



OMAN

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National Day

Oman celebrates its National Day on 18 November each year. This date commemorates both the birthday of H.M. Sultan Qaboos and also the establishment of the new Regime, which took place on 24 July, 1970.

Plans had been made well in advance for celebrations in London, but owing to the situation in the Middle East they were cancelled. However, official and popular celebrations took place on a limited scale in Oman itself. H.M. Sultan Qaboos reviewed a military parade and there were a number of sporting displays and contests.

right:

H.M. Sultan Qaboos at the National Day parade held at the old airport at Bait el Falaj, near Muttrah, at dawn on 18 November.

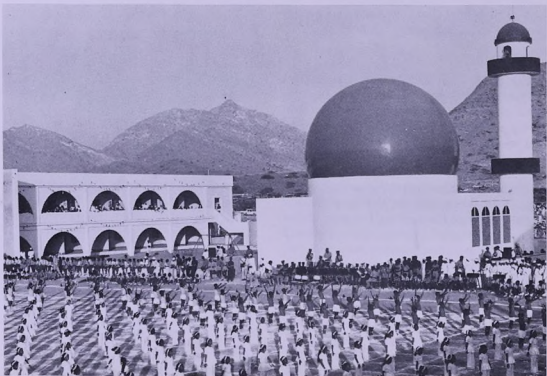
below right:

Schoolchildren giving a display at the Centre for Islamic Studies outside Muttrah on 19 November, watched by H.M. the Sultan.

below:

National Day concert at the old Broadcasting Station.

The line-up at the start of the final of the Oman Hockey Championship at Seeb on 20 November, between the Oman Club, Muscat, and the village of Sidab, which Oman Club won by two goals to nil.



Educational Progress in Oman a Remarkable Achievement

"The education and training of our people must commence as soon as possible so that the governing of our country by Omanis for Omanis may spread throughout the land."

So declared H.M. Sultan Qaboos bin Said on his accession to the throne in July 1970 and today, 3½ years later, Oman can look back with pride at a remarkable story of educational progress that has rarely been matched by any other country.

With the exception of the Koran schools, where reading and writing were taught in mosques and private homes, education in Oman was virtually static prior to 1970. There were only three Government schools, all for boys, with a total of 900 pupils.

Schools operating privately included an American mission school for girls with about 50 pupils only, three small schools for the Hyderabad community, and a technical trade school for employees of Petroleum Development (Oman) Limited.



Three year old Reem Taghlib, one of the young citizens of Oman who will now benefit from a modern educational system.

For those who could afford it, education abroad was the only solution—but even this was prohibited by the previous Ruler and many parents smuggled their children out of the country by boat, often at night, in an effort to secure their enrolment in schools in neighbouring states.

Realising that a comprehensive educational system was essential for the progress and development of his country, the new Sultan set up a Ministry of Education less than a month after his accession and charged it with the daunting task of making free education available to every child in the country within the shortest possible time.

Eighteen months after the establishment of the new Ministry—by the end of 1971—41 primary schools were already operating, including five schools for girls and eight co-educational, and the number of pupils had

risen to 15,332—an increase of over 17 times the original figure.

Expansion continued at the same remarkable rate and in the school year 1972-73 there were 71 schools throughout the Sultanate—50 for boys, 9 for girls and 12 co-educational—and the number of pupils amounted to 24,645. For the current school year—1973-74—a further 37 schools have opened, bringing the total to 108, with the number of pupils rising to nearly 38,000.

In spite of this staggering increase, demand shows no sign of abating and in the main towns schools are operating on a double enrolment basis with separate teachers and pupils in morning and afternoon shifts.

The demand for education, originally engendered by the Islamic tradition which encourages the quest for knowledge "from the cradle to the grave" existed in Oman prior to 1970 but did not have an outlet in the national educational system. That the backwardness of Omanis in the past was due to lack of opportunity rather than dislike for change is clearly demonstrated by their enthusiastic interest in the provision of modern educational facilities. Many parents are illiterate, yet throughout the country they are clamouring for more and more schools to be built for their children.

So great is the thirst for knowledge that the Ministry has been unable to keep up with the demand, especially from villages in the interior of Oman. Far-reaching plans for continuous expansion have been made but in the meantime the policy has been to establish schools in the larger villages and in centrally-placed communities which can attract pupils from the surrounding area.

Children often have to cover a journey of up to 10 miles for their daily schooling, either walking, riding on a donkey or using school transport provided by the Government. In many areas, lorries of the Sultan's Armed Forces are used to ferry pupils to and from their homes.

Inevitably, the construction of suitable premises failed to keep pace with the rapid rate of expansion in educational services and until new buildings were complete many schools had to operate in temporary locations, such as rented houses, mosques, tents, palm-leaf huts or even in the shade of trees.

Shortage of trained teachers has been another problem but this was partly resolved by recruiting teachers from abroad and by giving Omani teachers additional in-service training and refresher courses. The Ministry is also planning to establish a teacher training college.



Pupils of the Bilad Bani Bualy School at Ja'alan, near Sur.



Homework in the dormitory at the Islamic School near Muscat.



A Maths lesson.

The emphasis in Oman's educational development programme has been on primary school instruction, the policy being to concentrate on producing the maximum number of pupils trained to read and write and equipped with basic skills rather than to develop a small nucleus of highly-trained people to undertake more skilled tasks.

This does not mean, however, that secondary and higher education has been neglected. A secondary school now being built in the capital area of Muscat will provide hostel accommodation for teachers and students and there are also plans to establish similar schools in other main centres of population such as Sohar, Rostaq, Nizwa, Sur and Salalah.

Overseas there are several hundred students enrolled in universities and special institutes in various countries abroad, where they benefit from scholarships or subsidies awarded by or through the Oman Government.

Public and private education at all levels is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, but other Ministries and Government departments provide various forms of vocational training.

The oil company's technical trade school near Muscat was taken over by the Government in 1971 and now operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Plans are in hand to create similar schools in other parts of the country to provide training in the building, mechanical and allied trades.

The Ministry of Health has assumed control of nursing training and until a proposed new training institute is opened, with courses for assistant nurses and midwives, sanitary assistants and laboratory technicians, a temporary school of nursing has been attached to the hospital at Muttrah, near Muscat. A three month course for sanitary assistants has also been introduced.

Agricultural training is the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture, and although no formal institutions have yet been established in Oman to provide courses in this subject, students have been sent to agricultural secondary schools in Jordan.

An Institute of Islamic Studies has also been opened, where Qadis (judges) and other prospective officials of the Islamic legal system are being trained. In addition, U.N.I.C.E.F. is

providing aid and technical assistance and training male community development officers and female social workers and educators in Oman.

The sweeping educational changes that have taken place in Oman during the past 3½ years are unparalleled in the whole of its history. Coupled with the progress and development that has taken place in other spheres since the accession of Sultan Qaboos, the country now has a bright and promising future ahead, in which the children of Oman will play an increasingly important part.

Arab International Bank

His Majesty the Sultan issued a decree on 25 September 1973, for the establishment of a branch in Muscat of the Arab International Bank for foreign commerce and development. It will be financed by Oman, Egypt and Libya.

Rural Municipalities in Oman

Oman's first rural municipalities were established in 1972 in Nizwa, Sohar and Sur. These towns were natural choices for the new municipalities, the first to be set up outside the capital region of Muscat, Muttrah and Seeb and Salalah in Dhofar Province. Nizwa, a former capital of Oman, is considered the main urban area of Northern Oman outside the capital region. Sohar and Sur, both coastal towns, the former just over 200 kilometres north-west of Muscat and the latter 150 kilometres to the south-west, were trading ports of major importance: both lay claim to have been the home of Sindbad the Sailor.

The establishment of these three municipalities in which the Government has been assisted by a British firm of management consultants, the Whitehead Consulting Group, marked the beginning of the implementation of a policy of making municipality services available throughout Oman. This policy was again referred to by H.M. Sultan Qaboos in his speech on the occasion of Oman's National Day on 18 November 1972, when he said, "Municipalities will be set up in the main towns until we finally reach the stage of designing municipalities for every town and village with God's help".

In addition to supplying these essential services, the municipalities, having established themselves as a point of reference for local problems, became increasingly involved in local development. During 1973 work started on two comprehensive development plans making full use of the local municipality: that for Sur undertaken by a planning consultant from Durham University, and another, for Nizwa, by an Egyptian expert. Nizwa Municipality has given valuable assistance to a project for building a modern market improvement.

To make more effective use of the rural municipalities in co-ordinating local development, responsibility for rural municipalities

was transferred from the Interior Ministry to the General Development Organisation at the end of June 1973.

As each municipality has its own peculiar conditions and problems, it has always been recognised that a municipality depends on the initiative and enthusiasm of its senior officials to evolve the most effective methods for dealing with local situations, with guidance and encouragement from the Municipalities Department in the General Development Organisation. In October 1973, H.M. Sultan Qaboos paid tribute to what Sur Municipality had achieved "in such a short time and with limited resources", which, he said, was an indication of the efforts of the head of the Municipality in making the Municipality so active and raising the level of municipal services. From his privy purse H.M. the Sultan placed O.R. 2,000 at the disposal of the head of the Municipality to develop the municipal services still further.

Further municipalities have been set up in Buraimi, which adjoins al-Ain in the State of Abu Dhabi, Masirah, an island off mainland Oman, and Samail, in the Interior. Municipalities are now being set up in Rostaq, like Nizwa a former capital of Oman, and Ibra which looks out west to Arabia's Empty Quarter. Two more municipalities, in Ibra, in the Sharqiyah, Oman's eastern hinterland, and in Khasab, at the entrance to the Gulf on the Musandam Peninsula, Oman's most northern territories, are scheduled for early 1974. During this year it is also planned that the functions of the rural municipalities will be expanded to include such work as the licensing of shops, eating houses and trading establishments, the issuing of building permits and the registration of births and deaths.

The survey and preparations which preceded the setting up of these municipalities showed how strong was the popular demand

for the introduction of municipality services. On the basis of interviews with local government officials, members of newly-formed municipal councils representing tribes or town quarters and as many citizens as possible, it was generally agreed that their communities' major needs were as follows:

- Disposal of rubbish, with initial emphasis on removing long-standing accumulations of waste materials and scrap.
- Control of flies, mosquitoes and other insects.
- Improvement of market facilities and their supervision to raise the standard of hygiene in the handling of foodstuffs and allow controlled expansion in the light of the increased commercial activities which have followed the accession of H.M. Sultan Qaboos.
- Improvement of thoroughfares within the municipality boundaries, especially to allow access for ambulances and rubbish collection vehicles.

The new municipalities, despite limited resources, spared no effort to rectify these deficiencies inherited from the past. The absence of systematic treatment of these problems had serious consequences, especially in the field of public health. The swarms of flies, which found the accumulations of rubbish an ideal breeding ground, were not only a constant annoyance but a cause of eye diseases and recurrent sickness. Mosquitoes, which bred freely in the absence of adequate control, brought the continual threat of malaria to every family. Alongside the removal of rubbish, the municipalities carried out spraying and "fogging" programmes in close co-operation with the Public Health Department: the result, in each municipality, was a dramatic reduction in the number of flies and mosquitoes.

Government Changes

A Royal Decree was issued on Saturday, 17 November announcing changes in the Oman Government. It stated that the Directorate-General of Information and Tourism was to become the Ministry of Information and Tourism and the General Development Organisation was to become the Ministry of Development.

Consequent upon the creation of these two new Ministries the following appointments were made:

H.E. Sayyid Fahad Al-Said, who was Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, has become Minister of Information and Tourism;

H.E. Mr. Karim Ahmed Al-Haramy, who was President of the General Development Organisation, has become Minister of Development;

H.E. Qais Abdulmunim Zawawi is the new Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

At the same time H.E. Sayyid Faisal Ali Al-Said was appointed Minister of Education (the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour had previously been acting as Minister of Education). H.E. Sayyid Faisal Al-Said was Oman's Ambassador in Washington and Oman's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. He has been replaced in both posts by H.E. Mr. Ahmed Macki, previously Under Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It was also announced that a Department of Omani Culture had been established in the Ministry of Information and Tourism and that Sheikh Ahmed bin Abdulla Al-Harithy had been appointed its first head.

It was further announced on Sunday, 16 December, that the Diwan would become the Ministry of Diwan Affairs and that Sayyid Hamed Hamoud, Head of the Diwan and Secretary to the Cabinet, would become Minister of Diwan Affairs. Mr. Maqbool Hameed, formerly Director of Administration, was made Under Secretary at the Ministry of Diwan Affairs.

New Petroleum Agreements

At the beginning of December, announcements were made concerning two agreements relating to the future exploitation of the Sultanate of Oman's oil resources.

An agreement on Government participation in the concession of Petroleum Development (Oman) Limited was signed in Muscat on 4 December, by His Majesty the Sultan of Oman and representatives of Petroleum Development (Oman) Limited and its shareholders, the Shell Petroleum Company Limited, Compagnie Francaise des Petroles and Partex (Oman) Corporation. Under the Agreement the Government will acquire a 25% interest in the concession from the 1 January 1974. The terms of the Agreement are in other respects similar to those currently in force elsewhere in the Arabian Gulf Area.

Petroleum Development (Oman) Limited has relinquished substantial parts of its concession area in Dhofar, South and Central Oman, and the Batinah Coast. These relinquishments which are effective immediately, will reduce the area of P.D.(O)'s concession from some 100,000 square miles to approximately 65,000 square miles.

By these agreements Oman is joining her sister Arab countries in the Gulf area in assuming control over the development and utilisation of its natural resources. Not only will Oman realise additional financial gains for the benefit of its citizens by these agreements, but it will also, through its own Omani representatives, actually be assuming responsibility for the operation of its petroleum fields. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos stated that he was confident that the Omani citizens charged with this responsibility would be more than equal to the task.

Under the terms of the agreement, from 1 January, next year the Government will share in the decision-making on all major issues such as programmes and budgets. Although the Government's shareholding is initially only 25%, all decisions will have to be

reached unanimously. The Agreement also allows the Government to increase its revenues through disposal of certain quantities of oil.

The Government has at its disposal a large area, which P.D.(O) considers of limited interest, but which another oil company may well apply for and explore. The area retained in Dhofar has been integrated into the Main Concession Agreement. This should make for an orderly and logical programme of exploration in South Oman and in Dhofar.

The Oman Government has also announced the signing of a Petroleum Agreement for the exploration of approximately 5,300 square kilometres of the Sultanate's territorial water off the coast of the Musandam Peninsula. This Agreement, under which a substantial cash bonus has been paid to the Government, and which provides for participation by the Sultanate, was entered into with Enterprise de Recherches et d'Activites Petrolieres, the French National Oil Company, sometimes known as the Elf Group. It calls for the rapid exploration of the area covered. The Government feels that this area is highly favourable for the discovery of oil and is confident that the Elf Group will be successful in its efforts.

With the signing of this Agreement there will be in addition to Petroleum Development (Oman) Limited, three other International Oil Companies operating in Oman in an endeavour to develop the country's natural resources. These will be the Elf Group, the Sun Oil Company of U.S.A., which is prospecting offshore, south-west of Masirah Island and the Wintershall Company of Germany, which is exploring off the Batinah Coast.

H.M. Sultan Qaboos said that he hoped the Agreement with Elf would lead to the development of closer economic ties between Oman and France. The French Government is planning to open an Embassy in Muscat in the New Year.



The new road to the Airport—an example of road development in Oman.

Another New Road

An agreement was signed a few months ago for the building of a tarmac road from Seeb to Nizwa. The contract was awarded to a German company, Messrs. Strabag. The project, estimated to cost O.R. 750,000, will take two years to complete. The road will incorporate four bridges and will be designed in such a way that in future years it will be possible to convert it into a dual carriageway.

Messrs. Strabag have already completed major roadworks in the Sultanate of Oman, including the 240 km. long road from Muttrah to Sohar, and the Ruwi—Darset road. They are also currently building a 91½ km. long road from Sohar to Hetmat-Milaha, from which a branch will extend to Aswad, some 10 km. away. The roadwork is scheduled for completion by mid 1974.

Omani Rock Art

Writing and pictures out in the smooth limestone boulders and walls have been noticed and reported in Oman for a long time by explorers and weekend visitors alike. No special attention was paid to these figures, some of which were evidently very recent, (and therefore of little interest to the amateur archaeologist who is fascinated by great age) until a young anthropologist—Christopher Clarke—spent a few months in 1973 on painstakingly drawing, photographing and mapping some of these features, pointing out the great wealth of forms represented in Omani rock art.

At once it became important to know what this rock art all meant. Why, for instance, was it in some places, but not in others which seemed equally inviting? Who did it? Why? How? What did the figures represent? How did they compare with finds elsewhere in Arabia or elsewhere in Middle East?

The pictures and symbols have been applied mainly by striking precisely controlled blows with a hard, blunt or pointed implement at a smooth weathered limestone surface. Sandstone or serpentine were frowned upon by the peckers. It had to be limestone, the more massive and smoother the better. Some pecked depressions are weathered deeply and irregularly, showing "micro-karat" ridges, which must have taken centuries or maybe millenia to form in this climate. Other figures look and, indeed, are freshly pecked. Pecking figures, more as a pastime than for any other purpose, is still carried out at present in a few places. Some of the recent figures look like copies of older types; others are evidently very young such as the unmistakable pictures of trucks and landrovers in the Wadi Sahtan.

After searching a number of wadis for rock art, traces of a pattern of distribution are emerging. Firstly, as indicated before, the geology must be right; there must be smooth limestone. Secondly, it was found in many instances that the major panels of rock art were situated on walls at prominent places in large "wadis of passage". By the latter is meant for instance the Wadi Aday between Ruwi and the Saih Hatat or the Wadi Bani Kharus just

above Awabi or the Wadi Sahtan near Tabaqa. These are wadis connecting the exterior of Oman with relatively populated interior wadis or intramountainous depressions. The large panels in these wadis may also have coincided with camping places or water holes. There is, however, another group of rock pictures, the distribution of which is more difficult to explain, such as those in the Wadi Rajim and the Wadi Bani Ruwaha. These are small wadis; they lead nowhere except to some goat grazing ground on steep and high slopes. They yield, however, falaj water and where they leave their narrow and steep mountain gorges there are often villages and gardens on the alluvial fans or on the terraces. It cannot be ruled out that the distribution of rock art in some of these small wadis is not primarily controlled by nature but by human factors and traditions. Some pictures may even have a cult significance, such as those in the Wadi Rajim. Rajim means "damned" and is also the name given to a devil's figure drawn on a rock at which stones were thrown during a hajj. Another phenomenon, which may also be behind the seemingly great variety of ages of rock art at one single site or panel, works something like this: once a trail always a trail, once a settlement always a settlement—once a rock picture always a rock picture, or maybe even more simply: graffiti attract more graffiti.

The figures themselves should, of course, be reproduced not described but it is worth mentioning that there are all sorts of animals such as horses, camels, elephants, ibexes, dogs, birds and bulls, and maybe even an example of the extinct Omani baboon. The animals are more often highly stylised than executed in accurate detail. Men, women and children (but as expected above all men) are represented in a variety of forms. Some ride, some stand on horses or bulls, some carry rifles, some swords and shields, others fight with bow and arrows. Many are demonstrably naked but a common form, which may be up to two feet tall, wears a knee-length dress and features a wasp-waist, birdhead, long-fingered hands and either a wraparound snake or phallus sheath. This form resembles figures on cylinder seals of the Akkadian period (c. 1700 B.C.) and it is possible that some came from then. Non figurative designs are common too and vary from intricate geometric patterns to simple dots.

Worth mentioning are very highly stylised

figures of a couple in an embrace from the Wadi Bani Kharus or a fish-tailed multi-legged creature from the Wadi Farah or the strange horned animal with a goose-neck sitting on its rear end in the upper Wadi Halfayn.

What does it all mean? Was it the creative urge of people who just loved to draw? Do the figures have a ritual meaning? It is, for instance, worth noting that some figures have clearly served as aims for sling shots and soft lead bullets. Whether the pictures were originally intended to be hit or whether target practice was a second thought is not clear. Not only figures but natural holes or caves were pelted with lead and stones. A sample count was made within about 2.5 square metres around a two inch hole in a wall in the Wadi Bani Kharus. It is estimated that over 20,000 soft lead bullets were fired at this hole by some good and some not so good marksmen over the years.

In addition to figures, there is much writing. In some instances, texts run over dozens of closely spaced lines, in others there is merely a name or a date. The texts are probably in the main Koranic. Clarke found also a short inscription in Old South Arabian. This is of considerable interest since it is the first example of the pre-Islamic script of Arabia which has so far been found in Oman north of Dhofar.

Not much can be said about the age of the rock art so far observed in Oman but the following may throw some light on this question. Preservation shows a wide range of weathering. Some features are fresh and new, others are very weathered and very old. Extinct animals may in the end help to set some dates and so may some scripts or dates or datable names of people. Figures or features which resemble those known from dated civilisations will be of importance, such as the landrover which dates the picture as post-second world war. Mapping rock art within the context of the surroundings may also help and the close proximity in many instances of Umm an-Nar type graves may have a special significance and so may the cupstones of the Wadi Rajim which are common from late Neolithic to early Bronze Age elsewhere.

There is clearly much scope for recording and studying this great wealth of Omani rock art and the Government has therefore decided to support some future work in this field.

Rock drawings in the Wadi Aday.



Algiers Conference

H.M. Sultan Qaboos of Oman attended the Arab Heads of State Conference held at Algiers. He was accompanied by:
 H.E. Sayyid Tarik bin Taimur, Political Adviser to His Majesty,
 H.E. Sayyid Fahad Al-Said, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs,
 H.E. Ahmed Macki, Under Secretary,
 Mr. Ahmed Hamoud Al-Maamiry, Director, Department of International Affairs,
 Mr. Hassan Said, Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

On route he had a meeting with President Sadat in Cairo on Sunday, 25 November.

The two Heads of State had discussed relations between Oman and Egypt, the Middle East situation and other matters affecting the Arab Nations. H.M. The Sultan reaffirmed his stand in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict and his continued support for the effort to regain all the lost Arab territories now occupied by Israel.

He was present at the dinner given in honour of all the visitors by President Boumedienne of Algeria on the evening of Monday, 26 November.

During the period of the Conference Sultan Qaboos had separate and private meetings with H.H. Sheikh Zaid of Abu Dhabi, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa of Qatar, H.H. Sheikh Isa of Bahrain, H.E. President Bourguiba of Tunisia, H.M. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and H.E. President Boumedienne of Algeria, concluding with a private dinner with H.M. King Hassan of Morocco.

All the above meetings were private.



above:
 H.M. Sultan Qaboos at the Conference.

above right:
 H.M. Sultan Qaboos (left) taking the salute on arrival in Algiers with President Boumedienne of Algeria.

right:
 H.M. Sultan Qaboos (right) meeting President Sadat of Egypt in Cairo en route to the Algiers conference.

far right:
 Omani Delegation at the Algiers Conference. In the front row (left to right): Sayyid Tarik, political adviser to H.M. Sultan Qaboos; H.M. Sultan Qaboos; Sayyid Fahad Al-Said, at the time Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (now Minister of Information and Tourism). Other members of the Delegation are seated behind.





Durham University Oman Research Programme

Outline Statement

On 10 May 1972, Petroleum Development (Oman) Ltd., officially notified Professor Howard Bowen-Jones, Director of the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies in the University of Durham, that it would finance and support a research programme to be carried out in Oman by a team from the University of Durham, this following approval of the project by His Majesty, Sultan Qaboos.

The research programme is designed as an integrated inter-disciplinary study of sample areas extending from the Gulf of Oman at Al Khabourah inland to the desert edge region around Ibri, from which extrapolation to other regions in Oman will be possible. The research work will have practical applications as well as academic value, although the Durham team will be primarily concerned with establishing and interpreting scientific data.

The programme, which will extend over four years, commenced in September, 1972. Field work started at the end of December 1972, and the first working papers were produced during the summer of 1973. It is planned that information obtained during the programme, as well as periodic reports, should cumulatively be made available to relevant and approved agencies and institutions, through the programme's official links with the Oman Department of Agriculture and the Ministry of Development.

The programme director is Professor Bowen-Jones; in addition seven senior participants, all experienced Middle Eastern specialists from the University of Durham, are responsible for the design and supervision of research in particular sectors. Four full-time research workers in the fields of anthropology, population and settlement, soil studies, and water resources were appointed initially and a further one concerned with agriculture joined the team in the autumn of 1973.

Background Statement

In the 212,000 sq. kms. of the State of Oman there is a considerable variety of environmental regions and resources. Before 1967 basic resource use was largely limited to traditional and only partly commercial agriculture and fisheries; other economic activity consisted of medium-scale Indian Ocean maritime trade and the small-scale regional exchange of local products. The population, estimated at some 600,000 has been traditionally strongly regionalised and associated with particular types of life-zone, i.e., the fisher-irrigation farmers of the narrow Batinah coastal strip; the highland cultivators and pastoralists of the Jebel Akhdar; the irrigation farmers of the interior oases southward from Buraimi along the mountain foreland; the bedouin of the desert; the urban and trading groups of Muscat and Muttrah.

Since 1967 the exploitation and export of oil has brought accelerating change on a major scale and the possibility as well as the need for a rapid re-appraisal of resources and their utilisation. Developments in the economy and society, in physical and social infrastructure, are proceeding very rapidly, prod-



H.E. Mr. Nassir Seif El Bualy, Ambassador of Oman (centre) with (right) Professor Howard Bowen-Jones, Director of the Centre and (left) Dr. Richard Lawless, Research and Documentation Officer.

ucing in turn a fast-growing need for information and data on the basis of which the future can be soundly planned. The research programme is designed to cover some of the significant aspects of this changing situation, significant academically and, it is hoped, to Oman itself.

The complex inter-relationships between the various physical and human sectors in this situation are of great academic interest, as well as being of practical importance. The Durham programme is therefore specifically designed to include mutually integrated studies of several different sectors.

In the University of Durham there is the largest concentration of modern Middle Eastern research expertise in Britain, such expertise being combined with extensive experience in development work. Senior participating members in the project are drawn from several fields, covering agriculture, soils, water resources and utilisation, population and settlement studies, aspects of development economics and social anthropology. The Project Director is Director of the Durham University Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (one of three British Centres specially financed by the University Grants Committee), Chairman of the British National Committee for Middle Eastern Studies and of the British National Committee for Asian Studies. In Durham there is also a unique concentration of research support facilities, ranging from extensive laboratories for soil, hydro-geological and climatic work; access to a major computing unit; a first-class

Middle Eastern Documentation Centre and Library, together with map and air photograph collections. This strength in personnel and facilities will be called upon in different ways, partly in field investigation, partly in the directing of fields of research. Centre and Departmental experience in the publication of monographs and consultant reports will ensure a regular production of study data.

The Research Programme

Given the approach already noted, the regions chosen for investigation were selected as being representative of physical and human conditions in major areas of Oman. The urban and port complex of Muscat and Muttrah and the oil-fields were excluded as being regions requiring and already receiving special and different consideration.

In the interior a region of some 1,500 sq. kms. approximately centred on Ibri will be studied, together with a transect zone of about the same size extending north-eastward from the main watershed to the Gulf of Oman at Al Khabourah. A traverse across these two contiguous zones contains elements of almost all the dominant types of life zone and land resource characteristics.

The research objectives can be summarised thus under two main headings:

- (i) Resource, resource use and resource potential inventory
- (ii) Identification of critical fields in processes of economic and social change

The research operations include:

- (i) The collection of data concerning water resources including both quantitative and qualitative aspects and hydro-climatology
- (ii) The evaluation of water resource utilisation
- (iii) Soil survey and preliminary classification, including aspects of agro-climatology
- (iv) Soil and land utilisation, contemporary and potential
- (v) The study of population and settlement distribution and structure, together with population mobility
- (vi) Anthropological studies of kinship and social structures and correlations with space-location, occupations, etc.

From September 1973, concurrently with continuing work in observation and recording as noted above, the programme has been extended to include:

- (i) Studies of agricultural organisation, technology and husbandry, together with landholding systems
- (ii) Economic studies (demand orientated) of transport, capital and credit facilities and use.

During the second field season the programme emphasis will gradually be changed to the area of critical problem identification with special attention on demand constraints and opportunities, e.g.,

- (i) Markets and marketing in relation to specific potentials and agricultural and other commodities

- (ii) Small-scale industries and entrepreneurial activity
- (iii) Economic organisation, for example co-operative and management systems
- (iv) Intermediate technology (especially in agriculture) for improved resource use
- (v) Training and education
- (vi) Personal and economic mobility; transport.

The first field season extended from December 1972 to May 1973. Further field seasons will extend from September to April, ending in 1976. The first field season team comprised four research fellows in the fields of anthropology, population and settlement, soil science, and water resources. During the second field season they were joined by two other research fellows in agriculture and economics. The third and fourth field seasons are planned for teams of six and three respectively.

The first eleven reports were produced during and at the end of the first field season. Further reports (other than the more frequent internal working papers) will be made annually at least. Major publication is planned for the end of 1976.

Research Personnel

Senior participants from the University of Durham, who serve as directors of specialist research sectors and as field investigators, are listed below with summary notes of their fields of expertise.

Professor Howard Bowen-Jones (Project Director)
Director of Centre for Middle Eastern and

Islamic Studies; a Rural Development specialist.

Professor William Bayne Fisher
Head of Department of Geography and Principal of Graduate Society; Middle East specialist.

Professor John Innes Clarke
Demography, nomadism, settlement studies.

Professor Eric Sunderland
Head of Department of Anthropology; physical and social anthropology.

Dr. Peter Beaumont
Middle East specialist, water resources and quaternary geomorphology.

Mr. J. N. Bridge
Middle East specialist in economics and development.

Dr. R. J. Wilson
Middle East specialist, agricultural economist.

Dr. John Harold Stevens
Arid Zone specialist, soil science, soil and land potential survey.

The four full-time research fellows appointed for the first season:

Mr. John Stacey Birks, B.A., Ph.D., research on pilgrimage movement, migration and population in Darfur province, Sudan.

Mr. Philip Scott Hoyle, M.A., Diploma in Social Anthropology.

Mr. John Richard Landon, B.Sc., M.Sc., in Pedology and Soil Survey.

Miss Sally Elizabeth Letts, B.A., D.Litt., research on quantitative and qualitative aspects of groundwater.

Second field season appointment:

Dr. R. W. Dutton, B.A., Ph.D., research interests in sub-tropical and tropical agriculture particularly in the Arab World.

Medinat Qaboos

Progress continues with the building of a new township at Al Qur'm, near Muscat, to be

known as Medinat Qaboos New Town. The new town will provide accommodation for 400 families in villas, houses and apartments. It will include, when completed, a supermarket, a shopping arcade, a service station, a

clinic, a primary school and a mosque.

An artist's impression of the new township of Medinat Qaboos.



The Municipality of Sur

Like Britain our friends in Oman are a maritime nation with more than a thousand miles of coastline. Yet with twice the land area of the British Isles Oman has under two rather than over fifty million people. The grouping of this population in locations where they can form stable well-rooted communities is therefore a matter of some importance. Considerable progress has, however, already been made by the creation of four new Municipalities with a further four to follow until every township has municipal status. (See article on page 3.)

Logically three of the first four Municipalities are existing coastal towns and two of them—Sohar and Sur—are strategically placed in relation to the capital region of Oman now rapidly developing along the Muscat, Muttrah, Seeb axis.

At present Sur is relatively isolated with a static economy but recent road improvements have reduced the travelling time between it and the Capital from ten to five hours. The British firm of Consulting Engineers, Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners, have just completed a land use transportation study over much of this route and are now involved with the provision of road access to the proposed Provincial Airport. Meanwhile scheduled and non-scheduled military flights from the international airport at Muscat are using an improvised landing field on the boundary of the Municipality near the Governate headquarters.

The sea route from Muscat to Sur, which at present takes more than ten hours, is an alternative which will become more attractive as port facilities at Sur are improved. Already the off-loading facilities near the existing custom-house there are being extended by the provision of a 150 ft. jetty able to accommodate vessels drawing up to 12 ft. of water and the custom-house itself is to be rebuilt.

The three local priorities are town water supplies, electric power and town roads and in this connection a World Bank loan is being sought for electrification projects both at Sur and a number of other townships. Intra urban road projects are similarly under consideration and proposals are at present being formulated.

Situated one degree south of the Tropic of Cancer on the eastern tip of the Arabian peninsula, Sur has offered a sheltered and easily identifiable landfall throughout history. The Phoenicians, who penetrated as far as Cornwall and the Scilly Isles to trade for tin, almost certainly visited Sur. In fact "Sour" is the modern Lebanese place name for Tyre and like the Sur in Oman it is built on a peninsula and connected to the mainland by a narrow causeway. It is therefore interesting to speculate on the link between the two towns.

The original anchorage was probably at Ayja, a crescent shaped bay to the east of the peninsula, on which the 19th century barasti Township was built. Earlier the Portuguese had built stone houses around the wells in what is now Bilad Sur, where the French Consulting Engineers Renardet have recently located water reserves sufficient for the new township to be built on the mainland west of



The Port of Sur.

the peninsula. This development will increase the present population to 20,000 and allow for an eventual expansion totalling possibly 50,000 people in the Municipality as a whole.

On the advice of Sir William Halcrow and Partners, who are world leaders in the field of port construction, the channel separating Ayja from the Township is to be deepened and sea protection works involving the construction of a corniche are being designed. The improved channel will offer access to the dhow building yards and the shallow lagoon behind the peninsula where the celebrated "Bhagla", with its distinctive bow ornament and square stern, has always been built for the slow haul down the coastline of Africa and eastwards into Asia. The skills of generations of boatbuilders and seafarers still remain with the people of Sur who have an enviable reputation for mechanical innovation and an independent and vigorous attitude to the challenge of their often harsh and demanding environment. It has also prompted the Minister for Development, Karim Ahmed Al-Haremi, to lay the foundations for an expanded boatbuilding industry at Sur and the construction of a modern boatbuilding yard is about to commence.

The human resource at Sur presents opportunities to diversify further the economy, which is at present based on trade and fishing supported by remittances home from Souris working elsewhere in Oman or overseas. When two banks opened in the suq near the sub Post Office earlier this year their representation was immediately justified by the number of deposit accounts they attracted.

It is also expected that people at Sur will receive the "spin-off" from further Government investment in the fishing industry now centred in the northern Municipality of Sohar.

The fact that H.M. Sultan Qaboos has decreed that Sur must be revitalised has effectively guaranteed its future and following His Majesty's initiative the Municipality is rapidly becoming established as a growth node in the urban geography of Oman. A school with a fifty-bed hospital complex, designed and built by the Swedevlop AB and Skanska company of Stockholm was recently brought into service and additional land for educational purposes has recently been requested by the Ministry of Education and

the Ministry of Awakf and Islamic Affairs. A social investment of equal significance is the proposed development by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour for a self-contained community of 500 low income dwellings served by a neighbourhood scale of shops, social facilities, mosques and other amenities. A site between the sea and the 16th century Portuguese citadel has already been selected and layout plans are being prepared.

Elsewhere in the Municipality problems of refuse collection, vector control and the improvement of the ferry service have already received the attention of the Municipality Officer and his staff. These improvements have been welcomed and are greatly appreciated by the people of Sur, who have expressed similar enthusiasm for the proposed redevelopment of the suq and its market buildings.

Investment in labour intensive projects of this kind not only provides employment but also leads to changes in the life style of the people themselves and their environment.

The extent to which people can absorb change is therefore receiving careful and sympathetic attention in the knowledge that the loss of familiar surroundings can sometimes induce a very real sense of insecurity in certain sections of the community. Initially, established design and construction techniques are likely to be employed wherever possible and in doing so it is hoped that people will continue to live within the protective and sustaining influence of their traditional environment and cultural values. In due course of time this will permit the use of less familiar technological tools and the selection of alternative life styles.

Sur is particularly well-endowed with a sense of place and among the increased employment opportunities which will have to be most carefully considered are those associated with tourism. There are opportunities for game fishing, sailing and other aquatic sports quite apart from the possibility of natural history and archaeological expeditions to the nearby ruined coastal citadel of Qalhat, which was visited by Marco Polo towards the end of the 13th century.

All this adds up to an Arabian experience able to challenge the attraction of an African safari but it will require the right kind of planning and control if it is not to have a disruptive or even degrading influence on the lives of the people. The Minister of Information and Tourism is therefore arranging for representation within the Municipality and land is being reserved for this purpose.

The outline strategy, which has been drawn up for the development of the Municipality, will, when approved, form the basis of a detailed and comprehensive development plan covering every aspect of life in the community.

The underlying intention of the development plan is, however, not primarily to initiate change but to ensure that change, when it takes place, is skilfully accommodated. Planning is no more than the management of change and perhaps nowhere else in the world is this fact being more effectively demonstrated than in Oman, where H.M. Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimur has not only liberated the frustrated energies of his people but, in a remarkably short space of time, has also provided creative outlets for their special skills and aptitudes.

Military Operations in Dhofar

During the months of October and November the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf (P.F.L.O.A.G.) has continued its propaganda campaign of fictional communiques issued from Aden and carried usually by the Iraq News Agency.

The Sultan's Armed Forces have continued operations to consolidate social welfare schemes in the Eastern part of the Province, to maintain their patrolling and blocking activities in the Central part, and to attack the supply trains of the guerillas in the West.

A new Civil Action Team was established at Tawi Atair, making a total of four teams now operating in this area in projects to improve the living conditions of the people of the Jebel. Aircraft of the Armed Forces maintained their flying ambulance service, bringing in eight civilians to Salalah for hospital treatment from areas of the Province.

Nineteen of the guerilla forces surrendered to the Sultan's Armed Forces during the period, bringing the total of those defecting from P.F.L.O.A.G. to over 730. In addition at the end of November a party of six refugees from the west came into a Government post in the north of the Province.

A highly significant event during the period occurred on 18 November, when an aircraft of the P.D.R.Y. Government Forces flew into Oman territory and dropped bombs on an Oman Government post at Makinat Shaham in Dhofar Province. There were no casualties. The Government of Oman have made official protests to the Arab League and the U.N.

On 19 December Government forces launched an operation to open the Midway Road, part of the Salalah-Muscat highway. Patrols from forces in the north quickly linked up with those from the south; the Road was fully open to civilian and military convoys by 22 December.

Development Programmes in Dhofar

Dhofar and more particularly Salalah has witnessed a lot of development in the last two years. Among significant achievements can be listed the harbour at Risut (Salalah), radio station and telecommunications system, network of residential and official buildings, an airfield, development of water supply and power in Salalah, construction of surfaced roads in and around Salalah, development of health and educational facilities, research farms for the development of agriculture and fodder, a livestock centre and abattoir and the establishment of a complex of school, clinic and mosque at the important centres in the interior. Development projects include:

Water Resources and Land Classification Survey

An Aerial Survey

Extension of Risut Harbour

Coastal and Midway roads

Residential Buildings

Radio studios and information centre and further development of power

Water supply and educational and health facilities.



H.M. Sultan Qaboos presenting a medal for bravery in the Dhofar war.



Headquarters of the Dhofar Province Administration at Salalah.



The new harbour at Risut, near Salalah.

Diplomatic Initiatives

I.M.F. Conference

The Sultanate of Oman was represented by the following delegation at the International Monetary Fund Conference held in Nairobi at the beginning of October:

Mr. Mohmood Murad, Director General Accounts and Treasury.

Mr. Mohamed Musa, Director Accounts and Treasury.

Mr. John Townsend, Adviser.

Development Delegation in Saudi Arabia

During the middle of October, at the invitation of the Finance Minister of Saudi Arabia, a delegation from the General Development Organisation in Oman made a five day visit to Saudi Arabia. The delegation was headed by Mr. Karim Ahmed Al-Harami, President of the General Development Organisation, who was accompanied by Mr. Salim Macki, Director of Mineral and Oil and Dr. Yusuf Nimatullah, Economic Adviser.

U.N.I.D.O.

On Wednesday, 24 October, Mr. Ahmed Al-Jamali, Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Oman to the United Nations, announced Oman's contribution of 10,000 dollars at the 1973 pledging Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation.

Dutch Visit to Oman

On Thursday, 1 November, H.E. Sayyid Fahad Al-Said, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs received Mr. Dolavaleit, Special Representative of the Netherlands to the Gulf States. A discussion took place on the matter of the decision of the Government of Oman to stop exporting oil to the Netherlands.

Diplomatic Relations with Greece

It was announced on Monday, 1 October 1973, that the Governments of the Sultanate of Oman and Greece had agreed to establish diplomatic relations at Ambassadorial level.

Diplomatic Relations with Belgium

On Thursday, 29 November, it was announced simultaneously in Muscat and Brussels that diplomatic relations had been established between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Belgium.

Diplomatic Relations with Chad

On Wednesday, 5 December, it was announced simultaneously in Muscat and Fort Lamy that diplomatic relations had been established between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Chad.

Asian Tour

During November Mr. Ali Dawood, Under Secretary to the Ministry of Development, made official tours of India, Pakistan, Thailand and Burma. He made agreements with these countries for the purchase of rice amounting to a total value of £11,000.

African Development Bank

The Government of Oman is to contribute \$3 million towards the establishment of the proposed African Development Bank.



Visit of H.M. King Hussein to Oman

In mid-November H.M. King Hussein of Jordan paid brief visits to the Rulers of Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait and Syria.

He arrived in Muscat on Sunday, 11 November. During his visit he held official discussions with H.M. Sultan Qaboos at the Palace in Seeb.

Mr. Bhutto in Oman

During the course of a visit to a number of Arabian States, which included Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the Union of Arab Emirates, at the beginning of December, Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Prime Minister of Pakistan, also visited Oman. He extended an invitation to H.M. Sultan Qaboos to be represented at the forthcoming Islamic Conference in Pakistan and also discussed matters of economic co-operation.

top:

H.M. Sultan Qaboos greeting H.M. King Hussein of Jordan, who was accompanied by the Prime Minister, Mr. Zeid Rifai.

above:

H.M. King Hussein of Jordan and the Prime Minister greeting members of the Government of Oman.

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