



and took part in the 30<sup>th</sup> general conference of UNESCO's International Music Council and the international symposium in Montevideo, Uruguay in the same year.

In December 2004 the Sultanate will host, in cooperation with the International Music Council, an international conference entitled "Trends and Future Perspectives in Arabic Music". The event is expected to attract some 200 participants.

### **Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra (ROSO)**

The Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra was established at the direction of HM Sultan Qaboos in 1985. Although it has no tradition of western classical music, Oman was in the unique regional position of being able to put together an orchestra composed entirely of its own national musicians, after foreign experts were recruited to train them locally. ROSO gave its first public performance in July 1987, just a year after training first began. Initially, Orchestra members were all male but from 1988 onwards females have been recruited. The orchestra stages regular concerts from September to June each year at the purpose-built auditorium of the Al Bustan Palace Hotel.

### **International Book Fair**

This event is held annually in Muscat at the beginning of each year and in 2004 (its 9<sup>th</sup> year) some 70,000 titles were on sale when the Fair attracted approx. 750,000 visitors to the 2-week event. The Sultanate also had a stand at the 56th Frankfurt Book Fair in October 2004 when an Arabian theme was portrayed.

### **Journal of Oman Studies**

The Journal of Oman Studies was launched in 1975 as a vehicle for archaeologists and historians to publish academic articles about the Sultanate and its neighbours in the Arabian Peninsula. The Journal, later expanded to cover natural history, has attracted worldwide recognition. Volume 13 is to be published at the end of 2004. It will include the archaeology of Sohar, tribal influence on the architecture of Manah, plants of Juzur al Hallaniyat, and the weft-twined purses of the Wadi Sareen, as well as other works.

*The International Music Council and the OCTM will host a Conference "Trends and Future Perspectives in Arabic Music" in December 2004.*



### Archaeology

Archaeological surveys continue to be carried out in cooperation with the Department of Archaeology at the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Sultan Qaboos University and specialist European and American missions. These surveys have resulted in a number of archaeological discoveries in various regions of the Sultanate. Among these sites are:

#### The Mahlia burial sites (Eastern region)

This involved 108 burial sites dating back to the Iron Age. Artefacts discovered included earthenware jars of varying sizes, decorated in wavy-line patterns, as well as beads of different types, iron arrowheads, bronze rings and earrings, broken iron spears and stone pendants.

#### The Al Suwaih site

This site dates back to the 6th and 4th millennia BC. The excavations at this site have led to a reappraisal of the chronological sequence and dating of the surface flint implements.

*The Ra's al Jinz archaeological site where four settlement periods have occurred between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC.*

*Impression of a three-sided prism seal from the Maysar-1 site near Wadi Samad.*

### **The Ra's Al Jinz site**

Four settlement periods have been established, occurring between the 4th and 2nd millennia BC. Six tombs have been discovered dating to the Umm Al Nar period in the second half of the 3rd millennium BC.

### **The Wadi Shaab site**

Excavations at this site, in the Sur region, have revealed circular fishermen's dwellings dating back to the 4th millennium BC.

### **Bat site, Ibri (3000 BC) (Dhahirah region)**

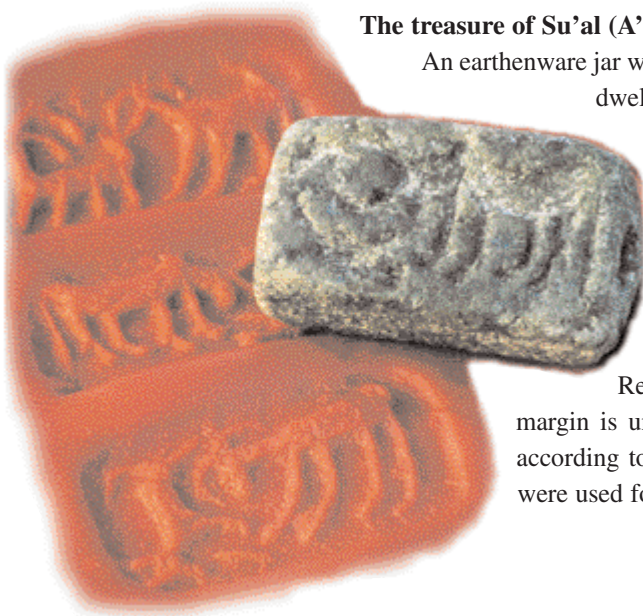
In preparation for opening up the Bat archaeological settlement for tourism, excavations were carried out in a number of tombs dating back to the Umm Al Nar and Iron Ages. In Wadi Al Ain a fortified structure dating back to the Lazq era was discovered. Decorated fragments and mouthpieces of earthenware vessels were found, as well as other rare artefacts such as a piece of soapstone used for straightening the shafts of spears.

### **Late Ice-Age sites in Central Oman (Central region)**

This survey carried out in the Al Wusta region covers late Ice-Age sites, aged between 100,000 and 125,000 years. In all, 47 sites were discovered.

### **The treasure of Su'al (A'Dakhiliyah region)**

An earthenware jar was discovered in the wall of a mudbrick dwelling in Su'al (Nizwa district). This jar was found to contain 456 coins of the silver dirham type of varying sizes. On the face of the coins was inscribed 'Ali friend of Allah' and on the edge 'There is no God but God and Muhammad is His Prophet'. On the reverse side is inscribed 'The True Religion' while the inscription in the margin is unclear. The coins are of various dates according to the Hijra calendar and some of them were used for decoration in women's necklaces.



**The Baushar site (Muscat Governorate)**

All AGCC States participated in this joint archaeological excavation and a total of 17 tombs of the Wadi Suq (Late Bronze) period were excavated. Among the varied artefacts discovered were soapstone vessels, earthenware pots, bronze spearheads, and gold jewellery.

The Sultanate of Oman, is currently a member of UNESCO's World Cultural Committee. Four sites are currently listed on UNESCO's World Cultural and Heritage List.

**The Frankincense Trail (inscribed in 2000)**

Surveys and environmental studies are underway, with the cooperation of universities from Europe and the United States, on a range of excavation programmes and schemes designed to maintain and protect Oman's old frankincense production and export sites.

In ancient times frankincense was highly prized with the finest in the world produced in the Dhofar region. For many years the frankincense routes — the harbours from which it was exported and the sites from which it was harvested — have been a subject of fascination for scholars and travellers.

In 2000 four archaeological sites were registered on the World Cultural and Natural Heritage List "Frankincense Trail": Wadi Dawkah, Shisr/Wubar, Khor Rori/Sumharum and Al Baleed. (*Details in "Oman 2003/2004" published by the Ministry of Information*).

**Museums**

Oman has a wealth of history, much of which is displayed in its various museums. Among these are: the National Museum, Muscat Gate Museum, the Oman Museum (which hosted an exhibition "Archaeological Discoveries" of the Baushar burial site and Samad A'Shan tombs), the Children's Museum (which hosted an exhibition entitled "When Science spoke in Arabic", with the French Embassy), the Sultan's Armed Forces Museum, the Natural History Museum (which boasts a whale hall), the Omani-French Museum (which has an impressive display of old Omani and French stamps), and the Currency Museum of the Central Bank of Oman. The Sultan's Armed Forces Museum in Bait al Falaj is also open to members of the public.



*A state-of-the-art Museum and Information Centre is soon to be opened at the Al Baleed archaeological site, as part of the UNESCO Frankincense Trail.*

The Salalah Museum in Dhofar has a permanent exhibition of photographs of a bygone age taken by the late British explorer and writer, Sir Wilfred Thesiger. Sohar Fort contains a museum which covers the history of the Sultanate and information concerning its geology, as well as a display of elderly weapons. Fort Nahkl too has a display of historic guns.

There are also two privately-funded Museums: one in Sur, and the other in Bait al Zubair - the latter hosted an exhibition by the Austrian Mint of the Maria Theresa Thaler.

Meanwhile PDO has an Exhibition Centre where a permanent display features a wealth of information on oil and gas, as well as a Planetarium. The latter was built, as an annex, in the style of an Omani fort to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the accession to power of HM Sultan Qaboos. The Planetarium, which can accommodate up to 60 people, stages weekly presentations in both English and Arabic.