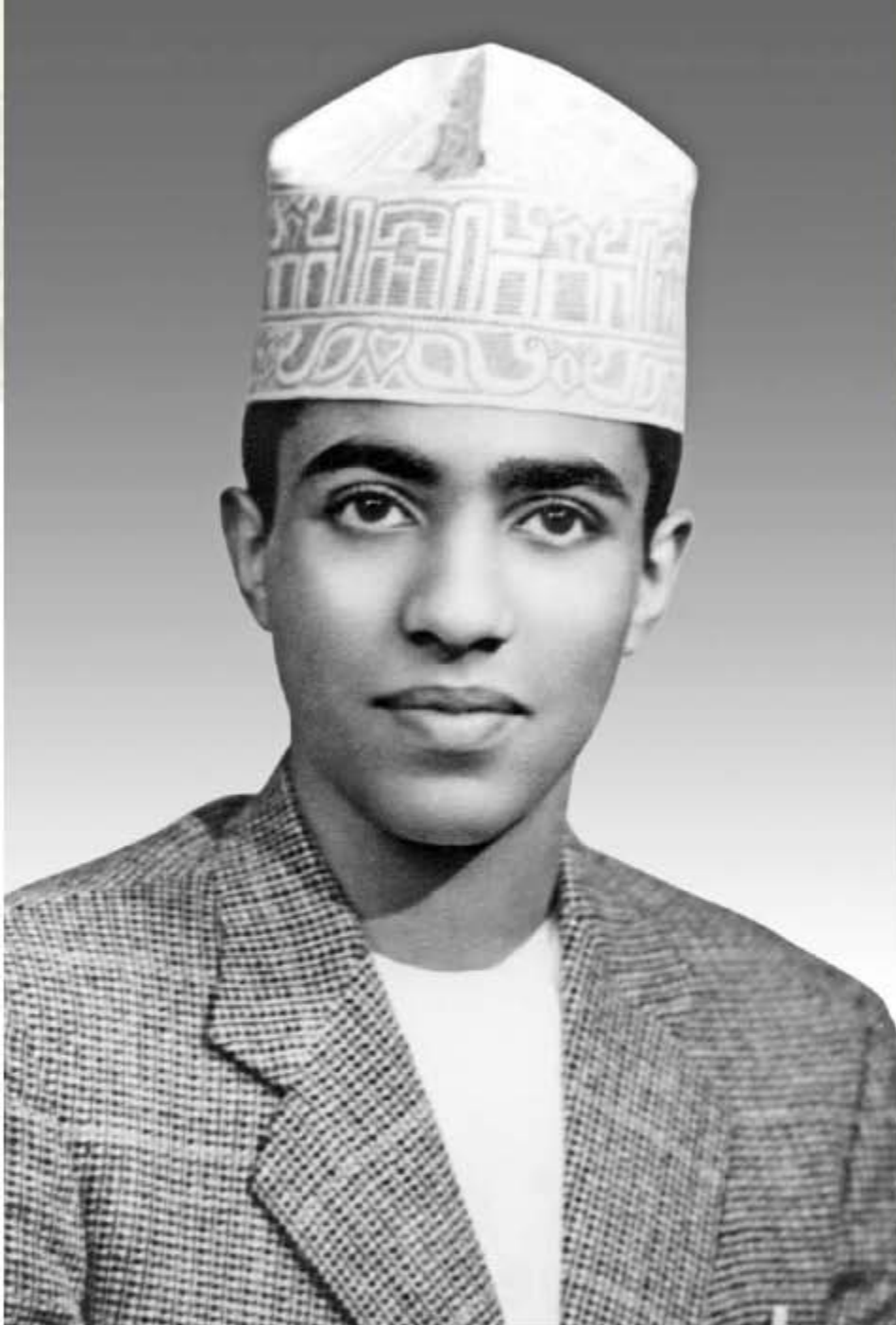
THE CHARACTER OF THE LEADER

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said was born in Salalah in the Governorate of Dhofar, on 18 November

1940. He is descended from the Imam Ahmed bin Said (1744-1783), founder of the Al Busaidi Royal line. It was Al Busaidi who quelled the fires of internecine strife which had overwhelmed his country at that time and sowed the seeds of its unity, before going on to build a powerful naval fleet. Today he is still held in high regard by Omanis for his success in unifying the country after extended civil wars.

His Majesty received his early schooling in Oman. Then in September 1958 his father, the late Sultan Said bin Taimour, sent him to England to complete his education. He attended private schools in Suffolk for two years before entering the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst as a cadet in 1960. On passing out two years later he joined the Cameronian Regiment and was posted initially to West Germany, then completed a 6-month duty assignment while undergoing a programme of study in leadership. On completing his military training, he returned to Britain to pursue a one-year study in local government, which he combined with a series of supplementary courses in administration. His father then encouraged him to undertake a world tour, which lasted for three months.

In 1964 His Majesty returned to Oman and settled in Salalah close to his father. Much of the ensuing period he spent expanding his knowledge of Islamic *shari'a*, and gaining a deeper understanding of the history and culture of his country. In a press interview he confessed, "It was my father's de-



28/29

termination that I should study religion and the history and culture of my country and it had a marked impact on me. It broadened my perception and awareness of the responsibility I bore towards my people and towards humanity in general. I also benefited from my Western education. I succumbed to the military life. More recently I have had the opportunity to read the political ideologies and philosophical thoughts of many leading world thinkers."

This interview provides a revealing glimpse into the core beliefs that drive His Majesty as a person and leader. He managed to harmonise the elements of a classical education in language, jurisprudence and history with an openness to contemporary science. His military studies bore fruit in the moulding of the institutions of a modern State, responsible for bringing prosperity, growth, stability and reassurance to his people and homeland.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said studied religion, history and his country's culture as a young man.



***His Majesty in his role as
Commander of the Armed Forces.***

His Majesty is an avid reader and maintains libraries well stocked with lexicons and learned volumes. He encourages others to read, to understand what they read and to learn from it. This love for Arabic science and learning, for religion and astronomy, for the environment, are given practical expression in the strong personal support he offers so many cultural projects, both locally and abroad, sometimes through UNESCO or through other regional or international organisations.

Sultan Qaboos has a long-standing and particular interest in projects of a religious orientation and which promote tolerance in Islam. Under his

leadership and often with his personal backing, the government has implemented a long list of religious and cultural projects - mosques, learning institutions which promote religious and cultural awareness in society. The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Muscat Governorate, established to become a beacon in disseminating religion and culture, is a jewel in the State's broad mosque-building plan.

As a service to research work in the Sultanate His Majesty instructed that within the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque complex should be a cultural centre comprising a multipurpose hall, a centre for Omani studies which would serve as a primary resource, en-





trusted with the function of gathering and documenting all university and Omani studies dealing with aspects of the Sultanate. This will gradually build to become a national resource and a heritage for future generations of Omanis, as well as a particular boon to researchers and thinkers in all fields of intellectual endeavour.

His Majesty balances a broad spectrum of interests and personal concerns that occupy what spare time he has away from the preoccupations of State. He is a skilled equestrian and a lover of horses. He has built extensive stables and a breeding facility and he is never absent from the annual horse racing fixtures at Midan Al-Adiyat in

As Seeb. Indeed throughout the Sultanate he has overseen the creation of a roster of racing and equestrian events, while retaining a special interest in and fondness for purebred Arabian racing camels.

It is Sultan Qaboos' broad love for the natural environment that has given Oman its many nature reserves and sanctuaries, some of which are listed with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

His Majesty has a well-developed and refined appreciation of the arts and his eclectic tastes extend to the worlds of the classical composers, of opera, of Arab traditional and military music. It was the Sultan person-



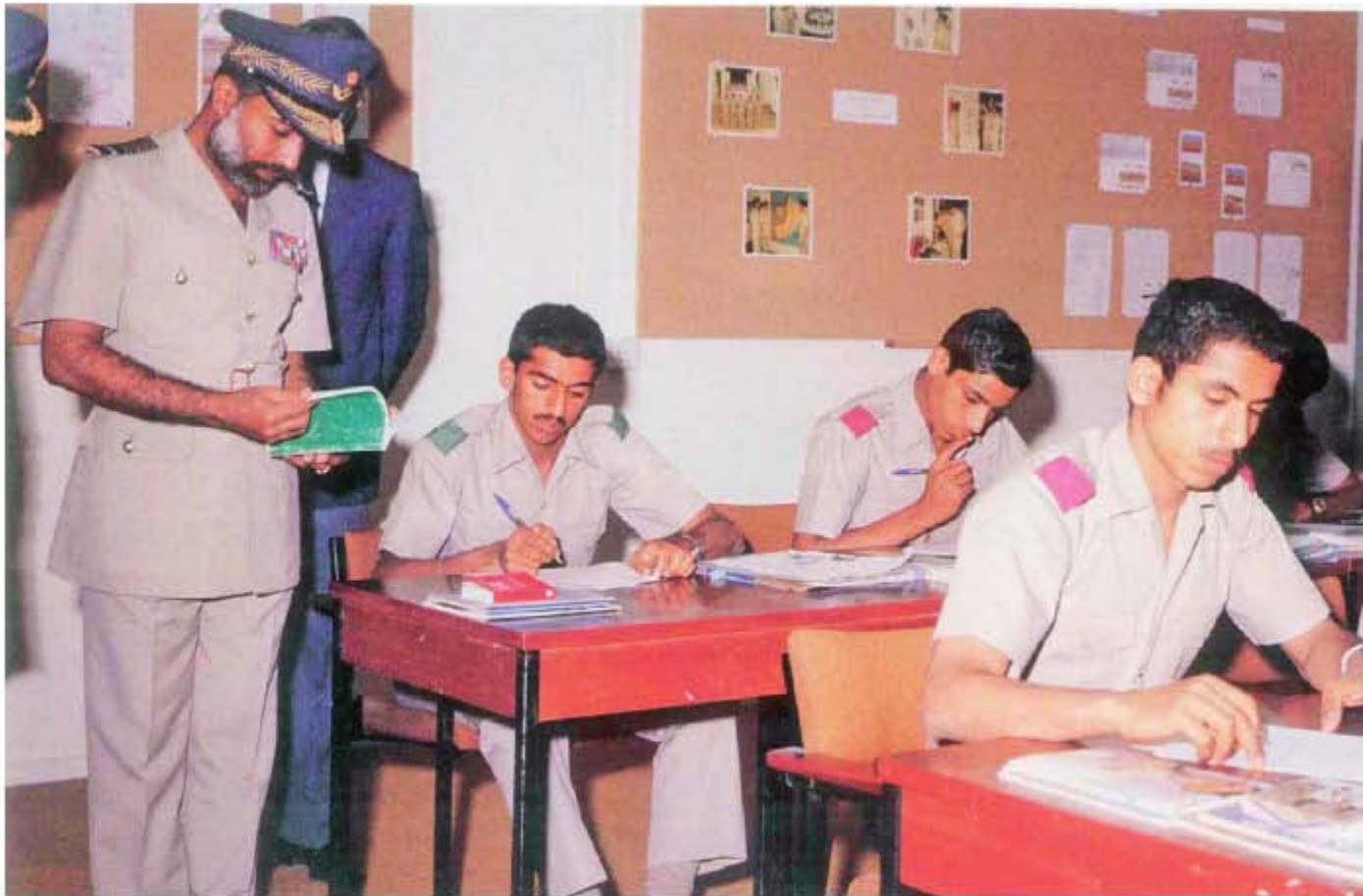
32/33







34/35



ally who sponsored the construction of the Royal Opera House in Qurm in the Muscat Governorate and who nurtures the creation and performance of music in its many expressions. He is, meantime, a competent amateur photographer, artist and painter. As an ardent supporter of the artisan crafts, he fosters the promotion and retention of traditional craftsmanship as a rich and living legacy of Oman's past.

Islamic architecture is a particular

focus of the Sultan's attention and he is careful to ensure that its manifestations in the Sultanate conform to the elegant lines of traditional design. The Qaboos Prize for Architecture was a personal expression of this partiality and resolve to preserve and maintain high standards of artistry, creativity and content in architecture. There is a visible spirit of innovation and avant-gardism among Oman's architects and it is a tribute to His Majesty's zeal and vision that the Sultanate of Oman can



claim to have upheld superb standards in the profession, as reflected in the singular and harmonious style of its public buildings. Oman is an exceptional model to countries setting out to protect their heritage and identity and there is a grace and balance in the way its contemporary architecture blends with the old.

His Majesty's immersion in literature and the arts has undoubtedly contributed to the transparency of his style of leadership. Tolerance and inclusiveness are its outstanding and constant features and express themselves in every aspect of his administration. He is a compassionate leader, given to indulgence and dispensation

in his policies, policies distilled from an educated and broad intelligence, a genuine understanding of life and an all-encompassing humanity.

Sultan Qaboos bin Said, in both his public and private bearing, projects warmth and modesty in equal measure. In his public encounters, when visiting representative groups or touring villages, he is humble and approachable, and will leave his car to walk alongside elders who have come to meet him. He listens to them with an open and humane heart. This ease of connection is expressed in all his human interactions, as when he responds to small children sent to greet him with a smile and a reassuring pat on the head.



Since the early years of the Renaissance Sultan Qaboos has often reiterated, "Our internal strategy at home is to build our country and to offer all of its citizens a comfortable and dignified life. This is an objective we can only achieve if the people will share with us the burden of responsibility and the task of achieving this progress."

Sultan Qaboos has more than fulfilled the promises he made to his people and 40 years into the Renaissance the Sultanate has been transformed into a thriving modern country. It has pursued a steady path of progress and, by the Will of Allah and the wise administration of its leader, has become an oasis of peace, trust and

stability. Its strong economy is capable of continued growth and upward momentum of a form compatible with the demands of today's knowledge-based societies. It has the dynamism to drive the creation of a modern State, its institutions built on the basis of principles and guarantees laid down by the founding regime, designed to ensure cohesion and complementarity between its various supporting structures.

In the broad context of human development Omanis today live in a climate of exceptional stability and material comfort. Sultan Qaboos bin Said never shrank from the challenges involved in bringing his country to this

His Majesty is well-known for his love of Islamic architecture. Here with a model of the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Muscat, designed as a major religious and cultural centre.

An admirer of the arts, His Majesty has fine aesthetic tastes.



place and participated energetically from the start in its reconstruction.

MILESTONES IN THE RULE OF HM SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID

In the forty years that Sultan Qaboos has ruled Oman, three milestones stand out. The first of these, and the foundation for the others, was the achievement for his country of national and social cohesion and the restoration of Oman's political and regional integration.





The second milestone was the institution of the fundamental basis for the modern State that is Oman today, a basis that revolves on equality, justice and human rights, secured by means of the essential components of democracy, the rule of law and separation of powers.

The third milestone is embodied in the process that culminated in the institution of free elections open to all citizens, male and female, without discrimination.

Each of these landmark achievements is stamped with the personal mark of His Majesty's political philosophy and is derived from a deep understanding of Oman's history, an intelligent grasp of its realities and an enlightened vision of its future.

From the very outset of his rule, Sultan Qaboos was careful to dismantle the twin scourges of dualism and fragmentation, both formidable features of the era. He took care also of the details – for instance the name

Islam calls for peace amongst people and nations.





by which Oman was known at the time was the "Sultanate of Muscat and Oman" – and the details tell a great deal about a time that was marked by roving gangs, polarisation and calls for devolution and rebellion.

Sultan Qaboos relied on five interconnected strategies to weld the country together and secure social cohesion. He reined in the momentum towards division, restoring political and regional unity to Oman, and turned it into a nation for all Omanis by seeking recourse to elements of social connection as a positive replacement for the negative draw of fragmentation and schism. He developed and extended the State's administrative apparatus to make it more compatible with the goals of a comprehensive development strategy on the one hand, while converting it into an instrument for integration and cohesion at local and national level.

Thirdly he initiated a comprehensive study of the diverse components that impacted internally on this administrative apparatus, an outcome of

which was a diminution of tribal influence, which retreated gradually before the encompassing authority and oversight of the State.

The fourth strategy consisted in the adoption of a foreign policy that served Oman's internal goals of development and stability. He began a process of resolving all border issues with neighbouring countries, and that included Oman's marine boundaries. At the heart of the Sultanate's foreign policy he planted firm and unbending principles, principles based on mutual respect, non-intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign States and extension of the hand of friendship and cooperation to all without exception.

The fifth and final strategy was to open up opportunities for greater partnership by the citizens of Oman in the administrative affairs of their country and to copper-fasten their role alongside that of the government. This partnership process was introduced and advanced by degrees, keeping pace with the phases of development

(Left) Sultan Qaboos is keen to preserve Oman's heritage for future generations.

(Above) His Majesty has a love of animals – the Arabian Oryx were reintroduced in the Wusta region in 1982.

THE SULTAN QABOOS PRIZE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation reflects the international recognition given to Oman's support for the environment and sustainable development. The Sultanate has been committed to environmental conservation since the early days of the Renaissance and has always sought to ensure that a balance is maintained between the demands of national development and the protection of the country's natural resources.

The prize, first awarded in 1991, has been won by individuals and institutions working on behalf of the environment on all five continents.

The main condition for awarding the prize is that the winning individuals, groups, institutes or organizations must have made distinguished contributions in one of the following fields: research into the environment and natural resources, environmental education and training, encouraging environmental awareness through the preparation of constructive environmental data, or establishing and managing natural conservation areas.

Year	Winners
1991	Instituto de Ecología, Vera Cruz, Mexico
1993	Professor Jan Jenik, Czech Republic
1995	Lake Malawi National Park, Malawi
1997	Shared between the Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Alexandria, Arab Republic of Egypt, and the Department of Forest Conservation, Sri Lanka
1999	The Charles Darwin Foundation, Galapagos Islands, Republic of Ecuador
2001	Chad Association of Volunteers for the Protection of the Environment, Republic of Chad
2003	Shared between Professor Peer Johan Schei, Biodiversity Expert, Norway and the Center for Ecology, Venezuela.
2005	Shared between the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Australia and Ernesto Enkerlin of Mexico.
2007	Shared between Dr. Julius Ozlanyi, Director of the Institute of Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia, and the Institute of Biodiversity Conservation, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
2009	Autonomous Authority for National Parks (OAPN), which operates under the Spanish Ministry of Environment, Rural and Marine Areas





His Majesty awards Cups in his name for excellence in sporting achievements, both locally and internationally.

through which Omani society was naturally progressing.

He frequently gave expression to the deep and many-layered connection between himself as leader and his people, most often in the direct and open exchanges he encouraged with members of the public during his annual tours that took in every corner and province of Oman.

These combined strategies worked together to culminate in the achievement of the first milestone distinguishing the rule of Sultan Qaboos.

THE BASIC LAW OF THE STATE: THE RULE OF LAW

So we may say that these five intertwined strategies succeeded in

achieving national unity and knitting a closely bonded and living social fabric, factors without which any form of economic, social or political development would have been near impossible. Nor could an effective labour force have been created, or such elements of civil society as characterise the modern State. No small achievement by any standards, this process must be seen also as an outstanding marker in Oman's known history, a formidable legacy to add to the long list of accomplishments of the last 40 years. But there is another milestone that is of no less historic significance, and it dates to 6 November 1996, when His Majesty promulgated the Basic Law of the State, crowning a long process during



44/45





On his annual Royal Tours Sultan Qaboos meets his people, whatever their age, and listens to their concerns.

which the Sultanate had managed to build a modern State, equipped with the institutions it needed for expression of its guiding principles and policies, and clear in the orientation and consistency of its political strategies.

The Basic Law of the State became the foundation on which the Sultanate could realise further development and progress and draw clear outlines of the principles to which it was committed both internally and in its foreign policy. All of these prin-

ciples have the common aim of benefiting the progress of Oman's citizens to realisation of their personal potential, their labour skills, their educational advancement. The citizens of Oman are the pivot around which revolves every one of the administration's goals and through which all accomplishments are achieved. It is through their education and preparation that the many plans and programmes and strategies will come to fruition.





Sultan Qaboos has spoken of this approach to development, "The principles which guide State policy in every domain are no more than manifestations of a single goal, a means to the realisation of a single purpose, and that is to provide assistance to the people, to advance them and their prosperity and progress and security and safety as citizens of a strong and forward-looking country, one that occupies a position of respect and influence in the world at large."

The Basic Law of the State did not limit itself to addressing the changes of the present era, but went beyond this to lay the groundwork for a secure future that would be stable politically, economically and socially. As a consequence, Oman has in place standards that underlie the form of the legislation that regulates social life inside the country as well as the State's conduct of its foreign interactions.

There are guiding principles, a reference which can be invoked as an authoritative resource when any issue of difference or subject of controversy emerges. Everything that contradicts the noble aspirations enshrined in the Basic Law of the State is void. This comprehensive system itself set a two-year deadline for a review of all laws, decrees and regulations in Oman so that they might be stripped of any and all aspects incompatible with Basic Law.

The Basic Law of the State of Oman addressed every detail of relevance to the vital issues of the country's present and future.



The early days of His Majesty's leadership were not easy for Sultan Qaboos so he took the opportunity to listen to his people in every corner of the country.



48/49





The annual Royal Tours of the country - a time when Sultan Qaboos can meet his people and listen to their demands and views. Through this he is able to direct development to where it is needed.

Firstly, the issue of human rights, as guaranteed in Part III relating to general rights and obligations, prohibits the deportation or exile of citizens or their prevention from returning to the Sultanate. It renders all citizens equal before the law without discrimination on grounds of sex, origin, colour, language or religion, sect, domicile or social status. It ensures personal freedom so that no individual may be arrested, searched, detained, imprisoned or placed under house arrest or restric-

tion of liberty in the home or outside of it, except insofar as this is compatible with the provisions of the law; and it does not permit detention or imprisonment in places other than those designated in the prison laws as "providing health and social care". Citizens may not be subjected to physical or mental torture, inducement or "degrading treatment". The law defines the punishment for breach of this injunction. In addition, any statement or confession proven to have been induced or



50/51



THE ANNUAL ROYAL TOURS

His Majesty the Sultan's Royal tours of the governorates and regions have a very specific character and function. Ever since the beginning of the Sultanate's modern Renaissance His Majesty has attached great importance to them as an integral part of the Omani political scene and as a channel for interaction between the leadership and members of the public wherever they may happen to be. Equally important is the fact that the tours lead to significant achievements in the economic, development, social and political fields.

During the tours His Majesty meets local sheikhs, dignitaries and members of the public and engages in an open dialogue with them. National seminars are also held at the Royal Camp to discuss matters of importance to the country and its citizens. To broaden the scope of the dialogue between the leadership and the public, His Majesty is accompanied on his tours by a large number of ministers and advisers.

As well as enabling His Majesty to inspect development projects on the ground, the tours also perform the valuable function of mobilising the nation's energies and channelling them into the implementation of the development plans.





52/53





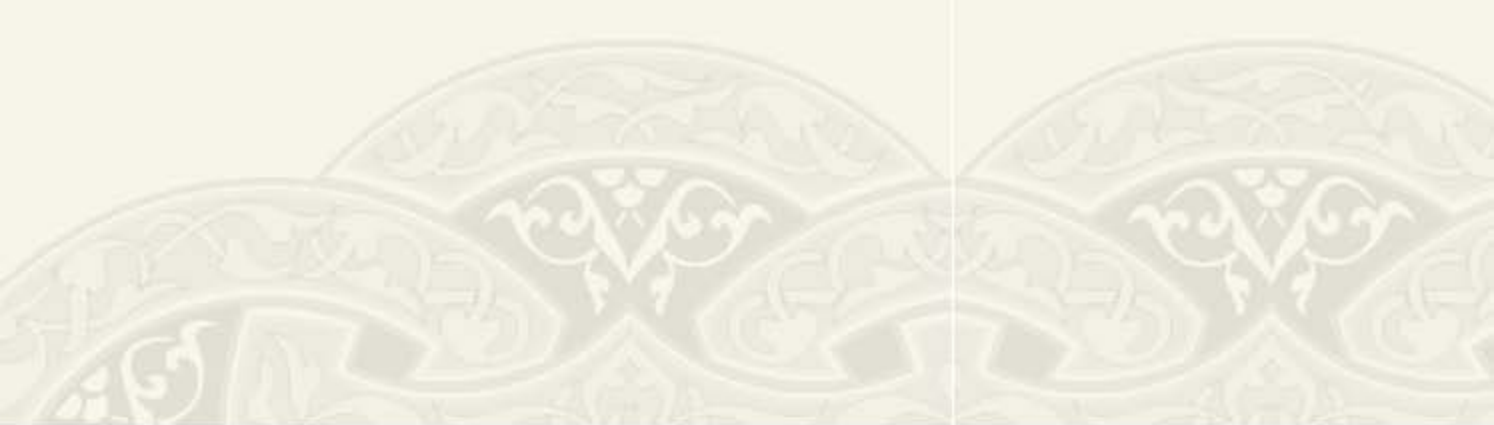
Creating an open dialogue – the people showing loyalty to their leader from the early days until today.





made involuntarily under the effects of torture, or as a result of degrading treatment or threat of any of the above, will be inadmissible in law. Further, no crime or penalty can be established except as prescribed by law, and no punishment can be effected except for acts perpetrated that represent unlawful conduct in the definition of the relevant legislation. Moreover all penalties are "personal" in so far as they may not be transferred to members of the family of the offender. Equally an accused is

innocent until proven guilty by way of a legitimate trial at which he has been given all the guarantees necessary for exercise of the right of defence in compliance with the law. The abuse of an accused, by physical or mental means, is prohibited and the accused has the right to appoint someone who has the ability to defend him during the trial. Any person who is arrested or detained must be informed immediately of the grounds on which he or she has been arrested or detained and shall have the



right to communicate with whomsoever he wishes in order to alert them to what has happened. He shall be informed promptly of the charges being brought against him and he, or whoever represents him, shall be entitled to lodge a complaint before the courts in relation to the procedure which is restricting his personal liberty. Resolution shall take place within a specific time limit or else he must be released without delay. Also prohibited is the implementation of any medical or scientific experiment on any human being in the absence of his free consent.

A home is deemed a sanctuary which may not be entered without the permission of the occupants and only in instances as defined by law. Freedom of worship is guaranteed and supported, subject only to the proviso that public order be upheld.

Also guaranteed and upheld are the freedoms of opinion and expression and freedom of postal, telegraphic and telephone communication, which may not be subjected to surveillance or inspection, disclosure, delay or confiscation except in the circumstances specified by law. Further guaranteed are freedom of the press, printing and publishing. Citizens have the right to freedom of assembly and freedom of association throughout the State, for lawful purposes, and they have the right to seek redress from public authorities. Every foreign national who is in Oman is assured of the legal protection of their persons and property.

The Basic Law of the State also contains an important provision in

its Article 36 of Part III, which categorically prohibits the extradition of political refugees, with the sole exception of those categorised as criminals, who will be handed over in accordance with the terms of international laws and conventions. This provision clearly highlights the humane dimension that characterises the administration of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. A political refugee is an outcast from a system of governance that is hostile to his person, and his surrender may lead to his death and the displacement of his family, generating further strife and unrest and bloodshed. Therefore the surrender of a political refugee by the Sultanate of Oman is a matter not to be considered in any circumstances, a matter not subject – as can be the case in some countries – to negotiation or to the service of mutual interests. It represents a moral issue of the first order.

Secondly: the independence of the judiciary. A separate section, Section VI, has been devoted specifically to the authority of the judiciary. The rule of law is established as a basis for the government of the State and the integrity and impartiality and fairness of the judiciary acts as a safeguard of rights and freedoms. It is expressly provided for in Article 60 that the authority of the judiciary is independent. It is administered by courts of different types and levels which deliver their rulings in the context of the clear provisions of the law. No power supersedes the power of judges in



56/57



the rulings delivered by them in the courts. Nor may they be removed from their positions, except in cases as specified by law. Any and all interference in the courts or the affairs of justice is prohibited. Such interference, should it occur, shall be deemed a crime punishable by law. The Basic Law institutes a Supreme Council to oversee the proper functioning of the courts and its auxiliary bodies, and designates as a crime punishable by law any failure by a public official

to execute a judgment or to delay its implementation, and grants the right to the convicted person in such a case to bring a criminal case directly before the competent court.

Thirdly, the issues of conflict of interest and of abuse of public office for personal benefit are dealt with in Article 53 of the Basic Law of the State, which provides that members of the Council of Ministers may not combine ministerial positions with the chairmanship or membership of the board

His Majesty famously said: 'We are going to teach our children, even under the shade of the trees'.



of any company or organization in which they may have an interest either directly or indirectly. They are required in every case to place, by their conduct, the interests of the country first and to uphold the public interest and not use their official positions in any way for their own benefit or for the benefit of any person or entity with whom they may have a special relationship.

The Basic Law of the State is no mere text or guideline or cosmetic document that is not truly intended for practical application. Rather, the spirit of these texts has been embodied in legislation in such a way that the legislation embraces energetically in its provisions the letter and spirit of this Law. Since 1997, the year that followed the promulgation of the Basic Law of the State, a sequence of laws has been released that addresses the details of the daily life of Omani society. Notable among these laws is the Personal Status Law, comprising 282 articles drafted in conformance with Islamic law, which is the foundation on which all Omani legisla-

tion is based and from which all is derived. All of these successive laws have dealt with issues of the family as the core building block from which society is structured. Also drafted and issued were the Civil Code, the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedures Act, along with laws defining the powers of the judiciary and the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, the Office of Public Prosecution, the Administrative Court and its organizational legislation, as well as the Procedures Act. All of this legislation combined has given the Sultanate of Oman a fully integrated judicial system, equipped with all of the necessary relevant structures, such as the various levels and specialities of court and jurisdiction, and the laws born in spirit from the abundance of the Islamic *shari'a*.

This body of legislation expresses fully the spirit of the Basic Law of the State. It confirms His Majesty's constant endeavour to integrate and complement the legal structures in the Sultanate of Oman so as to promote

Early days of schooling in Oman - education was given priority right from the start of the Renaissance.



the justice and fairness which he has fostered since his accession to power 40 years ago. It is no exaggeration at all to say that the judicial system and legal structure of Oman as it exists today constitutes a historic milestone in the progress of the country, and a model of oversight as measured by its resourcefulness in time and place.

A GRADUAL AND EVEN PACE TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

Thirdly: the third milestone that distinguished the Renaissance initiated by Sultan Qaboos bin Said laid the basis for a democratic system structured around Omani, Arab and Islamic realities. The process of enfranchisement began with limited elections and went on to engage increasing levels of public participation at a rhythm that mirrored the process of social and economic development. It culminated in fully free elections, held without discrimination to the right of men and women to vote and run for office.

The carefully modulated advance of the Omani consultation process en-

sured that it developed into a mature model, noteworthy not only because it differed from the custom of adopting an imported experience readymade, but also because it progressed organically in a pattern of successive stages that reflected Oman's newly mobile society, meeting all of the aspirations of future generations, while sparing Omani society the common after-shock effects that were a consequence of suddenly leapfrogging outside the normal rhythm of social progress. The process that has been called "burning stages," for its attempt to short circuit the natural gradual progress from tribal to modern society, is ultimately flawed.

In the first electoral experiment launched in 1991 the voting body was limited to a select group of elders and notables in each state who between them nominated three individuals, either by mutual consent among attendees at the nomination meeting or, in the absence of a compromise on the names put forward, from among those candidates with the highest number of

votes. This step was followed by the government's selection of one of these to become a member of the Council.

The process was advanced in 1994, when the system of nomination directed the voters – the elders and traditional leaders, dignitaries, intellectuals and representatives of the trading class – to nominate just two members each from the *wilayat* which were to be represented by a single member. This reduced the weighting towards government in the selection process and expanded the right of citizens to select their candidates in the form of the two persons nominated. The same criteria applied in the selection of representatives of the *wilayat* which were to be represented by two members each, viz. those representing constituencies of over 30,000 inhabitants. In the case of the two-member constituencies the Electoral College in each of these *wilayat* selected four candidates, two of which were the preferred candidates of the government - hence a fifty-fifty process. This period also witnessed an important departure with the introduction of legislation allowing women – for the first time in the Sultanate and the GCC region overall – to participate in the nomination of candidates for membership of the Council. This included their right to nominate themselves as candidates and to seek membership of the Council. This was, however, limited only to the six *wilayat* of the Governorate of Muscat. In the event, women succeeded in winning two seats.

His Majesty, a believer in educating the mind to a high level, seen here at Oman's first university - Sultan Qaboos University in Al Khodh, Muscat.





60/61





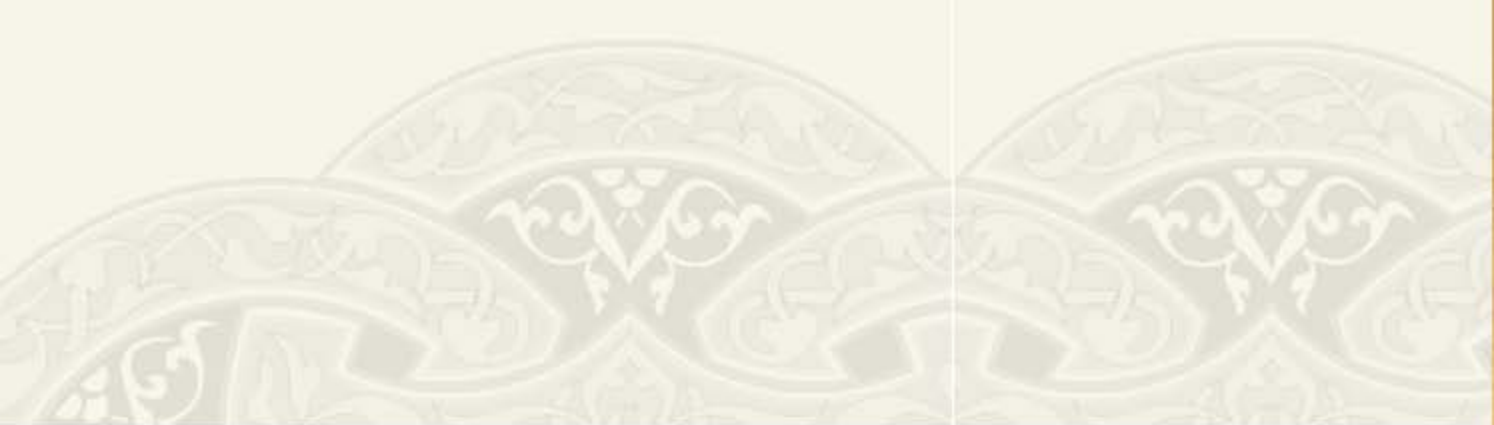
The Council of Oman which consists of members of the State Council and the Consultation Council.

The third period – in the summer of 1997 – saw legislation approved that expanded women's nomination and candidacy rights further, so that they extended to all constituencies in Oman. In other words, these rights were no longer confined just to the constituencies of Muscat Governorate. There were additional advances, with changes to the classification of citizens who had the right to vote. The voter base was enlarged so that the total number of voters enfranchised under this amendment

was now 51,000 citizens, male and female. This period saw a field of 27 female candidates standing for election. Two of them, as it so happened once again from within the boundaries of the Governorate of Muscat, won seats.

More sweeping moves to broaden the voter base were introduced in 2000. The number of male and female voters increased to 175,000, a number which at the time represented approximately 25% of all Omanis aged 21 years or over.





This new figure represented a tripling of the voter base from the status at the previous election. The process of democratisation was accelerating rapidly.

The fourth period saw the complete withdrawal of all government intervention in the process of nominating members of the Shura Council by selection from among those who had won the leading places in the *wilayat* voting. This meant the four frontrunners in constituencies of more than 30,000 thousand inhabitants, in other words those which would be represented by two members; and the two front-running candidates in the constituencies with lower populations and which therefore would be represented by a single member.

The fifth stage of this process of enfranchisement witnessed a significant and historic new direction in the path of institutional democracy in the Sultanate. The elections held on 2 October 2003 granted the right of electoral participation to all citizens aged twenty-one years and over. Gone was the stipulation limiting the franchise to a certain percentage of the population of each state, as had been the basis of previous elections. In addition, the standard of judicial oversight was upgraded. It was decided that the Main Committee, in its capacity as the body responsible for rolling out the electoral process, should include, respectively, an undersecretary from the Ministry of Justice and two delegates appointed by the Chairman of the Supreme Court. The elec-

tions were also declared fully open to women to participate in the electoral process without restriction. No longer did they have to earn this right, as recognition for having exercised a central or prominent role in the construction and development of society in one or other of its aspects. Another important change introduced in this phase allowed candidates to initiate their campaigns from the date of publication of the final lists of candidates and continue up to the day immediately preceding polling day. The last major change to the process introduced in this period involved the formation of electoral committees in some of the Sultanate's embassies and consulates which were permitted to exercise the functions of the Electoral Committee and the Vote-Counting Committee.

The sixth term elections, which took place on 27 October 2007 and dictated the shape of the current legislature, granted 388,672 voters, including 155,030 female voters - according to statistics from the electoral rolls at the time - the right to vote for their chosen representatives at 102 polling stations throughout the country's sixty-one *wilayat*. This current term runs until October 2011, when the Sultanate's next and seventh national elections are scheduled to take place for a term of four calendar years up to October 2015.

And so it goes. The particular experience of the Sultanate was one characterised by a controlled and internally defined rhythm, in which change was

Voting for a candidate at the Majlis Ash Shura elections - women too have played their part in Oman's development.



administered in escalating doses that embraced the principles essential to activation and broadening of the electoral process, while ensuring neutrality and fairness. This experience, in all its many aspects, constitutes the third milestone or distinguishing benchmark of Oman's journey to modernity over the 40 years of its Renaissance.

MAN OF PEACE ... FIXED PRINCIPLES AND WISE DECISIONS

"Our aim is to achieve peace, by

giving neither too much nor too little."
Sultan Qaboos

The personality and political demeanour of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said reflects a set of core beliefs, astute perceptions and wisdom that together form the common denominator of all his decisions. They encompass his deep empathy with and belief in the role of science and civilized communication in cementing bonds and achieving convergence and understanding in support of peace, stability

and development in the world. They also make the Sultan, among world leaders, one of the foremost proponents and supporters of peace at the present time.

In the first place, despite the aura of isolation that marked Oman prior to 1970, the policy espoused energetically by Sultan Qaboos from the earliest days of his administration has succeeded by dint of persistent positive action in breaking through that isolation. Today, as a result of this policy, Oman has managed to build strong and fruitful relationships with many countries and as many regional and international organizations. It has regained its influence and expanded its contribution through every positive effort it has made for the benefit of the peoples and countries of the region and the wider world. But while the Sultan believes in the peace process and the importance of working to build a better world that is secure, calm, stable and in permanent dialogue with all other countries and peoples, in the face of injustice and violence of whatever kind and cause, the principles and ground rules incarnated by the Sultan as a basis for Oman's foreign policy are never negotiable. Their means and context are dialogue, the promotion of friendly relations with all countries and peoples, respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and cooperation in good faith, both bilaterally and through the medium of international organizations. Their purpose is to build a better re-



ality and resolve disputes by peaceful means and constructive dialogue. This is the philosophy that has permitted the expansion and extension of Oman's connection to every part of the world, that has guided it in the restoration of its economic links and that fostered its readiness to engage with and pursue civilized dialogue and interact dynamically with all peoples. Oman enjoys a special and remarkable level of trust and respect regionally and internationally, and its external

The Sultanate has good relations with countries around the world, and supports the United Nations and its agencies.



66/67



relations have been transformed to become today an additional resource in the national endeavour to pursue and strengthen development and growth.

Sultan Qaboos describes the foreign policy of Oman as transparent and unambiguous to all. It will always take the side of truth, justice, friendship, peace, and the call for coexistence among nations and understanding among cultures, as well as eradication of the causes of hatred and animosity that are generated in-

evitably in the hearts of those who have suffered injustice and inequality. His Majesty's own words best express the civilised dimension of this policy, "Injustice is a dark deed and we are against injustice and darkness and we are for justice, light and harmony. Humanity will not be healthy and it will experience no reassurance unless it chooses to balance the scales of justice and practise respect for everything that guarantees the legitimate rights of mankind, foremost among which are



On the international scene – the policy is non-interference in the affairs of others.

the right to dignity and the right not to be humiliated and the right to freedom and independence”.

It is from the perspective of this civilised and humane vision that Oman has handled all issues and all aspects of its relations. One consequence has been the country's success in building ties of friendship and good relations with other countries. Another has been the high regard with which His Majesty is universally held today, both personally and for the enlight-

enment of his political positions and policies. Many leaders seek him out to exchange views freely, to access his opinion and considered perspective on aspects of developments in the Gulf, Arab or international arenas.

Secondly, in its resolve to protect the process of national development, Oman sought in a spirit of good intent, to find resolutions to territorial and marine border issues – until it had managed to reach international conventions with its neighbours; and went on to turn these



borders into bridges of common purpose, into transit points for mutual interchange between the people of Oman and their friendly neighbours; this approach had the overall effect of contributing to the consolidation of peace and stability in the region. As such it created a working model that sought out means of circumventing thorny issues and showed that this could be done where the necessary political will existed. In this sense it can be seen as a second guiding principle.

Thirdly, Oman has contributed repeatedly to the containment of conflicts that broke out in the region, always seeking resolution before they can escalate. The singularly effective aspect of this approach is its swiftness, when deft political action is often what is most needed to achieve a convergence of views between disputing parties. At other times the Sultan has provided a secure channel of communication between the conflicting parties. Oman



was careful to keep the lines of communication open with both Iraq and Iran over the eight years of the war between them. Its position was very clear on the issue of Gulf security, in all its dimensions. Sultan Qaboos has said in this regard, "It is clear that stability in this vital part of the world, and the continuity of security and peace among its various communities, depends on the ability of its member countries not to provoke the international community in any way, either by threatening its interests or interfering in the affairs of others. Irrespective of the justification for such interference, it would be the duty of all to adhere to the principles of peaceful coexistence among nations and respect for the rules of international law governing rights and duties, on the basis of a sincere desire to spare the region the adverse consequences of instability and enable its people to pursue growth and prosperity".

As a fourth core principle, Oman has persisted in maintaining its close relationship with all Arab countries, rejecting the policy of the cold shoulder or boycott. In this way it has ensured that its capital city has been and remains a meeting point for disputing Arab parties. Oman's doors are always open to its brothers – in all circumstances – and this is a tribute to the immutability of the Omani approach, of its credibility and strategic vision, which looks beyond differences to reach for the constants in the Arab experience.



His Majesty with his brothers, the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council states. Their special relationship is based on the strong ties between them, the roots of which extend back into history, and hinge on shared common interests and aspirations.

Fifthly, Oman was a firm supporter of the peace process from its earliest steps. This support derived from its commitment to the sovereignty, security and stability that serves the welfare of the peoples of the Middle East and the world. This commitment has not, however, ever prevented it from emphasising the need for a peace that is just, lasting and comprehensive in every sense of the three concepts. In this context, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has declared that Oman will not



hesitate to take any step that might help the Palestinian people to walk the path of peace that it has chosen for itself, and he has clarified this by saying that the Palestinians must be encouraged and supported in solidarity until they have reached a conclusive solution. Equally, the Israelis must be induced to pursue the peace option. Guided by these criteria, the Sultanate has endorsed the various agreements and peace moves that have been pursued by the Palestine Liberation Orga-

nization and Israel, as well as between the latter and Jordan, along with other efforts and positive moves, always acting from a belief in the importance of peace and the need to achieve it by whatever genuine means.

Sixthly, running parallel to the energetic role played by Oman at various regional levels, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos maintains a deep and longstanding respect for the United Nations as a 'world parent' organization working to achieve international peace



and security, acting through its many specialist bodies, and to promote communication between the peoples and nations of the world. His admiration for the UN extends to support for the efforts of Unesco to uncover the historic trade route known as the Silk Road, as well Oman's funding of an international award for the Environment, delivered every two years since 1991 by Unesco, in addition to many other expressions of support and participation.

Ultimately peace, in the full meaning of the word, is likely to be accomplished in line with the integrated Omani vision, the features of which, as outlined by the Sultan, incorporate the immediate needs of the present and the necessary demands of the future. The work of achieving peace is a broad one, and it is a singular priority by any measure, locally, regionally and internationally. The approach of Sultan Qaboos is best illustrated in his own words: "Peace is a doctrine in which we have placed our trust, a requirement we aim to achieve, by giving neither too much nor too little".

The Sultan is a peace leader of world standing. He does not limit his efforts to the 'peace of the weak,' but advocates the 'peace of the strong.' He has exceeded the expectations of many in his support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinians and makes a point always of appealing to all parties to stand firmly with the right of the Palestinian people to establish their own independent state on their national soil. He also appeals to all

parties to give resolute support to the right of our brothers in Syria and Lebanon to regain their occupied territories, asserting that this alone can be the basis that will ensure security and the reinforcement of good-neighbourly relations, so that prosperity and development may be within the reach of all peoples of the region. In this manner he constantly renews the Sultanate's belief in a peace based on justice "which will preserve, rather than be divested of, its rights". He also emphasizes that the only true peace will be one that is backed by a force that will protect and preserve and nurture it, a deterrent power that will guarantee balance. The 'peace of the weak' is in fact no more than a surrender; a peace that is doomed to failure, no matter the bright colours in which it is dressed. His Majesty says in this context that the peace in which the Sultanate of Oman believes is not the peace of the weak, who are incapable of responding to aggression, of preserving the integrity of the State and its independence and sovereignty, but a peace of the strong, "who will give the matter due consideration as God directs." This understanding demands that it include development of the armed forces and the security services, which must be provided with all means of attaining the force necessary to enable them to perform their role in protecting the State's territorial integrity and ensuring security and peace for its citizens and residents. This understanding of the essential components of a just

peace backed by power is not an approach that Oman limits to its own borders, but one which it sees as equally viable at regional, Arab and international levels.

The call for justice for the oppressed is in fact a call for justice and peace. His Majesty constantly renews the Sultanate's commitment to maintaining bonds of friendship with all nations and peoples on a basis of mutual respect, mutual non-interference in internal affairs and the observance of regional and international conventions and treaties and the recognised norms of international law. These are the components which he sees as crucial in the promotion of peace and security among States and peoples. He urges all people to commit to the fight against injustice and tyranny, to confront policies of ethnic cleansing and the trampling of human dignity, to confront all occupation of the lands of others and the denial of their legitimate rights, and to push for a more equitable balance of justice for the oppressed and the consolidation of security, peace and tranquillity in the world at large.

A seventh core principle of Oman's foreign policy, in addition to its effective participation in meetings of the Cooperation Council of Arab Gulf states and its endeavours to achieve by way of Gulf integration a positive response to the aspirations of the people of the GCC countries, is its resolve to pursue broader and deeper relations, both bilaterally and

as part of collective initiatives, with the Arab world. Oman works in close partnership with the Arab League and backs its endeavour to develop and restructure so as better to play the role for which it was founded. This role is not limited to politics, but aspires to the achievement of greater Arab economic integration and cooperation in other areas. Once again we see the Sultanate expressing its genuine concern as to the importance of and need to work sincerely towards convergence, towards achieving the best possible environment for relations between brothers and neighbours, keeping them strong, open and capable of overcoming all differences or disputes through dialogue and ongoing consultation.

At international level, the policies and positions taken by the Sultanate of Oman are fortunate to enjoy solid respect and acknowledgement both at bilateral level and within regional and international organisations. Typical of such organisations working to strengthen a spirit of cooperation and shared interests is the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORARC), of which Oman was a founding member in 1997. The purpose of IORARC is to foster common interests and to contribute to various endeavours aimed at achieving and consolidating peace, security and stability for the Gulf and Arab areas, as well as regional and international states, through participation in conferences - Gulf, Arab, Islamic and other - and supporting the activities



and efforts of the United Nations and its specialist organizations to achieve greater cooperation and understanding between the nations and peoples of the world. This eighth spoke of its foreign policy and reflects the constant that runs through all of Oman's interactions with the outside world, and that is the endeavour to make the world a better place for this and future generations

Finally, given all of the above, and given the seriousness of the modern phenomenon of terrorism, there was only one response which might ever be expected of Oman, and the Sultanate has made clear from the outset its condemnation of this phenomenon, in all its forms and manifestations and by whomsoever exercised. Sultan Qaboos has called terrorism "an attack on the peace aspired to and sought after by the human race and the stability and security which we seek to consolidate and entrench by working with other nations." The Sultanate condemns and denounces terrorism, insists that it must be challenged and its causes addressed. This clear vision guides all its efforts in this area, whether these be expressed through joint collaboration with others in the campaign against terrorism regionally and internationally, or through an internally driven resolve to promote a more correct image of Arab and Islamic culture to the other peoples of the world. This latter determination is demonstrated in its policy of supporting scientific and academic endeavour in a number of Western universities by way of pro-

grammes for the study of Arabic and Islamic culture that project an objective, more rounded understanding of it, while reaching out to extend this understanding further to universities and centres of academic research. In this context it has established professorial chairs bearing the name of Sultan Qaboos bin Said in some of the world's leading universities. Meanwhile the Sultan has approved a grant to the Islamic Cultural Centre in the Republic of Mauritius that will assist the Centre in carrying out valuable work in the service of Islam and Muslims, and another to the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - ISESCO - to complete the construction of its permanent headquarters in Rabat. Closer to home, the Sultan has backed numerous cultural and scientific projects. Among these may be counted the Unesco-led Silk Road project, for which His Majesty has placed the Royal Yacht, the *Fulk As Salama*, at the disposal of the scholars engaged in this project for the duration of their study, and the Sultan Qaboos Encyclopaedia of Arab Names. The common denominator underlying all of these principles, perspectives and approaches is a quality that is at the heart of the belief system of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. It is represented in his passionate belief in the importance of cultural interaction as a means to achieving harmony, convergence and mutual understanding, bringing the prospect of peace, stability and development to the service of humanity.

ACADEMIC CHAIRS IN HIS MAJESTY'S NAME

No.	Chair	Country/University	Aims
1.	The Sultan Qaboos bin Said Chair in Arabic and Islamic Literature 1980	United States of America Georgetown University	To carry out research into classical Arabic poetry and prose, the Holy Qur'an, modern Arabic poetry and prose and Arab-American literature.
2	The Sultan Qaboos Professorship of Arabic 1993	United States of America (Washington) Georgetown University	- To develop Arabic and Islamic studies at the University. - To promote closer relations and mutual understanding between Arab and Western cultures.
3	The HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said Chair in Desert Agriculture 1994	Kingdom of Bahrain (Manama) Arabian Gulf University College of Higher Studies	- To support the University in achieving its goals and future programmes in desert agriculture research. - To provide opportunities for researchers and post-graduate students to carry out scientific research in the desert agriculture field and provide expertise, consultation and contractual studies in the use of modern technology in agriculture.
4	The Sultanate of Oman Chair 1997	Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan University of Al El Bait - Omani Studies Unit	- To promote heritage, historical and literary studies related to the Sultanate. To organise and hold academic forums. - To issue books, academic papers and other publications. - To announce a prize called the Omani Book Prize.
5	The Sultan of Oman Chair in Arabic and Islamic Studies 2003	Australia - Melbourne University	To present modern, effective and constructive Arab and Islamic views to the world.
6	The Sultan of Oman Professorship of International Relations 2003	United States of America Harvard University - John F. Kennedy School of Government	To highlight the role of His Majesty the Sultan's leadership in promoting regional and international stability, security and peace.

No.	Chair	Country/University	Aims
7	The Sultan Qaboos Chair in Information Technology 2004	Islamic Republic of Pakistan NED University of Engineering and Technology Lahore	- To encourage technological research and improve the standards of specialist educational disciplines in the information technology field. - To support the University's departments with modern electronic and advanced telecommunications equipment and link them with international academic institutions with the aim of exchanging knowledge and expertise.
8	The Sultan of Oman Fellowship in Literature and Islamic and Social Sciences 2004	United Kingdom Oxford University - Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies	- To support education, dialogue and friendship between the peoples of the world and foster an understanding of Islamic culture, civilization, history, societies and contemporary life and historic links with other nations around the world. - To encourage and support higher studies grants in the fields of literature, the humanities and social sciences. - To pursue academic co-operation between the Sultanate of Oman, the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and international academic circles.
9	The HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said Chair in Modern Arabic 2005	United Kingdom - Cambridge University Oriental Studies Faculty	- To make a free and independent contribution to the development of the Arabic language and reinforce the historical and cultural relationship between non-Arabic-speaking peoples and the Sultanate. - To promote co-operation between Britain's Cambridge University and higher education institutions in the Sultanate.
10	The Sultan Qaboos bin Said Professorship of Water Management 2005	Kingdom of the Netherlands - University of Utrecht Roosevelt Academy	The Dutch government decided to establish the chair in recognition of His Majesty's efforts and contributions to the cause of peace and international co-operation and as a reflection of the good relations between the Sultanate and the Netherlands.

No.	Chair	Country/University	Aims
11	The Sultan Qaboos Chair in Information Technology 2005	Islamic Republic of Pakistan NED University of Engineering and Technology Karachi	- To encourage technological research and improve the standards of specialist educational disciplines in the information technology field. - To support the University's departments with modern electronic and advanced telecommunications equipment and link them with international academic institutions with the aim of exchanging knowledge and expertise
12	The Sultan Qaboos Chair in Arabic Language Studies 2007	China Beijing University	- To teach Arabic language and literature to Chinese students. - To help set up a library in Beijing University's Arabic Language Department in order to raise awareness of Arabic language and literature in China. - To encourage research in Arabic language, literature and culture, with particular focus on Oman. - To encourage cultural exchanges between universities in the Sultanate and China in the Arabic language studies fields.
13	The Sultan of Oman Professorship of Oriental Studies 2008	Kingdom of the Netherlands -Leiden University	- To teach and carry out research in oriental studies in the fields of history, culture, civilization and contemporary life. - To encourage post-graduate studies, provide study grants in oriental studies and promote continued academic co-operation between the Sultanate of Oman and Leiden University.
14	The Sultan Qaboos Chair in Middle Eastern Studies 2010	Tokyo University Japan	- To publicise the Sultanate of Oman and its civilization, history and culture. - To focus on Middle Eastern studies as part of the Sultanate's mission to promote a better understanding of Arab and Islamic contributions to civilization in former times. - To foster cultural relations between the Sultanate and Japan and promote academic interaction between Tokyo University and higher education institutions in the Sultanate.





DEFENCE AND SECURITY

A PIVOTAL ELEMENT IN ENSURING OMAN'S STABILITY



OMAN'S PEACE PHILOSOPHY

Over the years, a strong security and defence system has been the mainstay of Oman's existence and an effective contributor not only to its national unity, but also to the maintenance of law and order and social harmony. That is the main reason why His Majesty the Sultan has always attached great importance to the members of the armed forces, the police and the security services, whose role he hails on every occasion.

These institutions have played an important role in Oman throughout its history and they continue to do so today. They did not attain their present state of readiness and efficiency in a vacuum. Before the Omani state reached the level of progress and development that can be seen in the country today, it was the speedy build-up of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) in the early 1970s that enabled it – in record time – to confront the first and by far the most serious of the challenges facing it. This came to a head on 11th December 1975 when the SAF overcame the most dangerous threat to the Omani people within their own borders – a threat which threatened to destroy their future. Fighting a battle on behalf of development, growth and progress – at a decisive historical moment for national unity and social harmony – the armed forces had the honour of defending their land. Indeed, it could be said that their

mission helped protect the region as a whole, particularly when one considers the international situation at that time when the different power blocs were struggling for supremacy in a world of multiple alliances.

Despite its significance, this was not the final chapter in the story of the development of the "deterrent force" – that is to say, of the SAF and its different arms and formations. Instead, it marked the birth of a process which embodied the concept that "Peace which does not rely on a force to protect it is nothing more than an illusion." This has been the view of His Majesty the Sultan ever since he assumed the reins of power on 23rd July 1970. He has frequently made this point in his speeches from that day to this, along with the observation that economic and social development can never take place unless there is a protective fence to uphold the nation's security and stability for the

sake of its citizens.

The continued development and modernisation of the armed forces ensures that they remain able to protect the country's achievements and safeguard its gains, while bolstering people's hopes for further sustainable development in future.

The main focus of the modernisation of the armed forces and the police has been on their human component, since it is human beings who ensure security rather than military equipment, however modern the latter may be.

Unless the "human component" is combat-ready and believes in its mission, the most modern weaponry becomes no more than bits of rusty iron, however much money may be spent procuring it. Weapons are completely useless without trained, proficient men capable of using them properly and experienced in manoeuvres and mobilisation exercises.

The modernisation and upgrading of the armed forces also adopted the principle of "rationalising consumption" and "avoiding luxury items" when buying weapons. It was the policy to opt for equipment that was "actually necessary," able to ensure combat readiness and effective as a deterrent, while at the same





time encouraging self-reliance – in the form of technical services and well-equipped workshops that could maintain and upgrade the weapons, aircraft and other equipment wherever possible.

The Sultanate was able to achieve this balance. Its military establishment was – and still is – both aware and capable of attaining its strategic goal as the “incubator” of development and prosperity and the guarantor of future success. Indeed, as a pivotal element in the strategic thinking of His Majesty the Sultan, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, it is one of the nation’s most vital sectors.

In simple words that carry a deep meaning, His Majesty summarised Oman’s security and defence philosophy like this: “What we believe in is not the peace of the weak, who cannot face up to aggression or maintain the existence, independence and sovereignty of the state, but the peace of the strong who are prepared and well equipped, as God has ordained. Inspired by this concept, we are developing our heroic armed forces and all the security services, and we are supplying them with the means to fulfil their role of protecting the state and its territorial integrity, and ensuring security and stability for its citizens and residents.”

The process of developing the SAF began forty years ago, almost from scratch and in the face of many challenges. However, thanks to the importance attached to them by His Majesty,

the armed forces have made steady and impressive progress over the years and today they are the embodiment of combat proficiency and dedication to the defence of the nation.

The SAF is much more than merely the modern incarnation of Oman’s armed forces. It is also an integral part of the country’s centuries-old military history and it has maintained its distinctive character over the ages. Today, thanks to its advanced technological and engineering capabilities, its duties and responsibilities include contributing to the country’s development plans, particularly in the mountainous and remote areas where it is able to cope with unusual climatic or geographical conditions.

The security services are the other wing of the country’s defence and security system. In a reference to their role, His Majesty the Sultan notes: “...an individual’s talents cannot blossom unless he and his family feel secure, nor can his creative, intellectual, scientific, literary and artistic potential flourish. Therefore, it is one of the prime duties of the state at all times to guarantee this security and stability.”

That, in essence, is what a sense of security and stability really means. It is a vital element of any meaningful discussion about development, progress and prosperity and it must always be the basis of any aspirations for a better future, since a lack of it can only lead to chaos and the dissipation of all hopes, threatening

Members of the Armed Forces showing their loyalty to the Sultan in defending the country.



any achievements that may have been gained. the workplace.

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) is the shining face of Oman's modern Renaissance and offers a fine example of the efficiency and competence shown by Omani nationals in the different areas of police work. It employs large numbers of young Omani men with university and post-graduate qualifications, as well as a number of Omani girls who have proved their ability to excel in

THE SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES (SAF)

Faith in GodLoyalty to the Sultan.....Defence of the nation

The Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) are a clear example of the success of Oman's Renaissance and have many achievements to their credit, thanks to the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The SAF's



The Armed Forces place a lot of emphasis on training at all levels. All three Services hold annual exercises with AGCC and other friendly countries.

development is the result of meticulous planning and a broad vision, reinforced by the hi-tech military capabilities of the world of today.

While His Majesty took steps to ensure that the armed forces were provided with modern weapons that would enable them to enjoy a high level of combat capability, trained manpower remained the top priority. Inspired by the slogan "Faith in God, loyalty to the Sultan, defence of the nation", the SAF has been restruc-

tured along modern lines and - like the other government departments and institutions - in accordance with the national strategy of promoting growth and prosperity for the nation and its citizens.

MODERN WEAPONRY AND EFFICIENT PERSONNEL

The Sultanate launched a series of plans to supply the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) with advanced weapons and equipment including tanks,



84/85



armoured personnel carriers, missile and artillery systems, armoured cars, fighter and transport aircraft, helicopters, landing craft, ships and advanced patrol boats. Today the support arms are constantly being upgraded and improved to enable them to fulfil their role with maximum effectiveness; at the same time, the manpower training programmes reflect the high standards of Oman's soldiery and their ability to handle modern technology in a professional and accomplished manner. Mo-

bilisation exercises and manoeuvres are held at various different levels and stages of joint operations management. The SAF carries out land, air and sea exercises, and its men have proved their competence and proficiency in joint exercises with the armed forces of the Arab Gulf Co-operation Council (AGCC) states and other friendly countries.

The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) has adopted a training plan tailored to suit the technology used in its



weaponry and the demands of modern joint operations. Its integrated, high-performance units and formations have been extensively upgraded and use a range of firepower control, tactical artillery and air defence weapons as well as other equipment to provide support in the theatre of operations. Its arsenal also includes main battle tanks, self-propelled artil-



The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) is equipped with a range of modern weapons and systems and its capability has been reinforced with advanced fighter, interceptor and transport aircraft, helicopters, anti-aircraft batteries, modern radar and training aircraft. Recent agreements signed by RAFO are designed to cope with the demands and challenges that lie ahead and improve the country's defence capability by incorporating the latest military technology in its defence and weapons systems. Its bases contain effective, advanced equipment capable of operating in all conditions. It has multi-purpose F-16 fighters, as well as Hawk and Jaguar aircraft, while the Airbus A320-300 transport aircraft has replaced the BAC-111 planes. The introduction of the Super Lynx 300 helicopter is a major step forward in providing back-up for the Royal Navy of Oman in protecting the Omani coastline, while the NH90 helicopter is equipped to carry out a combat role as well as search and rescue missions and the provision of transport and support services for people living in the mountain areas. RAFO also provides air support for the Sultan's Armed Forces on their mobilisation exercises and – to enhance the skills of its personnel – takes part in exercises with the air forces of the AGCC states and other friendly countries.

The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) is of particular importance owing to its links with Oman's seafaring past and because of the country's strate-

lery, armed reconnaissance and transport vehicles, supply equipment, rocket launchers and other personal weapons backed by well qualified manpower. Other elements include automated supply systems, human resources management and internet services.

The Firqat forces have also undergone significant upgrading in terms of their organisation, training, installations, services, utilities and communications.

The officers and men of the Royal Air Force of Oman have reached a high standard in handling the Jaguar, F-16s and Hawk aircraft as well as the Rapier missile system.







gie location overlooking one of the world's most vital shipping routes – the Strait of Hormuz. As the force responsible for defending the Sultanate's maritime, strategic, security and economic interests, its well equipped fleet includes gunboats, fast missile boats, and support, training, cargo and hydrographical survey vessels, which can be deployed to support the patrol vessels in their mission to protect Oman's shores and territorial waters, monitor the passage of ships and oil tankers through the Strait of Hormuz, provide transport for units of the Sultan's Armed Forces along the coast, support SAF defence operations and protect the Sultanate's fishing grounds.

Three ships with advanced technical and operational specifications are joining the Royal Navy of Oman under an agreement entitled "Project Khareef". The first two of these - RNOV *Al Shamikh* and *Al Rahmani* - have already been launched, while the third is due to enter service shortly.

The Said bin Sultan Naval Base with its world-class facilities is one of the Sultanate's leading naval establishments. Along with the country's other naval installations, it has been built to cater for the RNO's operational, training and service needs.

In a move towards the creation of the Digital Oman Society, the Naval Training Centre at the Said bin Sultan Naval Base has been accredited by the AGCC Computer HQ as an International Computer Driving Licence

(ICDL) examination centre.

The RNO Medical Unit has installed a decompression unit to treat the effects of diving accidents as well as certain chronic diseases.

The Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) is an important element of Oman's modern military set-up and has achieved a high level of proficiency and combat capability. In addition



to its educational, training and administrative units, it also has infantry and support units equipped with advanced systems and facilities. It trains its personnel on the full range of its systems and equipment, while its Technical College supplies it – as well as other departments of the state - with personnel trained and qualified to international standards. The RGO Technical College is at the cutting edge of technological

The Royal Navy of Oman's annual naval exercises are codenamed Asad Al Bahr/Lion of the Sea after a famed Omani sailor.



education internationally, not just in the Sultanate, and it is accredited to grant the same certificates as those awarded by colleges of technology in the United Kingdom.

In addition to the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra, whose musicians are highly trained and talented young Omanis, the RGO also has a number of military bands that per-

form on national occasions and at other events at home and abroad. In addition to their security duties, the Red Helmets motor-cycle team perform in shows in which they demonstrate their skills, while the RGO free-fall parachute team takes part in national events and the RGO cavalry stage show-jumping displays and other performances on various occasions, including graduation ceremonies.

art facilities for performing surgical operations, conducting tests and laboratory analyses, and providing diagnoses and top-quality treatment for members of the SAF and their families. They also give medical back-up and carry out evacuation operations in the field, and offer emergency medical assistance to members of the public through their flying doctor service. With its advanced equipment, the Armed Forces Medical Services School is a modern training institution built to the most up-to-date specifications that supplies the SAF with qualified medical and technical personnel. The Armed Forces Hospital, which serves members of the armed forces and their families, now has new facilities and departments, including a digital X-ray system, an apparatus for dispersing kidney stones and an artery clinic. The medical centre at Bait al Falaj Fort is the latest of the medical centres to be installed on the bases and in the units and formations. The existing centres and military hospitals have been modernised.



The Royal Guard of Oman consists of some of the fittest and best-trained men in the armed forces.

The Armed Forces Medical Services are equipped with state-of-the-

CULTURAL AND WELFARE ACTIVITIES

Cultural, academic, scientific and religious activities are given a high priority by the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO). They play an important part in inculcating their men with knowledge and faith – with an understanding of their history and religion and an awareness of what is happening



90/91



in the world of today. Military Social Services at SAF HQ also help promote a sense of psychological and social stability in the officers and men so that they can devote all their time to carrying out the sacred duties that are entrusted to them.

Thousands of books on a wide range of subjects can be found in the central libraries, as well as in the libraries and social clubs in the HQs, units, formations and bases. All these libraries are now linked by the De-

fence Ministry's internal electronic network – an additional product of modern technology which provides its users with additional support in finding the information they are looking for. There is also a programme of arts and culture activities, including lectures, quizzes and competitions, which enable young members of the armed forces to develop their talents.

The mosque is an important means for instilling culture and religious values and great importance is



The RNOV Shabab Oman made her 11th international voyage over the summer of 2010. Her mission is to carry Oman's message of peace, and to strengthen the bonds of friendship between people around the world.

attached to it by His Majesty the Sultan. It was on His Majesty's instructions that the Mu'askar al Murtafa'a Mosque was built. In addition to its religious and cultural facilities, this mosque is a fine building in its own right and incorporates numerous different Islamic architectural styles. There are a large number of other mosques on the bases and in the units and camps.

The sailing ship RNOV *Shabab Oman* builds and nurtures cultural

contacts with peoples around the world, raising Oman's profile on the international stage, while highlighting its history and contribution to human civilization during its training visits to ports around the world. It has been awarded a number of international prizes, the latest being the International Friendship Trophy, which it won for the fifth time in the Netherlands, then for the sixth time in Portugal. It has also won the International Friendship Cup in the Tall Ships Race in Greece.



92/93

Military Social Services provide social welfare for officers and other ranks. They arrange housing loans, supervise the construction of houses for forces personnel and operate services for SAF veterans such as care and rehabilitation for the disabled to enable them to become reintegrated into the community. The situation of these disabled veterans is constantly monitored to ensure that their needs are met, and a programme of events is organised for them which includes charity races, solidarity days and annual outings during which they have the opportunity to see something of their country's heritage as well as regions other than their own.

The SAF Museum at Bait al Falaj Fort chronicles the main events of Oman's military history, its contributions to human civilization over the ages and examples of weapons past and present. It is highly popular with visitors to the Sultanate and its explanatory captions are displayed in several languages. It also has an internet website.

The state-of-the-art Information Technology sector serves all the SAF's formations and units and is run by a department staffed by qualified Omani nationals. The launch of a number of e-projects – including the Ministry of Defence's interactive guide, a link connecting the SAF's libraries, and the salaries, pensions and cash register system - has helped to boost productivity and ensure that the armed forces keep pace with technical and technological advances. The recently

introduced Nibras data management system - another Defence Ministry/SAF initiative aimed at expanding the use of e-services in the Sultanate – is an interactive system designed to simplify the transfer and exchange of data between interlinked units and uses a single finance and purchase database as well as a set of standard operating procedures. It will help reduce the use



of paper and – by providing prompt, transparent and comprehensive access to the relevant information – it will enable decisions to be taken with the minimum of delay.

MUSIC AND MORALE

The Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) have military bands which perform on national occasions and at international events. They include the Royal

(Top) The Sultan's Armed Forces Museum at Bait al Falaj chronicles Oman's military history through the ages.

(Below) Military Social Services provide care and rehabilitation for the disabled.



The bands of the SAF and RGO are accomplished musicians who regularly take part in national and international events and competitions.

Army of Oman (RAO) Band, which won several drum and pipe contests at the North Berwick Highland Games in Scotland and at the international infantry, drum major and pipe competition in the United Kingdom. The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) Band has also received acclaim at international festivals and competitions, with performances of traditional songs and dances as well as military music. A RAFO Ladies Band was also formed at the beginning of 2009.

The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) Band has helped keep Oman's seafaring heritage alive by performing on the deck of the RNOV *Shabab Oman*. The Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) Band has also won plaudits for its performances.

The Morale Guidance Department has a major role to play in maintaining morale and highlighting the achievements of the armed forces and their members and their contributions to the service of their



94/95

nation. As well as organising press, radio and TV coverage of military, social, cultural and sporting events, it also produces a range of educational and cultural publications for SAF officers and other ranks. It presents radio and TV programmes and reports in collaboration with the Ministry of Information, commemorates religious occasions, organises lectures, arranges visits to veterans, the sick and bereaved families of former SAF personnel, and runs the annual military Hajj mission to the Holy Places.

DEALING WITH DISASTERS

The superhuman efforts displayed by the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) in dealing with the exceptional weather conditions that affected the Sultanate in June 2010 (and before that in June 2007) reflect their readiness to respond to natural disasters. An operations centre was set up and was kept open round the clock to monitor the situation on the ground, provide assistance to the victims and offer engineering support by putting all available equipment at the service of the affected areas. The SAF reclaimed flood-damaged land, resurfaced roads, organised clean-up campaigns, provided shelter, distributed supplies, food, water and relief to victims in coastal areas who had been cut off from the rest of the country by wadi flows and floods, ferried electrical and telecommunications equipment to the affected areas and arranged transport services. SAF Medical Services opened

a military field hospital to provide treatment and first aid to the victims, ambulances were made available to transport the sick and injured, and the flying doctor service was mobilised to bring health care to the sick and injured in areas inaccessible to land vehicles.



FACILITIES AND TRAINING

The Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) educational and training institutions cover a range of military, scientific, academic, technical and technological disciplines. Among their educational and training colleges, institutes, schools and specialist training centres is the Command and Staff College, which produces staff officers trained and qualified to assume leadership positions in the army units and formations and on the air force and naval bases. Members of

(Top) The Sultan's Armed Forces show their readiness to respond to natural disasters.

(Below) The SAF's Medical Services provide support for general emergency services through their flying doctor service.



The Ministry of Defence Engineering services are among the SAF's main support facilities - they work closely with other government departments in supporting the country's development efforts.

the armed forces are also offered the opportunity to complete their higher studies in various military, administrative and technical subjects that are relevant to the SAF's needs, either in the Sultanate or at universities and colleges abroad.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE NATION'S DEVELOPMENT

Alongside their numerous other roles, the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) work closely with other gov-

ernment departments in supporting the country's development efforts. They train civilians in navigation, telecommunications and administration, run training programmes for young people and teach them the basics of military life to encourage them to assume the responsibility of serving their nation. They take on projects such as road building in areas that are hard to reach, provide health services for the public in rugged and mountainous regions in co-operation with



other competent authorities, take part in search and rescue operations in cases of natural disasters, provide support and rescue services for fishermen and ships in distress, help protect the environment and expand the country's green areas by providing treated water from the military camps in the Governorate of Muscat, and help prevent illegal immigration.

Retired members of the armed forces who have returned to civilian life frequently join the private sector or set up their own enterprises, contributing the skills and experience they have acquired during their years of military service. In recognition of their role, 7th December each year has been designated Veterans' Day.

ENGINEERING SERVICES

The Ministry of Defence's Engineering Services - one of the main support arms of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) - provide technical and engineering support for military exercises, as well as essential services such as water, electricity and infrastructure facilities at the military camps, bases and installations. They also plan and oversee construction projects, maintain services and utilities, and plan and build roads within the military areas. Despite all these responsibilities, they also play an important role in the country's development, building roads in various parts of the country and supplying treated water for landscaping projects. They have also acquired some easily transportable, 400 cubic-

metre-capacity rubber fold-up tanks which are taken into the field and then filled with water. Once emptied they can be folded up and moved on. A specialist Engineering Services team searches and locates hidden leaks in the water supply systems.

NATIONAL SURVEY AUTHORITY

The National Survey Authority (NSA) plays a pivotal role in providing geospatial support for the Sultan's Armed Forces, the other security services, ministries, government departments and authorities and the private sector.

The Authority has been entrusted with responsibility for all survey activities in the Sultanate and for assembling and maintaining the Sultanate's Geographic archives. It is also charged with establishing and enforcing standards for topographic surveys and mapping and with managing and maintaining the national archive of geographic materials. Other responsibilities involve revising and providing accurate maps, aerial charts and other geographic information for government ministries and for the Sultan's Armed and Security Forces to enable them to plan, train and protect Omani territory.

As part of its remit, the Authority has established a Topographic Sciences Institute to provide technical training in the field of Surveying and Mapping Sciences for Military and Civilian Personnel in collaboration with a recognised international body.



Royal Oman Police personnel are trained at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences in Nizwa.

THE ROYAL OMAN POLICE (ROP)

Disciplined performance and respect for the sovereignty of the Law and human rights

"YES TO REDUCING TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS"

The Directorate-General of Traffic has been expanded significantly. More personnel have been recruited and their performance has been improved, while new buildings and

facilities have been constructed and supplied with modern equipment to cope with the growing volume of traffic on the country's roads.

The driving test service has been expanded and drivers now take the test at the Directorate-General of Traffic in Seeb as well as the existing centre at al Qurm. Vehicle testing and registration may now be completed under one roof, along with all other traffic-related procedures; previously testing and registration had



98/99

to be done at two separate locations. Insurance companies are now linked to the ROP by computer so that traffic violations can be identified when vehicles are insured; the link includes details of minor accidents which are dealt with by the insurance companies. Fourteen automatic inspection stations have been set up across the country and will soon inspect all vehicles over five years old. A study has been carried out with a view to increasing the number of fixed and mobile speed cameras in the country in order to reduce the number of deaths and accidents caused by speeding. Their effectiveness has been proved by a fall in the accident rate on the roads where they are installed.

Booklets have been produced for road users to raise their awareness of traffic safety issues. Over half a million leaflets are produced annually and distributed to all sections of the community; the ROP also runs road safety campaigns in the media, organises exhibitions and holds lectures all over the country. The Traffic Safety Institute spreads the traffic safety message and holds training courses for road users and members of the police force. The first batch of driving instructors has already graduated and the Institute has approved nine course syllabi on traffic safety which are currently being taught to government and private sector drivers, as well as taxi drivers, drivers of heavy vehicles and driving instructors. The Institute also hosts interna-

tional conferences, brings in experts to improve the quality of its courses and workshops and studies the experiences of other countries with long experience in the field of traffic safety.

The Traffic School organises educational programmes for children throughout the year to teach them



the rules of the road and the importance of road safety. At the School, which is a sort of miniature town with streets, intersections, roundabouts and buildings, the children are taught the road signs and how to behave on the road.

In recognition of the need for all members of the community to play their part in helping to reduce the number of road accidents in view of the economic losses and human tragedies they cause, a symposium was

Great efforts are being made to reduce the incidence of road traffic accidents. A traffic safety symposium was held by the ROP, with input from regional and international organizations, in Muscat in May 2010.



held on traffic safety on the instructions of His Majesty the Sultan, the Supreme Commander of the ROP, from 15th to 19th May 2010 under the slogan "Yes to reducing traffic accidents". The goal of the symposium was to study materials and traffic awareness programmes and assess the effectiveness of the way in which

and discussed possible future steps to reduce accidents and produce a national road safety strategy.

Meeting the sheikhs and dignitaries of the *wilayats* of the Batinah region and the Governorate of Musandam at the Royal Camp at Seeh Al Makarim in the *wilayat* of Sohar during his annual tour, His Majesty the Sultan hailed the ROP's efforts to reduce the road accident rate but warned that the problem could get worse. He stressed the need for further steps to improve traffic safety awareness in the community and called for the subject to become a major topic for discussion in social and family gatherings throughout the land. Road accidents were the price societies had to pay for progress and development, His Majesty said.

IRIS RECOGNITION

In response to the rapid development taking place in the Sultanate, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) is expanding and improving its services, including the use of modern technology. A new fingerprinting building for expatriate residents beside the Directorate-General of Passports and Residence in Seeb has several windows so that a number of people can be processed at the same time. The building can accommodate up to 200 people and process over 600 applications a day.

The Sultanate has also begun using iris recognition at several ROP locations including the Directorate-General of Inquiries and Criminal



(Top) The Directorate-General of Passports and Residence in Muscat can accommodate up to 200 people and process over 600 applications a day.

(Below) Women officers work alongside men in the traffic patrol division.

they are communicated to the public. In addition to a study on the effectiveness of training in improving road users' skills and their ability to avoid accidents, the symposium agenda also included an examination of the role of the private sector, non-government associations and the community in general in helping to promote a proper road safety culture. It also reviewed the government's efforts to establish better standards of safety on the roads



100/101



Investigations and the Directorate-General of Passports and Residence. In future the system, which will enable deportees and convicted people to be identified when they try to re-enter the Sultanate, will be extended to Muscat International Airport and several other points. Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are also considering an iris recognition link between the two countries to speed up the entry and exit procedures for overland transit travellers, visitors

and tourists.

It is hoped that this system will help prevent illegal immigration and black market labour. It will operate in all the country's regions and a department will be set up at the ROP's Directorate-General of Operations to combat illegal immigration. The new department, called the Directorate for the Prevention of Illegal Immigration, will be staffed by a team that will follow up police efforts to prevent illegal immigration and black

(Top) The ROP's Ambulance Service has been upgraded to provide prompt medical care for victims of traffic accidents.

(Below) Children are made aware of road safety through campaigns and the issuance of leaflets.



The Police Coastguard Command has been equipped with patrol craft with rescue facilities, helicopter landing pads, fast patrol boats and first aid units.

market labour and establish a system for working directly with the illegals' home countries through those countries' liaison offices in the Sultanate. The illegal immigrants will then be repatriated with the minimum of delay. Visa issuing procedures have been reviewed and amended, and the Inspector-General of Police and Customs has issued a decision setting out the steps required for issuing visas and residence permits for foreigners. The new measures offer

wider opportunities for them to enter the Sultanate legally and legitimately, while enabling [legal immigrant] labour to be entered on the national databases.

In dealing with illegal immigration and black market labour, the ROP has adopted two mutually complementary lines of approach. Under the first, a direct dialogue has been established with members of the public and the relevant bodies and organisations with the aim of raising



102/103

awareness about the subject. Meetings and seminars held all over the country have resulted in mutual understanding between the authorities (those responsible for cracking down on illegal immigration and black market labour) and those sections of the community that benefit from the situation. The second approach, on the other hand, has focused directly on working with the other relevant authorities to catch as many illegal immigrants as possible who might land along the coast between the *wilayat* of Mutrah and Khatmat Milahah on the UAE border. At the same time, there are regular inspection campaigns – about twelve a year – to apprehend illegal expatriate workers. A field study has also been carried out to profile the typical illegal expatriate worker. In addition to all this, two high speed Haras 1 and three Mark 5 patrol boats have been purchased and equipped with the most up-to-date facilities; now fully operational and working alongside the force's existing Haras 1 and 2 patrol boats, they already have several successes to their credit.

CIVIL DEFENCE

Civil Defence – a cornerstone of the country's development – is responsible for protecting people, property and installations from fires and other disasters; the Directorate-General of Civil Defence is staffed with qualified nationals and boasts advanced technology and high quality equipment.

The Directorate-General of Civil Defence currently has 96 fire engines, rescue vehicles and hydraulic ladders, as well as a number of civil and operational vehicles, and it has signed an agreement for a further 97 fire engines and rescue vehicles. The first batch of twelve vehicles has already been delivered.



The new Directorate-General of Civil Defence building is now open and the service's fleet of aircraft includes a number of modern helicopters. The service has also received several vehicles of various sizes and uses equipped with state-of-the-art technology. Training programmes for Civil Defence personnel include specialist courses, intensive daily training sessions and joint exercises with other departments and bodies

The Civil Defence service plays a vital role in protecting people and property from fires and other disasters.



– both government and non-government – to ensure that they are in a constant state of readiness. This ensures that they are always prepared to deal with incidents without delay and save lives and property.

The Fire Hazards Prevention Directorate, which comes under the

to enable fire-fighters to reach their target destinations – whether it is a fire or some other incident – within the recognized international response time of fifteen minutes.

E-SERVICES

The Royal Oman Police (ROP)'s



Directorate-General of Civil Defence, studies and monitors building plans and projects and inspects commercial and industrial establishments and public and private utilities to ensure that they comply with safety regulations. Its success in safeguarding the Sultanate's economic and industrial assets is reflected in the figures, which show a drop in incidents on these sites.

One aim of the current strategy is

goal is to introduce electronic systems for all its operations. In addition to constantly updating its information and service facilities, it is setting up a single set of databases to help improve the efficiency of its services to the public. In the first initiative of its kind in the Middle East, it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Information Technology Authority and a local bank to enable members of the pub-



104/105



lie to carry out electronic financial portfolio transactions using their ID cards.

Following the success of the automated link between Al Wajajah border post and the Hatta border post in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), there is now a similar link between the border post at Hafeet and the one at Mazyad in the UAE. These measures will help speed up cross-border procedures for citizens and residents of the two countries.

An electronic visa application form introduced as a first step towards a fully automated visa system is available on the ROP website in place of the handwritten form.

The ROP's civil registry system has been awarded a certificate of merit by the United Nations as one of the world's ten best service projects. The ROP also came top in the Information Technology Authority's Digital Oman Competition for elec-

The latest data systems technology is employed by the ROP in its operations.



tronic content and best government e-project. Twenty-six government bodies took part.

In a move to simplify and speed up passenger arrival and departure procedures, six electronic gates have been installed at Muscat International Airport as well as a new passenger hand luggage inspection sys-

tem at Qarn al Alam and Fahud. Muscat International Airport Security's new emergency room, which has been opened in the Directorate's building, is equipped with high capacity telephone lines and other facilities to enable it to respond to any emergency at the airport. Foreigners' residence permits are automatically cancelled at Muscat International Airport when their contract of employment finishes on their departure from the Sultanate.

THE AMBULANCE SERVICE

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) Ambulance Service provides prompt medical care for victims of traffic accidents and other mishaps and its fleet of modern ambulances are fitted with advanced medical equipment. Several batches of medical emergency technicians have graduated from their training courses and are now employed at the Ambulance Unit.

At present there are 23 first aid centres; eight are in the Governorate of Muscat, while the others are in the Governorate of Dhofar and the Batinah, Dakhiliyah and Sharqiyah regions, where they are located near accident black spots. During the Salalah Tourist Festival the Ambulance Unit patrols the section of road between Adam and Thumrait on the main Dhofar road. A new Ambulance Unit headquarters building currently under construction on the Airport Heights is nearing completion. First aid centres are also being built in al



tem and two radiation detectors to spot radiation leaks from the X-ray baggage inspection machines. An arriving and departing passenger identification system has also been installed at the Airport Security Directorate with the collaboration of Oman Aviation Services. The Directorate-General of Airport Security has taken over responsibility for security at Petroleum Development Oman (PDO)'s airports at Marmul,

(Top) Processing Civil Status cards and passports at Seeb.

(Below) A fleet of Augusta Westland helicopters provide support for the ROP.



106/107



Amerat, Bausher, Al Wattayah and Seeb in the Governorate of Muscat.

POLICE AVIATION

Following its expansion and the increase in its aircraft and personnel, the status of the police aviation service has now been upgraded from directorate to directorate-general. Its installations and equipment have also been modernised.

The Directorate-General of Police Aviation has signed an agreement to

purchase a new fleet of Agusta Westland 139 helicopters, four of which will be used on flying ambulance and search and rescue missions. A further two Agusta Westland 109 helicopters will provide support.

The Financial Intelligence Unit has been set up to investigate financial offences, particularly money-laundering and the financing of terrorism, and to provide general protection for the community from financial and economic crimes.

(Top) The ROP and SAF hospitals have the latest equipment.

(Below) The ROP's Mobile Hospital Unit can be deployed at a moment's notice to wherever a disaster has occurred.

THE GOVERNORATE OF MUSCAT

OMAN'S BEAUTIFUL CAPITAL



Muscat extends along the a central section of the Sultanate of Oman's coastal strip, where its white houses, minarets and historic buildings nestle together like a row of doves between the grey mountains on their eastern flank and the sea to the west. Green parks and gardens scattered among its old and new buildings give it the appearance of a beautiful painting hung within the mouth of the Omani shore as it rises southwards in an elegant curve from the Strait of Hormuz and the Musandam Peninsula to the Governorate of Muscat.

Muscat has been justly awarded all the poetic accolades that exist – cooling springs of fresh water...haven of the seafarers of old.... inspirer of songs of epic heroism.... When you travel through its wilayats, you feel that you are travelling through history. Everywhere you go the eyes of the local men, women and children captivate you with their beauty and joy and the message they communicate to you is one of love and hope.

It is hard to enter Muscat without sensing that you are passing through a gateway to the past and when you look down on the city from above you notice how its roads are laid out and interlinked like the network of blood vessels that supply the human body. One of these - the coast road - runs alongside Riyam Park, almost surrounding it like a bracelet on a wrist.

Muscat Gate, which stands like a sentry on guard duty at the entrance to the old city of Muscat, consists of two towers connected by a building beneath which two roads pass through a pair of arches. A museum in Muscat Gate connects the present with the past through a series of exhibits depicting various aspects of Oman's history, development and heritage.

The harmony between Muscat's

fine traditional and modern buildings, parks, gardens and roads mirrors the harmonious nature of the Omani personality and is a worthy reflection of the Omani citizen of today, who has built his capital with the sweat of his brow and, using his intelligence and imagination, has exploited every inch of space and every natural feature to give it its character.

An observer will soon realize that behind this transformation and development, this harmonisation between the traditional and the contemporary, there is a brain and a vision supported by collective human effort – in other words, an effective leader and an industrious people; indeed, every Renaissance that has ever taken place in history owes its success to an inspired, visionary leader who devotes himself to leading his people out of the darkness into the light, from ignorance to knowledge, and from the past to the present....and into the future.

CONSTRUCTION AND GROWTH – THE TEMPO OF DEVELOPMENT

In the Sultanate of Oman it is the Omani citizen who is the creator of his country's development, the goal of which must be "to make him happy and prepare him to give of his best for the sake of his country," as His Majesty the Sultan said on the country's fourth National Day.

Oman's achievements over the past forty years speak far louder than any words. The Blessed Renaissance has restored Muscat's true



108/109



character as – in the words of the old geographers and historians – “a safe haven and a resting place for ships and people.”

DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND PROSPERITY MUSCAT – REBIRTH AND GROWTH

Muscat lies in the north-east of the Sultanate overlooking the Sea of Oman. From the east it borders on the Eastern Hajar mountain range

and the Sharqiyyah region, to the west on the Batinah region and to the south on the Dakhiliyah region. It is the country's main political, economic and administrative centre, as well as a major economic player in the region and on the international stage. Its trading and tourism links with the outside world are mainly through Port Sultan Qaboos and Muscat International Airport.

The Governorate of Muscat's population accounts for around 27 per

(Top) Riyam Park, Fort Mirani and Fort Jalali at dusk.

(Below) Muscat Gate provides a welcome to Muscat, with its museum on the first floor depicting the history, heritage and development of the city.



(Top) An early-evening scene in Muscat.

Al Alam Palace in Muscat, rebuilt in 1971.

(Overleaf) Old alongside the new – redevelopment of Muscat, but retaining the 16th century forts of Mirani and Jalali at the water's edge in Muscat Bay.





110/111









The corniche of Mutrah sweeps round the rim of a natural harbour, with the fort at one end and the fish souq and port at the other.

cent of the Sultanate's overall population. Within its borders are the government ministries, authorities and departments, factories, banks, world-class hotels, tourist recreational facilities and specialist hospitals, as well as Sultan Qaboos University, colleges, institutes, schools, sports associations and clubs, youth complexes, culture and arts centres, a sophisticated communications network, a sewage system and numerous other amenities.

The Governorate of Muscat's six

wilayats – Muscat, Mutrah, Quriyyat, Al Amrat, Bawshar and Seeb – coexist in mutual harmony while retaining their own individual characters and diversity. In Mutrah a visitor will find four things that stand out in particular – its fort, its old souq, its harbour (i.e. Port Sultan Qaboos, the country's main port), and its sea-front. Mutrah is Muscat's twin in both its traditional and modern features. Its old covered souq, its roof ornamented with beautiful patterns,





(Top) Mutrah souq attracting for the tourist and local population alike.

(Below) The Mutrah Fort stands proudly at one end of the Mutrah corniche, and (Right) Port Sultan Qaboos expanded for increasing imports/exports, calls by cruise ships and a base for the ferry service.

(Overleaf) Aerial shot of the residential and commercial areas of Ghubrah, Al Ausab, Al Athaiba and Al Khawair.

takes you back on a journey in time as you wander through its tangle of alleyways and past the stalls of goods on display – gold, perfumes, spices, clothes, frankincense and curios.

As well as its souq, Mutrah is also a place of historical interest. The best known of its numerous forts and towers is Mutrah Fort, which overlooks the sea. Port Sultan Qaboos is a major commercial hub, while the seafront promenade offers you

the chance to enjoy one of the most beautiful drives in the *wilayat*.

From Bawshar with its golden sands, fresh water springs and date oases to the *wilayat* of Seeb with its lush gardens, lime orchards, palm groves, flyovers and broad highways, which sleeps and wakes to the sound of the waves; to the *wilayat* of Al Amrat and the Arabian tahr sanctuary in Wadi As Sareen, where not only tahr but gazelles, red foxes, wolves, hedgehogs, sandgrouse and









(Top) Animals are protected in a nature reserve near Qurayyat.

(Above) The Arabian Tahr (Hemitragus jayakari) has been a protected species since 1976 – here at Wadi As Sareen, near Al Amerat.

(Right) The education programme seeks to develop young pupils' reading, writing and arithmetic skills as well as their artistic talent.

partridges live their lives safe from the hunter's gun; and from there to the Majlis Al Jinn Cave with its mysteries and secrets, whose wide entrance tempts the adventurous to explore its interior, which, with an area of 58,000 square metres, a length of 310 metres and a width of 225 metres, is big enough to accommodate ten Jumbo jet aircraft; and from there to the sinkhole at Hawiyat Najm Park, all these places are evidence of the fact that this is a region of excep-

tional variety and beauty.

"WE WILL TEACH OUR CHILDREN, EVEN UNDER THE SHADE OF A TREE"

The tree to which His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said was referring at the beginning of his reign has become a luxuriant garden of knowledge and learning. The two schools which existed in Muscat and Mutrah before 1970 have become 143 schools with 91,322 students (boys and



girls), according to the figures for the 2009-2010 school year. Along with these schools, there are also higher education institutes, colleges and government and private universities offering courses in a wide range of disciplines.

The Sultanate's educational sectors have been upgraded and their programmes modernised to cope with the changing situations and challenges of today's world. Oman has made impressive progress in higher education and today's Omani students are able to opt for the subjects that suit their potential and preferences.

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) is at the forefront of Oman's educational institutions and during its short life it has gained an enviable reputation as a centre of learning.

The pledge to establish this university was made at the tenth National Day celebrations in 1980. The first student intake was in 1986 and the first batch graduated in 1990.

In 2006 SQU embarked on a new phase of its existence with the establishment of a cultural centre including an auditorium capable of accommodating 5,000 people, as well as an Omani studies centre with a 200-seat auditorium. The centre's remit is to collect and document all SQU's study papers and make them available for the benefit of researchers.

The centre has a library with around 600,000 book titles and suf-





(Above) The No.1 Conference hall at SQU used for lectures by all Colleges and by international speakers.

(Right) The Sultan Qaboos University complex with the newly-opened Cultural Centre in the foreground.

ficient space to receive up to 2,000 visitors. The building, which occupies five stories, also has classrooms and meeting rooms.

SQU's four main functions - teaching, research, community development and cooperation with other academic bodies at home and abroad - have been upgraded.

The university's nine colleges are: the Colleges of Arts and Social Sciences, Commerce and Economics, Education, Agricultural and Marine

Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, Health Sciences, Nursing and Law. Responsibility for the College of Law was transferred to SQU from the 2006-2007 academic year under Royal Decree No. 38/2006, issued on 24th April 2006.

In addition to SQU, there are also several institutes and colleges of higher education in Muscat, including private higher education institutions which operate in collaboration with the government.







(Top) Enjoying the sunset in Qurayyat harbour. Aerial views of Qurayyat, now a developed and prosperous town in Muscat Governorate.

(Overleaf) The route taken by the Jewel of Muscat on her voyage from Oman to Singapore over the 5 months, February to July 2010.



THE JEWEL OF MUSCAT (JAWHARAT MUSCAT) - FOLLOWING THE OLD SEA ROUTES

On 16th February 2010 the Jewel of Muscat (*Jawharat Muscat*) set sail for Singapore along the route followed by the seafarers of old, which depended upon the monsoon winds. Its voyage took it through the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Sea to its first stop, Cochin in India, then on to Sri Lanka and Malaysia, before it reached its final destination – Singapore – five months after it first set off. The ship was then presented to the people of Singapore as a gift from His Majesty the Sultan.

The Jewel of Muscat is a joint heritage and culture initiative between the governments of Oman and the Republic of Singapore, which involved building a 9th century replica sailing ship and sailing it from Oman to Singapore.

The Jewel of Muscat carried a cargo of 60,000 pieces of Chinese porcelain, gold artefacts, spices and other goods – known today as the Tang Treasure, which was found at the bottom of the Indian Ocean in 1998.

The ship's design is based on archaeological evidence from the Belitung Wreck which was found in Indonesian waters in 1998. The ship represents a major feat of maritime engineering. The hull, which was sewn together with coconut fibre, was built without nails and each timber had to fit perfectly. The wood was protected by a coating of goat fat mixed with lime, and the sails were square and made from palm leaves.

The crew used traditional 9th century navigation techniques during the voyage.



The route taken by the Jewel of Muscat to Singapore.



126/127









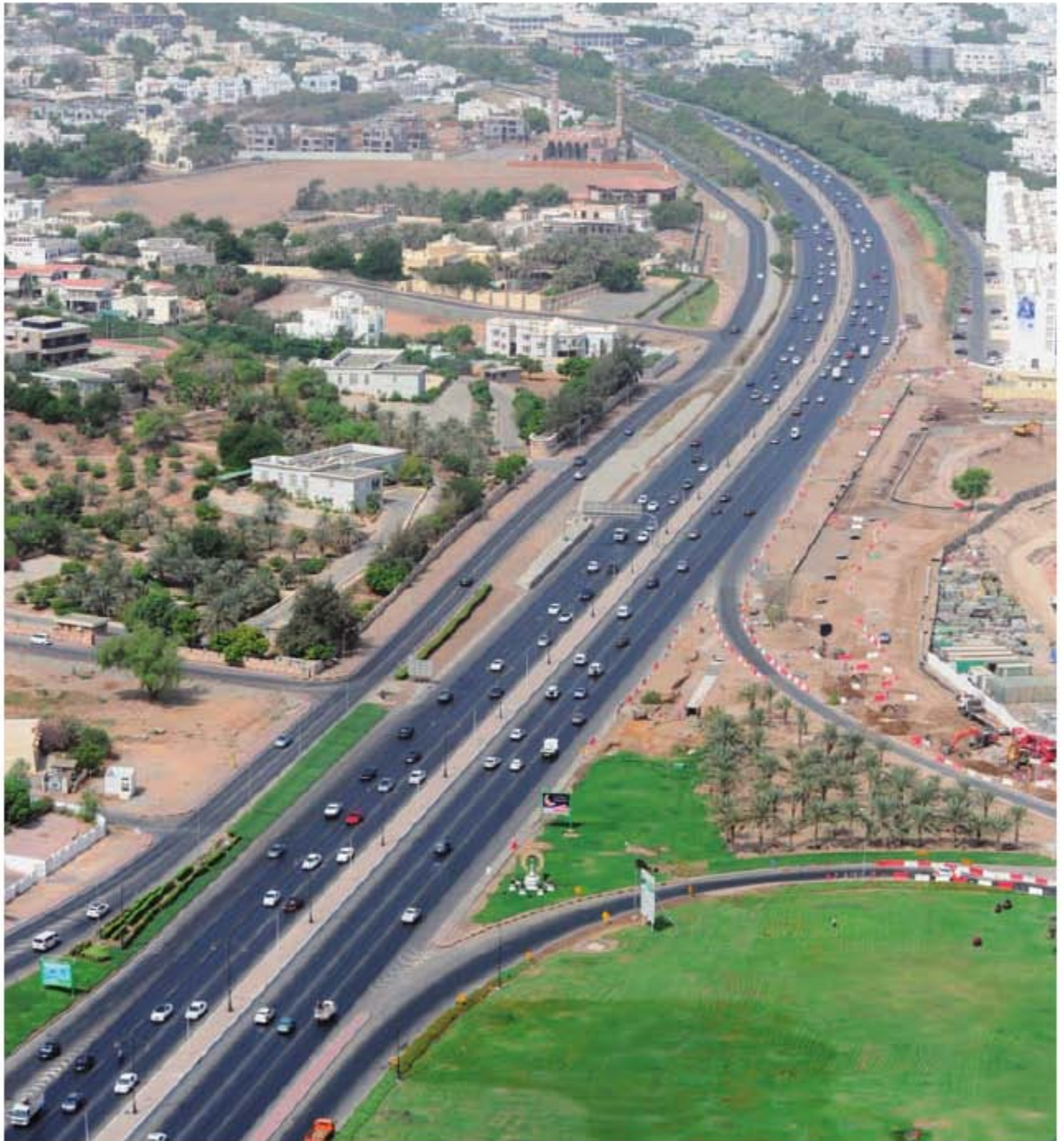
An extensive network of roads in Muscat Governorate. One of the most recently opened was the Bawshar-Amrat dual carriageway which takes motorists along a steep mountainous road.

ROADS

In any country roads and streets are designed to create opportunities for contacts between people and enable them to travel easily and safely from one place to another. The road system in Muscat, which is constantly expanding in line with the Governorate's growing population, urban development and rising economic activity, aims to ensure the smooth movement of people and vehicles between Muscat's residential, commer-

cial and industrial areas and tourist resorts. They include the busy, eight-kilometre-long Wadi Adei-Al Amrat road, which runs through the mountains a safe distance from the course of the wadi flow, and the Al Amrat-Quriyyat road (70 kilometres) which snakes deftly around the wadis and towering mountains between al Hajir Roundabout in the *wilayat* of Al Amrat and the *wilayat* of Quriyyat.

The Bawshar-Al Amrat dual car-





riageway (14 Kilometres) links the two *wilayats* by a route through the mountains.

Muscat Governorate's 23rd July Street was designed to relieve congestion on Sultan Qaboos Street and provide easy access to the southern parts of Al Khuwayr district.

Other major roads include the 18th November dual carriageway (6 Kilometres).

No description of the Governorate of Muscat's modern highways would be complete without a reference to their street lighting and flyovers. These highways, which are dual carriageways linking the Governorate with the rest of the country, include the well-lit Al Mawaleh – Al Khawd – Al Ma'abala South road which has a flyover for traffic travelling between Al Ma'abala North and Al Ma'abala South. Among other similar roads are the Al Sarooj – Al Qurm coast road, the Wadi Mayh – Yiti – Hanshuf road, and the Seeb coast road with its street lights, flyovers and roadside landscaping. In other coastal towns and villages, a new asphalted road between Yiti and Al Sifah (23 Kilometres) now serves several remote rural communities and provides them with a link to Muscat.

The future development of the Sultanate's road system has been as meticulously planned as the projects for the country's industrial, agricultural and economic sectors and is designed to cope with the country's growing population and vehicular traffic. These projects include the Al Qurm-



The Muscat Expressway begins in Qurm and finishes at Naseem Gardens and consists of 54 kms of asphalted road, 13 bridges and underpasses, and 12 interchanges.





MUSCAT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

The proposed new terminal at Muscat International Airport is to have a new control tower and second runway completed and operational by the end of 2013, and the passenger terminal and other buildings by the end of 2014. Further expansions planned in three subsequent phases will ultimately boost the airport's capacity to 48 million passengers by 2050.

It will feature a new passenger terminal building with 32 boarding air bridges, a second runway, control tower, cargo terminal to handle 200,000 tonnes of cargo annually and car parking capacity for 6,000 cars. The passenger terminal, a grandiose structure incorporating a blend of modern international class airport design elements and Omani traditional motifs, will be built between the two parallel runways.

The new terminal building will have a net floor area of

290,000 sqm and a capacity for 12 million passengers a year. Shopping arcades, restaurants, cafes, elegant lounges, and an 80 bed airside hotel for transit passengers are also envisaged. The airport will also feature a 101-metre high control tower and a new Air Traffic Management Centre. The project has been designed to allow the airport to expand its capacity size for up to 48 million passengers annually.

Furthermore, the existing runway at Muscat International Airport will be upgraded and supplemented with a new runway. It will be able to handle the world's largest passenger plane, the Airbus A380.

The project also includes a motorway to the airport with three lanes in either direction, complete with a companion interchange feeding into the existing motorways.



134/135



THE WADI DAYQAH DAM

The Wadi Dayqah dam is one of the Sultanate's main water projects. Situated in the wilayat of Quriyyat in Muscat Governorate, Wadi Dayqah is one of the few wadis in Oman that flows constantly throughout the year.

The project involved the construction of two dams located just upstream of Mazara village. The Main Dam was constructed across the main channel of Wadi Dayqah. A Saddle Dam has been constructed on the depression in the left rim of the reservoir.

Main Dam = length 410.00m, height 75.43m, crest width 5.00m, base width 55.40m. The Main Dam has been constructed with Roller Compacted Concrete. It is curved in plan with a vertical upstream face and a stepped inclined face on the downstream side.

Saddle Dam = length 360m, height 49.16m, crest width 10m, base width 183.00m. The Saddle Dam has closed the gap through the mountains which was used

for the access track to the tourist area in the Wadi.

On the crest of the Saddle Dam there is an access road to the Main Dam.

Mazara Reservoir = covers nearly 350 hectares in area when full, it extends for some 6 kms upstream from the Main Dam, and the perimeter at the top water level is about 28 kms. The Mazara site lies on folded and faulted sedimentary rock layers.

Wadi Dayqah catchment lies in the northern part of the Eastern Hajar mountain range. The wadi flows through these mountains in a number of gorges from the village of Tul down to Daghmar where it discharges to the sea across the coastal alluvial plain. The highest point in the catchment is 1500m above sea level. In its upper reach Wadi Dayqah is known as Wadi Tayin. It is joined by Wadi Dima At Taiyin village. Further downstream at Tul Village it is joined by Wadi Khabbah, a major water bearing tributary. It is after this junction that it is known as the Wadi Dayqah.



Aerial view of Wadi Dayqah Dam. This project involved the construction of two dams located just upstream of Mazara village, ie the Main Dam across the Wadi Dayqah, and a Saddle Dam on the depression in the left rim of the reservoir.







FERRIES

Two high-speed diesel ferries - the *Shinas* and the *Homuz* – were launched in 2008 and are currently operating regular services between the Governorates of Muscat and Musandam, although plans are afoot to include a stop in this service at Shinas on the Batinah coast. They also run evening cruises in Muscat.

High-speed ferry services to over a dozen Omani ports on the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Sea are being planned in co-ordination with the Ministry of Transport and Communications, and the aim is to install ferry handling facilities at all the Sultanate's existing and future harbours.

The National Ferries Company (NFC) was established in 2006 to improve and expand sea transport services for passengers, goods and vehicles, encourage domestic trade, support the tourist sector and provide job opportunities for Omani nationals.

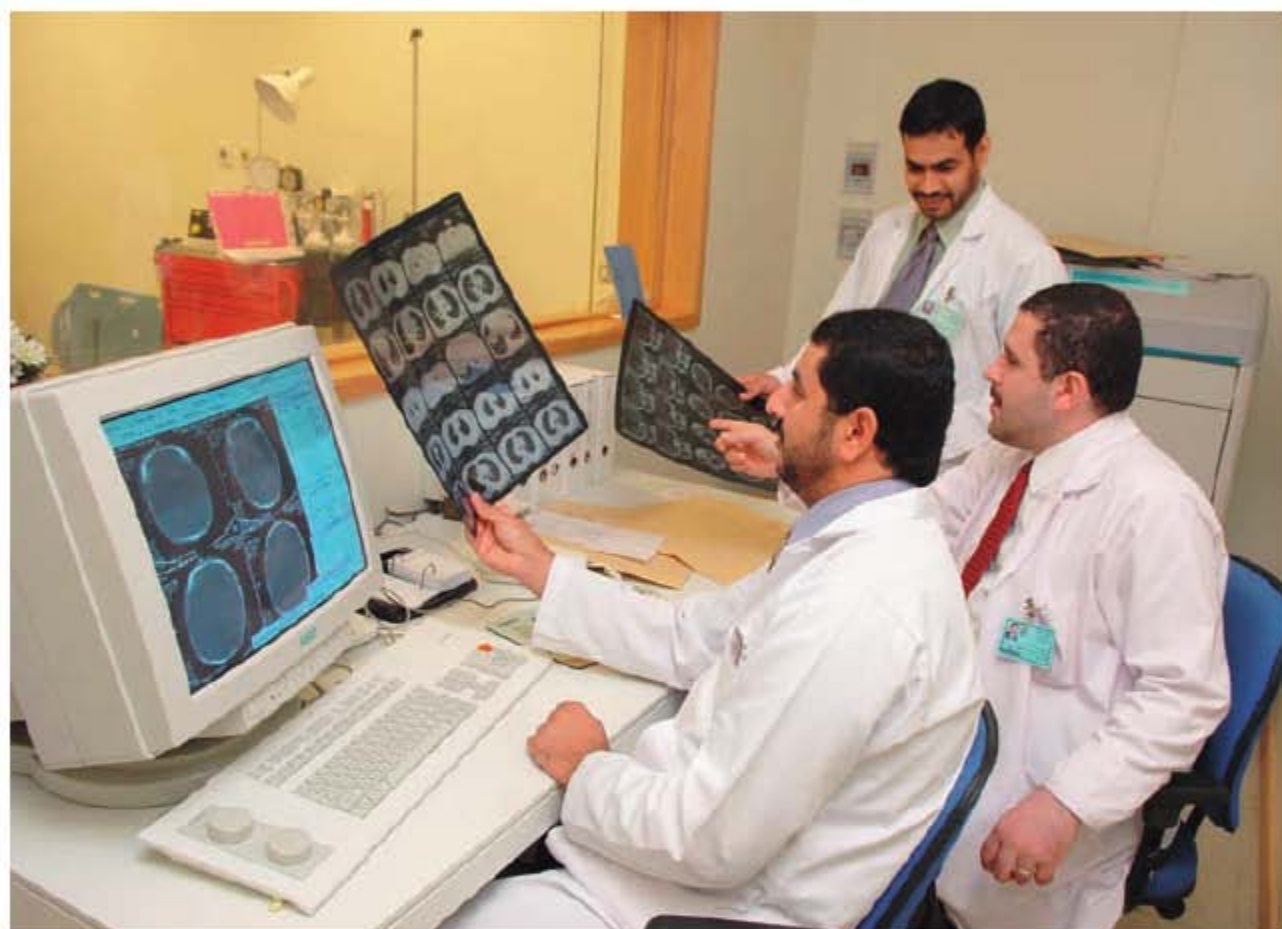
The NFC is due to add a further three ferries to its fleet in the very near future to cover the Salalah-Hasik-Al Shuwaimiyah-Al Hallaniyyat route. There are also plans to build a further two ferries for the Shannah-Masirah service.





138/139





High-tech health care is available to all in Muscat's 4 specialist government hospitals, as well as in privately-run establishments.

An Naseem road (55 Kilometres) from Al Qurm roundabout to just past An Naseem roundabout, with three lanes in each direction as well as twelve intersections with roads over twenty-eight Kilometres long linking the nearby residential and industrial areas, and nine underpasses. The project also provides for the installation of street lighting, landscaping and spacious roadside stopping places.

All these projects aim to enable the public to travel between the dif-

ferent areas of the Governorate in safety and comfort along a system of asphalted roads and dual carriage-ways. With its broad highways, flyovers and trees, Muscat is one of the Arab world's most beautiful capitals.

HEALTH

In 1970 there was just one small clinic available in Muscat for the Omani population; no trace of it remains today apart from some references in books. Now the Governo-





rate has six hospitals, three polyclinics and 23 health centres, two of them with maternity beds.

Four of Muscat's six hospitals – the Royal, Khoula, Al Nahda and Ibn Sina – are high-tech specialist referral hospitals. The other two hospitals are Ar Rahma and Quriyyat.

Departments and authorities such as the Diwan of Royal Court, the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Oman Police, provide similar health services for their staff and their families. Health



142/143



and diagnostic services are also available at a number of private sector hospitals, polyclinics, health centres and medical laboratories.

A KNOWLEDGE-BASED DIGITAL ECONOMY - KNOWLEDGE OASIS MUSCAT (KOM)

This is the age of technology and digital knowledge. The Sultanate is well aware of this and uses a number of channels to promote an understanding of modern technol-

ogy among members of the Omani community and create a suitable environment for implementing a national information technology (IT) strategy. One of its goals is to establish the right conditions for an "electronic society" to develop that will enable the Omani economy to make a gradual transition to a digital economy which can serve the country's goals of sustainable development.

In seeking to promote the concept of IT and help information-oriented

Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM) - seeking to promote the concept of IT and help information-oriented businesses to compete effectively.



The Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat was the venue for the final of the 19th Gulf Football Cup. Celebrating Oman's win for the first time.

businesses to compete effectively at home and abroad, Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM) has created an ideal environment for exchanging information through a network of specialised companies and organisations.

KOM has over 40 businesses and facilities including small new individual enterprises, support and back-up centres, IT and advanced telecommunications institutes, a network of government support facili-

ties and international links.

KOM works closely with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Oman Centre for Investment Promotion and Export Development, as well as export and development establishments, licensing authorities, basic service providers and other bodies, with the aim of establishing a partnership that will ensure the success of the Sultanate's IT industry.



144/145



SPORTS FACILITIES

Youth and sports are a significant aspect of the Sultanate's development. The government aims to ensure that the population are healthy and physically fit, generate enthusiasm for sports among young Omanis and encourage them to take part in local and international sporting events.

The Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in the *wilayat* of Bawshar, which opened on 19th October 1985, is the

country's leading sports and youth establishment and was awarded an international prize by UNESCO in 1995 for the excellence of its youth, sports and educational services.

Among its facilities the complex has hockey and football pitches, an outdoor basketball, handball and volleyball pitch and tennis courts, as well as a state-of-the-art indoor sports hall built to international specifications for team competitions.

The Seeb Sports Stadium, which



is also in the Governorate of Muscat and opened on 20th December 2005, covers a total area of 90,000 square metres and has a VIP hall, a grass football pitch, changing rooms for players and referees, radio and TV commentary boxes and live TV transmission facilities.

The Police Stadium in Al Watayyah - another leading sports amenity - has been renovated and modernised to meet the standards of the championships that it hosts. The games pitches in the Governorate of Muscat's sports clubs have also been radically upgraded.

PARKS – SPACES FOR RELAXATION AND CONTEMPLATION

Muscat looks like a huge natural park. Under the Renaissance lush parks and gardens have been created, turning it into a city in bloom and giving it lungs through which it is able to breathe fragrant breezes.

The sites of the public parks have been chosen with great care and they can be found in locations throughout the city.

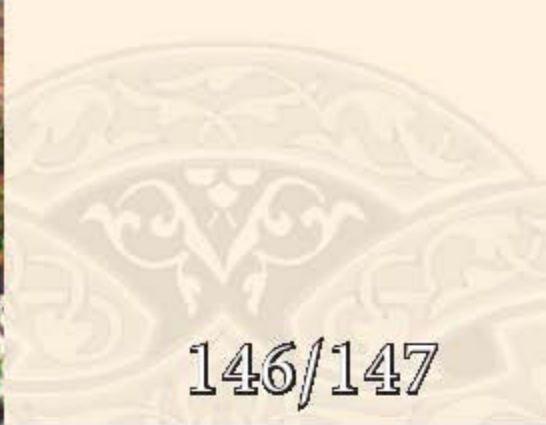
Al Qurum Natural Park, the largest, is also a nature reserve. Situated by the sea and overlooking the main road, with its date palms, lake, fountains and waterfalls it enchants passers-by as well as its visitors.

Equipped with the latest lighting technology and sound effects, an open-air theatre by the lake is the venue for music and drama performances as well as major festivals, national events and celebrations and it



(Top) The Governorate of Muscat is a city in colourful bloom during the cooler months of the year.

(Right) The Qurum Natural Park is one of many popular places to enjoy one's leisure time.



146/147





The Riyam Park on the Muttrah corniche and the As Sahwa Gardens near the As Sawah clocktower roundabout are among many perfect places to relax.

is there that the annual Muscat Festival's opening and closing ceremonies are held.

The park's winding paths pass between trees, shrubs and flower beds, making a walk through it a truly delightful experience.

As Sahwa Garden is on a large area of greenery beside As Sahwa Tower. Its main features are a series of Islamic floor patterns, a maze, fountains and flowerbeds, as well as children's play areas and places for

families to sit and relax.

Riyam Park in Muttrah is spread out over hills and overlooks Port Sultan Qaboos and the coast road. An observation tower shaped like an incense burner in the middle of the park has a telescope for the use of visitors and offers opportunities to enjoy panoramic views of Muscat and Muttrah.

Bandar Ar Rawdah Park by the Bandar Ar Rawdah Club is in a delightful setting high above the sea,



148/149



which it overlooks. Built on different levels connected by footpaths, it has been designed specifically to incorporate the features of the local terrain and the mountain slopes. Its features include date palms, open green areas, services and amenities and picnic shelters.

Other parks include An Naseem, Al Wadi Al Kabir, Al Amrat and Quriyyat, all of which are ideal places to relax and contemplate the beauty of nature.





MUSCAT – CITY OF ARTS AND CULTURE

Universities are not the only source of knowledge. Alongside them, numerous centres of culture and the arts are active throughout the year and not only during specific seasons or festivals.

Since its inception in January 1998 the annual Muscat Festival has become renowned for its cultural and artistic activities and an extensive programme of cultural seminars, poetry recitals and traditional song and dance performances is held under its aegis in various locations in Muscat.

The Sultan Qaboos Centre for Islamic Culture also plays a significant role, while the Sultan Qaboos Mosque holds seminars and symposiums on Omani, Arab and international cultural topics which are attended by leading writers and intellectuals from around the world.

There are a large number of cultural clubs and associations in Muscat. The Cultural Club has a busy programme of activities and attracts creative writers, poets and thinkers from across the Arab world, while the Literary Association is a major contributor to the Sultanate's cultural scene. The Omani Fine Arts Society promotes art among the younger generation and holds exhibitions of work by Omani, Arab and non-Arab artists.

Muscat's main theatre is the City Theatre. Built on a hill overlooking Al Qurum Natural Park, using materials that blend in with its natural sur-

roundings, it is one of the Governorate's leading cultural buildings.

Music and museums are two of the Muscat cultural scene's other components. The Oman Centre for Traditional Music (OCTM), set up at the Ministry of Information in 1984, plays a major role in preserving the Sultanate's traditional music and folklore and collects, records, documents and classifies national and regional songs and dances. It has a huge archive of photographs, coloured slides, audio and video tapes and field documents stored on computer.

In 2002 the OCTM received an award from UNESCO's International Music Council.

The Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra was established in 1985 to perform classical music and its musicians are highly trained and talented Omani nationals. Since its first public performance in 1997 it has performed at numerous events at home and abroad.

The Oud Hobbyists' Association was set up to promote and honour the *oud* - a traditional Arab musical instrument which has been much loved by Arabs and the people of the East from the time of Zaryab to the present day.

Muscat's theatres and cultural premises provide the setting for a year-round succession of events including plays and art exhibitions, the Omani Song Festival, the Muscat Cinema Festival and the Muscat International Book Fair. As well as ex-



hibiting and selling printed and electronic books and publications on science, literature, history and a wide range of other topics, the Book Fair also stages seminars and lectures featuring Omani, Arab and foreign speakers.

In addition to strictly cultural activities and the arts, Muscat also has a lively media scene. The new High Definition television studio complex in Information City in Al Qurm marks a major step forward.

Equipped with the latest world-class digital technology, its studios will replace the present studios - which can no longer handle the growing volume of operations and production - and give a big boost to Oman TV's programme and news output.

The new complex is built on four floors in an architectural style that is distinctly Omani, despite being designed to incorporate the latest transmission and network systems. It covers an area of 21,000 square me-

The Al Medina amphitheatre in the Qurm Natural Park attracts international as well as local performers.

(Overleaf) Folkloric groups entertain visitors with traditional dances, songs and poetry at the annual Muscat Festival held in Qurm.





152/153





Muscat Festival – events take place annually in various venues in Muscat Governorate attracting visitors as well as the local population.





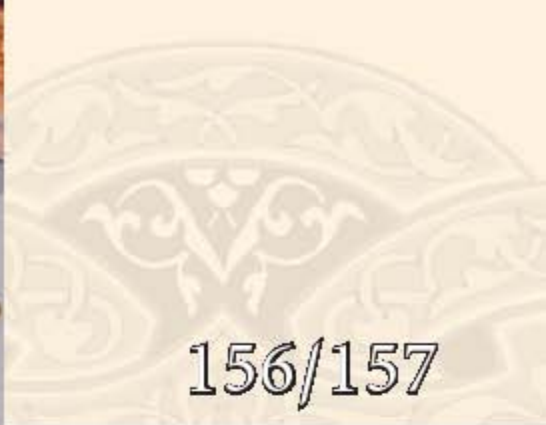
154/155





The Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra was established in 1985. It gives concerts locally, and has also performed internationally on several occasions.





156/157





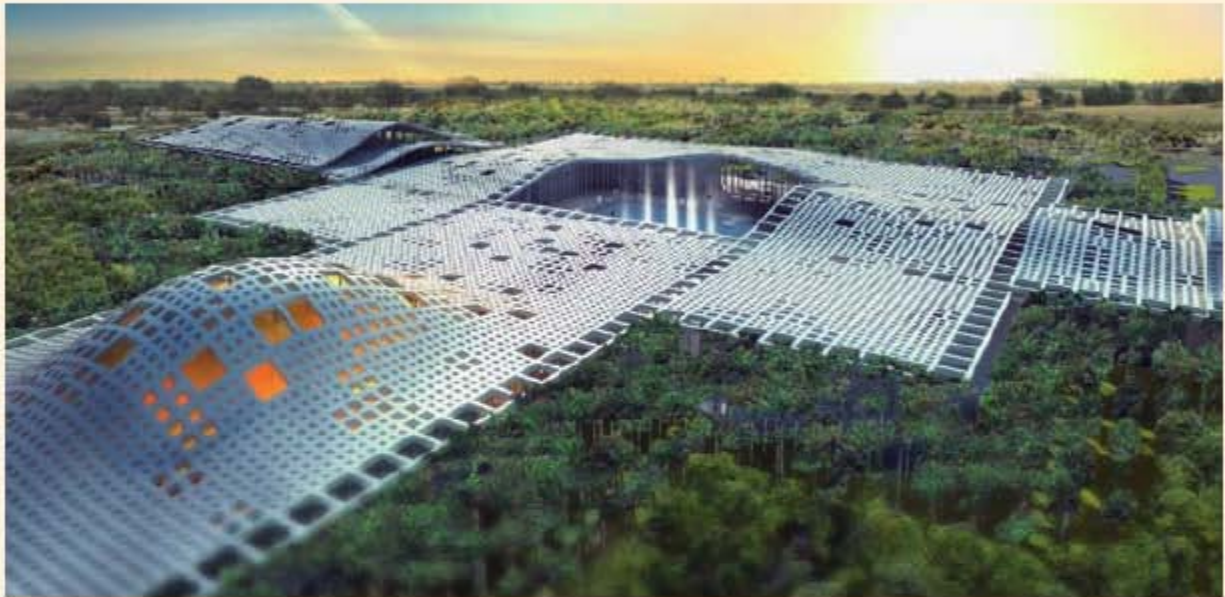
The Oman Centre for Traditional Music brought together artists from around the world for an International Oud Forum in December 2006. The Oud Hobbyists Association, formed in 2008, gives musical concerts and recitals as well as participating in overseas seminars.





158/159





OMAN CULTURAL COMPLEX

The Oman Cultural Complex is set to become one of the Sultanate's premier assets, offering practical and informational resources to both the academic and research communities, as well as ordinary citizens.

When completed, the Airport Heights project will occupy a total area of 40,000 square metres and an initial cost budget of RO40 million has been allocated.

The overall architectural design incorporates several purpose-built structures, to house respectively the National Records and Archive Authority, the Omani National Theatre, National Library and Children's Library, Literary Forum Hall and Institute of Arts. Other buildings within the complex will accommodate cinemas, cafes and a concert hall, as well as administrative and service buildings. The whole will be fronted by a public park.

The Cultural Centre is covered by a canopy, which is bent at its western side by the National Theatre. This *musharabih* canopy that filters sunbeams is a reference to Omani architecture; in the same way, a

trickle crosses covered gardens in reference to *aflaq* (water channels). The National Theatre will cover an area of 9,200 square metres, and will have a seating capacity of more than 1,000 people. It will use cutting edge technology to enhance the theatre experience in the form of light and sound equipment, control rooms and other features.

The National Library will include, in addition to the main book display area, separate sections for periodicals and special collections, maps and photographs. Adjacent to the display will be reading and study lounges, lecture rooms, an auditorium, a special area for people with disabilities and a children's book section. The total area of the library will be 9,600 square metres.

The Literary Forum will occupy a 1,200 square metre site and incorporate lecture and seminar rooms, a library, reading rooms and computer areas.

The Institute of Art will house galleries designed to exhibit paintings, art works and photos, as well as training rooms, all fitted with the necessary technical aids and security installations.



160/161



THE OMAN NATIONAL MUSEUM

The Oman National Museum will be one of the city of Muscat's major landmarks when it is completed in 2012. While it has been designed specifically as a museum, it also incorporates the prevailing Muscat architectural style while harmonising with the nature of the surrounding terrain.

Divided into many sections, the visitor will be treated with the people's gallery as soon as he or she steps inside the museum. Designed in the traditional Omani courtyard style, the people's gallery will provide details of the source of inspiration, customs and traditions of all the administrative regions in Oman. In effect a 'window on Omani culture'.

In another section Unesco-approved heritage sites in Oman will be showcased. In the section titled 'Omani civilisation', traditional settlements in the country, ancient capitals of Oman and various forts and castles

will be displayed with information on them in a touch-based and interactive way.

Other attractions will be buildings and houses in Oman, royal mansions, irrigation systems, the history of currency and the maritime history with its traditional songs sung during voyages.

Objects dating back 1.5 million years, which have been unearthed in Dhofar, are expected to be one of the star attractions. In the international section, treaties, letters and other artefacts Oman gained from its ties with other countries will also be displayed. Relations between Oman and East Africa too will be given a special section.

As well as providing immediate, unique and creative descriptions of the items on display, the Museum will also hold exhibitions, conduct educational programmes, lectures and seminars and support research.



(Above) The High Definition studios complex – upon completion viewers of Oman TV will be the first in the region to experience the superior quality of High Definition content production and distribution.

Sultanate of Oman Television operates two channels – the General Channel which transmits a wide variety of programmes around the clock, and Channel Two which transmits from 1600 to midnight.



162/163





tres and comprises thirteen transmission, production and music studios, a theatre, a newsroom, a control room, services and utilities, a central technical area, a library and other features – making for a truly tapeless broadcast production environment.

THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE – HI-TECH DESIGN

Covering an area of 80,000 square metres, the Royal Opera House in Al Qurm is a major musical, theatrical and architectural landmark. Its main features are its hi-tech design and the quality of its acoustics. The auditorium includes a Royal Box and VIP seating with three terraces on either side.

MUSEUMS – REPOSITORIES OF THE PAST

Oman's museums are repositories of the past preserved for posterity. They include the Museum of the Omani Heritage, opened on 17th November 1974; over the years this museum has undergone frequent expansion and new features have been added.

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture Museum, established in Muscat in 1978, contains a copy of the letter from the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) to the people of Oman, which was sent during the eighth year of the Hijra/630AD to Jaifar and Abd, the sons of Al Julanda – the kings of Oman at that time – inviting them to embrace Islam. The museum also has portraits of the Sultans of



The Royal Opera House reflects traditional Arab architecture but in a modern way. The interior too is to have an element of Middle Eastern tradition and Arabic/ Islamic design to it in the gildings, stencilling and colouring.



164/165





THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

The Royal Opera House in the Governorate of Muscat's Al Surooj district is an architectural masterpiece as well as a musical and theatrical landmark. Covering an area of around 80,000 square metres and built in the traditional style, its outward appearance contains many of the features of Oman's forts, castles and grand old houses.

Inside, its state-of-the-art lighting and sound technology is of the highest international standard and designed to cater for a range of different types of performances, including operas, plays and concerts.

The building, with its harmonious blend of different features - both functional and aesthetic - is an important addition to the Sultanate's cultural heritage.

For drama performances the stage can be expanded and the number of seats reduced to accommodate an audience of around 800, while a 32-metre-high tower provides a range of gadgetry to enhance the theatrical effects. For concerts the audience seating can be expanded to 1,100.

Modern technology will be used to produce an exceptional acoustic effect and the highest sound fidelity, adapted to suit the type of performance.

There are three tiers of seats on either side of the Royal Box and VIP seating area.

The Royal Opera House also offers a range of other amenities including restaurants, cafes, shops and a market for the sale of art works and traditional handicrafts.

With their trees and lawns, the grounds around the building are an attractive spot for visitors to sit and enjoy the fresh air.





166/167





Muscat has a number of interesting museums – featured here are the Museum of Bait Frausa, Omani Heritage, Natural History, Bait Al Zubair and Currency at the Central Bank of Oman.

Oman in chronological order, as well as documents, traditional costumes, silverware and old postage stamps.

The Natural History Museum, which opened on 30th December 1986 in the Ministry of Heritage and Culture building, contains examples of the Sultanate's natural treasures. In front of the museum is a fossilised tree some 260 million years old - the oldest tree in Oman. There are stuffed animals and birds from various Omani habitats and a special

section devoted to three meteorites from the planet Mars which were found during a geological survey in the Wusta region.

The Omani-French Museum documents the strong relations between Oman and France, which date from the beginning of the eighteenth century. It contains documents, pictures and exhibits from the heritage of the two countries.

The Sultan's Armed Forces Museum's displays include models,



168/169



weapons and documents depicting events in Oman's military history.

The Children's Museum, opened in November 1990, provides simple, easy-to-follow demonstrations of science and technology for children.

The Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Museum, which opened in 2008, contains a permanent exhibition of weapons dating from the Stone Age to the Second World War.

The Bait Al Baranda Visitors Centre, which is overseen by Muscat





Muscat's museums attract all ages and nationalities to visit – here are the museums of the Sultan's Armed Forces, the Children's Museum and Bait Al Baranda. At the Sayyid Faissal bin Ali museum there is a display of ancient manuscripts.

Municipality, depicts the history of Muscat from the earliest geological epochs to the present day. It attracts a large number of tourist groups.

The Muscat Gate Museum on Muscat Gate's upper floor is devoted to the history and development of the city of Muscat.

There are three privately-run Museums:

The Bait al Zubair Museum contains personal ornaments and jewellery and examples of traditional

Omani weapons, and in its grounds a miniature village can be seen complete with flowing *falaj*.

The Bait Adam Museum, opened in 2004, contains an unsurpassed collection of Oman's postal history, as well as one of the best private ancient coinage collections.

Ghalya's Museum of Modern Art on the Mutrah corniche portrays, in a cluster of old Omani houses, the habits, traditions and ways of life of past generations.



170/171





Fort Mirani (1587) on the western side and Fort Jalali (1588) on the north-eastern side of Muscat overlook the Oman Sea, whilst Mutrah Fort stands guard on the corniche overlooking Port Sultan Qaboos.

FORTS AND CASTLES

The many forts and castles in the Governorate of Muscat stand as silent witnesses to this country's illustrious past. The hilltop forts of Al Jalali and Al Mirani overlook the Sea of Oman. Al Jalali, completed in 1588, occupies a peak one hundred and fifty feet above sea level on the north-eastern side of the city of Muscat, while Al Mirani, built in 1587 – a year before Al Jalali – is on the western side.

The old Muscat city gates include Bab Al Mathaib, Al Bab Al Kabir and Al Bab Al Saghir. With its six towers Mutrah Fort, built in 1578, guards the town of Mutrah from a crag overlooking the sea.

As Sifah Fort, in the village of As Sifah in the south-eastern part of Muscat Governorate, overlooks the sea on one side and a wadi on the other. The *wilayat* of Seeb has several historic buildings including Al Khawd Citadel, Sur Majid



172/173



in the village of Al Manoomah, Dima Fort in Al Khrais and Al Bait Al Oud in Al Khawd, as well as Al Jafnain and Ar Rusayl Towers, to name but a few.

In the *wilayat* of Bawsher you will find Al Husn Citadel, Al Fath Citadel, Al Hammam Towers and the mansion of Bait Al Maqham. Quriyyat has a large number of forts including Quriyyat Fort, Al Sahel Fort, Dagh Fort, Al Misfah Fort and Al Malik Fort, as well as Al Burj Cit-





Muscat Governorate has a number of forts.

(Top) Quriyyat Fort and (right) Quriyyat tower which was shown on a map of the town in 1635.

(Above) The mansion of Bait Al Maqham in Bowshar, and (right) Sirat Al Gharbiya located north of Fort Mirani in Muscat Bay.

adel (beside Quriyyat Fort), Al Sai-rah Citadel and Kharmawh Citadel. There are also several archaeological remains dating from the third millennium BC.

The *wilayat* of Al Amrat has Ba'ee and Al Hajir Forts, as well as the Rajee', Mandhariyah and Ba'ee Towers.

Muscat also has numerous grand old houses such as Bait As Sayyid Nader, Bait Gareeza and Bait Al Sayyid Abbas bin Faisal.

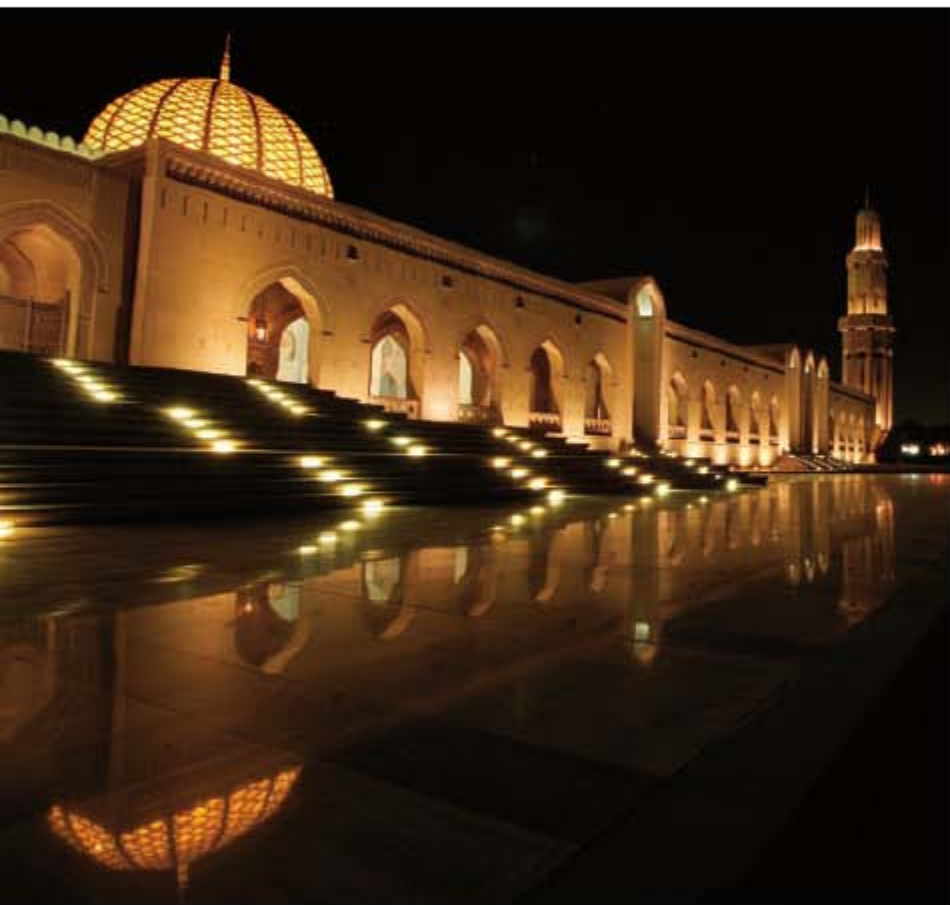
MUSCAT'S BUILDINGS – TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Muscat's buildings strike a harmonious balance between tradition and modernity – between the Arab and Islamic heritage and the architectural styles of the modern age. The latter can be clearly seen in the fine buildings which grace the public squares and open areas of modern Muscat outside the city's old wall. At the same time, the arches and ornamentation of these modern build-



174/175





The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque inaugurated in May 2001 has 5 minarets. Different decorative styles can be seen in the arcades, with short descriptions given of the historical background of each.

ings show that they have managed to retain their original Arab and Islamic character.

The first thing that strikes the visitor to Muscat is the sight of the splendid dome of the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, surrounded by five minarets in the middle of a broad expanse of greenery.

From inside, the entrancing beauty of this great building is most obviously apparent in the meticulous design of its prayer hall, the use of mosaics to decorate the inside of the

dome and the *mihrab* (prayer niche) framed by a border of Qur'anic verses.

The *riwaqs* (arcades) with their multiplicity of styles will also impress the visitor. Short descriptions displayed in each *riwaq* section explain the historical background of their different decorative styles.

Other striking mosques in the Governorate of Muscat include the mosque of Maizoon bint Ahmed in Al Mawaleh district in the *wilayat* of Seeb and the Said bin Taimur



Mosque in Al Khuwayr in the *wilayat* of Bawshar with its eye-catching colours and simple decorative style.

Standing in the midst of several other imposing buildings, Al Alam Palace in the old city of Muscat is an architectural sensation. Al Bustan Palace Hotel near Al Bustan village, which stands beside the shore, combines Islamic art and design with modern technology. The flower-bedecked coast road that takes you there, sandwiched

between the sea and the mountains, ends at the traditional sailing ship *Sohar* which made the historic voyage to the Chinese port of Canton. Today the *Sohar* stands in an open space in the middle of a large roundabout.

The hotel is surrounded by date palms, green meadows and mountains, which come right down to the sea.

The stunning three hotel Shangri-la Barr al Jussah Resort lies between mountains and the sea.



(Top) The beautiful mihrab (prayer niche) of the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque. (Below) the Mizan Al Saeeda mosque in Seeb, and the Said bin Taimur mosque in Al Khawair.

TRADITIONAL CRAFTS AND FOLKLORE

The main crafts in the Governorate of Muscat are handworked gold and silver jewellery, carpentry and woodwork. Some of the population are fishermen and farmers or work in halwa manufacture and other traditional craft industries.

An exception to this are the ladies of the Wadi As Sareen, situated some 45 kms south-east of Muscat, who produce beautiful leather and

wool handcraft items. No looms are used, instead the warps are the vertical elements, whilst the wefts are the active and horizontal elements so it is weft twining worked around leather strips.

The best known traditional music and dance forms are *al razha*, *al aazi*, *al qasafi*, *al na'irooz*, *al maidan*, *funoon al bahr*, *al maalid* and *al shah*. Each of these has its own significance and is performed on appropriate occasions.



178/179





The luxurious Al Bustan Palace Hotel in Sidab which was opened in 1985, and refurbished on several occasions. It boasts an auditorium where concerts and conferences are held.



180/181





The Barr Al Jissah, a major tourist development with its three-hotel complex, situated near Qantab.

(Overleaf) Traditional crafts – the making of the silver dagger (khanjar) is the most multi-faceted of all Omani crafts, encompassing the working of steel, wood, horn and leather, as well as embroidery skills, and silver-working techniques. The lady on the right is making jewel-like strips of braid known as talli or sim.

Muscat Bay - between Forts Jalali and Mirani lies the Al Alam Palace and royal guesthouses.





182/183













*The Burj As Salwa
roundabout in 1976.*





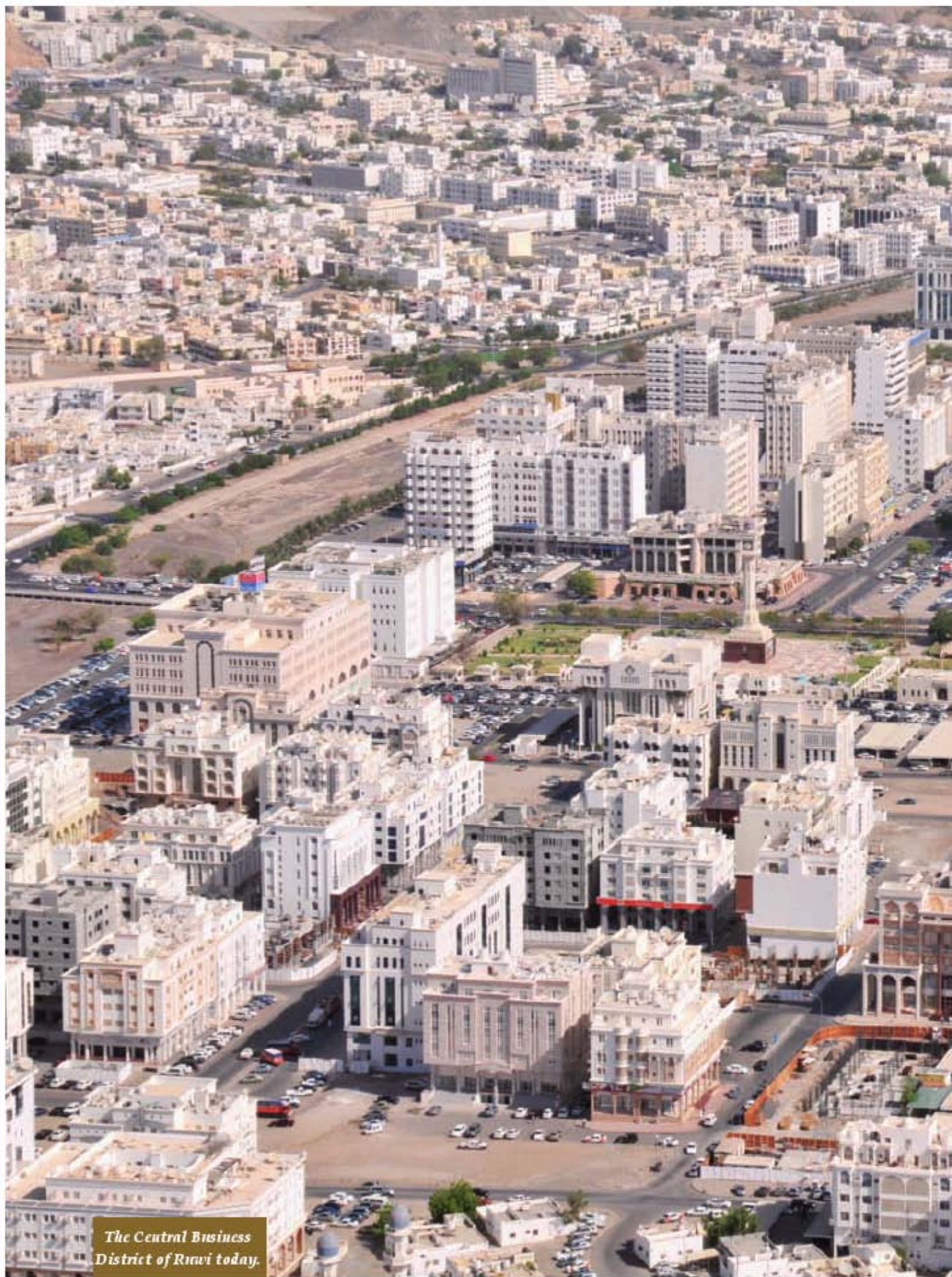
*The Burj As Sakwa
roundabout today.*





*The Bait Al Falaj
airport in Ruwi in 1971.*





The Central Business District of Riyadh today.





Mutrah in 1971





Muttrah today



THE GOVERNORATE OF DHOFAR

LAND OF FRANKINCENSE – AND THE AROMA OF HISTORY

The Governorate of Dhofar has a long history and many traces of its past can be seen to this day. During the modern era it was from Dhofar that Oman's Renaissance was launched under His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's leadership in 1970.

The Governorate of Dhofar lies at the Sultanate's southern extremity some 1,000 Kilometres from the Governorate of Muscat. It borders on the Wusta region to the east, the Arabian Sea to the south, the Republic of Yemen to the west and the Empty Quarter desert to the north-west and north. Its ten wilayats are Salalah, Thumrayt, Taqah, Mirbat, Sadah, Rakhyut, Dalkut, Muqshin, Shalim and the Hallmiyyat Islands, and Maziyunah. These wilayats include 28 niyabats (sub-wilayats).

From the point of view of its terrain Dhofar is divided into three distinct regions - a coastal region, a mountain region and the Najd desert region. The mountain region comprises a narrow strip of high green mountains and has a moderate climate throughout the year, with temperatures ranging from 15 to 33 degrees Centigrade.

The mountains receive the South-West Monsoon winds during the *Khareef* season between June and September, which blow in from the Indian Ocean bringing mist, drizzle and summer rain. Water flows in abundance in the springs. The mountains are cloaked in greenery and scattered flocks of sheep and herds of cows, camels and goats graze on the pastures that cover the slopes.

The Governorate of Dhofar's coastal region is part of the specially protected marine area declared by the International Maritime Organisation with the aim of protecting the local environment and economic

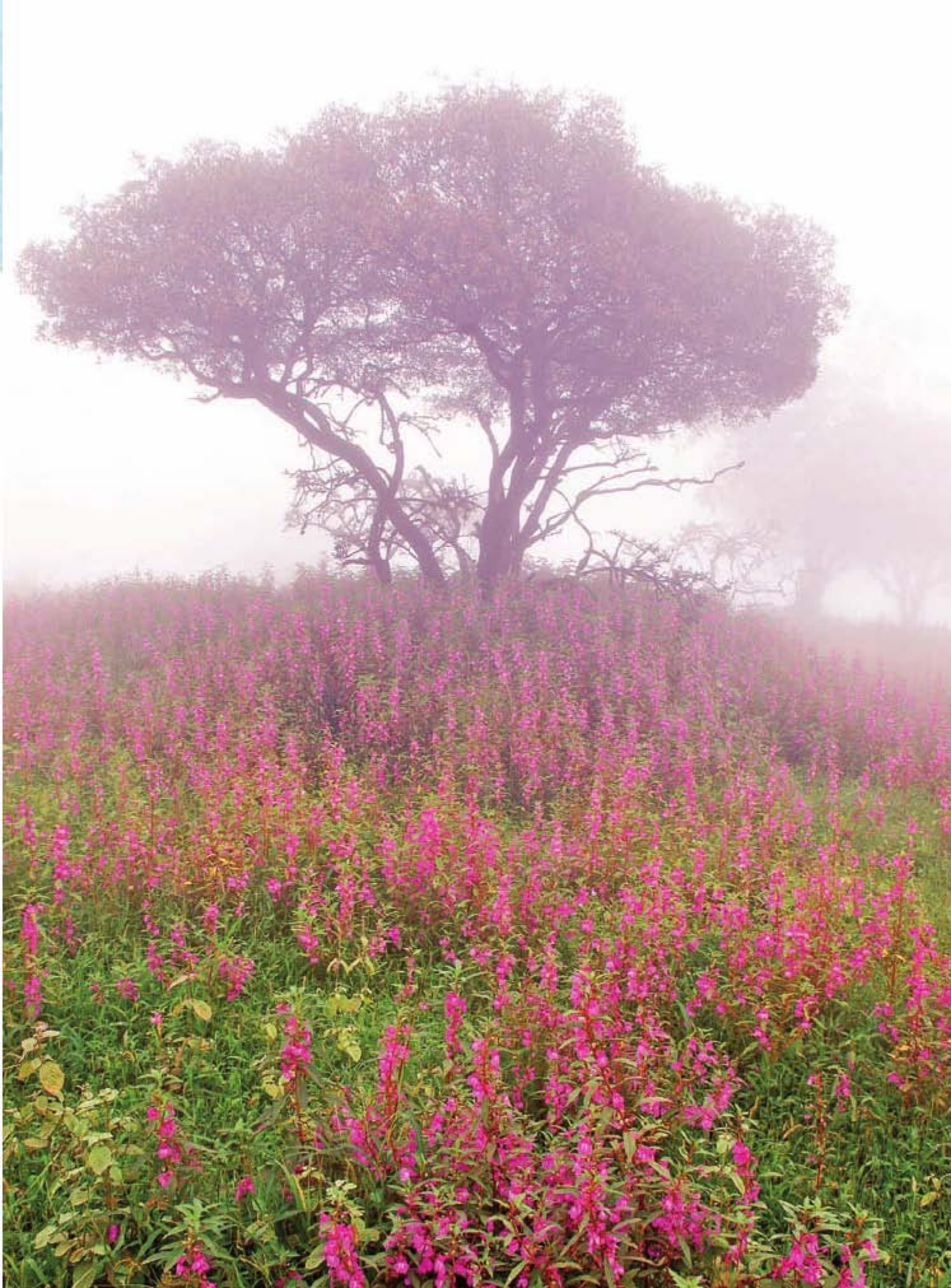
resources from pollution. It is an area of great natural beauty and its rocky shores and numerous lagoons comprise a number of distinct, bio-diverse ecosystems, including mangrove swamps, breeding areas for a wide variety of birds, fish and crustaceans, and plants that provide food for numerous marine species. Molluscs and crustaceans in these areas include lobsters, squid, abalone and prawns.

When you move from one part of Dhofar to another – from the coast to the mountains or from the mountains to the Najd - you find yourself travelling between areas with different histories and totally different natural environments. Salalah is a city that combines an illustrious past with a thriving and equally splendid present – from the ruins of the city of Al Baleed, site of the remains of an ancient grand mosque, to the achievements of Oman's Renaissance.

No reference to the *wilayat* of Taqah would be complete without mention of Khawr Rawri – the historic city of Sumhuram - which was a prosperous centre in ancient times. Thousands of tourists from all over the world visit this site, which dates from the pre-Christian era.

The *wilayat* of Mirbat has much to offer – beautiful unspoilt beaches with silver sand and coral, stunning views of mountains such as Jabal Samhan, which is one of the Sultanate's major wildlife sanctuaries, tombs like the tomb of Bin Ali and

*At the end of the monsoon, *Eupatium balsamium* of the Touch-me-not family, are in full bloom on the Dhofar escarpment.*





numerous historic buildings including the citadel of Bin Saydouf.

Visitors to the *wilayat* of Sadah can enjoy fresh abalone and lobsters if they are there at the right time of year. Forty-five tonnes of abalone are caught but at present there is a ban in place during the diving season. This rare sea creature is known for its high nutritive value. The *wilayat* of Shalim and the Hallaniyyat Islands is famous for its sandy and rocky shores and the rich variety of fish which teem in its offshore waters. Several private sector companies have invested in the Governorate's fishing industry and can and export local catches to the region's markets.

The *wilayat* of Shalim and the Hallaniyyat Islands used to be remote, sparsely populated and somewhat cut off from the rest of the country. However, the situation has changed over the years of the Renaissance. Today it is a popular destination for nature lovers and each of its three *niyabats* has an administrative centre with a full range of government services.

The *wilayat* of Muqshin is a region of oases and wide, sweeping plains.

In the distant past frankincense used to be gathered and traded from the desert in the *wilayat* of Thumrayt and it was this valuable substance that fuelled the rise of Shisr and Wubar – an ancient city of columns and domes. Today Wubar is an important archaeological site and the

remains discovered beneath its soil and sands remind us of a civilization that thrived centuries ago.

The charming *wilayat* of Rakhyut lies by the foothills of Jabal Al Qamar. In the past it was a trading centre and ships came from far and wide to anchor in its harbour and load up with frankincense and animal products.

The road to the *wilayat* of Dalkut takes you through mountains and wadis covered with green trees and fragrant shrubs, particularly during the summer – the *Khareef* season. Dalkut itself is a pretty town on the shores of the Arabian Sea. Some three Kilometres to the east of it is a shady tree of immense antiquity known as *Haroun Dheini*, or "The Strange Tree", the *Adansonia digitata* (Baobab or *enkize* in Jibbali). With its massive trunk this exotic tree symbolises the *wilayat's* natural lushness and fecundity.

Al Mazyunah is on the Yemeni border around 260 Kilometres west of Salalah. This desert *wilayat* is undergoing rapid development.

THE FRANKINCENSE (*Boswellia sacra*) TREE IN DHOFAR – MORE THAN JUST A TREE

The Governorate of Dhofar and frankincense (*Boswellia sacra*) are inextricably intertwined. Dhofar is the historic homeland of the frankincense tree, which forged a common link between the civilizations of the ancient world over seven thousand years ago. Thanks to its spiritual es-



202/203



AL MAZYUNAH FREE ZONE – GATEWAY TO PROMISING INVESTMENT PROSPECTS

Al Mazyunah Free Zone in the Governorate of Dhofar is a new addition to the network of industrial estates that can be found across Oman.

Phase One of the zone covers an area of around four and a half million square metres and aims to provide facilities for the establishment of a range of industrial, commercial and service projects and other operations. Currently there are fourteen productive companies businesses in the zone, three factories are under construction and a further four new projects are on the way. A large number of applications have also been submitted for other investment enterprises.

Al Mazyunah lies on the Sultanate's border with

the Republic of Yemen and this places it in a good position to play a role in the re-export trade between the two countries and between the Arab Gulf Co-operation Council states, Yemen and the countries of the Horn of Africa. In doing so it will help promote trade between Arab countries and closer Arab-Arab economic integration.

In March 2010 an investment agreement was signed as a strategic partnership between the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates and an international company with the aim of developing a further three million square metres of the Al Mazyunah area. This will provide scope for local and international investment and boost the economic sectors involved in free trade zone operations including transport, banking and tourism, to name but a few.



(Top) Frankincense trees at Wadi Dawkah and a close-up of the milky liquid which flows out and solidifies into globules, later to be sold in the shops.

(Below) The Boswellia sacra, or frankincense tree, thrives in the arid mountainous zone beyond the monsoon moisture but within range of the cooling winds.





204/205



sence - the fragrant smoke that is produced from its resin - it is still highly prized today.

Around seven thousand tonnes of frankincense are produced in Dhofar every year. Huge quantities of top quality frankincense grow along a strip of land up to eight Kilometres wide that runs parallel with the coast until it tapers off at its western end north of Ras Fartak. The government attaches great importance to the frankincense sites; surveys were carried out in the frankincense tree reserve in Wadi Dawkah following the issue of Royal Decree No. 16/2001 and the boundaries of the site were delineated.

The trees usually grow in small clumps and are between three and five metres in height. They begin producing frankincense between eight and ten years after they have been planted; it is extracted directly from the tree by cutting or scarifying the trunk (this operation requires great skill), following which a gummy, milky liquid flows out and solidifies.

The best frankincense trees produce whitish flowers. Lower quality trees produce reddish flowers; the redder the flower, the poorer the quality. The dark leaves, which are similar in appearance to olive leaves, give off a fragrance similar to the aroma of frankincense when it is being burnt on charcoal. There are four types of frankincense - each classified according to its quality



No home in Oman is without one of the 4 types of frankincense and burners of different designs and colours.

and place of origin – *Hawjan, Najdi, Shazni* and *Sahli*.

Thousands of years ago frankincense was an essential element in religious rituals. It was used in mummifying the bodies of the Egyptian pharaohs and burnt in the temples of the Egyptians and the Assyrians of Mesopotamia. It was even used as far away as Greece, Rome and India and was referred to by ancient historians including Herodotus, Pliny, Strabo and Diodorus, all of

whom asserted that the demand for frankincense was greater than the demand for any other commodity.

Frankincense also had important medicinal properties. The ancients used it as a heart tonic and to treat stomach and digestive disorders and stimulate the appetite. Today the people of Dhofar add it to drinking water as a diuretic and because it has a cooling effect. It is also an ingredient in cosmetic preparations. According to some traditional be-





Salalah Tourism Festival, held in July/August each year, attracts visitors from all over the world.





liefs it is effective in warding off the evil eye from the bridegroom at weddings; on such occasions huge earthenware incense burners are prepared and waved over the heads of the people present; ash is placed in the burner then a layer of charcoal embers, then some pieces of frankincense, which melt and give off their distinctive aroma.

The frankincense tree is indeed more than just a tree.

TOURISM AND FESTIVALS

While the frankincense tree created links between Dhofar and the ancient world in former times, the *Khareef* season in Salalah and the city's annual tourism, culture and arts festival are among the many bridges of communication and interaction between the Sultanate and its Arab neighbours today. The festival programme includes a wide range of recreational, cultural, arts and sporting activities as well as exhibitions, seminars and other events, which bring thousands of visitors to the Governorate of Dhofar.

During the summer – the *Khareef* – the mountains of Dhofar turn green as the monsoon winds bring a gentle drizzle and a refreshing dampness to the region. People find themselves reinvigorated and in the mood to go out on trips and do something active – something recreational or sporting perhaps, or even an artistic pursuit of some kind. The Salalah Tourist Festival offers an ideal opportunity for any or all of these activities; moreover, a wide choice of restaurants, hotels, hotel apartments blocks and shopping centres is available to cater for the needs of the tourists who come to enjoy the amenities on offer.

These amenities include the Mirbat Beach Resort - a tourist resort comprising three hotels, a marina, a golf course, a shopping centre, villas and luxury hotel flats.

The As Sawdah Island Project is an eco-friendly tourist resort con-



The University of Dhofar, College of Applied Sciences and College of Technology providing students with the know-how to take up jobs in a wide variety of fields.

sisting of 32 luxury hotel units. The Salalah World tourist shopping centre and the recently opened Salalah Marriott hotel in the *wilayat* of Mirbat are also among Dhofar's private sector enterprises.

EDUCATION – THE CORNERSTONE OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Education is the cornerstone of the nation's development and it has been the top priority of Oman's

Renaissance since the latter was first launched in 1970.

In the 2009-2010 school year there were 41,359 students (boys and girls) in Dhofar's 149 schools. Hundreds of male and female students graduate every year from Dhofar University and Dhofar's College of Applied Sciences and College of Technology and take up jobs in a wide range of specialist fields.





(Above) Hospitals in Dhofar have a combined total of 538 beds.

(Right) Tourists from all over the Arab world enjoy the mousoon season.

HEALTH SERVICES

The government regards the provision of health services for all citizens as one of its top priorities and health facilities can be found across the Governorate of Dhofar.

As well as the 450-bed Sultan Qaboos referral hospital in Salalah there are hospitals in Tawi Ateer, Mirbat, Rakhyut, Sadah and Madinat Al Haqq in the *wilayat* of Taqah.

In addition to the hospitals, which have a combined total of 538

beds, health facilities in the Governorate of Dhofar include the Salalah Polyclinic and twenty-eight health centres, twenty-two of which have maternity beds.

Work has been completed on the construction of new health centres in Ad Dahariz and West Salalah. A cardiology centre and magnetic resonance unit are currently under construction.

A new referral hospital will be built in the Governorate of Dhofar



212/213



under the Eighth Five Year Plan (2011-2015).

ROADS AND DEVELOPMENT

There can be no development, tourism or significant economic activity without a network of modern roads. Road projects in the Governorate of Dhofar include the conversion of the 73-Kilometre-long Salalah-Thumrayt road into a dual carriageway and the installation of street lighting along it, as well as the

construction of the Hasik-Al Shuwaymiyyah coast road (94 Kilometres) at a cost of around RO84 million. This project, which is due for completion in 2011, will provide an alternative overland link between Dhofar and the rest of the Sultanate. Other major roads under construction include the 141-Kilometre-long Sharbithat-Sawqara road between the *wilayat* of Shalim and the Hallaniyyat Islands and the Wusta region. Some roads in the urban areas

are being paved and street lighting is being installed in Salalah, Taqah, Thumrayt, Mirbat, Al Mazyunah, Sadah and Shalim and the Hallaniyyat Islands.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT – MAKING INVESTMENT WORK

Raysut Industrial Estate is one of a number of industrial estates in the Sultanate that have been set up to broaden the country's industrial base. It covers an area of around 142





214/215



hectares including a storage area (30 hectares). The Estate will be expanded by a further 100 hectares in future.

Raysut Industrial Estate has 68 factories and commercial installations. As part of its plan to promote and support Omani industry, the government is encouraging private sector investment and the use of locally available resources, as well as the creation of job opportunities for Omani nationals.

SEAPORTS AND AIR TRANSPORT

Salalah Airport is the Governorate of Dhofar's main tourist and travel facility and handles a large number of domestic and international flights. Several of its amenities have been upgraded, new passenger and business class lounges and other services are due to be added and its handling capacity will be expanded to enable it to receive up to a million passengers a year.

Young people are taking up jobs in the factories on the Raysut Industrial Estate – tins of fish are packed, and labelled for export.



ELECTRICITY AND WATER

In view of the steady rise in demand for electricity services, the government is engaged on a number of projects to improve the electric power grid. These include the construction of an RO385 million power station and desalination plant on the Ashour plain in the *wilayat* of Mirbat with a 445 megawatt generating capacity, which will produce 15 million gallons of desalinated water a day. All phases of the project are due for completion in 2012.

Other projects with a total value of RO23 million are also being implemented to expand the Governorate's electricity services, in addition to a further RO6 million worth of projects for boosting the power transmission and distribution system.

THE SEWAGE PROJECT

The Salalah sewage project - one of the biggest infrastructure projects in Dhofar - will contribute to the region's commercial and economic development and help improve the Governorate's environmental and living conditions.

The project, which has an investment value of over RO70 million, comprises three main elements - a collection and conveyance system, a treatment plant and a feeder system.

When the first two phases have been completed at the end of 2010, the project will serve around 200,000 people.

Port of Salalah, a major trans-shipment port, sitting at the major East-West shipping lanes.





Salalah Port

The Salalah container port is one of the Sultanate's principal ports and is among the top 30 container ports in the world, sitting as it does on the Indian Ocean Rim, right at the major East-West shipping lanes. Salalah is the second largest container route between Europe and the Far East, and provides easy access to the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Indian Ocean and the East African coast. Salalah Port has two terminals – a Container Terminal (CT) and a General Cargo Terminal (GCT).

Container Terminal

Operations at the Container Terminal began in 1998. This terminal occupies a total area of 1.2 million square metres. In view of the success of Port Salalah as a major transshipment port in the region, the government started the implementation of the second stage of expansion in 2005, with the establishment of two berths (Berths 5 and 6), both with depths of 18 metres. They

were commissioned in early 2009. The terminal now consists of seven berths with a total length of 2,505 metres of quay wall. It is equipped to handle the world's largest container vessels with its 16-18m berths and 18.5m approach channel. The Port's container terminal capacity today is 6 million TEU. Today 25 of the world's largest cranes have been installed on the berths.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Omani government for the development of 3 new deep-water berths which will bring capacity to 9 million TEU.

General Cargo Terminal (GCT)

The GCT has 12 berths ranging from 115 to 600 metres in length with draughts of up to 16 metres, and a dedicated oil pier. Expansion of the GCT is underway and includes 1,800m of linear General Cargo berths with draughts of 16-18m to enable it to handle up to 40 million tons of dry bulk commodities and over 5 million tons annually of liquid products.



218/219



SPORTS AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Oman's modern Renaissance attaches the same importance to the physical fitness of the country's youth as it does to developing their minds and the government has provided a wide range of sporting and other youth activities for their benefit.

In the Governorate of Dhofar there are five sports clubs – Dhofar, An Nasr, Al Ittehad, Al Hilal and Mir-

bat. There are also a number of other sports amenities including the Salalah Sports Complex and As Saada Sports Complex. The Salalah Sports Complex, built in 1991, comprises a football pitch, an athletics track, changing rooms, an administrative building and accommodation for the teams. Numerous events have taken place here, including local and international championships and matches.

The new As Saada Sports Complex has a football pitch capable



Construction of a RO385 million power station and desalination plant on the Ashow plain in the wilayat of Mirbat is currently taking place, with other projects worth RO23 million being implemented.





220/221



of accommodating around 10,000 spectators, as well as a covered sports hall, an Olympic-sized swimming pool, a hockey pitch, two tennis courts, staff and player accommodation and several other facilities.

MARKETS

Al Hisn Souq - one of the main markets in the Governorate of Dhofar and the oldest souq in Salalah - is situated in one of the city's old quar-

ters. Upgraded in the year 2000, it covers an area of 30,000 square metres and has a large number of shops and stalls. After the sale of incense-burners, frankincense and incense were Omanised in 1994 (i.e. only Omanis were allowed to sell these items), several of the shops that had previously been selling other goods began selling these items too.

Salalah's central market occupies an area of 38,914 square metres





222/223



in the city centre. As it is a very important part of the city's commercial scene, it is constantly being upgraded by the government.

Souqs will be built in the new residential areas in several of Dhofar's main towns and cities to serve the needs of the local inhabitants.

SULTAN QABOOS MOSQUE – AN IMPORTANT RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL INSTITUTION

The Sultan Qaboos Mosque, which opened in Salalah in 2009, is a major religious and cultural institution. Occupying an area of around 19,440 square metres, it is surrounded by a marble-clad outer wall and has four gateways opening onto the neighbouring streets. The ground floor covers an area of 7,360 square metres and the main prayer hall can accommodate some 3,200 worshippers.

THE LAND OF FRANKIN- SENCE (WORLD HERITAGE SITES)

Many civilizations have come and gone over the course of the Sultanate's long history and traces of them can be seen to this day. The ancient city of Al Baleed to the east of Salalah in the Governorate of Dhofar was an example of Islamic architecture at its best during the Islamic

Physical fitness and developing the mind are of equal importance.





224/225



period; this was exemplified by its Grand Mosque with its 144 columns. It was visited twice by the traveller Ibn Battuta – once in the 7th century AH (14th century AD) and again twenty years later. He described it as a city of many mosques which produced excellent silk, as well as cotton and linen garments, and exported the finest Arabian horses to India. In the 14th century AD it was a commercial hub for trade between India and the East African coast.

Large scale excavations began in 2009 in the southern and south-east of the site, which revealed the presence of a substantial formal city wall with associated towers from the southern and south-east, and a very large stone breakwater. In addition, the distinctive rectangular piece of land surrounded on three sides by ancient lagoon deposits – sometimes identified as the Custom's area – was completely surrounded by a formal city wall with towers.

Al Hisn Souq covers an area of 30,000 square metres while Salalah's central market occupies an area of 38,914 square metres in the city centre.

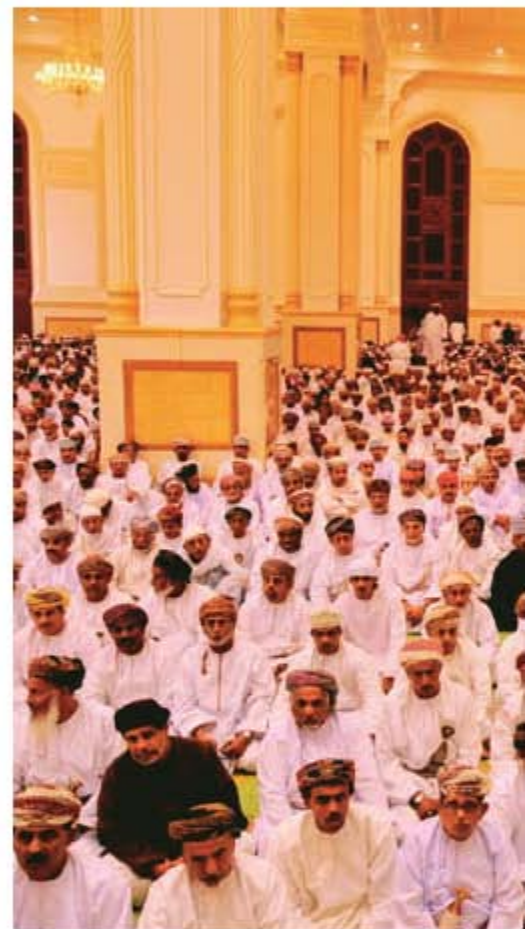


This wall is associated with the gate excavated from the east side. To the west of the enclosure excavations to date indicate that this very large complex may have been associated with trade described in a number of historical sources, including those of Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo.

The city of Sumhuram (Khawr Rawri) in the *wilayat* of Taqah is an ancient archaeological site dating from the third century BC. Himyaritic inscriptions can still be seen clearly on its citadel walls and columns and its harbour is one of the oldest in the Arabian Peninsula. Frankincense was exported to Egypt during the reign of Queen Hatshepsut in the 15th century BC – this is confirmed by a picture of a pharaonic ship which can be seen today in one of the temples in the Valley of the Kings in Luxor, Egypt.

Other ancient sites include Shisr in the *wilayat* of Thumrayt, which has been known by several names including Ubar and Wubar. Evidence of frankincense production has been found there, as well as indications of trade in frankincense and perfumes with Mesopotamia, Rome, Greece and Ancient Egypt.

Wadi Dawkah lies in the Al Najd area behind the northern slopes of the Dhofar mountains which are 350 kilometres long, 30 kilometres wide and stand at 2,000 meters at Jabal Samhan in the East, and at 1,400 meters at Jabal Qamar in the west. The frankincense crop is dependent on the rules and customs established



by the people residing near these areas, and production locations are divided into individual sections and with each designated to one group. The owner of any section may rent it to another group after negotiating a contract as to whether the production will be shared or exploited in full.

Wadi Dawkah is an example of an area where frankincense trees (*Boswellia sacra*) (Dhofari Arabic: *sajerat*, Jibbali: *megerot*) grow in large

(Top) The Sultan Qaboos Mosque in Salalah, surrounded by a marble clad outer wall, was opened on 10th July 2009.

(Below) Al Balced Archaeological Park.



226/227





THE MUSEUM OF THE FRANKINCENSE LAND

The Museum of the Frankincense Land in Salalah, officially opened on 23 July 2007, offers panoramic access to the history of Oman and its different regions over the ages. The museum provides visitors and scholars alike with an outline of Oman's long history and Maritime Heritage.

The Museum presents a brief history of Oman in two sections: The first exhibits history and archaeological findings; and the second contains models of Omani boats and shows the association of the Omani people to the sea.

The museum uses a blend of exhibits such as artefacts from different archaeological sites in Oman, audio-visual presentations, models, drawings, photographs, visual recreations and manuscripts to tell its story. The building also includes a multimedia hall, bookshop, number of Omani handicraft shops and a cafe, in addition to administration facilities and storage for artefacts not currently on display.

Located atmospherically inside the Al Baleed Archaeological Park, the outdoor areas include a watchtower and a viewing platform for observing migratory and native birdlife in the Al Baleed lagoon. There are pathways for strollers along the northern bank of the lagoon, and two bridges link this northern bank across the lagoon to the archaeological site, where plaques describe the history and excavation of the area for the benefit of visitors and scholars. In addition passages through the site enable viewers to overlook the excavated areas at close range and ponder life as it was once lived in this ancient place.

New discoveries were made at Al Baleed in March 2010, when the remains of a two kilometre wall running parallel to the shoreline were excavated below ground level on the southern side of Al Baleed, along with an anchorage on the sea side and a very large stone breakwater.





228/229





The Al Baleed Archaeological Park includes the historic city of Al Baleed which pre-dates the dawn of Islam. It was a main settlement during the late Iron Age, becoming an active city during the Islamic era.







numbers. The wadi is approximately 40 kilometres from Salalah on the highway linking Salalah to Muscat in the direction of Shisr/Wubar. It is a stony, semi-desert area featuring small, rounded hills mixed with shallow dips which were caused by flooding in ancient times. Frankincense trees dominate the area's vegetation, although other varieties of trees and herbs can also be found. The trees extend along an area of approximately 5 square kilometres of the whole wadi, which is estimated to be 14 Kilometres, and a total of 1,230 old trees of varying size have been found in the area. The trees grow to a height of approximately 5 metres with alternate leaves which are crowded at the ends of branches. The bark is papery and peeling.

Covered viewing and facilities for the visitor were put in place in 2010.

TOMB OF PROPHET JOB (PBUH)

The tomb of the Prophet Job (PBUH) is in Salalah's *miyabat* of Ghuduw. Other sites of religious significance include the tomb of the Prophet Omran and the Dahqa, where what is believed to be a footprint of the Prophet Saleh's camel can be seen. Sites in Mirbat include the tomb of Mohammed Bin Ali and the old citadel of Bin Saydouf.

FORTS AND OTHER PLACES OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

The numerous forts and citadels in the Governorate of Dhofar were



(Top) Chess pieces found in Shisr/Wubar.

(Below) This ancient city is approximately 170kms north of Salalah, and 90kms from the wilayat of Thumrayt. Historical sources show the city as being on the old frankincense route while excavations have revealed numerous traces of settlements dating from the Iron Age and the Islamic period.



232/233





The castles of (top) Taqah and (below) Mirbat and Sadah – the three most important castles in Dhofar.

built as defensive structures during various historical periods. Taqah Fort is one of the most significant. Built and ornamented in the Islamic style and situated in the town centre, some sources maintain that it dates from the 19th century AD. It has numerous defensive features, including towers and hidey-holes, and was used as an administrative building as well as for military purposes. It was restored and furnished

with traditional craft items by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture in 1991. Mirbat Fort has played an active role during the course of its long history, as a defensive structure, an administrative building and a *Barza*, or open meeting place. It has been restored several times, most recently in 2009.

Sadah Fort in the *wilayat* of Sadah has been restored and furnished with traditional Dhofari handicrafts.



حصن السداح
Sadah Castle



It was first opened to the public during the Year of the Heritage (1994).

KHAWRS (LAGOONS) – MIGRATING BIRDS AND A REFUGE FOR FISH

Under Royal Decree No. 49/97 eight *khawrs* – or lagoons – in the Governorate of Dhofar were declared protected areas. The main reason for this was the large number of birds which stop off at these lagoons during their annual migrations; some 156 different species have been recorded at these sites.

Over eighty species of birds have been recorded at Khawr Mughsayl, which lies to the east of Jabal Al Qamar and is one of the most important places for birds on Dhofar's western shore. It has been fenced off to protect the plant cover, enable mangrove trees to be planted around it and allow suitable observation points to be set up for bird-watching.

Khawr Rawri, one of the biggest protected *khawrs*, is between the *wilayats* of Taqah and Mirbat near the outlet of the Darbat Falls. It provides a refuge for numerous species of birds such as the flamingo, glossy ibis, the Eurasian spoonbill, various species of heron as well as numerous species of ducks, waders, gulls and terns. Eagles too of various species also visit during the winter months. It also offers occasional sanctuary for nesting turtles and it has over twenty different plant species and eleven species of fish. Khawr Al



(Top) The Argemone mexicana can be found in Dhofar's wadis, while the Little Bittern prefers coastal lagoons with reed beds.

The unspoilt beaches and khawrs provide a refuge for numerous species of birds, and wandering camels.





Baleed is another protected *khawr*.

Khawr Awqad, which is in Salalah, is part of the city's green belt, along with Khawr Al Qurm As Saghir and Khawr Al Qurm Al Kabir (Big Mangrove Lagoon and Little Mangrove Lagoon), which are beside the Salalah-Raysut road and are known locally as Khawr Theet.

Khawr Taqah is immediately to the west of the town of Taqah. It is a deep fresh water lagoon fed by a spring beside the sea which produces 120 litres of water a minute. It has two parallel "tongues" of water that extend in the direction of the sea; each "tongue" is around a Kilometre in length. Its plants, which are fresh water plants, include pond weed and reed thickets which provide a refuge for birds; more than 200 species of birds have been recorded in this *khawr*, while the fresh water provides a suitable environment for certain types of fish; some twenty species have been recorded there.

Khawr Sawli lies beside the Taqah-Salalah road. It has been fenced off because it is a site of special archaeological interest. It also has over 44 types of invertebrates as well as around 66 species of birds, 26 species of fish and over 70 different types of plants.

The reserve is at the eastern end of the city of Salalah and includes a stretch of open water around a Kilometre in length surrounded by thickets of reeds which grow to a height of up to 5 metres. Around 2,500 migrating birds have been



seen there. These birds fly to their breeding grounds in Europe in the spring, then in winter they migrate in large numbers to Africa, Arabia and Asia to escape the bitterly cold northern climate. The Governorate of Dhofar is one of their main transit areas and the birds stop off here during their journey to stoke up with food, which is available in abundance in the *khawrs*.

The Jabal Samhan Nature Reserve is a major sanctuary for rare

(Top) The Little Grebe can be seen at Wadi Darbat and Khawr Rawri all year round, while the Grecushawk is a winter visitor.

(Right) Nine *khawrs* in Dhofar are currently under protected status – here Khawr Baleed.





JEBEL SAMHAN NATURE RESERVE

The Jebel Samhan Nature Reserve, located to the east of Dhofar Governorate, is the largest wildlife reserve in the Sultanate of Oman and is home to the Arabian leopard, a flagship species that takes refuge in the mountains of Dhofar. The Reserve is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment & Climate Affairs.

Jabal Samhan is a series of peaks separated by deep, narrow valleys and water pools. It reaches a height of more than four thousand feet, and amid its rocky heights and cliffs live the Nubian ibex, Arabian gazelle, striped hyena, caracal, wild cat, foxes, porcupine, hedgehog and genet. High cliff ledges in some of the valleys, such as Wadi Snyak, offer a natural habitat for rare birds, including herons and several tropical species.

Over the past decade the Office for Conservation of the Environment of the Diwan of Royal Court, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Environment & Climate Affairs, conducted the Arabian Leopard Survey in Jabal Samhan Nature Reserve and on the Al Qamar mountains to the west of Salalah. The survey aimed to study and conserve this rare animal in the wild and to turn this region of the Sultanate into a protected area where visitors and researchers may observe these animals in their natural habitat among the steep mountain slopes, plains and valleys.

The broad expanse of Jabal Samhan extends to some 1,500 meters of high cliffs overlooking the hills of Salut, located between the *wilayats* of Mirbat and Sadah. Jabal Samhan was declared a Nature Reserve by Royal Decree No. 48/97.



240/241





wild animals. Declared a nature reserve under Royal Decree No. 48/97, it covers an area of 4,500 square Kilometres. Its cliffs, precipices and wadis provide natural habitats for certain rare bird species. Jabal Samhan consists of a chain of peaks rising to heights of over four thousand feet. Animals found here include Nubian ibex, Arabian leopard, gazelle, striped hyena, lynx, wild cat, fox, porcupine, hedgehog and hyrax.

SPRINGS AND WATERFALLS

Dhofar's numerous springs provide water for the population's needs and attract large numbers of tourists. The seasonal rains, known locally as the *Khareef*, are the main groundwater source in the mountain areas and on the plains. Rainfall varies from place to place and this means that the volume of water stored in the springs varies too.

The most important springs in the Governorate of Dhofar include Ayn Hamran, which is around fourteen Kilometres from Salalah and is well wooded with a variety of trees. Tourists visit it throughout the year, but particularly during the *Khareef* season. Water is plentiful in Ayn Hamran and (according to some of the local inhabitants) there used to be farms in the area which depended on it to irrigate crops such as maize, sugar cane, sweet potatoes and other local produce.

The spring with the greatest volume of water is Ayn Razat. Sev-



eral farms take their irrigation water from it including the government farms near al Mamoura Palace. Dhofar Municipality has established a beautiful garden with shady trees beside the spring, which is a popular destination for tourists, children on school trips and amateur photographers. A cave near the spring is used by picnickers and day trippers.

As it is near the Ateen Plain and the holiday camp sites in the *wilayat* of Salalah, the spring that attracts

(Previous page)

(Top) A rock hyrax (*Procavia capensis*) peeps out onto a wadi, and (below) Jabal Samhan.

Ayn Razat, the spring with the greatest volume of water.



the greatest number of visitors is Ayn Sahnawt. Despite having the lowest volume of water, it fills up and overflows during the monsoon rains.

Beneath the mountain, near Ayn Sahnawt, is a forest of shady trees which is also popular with visitors, particularly those who enjoy spending their evenings out of doors in the open air. The government has plans to develop the area and install some tourist amenities there.

Ayn Darbat lies to the east of the *wilayat* of Taqah off the main Mirbat road. In one section of its course it becomes a waterfall when the water level in Wadi Darbat rises following heavy monsoon rains. Ayn Darbat is in an unspoilt area with trees which only occur in Dhofar and South-East Yemen on a global scale - the *Anogeissus dhofanica* (*nestah* in Arabic, or *shghot* in Jibbali) - as well as many tamarind (*Tamarindus indica* and Arabic *subaar*).



Wadi, or Ayn, Darbat lies to the east of Taqah, off the main Mirbat road – nature at its best.





(Top) *Heliotropium longiflorum* and *Argyrophylla* are both common in Dhofar.

(Above) Wadi Darbat during the July/August monsoon, and (right) a colourful example of the *Adenium obesum* (or desert rose) in bloom.

The government is developing the area for tourists and is installing some amenities in the wadi beside the flowing waters.

There are many springs in the Governorate of Dhofar. Some are in rugged, almost inaccessible areas and are used by the local herdsman and inhabitants of the mountains and wadis. Ayn Natif is a spring in the *wilayat* of Hasik (in the east of Dhofar). The springs in the *wilayats* of Dalkut and Rakhyut are popular

with tourists, particularly during the *Khareef* season.

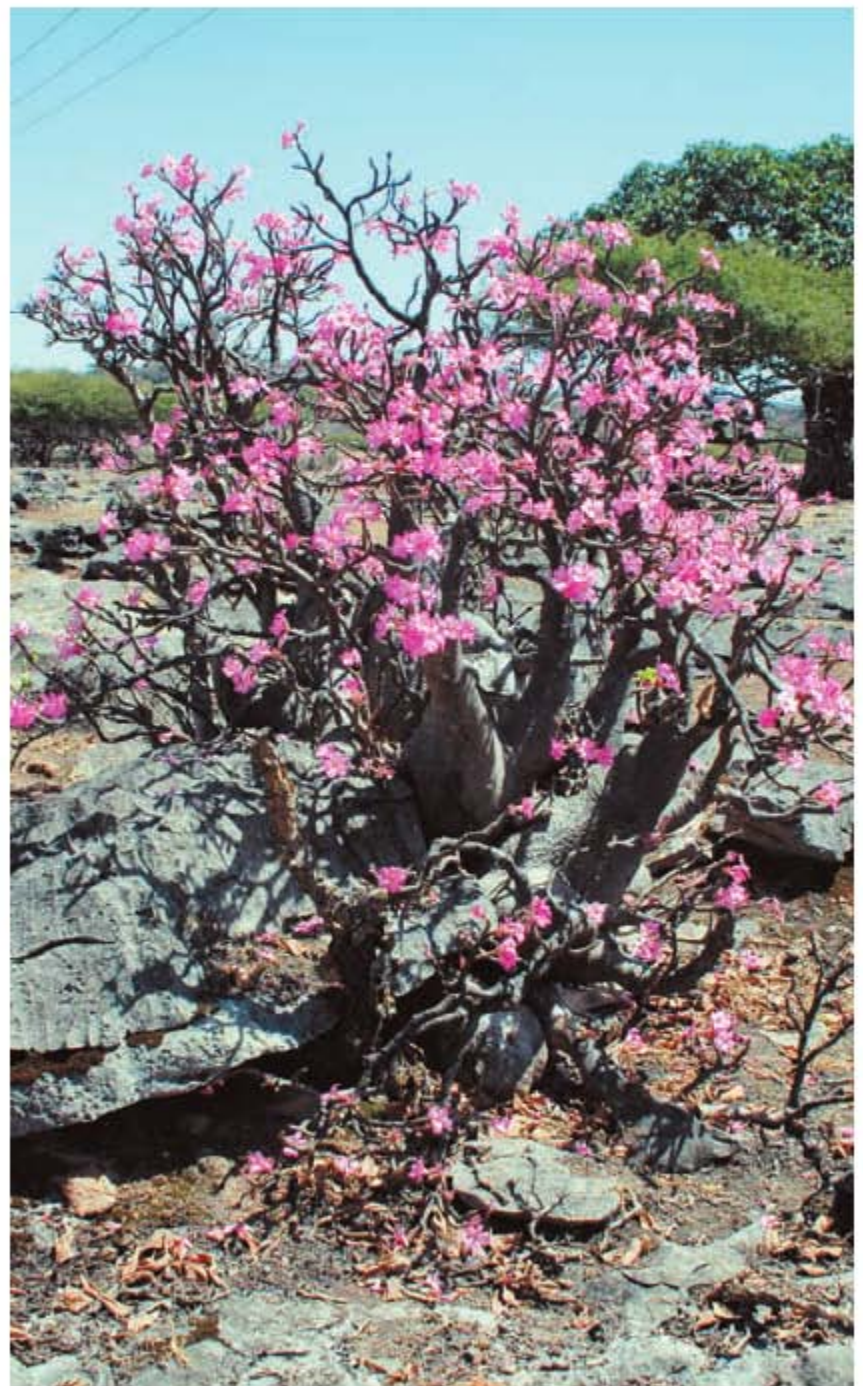
In addition to the springs, a number of other water sources in Dhofar provide irrigation for agriculture and water for domestic use. Water is an important strategic resource for the region's development. At present some 211 million cubic metres are available for agricultural use in five areas of the Governorate – Hailat Al Rakah, Hanfeet, Dameet, Wadi Bari Khawtar and Dawkah.



246/247



The main *wilayats* for desert tourism are Thumrayt, Shalim and the Hallaniyyat Islands and Al Mazyurah. The mountain wadis and deserts of Dhofar have their own unique charms and beauty that attracts explorers and tourists. They include Wadi Darbat, which is mentioned above, which runs through the hills until it reaches Khawr Rawri and the sea. It is particularly enchanting during the Khareef, when it flows over a waterfall some 1,000 feet high.







248/249



Wadi Andhar to the east of Thumrayt is a very ancient wadi which lies on the old caravan routes and used to be a centre for the frankincense trade. Evidence of that era can still be seen and frankincense trees grow there to this day.

Wadi Muqshin flows from the northern slopes of the mountains of Dhofar towards the desert. Because its water is so plentiful, it supports large numbers of *ghaf*

(*Prosopis cineraria*) trees and has wells that used to supply the Bedu with sweet water.

Many frankincense trees grow in Wadi Adwnab near Raysut. Visitors who want to see what a frankincense tree looks like will find this area is easily accessible.

BEACHES, KHAWRS (LAGOONS) AND TOURISM

Apart from its natural beauty, the main appeal of Dhofar's seashore is

(Left) The mountains above the village of Dalkut.

(Top) Greater Flamingoes explore the tranquil waters of Khawr Arkhal, and the headland between Dalkut and Rakhyut.

(Overleaf) The picturesque village of Dalkut nestles between the mountains and the sea.







(Top) Rakhyut is sandwiched in a narrow stretch of land, while below Tawi Ateer is depicted. (Right) Modern Taqah.

its caves and its many *khawrs* (lagoons) with their flocks of birds. At the northern end of Dhofar, you will find Khawr Arkhal with its hundreds of flamingos and other seabirds, as well as numerous other enchanting lagoons, Khawr Seenoor and As Shuwaimiyah beach. Further south is the lovely strip of coast and mangroves between Salalah and Mirbat, then immediately to the west of Salalah there is a coastal area which includes the quiet, clean

sandy beaches of Raysut and Mughsayl. There are plenty of asphalted roads and all these beaches are easily accessible by car. The beaches at Rakhyut and Dalkut lie sandwiched in a narrow stretch of land between green mountains and the deep blue sea.

PARKS AND GARDENS

With their natural beauty and the many recreational facilities they have to offer, the *wilayats*,





(Top) The fishing harbour at Mirbat, Abalone (safala) for sale in Sadah – diving for this priceless item has been banned for three years.

(Below) The dramatic scenery of Mughsayl which tourists and visitors alike love to visit, and right selling fresh fruits alongside Salalah's orchards.

towns and villages of the Governorate of Dhofar are able to attract tourists throughout the year. Three large parks have been set up in Salalah – Salalah Public Park, Al Sadah Park and Ad Dariz Park – as well as a number of smaller public gardens in the residential areas and on the slopes of the mountains overlooking the city. Seaside picnic shelters have been installed on the beaches at Mughsayl, Ad Damar and Taqah.

DHOFAR'S CAVES – ADVENTURE AND EXPLORATION

The Governorate of Dhofar is a geologically ancient region and its caves attract large numbers of tourists and visitors. In the old days they were inhabited by the local population or used as shelters. The main caves are Teeq, Tharwat, Akharat, Hartoum, Sheemaa', Mashloul and Asbeer.

Teeq Cave is one of the biggest caves in the world. The local people used to get their water from it and



take refuge or shelter in it, despite the fact that it is not easily accessible.

Sahoor Cave on the Naheez road is not far from the city of Salalah.

MARINE RESOURCES

The Governorate of Dhofar's 560-Kilometre-long coastline lies on the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean and its waters are teeming with fish including sardines, which the local people use as fodder for their animals and as a fertiliser. As it is rich in protein and phosphorus, it is also a valuable source of nutrition for human beings too.

The fishing industry is an important contributor to the Sultanate's national income; large quantities of lobsters, abalone and prawns are also exported. A large section of the population work either as fishermen or in fisheries-related occupations. The Ministry of Fisheries Wealth operates several projects and programmes in Taqah, Mirbat, Sadah, Dalkut, Rakhyut, and Shalim and the Hallaniyyat Islands with the aim of developing the sector. It has set up a fisheries research centre and built fishing harbours in Salalah, Dalkut and Mirbat, as well as a fish souq in Salalah. Fish souqs are also due to be built in Dalkut and Mirbat and a fishing harbour is scheduled for construction in Taqah.

PALM GROVES AND FRUIT ORCHARDS

With its water springs and heavy monsoon rains in the *Khareef* sea-





son, the Governorate of Dhofar has long been an important agricultural and stock-rearing region. From ancient times to the present day the local population have been farmers and animal breeders as well as fishermen. Cereals have traditionally been the main crop followed by vegetables and fruit; coconuts are also an important crop and there are many coconut groves in the Governorate.

There are three main agricultural areas – the coastal plain, the mountains and the Najd (which is in the *wilayat* of Thumrayt and the *niyabat* of Shisr); each of these areas produces its own types of crops. Dhofar is also rich in animal resources. According to the 2004-2005 agricultural census there are 405,147 head of livestock in 19,499 animal enclosures, mostly concentrated in the mountains of Dhofar.

FOLKLORE AND TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

The Governorate of Dhofar's traditional handicrafts are inspired by its environment and its heritage. This is also true of its folk songs, dances and poetry.

Dhofar is famous for hand-made swords and small daggers, palm-leaf and leather goods, pottery and traditional costumes. These crafts are popular throughout most of the Sultanate and the Gulf states.

Palm-leaf products include fans and baskets, which today are used



256/257



as ornaments. The Public Authority for Craft Industries has opened several craft centres - the Thumrayt Training and Production Centre for Leather Goods and Tanning, the Rakhyut Training and Production Centre for Coconut Shell Products in the *niyabat* of Shahb As'aib, the Shalim al Hallaniyyat Islands Training and Production Centre for *Ghadhaf* Palm Products, the Dhahboun Bone-Carving Centre and Al Mazyunah Craft Industries

Centre.

The government gives fishermen substantial financial support to encourage them to remain in their chosen profession. A project in the *wilayat* of Mirbat aims to provide training in abalone farming technology, develop abalone farming into a commercially viable industry and carry out research on the abalone's life cycle. Large numbers of lobsters can be found by the rocky shores in the *wilayats* of Dalkut, Rakhyut,

(Top and left) An abundance of fresh fish is caught daily, and a fisherman in Shalim Wa Al Hallaniyyat proudly displays his catch in the lobster season.

(Above) Performing popular musical folklore at the Salalah Tourist Festival.



(Above) The Sharh (a name derived from happiness) is performed.

(Right) Handicrafts made from desert palm leaves, and (below) traditional games are played at the Salalah Tourism Festival. Leather-covered coiled basketry - a Bedouin tradition, having evolved as a means of producing containers for both liquids and dry goods.

Taqah, Mirbat, Sadah, and on the Shalim and the Hallaniyyat Islands. They are caught in cages during the annual two-month lobster fishing season.

On the coast near the harbours there are several boat propeller factories and repair workshops.

The most popular men's and women's musical folklore in the Governorate of Dhofar include the *hubbut*, *sharh*, *dana dun*, *madar*, *naana* and *dibrart*. The *bar'ah* was

added to UNESCO's World Cultural and Human Non-material Heritage List in 2010. This dance and music represents youthful exuberance. It is performed by two persons, each carrying his dagger in the right hand and holding his *dishdasha* (robe) firmly at the waist in the left hand. The characteristic movement of *bar'ah* is a high leap into the air, during which one of the dancer's legs is raised up high.



258/259





Salaia in 1973





Salalah today



THE GOVERNORATE OF MUSANDAM

THE REALITY VERSUS FANTASY CONTEST



The Governorate of Musandam has two windows – one looking onto the sea and the other onto a world of the imagination.

In this governorate on the extreme northern tip of the Omani coast the sea is the next-door neighbour to the mountains. More than a next-door neighbour, in fact, because the two interpenetrate and overlap. The effect of the sea entering the base of the mountains is to create a series of caves of varying shapes and sizes which offer a fascinating adventure playground for divers and a chance for them to explore and view the rare fish that live in the dark waters deep beneath the mountains..... and the fish that gambol by the sunlit surface in a dazzling display that complements the colours of the coral reefs.

The Musandam peninsula separating the Oman Sea on the east from the Arabian Gulf on the west to form the Strait of Hormuz to the north. The mountains of this area slope steeply seaward forming an extremely rugged and rocky coast. And (right) the Musandam Peninsula as depicted by the NASA Earth Observatory.

Here in Musandam there are hawksbill turtles, dancing dolphins and flocks of white seagulls. Or you might see little green bee-eaters or white-cheeked bulbuls, or a distant golden eagle wheeling over mountains which rise to a height of 1,800 metres above sea level.

Musandam has four *wilayats* - Khasab, Daba, Bukha and Madha.

Those with an interest in history will find forts and citadels in the Governorate of Musandam that will give them an idea of just how old this place is. Others may be more interested in the Strait of Hormuz because of its strategic importance at the entrance to the Arabian Gulf. However, what about the poet or storyteller who sees fantasy and the imagination as being the underlying basis of truth and the world of fiction as being more real than the real world?

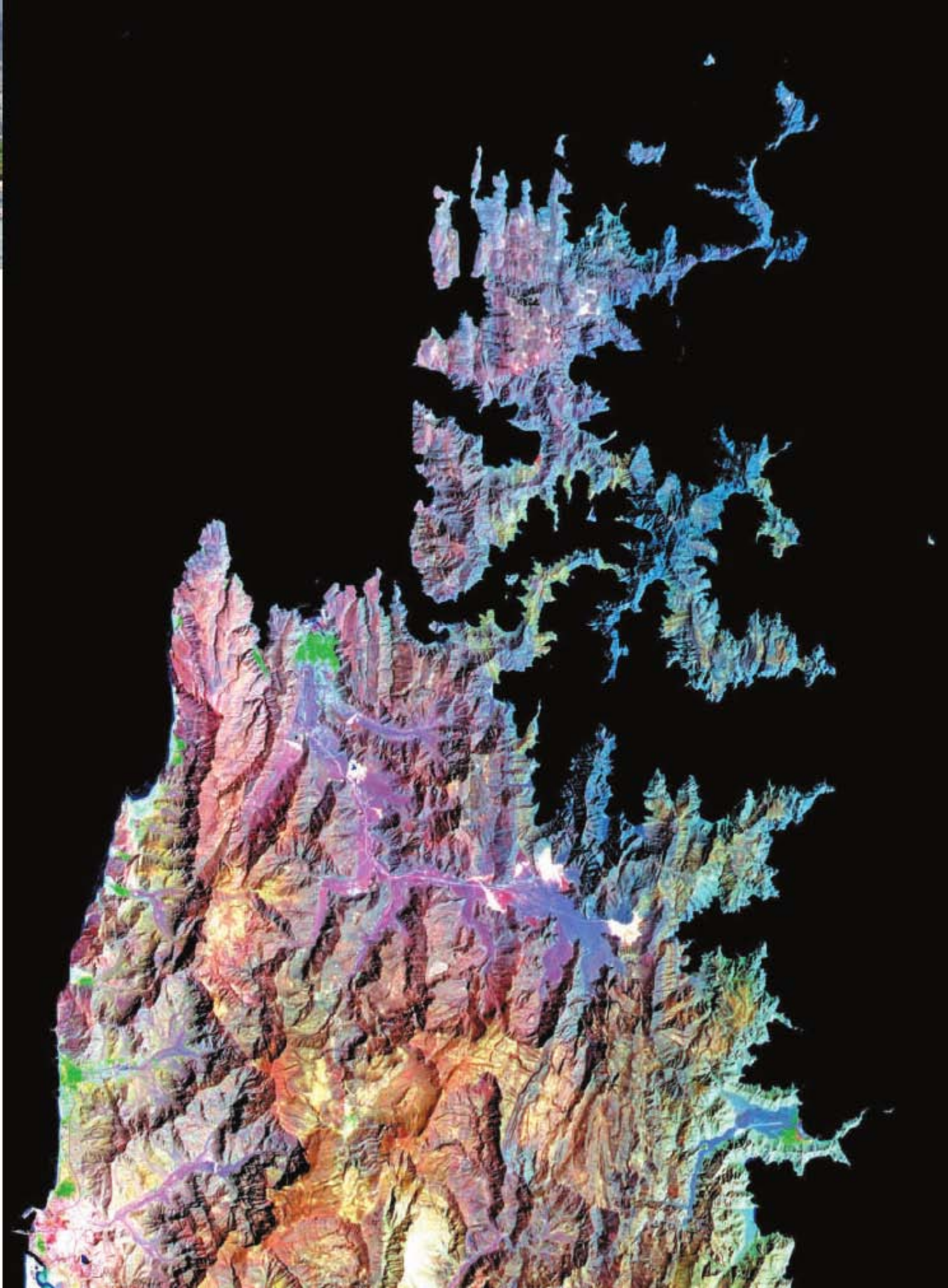
What can he say when he realises that the imaginary picture presented by poets and storytellers is actually tangible reality and that the fantasy world he sees before his eyes has been recorded by a very non-fantasy camera lens? Or that the mermaids described in Sindbad's voyages, together with the gardens, pearls, corals and birds, are not the product of the imagination, but actually exist on these shores and islands and in these mountains?

Here it is reality that creates fantasy and not the other way round. Or perhaps reality here actually is fantasy.

THE JOYS OF THE SEA

To travel north from Muscat, the capital, to the Governorate of Musandam you may opt for a long overland journey along the coast. Or alternatively you may choose to fly or travel by sea on the ferry service from Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat to Musandam's Port Khasab.

Of the three options the ferry is the most enjoyable. Throughout the five-hour trip the views of the water, the sky and the distant mountains, the dancing reflection of the sunlight on the waves, and the fish, dolphins and sea birds, will fill the traveller with the "joys of the sea" – a feeling akin to the "joys of the land" that a person experiences when he climbs up the winding mountain road to the summit of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in the Dakhiliyah region.





Musandam is famous for its khawrs - which are often likened to Norway's fjords - and its steep cliffs dropping vertically into the sea.

Dolphins love to play alongside the tourist dhows while immature cormorants are bannished at the activity in the waters below.

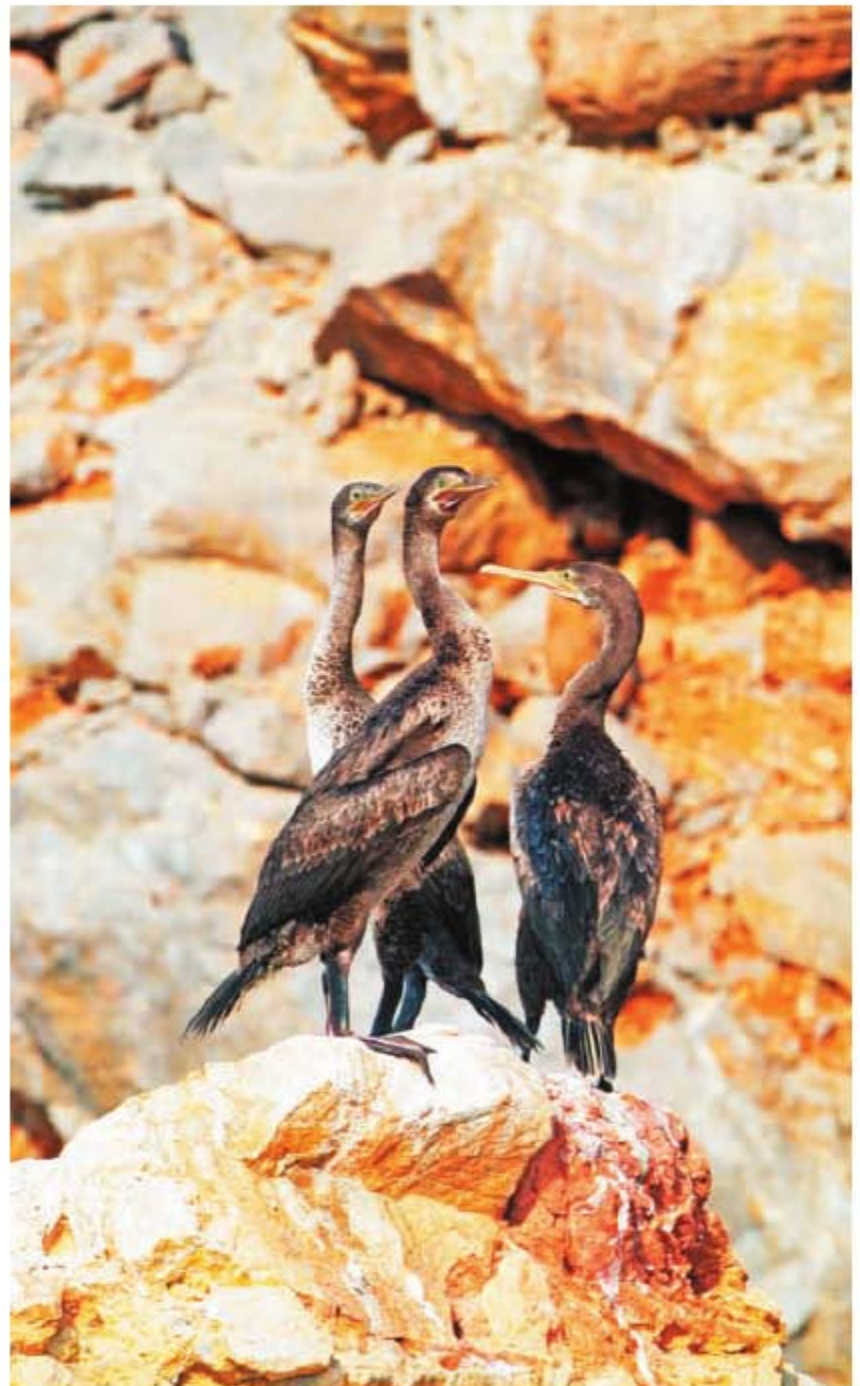
VARIED TERRAIN AND CLIMATE – MOUNTAINS AND SEA.

One of the distinctive things about the Governorate of Musandam is the variety of its terrain and climate, where in the summer months mountain villages cloaked in greenery and wreathed in cloud look like hanging gardens and the traveller finds himself straining every muscle in his haste to get to them. Helicopters provided by the government

transport the local people and drinking water to places that in the past were well-nigh inaccessible owing to the rough roads and harsh terrain.

Situated between sheer cliffs on both sides, the wilayat of Khasab is like a port at the mouth of an estuary. The mountains rising behind it supply it with fresh water and the green of its date palms blends harmoniously with the colours of the mountains, the sea and the sky.

An observer looking down from



the top of Jabal Harem (2,087 metres) will see the winding road climbing up towards the *wilayat* of Daba past small wadis cutting into the mountain slopes. In spring the surrounding country is covered with a multi-coloured carpet of flowers.

The *wilayat* of Madha is a mountain area watered by *aflaaj* (pl. of *falaj* = traditional irrigation channel) and springs. The *aflaaj* include Falaj Al Madhani, Falaj Al Daayer, Falaj Al 'Aadhid, Falaj Al Shariki and



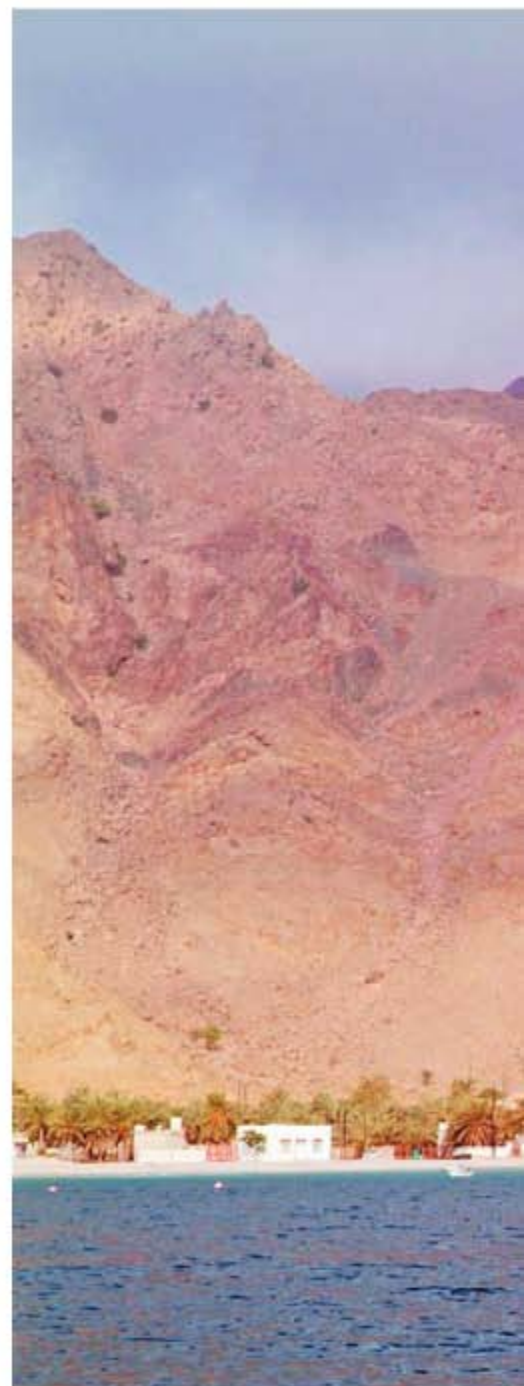
Falaj Al Sarooj, while the fresh water springs include Ayn Al Sheema, Ayn Al Shariki and Ain bin Humaid. There are also sulphur springs – hot in winter and cool in summer – that the local people and visitors use as a treatment for certain skin diseases. Madha also has a large number of mountain caves.

The *wilayat* of Bukha's most striking features are its modern houses and excellent beaches with their flocks of seagulls.

Every visitor to Musandam will be entranced by its fjords and bays and its many islands scattered over the sea like green stars. The main islands are Umm Al Ghanam, Musandam and Salamah and Her Daughters, and Umm Al Tair, half hidden under clouds of beautiful birds. In winter it is home to vast flocks of terns and seagulls.

Other islands include Jazirat Al Khil, Jazirat Makhbuq, Jazirat Abu Mikhaylif, Sawweek and Jazirat Maqlab, which is popular with divers and underwater photographers because of its coral reefs. The fjords – particularly Khawr Shim, Khawr An Nid, Khawr Al Hablayn and Khawr Ghub Ali – also attract tourists and divers.

So this is the Governorate of Musandam – a land of wide beaches and scattered islands beneath mountains heavy with the fragrant scent of trees. Sandwiched between the Sea of Oman to the east and the Arabian Gulf to the west, it lies right at the northern tip of the country and to



Bukha, with its beaches and picturesque houses which are silhouetted in the sea.





Scenes of central Khasab with its date palm orchards in the background. The centuries old making of the little axe (the jirz) being pursued by the young.

(Overleaf) Khasab Fort, winner of the International Award at the Museums and Heritage Show in London in 2010.

the south of the Strait of Hormuz, or the "pearl at the end of the world" as Raymond O'Shea describes it in his book "The Sand Kings of Oman".

KHASAB – FERTILITY AND GROWTH

It is often possible to deduce something about a place's character from its name.

The name of Musandam's *wilayat* of Khasab – which means "fertile" in Arabic – immediately suggests fertil-

ity and growth. About 500 Kilometres from Muscat, Khasab is the Governorate's capital. With 60 mountain and seaside villages it is an area of fruit trees and abundant groundwater stocks. The *jirz* is made here. Consisting of a wooden shaft with an axe-like iron head, the *jirz* was originally a weapon, though with the passage of time it became a traditional dress accessory. In Musandam today an Omani in formal dress wears a *misarr* (turban) and *khanjar* (dagger)



270/271

THE JIRZ

The *jirz* is a small axe. Historically, it was the main component of a personal arsenal that also included a sword, a shield, and a small, straight dagger. No longer required as a weapon the *jirz* continues to be carried for protection against feral animals and snakes in the peninsula's trackless interior, as well as being featured in ceremonies.

The head of the *jirz* is made either of steel or bronze and fixed in a long wooden shaft crafted from a branch of one of the following trees which grow on the mountains and plains of the Governorate of Musandam: *mizij* (*Prunus arabicus*) *sidr* (*Ziziphus spinachristi*), *'atm* (*Olea africana*), *shahs* (*Dodonea viscosa*) or *shaihan* (*Grewia erythraea*), all of which are notable for the robustness of their branches.

Jirz makers choose only the best and straightest branches. After they have been cut they are kept out of the

sunlight to prevent them from splitting, following which their bark is removed. Then they are usually oiled. Any kinks that might occur in the shaft are treated by immersing it in water to soften it and placing a rock on the opposite side to the kink to straighten it out. Alternatively, the shaft may be softened by heating it on a fire or straightened with modern carpentry tools.

The *jirz*, hand-forged, is small enough to fit into the palm of the hand, typically having a length of 8-10cms and a height of 3-4cms at the blade edge. The sharp, downward-curving blade tapers gracefully outward around a wooden shaft, and the head of the axe terminates in a square, hammer-like projection. Most feature geometric designs on the sides and along the top of the blade.

The *jirz* is fitted onto a wooden shaft or handle, typically measuring from 70 to 90 cms in length. The craftsman often decorates the shaft with two silver rings and other linear designs which complement those found on the axe head itself.









Khasab - haven for fishing boats and a terminal for National Ferries plying the route Muscat to Khasab, and the Sultan Qaboos Mosque to the right.

and holds a *jirz* in his right hand.

Khasab's seaside fort stands on the site of an old fort built by the Portuguese in the 11th century AH (17th century AD). Other ancient remains indicate that the *wilayat's* history has roots extending deep into the past. Apart from these attractions, Khasab also has a large number of wadis and green areas that are ideal for outings and picnics.

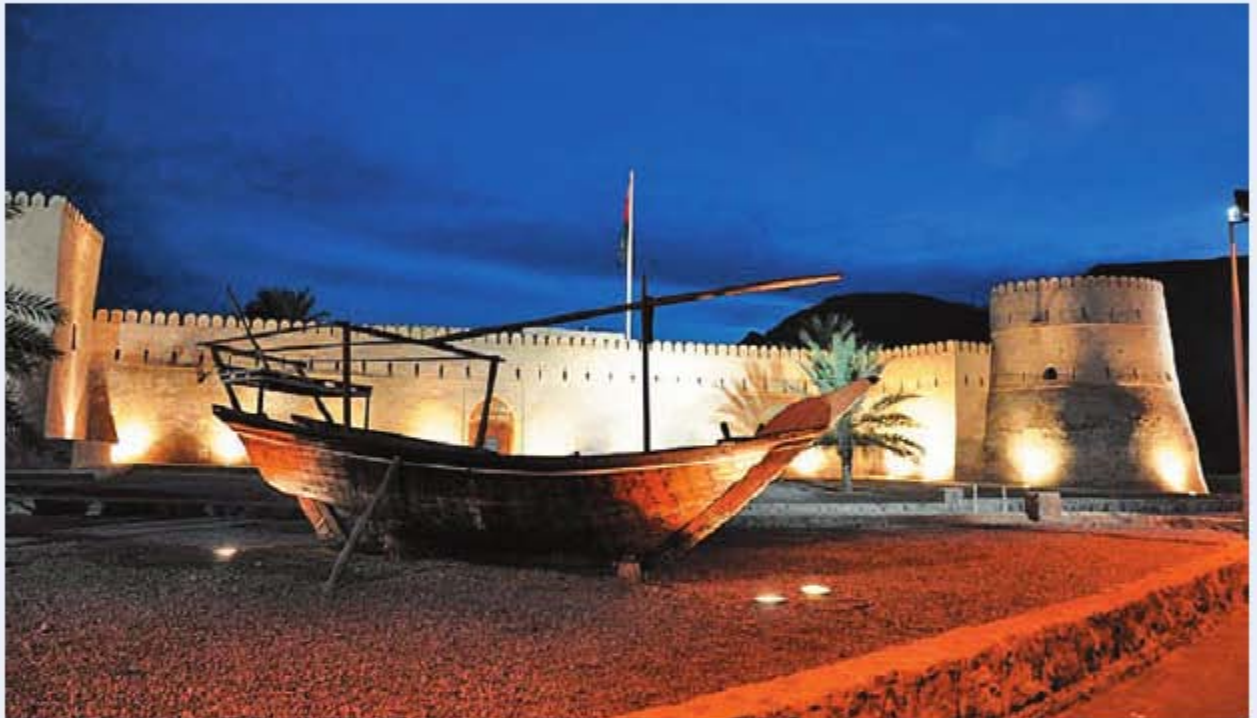
Khasab's houses are built beside well-lit modern streets lined with

shady date palms. The tall minarets of the Sultan Qaboos Mosque stands in the town centre.

BUKHA – FIG ORCHARDS AND FLOCKS OF BIRDS

In the *wilayat* of Bukha you are greeted by the sight of modern houses and clouds of birds. Its hundred villages lie stretched out along the shore and its farms – called *salsataam* by the local people – grow a variety of crops, particularly figs, grapes and dates.





KHASAB FORT

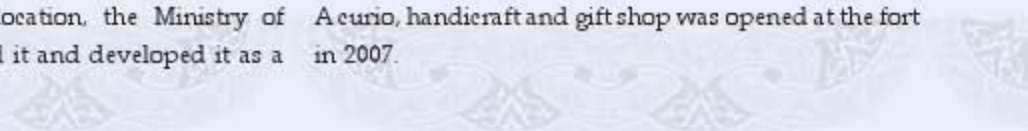
The Khasab Fort restoration and development project beat 250 international competitors to win first prize in the annual Museums and Heritage Competition in the British capital, London, in 2010, for the world's best historic site to be restored for tourism purposes.

The fort, one of the Governorate of Musandam's most striking buildings, was built in the 17th century and restored by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture in 1990. Inspired by the cultural memories the fort evokes and its stunning seafront location, the Ministry of Tourism has since revamped it and developed it as a tourist attraction.

There is now a museum in the fort containing examples of Musandam crafts, folklore and traditional music. Its other rooms have been furnished with the kind of items found in a typical Musandam house, including traditional dress and personal ornaments.

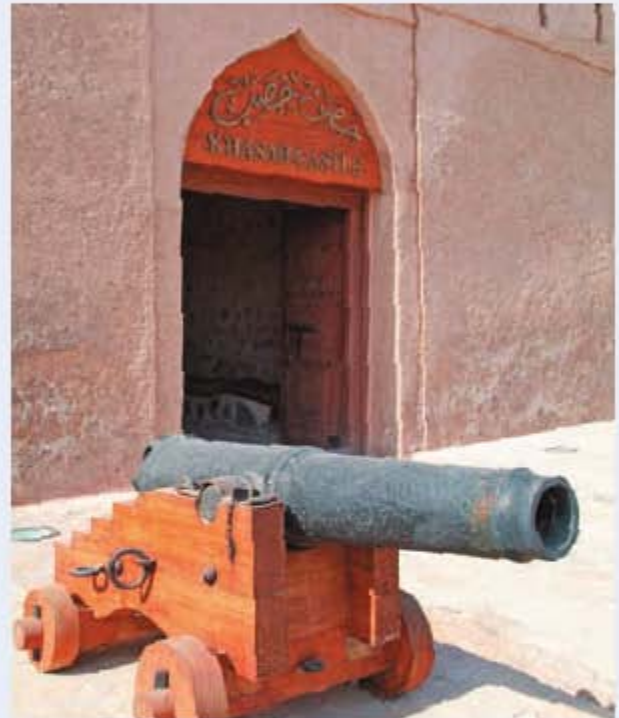
An example of a *bait al qufi* (traditional Musandam store house, known as 'the house of the lock) has been built in the fort's courtyard, where there is also an exhibition of local boats, a Kumzari summer house, a clay oven and an old quern.

A curio, handicraft and gift shop was opened at the fort in 2007.





276/277







278/279



Bukha is a crescent-shaped *wilayat*. The 26-Kilometre journey to it from Khasab takes you through the villages along the coast road. Its temperate summer climate and gentle breezes make it an ideal place for campers to pitch their tents.

There are several sites of historical interest in Bukha including Bukha Fort, which stands in the middle of the *wilayat*. Built in the reign of Sayyid Said bin Sultan, it was renovated in 1990. Nearby there is a mosque built of stone and Omani gypsum. Bukha is renowned for its wadis and beautiful beaches.

The *wilayat* boasts a full range of government services, including health, education, electricity, water, telecommunications and all the other amenities associated with modern urban development.

DABA – THE OLD MARKET

According to Ibn Mandhur (the great Arab scholar), in his 1290 Dictionary of the Arabic language entitled *Lisan Al-Arab*, he stated that Daba was one of the famous markets of the Arabs. Al Tabari – author of *Tareekh al Uman wa'l Muluk* (History of Nations and Kings) described it as "the metropolis and the great market", while the traveller William Gifford Palgrave who visited it in 1860, compared it to the Italian city of Naples.

Daba is in the south-eastern corner of the *wilayat* of Musandam. Its present-day population are farmers,

Al Balid Fort in Bukha, restored in 1990, is approx 26 kms along the coast road from Khasab.



Daba - Ibn Maudhūr (the great Arab scholar) in his 1290 Dictionary of the Arab language, stated that this town was one of the famous markets of the Arabs.

Madha, consisting of 16 villages, is situated 360 kms from Muscat .

fishermen and boat builders and its 114 villages are scattered over the mountains, on the plain and by the sea. Its historic sites include the mud and stone settlement of Al Aqiq, where the people of Daba used to live in former times, as well as Al Saibah Fort, restored during the Renaissance, and the Citadel of Sibtaan. Traces of ancient farming activity indicate that Daba has a long agricultural tradition. Every day hundreds of tonnes of fish including kingfish,

tuna and *sha'ni* are landed at its fishing harbour, which is frequented by fish merchants and tourists throughout the year.

MADHA – AFLAAJ, MAKHAAZIN AL JAHL AND THE HABOOT

The *wilayat* of Madha may derive its name for the word *madesh* (praiseworthy) in view of the fertility of its wadis, much praised for the crops they produce, as well as its large number of *falaj* water ba-





sins and cold fresh water and warm sulphur springs like Ayn al Sammai, which are renowned for their medicinal properties.

The sixteen villages in the *wilayat* of Madha, 370 Kilometres from the Governorate of Muscat, include Madha Al Jadidah, Al Harah and Al Saruj. Madha is exceptionally well endowed with sites of historical and archaeological interest, including some small underground chambers thousands of years old, known to the locals as "*makhaazin al jahl*" ("stores for the Time of Ignorance") – a reference to their great age. In the old days they were used to store food.

In Madha a basin in which *falaj* water collects is called a *haaboot*. (There are more *aflaj* in Madha than in any of Musandam's other *wilayats*) In other areas these basins, which are of varying sizes and capacities, are called *jall* or *lajall*.

THE GOVERNORATE OF MUSANDAM IN HISTORY

The Governorate of Musandam's historical roots go back a long way. Evidence of early settlement can be seen in the ancient rock carvings found in many parts of the *wilayat* of Madha which date from pre-Islamic times, as well as inscriptions from the early centuries of the Hijra. Musandam also has Iron Age sites from between 1000 and 1500 BC, as well as ancient tombs with white marble inscribed headstones.

The building style of the old traditional settlements reflects the



Madha is exceptionally well endowed with sites of historical and archaeological interest, but is at the same time a modern city.





harshness of the local terrain. The walls of some of the houses are over a metre thick and in some cases over two metres thick, while their low ceilings were designed to help keep them warm during the winter months.

According to figures released by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture's Historic Building Settlements Registration and Conservation Committee - as part of a project to document Oman's historic residential quarters - some 72 old residential quarters were recorded in the Governorate of Musandam, mostly stone built; the local people traditionally built their houses out of locally available materials and used natural rock formations in the terrain of the area for the walls and supports. The colours of the buildings were identical to the colours of the environment in which they stood and the roof beams were thick tree trunks, above which was a mass of interwoven branches topped by stone slabs.

The old settlements in the Governorate of Musandam are typical examples of the traditional mountain architectural style and consist of sturdy one-room buildings with basins for storing water. The fact that some of the inhabitants were animal herders may explain why their amenities were so basic, since by the nature of their occupation herders are constantly on the move in their search for new pastures. In former times the local people tended to move between the mountains and

the coast, depending on whether it was summer or winter.

Khasab Fort is a typical example of a defensive structure. This 17th century building's distinctive frontage is due to the fact that it is located on the shore overlooking the sea. Within its wall is a central tower believed to pre-date the construction of the fort itself. The fort has been restored by the Ministry of Tourism and turned into a superb museum depicting aspects of Musandam's history, heritage and culture, supported by audio-visual aids.

Al Bilad Fort is one of the *wilayat* of Bukha's main historic buildings and overlooks the shore. Dating from 1250 AH, it has a similar layout to most other Omani forts. It was restored in 1989.

Old buildings in the *wilayat* of Daba include the rebuilt Al Saibah Fort and Sabtaan Citadel, which is half way along the Daba-Khasab road.

THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ – A PEARL OF THE SEA

The Gulf's oil is transported through the Strait of Hormuz to the outside world and it is through here that super-freighters pass to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. It is thus of enormous commercial and strategic importance, to the extent that the safety of shipping in the Indian Ocean is inextricably linked to the security of shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

***Modern highways link the villages
of the Musandam.***



284/285



THE BAIT AL QUFL – HOUSE OF THE LOCK

The *bait al qufl*, a form of architecture unique to the Musandam Peninsula, evolved as a means of safeguarding vital supplies and household possessions during periods of seasonal migration.

Extending 1.5 metres or more below ground level, the walls of the *bait al qufl* can exceed one metre in thickness and three metres in height with individual slab-like stones, lifted into place by as many as 7 or 8 men at a time. The stronghold-like interior was designed to accommodate rows of large earthenware

storage jars (*khars*) containing provisions critical to the survival of the household. The storage jars, placed inside during the early stages of construction, were larger than the door itself, and could not be removed afterwards.

Access to the *bait al qufl* is limited to a single opening of no more than 50 x 90 cm, deeply recessed into the side of the main wall. A heavy wooden door, its floor-to-ceiling span greatly exceeding the size of the opening, is set into solid blocks of stone, and secured by two separate locking mechanisms during sustained periods of absence.





STRAIT OF HORMUZ

The Strait of Hormuz is one of the most significant and busiest waterways in the world. Some 90% of the Gulf's oil exports pass through this narrow passageway to the world beyond. Vital as it is to the oil trade, the Strait serves also as a principal trade and shipping portal to the markets and resources of the Orient.

On one side of the Strait lies the Arabian Gulf; on the other the Sea of Oman, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. The Iranian province of Bandar Abbas looks down from the north, while to the south the Governorate of Musandam oversees traffic through the narrow sea channel, since the shipping lanes lie

within the territorial waters of Oman.

To ensure the unbroken safe transit of shipping through the strategic international waterway, which lies beneath a bank of steep mountains, the Sultanate places top priority on maintaining maximum protection along the shipping lanes. Units of the Royal Navy of Oman guide and direct ships through the Strait and oversee their protection until they have passed through safely. The key importance of the Strait of Hormuz lies not only in its status as a conduit for oil tankers, but also its commercial significance, since much of the trade of the countries bordering the Arabian Gulf coast passes through this channel and its waters.





The Strait's commercial importance goes back centuries. Ibn Bat-tuta passed through it during his famous journey and recorded that all the trade between India and Iraq passed through it. Al Masoudi – the author of *Murooj al Dhahab* (Golden Meadows) – observed that the protection of shipping in the Strait was the responsibility of the people of Oman.

Some 90 per cent of the Gulf's oil exports pass through the Strait, which is 80 Kilometres long, 60 Kilometres wide and 60 metres deep at its deepest point and lies between the Omani and Iranian coasts. It is the Gulf's eastern gateway to the open seas – i.e. the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND MODERN DEVELOPMENT

The Governorate of Musandam's four *wilayats* have benefited hugely from the development and achievements of Oman's modern Renaissance. One of the many examples of the government's commitment to this region is the drinking water supply service; water is transported by ship to the islands and remote sea-side settlements and delivered overland to the most inaccessible mountain villages. There are health services in every *wilayat* as well as tree-lined, surfaced or asphalted roads with street lighting. Other clear evidence that the government is taking effective steps to develop Musandam includes the Governorate's sewage

and harbour projects and tourist investment schemes, which include the construction of several modern hotels.

According to the 2009-2010 figures, there are seventeen schools in Musandam with 5,030 students (boys and girls). Students of Sharia graduate every year from the Institute of Islamic Sciences, which comes under the jurisdiction of the Sultan Qaboos Centre for Islamic Culture.

There are three government hospitals – in Khasab, Bukha and Daba; Khasab Hospital is the referral hospital for the Governorate. There is also a polyclinic in Khasab and three health centres – in Lima, Kumzar and Madha. Of the 156 hospital beds in Musandam some are for general cases while others are for the treatment of internal diseases, surgery cases and paediatric, gynaecological and maternity patients.

There are electricity services everywhere in Musandam; power plants have been set up in Kumzar and Ar Rawdah to supply the surrounding rural areas. The *wilayats* and villages are linked by a network of roads, including the beautiful 40-Kilometre-long coast road from Khasab via Bukha to the UAE border. A road is currently being built between the *wilayat* of Khasab, the *niyabat* of Lima and the *wilayat* of Daba to help promote trade and tourism.

Port Khasab, one of the showpieces of Musandam's economic

Kumzar is situated in a narrow cleft in the rocks and has very little flat land around it. It looks out onto the Strait of Hormuz.



development, was opened in 1983 and work on its expansion was completed in February 2007 to enable it to receive commercial vessels and cruise liners. Two breakwaters were constructed – one 575 metres long and the other 445 metres long – as well as a commercial jetty 300 metres long and ten metres deep. The harbour basin was dredged to a depth of ten metres and the entrance channel to a depth of ten and a half metres, and some 70 hectares of land were reclaimed. Other work included the construction of a fishing jetty 100 metres long and five metres deep; the fishing harbour basin was dredged to a depth of five metres and seven iron floating jetties were installed covering an area of 22 by 10 metres. Four storage depots were constructed, as well as a passenger terminal and administration, police coastguard and customs buildings.

The mooring facility at Kumzar, opened in 2007, includes two breakwaters – one 105 metres long and the other 85 metres long – as well as a fixed fishing jetty 60 metres long. The moorage was dredged to a depth of three metres and a second jetty 40 metres long was constructed along with a Royal Oman Police building.

There are plans to develop Port Khasab so that it can play a higher-profile role in promoting trade and tourism, and also to introduce services and amenities - including boat trips - in the Khawr tourist area.



Because of Musandam's mountainous terrain, the local people have devised a way of storing water in basins known as *birak* (pl. of *birka*). According to the *birka*-counting project, there are a total of 968 *birak* with an estimated capacity of around 78,000 cubic metres. Four groundwater recharge dams have also been built.

The government has installed a water desalination plant to supply the public with clean drinking wa-



ter. The Royal Air Force of Oman operates regular flights to transport personal goods, foodstuffs, fresh water and building materials to some coastal communities such as the *niyabat* of Lima and Kumzar; and to deliver fresh water to the remote mountain villages.

CRAFTS AND POETRY

In *Murooj Al Dhahab* (Golden Meadows) Al Masoudi observes that when Omani seafarers were in

the Sea of the Zinj – also known as the Sea of Barbar – which adjoins the Arabian Gulf and ends at the island of Qarbalu in the Land of the Zinj, they would chant while they were riding the waves.

We hear similar sailors' chants today.

It is the environment that inspires people to adopt their own characteristic style of dress and develop their folklore and traditional crafts and industries, just as it was envi-

Musandam ladies are expert at making handicrafts from date palm leaves.



ronment and circumstances that led people to build forts and castles or dig tunnels beneath the ground so that they could defend themselves.

In the Governorate of Musandam the environment in which people live is either maritime (along the coast and on the islands) or agricultural in the mountains, and the people's occupations and crafts have developed accordingly.

For the inhabitants of the coast fishing is a basic source of livelihood, as well as fishing, net-making and boat-building. The local type of fishing boat – called a *bateel* – is not just a boat, but a true work of art in which the craftsman demonstrates the popular artistic taste in its most manifest form. Decorated with an arrangement of seashells, which are themselves products of the marine environment, it is over ten metres long from stem to stern. Another kind of boat, called a *maashwaat*, is smaller, being some seven metres in length. A cruise in a *bateel* or a *maashwaat* is an indescribably enjoyable experience for a tourist.

The main occupations in the agricultural mountain areas are stock-rearing and farming. Crops include dates, fruit and animal fodder. Crafts include needlework and embroidery.

Popular handicrafts in the village of Lima include pottery and drum making; the drums are renowned for their high quality. Other local products include traditional swords, sharp knives known as *beeshak* and



the *jirz*, which has a head similar to an axe head.

The local songs and dances are part of the region's folkloric tradition and are performed on specific occasions such as weddings or to mark the fishing or harvest seasons. They include *Ar Rawah* – a song and dance routine which comes in four different forms and in which the performers repeat four different sets of words, depending on the time of day at which it is performed; in the

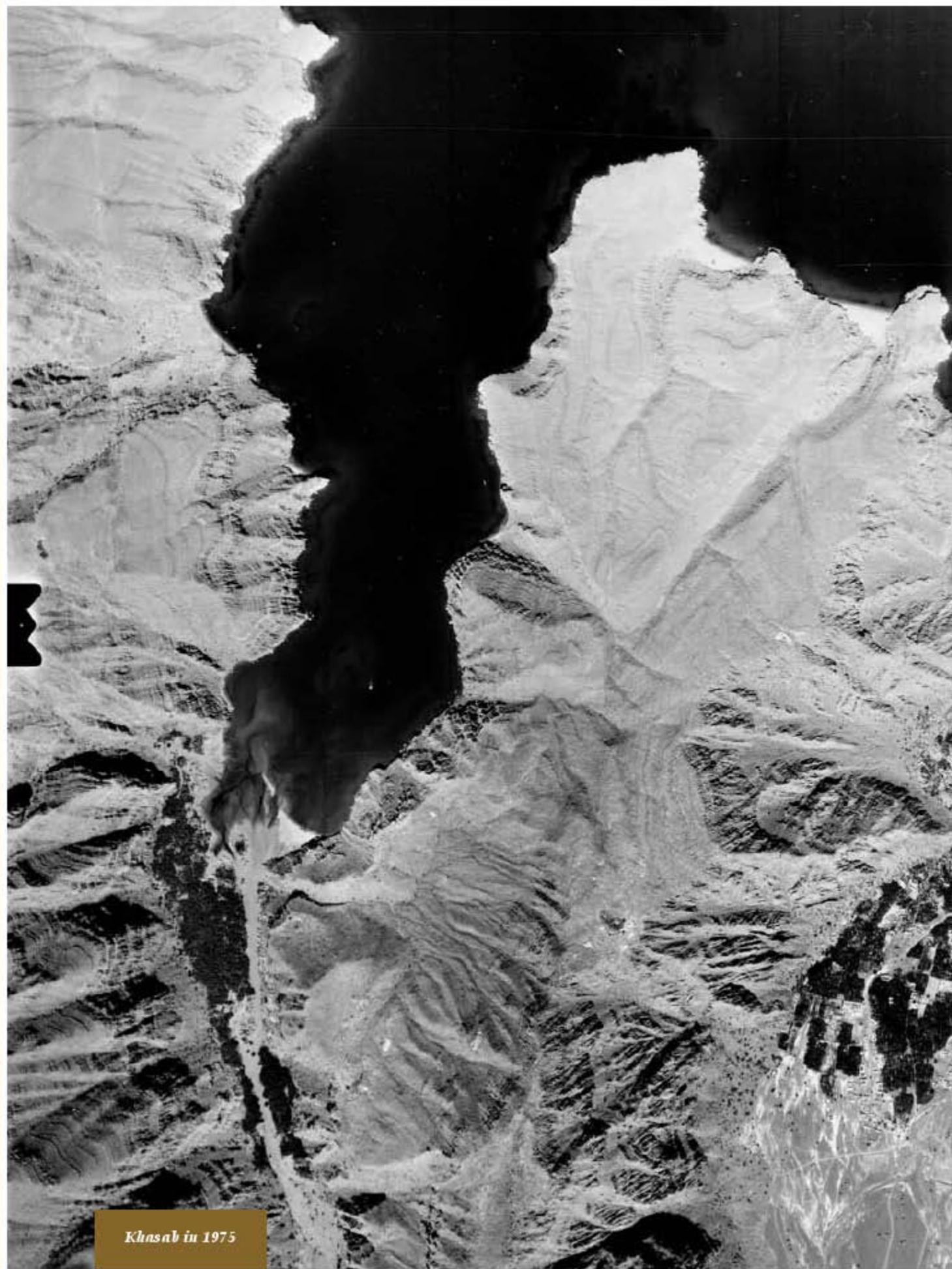


early morning it is called as *sanh* or *sirah* or *saynihah*, at midday as *sadir* or *sadini*, in the afternoon *ar rawah* and in the evening as *sari*, or *sayri*, or *sayriyah*. In *ar rawah* the men beat drums and move backwards and forwards while turning round in a circle. Other song and dance forms include *as sabbah*, *as shallah*, *ar ram-sah* (or *ar ramasiyah*), *al dan dan*, *al tawminah* and *al mawlid*.

An nadba is a "cry" to arouse the emotions. The *nadeeb* - or leading

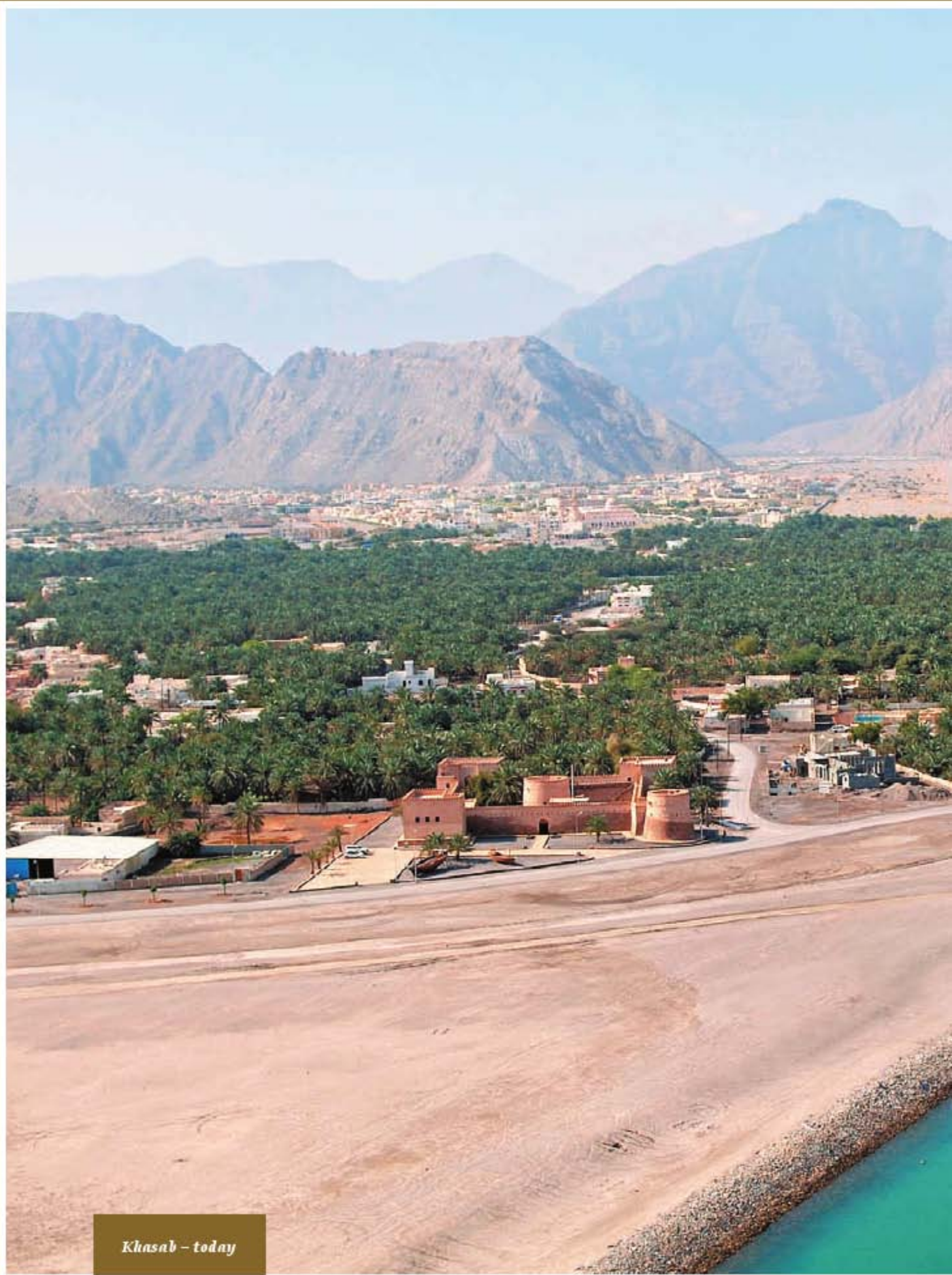
performer - raises his right hand in the air, then places his left hand on his brow and his face, after which he emits sharp cries while reciting a poem. The people respond by emitting short cries at the appropriate moments during the recital. *An nadba* is performed at national celebrations at which a mood of intense fervour is called for, or on religious occasions in which there is choral chanting or a solo performance by a vocalist alternating with a choral refrain.

(Above) The Ar Rawah song and dance routine when the men beat drums and move backwards and forwards while turning round in a circle.

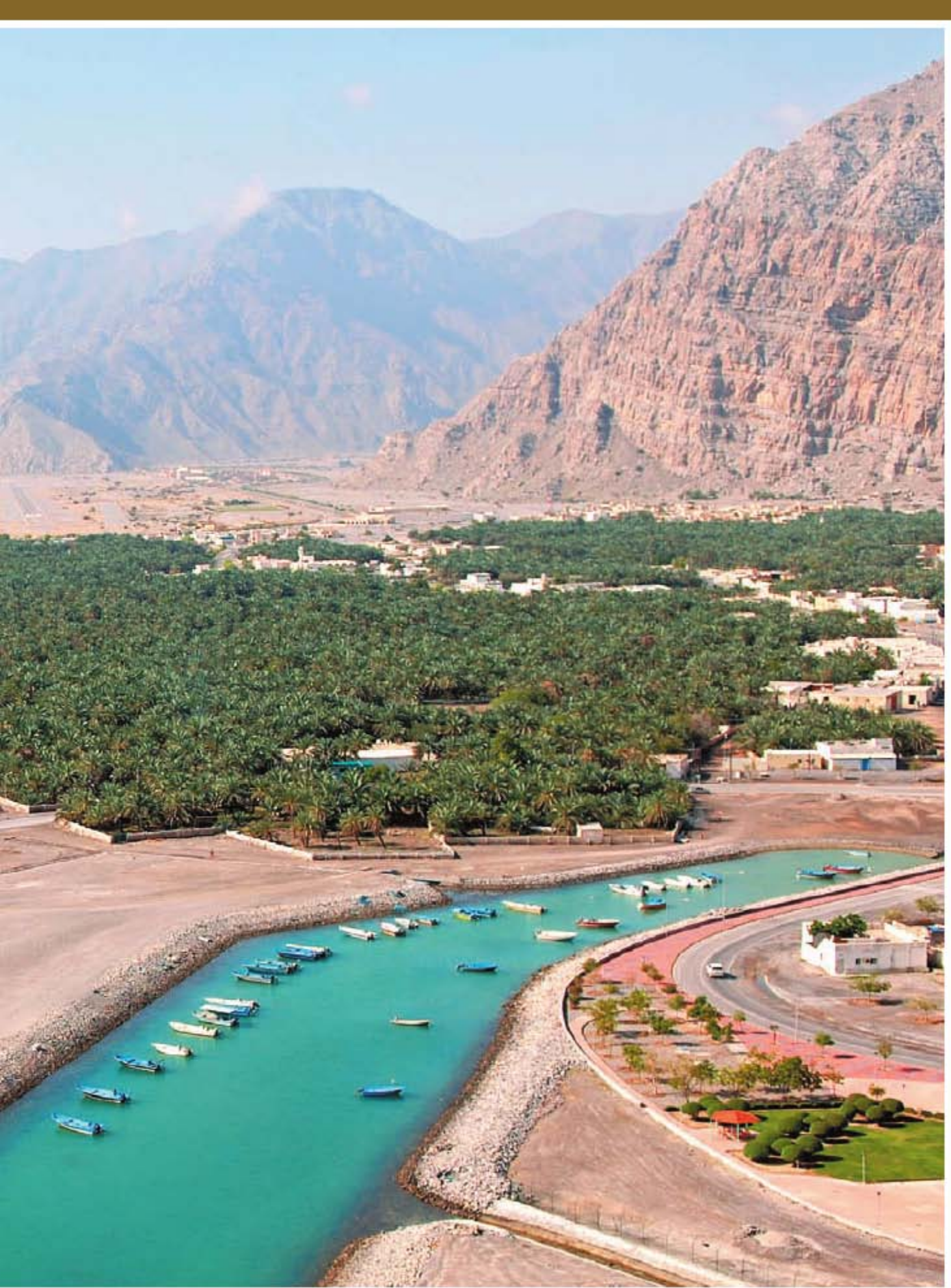


Khasab in 1975





Khasab – today



THE GOVERNORATE OF AL BURAYMI

A TIMELESS PAST, A BRIGHT FUTURE



Visitors to the Governorate of Al Buraymi will be charmed by the quiet glow of the place, their attention arrested by its virgin landscape, diverse in its scenery from desert plains to soaring mountains and golden sand dunes. But another landscape is just as striking, a landscape of modern industrial and commercial buildings. The lingering impression will be one that bridges a tranquil, timeless past with the industrial bustle of the present day.

Al Buraymi has eminent trading links, going back to a time when it was a destination for caravans that halted in its oases after long journeys. Through all of that time this region never lost touch with its trading roots. Today that tradition of enterprise has been nurtured to full maturity by the government's careful investment in modernity, where high tech industry coexists alongside traditional crafts.

SUSPENDED BETWEEN YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Royal Decree No. 108/2006 establishing the Governorate of Al Buraymi with its three *wilayats*, ushered in a phase of new growth to supplement the advances of 40 years of positive achievement under the Renaissance. Its southern demarcation is the border with Al Dhahirah, and Sohar and Dank lie to the east. To the west is the United Arab Emirates city of Al Ain.

The Al Buraymi Governorate today consists of the three provinces of Al Buraymi, Mahadah and Sunaynah, along with the two sub-*wilayats*, or *niyabats*, of Ar Rawdah and Hafit. And it is still an acknowledged and dynamic centre of commercial and economic activity.

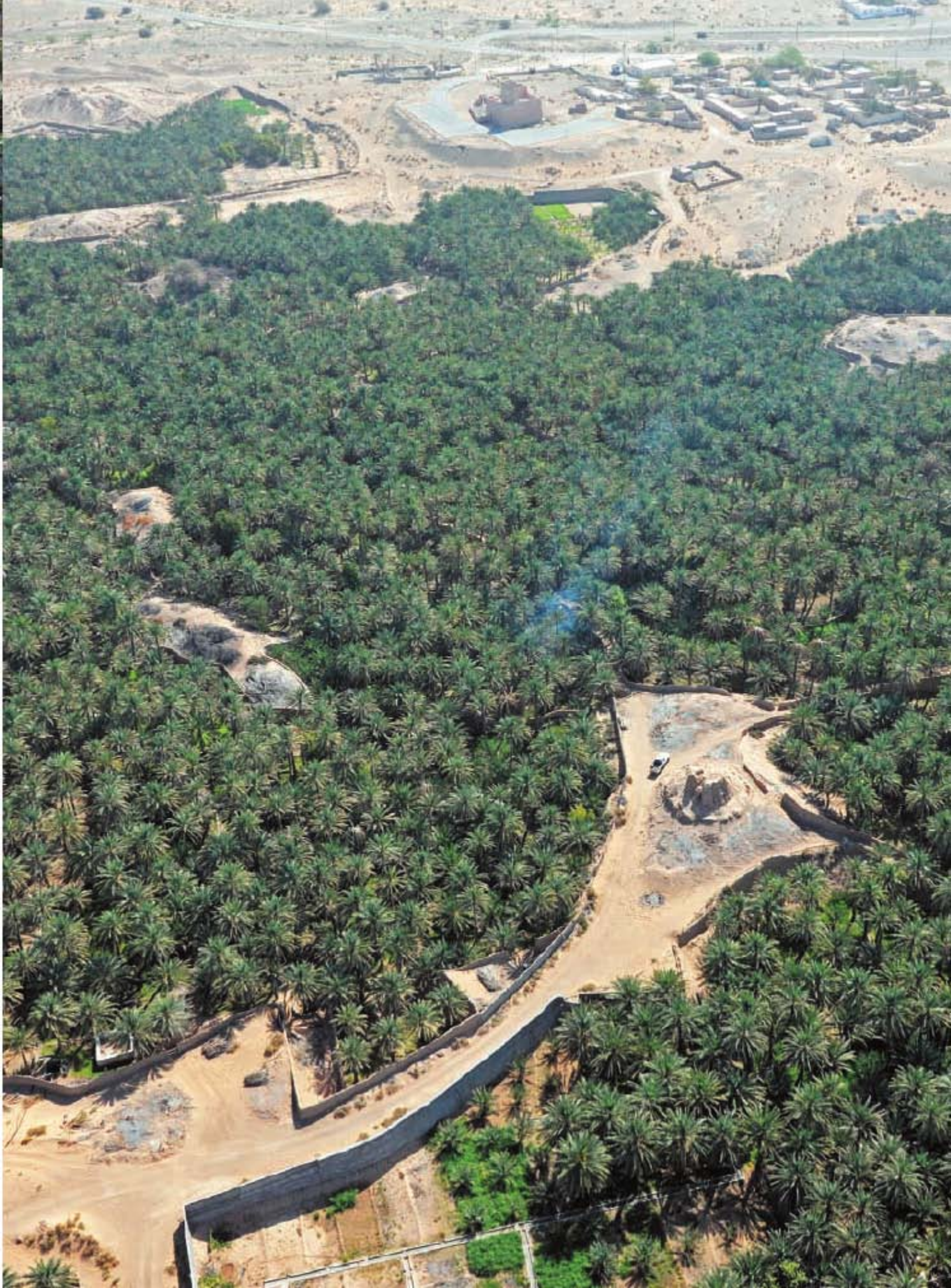
In the old days Al Buraymi went by the name of Tawam, and more popularly by the descriptive

al ardh al jao or the 'land in the air' because, due to its elevation above sea level, the landscape has the appearance of being suspended in the air. In the high mountains *Shu'a* (*Moringa peregrina*) trees with their tiny scented flowers are silhouetted against the rocky backdrop. The shrub *Qafus* (*Acridocarpus orientalis*) with its pretty yellow flowers is also to be found growing here.

Because of its proximity to one of the country's most thriving economic and industrial centres, the *wilayat* of Sohar in the Batinah region, a mutual complementation has married these two regions into what has become a pivotal and dynamic industrial hub for investment. No more than a few dozen kilometres separates Al Buraymi Governorate and Sohar, especially now with the road system that encircles the Governorate. This vital network has opened up the region to opportunities for both citizens and corporations to implement the investment projects that today fringe both sides of the road linking the Governorate and Batinah. The same energy is palpable in the economic activity that proceeds apace and is evident everywhere you go. A confident future is being drawn here, and its emerging features charted with every passing day.

Al Buraymi's northern location makes it particularly favourable for the implementation of projects with a strategic development bias, or vital or service projects with an accent on industry, trade and tourism. These

Sunaynah, an oasis of healthy date palm trees.





An aerial photograph of Al Buraymi, a modern industrial and commercial city. In the foreground, a large, white mosque with a prominent green dome and two tall minarets stands on a landscaped plot with green lawns. Behind the mosque is a large, empty parking lot. The city extends into the background with various buildings, roads, and some industrial structures. The sky is clear and blue.

298/299

*A view of a modern industrial and
commercial city - this is
Al Buraymi.*



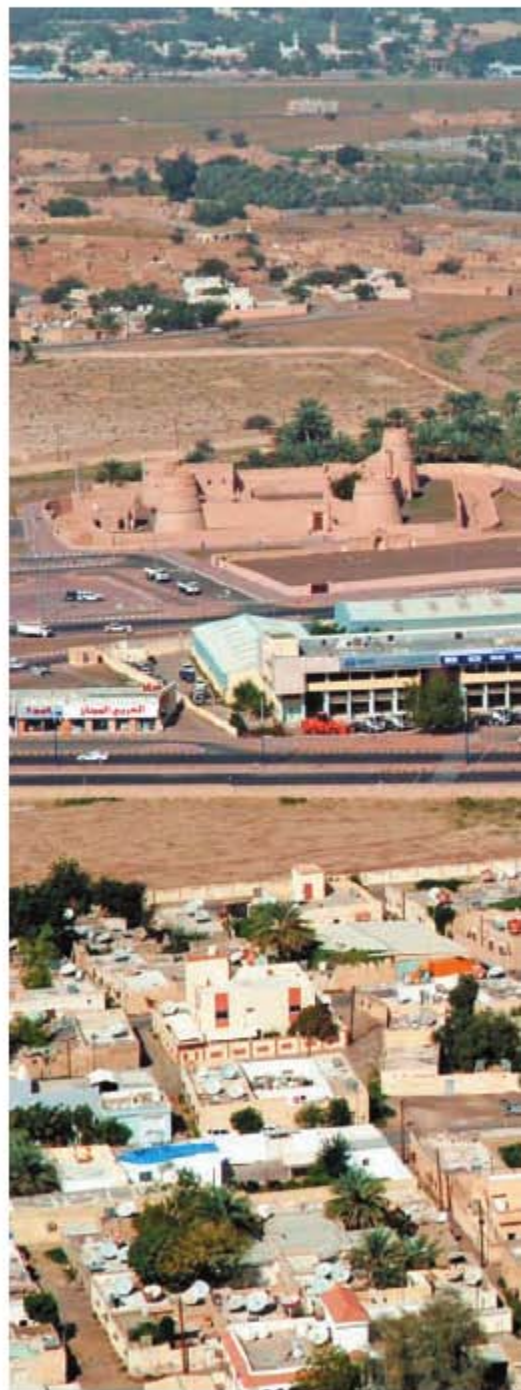
are the sectors that will provide a new direction for the region, especially on completion of the above ambitious projects, which aim to employ every feature of productivity that is capable of adding economic and social value and bringing benefit and progress to the region.

The Ministerial Committee formed to look into the proposals and mechanisms for development of the Governorate is overseeing a new phase of advances. Millions of Rials have been allocated, among them 50 million Rials for ongoing projects guaranteed in the Seventh Five-Year Plan 2006-2010. These are focused on the provision of broad educational facilities, including higher and technical education, as well as fundamental services. In all of these projects the private sector will be given an opportunity to invest.

SOUQ AL BURAYMI – A COMMERCIAL AND CULTURAL LANDMARK

The Governorate of Al Buraymi, and in particular the *wilayat* of Al Buraymi, is one of the most thriving commercial districts and investment gateways in the Sultanate. Its souqs, set among white painted dwellings or strung along ancient alleyways, are a draw for both investors and tradesmen from other parts. This combination of charm and enterprise is one of the factors that attracted private capital to invest in diverse projects throughout the region.

In the centre of the *wilayat* the singular architecture of the Commercial



(Top) The Commercial market in Al Buraymi – a city with a great past, a great future.



300/301





A modern network of roads linking the governorate to other regions, particularly to Sohag.

Market stands out. The market has separate sections for fruit and vegetables, livestock, domestic appliances and luxury items. A central area offers a variety of foodstuffs, craft items, copperware and other goods.

Given its significant history in the region the Market has undergone successive phases of development. The original structure has been extended with the addition of several sub-sections and many of its amenities have been upgraded. At present the possibil-

ity of further expansion of the facility, while introducing new back-up markets and supply centres in the Governorate, is being examined. The overall purpose of this expansion would be to keep pace with both the growing local population and increased commercial activity in the region. The crafts market will surely impress the passing visitor; with its whiff of the past and wide display of inherited crafts such as *manadis* (sing. *mandoos*) and silverware, as well as medicinal herbs. It is



302/303



close by the Khandaq Fort and adjacent to the antiques market.

WADIAL JIZZI ROAD – VIBRANT ARTERY

The road sector is crucial to social, commercial and tourist communication, and what exists today is a bustling arterial system that links villages to one another and to the outlying districts. The *wilayats* of Al Buraymi are fortunate to have been gifted a modern network of roads







304/305



that links region to region as well as facilitating transport communication between the region and the rest of the Sultanate.

Some 400 kms of external road system have been completed in and around the Governorate, along with over 300 kms of internal road links. Most of the internal schemes pledged in earlier plans are now complete and more than 9,000 street lights have been erected. As a result some elderly districts have sprung to life, while new ones have been created. Cities have been populated and the wheels of the Governorate crank and turn as it grows in vitality and bustle.

One of the most strategic of these roads is the highway that connects the *wilayat* of Al Buraymi to Ar Rawdah and Mahadah. A grid of new roads also links new areas of accelerated population growth, taking advantage of the economic and social upswing. Meanwhile plans have been drafted to extend to districts and villages a complementary road system capable of absorbing the expected growth in traffic requirements.

The Sohar-Al Buraymi dual carriageway, which crosses the Wadi Al Jizzi road and runs from Falaj Al Qaba'il roundabout in Sohar to Az Zurub in the *wilayat* of Al Buraymi, is evidence of the government's determination to fulfil the needs of the local populations for these vital arteries. The 81 km road is a model project designed to the highest level of specification and capability.

The Al Buraymi Industrial Zone, founded in 1998, is one of the fastest growing and flourishing zones in the country.



Travelling on the Wadi Al Jizzi road, traversing steep incline and rocky escarpment, will give you a commanding view and a healthy respect for the grand vision and engineering skill that went into this highway. It is one of the most remarkable roads, not only in the Governorate, but in the Sultanate as a whole. Between these two highways lies the dual carriageway that runs from Az Zurub roundabout to the Al Buraymi Hospital, covering a distance of some 17 kms. These vital projects together constitute a technical showcase of the Governorate's impressive road network.

INDUSTRY - A DREAM BROUGHT TO REALITY

As soon as you enter the *wilayat* of Al Buraymi your attention will be arrested by the tireless lanes of traffic plying the roads connecting Al Buraymi Governorate with the rest of the country, and in particular to Sohar. A panorama then opens up along the skyline of vast areas of construction and of manufacturing industry, compacted neatly. This sudden scene will lodge in your memory for some time.

Industry in the Governorate is a dream that is being transformed day by day into palpable reality. Once aspirations of the settled and enterprising inhabitants of the district, they have manifested with unexpected speed before their eyes. The development of this sector turned Al Buraymi Industrial Zone, founded in 1998 and which now covers a broad expanse of the *wilayat*, into one of the fastest growing and most flour-

ishing industrial zones in the country, with in excess of 61 manufacturing plants, representing an investment value of RO14.5 million. Meanwhile, more than nine new projects are underway, due for completion soon.

Al Buraymi Industrial Zone is a portal to promised industrial expansion. The coming phase of the Eighth Five Year Plan 2011-2015 revolves around exploiting the zone to implement industrial projects that will complement those already present in Sohar Industrial Zone, or in Sohar Industrial Port. These new projects will capitalise on the area's facilities and infrastructure, built up gradually to equip it as a home for back-up industries to serve the many production facilities spread about the various zones in the region.

EDUCATION AND HEALTH - THE FOUNDATION OF DEVELOPMENT

"Your country wants you to be educated"

This slogan is written on the walls of the Sultanate's schools and it expresses an official and national approach to learning. Schools and universities have multiplied, all animated with a vision that sees their pupils and students as the generation of the future.

Al Buraymi Governorate has shared this expansion in the education sector, with a substantial increase in the number of its educational establishments. The Governorate now has 27 schools, of which

In the Governorate, there were 27 schools and 11,573 pupils in various stages of education in 2009.





18 are in Al Buraymi, serving a total of 11,573 pupils over the various stages of the educational process.

With the growth in the numbers completing their schooling in the Governorate, and the need for a university to grant opportunity to those school-leavers to secure a third level education, a need that meshes with the demands of the labour market, Al Buraymi University has become one of the most remarkable modern private education projects the region has seen. The university will com-

prise initially three faculties, a faculty of commerce, a science faculty and a faculty of engineering.

The private sector is being called on to contribute both influence and confidence by engaging its responsibility to partner in strengthening the education sector. In this it will avail of the government's backing in the form of material subsidies, as well as recruitment support, facilities and incentives. Al Buraymi's new university campus building will become the latest pillar of a broadly

Al Buraymi University College offers places to 500 students annually.





distributed national education strategy. An area of over one million sq ms has been assigned for construction of the university and work is expected to begin in 2011.

The project, which is being built to world class quality specifications, is linked to time-honoured institutions of learning and will be capable of absorbing up to 2,000 students annually.

Meanwhile, Al Buraymi University College has become a beacon of learning in its own right. It has three divi-

sions and two units and offers places to 500 students annually. It is preparing to open one of the most impressive looking third level educational edifices in the Governorate, its new campus building. A vocational training institute is also envisaged for Al Buraymi which will be able to take in female school-leavers, thus benefiting the labour market with the professional skills and qualifications of the ambitious young women which the market will be seeking to employ in the coming phase.



310/311



Serious precedence and attention are given to healthcare. The Governorate has two hospitals, Al Buraymi Hospital, a referral facility incorporating 22 clinics and four wings, and the Wadi Al Jizzi Hospital, which has several units and specialist clinics. There are also four medical centres, in Sunaynah, Mahadah and the *niyabats* of Ar Rawdah and Hafit, in addition to a health complex in Al Buraymi and health centre in Wadi Al Hayoul in Mahadah.

WATER – ARTERY OF LIFE

Irrigation has been a constant feature of Al Buraymi Governorate and it has 159 *aflaj*, the most well known of which are those of Saara, Al Maisar and Al Mazidi. These *aflaj*, as a mark of their historical significance and importance, have been continuously maintained over the centuries. The influence and significance of these irrigation canals has lost none of its historical extent today, as they continue to irrigate the many farms

The oasis, and 159 aflaj, in this area are ideal for growing fruits and vegetables, while the handicrafts souq is popular with visitors and local people alike.



This area is home to several music and dance forms which are performed at weddings and on festive occasions – here the al ayyalah is performed. The Governorate is also home to several interesting citadels.

that surround the villages and districts of the Governorate.

Nor has the Governorate been neglected in the allocation of water projects. All villages and districts are served by a constant water service – supplied from either the desalination plant at Sohar or from the many wells of Az Zurub and Safwan.

The Public Authority for Electricity and Water has completed the installation of a water grid covering the entirety of the Governorate's disparate regions. Eighty per cent of the rural

network has now been completed in Al Buraymi. Meanwhile some 5 million Omani Rials has been allocated for the water grid in Sunaynah, supplied from the Masarat Basin. In Mahadah and the *niyabat* of Ar Rawdah, direct water lines connect supply to the water wells excavated there.

TOURISM: A SYMPHONY OF OLD AND NEW

Al Buraymi Governorate is well-endowed as a tourist haven. On the one hand the area is steeped in his-



312/313





tory, while nature has been generous to it in both its contrasts and its dramatic scenery. As soon as you set foot here, you will sense a harmony and concord between the old and new. This sense of the timeless is given a cultural dimension in the form of its handsome strongholds, typified in the historical fortress of Al Hella near Al Souq and the Khandaq fortress which straddles the heart of the province and has given it its distinctive logo.

These two monuments of defensive architecture tell the visitor to the Governorate a story of its consequence and influence in the ancient and modern history of Oman.

The *wilayat* and *niyabat* of Al Buraymi are noted for their many heritage tourist sites, represented in the wadis, mountains and deserts, caves and golden spreading dunes.

The Governorate's new prominence on the tourist map has encouraged the Ministry of Tourism, acting jointly with the private sector, to complete a full study of the region's tourist and amenity needs. A plan now exists to implement 18 hotel schemes, foremost among these a comprehensive scheme of tourist amenities and services to be installed in the Hamasa region of Al Buraymi Governorate. In addition, construction work is ongoing on a resort incorporating a hotel, chalets and tented accommodation in Ar Rawdah. With completion of these projects, the Governorate will be able to showcase a formidable model of tourist transformation that makes the most of its singular location and its historic and tourist attractions.



HISTORICAL FEATURES: FORTS AND HERITAGE BUILDINGS

The *wilayat* of Al Buraymi is rich in its historical legacy and it has many fortified and heritage buildings, most noteworthy among these the Bait Bahar. It is also home to several handsome citadels, sought out by visitors and lovers of history, which enrich the panorama of early architecture in the region – among these Al Fayadh, Hafit and Wadi Al Jizzi forts stand out.

The principal tourist sites of Al Buraymi are Al Rossa, Mahadah and



the villages of Ketna, Thaib, and Al Sarafana, Al Rabi, Al Ha'il and Waset and the villages of Al Ubaylah, Al Murjam, Wai' Al Huyul, Umm Al Shayq, as well as the caves of Wadi Ajran.

Mahadah is a popular local tourist destination, where visitors will want to see one of the most historically important *aflaj*, the signature Falaj Sharm, where fresh waters gush forth from springs.

The northern plains of Mahadah contain some of the Sultanate's

most fertile farmland. They are crisscrossed by *wadis* and are popular destinations for nature lovers looking to relax in the verdant water-fed landscape. Especially popular are Wadi Sharm and Wadi Qalifi, Wadi Aboul and Wadi Mas'h, also known locally as Wadi Al Saha (Valley of Health) or Wadi Al Shifaa (Valley of the Cure), along with the broader sweep of Wadi Al Khatwa.

Falaj Al Mazidi, in the heart of the *wilayat*, is one of the more well known *aflaj* in Mahadah, and it is

Aerial view of the nearly square Al Khandaq Fort in Buryami. It is surrounded by a moat about 24 feet wide, inside of which is a wall about 8 feet high and 5 feet in thickness at the base, and at the top only eighteen inches to 2 feet in diameter.



AL KHANDAQ FORT – A UNIQUE EXAMPLE OF THE OMANI STYLE OF FORTIFICATION

Al Khandaq Fort in the *wilayat* of Al Buraymi is one of the Governorate of Al Buraymi's most important historic buildings. Built during the first half of the 19th century AD (second half of the 13th century AH), it was renovated in 1871 during the reign of Imam Azzan bin Qais Al Busaidi.

The fort combines two functions – civil and defensive. As a residential palace it was similar to palaces such as

Jabrin (Bahla), Bait Al Nu'man (Barka), Al Hazm (Rustaq) and other fortified buildings with official state functions.

Al Khandaq Fort is a square structure with one tower at each corner and about ten rooms. The towers are of a similar size and style with a few minor differences.

The fort covers an area of around 3,070 square metres and is surrounded by a moat and a perimeter wall. It has two gateways – one on its eastern side and the other on the north side.

In addition to its towers, moat and outer wall, the fort also has several other defensive features including spouts for pouring boiling date treacle down onto

unwanted visitors, battlements, and embrasures for archers, guns and cannon. It also has steps leading to the roofs of the towers, the main building and the top of the wall, in addition to staircases and ramps.

Other features include side entrances, passageways, corridors, stabling for horses, barrack accommodation for soldiers and weapons and provisions stores. Water is supplied by a well and a *falaj* (irrigation channel).

The fort also has a prison, a mosque, a courtyard and various other features.





one of the larger of those whose waters are used by the inhabitants for a variety of purposes.

Nor is Mahadah lacking in historical strongholds to attract the student of history. The Bait Al Nadd Fortress is one of the area's most striking strongholds, as well as its oldest, being around 200 years old. Nearby are the Khabib and Aboul forts and Al Shathath, named after the mountain astride which it sits. The Sharm citadel follows the line of Wadi Sharm and is reputed to be over 100 years old. Built from soaring blocks it encloses a sweet-water well.

The *niyabat* of Hafit, which is attached to the Governorate but lies 60 kms away, is something of a heritage settlement, dating to the 3rd millennium BC. This small enclave has enjoyed a generous share of development funding.

The citadel of Al Oriani and the Al Hijra, Al Bazili and Al Aswad forts are all in the *wilayat* of Sunaynah.

Today nothing characterises the Governorate of Al Buraymi so much as this constant smooth alternation between features inherited from the past and features of modern development, as typified in every amenity and district.

CAMEL RACING AND DUNE SURFING

There are few more exotic spectator experiences than the sight of colourfully attired jockeys sprinting around desert courses on camelback. Camel racing is a popular local sport with ancient roots and has a passionate following

among the inhabitants of this region as much as it is an entertainment for visitors and tourists. Sunaynah hosts the country's principal camel racing fixtures and the annual Oman Camel Races are held in its distinctive arena.

Dune surfing is a more recent but no less consuming desert activity. For exhilaration it rivals its water equivalent, except that the medium is the undulating sand of the Al Buraymi desert. And Al Buraymi has no shortage of silken golden dunes. The *ghaf* (*Prosopis cineraria*) tree is prolific in this area too, and spinning and weaving are local industries.

AL 'AYYALAH, AL RAZFAH, AL TARIQ AND AL TAGHRUD

The indigenous people of this area received their dances and songs and traditions from the depths of the past, such as the *al'ayyalah* and the *al razfah* performed at national and festive occasions and weddings. Al Buraymi is home to other musical and dance art forms, among them the rhythmic warbling and drumming variations known as *al tariq*, *al taghrud* and *hambal al bush*.

The people of this area are well practiced in many of the farming related skills, and they produce fine copperware and other decorative and embellished craftwork, expressed in woven textiles and palm leaves. Mahadah and Sunaynah are particularly well favoured in these skills, along with other native artisan work derived in both design and form from the nomadic lifestyle.



Al Buraymi in 1974





Al Buraymi today



THE DHAHIRAH REGION

A CROSSROADS FOR CARAVAN ROUTES

Like the rest of the Sultanate, the Dhahirah has undergone extensive development and achieved impressive economic progress during the years of the Renaissance. A crossroads of the old caravan routes that has played a significant role in Oman's history, and blessed with an abundance of natural resources including oil, gold and other minerals as well as great commercial and tourist potential, this region has always been well-placed to reap the fruits of prosperity. Its future promises to be one of continued growth.

Most of the Dhahirah is a semi-desert plain extending from the southern slopes of the Western Hajar mountain range towards the Empty Quarter desert. Jabal Al Kawr marks its eastern boundary with the Dakhiliyyah region, while to the south it borders on the Wusta region. It has numerous tourist attractions including wadis, archaeological sites and historic buildings, such as forts, castles and towers. At the same time, its population have all the benefits of modern development including education, health and other services, while a network of modern roads has lifted it out of the isolation it suffered up to the beginning of the 1970s.

The Dhahirah region has three wilayats – Ibri, Dank and Yanqul. The *niyabat* (sub-wilayat) of Hamra Ad Duru' is in the wilayat of Ibri. Ibri derives its name from *ya'bur* (to cross), partly because it was the crossroads for the old trading caravans, but also because the moving

Ibri, a crossroads for the old caravan routes, but now connected by modern roads to other regions.







*Moving sand dunes, and
Al Buraymi lit up at night and the
view by day.*

sand dunes cross its wide expanses on their way to the deserts and wadis. Despite these features, historians and writers have described it as a fertile, agricultural district and a "town of horses and camels".

Ibri's 209 villages boast education, electricity and health services, including access to hospital treatment, as well as modern road and telecommunications systems and the other amenities of twenty-first century life.

In the desert round Ibri you can see parties of houbara bustards (*Chlamydotis undulata*) feeding under the trees. Studies have been carried out with a view to conserving these beautiful birds.

RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT

In addition to being rich in natural resources including gold, marble, industrial rocks and oil and gas fields, the Dhahirah has experi-



324/325



enced extensive development over the past forty years in trade, building construction and investment. The last of these - investment - has focused particularly on the mining, energy, tourist and industrial sectors, and today every corner of the region - which lacked many of the most basic services before 1970 - is flourishing and buzzing with activity.

In developing the Dhahirah region's *wilayats* care has been taken





326/327



to ensure that a proper balance is maintained between commercial facilities and residential areas. Old souqs have been modernised, while brand new souqs have attracted traders, reviving memories of the days when the region was a meeting place for caravans from the north and south of the country. It is now well-placed to be a vital economic centre, particularly since steps have been taken to set up a modern industrial estate there that will invest in local resources and benefit from the services that have become available during the years of the Sultanate's Renaissance.

The Dhahirah is a unique blend of old and new, where traditional souqs operate alongside modern markets. The main traditional souq - and the oldest, which has been extensively modernised - is in Ibri near the historic Ibri Fort. There the shopper will find a wide range of handicrafts, antiques, livestock, foodstuffs, spices, perfumes and incense.

Despite the development and modernisation that has taken place in the *wilayats* of Dank and Yanqul, their old souqs are still relaxed and informal places where the local people can meet and chat, though they also play an important commercial role.

The region has great potential for attracting new investment, particularly in mining, oil and gas. Al Raki mine in the *wilayat* of Yanqul,

*Dank as it was in times gone by,
and as it is today.*



which went into operation in 1994, can produce up to 4,500 Kilograms of pure gold a year. In 2003 work began at the Bishara mine, which produces around three grammes of gold per tonne of ore. Further studies and surveys are being carried out with a view to exploiting the Dhahirah's other mineral resources, which could produce substantial economic returns in future years.

Oil is also an important resource. The most important oil fields in the Sultanate are in Fahud and As Safa; there are gas fields there too. In recent years there has been a significant rise in the number of international oil companies exploring the concession areas in the region.

Several economic and commercial projects have been set up in Ibri. The private sector has invested in the agri-industry, setting up date processing and packaging factories and providing jobs for local people by helping to boost crop and livestock production.

MODERN ROADS AND OTHER PROJECTS

The numerous development and investment projects across the Dhahirah region could not have been implemented without a network of modern roads. In the past road transport was difficult, since there were only two asphalted roads – one through the Dakhiliyyah region and the other through the Governorate of Buraymi. Each of these roads was over 300 Kilo-



Exploiting the region's mineral resources – here marble is extracted from the mountains of Ibri.

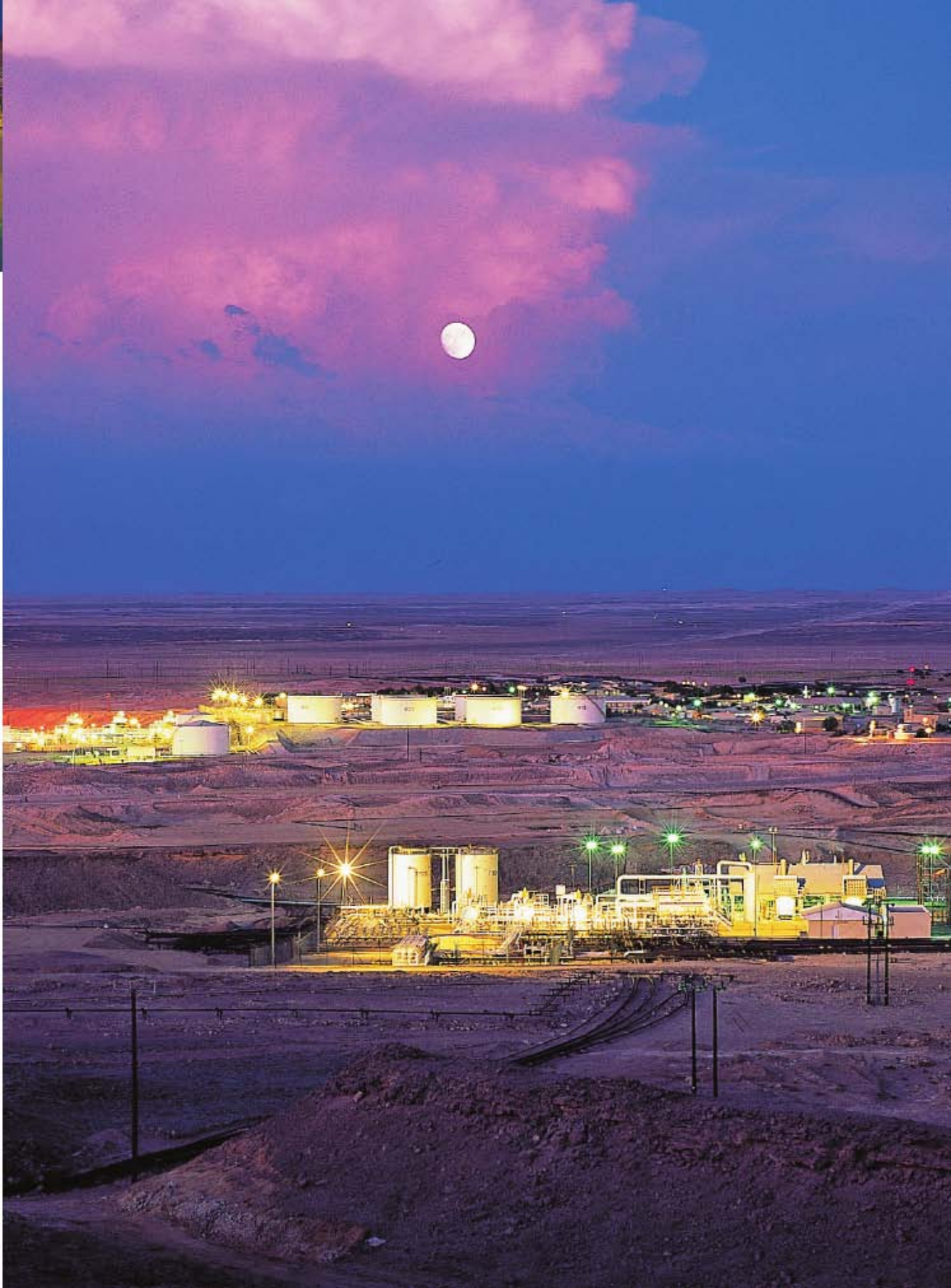
A significant number of international oil companies have been exploring investment in oil and gas in this region – depicted here the mountains of Fahud.



328/329









metres long, which meant a long and tiring journey for people travelling to the Dhahirah, particularly those coming from the Governorate of Muscat or the Batinah region. Road links between the *wilayats* were sometimes cut for days at a time after the rain, which meant their inhabitants became temporarily isolated.

Today, however, journeys are much shorter and easier and there are plenty of options, including the Ibri-Sulayf-Kubarah road which ends at Bahla and Nizwa in the Dakhiliyyah region. Another road that runs north from Ibri to the *wilayat* of Al Khaburah in the Batinah region via Wadi Al Hawasnah has two branch roads – one to the *wilayat* of Rustaq via Wadi Bari Ghafir and the other to the *wilayat* of Saham via Yanqul and Wadi Ahin. A third road runs west from Ibri to Dank, Al Qabil and Al Ayn, and from there to the Emirate of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. A southbound road runs down towards the Governorate of Dhofar.

The new roads are built to the latest specifications. High mountains and steep wadis are no obstacle. Other roads include the Rustaq-Maskan road (76 Kilometres) linking the Batinah and Dhahirah regions and passing through over forty villages whose inhabitants had previously encountered great difficulties whenever they wished to travel outside their own districts. This road also



offers a quick and easy connection to Muscat. The Ibri – Hafeet dual carriageway (114 Kilometres) is also part of the vital highway system.

Of no less importance are the Tanam-Hamra Ad Duru' (88 Kilometres) road and the Tanam-Ramlat Dahayth (142 Kilometres) road which links the Sultanate with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Work is continuing on the expansion of the region's road network.



Other major projects include the Amlaa-Wadi Al Ayn road (43 Kilometres), the Kahnat (*wilayat* of Ibri) - Layhban (*wilayat* of Saham) road (47 Kilometres), the Al Ghaizayn-Maskan road (50 Kilometres) and the Fajj As Sakhama-Ad Dariz road (16 Kilometres).

Surfacing work is currently in progress on the Yanqul-Fida-Dank road (41 Kilometres) and the Layhban-Kahnat road (74 Kilometres).

Tenders have been invited for

the construction of the Ibri-Ad Dariz-Maskan dual carriageway (51 Kilometres) and improvements to the Ad Dariz-Yanqul road (29 Kilometres), as well as for the dual carriageway project between Jabrin in the *wilayat* of Bahla and the *wilayat* of Ibri (90 Kilometres).

The upgrading and modernisation of roads in the built-up areas is ongoing. They include road surfacing works in al Latheelah, Hamra Ad Duru, Al Araqi Al Qadeemah,

New roads and an expanding commercial area.



Al Ainayn, Al Muqniyat, Al Manjoorain and Al Abla (in the *wilayat* of Yanqul).

HOUSING AND SEWAGE SERVICES

The Dhahirah's housing sector is a major priority of the government, which aims to provide citizens with decent living conditions in their own areas. Housing land has been distributed and housing units have been built for the local people; between 2006 and 2010 some 205 such units were constructed in various parts of the region.

Phase One of the sewage project has been completed at a cost of over RO 3 million. This too is a high priority government project.

EDUCATION

Education has been both a means and an end since the early years of the Sultanate's Renaissance – the end being knowledge and enlightenment and the means through which development is achieved being education itself.

The government was always aware of the vital importance of education and accordingly it built schools, colleges and universities to educate the population and provide young nationals with the qualifications they needed for their future careers.

The education sector in the Dhahirah region has undergone steady growth in terms of both student numbers, the range of options open



to them and the number of its educational institutions. Schools have been built in the *wilayats* and villages to save pupils the trouble of having to travel long distances in order to reach their classes. In the 2009-2010 school year there were 81 schools in the region – 55 in the *wilayat* of Ibri, 14 in the *wilayat* of Yanqul and 12 in the *wilayat* of Dank – with a total of 33,806 students (boys and girls) – 25,082 in Ibri, 4,767 in Yanqul and 3,957 in Dank.



Higher education facilities include the College of Applied Sciences, which offers courses in design, IT (information technology), international business administration and telecommunications. It has an annual intake of around 300 male and female students.

The disciplines available reflect the needs of the different development sectors, which lay particular emphasis on IT and design.

The Ibri College of Technology

opened in the 2007-2008 academic year with an intake of 362 male and female students – a number which was set to rise during subsequent years. This important new addition to the higher education sector enabled it to supply the labour market with trained and qualified personnel.

The Vocational Training Institute in the *wilayat* of Ibri with its state-of-the-art equipment trains young Omanis in a range of technical voca-

Higher education establishments in this region include the College of Applied Sciences, the Ibri College of Technology, the Vocational Training Institute and the Dhakhirah Nursing Institute.





336/337



tions and has played a major role in qualifying young Omanis for the labour market.

The Dhahirah Nursing Institute opened in 1996 and receives a substantial yearly student intake.

The Dhahirah University is another project that will mark a major advance for the region's educational sector. Its founding committees have already embarked on the preliminary

groundwork and a specialist company has been commissioned to prepare a study on its construction and the proposed disciplines that will be on offer when it opens.

HEALTH - SERVICES IN LINE WITH NEEDS

Alongside education, health is the development process's most basic human need and the Sultanate's health sector has seen impressive advances over the past dec-

The education sector has been steadily growing - in the 2009/2010 school year there were 81 schools in this region with a total of 33,806 students.



(Top) Schooling for all, even in the remote villages.

The Dhahirah region has three hospitals. There is also a centre for monitoring infectious diseases at Tan'am, Ibri.

ades. In the 1970s the Dhahirah had no hospitals or health centres capable of catering for the local people's needs and they found themselves with no alternative but to travel to other regions for treatment.

Today the Dhahirah has three hospitals, thirteen health centres and a polyclinic with a total of 286 beds. Ibri Hospital – the region's referral hospital which opened in 1995 – has 240 beds and is the re-

gion's biggest hospital. There is also a centre for monitoring infectious diseases at Tan'am in the *wilayat* of Ibri.

THE COURTS COMPLEX – EASY ACCESS TO LEGAL PROCEDURES

The Courts Complex was built in 2007. Situated on the *wilayat* of Ibri's main road, it is a fine example of the traditional Omani architectural style.



338/339





The Complex was established in response to advances in the Omani judicial sector following the promulgation of the Judicial Authority Law, which unifies the regulation of the judicial system. It consists of a Court of Appeal complete with offices and courtrooms, as well as a fully equipped Court of First Instance.

SPORTS

The sports complexes and clubs that can be found everywhere in Oman provide opportunities for young Omanis to engage in the sporting activities of their choice and develop and demonstrate their talents.

The Dhahirah's Sports Complex, which opened in 1999 and is the region's main sports facility, can accommodate over 17,000 spectators. It has a Royal Box and a VIP stand and offers a range of amenities. It hosts events between the regions and *wilayats* in collaboration with the sports clubs and associations.

The Dhahirah also has two clubs – Ibri Club and Yanqul Club.

WADIS AND SPRINGS

Wadis and springs are among the Dhahirah region's most attractive features. Ibri has numerous springs and *aflaj* (pl. of *falaj* = traditional irrigation channel), including the springs of Ayn Al Hadeeth in the village of Muqniyat and Ain al Junat and Ain Dann in Wadi al Ain, as well as the *aflaj* of Falaj Al



THE COURT COMPLEX IN
THE WILAYAT OF IBRI





340/341



The court complex in the *wilayat* of Ibri is one of the Dhahirah region's major architectural features. Built in 2007 and situated on the main Dakhiliyyah-Ibri-Buraymi road, it includes the Court of Appeal, the Court of First Instance, the Conciliation and Settlement Committee and the Notary-Public Department, as well as administrative departments and sections. Modern technology is used to ensure maximum speed and

efficiency in the conduct of its operations and services. Incorporating the finest architectural features and design and inspired by the traditional style, which gives it an aesthetically pleasing appearance, the Ibri court complex was set up in response to advances in Omani judicial practice under the Judicial Authority Law, which was promulgated to establish a single, integrated judicial system.



The Dhakhirah sports complex which opened in 1999 can accommodate over 17,000 spectators.



342/343





Mafjoor, Falaj Al Mabooth, Falaj Al Araqi, Falaj Al Ainain, Falaj Ad Dariz and Falaj Al Qarawan. Surface storage dams have been built on Jabal al Sarat in the *wilayat* of Ibri.

Wadi Fida – a wide wadi with date groves growing on either side of it – is one of Dank's main tourist attractions. It rises in the village of Fida - in the district of Al Khili to be precise – where a steep slope allows water to collect and flow into the wadis of Yanqul, Mahsi, Ans and the other valleys and ravines whose water comes from the mountain slopes. The beauty of this wadi is further enhanced by the forts and castles which stand above its banks as it meanders through the villages on its 24-Kilometre-long course. The *wilayat* of Dank has adopted Wadi Fida as its emblem.

A visitor to the *wilayat* of Dank feels as if he has arrived in an enormous park of palm groves, fruit orchards and a carpet of greenery stretching as far as the eye can see, watered by numerous *aflaj* including As Sadd, As Seemaa', Al Muhaidith, At Taff, Qumaira, Ar Rahba, Al Fath, Al Jabi and Khataam.

Dank also has several springs including Ain Bari Saaidah and Ain Al Maseefah.

The opening of the Sohar-Yanqul road gave a large boost to the number of tourists visiting the region from other parts of the Sultanate. Yanqul itself has numerous attractions including high mountains,



lush wadis, *aflaj* and huge areas of greenery, all enhanced by the industry and efforts of the local population. One of the most striking sights is the stunning formations created by nature in the mountains around Yanqul town.

High up on the list for the visitor to Yanqul is Wadi al Raki with its trees and fine views. The village of As Sudairiyeen is renowned for its abundant water and stunning scenery, while the village of al Waqba



has a wadi which descends through the mountains; it also has a number of *aflaj* including Falaj Al 'Uluw, Falaj Al Muhaidith and Falaj Al Khabourah.

Yanqul's emblem is Al Hawra – the highest mountain in the *wilayat*. The villages of this pyramidal-shaped mountain, which is also a major tourist attraction, include Baiha, As Sudairiyeen, Seeh Al Masaah, As Safrah, Say', Al Buwairdah and Al Waqba.

The Dhahirah has several hotels, hotel apartments and rest houses. Studies are currently being carried out with a view to further developing the region for tourism, particularly now that it has a substantial network of modern roads and other services. Under the 2020 Vision of the Oman's Economic Future, the government expects tourism to make a significant contribution to the Sultanate's GDP.

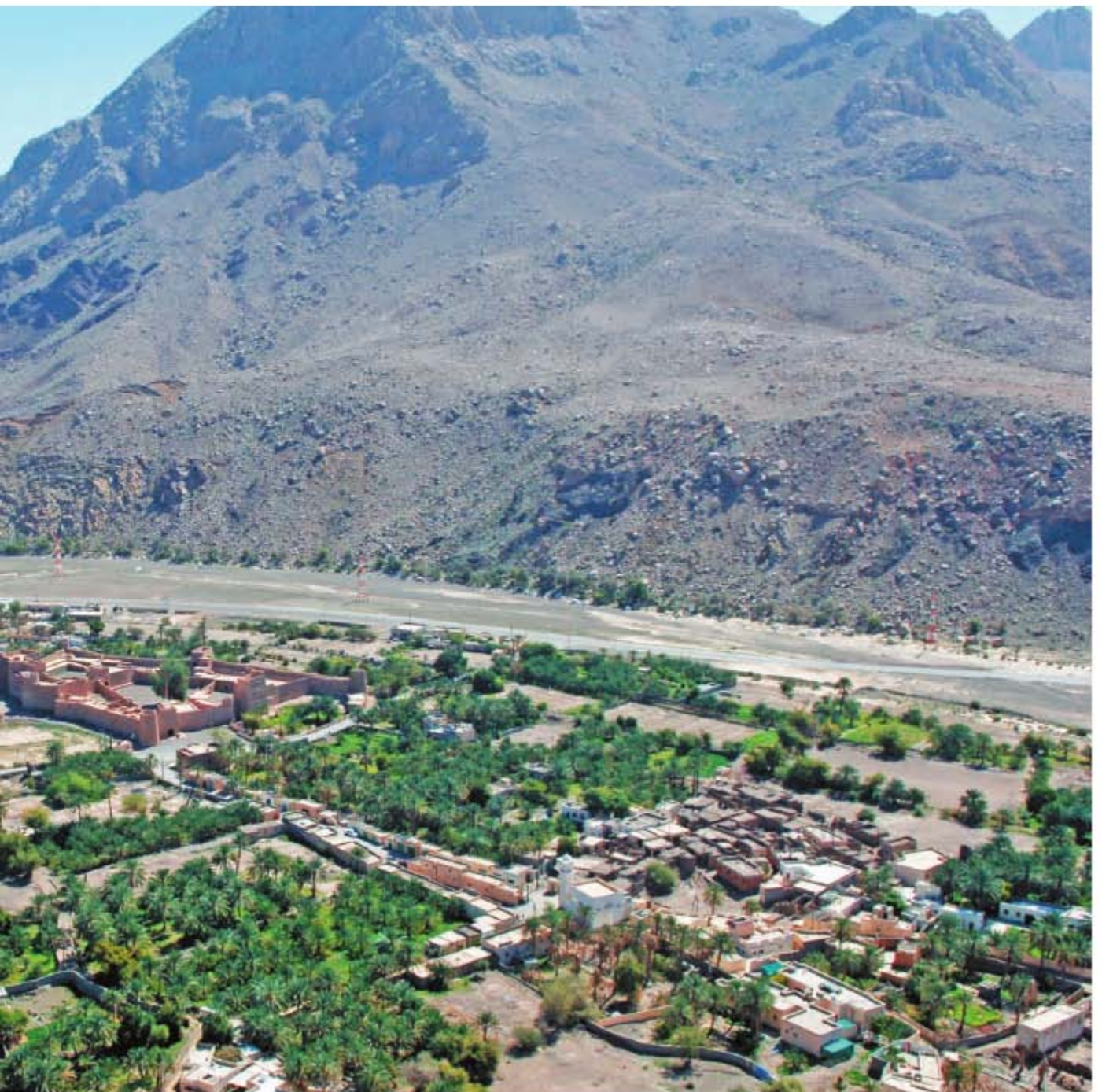
Dauk's date palm groves and fruit orchards thrive as there are many aflaj and several springs in this wilayat – Wadi Fida has been adopted as Dauk's emblem.



Yauquil's emblem is AlHowra, after the pyramidal-shaped mountain in its midst.



346/347





Providing clean drinking water for the people of Al Dhahirah - Al Masarrat Basin is the largest ground water initiative in this region.

(Right) On a high bank of the Wadi Al Ain where it meets with Wadi Smaisal, the remains of the fortified city of Sulaif blend in colour and texture with the jabal outcrop.

HAWDH AL MASARRAT – THE RIVER OF FERTILITY AND GROWTH

Some years ago no-one imagined that the desert of the Dhahirah region was hiding a river of fresh water beneath its surface. Scarcity of water was a real problem for the local people, but the government set about searching for sources deep below the ground until it discovered a huge reservoir of groundwater in

1993. The large Hawdh Al Masarrat (Al Masarrat Basin) project was opened in 2003.

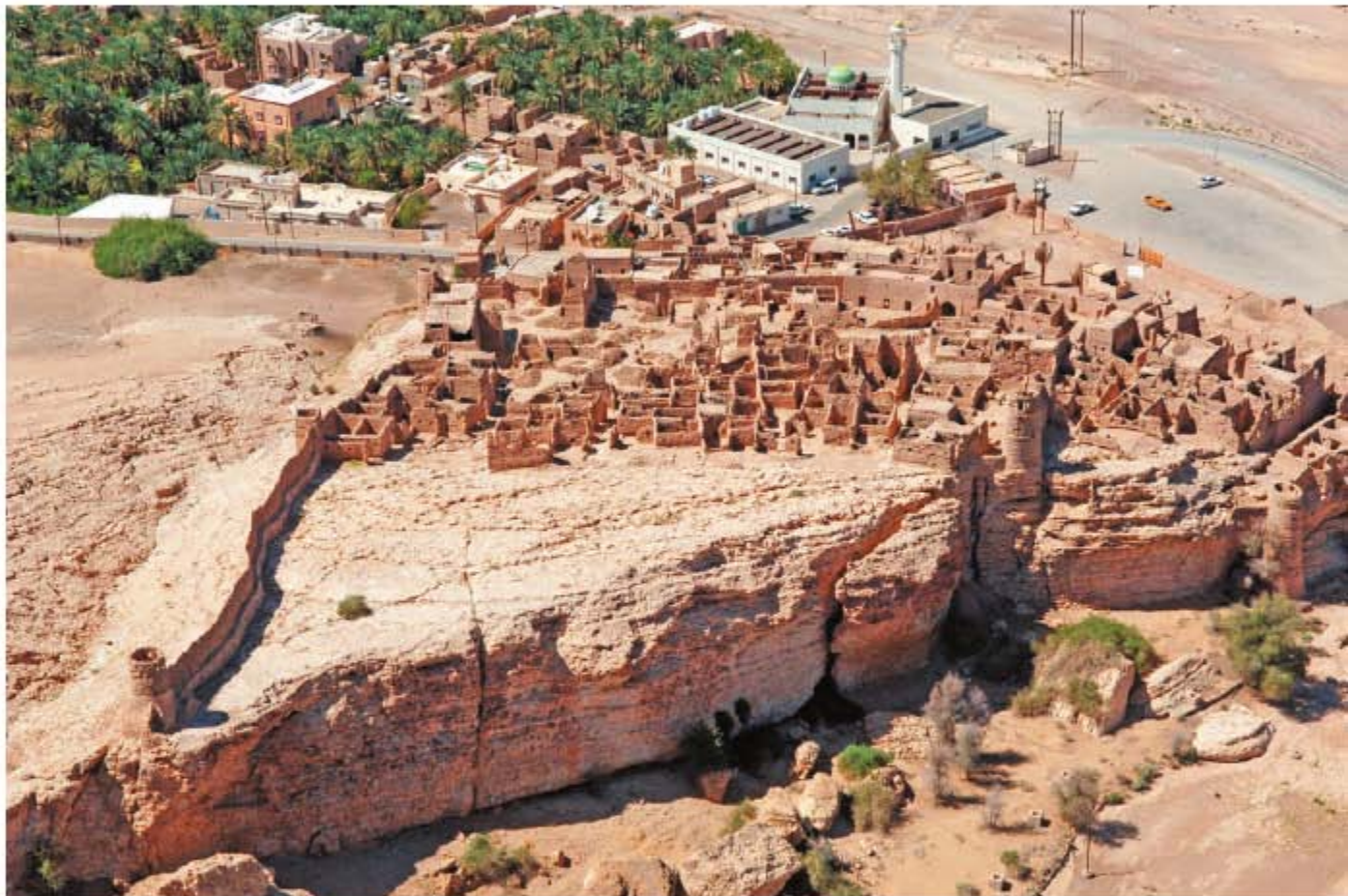
Hawdh Al Masarrat consists of two well-fields - Wadi Al Ayn and Wadi Bukraba - as well as a network of main and subsidiary pipelines and a mains water supply system. There are also tanker filling stations, reservoirs, pumping and treatment stations and electric power connections. Producing around 460,000 cubic metres of water a month at an average rate of 15,000 cubic metres a day from well-fields with an average borehole depth of 130 metres, Al Masarrat is one of the biggest groundwater initiatives in the region as well as being the largest water supply operation in the Sultanate. The project uses the SCDA (supervisory control and data acquisition) system to guarantee accuracy in measuring the volume extracted, flow rate and water quality. The groundwater stocks (reserves) were discovered using modern methods including geographical, geological and geophysical surveys.

CAVES – THE MOUNTAINS' HIDDEN SECRETS

Caves are another of the Sultanate's tourist attractions. There are around seventy caves of various sizes in the Dhahirah region. Probably the best known - and certainly one of the most beautiful - is the large Al Kattan Cave in the village of Al Araqi in the wilayat of Ibri.



348/349



Most of these caves are situated beside springs. In the past the local inhabitants used them as hiding places, to protect themselves from inclement weather conditions, as grain stores or as shelters for their animals.

ARCHAEOLOGY – THE REMAINS OF FORMER CIVILIZATIONS

The Dhahirah is steeped in history. Although much of its past has

been lost to posterity, the stone ruins that we see today can still tell us something about the region's civilizations in former times. Every single *wilayat* has some remnants of the old days, including forts, castles, towers or old residential quarters built in the distinctive Omani architectural style. Ibri Fort, in the middle of the *wilayat* right next door to its old souq, was built 400 years ago and has a stable, a square keep and a great mosque within its perimeter



wall. It has been restored by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and parts of it have been rebuilt.

In Ibri, parties of houbara bustards (*Chlamydotis undulata*) can be seen under the trees and the *wilayat* has adopted this bird as its emblem.

As Sulaif Fort – another historic building – was built in 1711 at the foot of Mount Shanbooh, which overlooks Wadi As Sulayf. Surrounded by a large perimeter wall, it has seven turrets, the most famous of which is Burj Ar Reeh (the Wind Tower).

Al Ainayn Fort is a fortified mansion built in 1740 and consisting of a two-storied defensive structure. Other forts include Al Fath, Al Oud, Al Marqoo', As Safar, As Sharaye' and Al Maneekh in the *wilayat* of Ibri.

Al Aswad Fort, which dates from 972 AH, is an impregnable stronghold with four turrets. Al Ghubayy Fort – also known as Bait Al Dakk – consists of a number of towers and a cluster of old houses built in the traditional style.

There are several historic buildings in the *wilayat* of Ibri including the forts of Jabal Shahshaah, Al Mamour and As Sulaimi Al Qadeem. Other buildings include Bait As Sarooj and several old mosques such as the Sheikh Shabib Mosque and Al Haleelah Mosque, which is built of gypsum and stone.

Bait Al Maraah is the biggest fort in the *wilayat* of Yanqul. Two of the

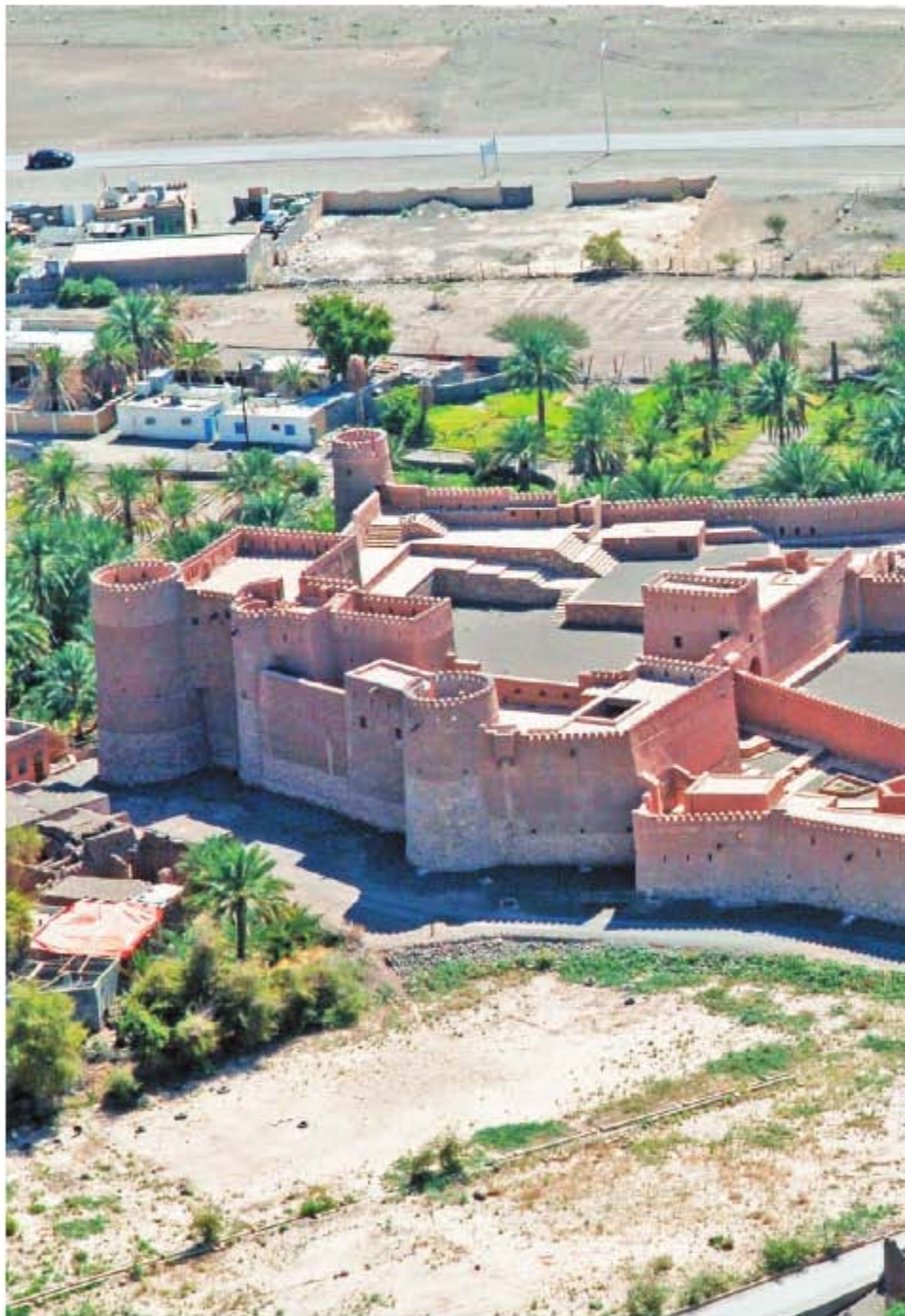


biggest *aflaj* in the *wilayat* intersect within its walls. They are Falaj Al Ain, which flows for over twenty Kilometres beneath the ground before rising to the surface inside the fort, and Falaj Al Muhaidith, which never runs dry. Now beautifully restored, today this fort symbolises the *wilayat's* history and status.

On Jabal Al Khateem, which is around 600 metres above ground level, there are some old buildings, including a fort built on a hilltop in the village of Hadeeqah. There are

Ibri Fort, next door to the old souq, was built 400 years ago. This region has a large number of historic buildings.





Bait Al Marrah is the largest fort in Yanbu, and two of the largest aflaj also intersect within its walls.



352/353





also several defensive towers and structures in the *wilayat's* villages which are hundreds of years old. Inside Yanqul itself are some old residential areas with mud houses which are a popular subject for the photographer's lens.

THE BAT TOMBS

The Bat tombs, which date from the third millennium BC, are the *wilayat* of Ibri's most famous archaeological treasure. Some thirty Kilometres from Ibri town, the tombs (there are around a hundred of them at the Bat site) look like little towers.

The truth about this site was discovered by the Danish archaeological mission, which carried out excavations on it from 1973 to 1979 and established that the piles of stones were not in fact towers, but ancient tombs consisting of a large number of graves of the Umm al Nar type. They also found other tombs similar in appearance to beehives.

In view of its importance, several excavations have been carried out at the site including a low-lying area between the wadi flow and some rocky prominences some two Kilometres north-west of the present town of Bat. Some 200 graves were discovered near a hill quite near the town and some round structures were found; each of these structures was surrounded by two walls with a well at their centre and it is believed that they were watchtowers. Archaeologists



also found some earthenware jar fragments similar to the Jumdat Nasr pottery in Mesopotamia, as well as some red pottery decorated with black horizontal lines, a complete soapstone vessel, three copper and bronze blades and some other copper fragments.

TOWERS AND OTHER REMAINS

An oval stone tower dating from the third millennium BC was found

Bat, which is located at an intersection of ancient trade routes, is some 30 kms to the east of Ibri. The beehive tombs at Al Ain are depicted here against the backdrop of Jabal Misht.



354/355



at al Khatam west of the Bat site in the *wilayat* of Ibri.

A defensive structure was found at Wadi Al Ayn on a hill surrounded by two walls enclosing the remains of a settlement consisting of ruined houses built on stone foundations. Some decorated fragments of earthenware vessels were found there as well as pieces of soapstone used to shape spear shafts (a rare find), all belonging to ancient civilizations that used to flourish in the Dhahirah region.

FARMING AND STOCK-BREEDING

Farming and stock-rearing are two of the most common occupations of the inhabitants of the Dhahirah and they have been the main source of income for many families for hundreds of years. Despite the development that has taken place in the region, the lush, fertile land still produces enough crops to satisfy the needs of the local population.



BAT

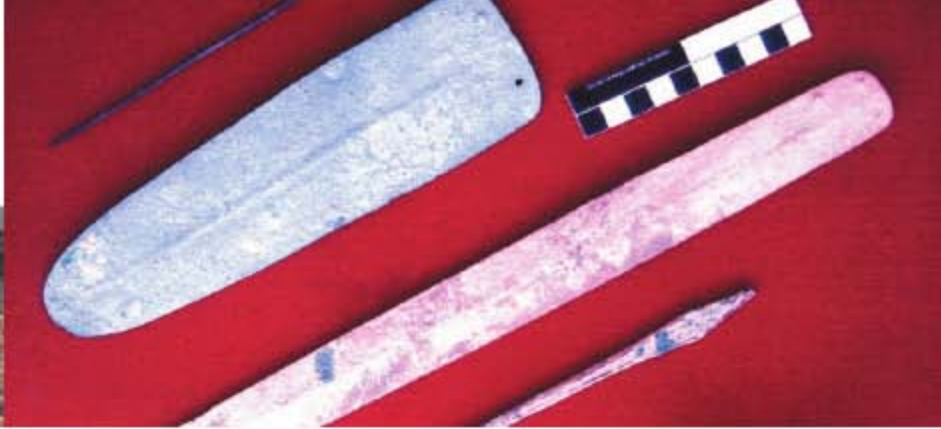
The Bat site in the *wilayat* of Ibri dates from the third millennium BC and was first excavated by the Danish Archaeological Mission in 1976 in collaboration with the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture. This led to the discovery of a number of tombs around two Kilometres to the north of the present-day village of Bat.

The southern section of the site contains tombs of the Umm An Nar type, while the northern end consists of "beehive" tombs. Elsewhere there are some stone tombs which appear to mark a stage of development from the "beehive" to the Umm al Nar type.

Finds at the site included some red earthenware potsherds similar to pottery from the Jumdat Nasr area in Iraq, as well as fragments resembling pieces commonly found in tombs of the Umm An Nar civilization that existed in this region in former times.

The mission also discovered numerous round structures walled with square stone blocks, in addition to a well which bisected one of the structures. Further excavations at this important site will uncover some of the remaining mysteries about this ancient civilization. Some ancient palaces found recently in Ar Rujoun, Al Masami, Al Khaffaj and Al Mitariyah in the Bat district were built of larger stone blocks than those used in the remains at Bat itself; most of them are over a metre and a half long.

A visitor to the Bat site will find evidence of a historical thread running right through the early period. He will see a number of ancient towers, as well as an alignment of stone blocks in a configuration suggestive of a cylindrical tower-like structure. Ancient remains from the Omari heritage are evidence of an advanced civilization and UNESCO has added the site to its World Heritage List.



The farms in the Dhahirah – and there are many – use modern irrigation systems to water their crops and farmers and stock-breeders receive regular support from the competent authorities, including advice and training programmes.

The region is famous for its dates, limes, grapes, mangoes, wheat, barley and animal fodder. The agricultural sector has also benefited from the introduction of several new crops on an experimental basis.

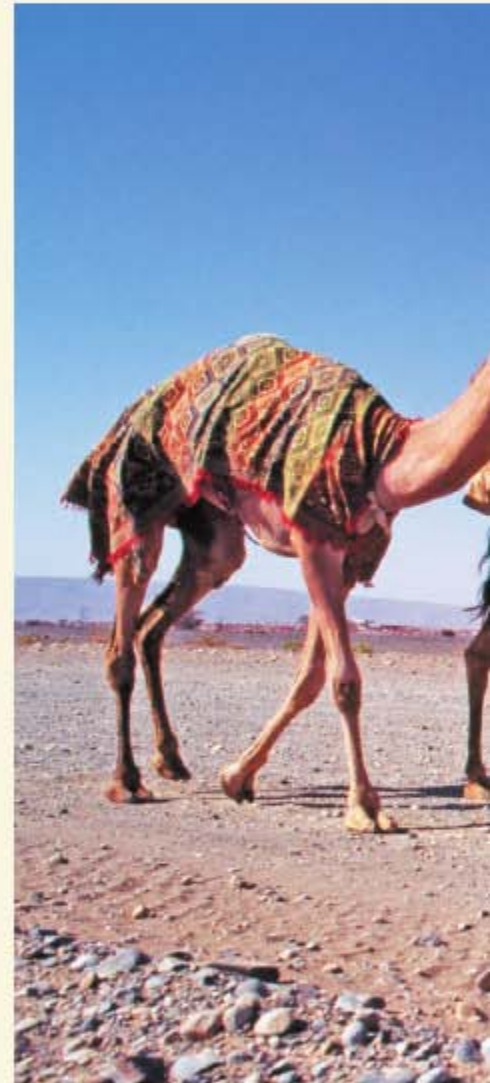
The government has built a number of dams – including a large dam in Ibri – to supply the *aflaj* and wells with fresh groundwater.

The Dhahirah's geographical character has provided its inhabitants with opportunities to work in a wide range of occupations and trades. These include carpentry, the manufacture of gold and silver ornaments and Omani *halwa*, weaving, palm-leaf products and metalwork. The *wilayat* of Ibri is renowned for its *bishts* (cloaks), *mansals* (woven woollen cloaks) and camel trap-pings. There are a large number of sugar-cane presses in the *wilayat* of Yanqul.

FOLKLORE – TRADITIONAL SONGS AND DANCES

One striking feature of Oman's Renaissance since it was first launched in 1970 has been the importance it attaches to the country's heritage. This is because of its awareness of the contribution Omanis





CAMELS





358/359



The camel is one of the more singular and striking inhabitants of the Omani desert. This versatile animal is crucial, too, in the lives of humans, who breed, raise and race camels, a skill that has a long and distinguished tradition in Oman.

Camel races are held throughout the Sultanate, especially on public holidays and festive occasions, and the Royal Court Affairs and Oman Equestrian and Camel Federation organise races year round. Oman is, moreover, known for its pure bred camels.



The Dhahirah is famous for its musical folklore – here the al razhak and the al razfah are performed, and on the right – all Omani women and children love brightly-coloured outfits.

have made to human civilization and the fact that it recognizes the importance of the heritage and traditional values in maintaining the Omani identity and as a basis for developing the country as a modern state.

The *wilayats* of the Dhahirah region are famous for their musical folklore and traditional crafts and trades, which are still a major source of income for many families. Traditional songs and dances include *al ayyalah*, *hambal al boosh* and *al tariq*,

as well as *al maidan*, *al taghrood*, *al aazi*, and the *al wayliyah* (which is performed by women), in addition to *al dan* and *fanni zaffat al arous*. At *tasyeef* – named after *sayf* (summer) – is a series of songs sung during the communal wheat harvest.

Al keetha involves women singing as they transplant this small tree/shrub under a full moon. The tree has beauty as well as medicinal properties – from one place to nearer to their village.





OMANI NATIONAL DRESS

The most immediately distinctive feature of Omani men and women is their traditional dress. Most men wear the *dishdasha* (robe) and *misarr* (turban) with an Omani *khanjar* (dagger) made from pure silver with a filigree decoration. Sometimes a *lisht* (cloak) is worn over the *dishdasha*. Women have a variety of dress styles, but they all wear the Omani *thobe* (gown) and *laisu* (long strip of coloured cloth used as a head cover), with an embroidered *wiqayah* (shawl) and embroidered *sirwal* (pantaloon). The style of the *thobe* varies from region to region. Some regions are renowned for a particular dress style; the *wilayat* of Sur, for example is famous for the Suri *thobe* embroidered with *braisan* (a type of silk), while women in the Governorate of Dhofar wear a wide voluminous *thobe* which has a 'tail'.

Generally speaking, the most distinctive thing about Omani female attire is its bright colours, which become even more dazzling when it is worn with gold or silver jewellery.





362/363





Ibri in 1975.





Ibri today.



THE BATINAH REGION

BOUNTIES OF THE LAND AND SEA

The Batinah region appears on a map of the northern Omani coast as a crescent with its upper, northern horn at Khatmat Milahah in the wilayat of Shinas and its lower, southern horn in the wilayat of Barka. It embraces the Sea of Oman to the east, while its western border lies on the Sultanate's mountainous interior and the slopes of the Hajar mountain range. The Batinah's fertile agricultural plain is a strip of land between the mountains and the coast.

The green oases which form the Batinah's twelve *wilayats* - Sohar, Ar Rustaq, Al Awabi, Nakhal, Wadi Al Maawil, Barka, Al Musanaah, As Suwayq, Al Khaburah, Saham, Liwa and Shinas - are like a necklace of emerald beads resting on the region's chest.

From the beginning of the *wilayat* of Barka right up to the edge of Shinas the villages merge into each other and you have no sense of where one ends and the next begins, until you see the signs welcoming you to a new *wilayat* or find that you have arrived at a roundabout with a street leading right into the middle of one.

A line of greenery with rows of white houses and farms as far as the eye can see, with date palms and distant forts and towers screening the sea from your gaze, this region is a congenial blend of human construction and nature's handiwork. Because of its location, economic resources and high population, the Batinah has played a major role throughout Oman's long history. It

has always been the Sultanate's outlet to the states of the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean and several of the country's heavy industries and vital economic projects are located here.

EVERY WILAYAT IS FAMOUS FOR SOMETHING

All the *wilayats* of the Batinah region have scored impressive achievements in education, health, roads, clean water supplies, sewage systems and other development sectors. Business is buoyant, telecommunication services have been streamlined and the population enjoy comfortable, stable lives.

Thanks to modern town planning, the *wilayats* of the Batinah are as beautiful to look at as they are pleasant to live in. Restoration work has been carried out on historic buildings including the forts and citadels of Sohar, Al Hazm, Ar Rustaq, Fazah and Barka. Facilities have been installed at some of the Sultanate's most renowned natural mineral springs such as Ain Al Kasfah and Ain Al Thuwarah, commercial districts have been modernised and large public parks and gardens have been created.

The Batinah is rich in economic resources and its raw materials are now beginning to be exploited as the basis for a range of vital heavy industries. Port Sohar is one of the Sultanate's major economic enterprises and its industrial estate has succeeded in attracting several

Oman produces over 60 varieties of dates - in the date souq awaiting the auctioneer.





mega-projects such as petrochemicals and aluminium industries. Sohar Airport, work on which is due to begin shortly, will give a big boost to the area.

SOHAR – GATEWAY TO THE EAST

After visiting Sohar the Arab geographer Al Maqdisi described it as the gateway to the East, noting that it was "a prosperous, beautiful city and comfortable to live in". He also referred to its seaside mosque with its tall copper-plated minaret and *mihrab* (prayer niche). In his book *Mu'jam al Buldan* (Dictionary of Countries) the Syrian geographer Yaqut Al Hamawi described it as "the Kasbah of Oman".

Al Farisi, author of *Hudood al Aalam* (Boundaries of the World), states that Sohar was the "market of the entire world", while Al Istakhri speaks of its wealth and beauty in his book *Al Masaalik wa'l Mannaalik* (Traditions of Countries). The Companion of the Prophet Amr bin Al 'Aas came to Sohar when he visited Abd and Jaifar, the sons of Julanda and kings of Oman, in the eighth year of the Hijra with a letter from the Prophet inviting the people of Oman to embrace Islam.

Under the Renaissance Sohar has become a modern city, though it has retained its original character. In 1998 it was awarded the Gold Shield by the Arab Towns Organisation, reflecting the way in which



its development had been planned to ensure a balance between the environment and the natural beauty of the area.

As you enter Sohar you pass through a gateway in the form of a line of sailing vessels with their sails raised, symbolising the ships that used to berth in Sohar's harbour. Its roads and squares have been embellished with lawns, beds of seasonal flowers, fountains and pools, with figures and models rep-

(Top) The Globe roundabout, and the imposing gateway to Sohar.



370/371



representing some of the country's historical, environmental or cultural features, including a football and a date palm.

Continuing its traditional association with copper mining and the copper industry, Sohar today has a large copper smelter. The city's development and beautification projects – which are much in evidence throughout the *wilayat* – have been carried out under the aegis of the Sohar Development Office.

The *wilayat* of Ar Rustaq is famous for Ain Al Kasfah – a hot spring that attracts tourists and visitors and produces 14,000 cubic metres of water a day. This is a high volume compared with other groundwater springs. A study of Ain Al Kasfah's water has established that it comes from a depth of 1,138 metres beneath the surface of the ground. The spring is surrounded by a lovely garden.



Ar Rustaq has always played an important role in Oman's history and this is reflected in the 121 forts, citadels and towers scattered over its hills and in its villages. They include Ar Rustaq Fort – the *wilayat's* most imposing building – as well as Al Hazm Fort.

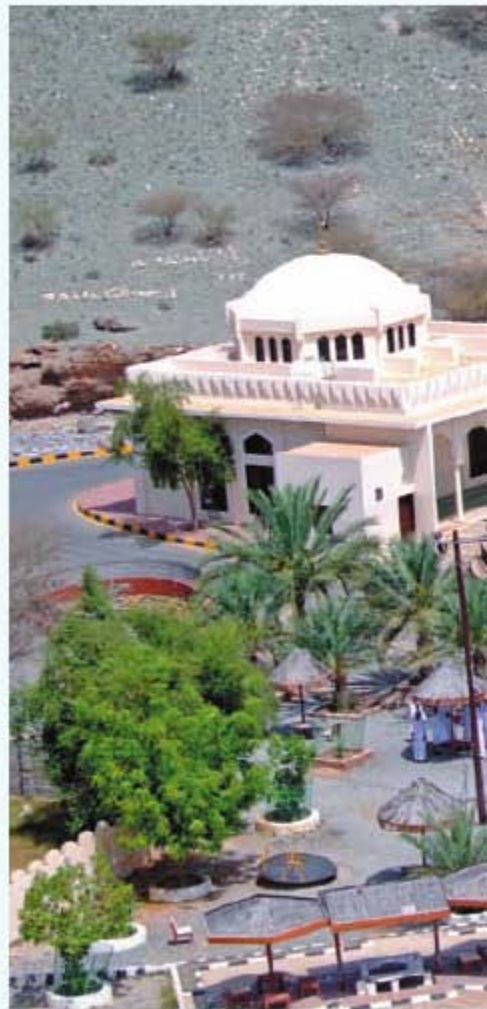
Bee-keeping is widespread in Ar Rustaq's fertile wadis and receives support and encouragement from the government. The bees feed on the local wild flowers.

Ayn Al Thuwarah is the *wilayat* of Nakhal's main claim to fame. This spring rises among the rocks and flows along the wadi forming a little river that is popular with day trippers throughout the year. There are many other springs nearby, all of which flow through the same wadi. Nakhal derives its name from the Arabic word *yankhul* meaning "to filter", because the soil filters the water and purifies it.

Nakhal has many historic buildings including its famous hilltop fort and numerous old mosques, as well as scenic spots like Wadi Mistall.

The *wilayat* of Al Awabi is distinctive for two things – its lushness and its history as a place of literature and learning – and that is why it has adopted a pen, an inkwell and a book as its emblem. Wadi Bari Kharus, its banks lined with farming villages, runs from the villages of Stal to Al Ulya and could justifiably be claimed to symbolise the true character of Al Awabi.

Ayn Al Kasfah – a major tourist attraction in Rustaq.



SPRINGS: AYN AL KASFAH AND AYN AL THUWARAH





Springs are among the Sultanate's main visitor and tourist attractions. Rising from deep beneath the ground, they flow along the wadis or irrigation channels. The water of Ayn Al Kasfah in the *wilayat* of Ar Rustaq rises from the bowels of the earth and has a temperature of 45 degrees C. Despite its pleasant taste it contains sulphur, though not in sufficient quantities to have an adverse effect on the health. It is used medicinally as a treatment for some types of joint and back pain.

The authorities recognize that the spring is a tourist asset and have developed the area round it. Ayn Al Thuwarah in the *wilayat* of Nakhal is a spring that flows in abundance from Jabal Sald throughout the year, though the volume produced varies according to the rainfall. Picnic shelters and seating have been installed for visitors near the spring. The *wilayat* of Nakhal is dependent on the water from Ayn Al Thuwarah for irrigation and other everyday uses.



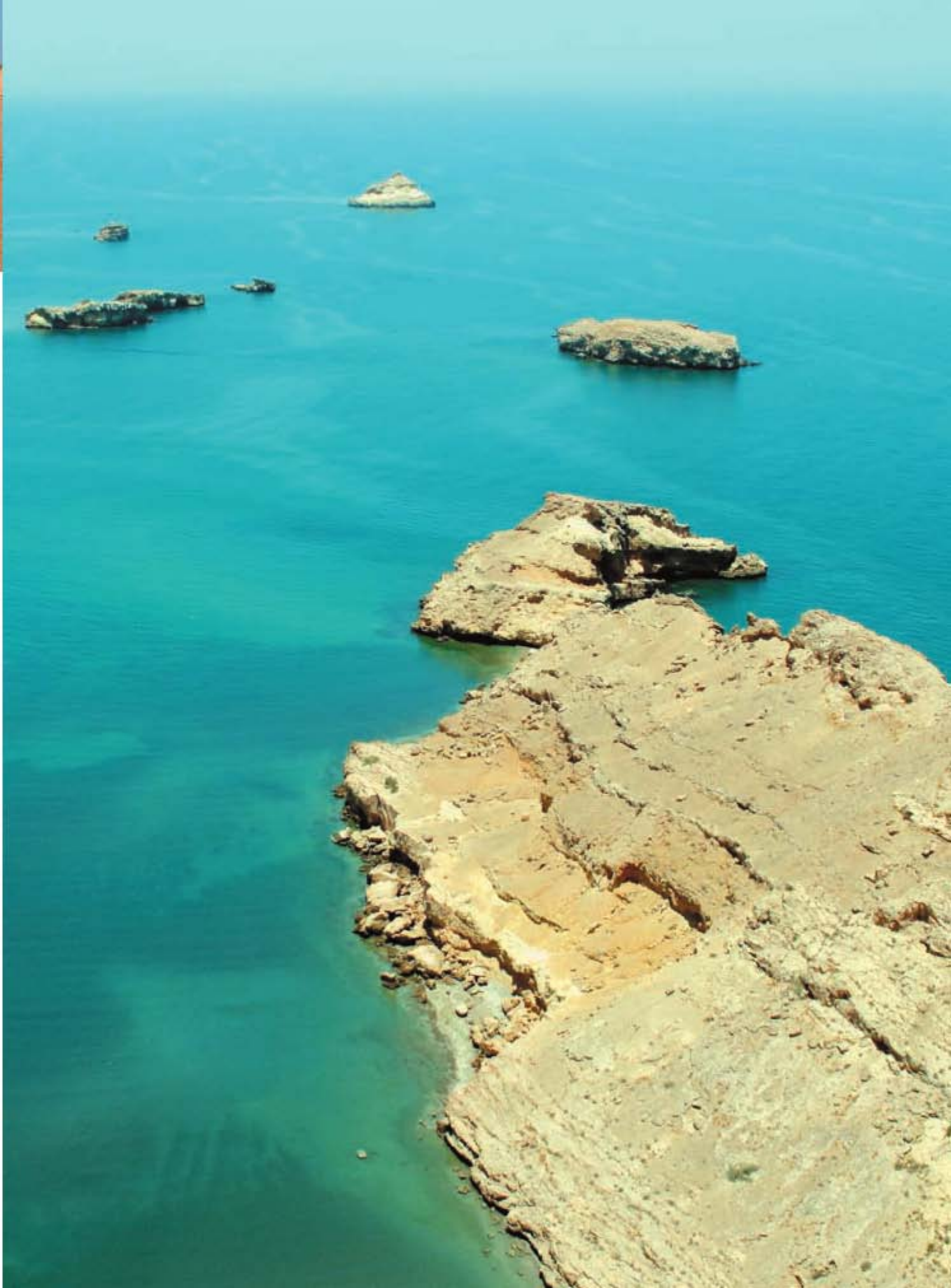
(Top) The unspoilt beach of As Sirwadi. (Above) Sufala Fort in Wadi Al Maawil, and (right) some of As Sirwadi's rocky islands where birds rest on their migration.

Al Awabi has numerous sites of archaeological interest and old mosques, including Al Ghamamah Mosque in the village of Al Hajar in Wadi Bani Kharus, the restored Al Awabi Fort, the forts of Ar Rami and Salawt and a number of towers.

Wadi Al Maawil has the jackfruit (fins) tree- a tree that is unique to this *wilayat* and one of its symbols. Some nineteen metres tall and with a trunk a metre and a half thick, its fruit weighs up to ten Kilograms.

WILAYATS AND HISTORIC SITES – THE RAK TREE AND MIGRATING BIRDS

There are a large number of historic buildings in Wadi Al Maawil, one of which - Al Safalah Citadel - is the *wilayat's* emblem. Its green, fertile villages – Afiy, Muslimat and Al Ajal – are watered by *aflaj* (pl. of *falaj* = traditional irrigation channel) and wells and the dates from its many palm groves are used to make *mabsal*; the palms produce *mabsali*





(Top) The white-collared Kingfishers can be seen in the Shinas and Al Liwa mangroves.

(Above) Barka Fort is constructed mainly of stone rather than mud bricks. One of its four large towers is an unusual octagonal shape, and (top right) the small palm-rib boat called a shasha, which is said to be unsinkable.

dates, which are picked after they have become yellow, then stewed in water in traditional ovens before being dried in the sun.

The *wilayat* of Barka is particularly well known for the attractive sandy beach at As Sawadi, which is a popular week-end spot and an excellent starting point for trips into the nearby mountains. Sawadi beach owes much of its fame to its three rocky offshore islands which provide a refuge for migrant birds,

including herons and black-headed gulls, which stop off there in January and February every year.

Barka is also famous for its forts, towers and old houses, particularly Barka Fort. Al Fulaij Fort, which is also in the *wilayat*, has been renovated and is now a modern theatre that stages Arab and international productions.

The leafy *rak* (*Salvador persicus*) tree grows in the *wilayat* of Al Musanaah's deserts. In English it



376/377



is sometimes known as the 'toothbrush tree' as in earlier times the roots were traditionally harvested as toothbrushes. Today the *wilayat* has adopted the tree as its emblem. The local people here have been fishermen since childhood and you will find their fishing boats anchored beside the shore. Other occupations include agriculture and textile weaving. In the old days Al Musanaah was renowned for certain traditional industries such as

the production of indigo, which was used to dye women's garments, and for its sugar cane presses – an indication of the fertility of the soil.

Al Musanaah is famous for its camel-breeding and camel races; in Tawi Al Shawi in the village of Al Qurt there is a camel race track and official thoroughbred Arab camel races are held there.

In the flat, open land of the *wilayat* of Al Suwayq you will find pastures dotted with herds of camels, while towards the plain there are beautiful wadis such as Wadi Al Halfayn, which is one of the main local tourist attractions. The town of As Suwayq is one of the biggest markets and shopping centres in the Batinah region and sea-going vessels anchor off its shore.

The *wilayat* of As Suwayq has nearly a hundred villages, as well as historic forts and citadels including Al Suwayq Fort. The surrounding country also has much to offer such as fresh water springs.

The *wilayat* of Al Khaburah is known for its palm groves and lime orchards, while tourists – particularly those who are keen photographers – are enchanted by its wadis such as Wadi Al Hawasnah and Wadi As Sarmi with their *aflaj*, springs and running streams.

The *wilayat* of Sahamis renowned for its limes and it has adopted the lime tree as its emblem. Its 23 *aflaj* include Falaj Wadi Bani Omar, Falaj al Rawdha, Falaj Al Fulaij and Falaj al Mahab. The *wilayat* of Shinas has



36 wadis, the best known of which are Wadi Ajeeb, Wadi Teemat and Wadi Faydh.

While Liwa is famous as a boat-building centre, it also has several tourist attractions including some old mosques. A visitor to this *wilayat* will be struck by the sight of a small palm-rib boat floating by the beach called a *shasha*. As it is made from palm branches dried in the sun, the *shasha* is unsinkable. It can hold one or two people and the local people use it to fish in places near the shore.

In the *wilayat* of Liwa's village of Zuhaimi there is a *mashoo* (baobab) tree – the only tree of its kind in Oman – which has a massive trunk and short leaves and may be over 150 years old and. Local people believe it can relieve toothache.

The *wilayat* of Shinas, right up at the far end of the Batinah coast, enjoys all the benefits of modern development. It has numerous tourist attractions, a lively commercial scene and – thanks to its numerous *aflaj* – a thriving agricultural sector. Moreover, because of its seaside location, it also has an important commercial sea-port. Its main features of historical interest include Shinas Fort, which is near the souq. There are also other forts in the *wilayat* as well as over thirty towers including the seaside tower of Burj Al Mareer. There are a number of wadis and *khawrs* (lagoons) in Shinas; one of them – Khawr Al Qurm – is particularly popular with visitors and tourists.



EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Just as nothing can grow without water, so too can there be no development without education. According to the 2009-2010 figures, there are 177 schools in the North Batinah with 112,255 students (boys and girls) and 116 in the South Batinah with 73,151 students. In the higher education sector there are two Colleges of Technology – in Al Musanaah and Shinas – as well as two Colleges of Applied Sciences, one

There are over 300 schools in the Batinah region, with more than 185,000 male and female students.



جامعة صحار

SOHAR UNIVERSITY





380/381



In the Batinah region there is a University, Medical College and other colleges of higher learning where young people can equip themselves for a future career.



*There are 10 hospitals in this region.
Medical and nursing students are
trained to use the latest equipment.*







in Sohar and the other in Ar Rustaq. In addition to these, a branch of the Oman Medical College in Sohar runs courses for students from their fourth to seventh university years. There are two Vocational Training Centres – one in Shinas and the other in Saham. Sohar Private University offers courses in the arts and sciences.

Health is a major priority in the Batinah region. Its ten hospitals include referral hospitals in Sohar and Ar Rustaq. There are also eight polyclinics and 25 health centres. The Sultanate's first specialist centre for spinal surgery and the surgical treatment of sports accidents and injuries, which is being set up in the village of Majaz in the *wilayat* of Saham, is a joint Omani-German investment project.

MODERN ROADS

Today the Batinah boasts a network of wide modern roads embellished with green expanses and figures and models representing aspects of Oman's heritage and culture. As they cut across wadis and carve their way through the mountains, these roads link the *wilayats* with each other and the Batinah region with its neighbours. Tourists will soon be transported to a world of joy and beauty along a fine new addition – the Batinah Coast Road – which will run along beside the sea for a distance of 66 Kilometres between Port Sohar and Khatmat Milahah



The coastal road in Saham.



384/385



THE BATINAH COAST ROAD

The 240-Kilometre-long Batinah Coast Road through eight of the Batinah region's *wilayats* (Barka, Al Musanaah, As Suwayq, Al Khaburah, Saham, Sohar, Liwa and Shinas) is one of the Sultanate's national strategic projects.

Phase One (126 Kilometres) will be implemented in two stages. The first stage (60 Kilometres) will be from al Naseem Roundabout, then via the *wilayat* of Barka to the Said bin Sultan base intersection at Wudam As Sahel in the *wilayat* of Al Musanaah, while the second stage (66 Kilometres) will be from the Majees intersection in the *wilayat* of Sohar to Khatmat Milahah in the *wilayat* of Shinas.

The new road will be built to the highest specifications. It will be a dual carriageway with two lanes in each direction, with the possibility of an additional third lane in each direction in the future. It will also have slip roads on either side, as and when required, as well as pedestrian pavements, car parks, landscaping and safe pedestrian crossings near souqs and fishing areas.

As well as offering an alternative route to the existing Batinah highway, the project will provide access to the vital destinations located along its route. It will also help improve the seafront along the coastal strip and replace the areas affected by the project by creating well-planned new areas of building development, complete with all basic services including streets, street lighting and sewage systems. At the same time it will provide a range of tourist and recreational amenities.

The project will also resolve the problem of coastal erosion by establishing effective sea defences, while creating suitable conditions for future development in the areas allocated for projects such as tourist resorts, harbours and other marine facilities.





386/387



and for 56 Kilometres between the *wilayats* of Barka and Al Musanaah. The Dhahirah and Batinah regions are linked by the Maskan road (76 Kilometres) between the *wilayats* of Ibri and Ar Rustaq, as well as a second road between Yanqul and Sohar, while Ibri and Saham are linked by the Wadi Bari Omar road (44 Kilometres), which starts in the *wilayat* of Saham's village of Al Laheeban and ends in the village of Kahnat in the *wilayat*

of Ibri. This road joins the Wadi Al Hawasnah road (Al Ghizayn – Maskan) at two points – firstly at the village of Al Kooriyah (7 Kilometres) and the second at Kahnat (11 Kilometres). These road connections have helped shorten the distance between Wadi Bari Omar and Wadi Al Hawasnah. The Al Hajaari – Al Laheeban mountain road (31.5 Kilometres) has been upgraded. The 50-Kilometre-long road between Maskan village

Roads cutting across wadis and carving their way through mountains – linking the wilayats with each other and the Batinah region with its neighbours.



Another new road runs from Wadi Hilti (*wilayat* of Sohar) and Wadi Shafan (*wilayat* of Saham) through the villages of Al Khamirah, Safiy and Sahiy in the *wilayat* of Ar Rustaq. A new bridge across Wadi Bani Kharus in the *wilayat* of Al Awabi and the new Al Khabt branch road off the Uqair Al Abriyyin road will also facilitate travel between the *wilayats* and villages and help promote trade and tourism. To relieve congestion, the intersections on the main highway between the Naseem Park and the *wilayat* of Shinas roundabouts have been closed; sixteen overpasses and underpasses are due to be built as well as two flyovers at the Barka and Al Khaburah roundabouts. After these have been completed the remaining intersections will also be closed.

TREASURES OF THE LAND AND SEA

The Batinah lies along a shore that is rich in fish and there is now an infrastructure for developing the fisheries sector. Fisheries departments have been set up in the coastal *wilayats* and fishing harbours have been built in Shinas, Sohar, Saham, Al Khaburah and As Suwayq. To help improve the quality of the catches, an institute has been established in Al Khaburah to run a training programme for fishermen from all the Sultanate's regions and hold courses in navigation and map-reading.

(*wilayat* of Ibri) and the village of al Ghizayn (*wilayat* of Al Khaburah), which runs over high mountain passes and across wadis, has been designed to guarantee maximum safety for vehicles and drivers.

The Sohar-Buraymi dual carriageway (81 Kilometres), which begins at the Falaj Al Qabail Roundabout and ends at the Zarub Roundabout, is lit by three thousand street lamps. A flyover is scheduled to be built to Sohar Airport.

(Above & overleaf) Recently fishing harbours have been built in several coastal towns, and fisheries-related operations (including a training institute) have been established. **(Right)** A nice catch of tuna.

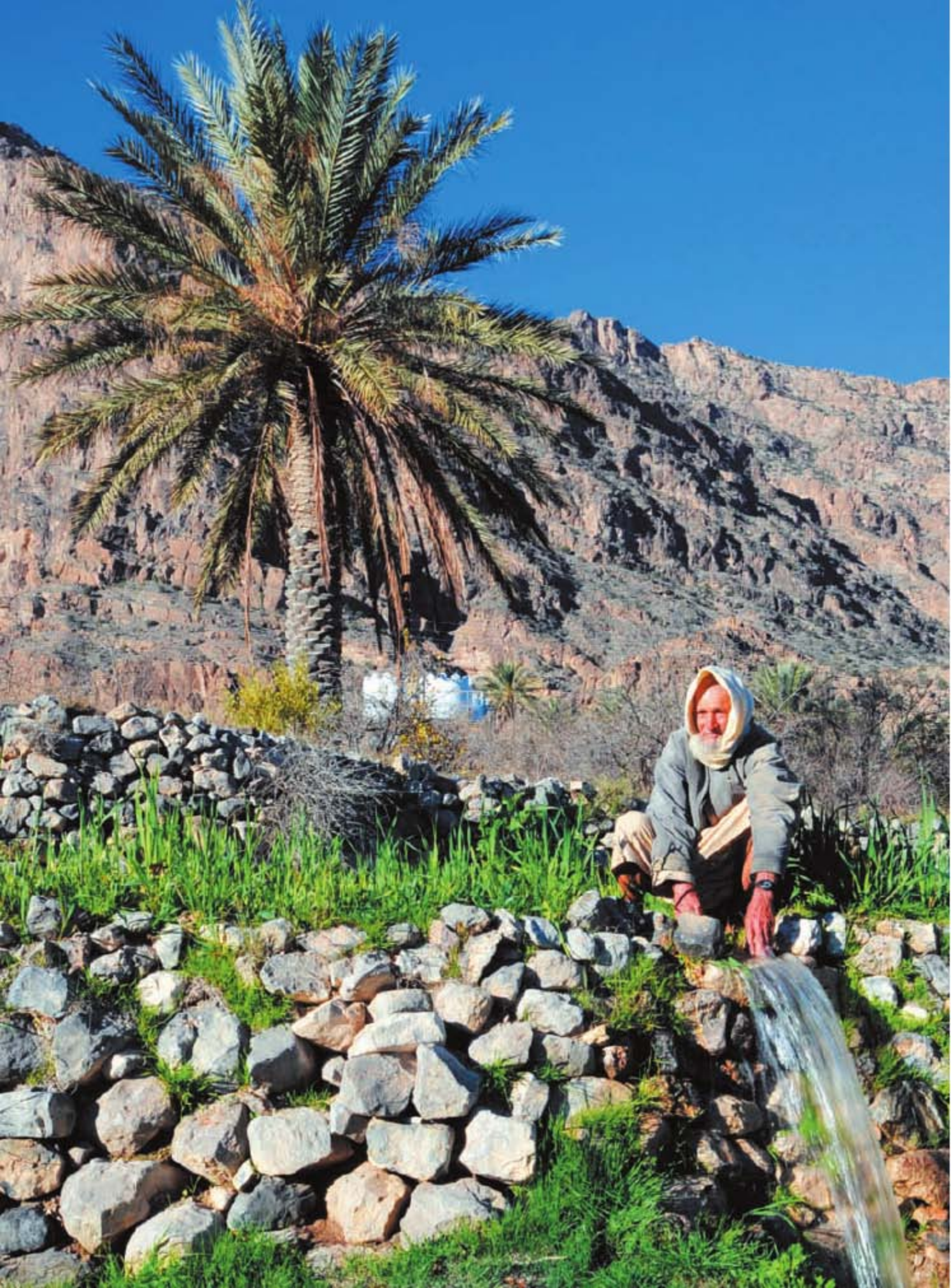






390/391











394/395





(Previous page) Falaj water is rotational so that everyone has a share for their crops. The young are encouraged to pursue careers in agriculture and horticulture using modern methods. Beans and mushrooms are exported.

Water desalination plants at Sohar and at Barka provide the people with millions of gallons of drinking water.

There are fish sales and marketing projects in the Batinah's *wilayats*, as well as a range of fisheries-related operations such as fish processing, canning and packaging factories, fishing tackle shops, fisheries companies, fish drying and salting plants, ice factories, fish import and export companies and fish farming and fish food production businesses.

Barka and Al Musanaah enjoy all the right geographical and en-

vironmental conditions for the establishment of fish farming projects along their shores and there are several fish production schemes in both those *wilayats* including tilapia farms. Several of the products from these businesses have found their way into the local markets.

An agricultural training section has been opened at the Saham Vocational Training Centre to support the farming industry. Its training plans aim to qualify young Omanis





to play leading roles in the agricultural sector.

CLEAN DRINKING WATER

Water is the basis of life and in recognition of this the government has introduced a range of projects with the aim of making clean drinking water available for the population. A water desalination plant that has been set up in the *wilayat* of Sohar produces millions of gallons of potable water; some thirteen million gallons a day are piped to the South Batinah including the *wilayats* of Ar Rustaq, Al Awabi, Nakhal, Wadi al Maawil and Al Musanaah, and eighteen overhead reservoirs have been built as well as ten pumping stations and eighteen tanker filling stations. Phase One of the Barka desalination plant produces twenty million gallons a day, while Phase Two produces twenty-six million gallons a day and supplies the Governorate of Muscat and the Dakhiliyyah region.



The Sohar sports complex has a football stadium capable of holding 1,000 spectators as well as indoor facilities while the the Sports City at Al Musanaah provided the venue for the 2nd Asian Beach Games in December 2010.

SPORTS

Sports play a vital role in promoting physical and mental health and in the Batinah much importance is attached to sports and youth activities. In addition to nine sports clubs, there is a sports complex in the *wilayat* of Sohar with a football pitch capable of accommodating over 15,000 spectators. The complex also has an indoor sports hall for volleyball, basketball and handball







matches with space for a thousand spectators and a hockey pitch where competitions are held including HM the Sultan's Cup championships. Other amenities include training facilities, an athletics track and accommodation for teams. Games played at the Batinah's clubs include football, volleyball, handball and hockey. As well as hosting local championships in these games, these clubs have also represented the Sultanate at Gulf and Asian events, particularly in football and volleyball.

A Sports City has been set up on an area of one million square metres in the *wilayat* of Al Musanaah to provide the venue for the 2nd Asian Beach Games in December 2010. Its facilities include an athletes' village, a four-star hotel, an administration building, a sailing boat marina and several games pitches and stadiums.

There are horse and camel race tracks in the *wilayats* of Sohar and Barka and an equestrian city currently being built in Barka will comprise a race track, a veterinary clinic for horses and camels, training grounds for jockeys and a range of other facilities.

Providing jobs for Omanis. Sohar Industrial Port is associated with large projects stemming from the oil and gas industries. It has 18 berths along 7,880 metres of pier. FreeZone Sohar is a joint initiative between the government of Oman and the private sector to provide industries of each cluster with the benefits of common facilities.

SOHAR INDUSTRIAL ESTATE – MEGA-PROJECTS

Sohar Industrial Port, which has been in operation since 1999, has attracted massive local and foreign investment in its heavy and petrochemicals industries and it is one of the largest economic projects in the Sultanate. The port, which









402/403









SOHAR INDUSTRIAL PORT

The Sohar Industrial Port was established in 2002 as the Sohar Industrial Port Company (SIPC SAOC) which is owned jointly by the government of Oman and Port of Rotterdam. It opened in 2004.

The Port is associated with large projects stemming from the oil and gas industries. The port has 18 berths along 7,880 metres of pier, and is divided into four main sections, handling containers, general cargo, dry materials and liquids, including a liquid storage area. The port ranges in depth from 16 to 18 metres inside the main basin, and reaches a depth of 23 metres at the dry goods station. In just a few years, the Port of Sohar has gained importance internationally, attracting local and foreign investments in heavy industries and petrochemicals such

as the Sohar Refinery, the polypropylene, urea, methanol, aromatics and polyethylene factories and the large iron and aluminium plants. The development of the area also includes Free Zone Sohar and Sohar Airport.

It shares excellent road connectivity with the upcoming Expressways to Muscat, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and the proposed Batinah Railway network. The Port and Free Zone Sohar benefit from incentives encouraging investment in the locality and can offer all of the services required by industries, such as handling stations managed by specialized international companies, electricity, water and gas industry services, in addition to certain primary materials such as the products of Sohar Refinery, which were responsible for stimulating investment in the propylene project.





consists of a main container terminal, a general cargo terminal and a terminal for handling and storing liquid cargoes, is between sixteen and eighteen metres deep inside the main harbour basin. At the future dry cargo terminal it will be up to twenty-three metres deep.

Sohar Industrial Estate has around 178 projects at various stages ranging from Phase One to Phase Seven, including sixty-eight projects that are currently in production or under experimental production; these projects include foodstuffs, plastics and chemicals industries, oil and gas derivatives, metal-based industries for the manufacture of equipment and machinery, wood, paper and aluminium industries and service projects.

The completion of the ship fuelling station at Sohar Industrial Port will bolster the Sultanate's capacity for boosting trade between the Gulf region and the outside world, including the "transit" trade. This is not only because the Sultanate is in a geographically vital strategic location, but also because Sohar Industrial Port is a major link in a string of Omani ports including Port Sultan Qaboos in the Governorate of Muscat, the container port in Salalah in the Governorate of Dhofar and Port Duqm - currently under construction in the Wusta region - as well as several small harbours along Oman's long coastline.

Free Zone Sohar is a joint venture between the Government of Oman



Sohar Fort, dating from the 13th to 14th centuries AD, has been converted into a museum dedicated to the old city of Sohar and its relations with other cultures.



408/409





and the private sector. It is being developed in three phases over a total area of 4,500 hectares, the first phase covering 500 hectares. The cluster approach, adopted from the Port, is to provide industries of each cluster with the benefits of common facilities.

TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

The old citadels, forts and towers in the Batinah's towns and villages are shining examples of Oman's architectural history. They include the eye-catching white Sohar Fort, which dates from the 13th to 14th centuries AD and has now been converted into a museum dedicated to the old city of Sohar and its relations with other cultures. Among its exhibits are some ancient artefacts and traditional weapons.

The old city gates beside the Fort have been restored. They include the historic Hijra Gate by the entrance to the Fort, and the Friday Market Gate to the west of the Hijra Gate, which - along with the old souq - must have originally stood there at the beginning of the Islamic era.

Ar Rustaq's fort, which stands on a rocky hilltop, is an imposing old building and Al Hazm Fort is an architectural gem that has been restored and is now a museum. Its vaulted roofs have been constructed entirely without wood. With walls three metres thick, the Fort has massive doors and some old Portuguese and Spanish cannons, as well as a series of passageways and staircases



The great angular Al Hazm Fort was built in 1708 and is located where the Batinah plain meets the Jabal Al Akhdar. It is a true military fort, incorporating towers for many cannons. And (below), the Al Awabi Fort which now has a renovated tower at one corner and a non-renovated tower at the diagonally opposite end.

specially designed to enable horses to climb up to the roof of the building. The Falaj Al Hazm channel passes through the Fort to provide its occupants with fresh water.

In Nakhal the town's lofty citadel and its towers look down from the top of a hilltop 200 feet high. It was restored in 1990. Al Junah Citadel, also in the wilayat of Nakhal, is in al Alaya district near a mosque which bears the same name - Junah. There are also citadels in the village





The Julandas built Rustaq Castle Fort in 1250 AD. When Nasir bin Murslid became the first Yaruba ruler in 1624, he moved the capital to Rustaq and rebuilt the fort in 1650 AD.

es of Al Abyad, Al Taw, Haliyan and Wadi Mistall.

The *wilayat* of Liwa has several castles, forts and towers. They include Liwa Citadel, whose three main towers are set in its perimeter wall, Fazah Citadel, which is approximately twenty-five metres high, and the white mud fort of Awlad Yarub on the shore in the Harmoul district. There are numerous small hilltop towers in the *wilayat*.

The Souq Fort is one of the main

forts in the *wilayat* of Saham. The *wilayat* of al Khaburah has several forts, towers and walls, including the forts of Qasabiyat Albusaid, al Hijari, Al Badi'ah, Al Ghashiyeen, Al Aqli, Falaj Bari Rabi'ah and Al Khabt, and Qateet Wall and Al Dawahna Wall.

Historic buildings in the *wilayat* of Wadi Al Maawil include forts in the villages of Afiy and Muslimat, as well as three other forts – Bait Matma', Al Khandaq and Habra.



end of the 18th century AD, stands in an area of open ground surrounded by mountains. Now a theatre which stages world-class dramas, shows and concerts, it has a VIP box and seating for up to 500 people.

The *wilayat* of As Suwayq has 20 historic walls and four towers, as well as forts in several of its villages; these include the forts of Al Tharmad, Al Hilal, Al Maghabisha and Al Burasheed. As Suwayq Fort, beside the sea, has round turrets in three of its corners.

Harat Al Baks is an old mud and stone-built residential area in the *wilayat* of al Khaburah on a tongue of rock beside Wadi Al Baks. It has only one entrance.

The mosque of Imam Ar Rabee bin Habib is a historic mosque in the village of Ghadhfan in the *wilayat* of Liwa. Other old Batinah mosques include the Nakhal Friday Mosque and Al Aqr Mosque in the *wilayat* of Shinas.

TOURIST AND ECO- ATTRACTIONS – WADIS, SPRINGS AND AFLAAJ

Wadis and springs are the Batinah's most attractive natural features from a tourist and environmental point of view. Wadis in the *wilayat* of Sohar include Wadi Ahen and Wadi Al Jizzi, as well as Wadi Hibi, which is some 60 Kilometres from Sohar city. Some of these wadis lie in hilly areas.

Wadi Al Hawqayn in the *niyabat* of Al Hawqayn (*wilayat* of Ar Rus-

Al Awabi has Al Awabi, Ar Ratmi and Salawt Forts, As Sadd and An Najour Towers and three old houses – Bait As Sarooj, Al Misfah and Al Waleeja'. Bait An Numan in the *wilayat* of Barka is a charming example of an old Omani palace. Its allure has been further enhanced by the date and coconut palms that have been planted round it. Barka Fort, which has recently been restored, features an octagonal tower. Al Fulaij Fort, which dates from the



(Top) The Sur Al Bu Hilal Fort in As Sawaiq and (right) Bait Au Na'man. (Below) Nakhl fort stands on an eminence some 200 feet high overlooking the town. Access is via a steep ramp leading up to the main gateway and through a strong outer rampart.



414/415



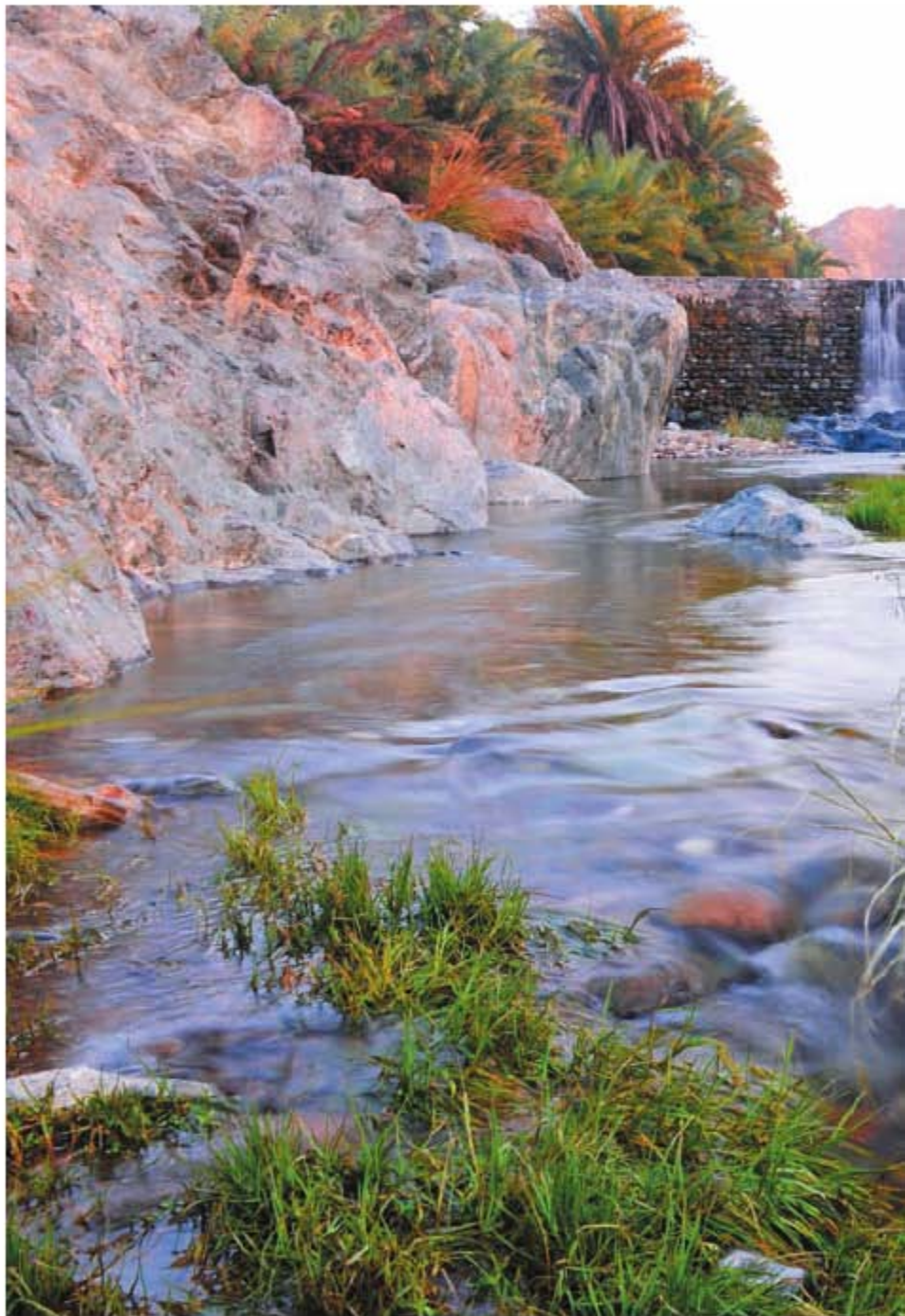


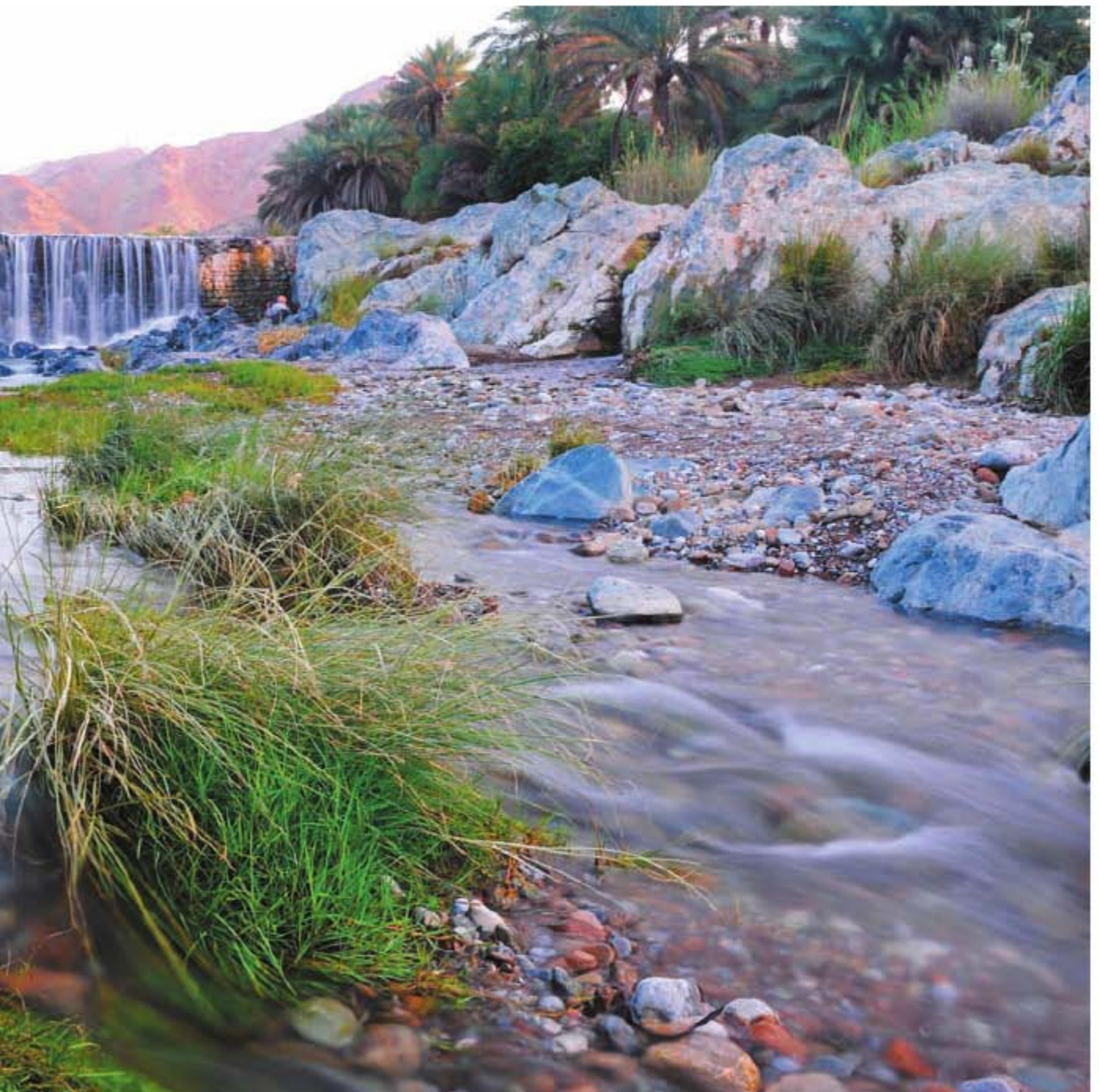


Al Fuleij castle which dates from the end of the 18th century AD is now a theatre with seating for 500. It stages world-class shows and concerts from around the world.



The village of Wakau in Wadi Mistall- popular for its trekking paths, and fruit trees which blossom in February each year. And (below) Wadi Hawqayu makes for an enjoyable day out.









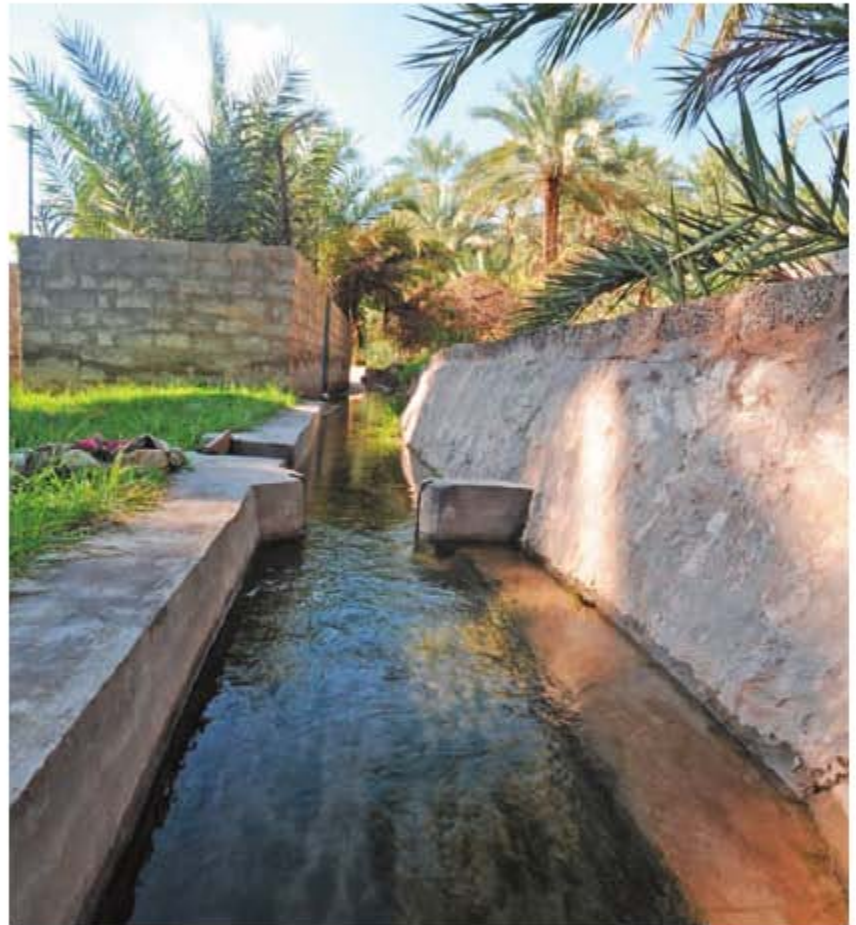
420/421

taq), usually has waterfalls after the rains. Wadi Sahtan is a delightful wadi with farming villages; one of the most beautiful of these is the village of Al Wajma. Wadi Bani Awf ends at the village of Bilad Seet – a popular tourist destination with houses built on a hilltop in an area of palm and citrus groves and woodland. Wadi Bani Ghafir and Wadi Bani Hinai are renowned for their springs and streams, while Wadi Al Haimli's main attraction is its mountain villages.

In Al Awabi there is the stunning Wadi Bani Kharus, which attracts tourists because of its scenery, historic sites and old mosques. The village of Al Ulya at the top of the wadi is popular with nature-lovers.

Wadi Mistall in the *wilayat* of Nakhal ends at the village of Wakan, famous for its peaches, apriots, pomegranates and walnuts. It is particularly popular with tourists when the flowers are all in bloom in February and their colourful blossoms produce a dazzling contrast with the green of the trees. Wadi Al Abya, also in the *wilayat* of Nakhal, combines the magic of nature with the charms of the houses on the hilltops above it.

According to the national *falaj* inventory there are 408 *aflaj* in Sohar, making it the *wilayat* with the greatest number of *aflaj* in the country. The *wilayat* of Ar Rustaq has 294 *aflaj*. The best-known *aflaj* in the Batinah include Falaj Al Muyassar, Falaj al Sayeghi and Falaj Al Kamil.



Along with five other *aflaj*, Falaj Al Muyassar in the *wilayat* of Ar Rustaq was chosen as a representative example of mankind's cultural heritage.

The Batinah is a region of heavy rainfall during some seasons of the year when its wadis fill up and flow. Groundwater recharge dams have been built in Wadi Al Maawil, Wadi Al Taw, Wadi Al Lajal, Wadi Al Fulaj, Wadi Al Hawasnah, Wadi Al Fara', Wadi Hatta, Wadi Al Jizzi and

The best known *falaj* in the Batinah region is Falaj Al Muyassar in Rustaq. This *falaj* is one of five ancient irrigation systems in Oman put on UNESCO's World Heritage List in July 2006.



Wadi Ahen to reduce the volume of rainwater loss and minimise the risk of flooding.

Springs are also popular with tourists. In addition to the hot spring of Ain Al Kasfah in the *wilayat* of Ar Rustaq and Ain Al Thuwarah in the *wilayat* of Nakhal, there are also several lesser-known springs such as Ain Al Hoot in Wadi Bari Awf, Ain Al Khadhra in Wadi Sahtan, Ain Al Zarqa in the *niyabat* of Al Hawqayn and Ain Al 'Azm in the *wilayat* of Liwa.

THE DIMANIYYAT ISLANDS RESERVE

The Dimaniyyat Islands lie to the east of the *wilayat* of Barka and cover a total area of 203 square Kilometres. The nine main islands are: Al Kharabah, Al Hayoot, Al Jabal Al Kabir, Al Jabal As Saghir, Al Mumal-laha, Al Loomiyah, Qismah, Al Joon and Awlad Al Joon.

These islands are a haven for wild life and they were declared a sanctuary by Royal Decree on 3rd April 1996 with the aim of protecting their turtle beaches, scenic beauty, coral reefs, birds and flora. Their main features are rocky inclines, sand cliffs and limestone rocks.

The fifteen wild plant species on the Dimaniyyats grow in profusion on the islands of Al Kharabah and Al Jabal Al Kabir, and this makes them attractive habitats for nesting birds. The islands also support many of the types of coral found



in this region, which protect the shores, forming natural barriers in the shallow water. It is believed that the abundance of coral is due largely to the unpolluted seabed beneath the waters where it has established itself.

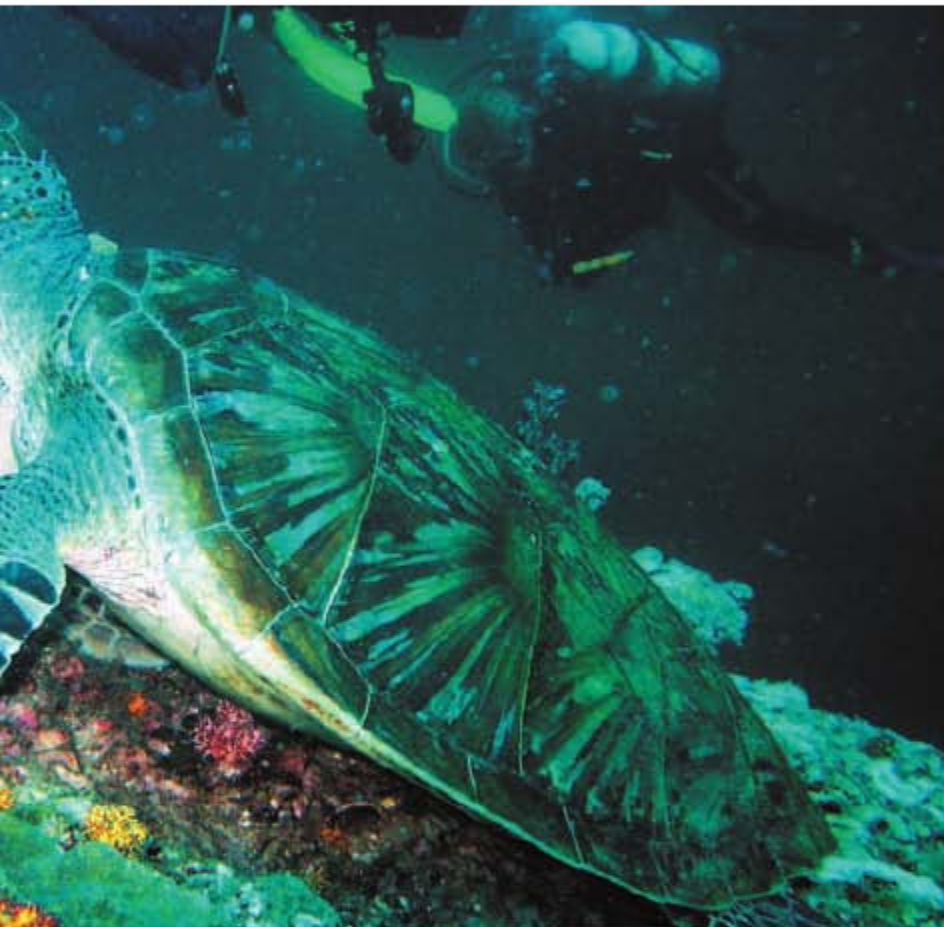
Coral grows generally on exposed rocks, forming platform-like structures several metres thick that attract numerous kinds of fish. Other coral reefs further away from the islands support large shoals of fish

(Top) Sooty Falcons are numerous in north Oman and in the Musandam from August to October. They winter in Madagascar.

The nine Dimaniyyat Islands were given Nature Reserve status in April 1996 with the aim of protecting the turtle beaches, coral reefs, birds and flora.



422/423



and are among the Batinah coast's main fishing grounds.

The islands are visited by two kinds of turtles – the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), which occurs in small numbers, and the hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricate*), of which there are between 250 and 300. These endangered turtles lay their eggs on the Daymaniyyat's beaches. Hawksbills (*Eretmochelys imbricate*) live in seas over rock or coral substrates. The islands offer this highly

endangered species a haven that is safe from predators.

KHAWRS (LAGOONS) AND MANGROVES – CONSERVING THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

The *khawrs* (lagoons) are found in marine areas close to the mountains and provide a suitable habitat for mangrove trees to thrive. The government has planted thousands of mangrove seedlings in Khawr Wudiyan in the *wilayat* of Shinas



Planting mangrove (Avicennia marina) seedlings in Khawr Wndiyan, Shiua. Mangroves provide protection from erosion and wind, and prevent saltwater from surging inland.

with the aim of conserving the marine environment. As well as being extremely attractive to look at, mangroves play an important part in maintaining a balanced ecosystem.

Mangroves are useful to both the marine and terrestrial environments. They protect the shores and provide a refuge for large numbers of fish and other sea creatures, including turtles and several species of birds.

FROM SEA SHANTIES TO KHANJARS (DAGGERS) AND CLOTH WEAVING –FOLKLORE AND TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

The wide range of traditional crafts and occupations in the Batinah region reflects the richness of the local culture and the social cohesion of the community. While fishing, farming, textile weaving and palm-leaf wickerwork are the most common occupations, some *wilayats* are renowned for certain specific handicrafts and





The wide range of traditional crafts reflects the richness of the local culture. Young people are encouraged to learn both from those with years of experience and new techniques at specialist training centres.

trades. Bee-keeping is a popular pursuit in the *wilayat* of Ar Rustaq in view of its wadis and mountainous terrain, while Saham is famous for its *khanjars* (daggers) and silverware. As Suwayq is a major textile-weaving centre and the Public Authority for Craft Industries has opened a textile and handwoven carpet training and production centre there. In other *wilayats* it is common to find other handicrafts, such as rope-making and the manufacture of spare parts for devices such

as the *zajirah* (a traditional device for drawing water from wells), or *da'oon*-making (*da'oon*: pl. of *dan* = palm leaf thatch), leather tanning etc.

Traditional songs and dances of the Batinah include *ar razha*, *al 'aazi*, *al taghrood*, *al wannah*, *al laywa*, *al maalid*, *al mikwarah* and *al tariq*, as well fishermen's and sailors' sea shanties. The region's songs and dances are related to occupations such as farming, craft industries and other traditional pursuits.



426/427



SUWAYQ PRODUCTION CENTRE FOR TEXTILES AND HANDMADE CARPETS

The establishment by the Public Authority for Craft Industries (PACI) of a training centre and production unit for hand woven textiles and carpets in the *wilayat* of Suwayq demonstrates its ongoing commitment to advancing Oman's traditional crafts, and the Centre is a monument to the depth of this commitment. One of its principle guiding objectives was to establish a niche for itself as a specialist production and training unit, focused on the skills involved in creating

superb handmade carpets, rugs and wall hangings. The Centre has made pioneering strides in the industry, as the first carpet production unit in the Sultanate to adopt modern techniques and production tools aimed at bringing this traditional industry into the modern age, at upgrading aspects of quality and using high technology to enhance performance. The Centre is housed in an 825 sq m block comprising administrative offices, a permanent exhibition of craft products and a marketing outlet, in addition to two training halls, for lectures and practical classes, and additional facilities.

THE OMANI KHANJAR

The *khanjar*, which is mostly made of pure silver, is an essential element of the Omani personality and a major part of formal male attire. It comprises three main components.

Every *khanjar* consists of a *nasla* (blade) which was formerly made of high-quality stainless steel, and a *qam* (handle, literally "horn") - the most prestigious material being ivory or rhinoceros horn, but this is not used nowadays. Instead a fine quality of marble or sandalwood is used - the handle is the most costly part of the *khanjar*. The third

and final component is the *sadr*, or the top of the scabbard, which is decorated with ornamental engravings. The *qata'ah* (scabbard) itself is the most attractive part.

There are several types of *khanjar*, including - among others - the Saidi, the Nizwani, the Suri and the Batini. The difference is in the size, shape and type of material used in the manufacture or plating.

Every *wilayat* in the Sultanate has at least one *khanjar*-maker, though the main *khanjar*-making centres are Saham, Al Khaburah, Sur, Nizwa and Salalah.







Sohar in 1975.





Sohar today.



THE DAKHILIYYAH REGION

If Muscat is the place where sea and dry land engage in an endless dialogue, the Dakhiliyyah region may be described as combining the greenness and fecundity of nature with towns and cities whose roots extend deep into the past.

In both cases the same rule about understanding this country applies. That is to say, it is impossible to grasp the essence of Oman's history unless you consider its geography.

However you may have arrived in the Dakhiliyyah – whether you have come from Muscat in the north, the Wusta region in the south, the Sharqiyyah region in the east or the Dhahirah and Batinah in the west – as you travel through the region you cannot help feeling a deep sense of joy and contentment. Here you will find beauty in its most sublime form – towering mountains, deep wadis and ravines, *aflaj* (traditional irrigation channels), date groves, fields of corn, pomegranates, *ghaf* (*Prosopis cineraria*) trees and *hamel* (*peganum harmala*), *'ishniq* (*Cassia italica*) and *matak* bushes. As you enter any one of the Dakhiliyyah's eight *wilayats* – Nizwa, Samayl, Bahla, Al Hamra, Manah, Adam, Izki and Bidbid – the first things that greet you are lush gardens, farms and orchards.

As well as being one of the Sultanate's agricultural regions, the Dakhiliyyah has an important place in Oman's history. Nizwa – its capital – is a must-see destination for any visitor. Situated some 164 Kilometres from the Governorate of Muscat, it was the capital of Oman in the early

days of Islam and was renowned for its scholarship and the generations of scholars, jurists and historians who were born and lived there. That is why it has been called "the egg of Islam". Its massive old fort, which stands to this day, is one of a number of historic citadels, towers, mosques and tourist sites in the *wilayat*.

Samail is also famous for its jurists and scholars, as well as for its wadis, green oases and date palms. It has adopted the *fardh* date palm as its emblem.

Adam is the Dakhiliyyah region's southern gateway and lies on the old desert caravan routes. It has numerous archaeological sites. The *wilayat* of Bahla – one of Oman's oldest districts – has a fine citadel and a historic city wall. Jabrin's famous castle lies within Bahla's boundaries.

The *wilayat* of Izki is guarded on its western side by the slopes of the Jabal Al Akhdar and its fort was built during the reign of Sultan Said bin Sultan al Busaidi. Bidbid's most striking features are its flyovers and it has adopted them as its emblem.

The *wilayat* of Manah has been chosen by Liverpool University in the United Kingdom as a unique example of Omani architecture comprising all the features of a traditional Omani town including old houses, mosques, wells, water springs and outer walls.

The *wilayat* of Al Hamra offers a wealth of stunning attractions such as Jabal Shams, the mountain village of Misfah, Al Hutah Cave, Hasat bin

The Dakhiliyyah region offers delightful views of flowing wadis, palm groves and desert trees against a backdrop of majestic, high mountains with their peaks wrapped in cloud.









Salt, Bait Safah and Bait As Shariah, as well as wells, *aflaj* and orchards. Many visitors are so enthralled by Al Hamra that they are reluctant to drag themselves away from its magical beauty.

THE DAKHILIYYAH REGION AND DEVELOPMENT

In the Dakhiliyyah region the traditional and the modern exist side by side. In the past Omanis were renowned for being able to adapt to their environment; this is still the case today and it is just as true of education, health, road-building, electricity and water services, environmental conservation and other areas of economic, social and cultural development as it is of more traditional activities and pursuits.

EDUCATION: THE CORNERSTONE

Education in the Dakhiliyyah region addresses the students' needs in the language of the computer age.

There are 139 boys' and girls' schools in the region – 106 Basic Education and 33 general education schools – with a total of 76,719 students.

Great importance is also attached to the post-General Diploma of Education stage and a range of options are available including the College of Applied Sciences, the College of Technology and the Nizwa Nursing Institute. Nizwa University – a non-government institution – is now up and running and offers a range of disciplines



to qualify young Omanis for the job market after they graduate.

The Higher Institute of Jurisprudence in Nizwa is now in operation and trains Sharia and non-Sharia judges in court practice and procedures. It has four main lecture halls, each capable of accommodating forty students, as well as a conference hall with a four hundred seat capacity, a computer laboratory that can accommodate up to fifty students at one time, a research room, a reading

In the past Omanis were renowned for being able to adapt to their environment; this is still the case today and it is just as true of education and health.



room, a library and administrative offices.

HEALTH SERVICES

In the past the only medicine was herbal remedies and some *wilayats* of the Dakhiliyyah region were renowned for them. A sick person would go to someone with expertise in local remedies or – on rare occasions – make the gruelling journey to Muscat to obtain prescription drugs.

Today the situation is very dif-

ferent. Before the patient has time to seek out health services for himself, he will find that they have already arrived on his doorstep.

There are six hospitals in the Dakhiliyyah region – in Nizwa, Samail, Bahla, Adam, Izki and Al Jabal Al Akhdar – with a total of 547 beds. Nizwa Hospital – the referral hospital for the region – has 325 beds. There are also sixteen health centres and four polyclinics in various *wilayats* across the region.



Education in this region addresses the students' needs to cope with a changing world.







There are 6 hospitals in the Dakhiliyyah region with a total of 547 beds. There are also health centres and polyclinics.

SPORTS

Sports and youth complexes and other facilities form a major part of the government's development programme. Nizwa Club, one of the oldest clubs in the Dakhiliyyah region, has been extensively modernised, particularly since its merger with Birkat Al Mawz under the name Nizwa Club. Its latest acquisition is an indoor sports hall with all facilities.

The new RO 700,000 Al Basha'ir Club building opened in December

2006 following a merger between the Manah and Adam Clubs. With their games pitches, indoor facilities and other amenities, the Al Hamra, Bahla, Samayl and Fanja Clubs are also making serious contributions to the development of youth and sports activities in the region.

The Nizwa Sports Complex, which opened on 18th November 1994 as part of the Sultanate's 24th National Day celebrations, is the Dakhiliyyah region's main youth facil-







444/445



ity. It has a Royal Box, a VIP stand, a grass football pitch with terraces for 15,000 spectators, an athletics track and numerous other amenities. Several local and Gulf sports championships and matches have been played here. It also has training facilities for a variety of sports including athletics, cycling and basketball, which operate most of the year round and offer opportunities for youngsters of all age groups to develop their skills and talents.

ROADS

Twenty-first century life would be impossible in the Dakhiliyyah without a network of modern roads to link its *wilayats*, towns and villages. Today, thanks to its road system, a visitor can travel around the region with the greatest of ease and savour its attractions and beautiful mountain scenery.

Modern roads have helped establish close social and commercial links between *wilayats* and regions that were once seemed impossibly far-flung and remote.

Roads have been a clear priority since the beginning of the Sultanate's Renaissance and in a region like the Dakhiliyyah, which is the heart of Oman, they have broken down barriers and shortened distances.

As well as the Jabal Al Akhdar road, which reaches right to the top of the mountain, there is a five-kilometre-long road to the mountain village of Misfah in the *wilayat* of Al Hamra. The Jabal Shams road links

The Nizwa stadium and sports complex now has an indoor sports hall with all facilities.





446/447



the *wilayat* of Al Hamra with the highest peak in the Sultanate. Work has also been carried out on restoring the old tracks which mountain people have used since time immemorial.

The Nizwa-Jabrin dual carriageway (32 Kilometres) – one of the Dakhiliyyah's major modern roads – is an extension of the Al Rusayl-Nizwa dual carriageway. Another dual carriageway, currently under construction, will link the Dakhiliyyah region with the *wilayat* of Ibri in the Dhahirah region.

Work has been completed on a large section of the mountain road linking the Dakhiliyyah and Batinah regions through the *wilayats* of Al Hamra and Ar Rustaq.

All these modern facilities – as well as countless others – are clear evidence of the vitality of the Dakhiliyyah region and its determination to be part of the modern world, while at the same time remaining true to its illustrious past.

MAN-MADE FEATURES OF THE DAKHILIYYAH REGION

The Dakhiliyyah region is the Sultanate's strategic hinterland and the crossroads linking the country's different regions with each other. Despite the individual differences between them, each of its eight *wilayats* shares two common features.

Firstly, they are all important farming and pastoral areas and – because of the woodlands, terraced plots and orchards scattered over

Modern roads have helped establish close social and commercial links between wilayats and regions that once seemed impossibly far-flung and remote.





448/449



their mountains and wadis, and their *aflaj* (irrigation channels), springs and other abundant water sources - their predominant colour is green.

For example, the Jabal Al Akhdar, the summit of which is ten thousand feet above sea level, has fruiting trees growing on terraces which are marvels of engineering and were created hundreds of years ago. There you can delight in the fragrant blossoms of its roses and revel in the verdure of its pomegranate, walnut, peach

and apricot trees and the other fruits that cannot be found elsewhere in the area. The best month to visit the Jabal Al Akhdar is October, when you will find the rarest of trees that only grow in cold countries. The government has built protective walls to buttress the terraces against wadi flows and a number of experimental agricultural projects have been launched.

Secondly, the Dakhiliyyah is a region of historic forts and castles. Wherever you go, you will find them

(Left) The Jabal Al Akhdar road which snakes its way to the villages at the top of this mountain, and on the right the Al Rusayl-Nizwa dual carriageway passing Fauja and Bidbid.



in countless towns and villages. Historic mosques are also a feature of every town and village in the region.

SPRINGS AND AFLAAJ

Aflaaj - the natural arteries of the Dakhiliyyah - water the region's trees and plants and are the source of its lush farms and orchards. The word *aflaaj* is the plural of *falaj*. (*Faljaan* is an alternative plural.)

A *falaj* is an irrigation channel and - according to Ibn Mandhur and al Asma'i - it means "to divide something in half". It has also been defined as a river, a rivulet or running water.

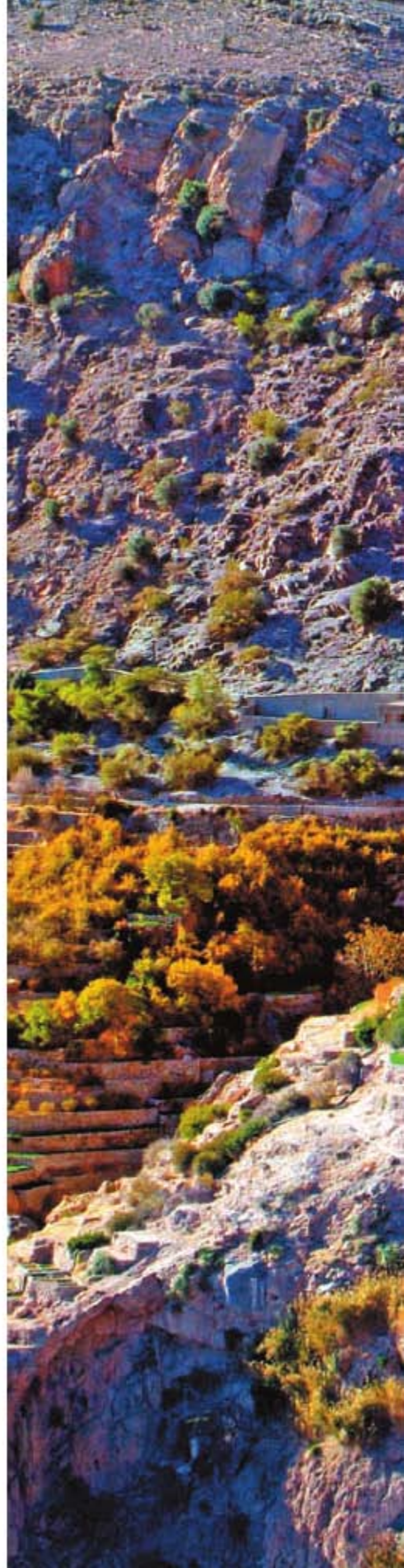
The Dakhilyah region's many *aflaaj* are very old. A *falaj* discovered at Al Ghubra in Wadi Bahla during archaeological excavations at Bisya and Al Hajar is believed to date from the third millennium BC.

The *wilayat* of Nizwa has nearly ninety *aflaaj* and springs. The most famous of these is Falaj Daris which is exceptionally wide and long and has sweet, flowing water. A park has been created beside it with trees and playground facilities for children.

Of the 194 *aflaaj* in the *wilayat* of Samail, the best known is Falaj As Samadi. Bahla also has a large number of *aflaaj*; the main ones are Al Meetha, Al Mahdan, Al Basyani, Al Ghuwaif, Al Ajrad, Al Tufail and Al Madri.

The best known *aflaaj* in Manah are Al Khatam, Al Faiqain, Al Masrah, As Sughrain, As Saleeb and Al Mahiyul, though Falaj Al Malki is believed to be the oldest in the *wilayat*. Traces

The Jabal Al Akhdar is famous for its terraces of roses, fruit trees and vegetables.









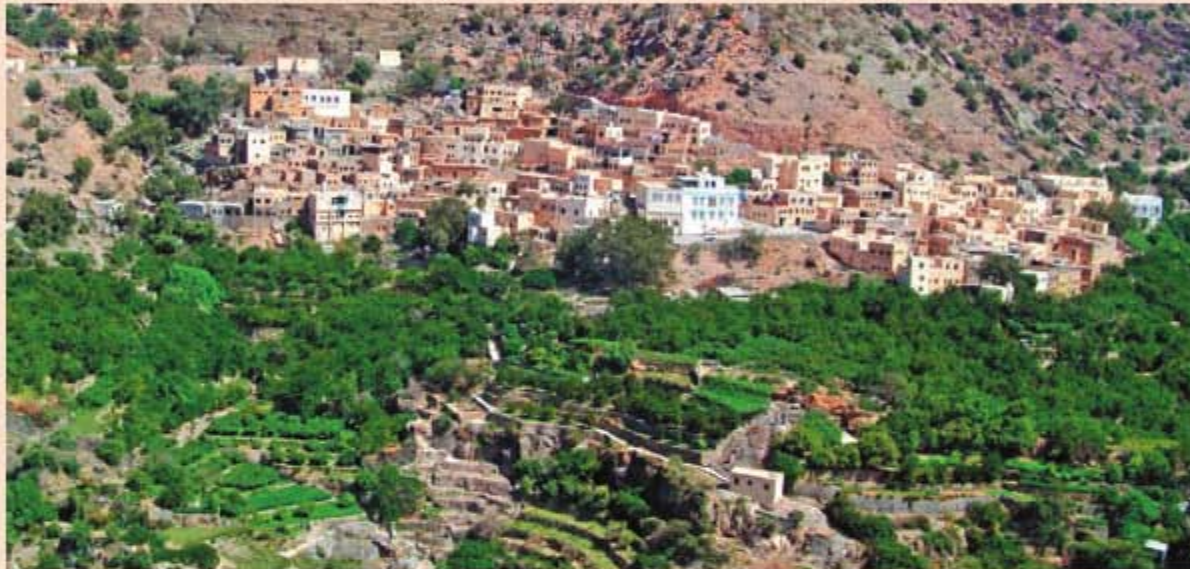
452/453



(Top) Juniper trees can still be seen on the Jabal Al Akhdar, while the blossoms in the fruit orchards attract the tourist.

(Below) In April each year rose petals are gathered to be used to distil rose water.

(Overleaf) Pomegranate flowers and fruit of the highest quality ripens in September, reaching a ready market both in Oman and in neighbouring countries.



AL JABAL AL AKHDAR

The journey up the Jabal al Akhdar gives the traveller the chance to observe the mountain's geological formations. And now that there is an asphalted road, it is easy to reach the summit and drive through its attractive mountain villages.

At ten thousand feet above sea level, the Jabal al Akhdar - in the *wilayat* of Nizwa - is one of the highest and most massive mountains in the Arabian Peninsula. It is most notable for its wide, seven thousand foot high plateau which has been populated since time immemorial.

The Jabal Al Akhdar differs from Oman's other regions in several ways, and not only because of its height. In addition to its cool climate and regular rainfall throughout the year, its scenery is uniquely stunning. It can be reached via Birkat Al Mawz and Wadi Al Mu'aidin, from where a tarmac road with street lighting leads right up to the top.

The Jabal Al Akhdar's houses and terraced plots look

like a landscape painting produced by the brush of a fine artist. As you approach them, you notice the exquisite design and construction skills used by the local population in crafting their terraces to conform to the nature and topography of the land.

The traditional houses built of gypsum, *sarooj* (a type of local cement) and stone reflect the local people's creative flair and their ability to tolerate the harsh conditions of their environment. Like Omanis in other parts of the country, the inhabitants of the Jabal Al Akhdar are farmers.

The highest villages - which include Saiq, Al Shuraijah, Wadi Bani Habib, Al Ain, Al Aqr, Al Manakhir, Salawt and Hail Al Yaman - are on the upper slopes of the mountain.

As well as almonds, walnuts and saffron, the Jabal Al Akhdar produces a wide variety of fruit crops including apricots, peaches, figs, grapes, apples and pears, while its pomegranates are regarded as being among the best in the world. A large number of ancient juniper trees also grow on the mountain.







456/457







458/459



of its irrigation channels can still be seen in the village of Al FaiqAyn.

The *wilayat* of Adam is fed by four *aflaj* – Al Maalih, Al 'Ayn, As Shaari' and Al Fulajj – and two springs – 'Ayn Al Rakheem and the sulphurous 'Ayn Naama. It also has a large number of artesian wells which supply water to farms over a huge area so that they look like a vast green carpet.

In the *wilayat* of Izki the agricultural villages of Al Yaman and Nizar

are watered by Falaj Al Malki and a number of artesian wells. The deep 'Ayn Al Maghiyah spring in Izki's Bani Hassan quarter only runs out of water during occasional periods of drought. The beautiful spring of 'Ayn Sa'nah is popular with tourists.

The farms of the 53 villages in the *wilayat* of Bidbid are watered by *aflaj*, the best known of which are Falajal Raha and Falaj Al Hammamiyaat. Its m'Ayn springs are 'Ayn Al 'AwAynah in Naf'a, which is one of

(Previous page) Jabal Shams, looks attractive in the snow.

Falaj Daris in Nizwa is the Dakhaliyyah's most famous falaj.

(Above) The falaj at Birkat Al Mawz which is one of 5 put on the UNESCO World Heritage List in July 2006, and (below) Tannf's picturesque waterfall following heavy rains.



the area's tourist attractions. Samail is renowned for its populated wadis, as well as the green farming villages which are strung out along its *aflaj*. The Wadi Samayl basin, which is fed from the Jabal Al Akhdar is famed for its twenty-six springs; nineteen of these are cold water springs – the best known is 'Ain Wird; of the other seven, which are hot water springs, the main one is 'Ain Manabik.

There are large numbers of sweet water springs in the Dakhiliyyah region. The *falaj* and well counting project identified a total of 169, including – among others - 'Ain Misfat al 'Abriyyin in the *wilayat* of Al Hamra, 'Ain Seefam in the *wilayat* of Bahla, 'Ain Wird in Samayl and 'Ain Fanja. The water from most of them is potable. Six groundwater recharge dams have been constructed to boost the groundwater stocks and an underground basin with an area of around twenty square Kilometres has been discovered in the south of the Dakhiliyyah region. The competent authorities are currently evaluating the water in the basin and examining ways of exploiting it in order to provide significant quantities of drinking water. So far eleven exploratory wells have been drilled to identify the water-bearing strata and their hydrological properties and qualities.

This is a brief overview of the Dakhiliyyah region's vast water resources as represented by its *aflaj* and springs. In addition to its year-round *falaj* maintenance programme, the government drills auxiliary wells



and digs new tributaries to help increase their flow.

FORTS, CASTLES AND MOSQUES

Aflaj were created by Omanis to provide water for agriculture and development, while forts, castles and towers were built to defend the population and enable them to live their lives in peace and security. Mosques were also an essential feature of a land that had embraced the



Faith during the early years of the Islamic mission; among the excellent qualities of the Omani people is the fact that they believed in the Messenger of God (PBUH) before they actually saw him.

In Oman the mosque became – and remains – a house of prayer and worship; at the same time it has produced a succession of eminent Islamic scholars, jurists and historians.

A traditional Omani town looked like this. A mosque would be built

in the centre of it with the house of the ruler, governor or wali beside it. A citadel or defensive tower would be nearby, then the local people's houses and markets. The town was usually encircled by a perimeter wall which protected it from enemies.

The towns and villages were surrounded by orchards and trees, so the solid built-up centre with its mosque, citadel and fort was like the hard kernel of a fruit, with the perimeter wall as its skin and the greenery,

Date palm groves and fruit orchards are watered via the region's vast water resources as supplied by its aflaj and springs.



THE DAKHILIYYAH REGION WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM

The project to supply the population of the Dakhiliyyah with drinking water from the Barka desalination plant (opened in 2010) is one of that region's main development programmes.

The project, which cost over RO89 million and has a productive capacity of 25 million gallons of water a day, is designed to meet the growing needs of the local people in view of the steady increase in construction, economic and trade activity - as well as tourism - in the Dakhiliyyah region.

The water is pumped through 288 Kilometres of pipelines from the Barka plant to Bidbid, then from there via the *wilayats* of Samayl, Izki, Nizwa, Manah and Bahla to the *wilayat* of Al Hamra.

The system has three booster pumping stations, three stations that have been revamped to support the project, nineteen tanker filling stations and sixteen reservoirs with capacities of between 1,500 and 10,000 cubic metres. A second project to supply the *wilayat* of Adam includes a 60-Kilometre-long pipeline linked to the main Barka supply system, as well as a reservoir with a capacity of 3,500 cubic metres, a pressure relief reservoir with a 1,500 cubic metre capacity and two tanker filling stations for water supplies to residents of the villages and rural areas near the pipeline's route. Work has also begun on a project to supply water to the *niyabat* of Al Jabal Al Akhdar; this comprises booster pumping stations, water supply reservoirs, pressure relief reservoirs, pipeline networks, control and remote monitoring systems, an administrative building and a laboratory for analysing water samples.





462/463





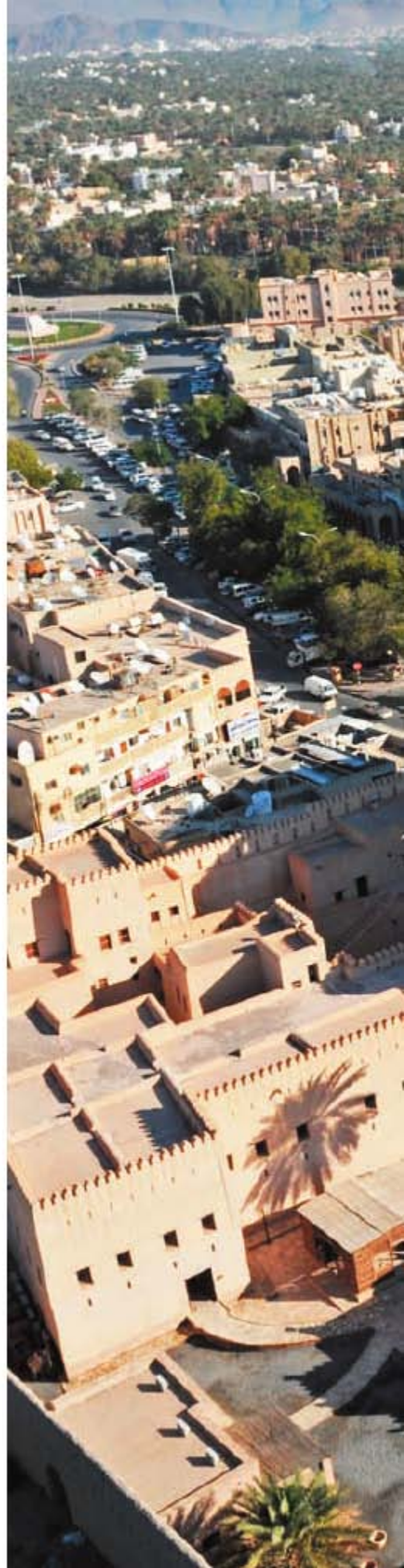
aflaj and springs as its flesh. This is still the normal configuration of Omani towns and villages today.

In the Dakhiliyyah region the forts, towers and castles – and the ancient residential quarters and mosques – are the visible witnesses of its history.

Nizwa Fort, known as Al Shahba', built in the reign of Imam Al Salt bin Malik and completed in 1668 AD, was the residence and headquarters of the wali. It is 24 metres high, with an outer diameter of 43 metres and an inner diameter of 36 metres. It has seven wells and several turrets. With its distinctive round shape and huge size it is quite different from other Omani forts and castles, which are built as traditional defensive structures. Today it has been furnished with traditional items such as large mirrors and glazed earthenware pots, and the shelves of its public rooms are filled with books.

The *wilayat* of Nizwa has numerous mosques. The main one is the Sultan Qaboos Mosque in the heart of the commercial souq. Many of the older mosques are famous for their ornate stucco *mihrabs* (prayer niches). The oldest – Sa'aal Mosque in the Sa'aal district – has a stunning *mihrab* with ornamentation dating from 650 AH/1252 AD and Kufic inscriptions. Al Janaah Mosque is another ancient mosque. The government is restoring these mosques because they are important religious buildings. Al Shawaadhinah Mosque, in the ancient Al Aqr quarter just to the south of Nizwa Fort,

Nizwa Fort, known as Al Shahba, built in the reign of Imam Al Salt bin Malik and completed in 1668 AD was the residence and headquarters of the wali. Today it has been filled with traditional items – a 'must see' destination for the visitor.





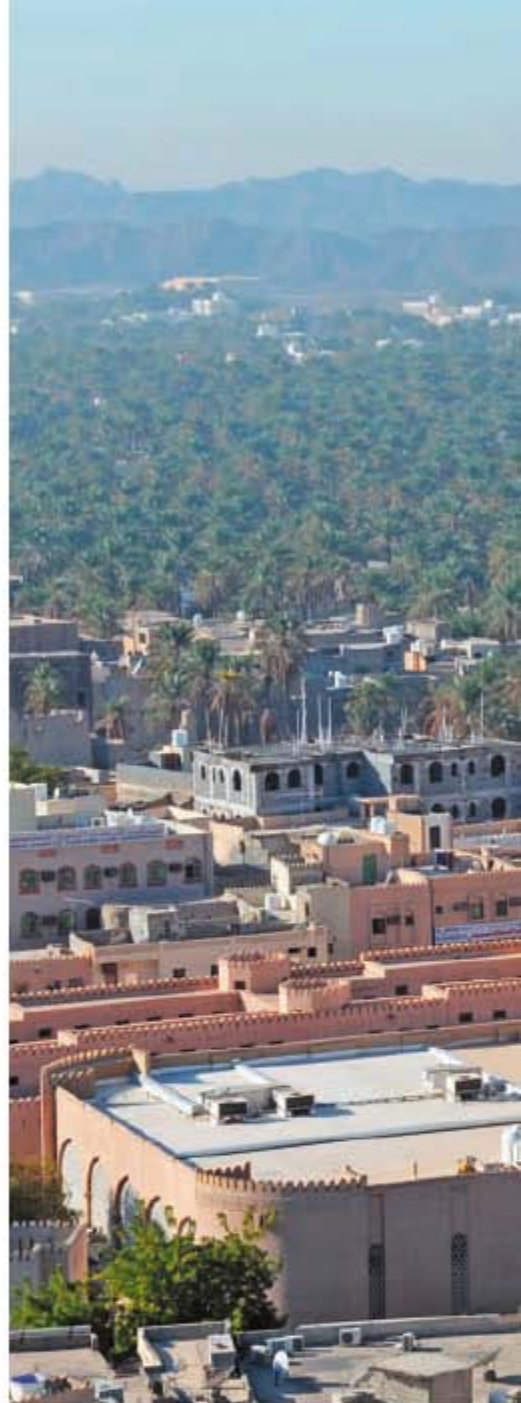


is also among the oldest mosques in the *wilayat*, with some reports claiming that its foundations date from the early Islamic period – i.e. from the time that Oman embraced Islam. Its *mihrab* ornamentation dates from 936 AH/1529 AD. Other mosques nearby include the Al Mazaara'ah Mosque, Al Sharjah Mosque, which has a fine stucco *mihrab*, and Al Ain Mosque, which is believed to have been built by Imam Al Mahanna bin Jaifar.

As we have already stated, these mosques produced scholars in jurisprudence, *Hadith* (Traditions of the Prophet), literature and history. The *wilayat* of Nizwa is famous for its private libraries, which contain thousands of Omani and Arab manuscripts on a wide range of subjects.

The most distinctive features of the *wilayat* of Bahla are its magnificent citadel and historic wall, and the castle of Jabrin, which combines the elegant beauty of a palace with the majesty of a great fortress. It was built by Bal'arab bin Sultan as his palace and as a centre for the study of Islamic sciences, the Arabic language and other disciplines. Bahla Citadel is the most important ancient structure in the *wilayat* and was the first Omani site to be added to the World Heritage List, when UNESCO approved it in 1988 as being of world cultural significance. Work has been ongoing on the restoration of the citadel and the neighbouring Friday mosque since 1992.

There are a large number of mosques in the *wilayat* of Bahla.



The Sultan Qaboos Mosque with its beautiful dome stands in front of the circular tower of Nizwa Fort, and below the traditional songs of Nizwa.





(Above) A glazed pottery pilgrim flask dated 2nd-1st century BC was found by a member of the public in Jimah, new Bahla.

(Top) The Al Midhmar Mosque in Samail, now renovated, but believed to be the oldest in the country, and **(right)** the new Sultan Qaboos Mosque in Bahla.

The main one – the Sultan Qaboos Mosque, built at His Majesty the Sultan's expense – has two fine domes and two tall minarets. The oldest mosques in Bahla include the Grand Mosque with its beautiful stucco *mihrab*, which has been restored under the Bahla Citadel restoration project.

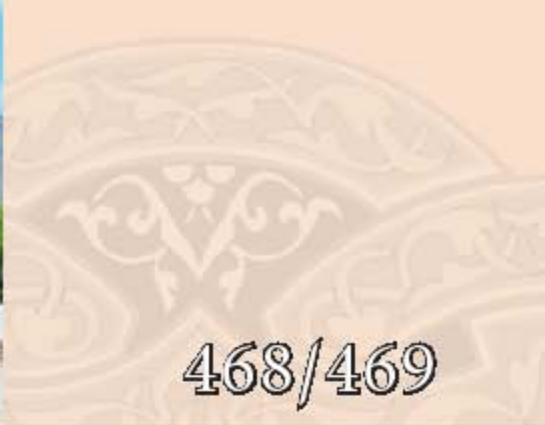
The Salut archaeological site at Bisya is situated on the western side of the valley at the junction of Wadi Bahla and Wadi Sayfam.

The *wilayat* of Samail has around fifteen forts, castles and towers. The main one is Samail Fort, which stands on a hill in the town centre, and its tower, which is called Burj Al Dawa. There are also several historic mosques, the most famous of which – Al Midhmar – was the first mosque to be built in Oman (in the year 6 AH). Other mosques include Al Aghbari, which has a white *mihrab*, and Al Sarrooj and Al Mazaara'ah, both of which have beautiful ornate *mihrabs*.

The ruined castle of Rowghan in the *wilayat* of Al Hamra is said to date from the pre-Islamic period. Other historic buildings in the *wilayat* include Bait As Shariah and Bait As Safah, as well as the residential quarters in Misfah, Dhat al Khail, Al Qaryah and Al Qala'ah, and the Sheikh Abi Said al Kudmi Mosque in Al 'Aaridh.

Hisn Al Shumookh in Manah is one of the *wilayat's* main landmarks and is a fine example of Omani architecture at its best. Other places





468/469











472/473



(Previous page) The handsome Bahla Fort and its old mosque stand on an enormous sandstone outcrop dominating a plain. The fort and wall were noted on UNESCO's World Heritage List as a monument of global importance.

Jabrin castle fort stands in the middle of a small oasis, its mass rising above a grove of palms about 20 kilometres from Bahla. Built towards the end of the 17th century, it is one of the finest examples of Omani architecture.



THE SALUT SITE

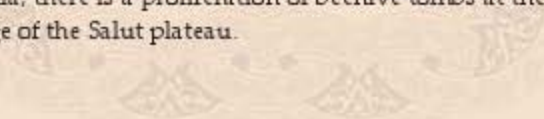
The Salut archaeological site is located in the *wilayat* of Bahla in the Al Dakhliyyah region. It comes under the supervision of the Office of the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs, works of archaeological survey, excavation and restoration were conducted at the site by the Italian Mission to Oman, University of Pisa, during the period 2004-2010. The excavations indicate that the area has been settled since the early Bronze Age, ie the early of the third millennium BC. In addition, two other phases of construction date back to between the second half of the second millennium BC and the mid-first millennium (First and Second Iron Ages) BC. A later settlement has been linked to the Middle Ages (Islamic Era) and dated to the 12th century AD.

Exploration work has yielded a rich crop of important artefacts, some of which are on display

at the Museum of the Frankincense Land in Salalah. These items include two scoops, a bronze cauldron and bronze dagger, as well as arrowheads and snake reliefs figuring on the outer surface of ceramic vases. Among the most recent findings at the Salut site is a seal, indicating the existence of an administrative system dating to a great age.

The area surrounding the Bahla region has a long history, and one rich in archaeological remains. In the Wadi Bahla valley near Bisya not far from the town of Al Dhabī are five towers known to date to the Bronze Age.

In Wadi Sayfam, where the Salut site is located, at least four towers were erected on a flat plain, and not on the customary rock base and, as is the case in Wadi Bahla, there is a proliferation of beehive tombs at the edge of the Salut plateau.



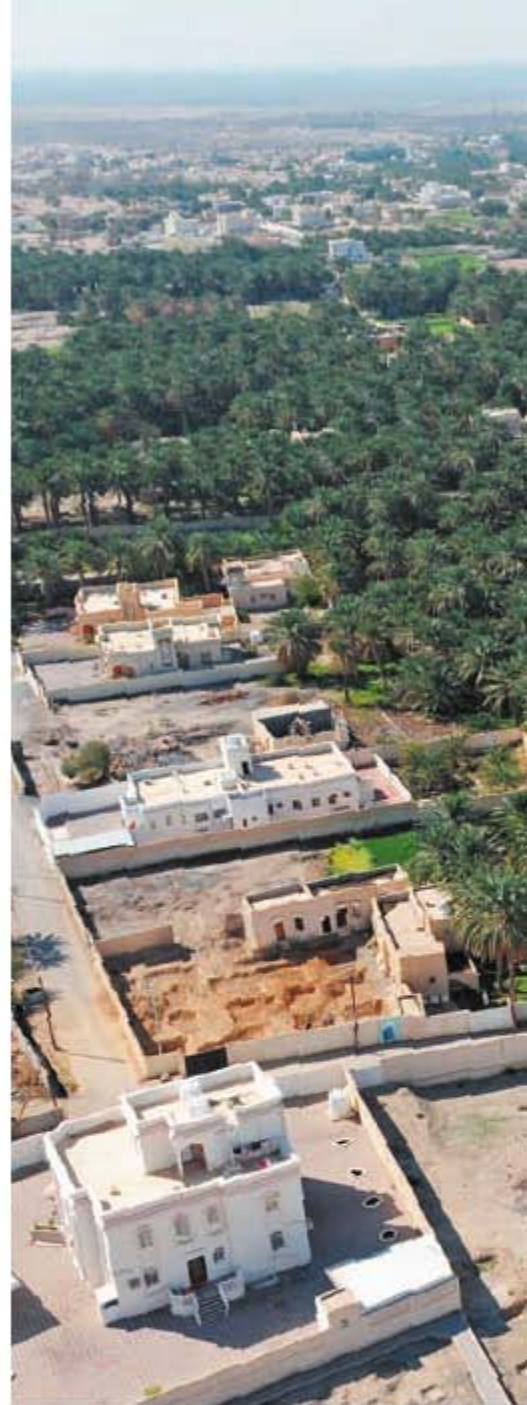


of interest include the ruins of the Harat Al Bilad quarter, where you can see the remains of its old mud houses and three tall mosques - Al'Aali, Al'Ain and As Sharaah - which have stucco *mihnabs* embellished with Qur'anic verses. The five-storied tower of Burj Al Juss, which stands at the quarter's northern gateway, is one of the highest towers in the *wilayat*. Over the years the fifth storey has collapsed. It was described by the explorer J.R. Well-

stead, who expressed amazement at its great height. Outside Harat Al Bilad is a perimeter wall and a restored mosque which is used for Friday prayers today and has a *mihnab* inlaid with glazed earthenware. Al Faiqain Fort - a fine, tall building - is an impressive feat of engineering.

The *wilayat* of Adam also has numerous features of historical interest. Its mosques include Al Muhallab bin Abi Sufra, Ar Rahbah, Al Hawashim, As Shaabinah and Ar Rawgha,

Siunail has around fifteen forts, castles and towers but the main one is Samail Fort which stands on a hill in the town centre.





Faiqa lies near Ma'alah, south of Nizwa. Faiqa Fort has massive walls and a wind tower. Access to the fort was gained by climbing a rope up to an opening in the wall.



MOSQUES IN OMAN

Mosques have been built as houses of worship ever since the people of Oman first voluntarily embraced Islam. The first of these was Al

Midhmar Mosque in the *wilayat* of Sumail in the Dakhiliyyah region. Other mosques followed and today Oman has over 13,000 old and new mosques.



478/479



while among its other buildings are Adam Fort and the citadels of Falaj Al'Ain and Falaj Al Maalih. There are around thirty towers in the *wilayat* including the Ar Rahbah and Al Mujabirah Towers.

There are several old residential quarters in Adam, including the oval-shaped Harat Jaami' Albusaid, the birthplace of the founder of the Albusaid state, Imam Ahmed bin Said, whose house stands to this day. Other old quarters include Harat

al 'Ain and Harat Al Shuyaabinah, which is said by historians to have been the crossroads of the old desert trading caravans from before the days of Islam.

The ancient sites in the *wilayat* of Izki indicate that its origins lie far back in the dim and distant past. It has 142 towers and three citadels – Qala'at Al 'Awamir and two others in the village of Al Qaryatain. There are also several historic houses including Al Nizar and Al Yaman,

Intricate workmanship is shown in this mihrab (prayer niche) of the Sultan Qaboos Mosque, and Hisu Al Shunookh in Muscat is one of the wilayat's main landmarks and a fine example of Omani architecture at its best.

(Overleaf) Aerial view of Izki which lies at the furthest end of the Samail Gap from Muscat – today it is a town of modern, colourful houses and shops. Fort Izki can be seen at top left, overlooking Wadi Halfayu.







as well as a large fort built during the reign of Sayyid Said bin Sultan; some parts of it have collapsed due to erosion and the passage of time. The main tourist attraction in the *wilayat* is Jarnan Cave – the subject of numerous folk myths and legends.

The *wilayat* of Bidbid has a fort – Qala'at Naqsi – and around forty towers, the best known of which are Burj Bidbid, Burj Fanja and Burj Al Mansheerah.

AL HUTAH CAVE – BLIND FISH

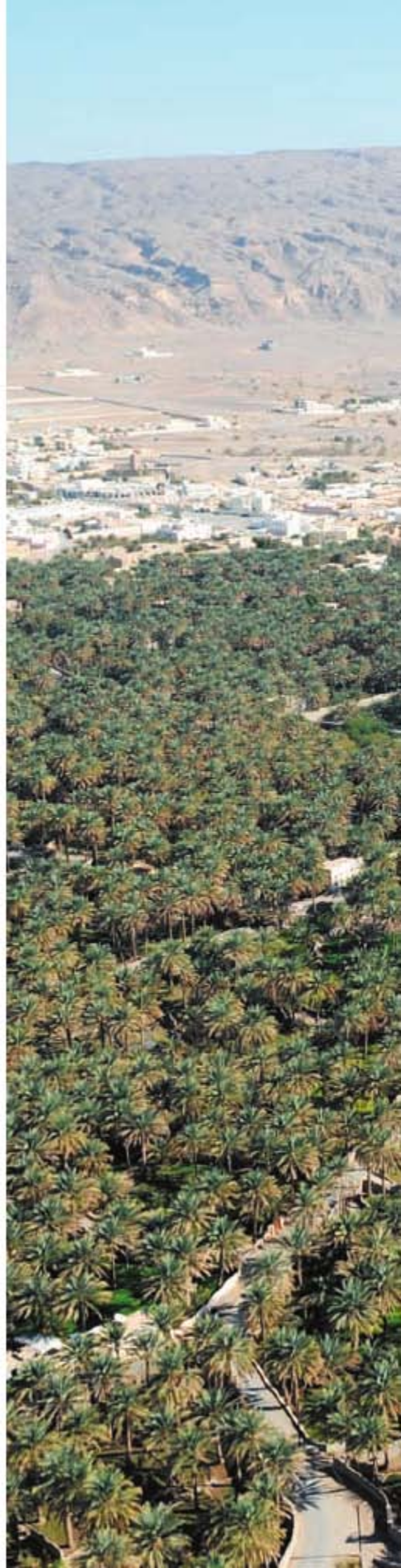
The *wilayat* of Al Hamra's ancient man-made sites are rivalled by another major tourist attraction – Al Hutah Cave, which is truly one of nature's treasures. Following the completion of the Ministry of Tourism's Al Hutah project, visitors can now enter the four-Kilometre-long cave system and view its subterranean pools with their transparent blind fish, which never see the sun.

Al Hutah Cave is one of the Omani government's major tourist projects.

FOLKLORE AND THE ARTS

The *razhah* dance, for which the Dakhiliyyah region is famous, is a combination of sword duel and poetic dialogue. Its original purpose was to convey the public's demands to the local wali, or as a declaration of war and a means of mustering the warriors, as a declaration of victory, or as a means of mediating between two disputing or warring parties so that a truce could be arranged between them.

Adam is 295 kms from Muscat and is the last green oasis before the desert. It was in Adam that Imam Ahmad bin Said, founder of the Al Bnsaid dynasty was born.







Men on their way to or from the venue of the *razhah* walk in a procession, singing as they go. This procession is called the *hambal*. In the 'aazi a poet or story-teller walks at the head of a group of people carrying his sword and his shield and reciting a poem of pride or praise. As he recites, he brandishes his sword causing the blade to tremble. Before or after the 'aazi, the *ta'yutah* is performed, this is a folkloric tradition that is particularly prevalent in the *wilayats* of Al



Hamra and Bahla. The *tariq* is a form of Bedouin singing in which the singers – usually two – are mounted on camel back or sit on the ground.

The *taghrud* is the singing of camel or horse riders which praises the animals with poetry that enumerates their good traits.

Children in the Sultanate's regions celebrate *Qaranqashooh* on the eve of the middle of Ramadhan, calling at people's houses and singing a traditional song to mark the occa-

sion. Because of the region's rocky, mountainous terrain, in some parts of the Dakhiliyyah the children sing the *Qaranqashooh* song, but hitting two stones together as a percussion accompaniment rather than a tin can or a drum. They call this *Tawq Tawq* because of the sound it makes. If the people in the houses respond by giving the children sweets, they praise them. If they give them nothing, the children sing an uncomplimentary song about them.

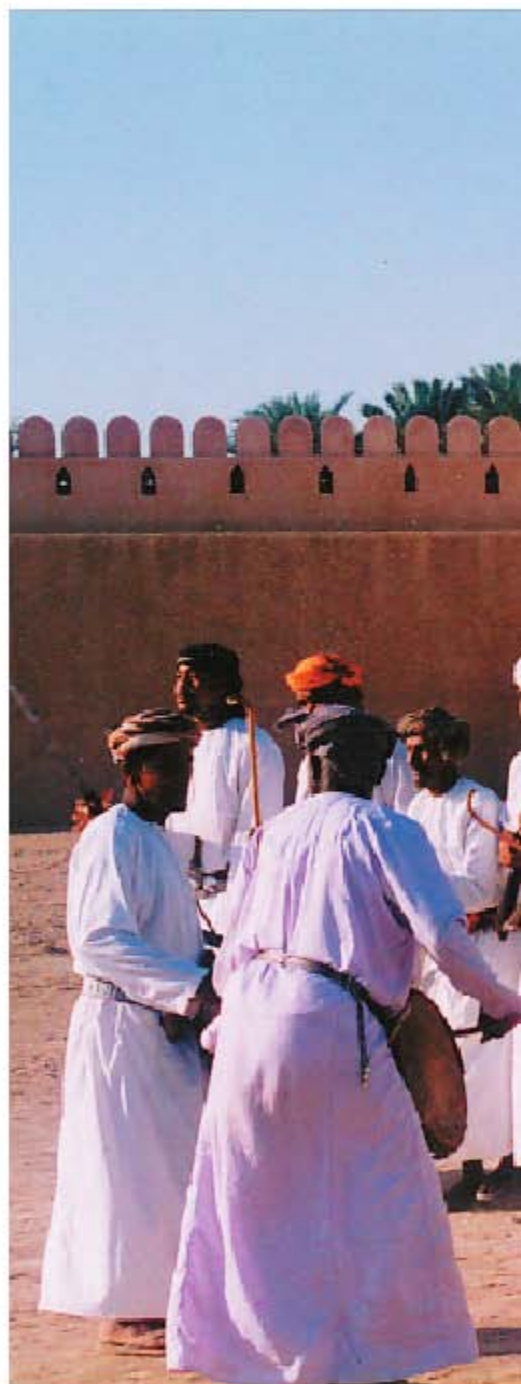
The Al Hntah Cave, a 4 kilometre-long cave system. Visitors can view its subterranean pools with their transparent blind fish which never see the sun.



The *tahlulah* is held during the first ten days of the month of Dhu'l Hijjah to celebrate the approach of Eid Al Adha. A man walks along reciting couplets from an Islamic poem in a loud, clear voice – one poem per day – followed by the boys of the local Holy Qur'an school, who chant "Allahu akbar wa bi'llahi'l hamd" ("God is Most Great, and may praise be to God") or "Subhaan Allah. Laa il-aaha illa'llah" (Glory be to God. There are no gods but God") at the end of each couplet.

Among the harvest songs is one called "Al tasyif wa'l duwasah" (i.e. words of gratitude to God for His generosity), which is sung when the wheat and barley are harvested. The song is led by a man with a good voice and his words are then repeated in chorus by all the people who have come to help bring in the harvest; the men of the village traditionally used to get together to help the wheat or barley farmers when their crop was ready. The words of the song are sung to a fast beat.

Some songs are sung specifically by women. The *wayliyah* is a traditional type of song sung in the *waylat* of Manah which women sing without drums, marking the rhythm with the movement by shaking an 'uud (silver bracelet) on one arm while holding the shoulder of the woman next to her with the hand of the other arm. The women gather in groups of varying number and move together as one to the rhythm of the songs and



The *al razhak*, a popular traditional music form in the Dhakiliyyah region, and at (top right) the *khetha* (tree transplanting ceremony) is performed by the ladies under a full moon.



486/487





the shaking of the bracelets, bending their bodies back and forth. When the leader shakes her bracelet, the groups move around to exchange places, stepping to the rhythm of the singing. They form geometric lines as they change positions, turning in synchronised movement.

When a boy has finished learning the Holy Quran a *taymeenah* is held in his honour. The pupils of the local Quran school gather together in a parade, led by their teacher, who recites verses from Islamic poetry to them which contains advice and wisdom to help guide them through life.

All these songs and dances are popular in the farming and pastoral communities of the towns and villages of the Dakhiliyyah region. The situation in the other regions is similar.

CRAFTS AND TRADES

Similar environments and lifestyles mean similar crafts and trades, since people can only learn these skills from their day-to-day environment and by inheriting them from the generations that went before them. Thus we find that people from the *wilayat* of Nizwa are traditionally involved in processing dates and making red sugar; Omani halwa, woven textiles, leather, rose water and gold and silver jewellery. There are also numerous crafts and traditional industries in the *wilayat* of Samayl, particularly weaving, spinning and stock-breeding. There they also make leather goods, palm leaf



products, gold and silver jewellery and Omani halwa.

The *wilayat* of Bahla specialises in the manufacture of swords, *khanjars* (daggers), blades, kohl pots and pencils, chains, copperware, wicker work, woollen products, Omani halwa and starch.

Pottery has a long tradition in Oman and pots are still made in Bahla. Adam is similar to the other *wilayats*, where the local crafts include gold and silver smithing, wicker



work, weaving and Omani halwa. It is also famous for its blacksmiths. In Al Hamra the main occupations are agriculture and stock-rearing, as well as red sugar, rose water and starch extraction and the manufacture of gold and silver jewellery, hand-woven textiles and halwa.

Traditional occupations in the wilayat of Manah include agriculture, blacksmithing and the manufacture of gold jewellery and pottery, as well as trade, spinning and weaving.

Izki is renowned for tanning, spinning, pottery and weaving, including the old local tradition of weaving palm leaf mats; other popular occupations include carpentry, agriculture and building construction.

The region's traditional handicrafts exploit every element of the local environment and depend on skills which have been passed down from father to son, and from mother to daughter, since time immemorial.

Traditional handicrafts are to be found everywhere on Jabal Shams, the Sultanate's highest peak at 10,000 feet.





490/491



The young people of today are learning the traditional handicrafts of their forefathers.



DATES

Dates have been a source of food since ancient times and the date palm has long provided the means for satisfying several of man's other needs too. To this day the date harvest is eagerly awaited every summer, when it finds its way into the local, and not so local, markets. During his Royal Tour His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said issued orders at the Royal Camp at Seeh al Masarrat in the *wilayat* of Ibri for a million date palms to be planted over the next five years.

Date cultivation is the Sultanate's main agricultural activity and date groves cover some 57 per cent of Oman's cultivated area. Across the country there are over 200 different strains of dates, many of which are of world-class quality. Large quantities of dates are consumed while they are at the first two stages - *bisr* (first stage of ripening when the date is still firm) and *ratab* (second stage of ripening when half the date is firm and the other half is soft and brown), while the remaining crop is eaten at the *tamar* stage - i.e. when the whole date is soft and brown. The average Omani consumes around 60 Kilos of dates a year.

The Sultanate exports around 5,000 tonnes of *mabsali*, *fardh*, *khasaab*, *madlooki* and *qish habash* dates a year. The Batinah is the main date producing area in terms of area, number of date palms and volume produced, followed by the Sharqiyyah (second in area and number of date palms and third in volume produced). The Dakhiliyyah is third in terms of the number of date palms and fourth in area, followed by the Dhahirah, then the Governorate of Muscat, then, lastly, the Governorate of Dhofar.

Around thirty of the different strains of dates may be classed as being of commercial quality or excellent. They include *umm al sala*, which is particularly common in the Batinah, *qish habash* and *shahl* (Governorate of Musandam), *mabsali* (Sharqiyyah), *fardh* and *naghaal* (Dakhiliyyah and Dhahirah), and *naghaal*, *qubni* and *khamri* (Governorate of Muscat). The top quality dates, which are found in varying quantities in all the regions, include *khalas al Dhahirah* and *khalas Oman*. After them in quality come *zabad*, *burnarajah*, *barui*, *khanaizi*, *khasaab* and *hilali*. *Fardh* can also be classed as being a good commercial date because it keeps its quality when stored.





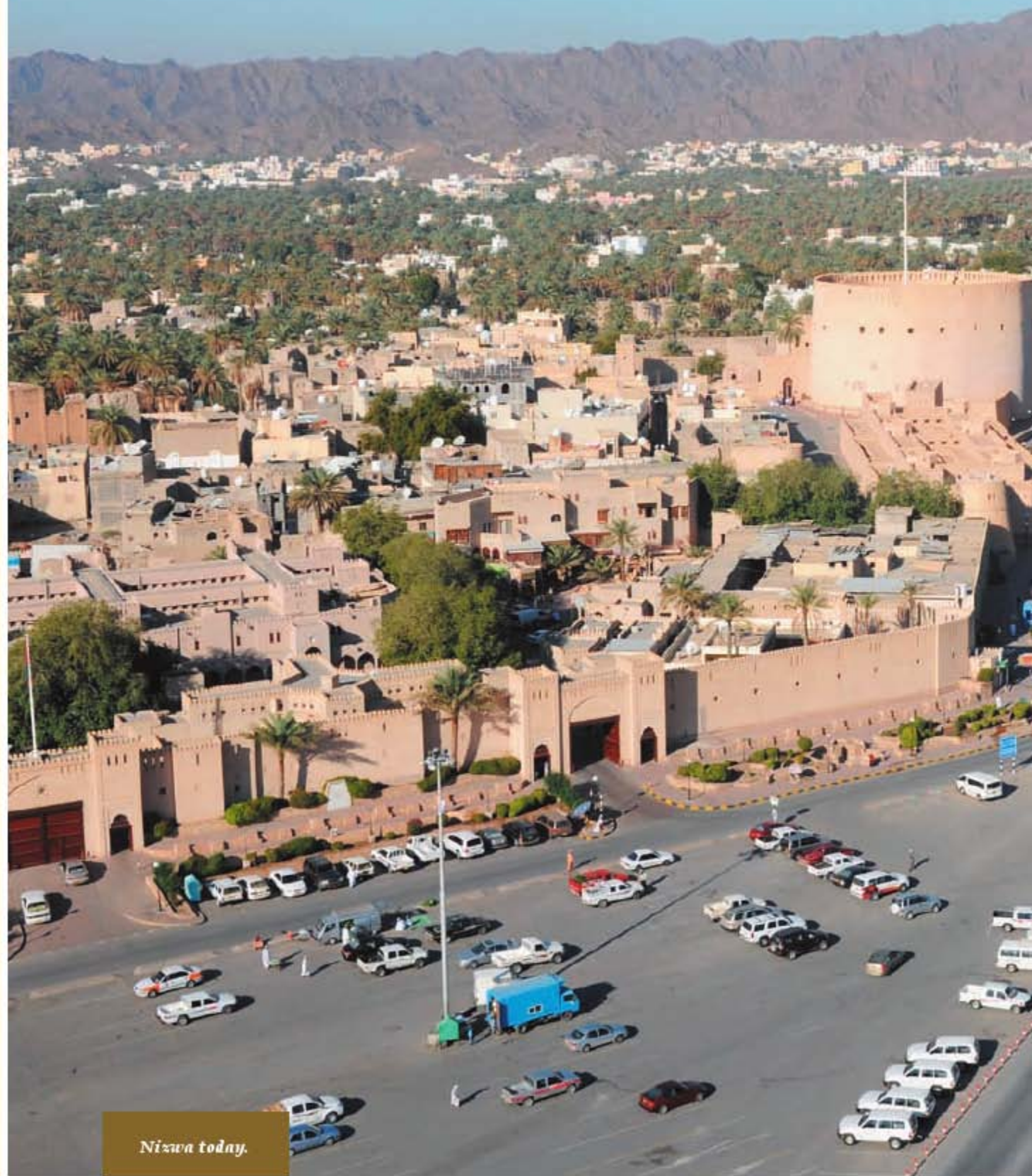
492/493





Nizwa in 1975.





Nizwa today.



THE SHARQIYYAH REGION

AL SALEEL NATURAL PARK

The Sharqiyyah region's eleven wilayats lie spread out between the sea, the mountains and the desert in the north-east of the Sultanate of Oman. The natural beauty and harmony of their plains, mountains, wadis and coasts is enhanced by their more modern features – their schools, hospitals, roads and street lighting. Historic buildings have been restored to preserve the region's heritage and steps have been taken to conserve its natural resources. Here it is Nature that draws the picture, while man adds the colours.

The Sharqiyyah is a region of desert expanses, pristine silver beaches, mountains, caves, golden sands and fertile wadis. The blue sea embraces the desert in the sun's dancing rays and the cooling monsoon breeze – a unique combination of delights that can be found nowhere else but here.

In the Sharqiyyah the beauty of nature expresses itself in numerous different ways. Life, too, is full of variety. Two major projects – the Liquefied Natural Gas plant and the Urea and Ammonium Fertiliser factory - are located in this region in the wilayat of Sur, which owes its original prosperity from earlier times to its shipbuilding industry and other traditional crafts.

(Top) *The beauty of the Sharqiyyah/ Eastern Sands and (below) Wadi Bani Khalid which always has copious quantities of water, even when rainfall is scarce.*

ALL ROADS LEAD TO THE SHARQIYYAH

All roads lead to the Sharqiyyah region. It overlooks the Arabian Sea





498/499





to the east and its boundaries include part of the Eastern Hajar mountain range while the Sharqiyyah Sands lie to the south and the Dakhiliyah region to the west. Its eleven *wilayats* are: Sur, Ibra, Bidiyyah, al Qabil, al Mudaybi, Dama Wa At Tayyin, Al Kamil Wa Al Wafi, Jaalan Bari Bu Ali, Jaalan Bari Bu Hasan, Wadi Bari Khalid and Masirah.

These *wilayats* offer a range of major tourist attractions including stunning sand dunes and beaches, traditional Omani architecture and fine modern buildings.

WHERE SHOULD WE START?

Where should we start? With the charms of nature or modern development? With forts and castles or schools and hospitals? With Sur's harbour, the songs of its fishermen and sailors and its old plastered houses, or the modern buildings and development that can be seen everywhere? Here modernity and history live side by side.

MODERN DEVELOPMENT: SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

Welfare, services and development have reached the farthest corners of the Sharqiyyah region. According to the 2008-2009 figures, it has 170 schools with 86,208 students (boys and girls), including 29 private schools with 4,934 students.

There are also a number of higher educational institutions in the

region. From the government side, these include the College of Applied Sciences in the *wilayat* of Sur, the College of Technology in the *wilayat* of Ibra and the Sur and Ibra Nursing Institutes, all of which accept graduates from the general education system and supply the labour market with qualified manpower.

The first private sector higher education institution to be set up in the region was Sur University College. Opening in 2001 with a choice of six course options, it awards diplomas and Bachelor's degrees. The Sharqiyyah University, which opened in 2010, offers courses in a range of fields including specialist professional disciplines.

HEALTH CARE

The health sector provides high quality basic health care services in all the Sharqiyyah's *wilayats*. The region has ten hospitals – in Sur, Ibra, Jaalan Bari Bu Hassan, Jaalan Bari Bu Ali, Sinaw, Masirah, Wadi Dama Wa At Taiyyin, Wadi Bari Khalid, Samad Ash Shan and Bidiyyah. There are two health regions – North Sharqiyyah and South Sharqiyyah. Ibra Hospital, with 191 beds, is the referral hospital for the North Sharqiyyah, which also has thirteen health centres including six with maternity beds, as well as the Ibra Polyclinic.

With a 234 bed capacity, Sur Hospital is the referral hospital for the South Sharqiyyah, which also has



two polyclinics - in Sur and Jaalan Bani Bu Ali - as well as fifteen health centres, including ten with maternity beds. The hospitals of the North and South Sharqiyyah have a combined total of 787 beds. There are also a number of private clinics, polyclinics and health centres.

HOUSING PROJECTS

Where housing is concerned, the government's aim is to ensure

that comfortable, healthy housing is available for the public in every part of the country. There are housing projects in all the Sharqiyyah's *wilayats* which help provide stability for the local inhabitants and reinforce their ties with their home villages, while developing their communities.

The housing situation in much of the Sharqiyyah has been completely transformed. Although they

This region has an extensive road network - ensuring the movement of people and goods between the towns and villages. Here the road to Wadi Dama Wa At Taiyyin.



(Top) Modern Sur, and (below) a social housing project and artistry on the road from Ras Al Hadd to Sur.

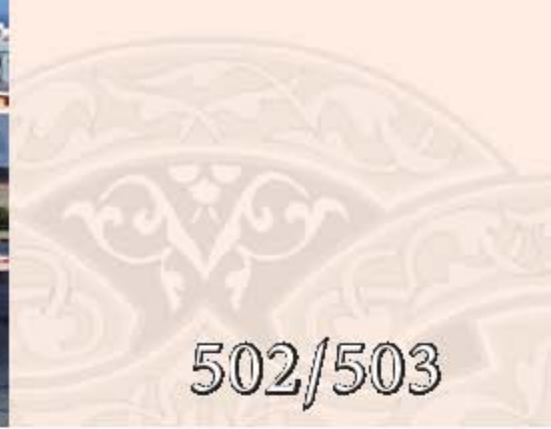
are built in a style that is in harmony with the Omani architectural tradition, today's residential areas enjoy all basic modern amenities including roads, electricity and water services and a safe, healthy environment.

AN EXTENSIVE ROAD NETWORK

The Sharqiyyah region's modern road system ensures the smooth

movement of people and goods between the towns and villages, while helping to boost tourism and the local economy.

The 90-Kilometre-long Quriyyat-Sur road is a major government project which plays a vital role in promoting development and connecting people. It has five large bridges – in Wadi Dayqah, Wadi Al Arbiyyin, Wadi Ash Shab, Tiwi and Wadi Haram - as well as a



502/503



bridge in the Qalhat district which is one of the highest in the country. In addition to an overhead intersection at the point where it begins, the road also has thirteen underpasses to provide vehicles with access to the surrounding areas.

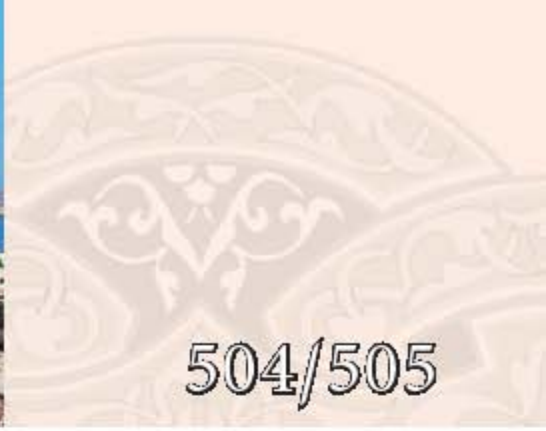
While offering an alternative to the Muscat-Bidbid-Sur route, the new Quriyyat-Sur road is also a major national enterprise whose importance extends beyond the Gov-

ernorate of Muscat and the Sharqiyyah region. A range of services and associated benefits are destined to benefit the areas along its route, and several economic – particularly tourist – projects will be set up along the coastal strip that runs beside it.

Work is currently in progress on converting the 260-Kilometre-long Bidbid-Sur road into a dual carriageway; this road serves most of the Sharqiyyah region's *wilayats*.



Depicted here is the 90 km long Quryyat-Sur road with its five large bridges and thirteen underpasses which provide vehicles with access to the surrounding areas, as well as a bridge in the Qalkat district which is one of the highest in the country.





In the Sharqiyyah you will find roads that cut through the rugged mountains, while others hug the shores or link the towns and villages. The Al Ashkharah-Shannah road runs along some of the most beautiful stretches of coast, while the new Sea Road in the *wilayat* of Sur runs over the Khawr Al Batah Bridge – the first suspension bridge of its kind in the Sultanate. Roads in the towns and villages have been surfaced, street lighting has been installed, and new souqs and public gardens have been opened.

The population of the Sharqiyyah's *wilayats* have made significant contributions on their own initiative to the government's development efforts in a number of vital sectors.

Aviation is a government priority and airports are due to be built in several of the country's regions. The Sharqiyyah region's Ras Al Hadd Airport, which is currently under construction, will have a terminal building capable of handling up to 500,000 passengers a year during its first phase, as well as a runway, taxiways, parking bays for the aircraft, two access bridges between the passenger terminal and the aircraft, a control tower, an aircraft provisioning terminal and other essential services and maintenance facilities, including a fire fighting unit and offices.



**THE KHAWR AL BATAH
BRIDGE**

(Top) An architect's concept drawing of the Ras Al Hadd airport which will have the capacity to handle 500,000 passengers, and (below) the Khawr Al Batah bridge from Sur to Al Aijah.





506/507



The Khawr Al Batah Bridge – This project has a unique geographical position in the Sharqiyyah region as this suspension bridge was constructed above a natural khawr along the Sea of Oman.

The bridge was built over Khawr Al Batah in the *wilayat* of Sur to shorten the distance between the Al Aijah side of the inlet and the centre of the *wilayat*.

The bridge is 204 metres long and 11 metres high, and 7 metres wide with walkways on the two sides which are

each 1.5 metres wide. It is a two-lane bridge so traffic may go in both directions. It has been designed to the latest international specifications and complies with all necessary safety and engineering standards. The iron structure can bear a maximum weight of three tonnes, i.e. only vehicles up to this weight may use this bridge.

The project also includes two roundabouts, one of them in Al Batah village and the other in Al Aijah village. The total cost of the project was RO7 million.





WATER

People are no longer forced to search desperately for water in the blazing heat of the desert or wait for rain to fall on the mountain peaks so that it can flow down along the *wadis* to the plains and parched land below. Today water gushes in abundance to the towns and villages of the Sharqiyyah region from the desalination plant in the *wilayah* of Sur. The plant, which produces 17.6

million gallons a day, has replaced the groundwater stocks which the region used to depend upon in the past and is part of the government's plan to use desalinated seawater as the country's main source of drinking water, while conserving the groundwater as a strategic reserve.

Water is pumped from the desalination plant to the *wilayats* along a modern system of pipelines several hundred Kilometres long, which ex-

Wadis in the Sharqiyyah region include Andam and Secq. Electricity generation in Kamal Wa Al Wafi.





tends from Sur to Al Mudaybi and passes through Al Kamil Wa'l Wafi, Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Wadi Bani Khalid, Bidiyyah, Al Qabil and Ibra. There are eighteen main and subsidiary pumping stations in Sur, Al Kamil Wa'l Wafi, Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Wadi Bani Khalid, Bidiyyah, Al Qabil, Ibra and Al Mudaybi. The Sharqiyyah's water distribution system has twenty-seven ground-level and mountain reservoirs and eighteen overhead reservoirs.

The water is distributed in two ways. Firstly, through the mains networks in Sur, Al Kamil Wa Al Wafi, Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan and Jaalan Bani Bu Ali to over 20,000 domestic, industrial, commercial and government connections; and secondly, from the tanker filling stations in Sur, Al Kamil Wa Al Wafi, Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Wadi Bani Khalid, Bidiyyah, Al Qabil, Ibra, Al Mudaybi and Masirah, where tankers carry it to the villages and populated areas that have no mains water services.

SPORTS

"Development of human resources" is just as important for the body as it is for the mind, spirit and moral character, and the sports facilities available across the Sharqiyyah region provide ideal opportunities for the population to develop their physical potential.

(Top) The Sharqiyyah's water distribution system is either through the mains networks to over 20,000 domestic, industrial, commercial and government connections, or from tanker filling stations where tankers carry it to the villages that have no mains water services. And (below) the Courts complex in Ibra.



The Sports complex in Sur was built in 1996 with a seating capacity in the main stadium for 15,000 spectators, and (top right) challenging the Sharqiyyah Sands.

The sports complex in the wilayat of Sur is the Sharqiyyah region's main youth amenity. Built in 1996, its main stadium has a seating capacity for 15,000 spectators. It has a Royal Box, a VIP stand, a grass football pitch and an athletics track, as well as facilities for radio and TV coverage of sports events, physiotherapy rooms, players' and referees' changing rooms, and rooms for cultural and art activities.

The Sharqiyyah region has several clubs with modern buildings and amenities and facilities for sports, cultural, social and art activities. Sur also has a Youth Centre with a football pitch, other games facilities and accommodation.

SUN DANCING ON THE WATER

From the moment it rises above the horizon, the sun dances on the waters beside the beaches and over



512/513



the sandy shores. When the monsoon winds begin to blow along the coasts of the Sharqiyyah and Wus-ta regions and the Governorate of Dhofar, the midday temperature at the height of summer drops to between 25 and 30 degrees Centigrade as a cooling breeze wafts over the beach at Al Ashkharah in the *wilayat* of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali.

Ras Al Jinz beach in the *wilayat* of Sur is another enchanting

seaside spot. World famous for its turtle sanctuary, its soft sands are overlooked by intriguing rock formations that appear to hang above them like paintings from an artist's palette. Green turtles come here in large numbers to lay their eggs, particularly between June and September. When the eggs hatch, the baby turtles instinctively return to the sea. Ras Al Jinz is a continuation of Ras al Hadd, which was declared a wild-life sanctuary under Royal Decree No. 25/96 on 23rd April 1996.

Tourists can enjoy the sight of the seabirds that live in this area and the traditional ships anchored in Khawr Al Hajar at Ras al Hadd, or they can take a boat trip to nearby Khawr Al Jarama.

SAND SKIING AT RAS AL RUWAIS

Sand dunes come right down to the pristine beach at Ras Ar Ruways in the *wilayat* of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali and beside the sea there are strangely shaped rocks formed from sand that turned to stone millions of years ago. The call of the seagulls mingles with the sound of the waves as they break against the golden shore.

Here tourists can enjoy a novel form of skiing. Not water skiing or skiing on snow, but sand skiing down the dunes.



SUR BEACH – SHIPS AND A Lighthouse

From Sur's attractive beach you can see several large ships anchored near the shore, while from Al Batah you can look across to the town of Al Ayjah and the Sur Lighthouse.

The beautiful Khawr Al Bath suspension bridge, which was built to link Sur with Al Ayjah, is a tourist attraction in its own right.

THE WILAYAT OF MASIRAH – SEAGULLS AND CORAL

There are some excellent camping spots in the *wilayat* of Masirah, particularly on the beach at Ras Abu Rasas. Seagulls breed here, particularly during the summer, and there are coral reefs beneath the surface of the sea. This place is popular with divers and snorkellers.

Tourists enjoy a novel form of skiing – yes, sand skiing down the dunes.





SAND AND SEA - AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE

Both the sea and the desert boast numerous features that attract adventure tourists.

The *wilayat* of Bidiyyah is a beautiful oasis at the entrance to the Sharqiyyah sands and is a starting point for visitors wishing to explore the delights of the desert. The Sands extend for a hundred Kilometres. Near the coast at Ras Ar Ruways there are sandstone and limestone rock formations, while inland a chain of rippling dunes runs from north to south, particularly in the northern and western parts of the Sands. Some dunes are around a Kilometre across and in places they are over a Kilometre and a half apart. The largest dunes are up to a hundred metres high.

THE SANDS - A SYMPHONY OF COLOURS

The Sharqiyyah Sands come in a variety of colours. Near the coast they generally range from light brown to white, while at their northern end they tend more towards dark grey. Elsewhere they are sometimes reddish, particularly in the area near Bidiyyah.

The oasis of Al Hawiyah is an island of green date palms surrounded by golden sands. The steep slopes to the south of Al Hawiyah village offer excellent opportunities for sand skiing.

Jewellery made from seashells, found by the French and Italian teams at Ras Al Jinz archaeological site.



RAS AL JINZ





516/517



Ras Al Jinz in the *wilayat* of Sur (Sharqiyyah region) is an important heritage site. Excavations began there in 1981 when the joint Franco-Italian archaeological mission discovered a fragment of patterned ancient pottery dating from the fourth millennium BC. After an initial survey of the site they were able to confirm its historical importance, and since 1985 a series of digs have produced a number of finds.

Reports from the surface surveys of the ancient sites confirmed that they were not all concentrated in one place, but were spread out depending on the type of ancient culture and people concerned. These discoveries are significant in that they reveal the relationship

between Omani man and those around him. They show that he was a social being who loved life and established trade relations with distant communities, and that his ships sailed across the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean to the shores of the Indian sub-continent, where he discovered a world amazingly different from his own in the lives, behaviour and beliefs of its people. There he exchanged the goods he had made for other goods that would help him in his daily life.

The copper and stone items, cosmetic implements and personal ornaments found at Ras al Jinz show us that ancient man was an expert craftsman. They also reveal that the site was an important harbour.



THE TURTLE SANCTUARY AT RAS AL HADD

The Turtle Sanctuary was established at Ras Al Hadd in the Sharqiyyah region in 1996 as a marine nature reserve covering an area of 120 square Kilometres of shoreline, coastal hinterland and seabed, as well as the lagoons of Khawr Jarama and Khawr Al Hajar. The sanctuary, which provides a safe and natural refuge for thousands of rare turtles that visit the area to breed, attracts the largest number of nesting green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) in the Sultanate. Every year some 6,000

to 13,000 members of this threatened species come here to lay their eggs from remote regions such as the Arabian Gulf, the Red Sea and the Somali coast.

Several important archaeological sites are also located within the reserve on the Ras Al Hadd Peninsula and at Khawr Jarama, as well as at Ras Al Jinz and Ras Al Khabbah. The turtles are among the reserve's most important bio-resources, with most of them nesting along a 45-Kilometre-long strip of coast between Ras Al Hadd and Ras Ar Ruways. In addition to the turtles,



518/519



Khawr Jarama is also notable for its clumps of small mangrove trees (*Avicennia marina*) and the coral reefs along its rocky shore, which are home to numerous species of crustaceans and other small marine creatures, providing a rich food source for large numbers of fish.

The alluvial surface soil round Khawr Jarama is an important feeding ground for the migrant birds that spent the winter in these parts, while the rocky coastal heights provide them with an ideal nesting site. Over 130 species of resident and migrant birds

have been recorded here including seagulls and terns. The sanctuary is also home to various wild animals including red foxes, gazelles, Ethiopian hedgehogs and hares.

The Ministry of the Environment and Climate Affairs has built fifteen traditional-style cabins on an area of around 1,000 square metres of land at the Ras Al Hadd Turtle Sanctuary to provide accommodation for visitors. The area also includes car parking facilities and a children's playground.



The sands in the *wilayat* of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan are strikingly different from the dunes of Bidiyyah. Here a scattering of plant cover creates a lovely blend of green and pale gold that stretches from Falaj Al Mashayikh in the north – one of the main villages in the oasis, renowned for its date palms that are irrigated by *falaj* (traditional irrigation channel) water. However, some of the farms here draw their water from wells. In this area there are numerous traditional villages and hamlets with shady *ghaf* (*Prosopis cineraria*) trees and rare plants.

HOW WERE THESE SANDS FORMED?

Scientists say that these sands were formed when rocks disintegrated and the resulting debris was carried by flowing water and deposited in depressions on the earth's surface. There are abundant groundwater stocks under the Sharqiyyah Sands to this day and satellite photographs of the area indicate that there are probably significant mineral deposits too.

THE WADIS OF THE SHARQIYYAH

In the Sharqiyyah region's many wadis there are numerous shady spots with interesting rock formations, water, greenery and stunning scenery which offer ideal opportunities for camping.

As the sands reach the Arabian Sea in the south the dunes are smaller and near Ras Ar Riqayns lithified sand dunes are exposed.





520/521





(Top) Khawr Al Batah with its lighthouse and traditional fishing dhows, and (below) everyone loves to spend time enjoying the desert.

Wadi At Tayyin in the *wilayat* of Dama Wa At Tayyin is a long *wadi* with villages surrounded by palm groves. The more accessible part of it extends for nearly seventy-five Kilometres, while the final eighteen-Kilometre stretch at the far end of it is hard to reach. This is a feature not commonly found in other *wadis*.

As well as villages and date palms, the *wadi* also has several sites

of historical interest including hill-top forts and towers.

GHUBRAT AT TAAM – WHERE THREE WADIS MEET

The tributaries of Wadi Al Tayyin flow from the Eastern Hajar mountains near the *wilayat* of Al Dama Wa At Tayyin; they then meet and become a wide, meandering *wadi*. By the village of As Sidafi this *wadi* is joined by Wadi Dama



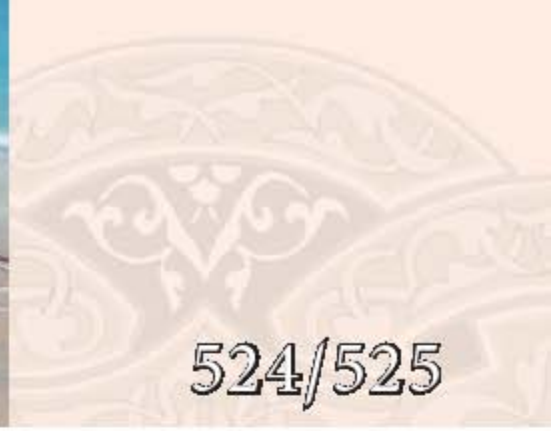
522/523





(Top) The ferry terminal at Shaunah, Muhut takes you over to Masirah Island where new hotels have recently been built.

- one of the most fertile wadis in the Sharqiyyah region. The two wadis flow together as far as the village of Ghubrat At Tam, where they meet a third *wadi* – Wadi Ismaiyyah. After the three *wadis* meet, they flow downhill along the narrow rocky gorge of Wadi Dayqah for a distance of eighteen Kilometres to the village of Al Mazari in the *wilayat* of Quriyat in the Governorate of Muscat.







(Top left) Aerial view of Al Mintrib in the wilayat of Bidiyyah, a modern fishing harbour at Al Ashkharah, and (above) Sinaw souq at date harvesting time.



The cave of Abu Al Habban is one of Wadi At Tayyin's main natural attractions. Situated by the village of Sawt on the left side of the wadi, it can be reached on foot after a two-Kilometre walk. Extreme caution must be exercised when entering the cave.

Visitors to Wadi Tiwi in the *wilayat* of Sur are greeted by the sight of an extensive stretch of greenery which extends right up to the beach. This beautiful, fertile wadi is a haven for wild animals and birds.

Wadi Tiwi is a rocky wadi and its water flows above ground between steep mountains until it reaches the shore. Its palm groves, farms and wild trees create a delightful interplay between nature and the hand of man.

Six Kilometres from the entrance to the *wadi* you arrive at Harat Al Hisn, which stands on the western side. After a further one Kilometre, and after passing through a narrow passageway, the road reaches the village of Al Bidah. Before entering the village, you can pause and admire the view. Here there are pools surrounded by trees and lofty date palms that seem almost as high as the mountains. The water flows and tumbles over green algae-covered rocks.

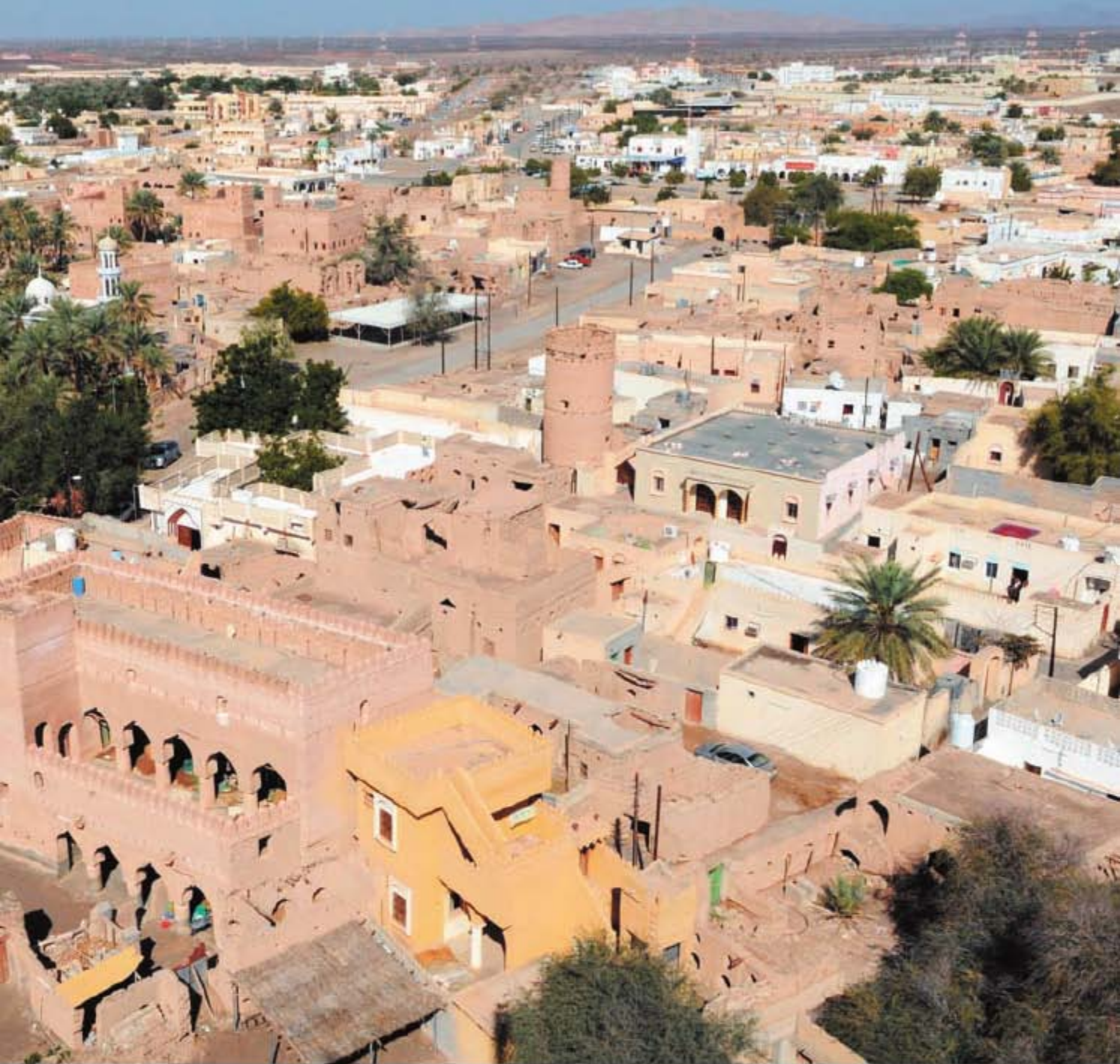


(Top) The many historical buildings of Mudayrib seem to be in harmony with the new.

Jaalau Bani Bn Hassan bordered by the desert on one side and flat gravel plains covered in acacia trees on the other.

THE VILLAGE OF MEEBAM

Meebam is one of the biggest villages in terms of its population. Its





houses are built of mud and stone on the mountain terraces on either side of the *wadi* above terraced date plantations, citrus and mango orchards and cultivated plots. This pretty village's *falaj* (traditional irrigation channel) flows from high up in the mountains and its gurgling water can be heard from the village *majlis* (meeting place) under the mango trees.

FLOWING WADIS

Wadi Ash Shab in the *niyabat* of Tiwi (*wilayat* of Sur) leads directly off the Quriyat-Sur coast road and combines the charm of the seashore with majestic mountain scenery.

Wadi Bani Khalid always has copious quantities of water, even when rainfall is scarce, and it is one of the Sharqiyyah region's most popular resort areas. Its main attractions include the pools at the entrance to the *wadi*, numerous streams and Muqul Cave.

THE WONDERS OF MUQUL CAVE

Muqul Cave is one of the best known caves in the Sultanate. You reach the entrance up a flight of cement steps. At the top, you crawl along a narrow passage for a distance of about ten metres until the entrance widens and you can walk normally. From this point you can marvel at the cave's rock structures that were formed thousands of years ago.

WADI AND MOUNTAIN

There is plenty of wonderful scenery to enjoy as you wander along Wadi Bani Khalid. The rocky sides of the *wadi* are covered with – but not hidden under – tall trees and date palms. Finally, the *wadi* opens out and you can see the mountains of the Eastern Hajar. Near the village of Halfa there are some stunning views with date palms and murmuring streams.

There are several wadis in the *wilayat* of Al Qabil, including Wadi Mazari, Wadi Muzairi', Wadi Al Hail and Wadi Al Muraidhif. After the rains these wadis flow in abundance and merge to form Wadi Siwi, which supplies water to most of the villages in the *wilayat*. The village of As Saaqah in the Wadi Nam district (also in the *wilayat* of al Qabil) is famous for the spring of Ain As Saqah, which flows throughout the year. This spring supplies water for the local villagers' crops and livestock.

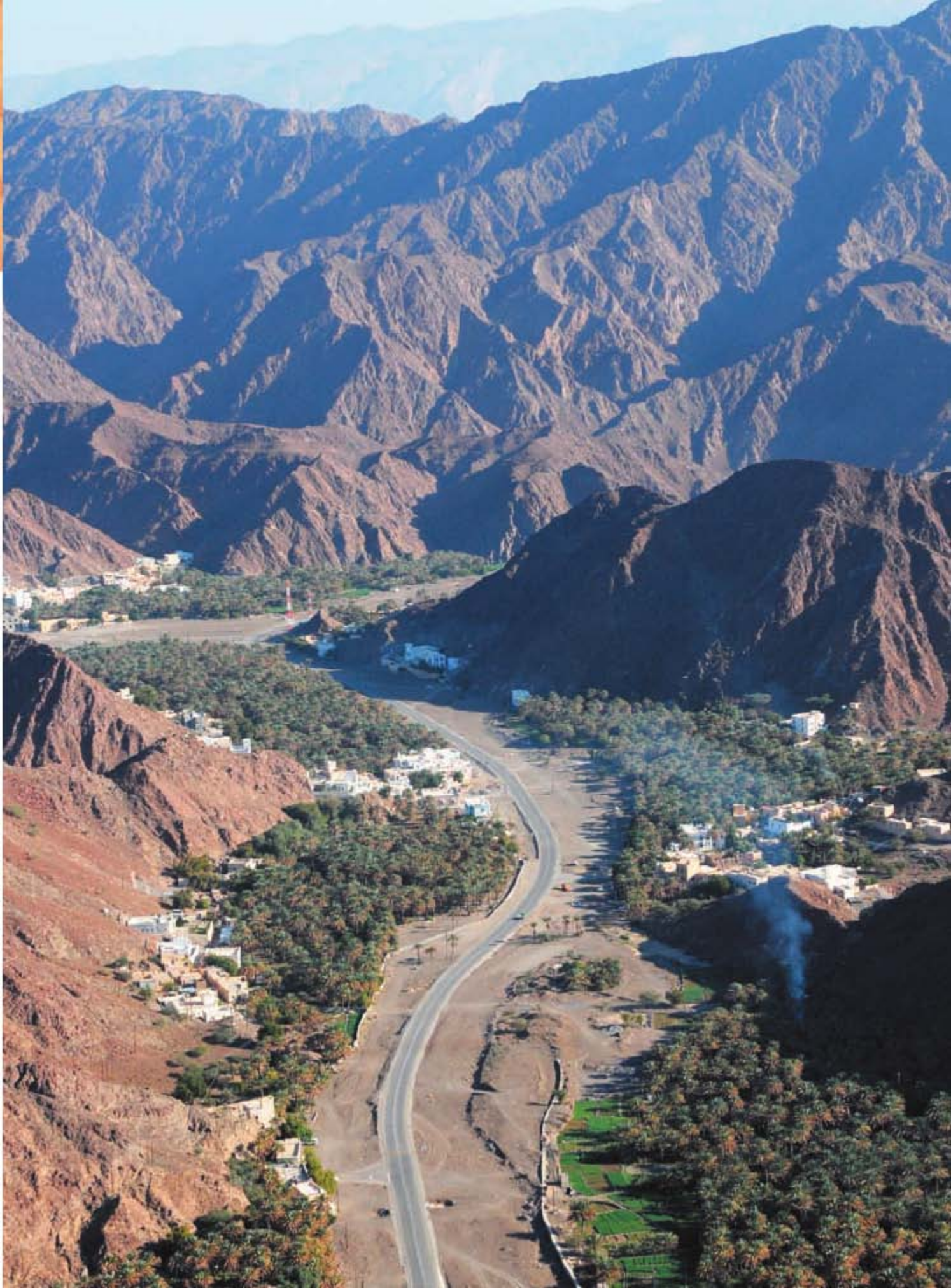
THE SHARQIYYAH REGION – MONUMENTS TO A GLORIOUS PAST

Many tourists are drawn to the Sharqiyyah by its wealth of ancient buildings which bear witness to the region's illustrious past.

In the *wilayat* of Sur the fort of Bilad Sur stands in the middle of the Wadi Bilad Sur plain. It has four towers and its outer wall is around

(Top) some trees seem to thrive even in the desert!

(Right) The Wadi Dama road passes many attractive villages and plantations sited at the side of the wadi.







532/533



six metres high. Restored by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture in 1990, its location – inland rather than by the sea – was chosen for strategic reasons.

As Sunaisalah Fort stands on a hill overlooking Al Sunaisalah village. A square building with a round tower in each of its four corners, it is said to be over 300 years old. It is 35 metres long and 30 metres across. Cannon were fired from three of its towers, while the fourth was used as a watchtower.

Al Aijah Fort – another square building – has many rooms and used to serve as a school and administrative centre. It has four towers overlooking the shore. Ar Rafsah Fort used to guard the *wilayat's* main landward gateway.

Ras Al Hadd Fort (in the *niyabat* of Ras al Hadd) overlooks a sandy beach which forms the most easterly point of the Arabian Peninsula. Seafarers used to land here in ancient times. It has two towers, gun embrasures and look-out points, an ammunition store and a well.

Ras al Mail Tower, which used to control the entrance to Khawr Al Batrah (Al Ayjah), has a round mud and stone wall two metres high. At night a lantern was placed in it to guide the ships and prevent them from going aground on the rocks. It is a popular tourist attraction.

Wadi Shab, which means a gorge between cliffs, is known for its beauty and for its greenery. The niyabat of Tiwi, and the Wadis of Dama Wa At Taiyyin have large amounts of water which flow into Wadi Dayqah.



Wadi Bani Khalid is approx 205 kms from Muscat on the Sur road. It is set deep into the hills and is a popular point from which to begin treks.

QALHAT – DESTINATION OF TRAVELLERS FROM EAST AND WEST

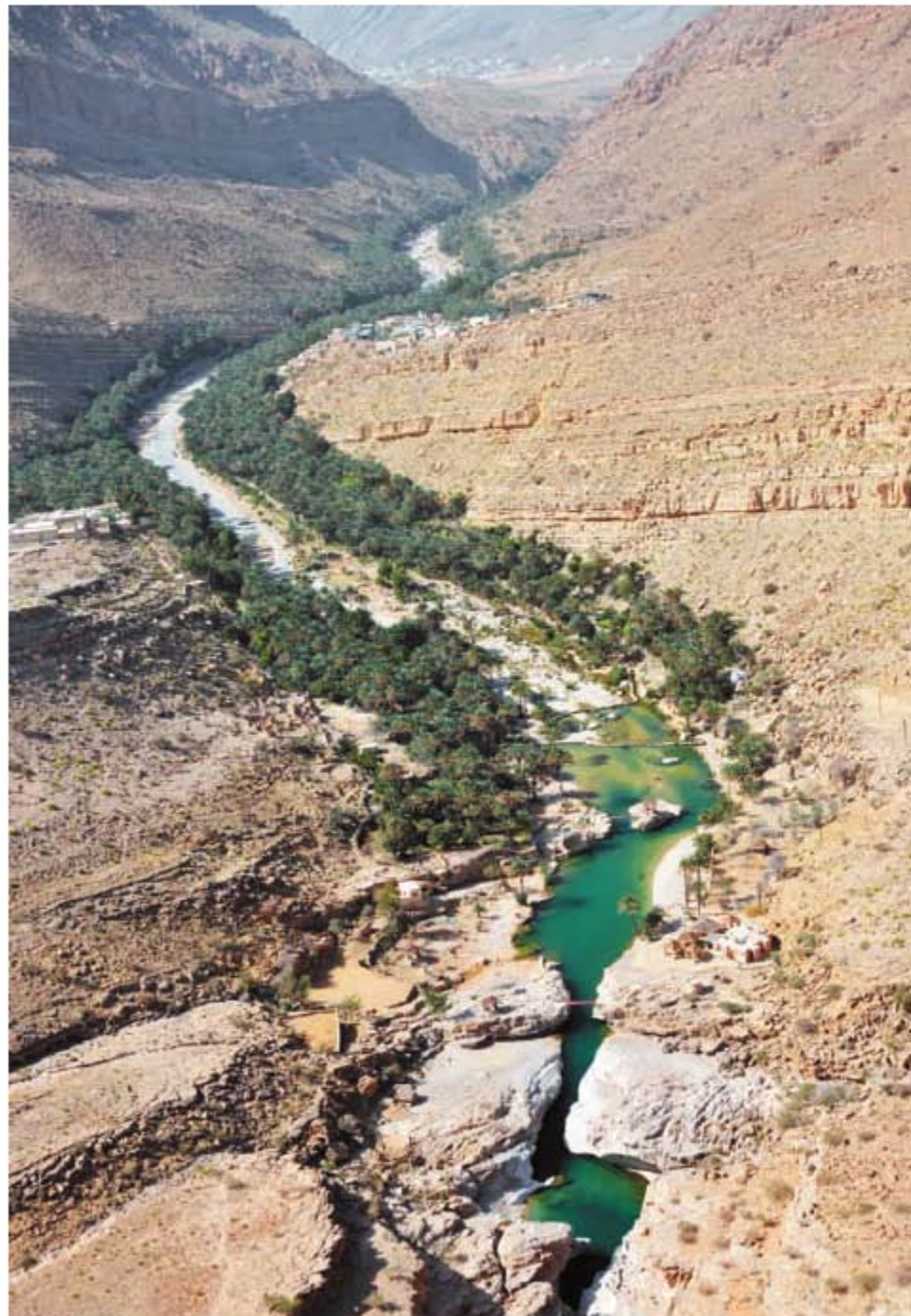
The village of Qalhat, with its impressive location and the remains of its fine ancient buildings, is an important part of Oman's history. Around 24 Kilometres from the city of Sur, Qalhat features in the reports of travellers and explorers ranging from Ibn Battuta to Marco Polo, who wrote of

its mountainous setting and its tombs, domes, water cisterns, residential quarters, harbour and sailing ships. In his book *Mu'jam al Buldan* (Dictionary of Countries) the historian and traveller Ya'qut Al Hamawi describes Qalhat as "the port of the Land of Oman" because of the huge number of ships berthed in its harbour. Marco Polo visited Qalhat on his way back from China in the 13th century AD.



Today Qalhat enjoys a new era of prosperity and boasts asphalted roads, electricity, water and telecommunications services.

Qalhat's ancient buildings include the tomb of Bibi Mariam – a fine domed building, some of which has collapsed. Its four sides are identical in their internal and external design and ornamentation.





Bibi Mariam's mausoleum in Qalhat. Marco Polo described Qalhat as "a very good port, much frequented by merchant ships from India...since it is a centre from which spices and other goods are carried into various inland towns"

HISTORIC BUILDINGS, TOWERS AND DATE PALMS

The *wilayat* of Jaalan Bari Bu Ali has many buildings of historical interest. First and foremost of these is its Grand Mosque, which was built in the 11th century AH (17th century AD). A total of 52 domes allow light and ventilation to enter this splendid and architecturally unique building, which is still used for regular prayers to this day. As Suwaih,

in the *wilayat* of Jaalan Bari Bu Ali, is one of the oldest historical sites in the area and dates from between the sixth and fourth millennia BC. The Al Hamoudah Citadel is in the Al Dhahir district. Elsewhere in the *wilayat* are the forts of Al Hasid, Al Mitwalli, Jabiyat Uyun, Fulaj Awlad Hamdah, Al Qutaitarah, Baleedah, Sharee'ah and Hallawt. Historic towers include Al Muzlaj, Al Jashsha, Al Lawiyah, Seeh Sandah,



536/537



Al Zardoumah, Al Jeerah and Seeh Al Zubairi.

There are also a number of forts, citadels and defensive towers in Jaalan Bani Bu Hasan. Al Mahyoul Fort, one of the biggest with two gateways set in its outer wall, was built in the third century AH. Its towers were used as look-out posts.

Other forts in the *wilayat* include al Khuwaisah, which is surrounded by a high wall, Falaj Al Manahiyah,

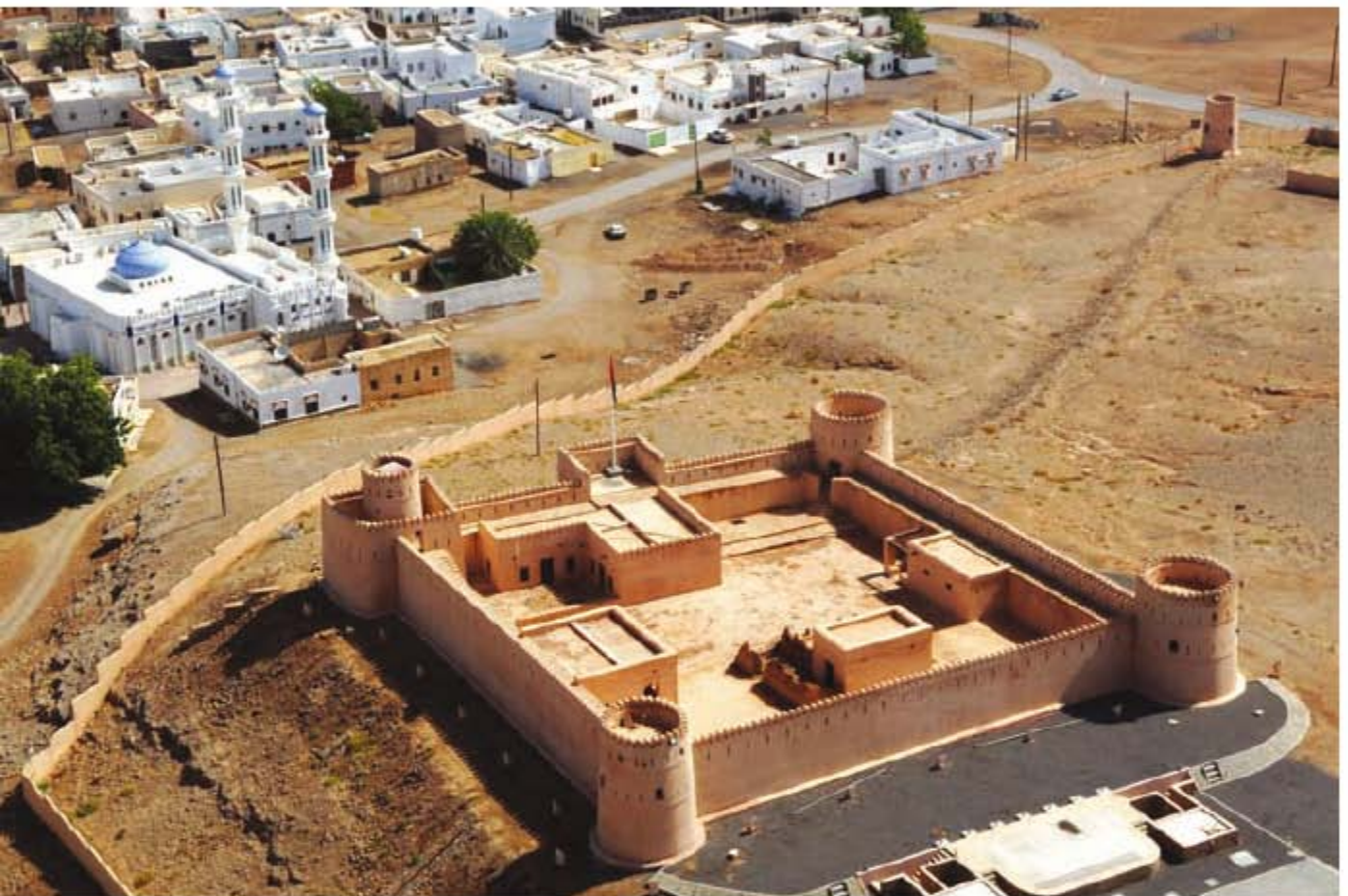
built on a hilltop in the middle of Falaj Al Manahiyah village, Awlad Wahail Wa Awlad al Abed, and al Shahaimaat (in the village of Al Munaiqalah). The main citadel in the *wilayat* is Qala'at Awlad Murshid in the village of Al Munjarad – a square stone and gypsum building some five stories high. Other citadels are Qala'at Al Munjarad and Qala'at Al Souq (in Al Souq district), which was used in earlier times to guard the *wilayat's* souq.

There are over fifty towers in the *wilayat* of Jaalan Bani Bu Hasan, including Burj Al Safra (which overlooks Seeh Al Ma'mour and Wadi Al Batha), Al Marsad, and the square tower of Sharee'at Al Munjarad, which is built of *sarooj* (a type of traditional cement) and gypsum.

There are over eighty forts and citadels in the *wilayat* of Al Kamil Wa Al Wafi. The best known are the Al Kamil Citadel and Al Wafi Fort.

The *wilayat* of Bidiyyah has several historic buildings including the forts of Al Mintarib and Al Shariq and Al Wasil Citadel.

Historic buildings are an important part of the *wilayat* of Al Qabil's legacy and include the pretty village of Al Mudayrib, which is over three hundred years old. The main buildings in the *wilayat* are the hilltop fort of Al Sharqi, Bait al Burj and Bait al Jabal. Citadels include – among others – Al Hadriyah, Al Khanajirah, Al Dimah, As Sur and As Sayigh, while



(Above) Sur castle, and Fort Sumaislah which stands on a high knoll overlooking the town.

(Right) The Jam'ee Al Hamoda mosque in Jalau Bani Bu Ali is built in a beautifully simplistic style and is unusual in that it has 54 domes which have hidden provision for ventilation.

the main forts are Al Hisn, As Sarm and Al Mudhairib. There are also a large number of towers including As Sharee'ah, As Suqur, As Safa, Al Ghafat, Al Burj Al Kabir and Al Nataalah. The Old Mosque in the wilayat of al Qabil has a mihrab embellished with Qur'anic verses and ornamented with moulded stucco.

The citadel of Bait Al Khabeeb is a major landmark of the wilayat of al Mudaybi.

Castles, forts and towers can be found everywhere in the ancient wilayat of Ibra – on the plains as well as perched upon the rocky hilltops.

Al Aqabah Mosque is said to be one of the oldest mosques in Oman. Al Manzafah quarter with its fine architecture and exquisite mouldings and engravings has retained its charm and beauty to this day. Other features of the wilayat are the elegant towers of Seeh Al Yahmedi.



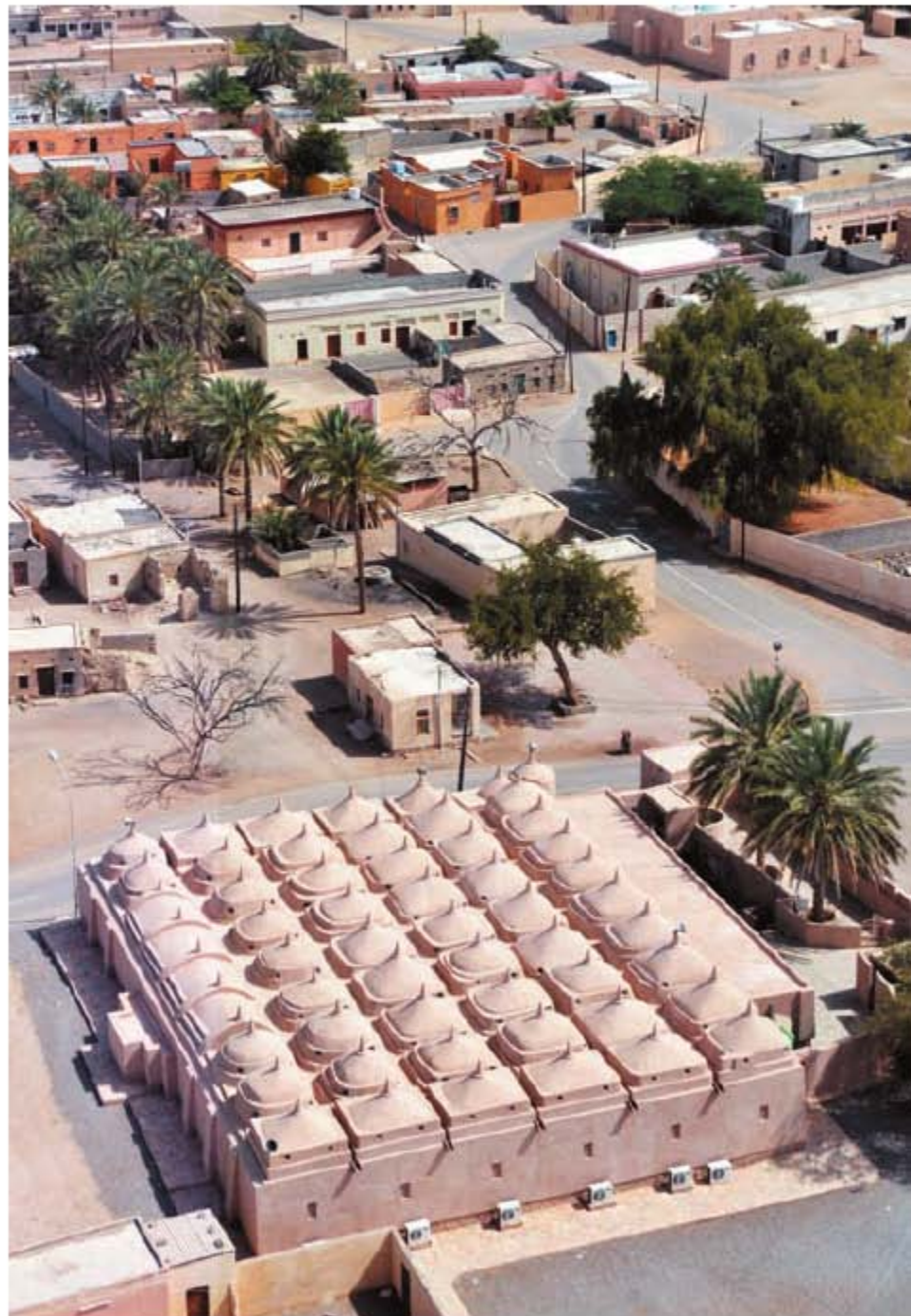
In the *wilayat* of Wadi Bani Khalid Al Awainah Fort stands beside the old mosque in Seeh Al Hail. There are also a number of old villages and residential quarters including the villages of Badh'a and Al Jaylah.

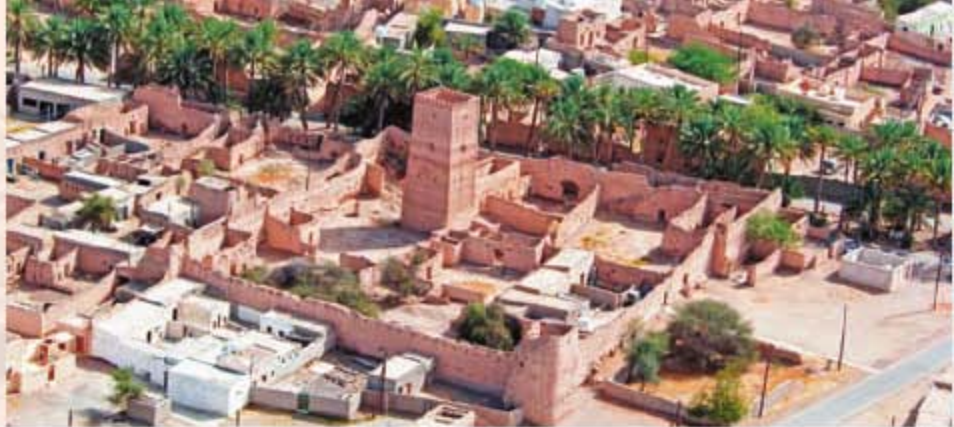
In the *wilayat* of Masirah traces of engravings on stone have been found in an Islamic cemetery in the Safa'ih district, as well as the remains of copper smelting furnaces in Wadi Madhi and the ruins of a couple of ancient forts in Marsees and Dafiyaat.

THE MARITIME MUSEUM AND THE FATH AL KHAIR

Sur has been a seafaring centre ever since its first inhabitants settled there and signs of its maritime heritage can be seen everywhere. The Maritime Museum has been set up in the city to preserve this legacy for future generations and highlight all the region's seafaring and local traditions under one roof.

Since it was established in 1987 the Museum has been a valuable source of information for students, researchers and tourists. It contains models and pictures of traditional Omani sea-going vessels along with photographs of their captains, crews and builders and the harbours they used to visit, in addition to examples of navigational and other equipment, maps and manuscripts.





In another section of the Museum visitors can see some of the tools used by the ship-builders, as well as various types of ships' timbers and nails and the lights that were used to guide and warn vessels at night. There are also pictures of the city of Sur and its most famous buildings, including its forts, towers and old mosques, in addition to photographs of local poets and practitioners of traditional medicine and examples of the currency that was used in former times. One wing of the building is devoted to traditional men's and women's costumes, local textile weaving and cooking, drinking and other household utensils.

After the people of the *wilayat* got together to purchase it and return it to its native land, the last of Sur's famous old sailing ships – the *Fath al Khair* - was installed in a park in Ar Rashsha on the edge of Sur Lagoon, where it can be seen today.

The *Fath al Khair* was built by highly skilled craftsmen using only the best quality timber.

TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFTS AND OCCUPATIONS

The wide variety of terrain and environment in the Sharqiyyah region has produced an equally wide range of ways in which the local inhabitants make their living. Each *wilayat* has its own traditional crafts. Ship building, boat-building



In spite of being so close to the desert Jalau Bani BuHasan castle is surrounded by extensive date plantations. It is dated 13th century AH and has 4 watchtowers.



540/541



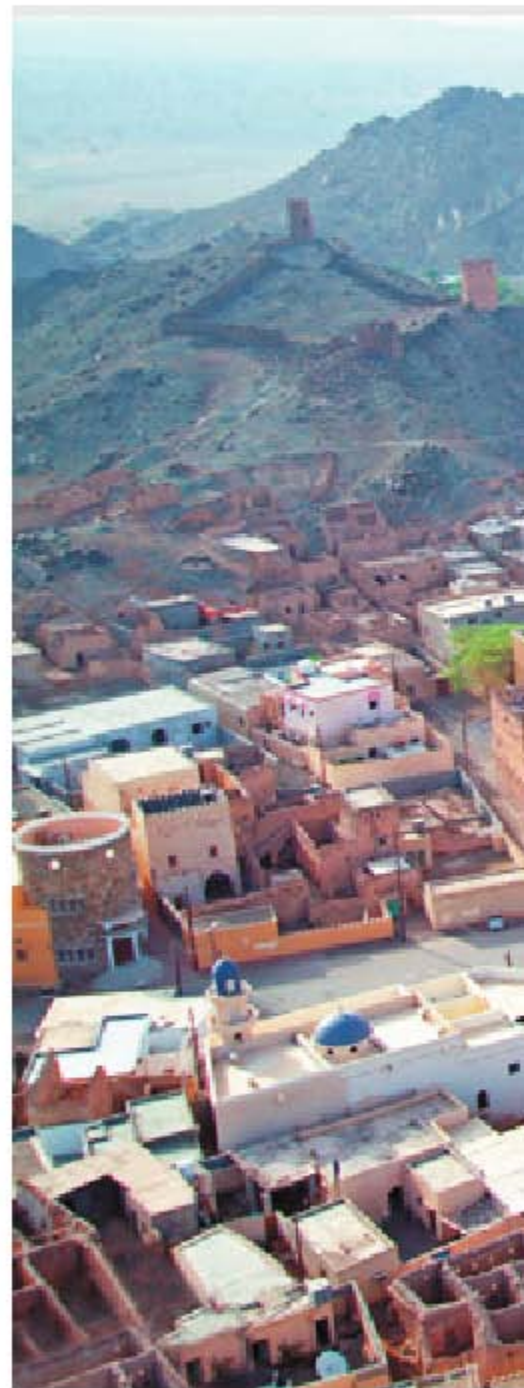


and fishing have always been major sources of livelihood in the coastal areas, where the fishermen's and craftsmen's skills have been passed on from father to son for generations. Where ship-building is concerned, this is especially true of the *wilayat* of Sur and much of the high reputation enjoyed by Omani craftsmen is due to the superb quality of the ships that have been made there over the years.

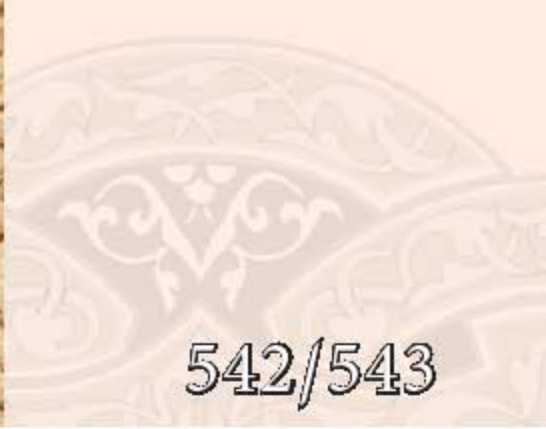
Fishing boats are made in the *wilayat* of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, particularly in the *niyabat* of Al Ashkharah, where this is one of the main traditional crafts. This is also the case in the *wilayat* of Masirah, which is also famous for the quality of its fishing nets. Weaving is a major craft industry there.

Agriculture is the main occupation in the *wilayat* of Al Qabil, as well as spinning, cloth-weaving and palm-leaf products. People there also breed horses and livestock and make silverware such as *khanjars* and jewellery as well as Omani *halwa*, pottery (in Al Munjarad in the Wadi Nam district) and Omani plaster.

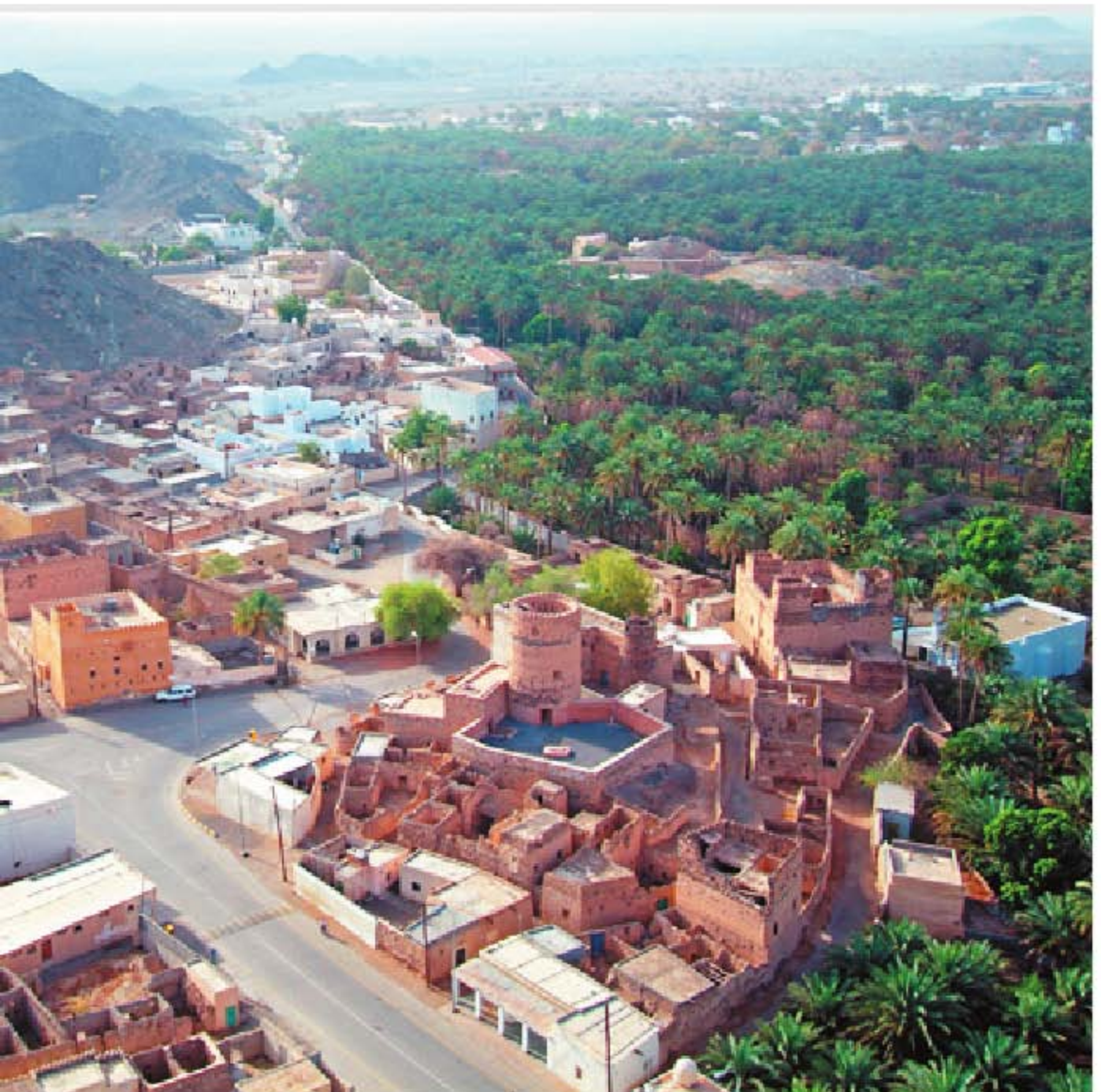
Traditional crafts in the *wilayat* of Al Kamil Wa Al Wafi include spinning, weaving and saddle-making (for horses). Local people also make camel trappings, belts, *khanjars* and swords and breed and herd livestock. The *wilayat* is renowned for its woodwork, pottery and textiles.



The Khanajira Fort is the most prominent fort in Al Mundayrib, Al Qabil.



542/543





Jaalan Bari Bu Ali is famous for its fishing industry, which is the main source of income for much of its population, particularly those living on its long coastal strip. The main occupation of the local Bedu is stock-rearing, while the town and village people in the inland areas tend to earn their living from agriculture or crafts such as gold and silver smithing. The *wilayat* is famous for its shelters made from the branches of date palms.

There are many local crafts in the *wilayat* of Jaalan Bari Bu Hasan, though farming is the predominant occupation. The land there is extremely fertile and suitable for a wide range of crops, which receive their water from *aflaj* (pl. of *falaj* = traditional irrigation channel) and wells.

The local Bedu rear sheep and camels on the hills and plains, where there is suitable natural pasture.

In the coastal area of Jaalan Bari Bu Hasan – from Bandar As Saqlah to Bandar Al Juwairah – fishing is the main source of income for the majority of the population. The desert dwellers rear livestock and use the wool from their animals for spinning and weaving.

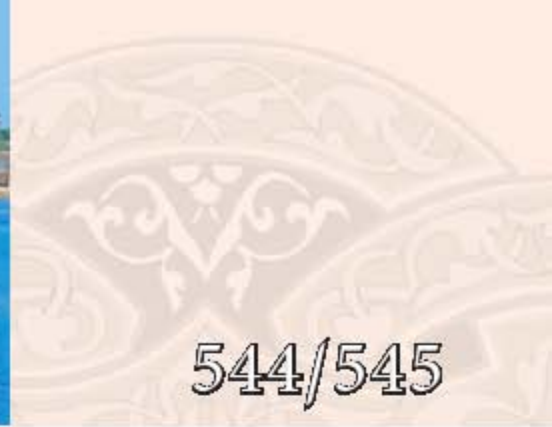
Leather goods including sword sheaths and cartridge belts, are also produced in this *wilayat*, as well as gold and silver jewellery and *khanjars*. Most of the local population make palm leaf baskets and



other palm items. There is also a pottery factory; the clay is brought from some of the nearby *wadis*.

The *wilayat* Dama Wa At Tayyin is a farming and stock-breeding centre and these two occupations are the main sources of livelihood for the local inhabitants. The main agricultural products are dates; these generally ripen nearly a month earlier than elsewhere in the Sultanate, which gives the farmers of this area

The Fath Al Khair – the last of Sur's old sailing dhows. She has been restored and can now be seen on land at the edge of the lagoon.





a significant advantage when they sell them in the market. The main traditional crafts of the locality are pottery, weaving, jewellery making and metalwork.

The *wilayat* of Wadi Bani Khalid has a wide range of local crafts and occupations including palm leaf products, stock rearing, the cultivation of dates, citrus fruit, mangoes and bananas, gold and silver work, weaving and metalwork.

The *wilayat* of Ibra is famous for its souqs, which sell a profusion of traditional items as well as local products such as fruit and vegetables, and also herbs from the Jabal Abyadh mountain. Local crafts include weaving, spinning, particularly with sheep wool, gold and silver jewellery, *khanjar*-making, palm leaf products, ropes, date baskets, tanning and cobbling.

The *wilayat* of Bidiyyah is renowned for its gold and silver-smiths. Other crafts include tanning, wickerwork and palm leaf products including ropes and baskets.

Agriculture is the main occupation in the *wilayat* of Al Mundaybi, where the main crops are dates, limes, alfalfa and vegetables. Sheep and camel-rearing is also widespread. Traditional crafts include spinning, weaving, palm leaf products including mats, as well as the manufacture of Omani halwa and agricultural imple-



ments, particularly ploughs, rakes and mattocks.

SONGS OF THE SEA AND THE DESERT

The rich folklore of the Sharqiyyah region illustrates the different ways in which the local people celebrate joyful occasions like weddings, Eid festivals and seasonal activities such as fishing, animal herding and harvesting crops and



The Bedouin ladies were skilled at making woollen trappings for their camels in the past, while today they cater to the tourist. Meanwhile the young use palm leaves to make useful items.





548/549



HORSE BREEDING

Since ancient times Oman has been famous for breeding and rearing Arab thoroughbred horses. The Omanis' love of horses can be seen in the way they deck them out: the neck ornaments, the silver *sareema* (bridle) on the head, the *ma'raqah* (sweat cover) placed on the back, the *lamad* (undercloth) placed under the *ma'raqah* to prevent chafing, the silver *qiladah* (collar-piece) and the reins.

Horse racing is a highly popular sport in Oman and horse races are important events on the sporting calendar, particularly at Eid times and on national occasions.



The rich folklore of the Sharqiyyah region illustrates the different ways in which the local people celebrate joyful occasions and seasonal activities such as fishing and crop harvesting.

Here the tauburah, shubani and Al Waqif are performed.

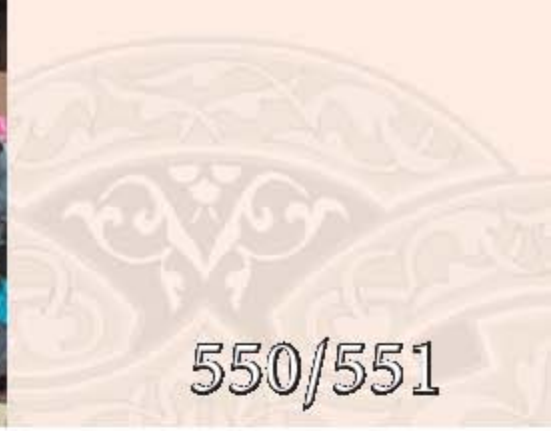
dates; there are numerous different types of dates, each with its own individual taste and time of ripening.

The song forms of the people of the coast include *ghina' al bahr*, *al madeemah* and *as shawbani*, while the Bedu perform *al taghrood*, *al tariq* and *al wannah*. *ar razha* and *al aazi* are also popular throughout the Sharqiyyah.

Other musical folklore in the re-

gion includes *al maidan*, *al tschahh shahh* and *al hambourah*, while *fann bin abadi* is performed specifically by women, particularly in Sur, Wadi Bani Khalid and Jaalan Bani Bu Hasan.

Other popular song and dance forms include *al tanbourah* and *unm boom*, which are only known in the Sharqiyyah region; in the *wilayats* of Bidiyyah and Al Qabil it is known as *al kartoonah*.



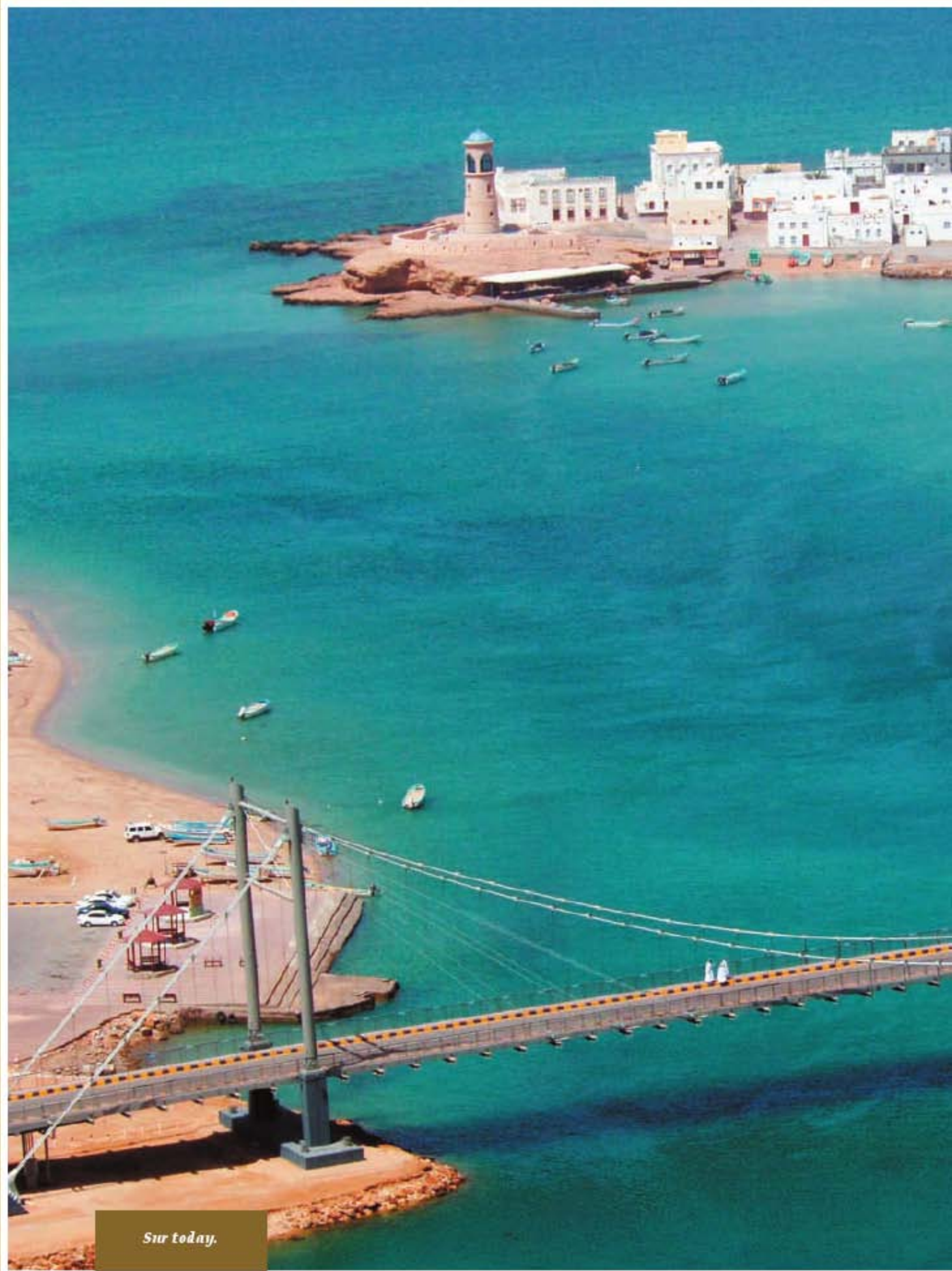
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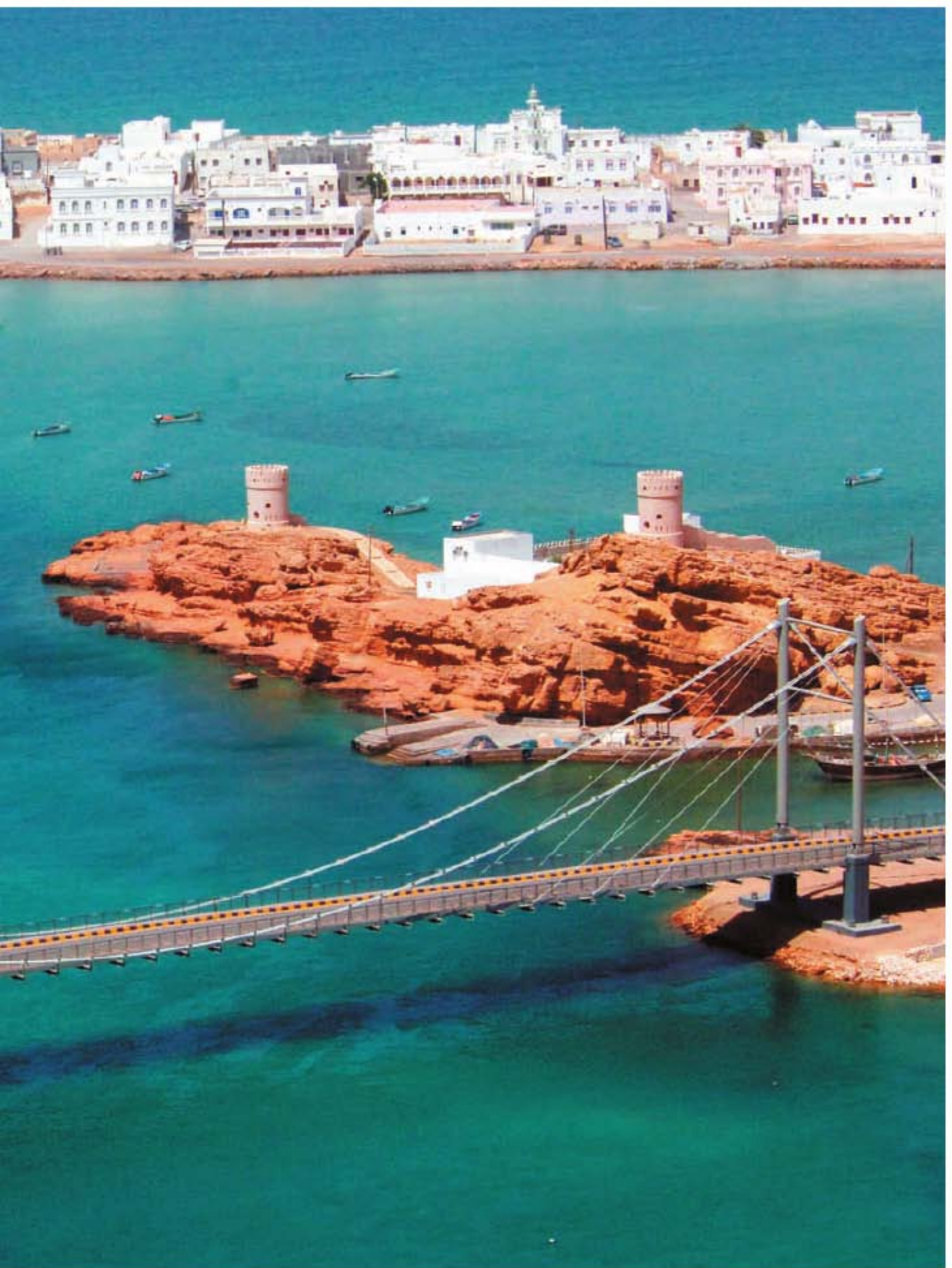


Siv in 1977.





Sur today.



THE WUSTA REGION

A MAGICAL EXCURSION TO SHORELINE, ISLANDS AND CAVES

The Wusta region of Oman is a vast area of luminous beauty and colour, with expansive views, landmark caves, islands and springs. It is one of the country's largest regional divisions after Dhofar, covering an area of 79,700 sq km. As such you might say that it does not yield itself so easily to the casual encounter. It waits until it has drawn you in, until you have explored its vast domains, sought out its coastline and penetrated its islands and caves. Away from the bustle and crowds, take yourself to the seashore and stretch out on the golden sands of Wusta's beaches, rest your gaze on the blue sky, on the colourful birds and little rock crabs, swim with capricious fish in crystal waters cradled by the nearby mountains. The Wusta region will soothe you and calm your soul!

THE WUSTA – A TREAT FOR THE SOUL

The Wusta lies south of the two regions of Dakhiliyyah and Dhahira. Its eastern rim borders Sharqiyyah for some distance and then the Arabian Sea. The edge of the Ar Rub Al Khali or Empty Quarter marks its western border with Saudi Arabia. Dhofar is below it to the south. Wusta has a long coastline on the Arabian Sea, 400 kms in all, and this is where some of the country's main oil and gas wells are located. The inhabitants of Wusta live in harmonious interaction with its diverse elements, secure in the steady influence it has maintained and the formidable growth and services it has enjoyed throughout the Renaissance period. This was when it became the focus of new oil extraction projects, bringing opportunities for work and economic advancement to the area.

The four *wilayats* that make up the Governorate include three on the Ara-



bian Sea coast, ie Duqm, Muhut and Al Jazir. The fourth is Hayma. The total population of the four *wilayats*, according to 2008 statistics, is 28,426.

From the 1970s up to the present, Wusta has seen substantial social and economic change, in education, health, construction, roads and equivalent markers of progress. All this has added up to a definite shift in prosperity and living standards, the sources and features of which will continue to strengthen into the future.

Ad Duqm, a strip of clean and silent coast, is in the far south eastern corner of the Wusta region. Hayma is deep in the region's heartland, and has long been a resting place for tourists travelling on to Dhofar; especially in the autumn season. Muhut differs little from Wusta's other provinces; it is rich geographically, combining the natural beauty and bounty of the sea and its pretty islands and long coastline with the internal landscape of wadis with their *ghaf* (*Prosopis cineraria*) trees and *sumr* (*Acacia tortilis*) and diverse plant life.

The southern coastal strip along the Arabian Sea contains the last sea ports of Wusta, in the *wilayat* of Al Jazir, with its pristine beaches and pretty seaside towns, as well as the two *niyabats* of Rima and Al Lakbi.

ORYX AND OIL WELLS

A distinctive modern feature of the Wusta region, as much as its protected sanctuary for the Arabian oryx in Jaluni in the *wilayat* of Hayma, are the oil wells that have sprung up in

Nature meets on the coast – the Wusta is a safe place for birds of many species.





relatively recent times and which are precious for their value as a mainstay of the national economy. The government has intensified oil exploration and drilling throughout the Sultanate, with particular focus on Wusta, and many wells are in active production in Hayma and Al Jazir. Hayma has production and recovery sites including those at Bahjah and wells at Hubara and elsewhere, while the Rima and Nimr blocs are in Al Jazir.

You cannot speak of Hayma with-



558/559



out referring to the story of the Arabian oryx. Jaluni in this *wilayat* was selected almost three decades ago to become a protected reserve for this indigenous white antelope. Today, with the help of the government, the oryx has been returned to the Omani desert, where they can move singly or in groups over great distances without fear of poachers or of nature's vandals. From the 1930s to the 1970s these majestic beasts were targeted by hunters, leaving the

colonies so drastically depleted in number as to be threatened with extinction. In 1980, the few remaining native oryx were joined by others brought in from abroad to populate the newly created protectorate.

FROM KUTTAB TO MODERN SCHOOL – A BROAD UMBRELLA OF LEARNING

The network of schools that has expanded steadily over the past forty years today represents a broad um-

The Arabian oryx (Oryx leucoryx) once roamed throughout much of the desert regions of the Arabian peninsula. (Above) In recent times oil wells have sprung up, precious too for their value as a mainstay of the national economy.



brella of learning beneath which a generation of Omanis has benefited and flourished. Duqm has six Basic level schools and several adult education and literacy centres. These facilities have brought the gift of schooling and ongoing education to the region's inhabitants and given them access to many and varied occupations, locally and further afield. This rich pool of human and labour resources presents a very different picture from that of forty years ago, when a very basic education was provided by the old Qur'anic school or *kuttab*. In the 2009/2010 school year Duqm had 1,240 pupils enrolled.

Muhut, meanwhile, had for long known only a single school, which had no fixed curriculum and where all children of school age in the province gathered to be educated. Today the *wilayat* has seven Basic level schools and these served 3,042 pupils in 2009/2010.

Al Jazir had a mere two schools in the 1970s, in Al Kahil and Sawqrah, compared with today's six, attended by 843 pupils of both sexes. Hayma, like its sister *wilayat*, is well served for its needs, with four schools offering general and Basic level education.

In an attempt to boost the standard of education in these areas, all schools which had occupied temporary structures were replaced. In addition, the practice of combining classes, which had long been a feature of the region's schools, was phased out. Teaching standards were raised, and qualification requirements upgraded.



A network of schools that has expanded steadily giving even those in the smallest village a chance of a good education.





Only two health centres existed in this region prior to 1980 – now there are hospitals in Hayma and in Duqm, as well as clinics in other towns and villages.

THE CROWN OF GOOD HEALTH

It is hard today to imagine that as late as the 1970s the inhabitants of Wusta, when faced with ill health or medical emergency, were forced to take on the added stress of travelling to neighbouring regions in search of treatment. Undertaking the long journey to hospital, as often as not on the back of a pack animal, it was not uncommon for the patient to die en route. Only two health centres existed in this region prior to 1980. Today the picture is a very different

one, and quality healthcare is freely available. Duqm Hospital takes care of all the region's internal requirements and incorporates a paediatrics unit and responsibility for two health centres, at Haytam and Ras Madrakah. Hayma Referral Hospital spares patients and their families the distress of travelling to Sharqiyyah or Dakhaliyyah or to the Dhofar. Muhut meanwhile has four health centres, in Hiji, Sorab, Al Najdah and Khaluf. And Al Jazir has a hospital, as well as health centres in Al Lakbi





and Rima.

Meantime a centre for the control and prevention of endemic diseases opened its doors in 2006, adding to the strides made by Wusta in the healthcare field.

'I will farm, though it be on unyielding ground'

Anyone passing through the Wusta region will notice that it is for the most part a hard land, arid and unyielding to cultivation of any kind. Yet, despite the many obvious complications that act as a deterrent to the process of agricultural exploitation, the first farmstead to be established here, covering a 150-feddan (one feddan = 0.42 hectares) tract in the environs of Hayma, set about breaking down all of the popular assumptions

The pioneering farmers here sowed crops which they hoped to sell into the local market, crops such as clover, tomatoes, cucumber and carrots. Later they moved on to the cultivation of wheat, until vast swaying fields of grain covered what had formerly been a barren landscape, extending further into the outback as scientific advances honed their methods.

In Wadi Dhurt by the village of Juwayrah, some 70 kms from the provincial centre of Duqm, mangrove trees have been planted with remarkable success. Meanwhile, everywhere you go, you will see reflected the government's commitment to areas of tourist interest, to the shoreline of flawless beaches interrupted by pretty bays and creeks. Inland as far as the eye can see all is a carpet of lush green trees. For visitors looking for a unique experience, this is nature in her best attire.



rience, this is nature in her best attire.

CAVES TO MODERN HOMES – HOUSING SECTOR PROJECTS

To help the inhabitants of Wusta gain a sense of belonging to their region and to dislodge their mindset from the nomadic lifestyle, it was essential that they be provided with housing that would meet the needs of a dignified life. Before 1970, the inhabitants of Al Jazir were for the most part engaged in fishing, living in cave-like structures which they constructed from stones compacted

(Right/top) Social housing in the Wusta region, ladies making leather-covered coiled basketry from the leaflets of the desert palm. In the foreground goat leather is stretched over the back of a milking bowl, and stitched in place to form a watertight casing.



564/565



one above the other without mortar. These dwellings were prone to collapse in the heavy storms that occasionally battered this region and offered precarious shelter to their occupants, all the more because they were only barely roofed with a type of wicker mesh. Today Al Jazir is a very different place, offering modern housing to a population that had for long suffered and struggled to provide themselves with lodging suited to winter and summer extremes.

At present, 125 units, distrib-

uted between Hayma (50), Al Jazir (50) and Duqm (25) are under construction. In the village of Khaluf in Muhut alone, 60 units are in the process of being built. This scheme is the latest in a series of similar village housing projects, the most recent being 151 units in the village of Al Najdah. These units are well outfitted and come supplied with electricity and tap water. Nine further protocols are signed and pending, covering a total of 236 new dwellings in the villages of Muhut and



There are several water desalination plants in this region, and telecommunication services are continually being expanded to reach every small village.

Hayma.

'FROM WATER, WE BROUGHT ALL TO LIFE'

Wusta has a need to manufacture potable water, having little or no ground water of its own, with the exception of a basin in Wadi Rawnab in Al Jazir which is the second largest in the whole of the Sultanate. In addition, there is the water reserve discovered between the Wusta region and the Governorate of Dhofar.

The need to sweeten water in this region is a consequence of its long coast-

line along the Arabian Sea. Hence the desalination plants at, for instance, Hijj, Sarab, Khaluf and Al Najdah, as well as Nafun in Muhut. Further plants are located at Al Kahil, Al Lakbi and the two Al Ghubras, North and South, in Al Jazir. Hayma meanwhile is served with sweet water from plants at Hayma itself and another at Abu Madhabi.

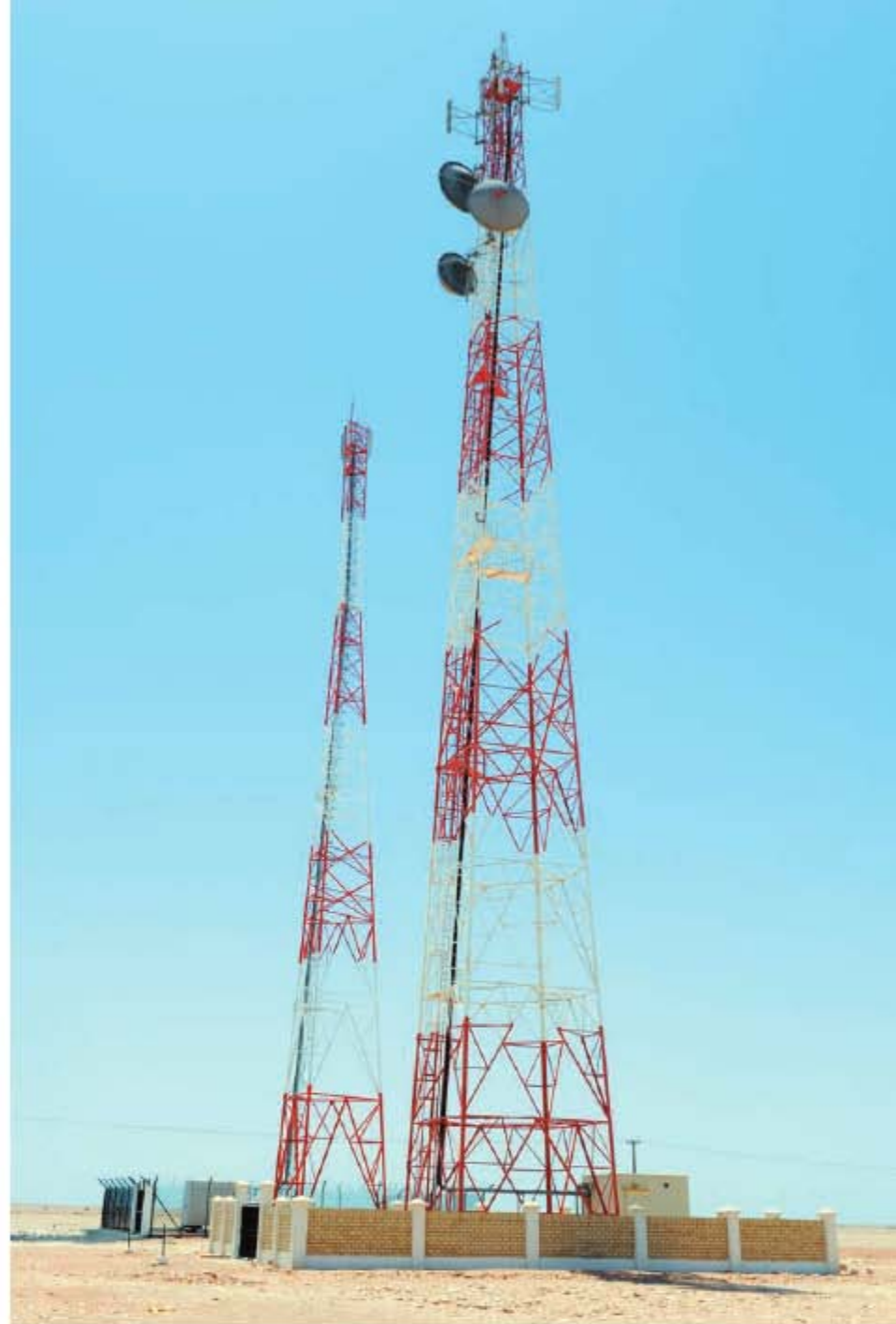
In the past Duqm suffered terribly from a lack of potable water. This is no longer the case, for the *wilayat* has four desalination plants, three of them producing 50,000 m³ apiece daily and



the fourth yielding 100,000 m³ The water is distributed by truck to homes and facilities throughout the area.

COMMUNICATIONS – REDUCING DISTANCE AND CONNECTING THE WORLD

Life is not viable without communication, and high-speed, stable communication systems are a vital part of contemporary life. At the press of a button the globe can today be transformed into a village. In recognition of this reality, the Omari Telecom-



munications Company has been developing the services offered to the residents of Wusta. Several international mobile phone booster installations have been erected in the Governorate's many villages and *wilayat*. New stations are fitted out to international specifications and now offer coverage over vast areas of desert.

A FUTURE IN COMMERCE AND TOURISM – DUQM SEA PORT

In summer the temperatures in Duqm drop due to its location on the



The new airport at Duqm, providing air links to all corners of the Sultanate, and the ferry service linking the wilayat of Muklat in the Wusta with the island of Masirah in the Sharqiyyah.

Arabian Sea coast, where it is exposed to the soft, moisture-laden sea breeze and life is balmy like the weather. From June to September Duqm is a beautiful resort to visit. Its weather and location suggest for it a fortuitous and significant future in commerce and tourism. Already that future is coming into view and it is hoped that this positive vision of the future will reach a wider world, especially with the addition of the strategically located Duqm sea port. Added economic advantage to the region is offered in the shape of the dry dock for ship repairs, one of the biggest such facilities in the world, covering as it does some 100 hectares. The facility is made up of two principal basins and a floating

basin.

This dry dock project will be an important resource, providing employment for the labour force in Wusta. The project is expected to generate almost 1,500 job opportunities when operations start.

HAIMA AND DUQMA AIRPORTS – CLEAR SKIES AHEAD

The Wusta region no longer trails its sister provinces. As development has picked up pace, the groundwork laid here has prepared it to absorb several major projects currently in the pipeline. Acting from the principal of ensuring diversity of service transport, the government gave serious consideration before ultimately



568/569



approving the construction of two airports, at Hayma and Duqm respectively, to broaden the spectrum of available transport links servicing daily life in Wusta today.

The two airports will serve this locality well, providing air links to all corners of the Sultanate. Most importantly, they will contribute to the growth of commerce, tourism and passenger traffic and enhance Wusta's interconnections with the rest of the Sultanate, as well as facilitating high speed access to complement the more time-consuming passage by land and sea.

BETWEEN MUHUT AND MASIRAH: SHANNAH HARBOUR

These projects do not end with

the provision of basic services. There are more ambitious plans to be fulfilled. The completion of the Shannah harbour facility in Muhut at a cost of RO10.395 million is one that will bring vital economic advantage to the area. It will link the *wilayat* of Muhut in Wusta with the island of Masirah in Sharqiyyah. The new port facility will inject vigour into existing enterprise and tourism on the island. The project also includes paving the 8.5 m wide road for a distance of 2.4 kms from the current to the new anchorage and to docks for medium sized craft and ferries as well as fishing areas. In addition there are plans for a mosque and complex with shops, restaurants and general amenities for



DUQM PORT

Duqm Port is a key resource within the Wusta region's maritime transport system, favoured by its position on the Arabian Sea close to international shipping lanes that link East with West. Adding to its key status is the dry dock facility for repairing ships within the port area which will be capable of accommodating and providing maintenance and repair services to vessels with a capacity of up to 400,000 tonnes. Forward plans see these services extended to the giant ships of the future, which are expected to reach cargo capacities of 600,000 tonnes. Duqm Port is already one of the region's prime

marine complexes and this status will be reinforced with completion of the current expansion works in the second half of 2012.

Given the strategic importance of the port and the large industrial zones scheduled for inclusion in the immediate vicinity, the government in 2008 took the decision to expand the scope of construction work at the port to accommodate the anticipated commercial and industrial traffic. As such on completion of all phases, the port enclosure will offer more than 42 berths, to a depth of 18 metres, allocated to various dockside activities. All types of commercial vessels will be accommodated. Phase One of the Duqm Port



570/571



expansion plan will involve the construction of more than 3 kilometres of pier. The cargo dock will be 2,250 metres long and 350 metres wide and allow as many as eight vessels to berth at one time. The storage facility will be directly adjacent to the berthing area to meet the anticipated needs of commercial shipping as well as of the industries which are currently projected for the industrial zone. An additional 940 metre dock is anticipated to serve government requirements and provide ancillary facilities for the ferry dock and marina. Among the infrastructural works scheduled for the dry dock are water and electricity stations and a communications hub

for contact between incoming vessels and the dry dock control centre.

Phase Two of the dry dock project will deal with the superstructure, to include the implementation of 17 projects relating to the installations, equipment and mechanisms necessary for operation of the dry dock. Execution of this phase has been entrusted to local and international companies, and will include the manufacture of a pair of heavy iron gates for the dry dock. The gates, consisting of one 95-metre wide 1,375 tonne panel of heavy steel and a second, 80 metres wide and weighing approximately 1,250 tons, will be 14 metres high and will be manufactured at the project site in Duqm.



tourists and visitors.

GOOD ROADS AND COMFORTABLE TRAVEL

Good and smooth roads are crucial if tourism is to become a successful and profitable option. With this in mind, proposals for an upgrading of existing transport links between the country's north and south were examined very closely. A priority was to upgrade the old roads built in the mid-1970s and link these in with a network of modern roads.

Major link roads connect Wusta to other regions, and these include the Nizwa highway in the Dakhiliyah and the carniageways from Thumrayt in the Dhofar to Mudaybi in the Sharqiyah.

A vital inter-regional project cur-

rently underway involves the paving of the 160 km highway linking Shannah-Al Ashkhara in the *wilayat* of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali with the Sharqiyah. On completion, this artery will provide direct access between the two regions and benefit collaborative and shared participation in the economy, trade and tourism potential of the area. The upgraded road will facilitate travel to and from the Wusta region generally and the *wilayat* of Muhut and its villages in particular.

Internal roads: 180 kms of highway link Hayma and Duqm. A further 250 kms of highway runs from Hayma to Al Jazir. Finally, Hayma is linked to Muhut by a new 249 km road that joins the two *wilayats* by

Old roads built in the mid-1970s have been upgraded and linked in with a network of modern roads.



572/573

way of Sayh Al Zamayim.

FROM THE ROMANCE OF CANDLELIGHT TO THE ILLUMINATING GLOW OF ELECTRICITY

If you were to view the vast Wusta region from a distance you could be forgiven for thinking it devoid of any and all services: water, electricity, roads and the like. But as you get closer, you will be struck by the visible signs of development and modernity. Anyone familiar with the affairs of Wusta forty years ago, on seeing the comforting glow of electric light illuminating the villages and residential estates in the mountains and outback, will know that this dream was a difficult one to realise. But it has been realised, and this is one of the many fruitful harvests of the Renaissance.

The Al Kahil power station in Al Jazir is a principal source of electricity, but there are many others – Haytam, Ras Madrasah and Wadi A'Sai in Duqm, and Sarab, Khaluf, Hijj and Al Najdah in Muhut, as well as Hayma and Ajaiz in the *wilayat* of Hayma. A number of other stations are planned to serve the villages scattered about this region.

FROM RAS MADRAKAH TO THE PINK POOLS: THE CHARM IS IN THE DETAILS

Wusta will charm you with the abundance of its many visual gifts – from sprawling desert to quiet shore, plain to mountain highlands.

Beautiful coastal villages such as Ras Madrasah in Duqm stand out against dramatic mountain and rock

formations set between the glittering water and golden sands, where tongues of high cliff slip into the sea.

Outdoor enthusiasts surf the waves here or fish in the clear waters, watched by wheeling seabirds and scuttling crabs. The metal road is bringing tourists to these parts in greater numbers, as well as groups of youngsters on club and State school outings. Some are from Qaboos University. Many are conducting scientific research in the pretty village, with its many elevations.

Tourism will always be a pivotal income earner for the Al Jazir *wilayat*, with its prime attractions, such as Ras Sawqrah and the pink pools and the caves in the Al Lakbi mountains. The valleys have the appearance of green streaks on a broad sea of desert. The pink lagoon is here too, spreading out from the point where a number of wadis meet the shoreline.

Sawqrah is perhaps best known as the place where the mountains finally come down to meet the sea. Ras Sawqrah is a barren promontory where the mountains drop off precipitously into the waters of the Arabian Sea. Visitors come here to contemplate a mesmerising scene, best observed from a point around 10 metres above sea level.

The island-lover should head for Muhut, which has three islands. The most important of these is Muhut island, surrounded on every side by mangrove. The lesser island of Al Rak has delightful natural views. Finally, 'Ab island is home to many

(Overleaf) Fishermen in the Wusta are well-known for their seasonal prawn and squid catches.







THE PINK POOLS

In the Wusta region, 12 Kilometres east of Al Kahil an amazing natural phenomenon is to be found in the *wlayat* of Al Jazir, at the famous Pink Pools.

The intense coloration of these Sabkhas (salt flats which occur along arid coastlines) is mostly due to the growth of specific salt tolerant (halophilic) micro-organisms trapped in the extensive saline crusts. A red-orange colour is associated with the pigments of Archaea and the unicellular green algae, whereas green colouration depends on pigments of

cyanobacteria (blue-green algae). Archaea are single-celled micro-organisms, similar but evolutionally distinct from bacteria.

The striking red-orange colour of micro-organisms is due to their high content of carotenoid pigments – also commonly found in carrots and apricots. Carotenoids protect microbes, their proteins and DNA from intensive solar ultra violet radiation by absorbing it. Meanwhile, micro-organisms without carotenoids can protect themselves from solar radiation by finding suitable life conditions below the surface.



576/577

varieties of seabird, principal among them gulls, bustards, herons, terns and many other migrant species.

WADIS AND SPRINGS ... CAVES AND CREEKS

The broad expanses of the Wusta region are peppered with springs and valleys. Hayma has three water springs. One, called Buwi Al Hawja, is sheltered by an enormous boulder that spreads over a stone base, giving it the appearance of a natural umbrella. The Ain Al Asla'a spring is south west of Al Habor and again is marked out by an overhang sitting on a pillar of rock, shading the spring waters beneath. The third spring, Qarn Aanouz, or the 'goat horn' is in a setting that features salt dunes and natural springs.

The water spring at Al Raki is surrounded by a thick belt of palm trees and lush grasses. Here also is the steep bluff known as Al Huqf, a rare and wondrous sight to behold. In Duqm the springs have curative properties and the sulphurous waters of 'Ayn Say are sought out by people suffering from skin conditions.

Visitors to Al Jazer will quickly fall in love with the still, lagoon-like waters of the pink pools in Al Kahil and be captivated by the cosy Khawrs, or creeks, that pit the rugged coastline, such as Khawr Ghawi and Khawr Sawqrah. Close by are the inland wadis of Rawnab and Ghudan, with their sweet waters.

Muhut too is blessed with green wadis and fresh springs, most popu-







578/579



lar among them the springs of Ayn Fadi and Ayn Massoud and, on the coast, the pretty inlets of Kanasah and Khawr Al Milh.

Hayma has caves, most notably the Al Raki cave north east of Jaluni, which has an internal spring, although the water is not suitable for drinking. In the Masalak cave, water drips from above, even though on inspection no such drops are visible on the ceiling. Then there is the Wadi Saraf cave, set below ground level and accessible through an opening which leads to a descending passage. A fourth cave in these parts goes by the name of Qutar.

HAYMA ... PROTECTING ANIMALS AND THE LANDSCAPE

Hayma is the not only the home of the oryx. It is an area of extraordinary geology and a natural habitat of rare world significance. Its qualifications for this responsibility come from its role as a conservation area for animal species and ecological balance. Along with the many varieties of graceful gazelle, desert hares, sand foxes, mountain goats and other rare animals are some 130 species of birdlife, 23 of which are indigenous, including the majestic golden eagle, spotted thick-knee and the Houbara bustard.

SUMMER JOURNEY AND SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH

The beaches of Duqm glitter with clear seas and pure smooth sands, disturbed only by gentle cooling breezes. Shuayr beach is around 20 kms from

(Top) Oman has recorded some 450 species of birdlife, and here Greater Flamingoes look spectacular when in flight. (Below) Mangrove trees (Avicennia marina) protecting the eco-systems.



Conservation areas protect rare animals, and crafts and skills are handed down from one generation to the next. This area has some of the best spinners and weavers.

the district capital and is especially beautiful. Some distance away are the empty shuttered homes of fishermen gone north for the season. In summer the fishermen abandon the wind-blown seas of the monsoon season which are hard to navigate and they pass the season farming, many migrating to Dakhiliyyah or Sharqiyyah. After the end of the hot date season, which keeps them occupied during the summer months, they return to their coastal villages. Alternating between the fruits of the palm and

the sea, Omani fishermen and farmers live out productive lives, so long as this abundance of land and sea protects them from famine and want, as indeed it has done for many centuries.

ARTS AND CRAFTS.... .. MAN'S RESOURCES OF TIME AND PLACE

Hayma has a long history of excellence in the raising of animals, herding camels, goats and sheep. This reputation extends to the veterinary arts, in which the maximum use is made of the plant medicines that grow wild in the desert.

The inhabitants of Muhut also make a living from fishing and raising livestock, while some engage in farming. Muhut has over 70 farms specializing in vegetable crops, dates and animal fodder. Al Jazir is where nets are made and boats are built, textiles woven and leather goods made from camel and goat skin. If there is a craft or skill that one district has perfected over another, it is likely to be one that has been practiced there from the distant past and handed down from one generation to the next. Hayma has some of the best spinners and weavers, palm weavers and leather goods. Duqm has a long tradition of herding, as well as diverse handicrafts and spinning and weaving using local materials such as goat and other animal hair. Muhut has long been celebrated for its boat building skills and the transport of goods and passengers from Oman to East Africa, India and other African ports, carrying Omani merchan-



580/581

dise and returning with goods foreign to Oman. Al Jazir, the sea lover and seaman's friend, with its miles of coastline and shore along the Arabian Sea, manufactures oars and nets, as well as palm woven goods and leathercraft.

Wusta's musical tradition is spontaneous, exuberant and passionate. Proximity and a similar lifestyle and livelihood influences the arts among the indigenous peoples of these areas, expressed in a common poetic meter that accompanies them in the rhythms of their working and social lives, as they fish and harvest and celebrate, at weddings and religious and national festive occasions. Some provinces still preserve the old singing and drumming traditions of *al razha*, *al a'azi*, *al taghrud* and *al taniq*, and Muhut in particular is noted for *al tosobil*, a form of sea shanty performed on festive occasions.

SPORTS ... HEALTH AND CONSTRUCTION

The Omani government has shared a serious commitment to enhancing the physical abilities and skills of young people and the Ministry of Sports Affairs is currently implementing a programme to install indoor arenas and games pitches at schools in the Wusta region. An indoor sports arena and football pitch will be attached to Hayma Basic School, Duqm School and Al Lakbi School in Al Jazir, as well as Muhut School.

In Wusta, as in every region of Oman, it is appropriate always to look for the human in nature and for



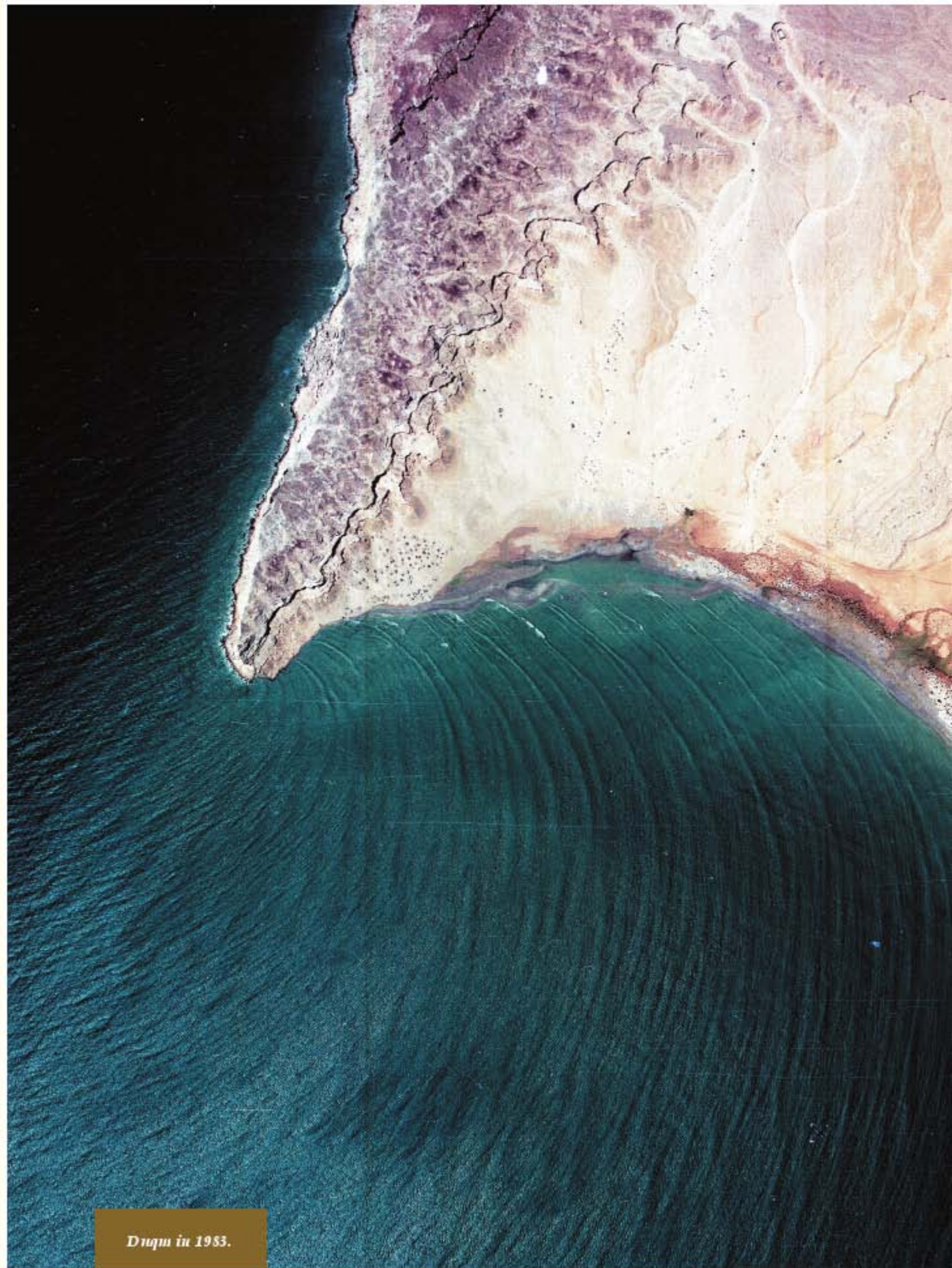


(Top) the prawn fishing season in full swing, and (below) Nafiu island which lies out at sea north of Diqun. Socotra Cormorants roost here during their seasonal migration.

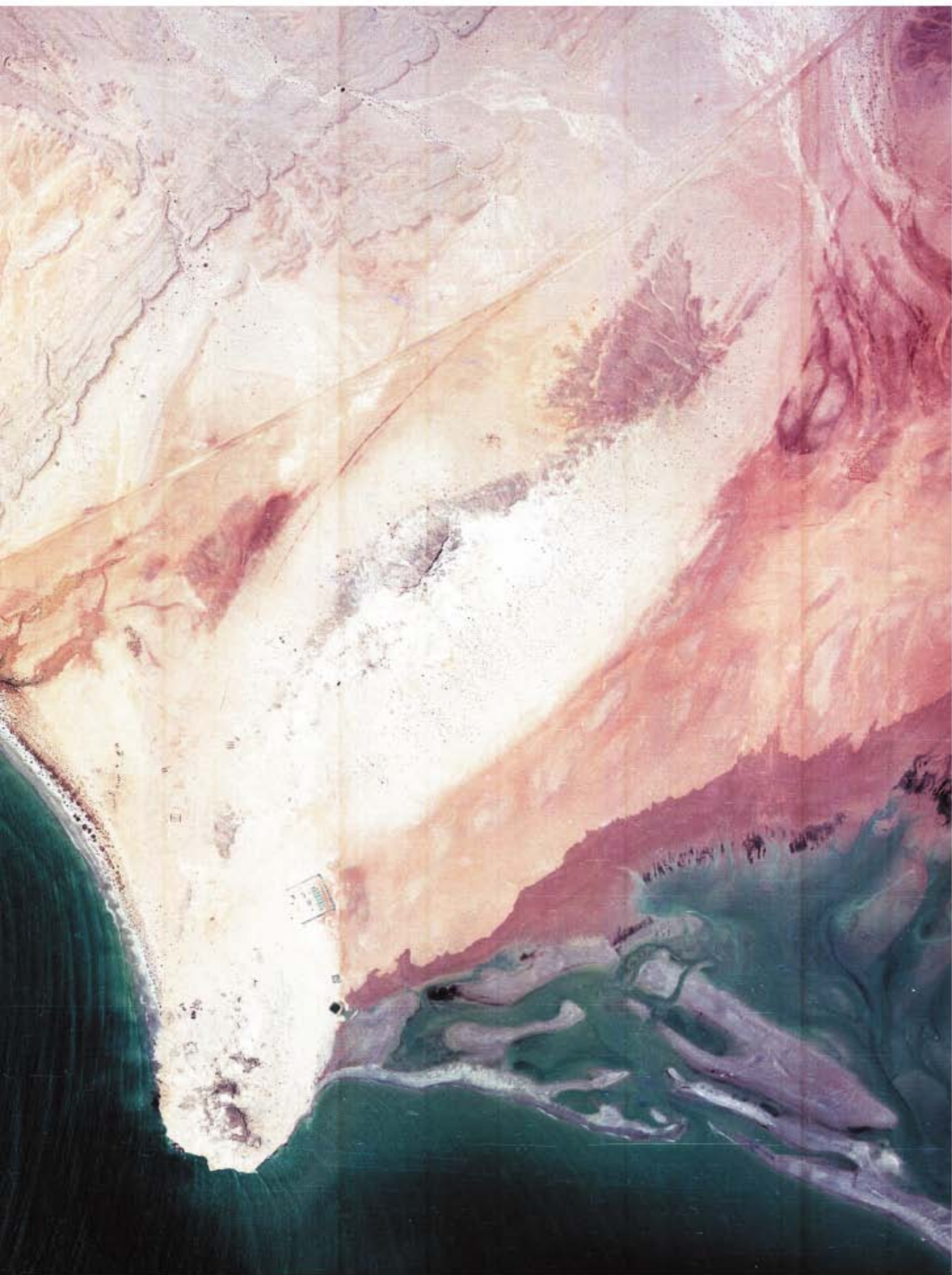


582/583





Drum in 1983.





Duqm today.







SULTANATE OF OMAN





Produce by National Survey Authority
This map is not an authority on international boundaries

OMAN IN FACTS AND FIGURES

Area	309,500 square kilometres
Capital	Muscat
Religion	Islam
Official Language	Arabic (English widely spoken in the economic and educational sectors)
Time	GMT + 4
Currency	Omani Rial = US\$2.60 (387 baizas = US\$1)
Climate	Hot and humid summers, moderately cold winters

Economic Indicators

	Unit	2009
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current prices	Million RO	17,731.1
Total Government Revenue	Million RO	6,748.4
Total Government Expenditure	Million RO	6,709.5
Average Daily Oil Production	1,000 barrels	813
Average Price of Oil over the Year (\$/barrel)	US\$	56.67
Total Commodity Exports	Million RO	10,632.0
Of which Non-oil Exports of Omani Origin	Million RO	1,849.5
Total Commodity Imports	Million RO	6,864.2

Social Indicators

	Unit	2009
Total population	1,000	3,173
Omanis	1,000	2,017
Expatriates	1,000	1,156
Infant mortality	per 1,000 live births	9.60
Hospitals	No.	60
Hospital beds	No.	5,631
Doctors	per 1,000 population	1.80
Male and female nurses	per 1,000 population	3.81
Schools	No.	1,418
Students / pupils	1,000	629.353
Civil service employees	1,000	159.538
Omanis registered with the Public		
Authority for Social Insurance	1,000	158.315
Private sector expatriate employees	1,000	874.245
Asphalted roads	km.	25,926
Internet subscribers	1,000	78.135
Hotels and accommodation	No.	219
Electricity production	GW / H	18,405
Electricity distribution	GW / H	17,632
Water production	Million gallons	39,657
Water distribution	Million gallons	39,462

GLOSSARY

Aazi :	tradition of reciting poetry of pride and praise without musical accompaniment. The poet recites his poem and shakes his sword.	Bunqa:	and passenger vessel mask worn by some Muslim women
Abaya :	Cloak worn by Muslim women	Baut:	<i>Monotoca buxifolia</i> tree with edible purple black berry fruit, 1.5cm in diameter
Ain :	water spring	Dma dat:	a poetry competition in which poets recite improvised poetry in the mountain language (Southern region)
Askar :	guard	Dm dat:	name for women's singing. It is accompanied by clapping and ululation
Ayn :	type of falaj irrigation channel	Damweez:	gateways in defensive walls
Ayyalah:	Traditional form of dance. Participants stand in 2 parallel rows and take turns in singing a poetic chant	Daudi:	type of irrigation channel (<i>falaj</i>)
Baghlah:	large ship distinguishable by its high poop deck and quarter galleries, its transom stern being pierced by five window apertures and it is often elaborately carved	Dibwt:	elegiac poetry expressing sorrow and anguish (Southern region)
Bani:	tribal prefix meaning 'the son of'	Dishdash:	robe worn by men
Bar'ah:	dance and music performed by two men, representing youthful exuberance (Southern region)	Du'oot:	palm branch mat which is laid on the sand
Bamsti:	house of palm wood construction	Falaj:	channelled water distribution system (pl. <i>aflaj</i>)
Bibi:	noble lady	Feddan:	one = 0.42 hectares
Bin		Forfar:	<i>Tecomella undulate</i> is a shrub or small tree with large pale yellow to deep orange showy flowers
Abbadi:	(Son of Abbadi) women's singing in the Sharqiyah region	Fonds:	branches of the date palm tree
Bislat:	cloak worn over the male dishdasha	Ghali:	type of seasonal irrigation channel (<i>falaj</i>) which draws water from the wadi base flow or the mountains
Boum:	superseded the <i>baghlah</i> in Oman as an ocean-going	Ghaf:	<i>Prosopis cineraria</i> tree

<i>Chanjah</i> :	boat very similar to the <i>baghlah</i> . The steam-head ornament is however a small rounded projection cased with concentric circles, sur mounted by a trefoil crest		
<i>Habbut</i> :	traditional form of horsemanship and swordsmanship display in the Southern Region. Participants walk in succeeding lines brandishing their weapons – daggers, swords and guns – as they leap high into the air. Poetry is recited during the ceremony.	<i>Khalas</i> :	traditionally carried by the men in the Musandam one of the best varieties of date grown in Oman. Yellow in colour.
<i>Habbut</i> :	a cistern which receives water from a <i>falaj</i>	<i>Khanjar</i> :	curved dagger worn by Omani men on ceremonial occasions
<i>Halwa</i> :	Omani sweetmeat of starch, sugar, ghee, rose water and almonds etc	<i>Khareef</i> :	monsoon
<i>Hambal</i> :	parade of singing men as they walk in horizontal lines, one behind the other. The procession is led by two drummers.	<i>Keetha</i> :	women's ceremony transplanting a small tree
<i>Hambal al-boosh</i> :	with camels and <i>hamal al-khnyl</i> = with horses	<i>Khawr</i> :	creek/lagoon
<i>Ibadism</i> :	the form of Islam widely followed in Oman, based on the doctrine of Abdullah ibn Ibadh	<i>Khubz</i> :	bread
<i>Imam</i> :	religious leader	<i>Khumazi</i> :	a popular variety of date grown in Oman. Deep red in colour.
<i>Jabal/Jebel</i> :	mountain	<i>Kumma</i> :	embroidered cap worn by men on informal occasions
<i>Jirz</i> :	small iron bladed axe,	<i>Lahaf</i> :	headscarf worn by some Omani women
		<i>Laisu</i> :	a 21/2-metre length of cloth used as a woman's head covering
		<i>Lithab</i> :	<i>Ficus cordata</i> tree
		<i>Mabseli</i> :	type of date which is boiled in water
		<i>Madar</i> :	tradition of music and dance performed at religious feasts in the South.
		<i>Maidan</i> :	tradition of music and poetry, performed for entertainment
		<i>Maljis</i> :	room where men and women receive their visitors
		<i>Malid</i> :	recitation held in celebration of the birth of Prophet Muhammad, and on other religious and social occasions

<i>Mashoo:</i>	<i>Adansonia digitata</i> deciduous large tree, 20-30 metres tall	<i>Qasqil:</i>	
<i>Mashkeek:</i>	small grilled kebabs	<i>Qassafiyah:</i>	the fast rhythmic <i>mzhah</i> performed by the youth
<i>Massar:</i>	embroidered turban worn by men	<i>Qasr:</i>	handle of a khanjar
<i>Mawlid:</i>	the recitation of the Prophet's biography in prose	<i>Qata'ah:</i>	curved and decorated part of the <i>khanjiah</i>
<i>Mihnah:</i>	niche in the mosque, where an Imam stands to lead prayers facing towards Mecca	<i>Rabubah:</i>	traditional dance of the Southern region. 4 dancers stand in a row opposite 4 female dancers.
<i>Mina:</i>	seaport/harbour	<i>Rak:</i>	<i>Salvadora persica</i> (tooth-brush tree) which is green throughout the year.
<i>Misij:</i>	<i>Prunus arabicus</i> , a sort of wild plum tree	<i>Ras:</i>	head, cape
<i>Mizwalah:</i>	sundial	<i>Razhah:</i>	traditional form of dance, essentially the art of sword dueling
<i>Nawaa:</i>	songs sung by beduins in the mountains of Dhofar	<i>Sabatat:</i>	small, overhead rooms
<i>Nadbah:</i>	a 'cry' to arouse the emotions. Traditional in the Musandam.	<i>Sadr:</i>	top of the sheath of the khanjar
<i>Nasl:</i>	blade of the <i>khanjar</i>	<i>Salam:</i>	Aehren bergiana shrub
<i>Nayruz:</i>	Men and women sing together as they walk towards the sea on the Batinah coast to celebrate the Spring and the beginning of the fishing season. The women carry palm leaves.	<i>Sambraq:</i>	boat used for pearling
<i>Neel:</i>	indigo plant	<i>Saqatnat:</i>	spout through which hot date treacle was poured onto unwanted visitor
<i>Niyabat:</i>	sub-district	<i>Sarb:</i>	September to December, following the monsoon in Salalah when there is vegetation
<i>Nust:</i>	reed found in wadis	<i>Sarooj:</i>	burnt clay
<i>Qabooli:</i>	meat or fish on the top of a pile of rice	<i>Saqiah:</i>	water channel
<i>Qafiyah:</i>	small pulley fitted on the prow of a boat	<i>Sha'abi:</i>	lowest quality of frankincense
<i>Qannah:</i>	height of an average man	<i>Shukh:</i>	tribal leader
		<i>Sharh:</i>	songs and dances performed at wedding ceremonies during the application of henna

<i>Shubana</i> :	a musical tradition of sailors that combines work and pleasure	<i>Wa'al</i> :	mountain goat (used for both tahr and ibex)
<i>Shawwa</i> :	meat cooked underground at Eid festivals	<i>Wadi</i> :	dried up river bed
<i>Sidr</i> :	<i>Ziziphus spina-christi</i> (tree)	<i>Waliyah</i> :	women sing and establish the rhythm by shaking a silver bracelet on one arm, while holding the shoulder of the women next to her with the hand of the other arm
<i>Souq</i> :	market place	<i>Wali</i> :	local governor of an area
<i>Sunn</i> :	<i>Acacia tortilis</i> (thorn bush tree)	<i>Wamnah</i> :	nostalgic chants performed by a lone Bedouin singer to entertain himself and to ward off sleep during a long night journey on camelback
<i>Ta'awib</i> :	singing performed during the gathering of dry wood from the desert	<i>Wilayat</i> :	district
<i>Tabseel</i> :	place where the <i>mabsehi</i> dates are processed	<i>Wizar</i> :	loin cloth worn by men (usually under a dishdasha)
<i>Taghlood</i> :	the singing of camel riders	<i>Zaffat al aroos</i> :	the bride's procession to her new home. The procession may be accompanied by drumming, oboe playing, and singing
<i>Tahlulah</i> :	the teacher recites a religious poem which the parading children repeat	<i>Zakat</i> :	alms giving
<i>Taymimah</i> :	celebration for a child who has completed the task of memorizing the Qu'ran	<i>Zamal</i> :	common name for <i>hubbut</i> (see above)
<i>Tahr</i> :	mountain goat	<i>Zaraf</i> :	horn of the rhinoceros (used at the top of the khanjar)
<i>Tariq</i> :	form of Bedouin singing performed on camelback	<i>Zariqah</i> :	boat
<i>Tasyeef</i> :	singing performed during the wheat and barley harvest		
<i>Thareed</i> :	stew		
<i>Uud</i> :	silver bracelet		
<i>Um boom</i> :	female singing, the poetry is based on praise and love		
<i>Ursiya</i> :	rice pounded with chicken or meat		

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