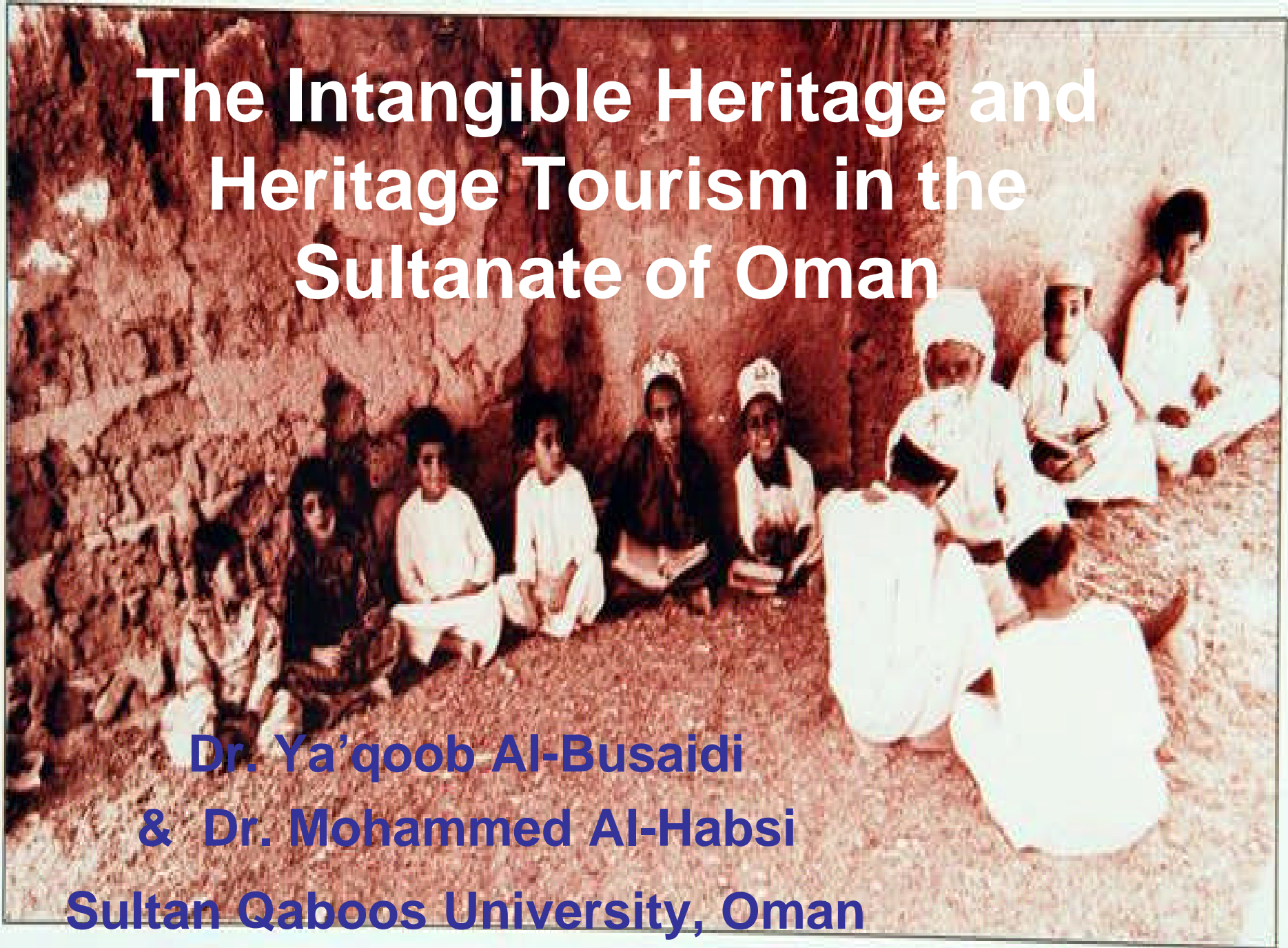


The Intangible Heritage and Heritage Tourism in the Sultanate of Oman

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UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, includes that intangible heritage means:

- *The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (Article 2.1).*

Types	<i>Examples</i>
oral traditions and expressions	<i>Greeting: nose touch and idiom 'ooloom', Ma Shai Akba Ma Shai Oloom</i>
performing arts	<i>el-Razhah, el-Haboot, el-Ayalah, el-Baqit, Nadbat el-Shuhooch</i>
social practices, rituals and festive events	<i>El-Maalid, el-Ttana ,el-khatmaa, el-Shiwaa, el-Habttah, el-qaranqashooh,el- tahloolah, bullfight</i>
knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe	<i>Aflaj System (solar system), Frankincense burning</i>
traditional craftsmanship	<i>Khanjar, Omani Halwa, Rose Water</i>

important elements that the Convention included
are:

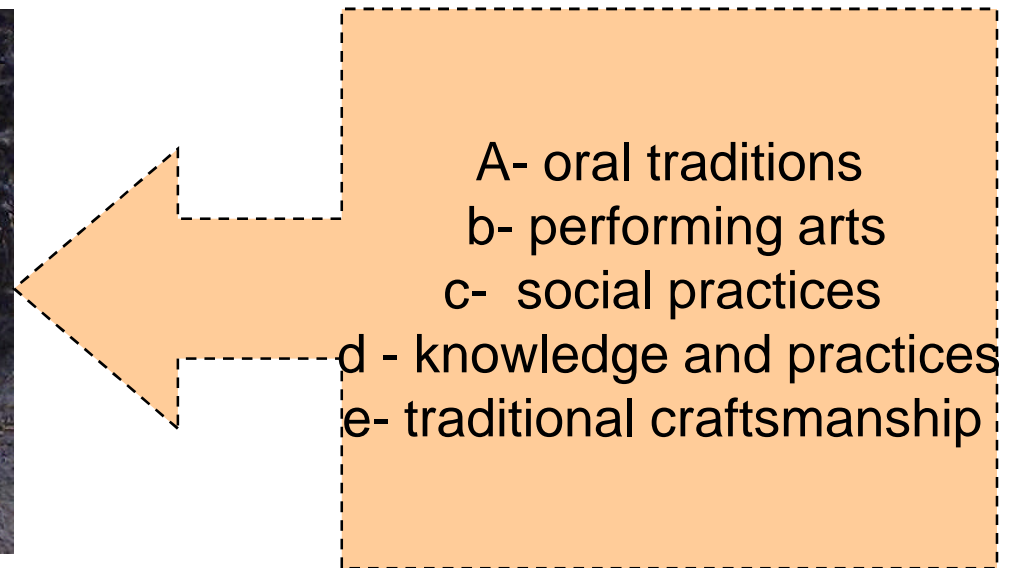
- The establishment of a Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Article 16);
- The establishment of a List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (Article 17);
- Encouragement of international cooperation to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage (Article 19);
- The establishment of a “Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage” (Article 25).

Tangible ↔ intangible heritage

- linkage between tangible and intangible heritage resources is inseparable; they complement one another.



Falaj



Internationally realized

- Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage included that ‘the intangible heritage or ‘the living traditions of indigenous peoples’ are essential components in interpreting archaeological and historical resources’.
- ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation of Cultural Heritage referred to the importance of safeguarding both the tangible and intangible values of cultural heritage sites in their natural and cultural settings, as well as their social contexts.

Heritage resources, tangible and intangible, in Oman represent major tourism attractions

- Sites with outstanding universal values inscribed on the World Heritage List for their tangible and intangible values:
 - Frankincense sites,
 - Bahla oasis,
 - Bat cemetery, and
 - Five examples for the ancient irrigation system, *aflaj*.

These sites are some of the top visited attractions in Oman, especially those located in active tourism



- Bahla in the Interior region and al-Baleed in Dhofar region.
- In Bahla, for example, visitors can experience living heritage, observe social practices and learn about traditional craftsmanship during their visit to the old *suq* district located to the west of Bahla Fort.

Other heritage attractions that tourists enjoy visiting to experience intangible heritage in Oman are:

- **desert areas** - e.g. the Empty Quarter and al-Sharqiyah Sand- Bedouin culture.
- **rural areas** which are famous for their palm-trees farms and aflaj system- e.g. the Interior, oasis culture
- **mountainous** regions, such as in Jabal Shams and Musandam in the north and in Dhofar region, tourists have the opportunity to enjoy sensible experience about the herdsmen culture.

Management

- To preserve the intangible heritage, the Omani government has been working collaboratively with other involved institutions and individuals, at national and international level.



Zagirah/ Muscat Festival

At national level, the Omani intangible heritage is protected by several legislations and policies

- the Omani Penal Code 1974
- the National Heritage Protection Law 1980 stated the importance of protecting and preserving the wider context in which heritage resources are located
- The Basic Statute of the State 1996 stated that: 'The State fosters and preserves the national heritage, encourages the sciences, arts, literature, scientific research and assists in their propagation'.
- the Law on the Protection of Copyrights and Neighboring Rights 2000 where Article 1 of the law defines the term 'folklore'

At the international level,

- in 1972, Oman became a member of UNESCO
- in 1981 it became one of the State Parties and was accepted as a party in the 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage
- in 2007, Oman ratified the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005.
- the Omani government ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003 in 2005

since the mid 1970s, the Omani government has been developing the administrative structures and responsible institutions to document, preserve, and raise the awareness of intangible heritage values.

- Through different research projects and documentary programs, the Ministry of Heritage and Culture has been working collaboratively- at international and national level- with governmental and non-governmental institutions to sustain part of the intangible heritage, Dept of Folklore Arts and Dept of Museums.
- **The Folklore Arts Department was established** based on the fact that *'folklore arts and incorporeal/intangible cultural heritage gain special importance as they demonstrate various economic, social, cultural and intellectual aspects of the Omani society'*.

the Oman Centre for Traditional Music (OCTM)[\[1\]](#)
which.

- was established in 1984 based on the directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said for a basic reason which is *'the country's musical heritage should be collected and documented in order to ensure that it was preserved for future generations'*
- *The centre taking into consideration the wider context of the gathered materials by using a **comprehensive approach** to documentation, today, the Centre has gathered more than 80% of Oman's musical traditions, including more than **23,000 photographs, 580 audiovisual** media and a large number of sound recordings.*

much attention has been dedicated to craft industries

- Crafts were among the issues that received attention from His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.
- to activate the role of craft industries and revive them in the present, both socially and economically, His Majesty issued the Royal Decree No. 24/2003 on 3/3/2003 establishing the Public Authority for Craft Industries

the Authority

- **set** the executive plans and programs for the approved policies in the fields of craft industries;
- **conducted** several field studies and inventory projects,
- **participated** in national and international exhibitions,
- **developed** several awareness programs especially during the festivals such as Muscat Festival and *e/-Khareef* Festival,
- **established** craft training programs and centers such as the Center for Training and Pottery and Crockery Production in Bahla, and
- **marketed** craft products through different outlets such as the Omani Craftsman's House in Muscat and in Sultan Qaboos Port outlet.

the Ministry of Tourism



- a major role in preserving the Omani intangible heritage through its interpretive projects and promotional programs at national and international level; e.g. travel exhibitions, festivals.
- Department of Site Development, preserves the intangible heritage of each tourism sites; e.g. the Omani Craft House and museum in Nizwa

the Ministry of Sport Affairs

- a special committee for the Omani traditional sports and games.
Supported by His Majesty, the Sultan,
- the Ministry is plying an interesting role in promoting some of the Omani traditional games at national and international level.

Other governmental, private and public organizations

- the Ministry of Information,
- Muscat Municipality (Muscat Festival) and Dhofar Municipality (*al-Khareef* Festival),
- Ministry of Education,
- Sultan Qaboos University, research
- the Ministry of Social Development, Women Development Centers
- The Oman Historical Association

Tourism and Intangible Heritage

Resources ?

- Despite the fact that at different levels there are continuous efforts to safeguard, develop and promote the Omani intangible heritage resources, yet in regard to tourism in particular, there are still some issues need to be collaboratively and wisely addressed

Insufficient Information and Research

- the limit of information and in-depth research about the available intangible heritage resources, such as those relative to major heritage attractions, especially the World Heritage Sites.

Omani Intangible Heritage in Museum

- a lack of appropriate presentation and interpretation of intangible heritage where interpretive practices and approaches are underdeveloped or unavailable at some major tourism sites; e.g. Bat, Sharqiyah Sand, historic quarters.

Lack of Omani Interpreters of Intangible Heritage

- a limited number of trained Omani interpreters specialized in intangible heritage, especial from the locals

Intangible Heritage Promotion and Marketing

- There is insufficient promotion for intangible heritage resources and products at national and international level, either by the public or private sectors.

Public Education

- a lack of knowledge and experience about the intangible heritage resources among the public, especially the young generation (ca. 563,602 students in 2006/2007)

Future considerations

- *Professionalism Development in Intangible Heritage Interpretation*
- *National Registry and Archive for the Omani Intangible Heritage*
- *The Development of National Legislation for the Safeguarding of the Omani Intangible Heritage.*
- *National and Local Museums for Intangible Heritage of Oman*
- *Public Awareness of Intangible Heritage Values and Community Participation*

Further details:

- Al-Busaidi, Y. (2010). ***Public Interpretation of Archaeological Heritage and Archaeotourism: the Case Study of the Sultanate of Oman; issues and approaches***, Lambert Academic Publishing: German.



The case of al-Baqit
Dr Mohammed Al-Habsi