

OMAN AND ITALY TWO MILLENNIA OF CROSS-CIVILISATIONAL DIALOGUE

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The cultural and civilisational ties between Oman and Italy are longstanding, and the two civilisations have enjoyed a lively exchange of goods, people and ideas for nearly two millennia. One of the noble purposes of this exhibition is the promotion of cross-cultural dialogue, which is all the more relevant in an age of geopolitical tensions, conflict, moral crises and social turmoil. We also pay homage to a number of notable Italian scholars who have left their mark on the unveiling of Oman's past, as well as to Omanis who have contributed to the introduction of Italian civilisation to Oman.

Throughout the past centuries, Italy has played a key role in revealing the foundational characteristics of Oman: its archaeology, its architectural heritage, its customs and traditions, its geography, its geology, its fauna and flora and its government. Some Italians have left their mark on our history, too.

This exhibition focuses on the archaeological legacy of these Italians, as well as on the publication of travelogue anthologies, accounts that give us an overview of documents, books, cartography and the arts. Likewise, common threads that attest to the bonds between our cultures are explored and highlighted, including the aflāj water management system, known in Sicily by the Arabic word qanat, and the ritualistic significance of al-lubān (frankincense) in the mosque and in church liturgy respectively, another point of contact between the imperial epochs of Oman and Italian-ruled Somalia.

SA'IDI DAGGER

1. Sa'idi-style dagger, belonging to Sultan Sayyid Humud bin Muhammad al-Busaidi Oman, late 19th century CE, horn, silver, steel, gold thread, leather, wood and fabric.

OMANI HOSPITALITY

2. – Coffee pot (Nizwani style), Nizwa, 20th century CE, copper. – Serving tray, Northern Oman, mid-20th century CE, copper. – Spouted bowl, Biddya, 20th century CE, copper. – Coffee cups, Ar-Rustaq, 20th century CE, glazed earthenware.

THE CLASSIC AND GRECO-ROMAN ANTIQUITY

3. 4. 5. Snake figures, Saih Al Qa'a, Al Hamra, 1300 BCE–300 CE Iron Age, bronze. 6. Fragments of a long-handled bowl in the form of a snake Sallut, 1300 BCE – 300 CE, Iron Age, earthenware. 7. Pair of vessel handles in the form of a snake Mahut, 1st century CE, Late Iron Age, copper alloy.

AL LUBAN (FRANKINSCENSE)

8. Evangelium Sanctum Domini Nostri Iesu Christi Woodcuts by Leonardo Parassole after Antonio Tempesta Rome, Typographia Medicea, 1591, first edition, print on paper, early vellum binding. 9. Sexta Asiae Tabula (The Sixth Map of Asia) Martin Waldseemuller (cartographer), after Ptolemy, Strasbourg, Johann Schott, 1513, intaglio print on paper. 10. Naturalis Historia, Book XXXVII, Gaius Plinius Secundus (23–79 CE), ed. Pierre Daniel Huet, Paris, Apud Franciscum Muguet, 1685, print on paper, black morocco binding with gilt edges. 11. Plaque with Old South Arabian inscription, Sumhuram, Dhofar Governorate, c. 1st century BCE, Iron Age, bronze. AFLAJ OF OMAN AND QANATS OF PALERMO 12. Manuscript of the Al Azizi Falaj Rabi'ah bin Majid bin Suleiman Al Kindi Saiqi, 1891 CE, ink on paper.

THE LIGHT OF ISLAM

13. Necklace with central disk inscribed with the Ayat al-Kursi, Northern Oman, 19th–20th century CE, silver. 14. Dinar, Al Manai-galah Hoard, Ash-Sharqiyah South Governorate, Oman 10th century CE, gold 15. Al Qur'an Al Karim (The Noble Qur'an)

transcribed by Khamis bin Suleiman bin Sa'id Al Harthi Al Abrawi, Oman, 1773 CE, ink, gilding and opaque colours on paper. 16. Al Qur'an Al Karim (The Noble Qur'an), transcribed by Muhammad bin Uday Al Battashi Al Wardi Oman, 1914 CE, ink, gilding and opaque colours on paper. 17. Bayan ash-Shar' (Digest of Laws), Vol. II, Sheikh Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al Kindi An-Nazwi, Oman, 12th century CE, ink on paper. 18. An-Nur al-Mustabi'n fi Idhah al-Hujaj wa al-Barahin (The Light of God to Clarify Arguments and Evidences), Sheikh Abdullah bin Basheer Al Hadrami As-Sohari, Oman, 1764 CE, ink and watercolours on paper. 19. Qasida fi Tashrih al-'Ayn (A Poem on the Anatomy of the Eye), Rashid bin Umayra bin Thani Al Hashmi Al Ayni Ar-Rustaqi, Oman, 1887 CE, ink on paper. 20. An-Nuniyya al-Kubra (The Major Noon), Ahmed bin Majid As-Sa'adi, ink on paper, UNESCO Memory of the World Register, 2025. 21. Diwan Shuthur adh-Dhahab (The Scattered Gold), Ali bin Musa ibn Arfa' Ra's Al-Ansari, Oman, 1796 CE, ink on paper. 22. Diwan Al-Ma'wali (The Ma'wali Collection) Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Sa'id Al Ma'wali Al Manahi Oman, 1640 CE, ink and opaque watercolour on paper. 23. Al-Kamil fi al-Lugha wa al-Adab (The Perfect One in Language and Literature), Abu al-Abbas Muhammad bin Yazid Al-Azdi Al-Omani Al-Mubarrid Rabi' al-Akhir, 1614 CE, ink and opaque watercolour on paper. 24. Inkwell (dawat) Sohar, North al-Batinah Governorate, 19th–20th century CE, copper, inscribed with verses attributed to Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib. 25. Gunpowder horn (talahiq), Northern Oman, 1796 CE Brass with traces of silver. 26. Qamus ash-Shari'ah (Dictionary of Islamic Law), Jumayyel bin Khamis bin Lafi As-Sa'adi Zanzibar, Sultani Press, 1880 CE, printed book. 27. Alcorani Textus Universus, edited and translated by Ludovico Marracci, Padua, Typographia Seminarii, 1698, first edition, marbled calf binding. 28. Qurani Takatifu translation of the Qur'an into Swahili, translated by Chief Qadhi Sheikh Abdullah bin Saleh Al Farsy, Republic of Kenya, The Islamic Foundation, 1969, printed book.

THE AUGUSTINE ORDER IN MASQAT 29. The Forts of Jallalee & Meranee, Muskat, William Daniell (1769–1837) and Hobart Counter From: The Oriental Annual, London, Edward Churton, 1836, engraving on paper. 30. Amoenitatum Exoticarum Politico-Physico-Medicarum Fasciculi V, Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716), Lemgo, Typis & Impensis Henrici Wilhelmi Meyeri, 1712 Printed book with engraved plates and map of the Persian Gulf. FORT AL MIRANI AND OMAN'S ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE 31. History of Seyd Said, Sultan of Muscat, Vincenzo Maurizi (Sheikh Mansur) London, John Booth, 1819, first edition Printed book with engraved folding map of Masqat.

OMAN AND VENICE 32. Oman Glass Vase Designer: Ettore Sottsass (1917–2007), Venini, Murano Island, Venice, 1994, mouth-blown glass. 33. – Zecchino, issued by Doge Lorenzo Priuli, Venice, c. 1556–1559, gold. – Venetian Ducat, issued by Doge Ludovico Manin, Venice, 1794 CE, gold.

34. Tavola Sesta dell'Asia / Tavola Settima dell'Asia (recto-verso) Girolamo Porro (engraver), Venice, Gio. Battista & Giorgio Galignani Fratelli, 1598, etching on copper 35. Il Pellegrino nell'Asia (The Pilgrim in Asia), Angelo Legrenzi, Venice, Domenico Valvasense, 1705, printed book. 36. Navigazioni et Viaggi, Vol. I, Giovanni Battista Ramusio (1485–1557) Venice, Giunti, 1588, third edition, ink on paper, leather binding. 37. L'Arabia divisa in Petrea, Deserta e Felice, Antonio Zatta e Figli, Venice, 1784, intaglio engraving with hand colouring. 38. Arabia Felix Nova Tabula (Modern Map of Arabia the Blessed), Gastaldi ed. Giacomo Gastaldi (c. 1500–1566), from Geographia di Claudio Tolomeo by G. Ruscelli, Venice, Vincenzo Valgrisi, 1561, copperplate engraving. 39. Arabia Felix Nova Tabula (Modern Map of Arabia the Blessed), Ruscelli ed. Girolamo Ruscelli (1500–1566), Venice, Vincenzo Valgrisi, 1561, first edition, copperplate engraving. 40. Tabula Asiae VI (Sixth Ptolemy Map of Asia), Ruscelli / Ziletti ed. Girolamo Ruscelli (1500–1566), from La Geografia

di Claudio Tolomeo Alessandrina Venice, Giordano Ziletti, c. 1598, copperplate engraving. 41. Tabula Asiae VI (Sixth Ptolemy Map of Asia), Gastaldi / Ruscelli, ed. Giacomo Gastaldi (cartographer); Ieronimo Ruscelli (translator), Venice, Vincenzo Valgrisi, post 1548, copperplate engraving with hand colouring. 42. Tavola dell'Universale descrizione del mondo, secondo Tolomeo, Ptolemy; Giovanni Magini, Girolamo Porro (engraver), Venice, Gio. Battista & Giorgio Galignani, c. 1598, copperplate engraving. 43. Turici Imperii Turchesco (Map of the Ottoman Empire) Girolamo Porro (1529–1600), Venice, G.B. Galignani & Giorgio Galignani, 1597, first edition Copperplate engraving. 44. – 50. Fragments of wall decoration from the Great Mosque of Qalhat, Star-shaped and cross-shaped tiles, Oman, Kingdom of Hormuz, 14th–15th century CE, glazed earthenware and local mortar.

SOMALIA AS A LAND OF CIVILISATION EXCHANGE BETWEEN OMAN AND ITALY 51. Tray, belonging to Sayyid Suleiman bin Ali Al Bu Sa'idi Khedivate of Egypt, 19th century CE (Sultanate of Zanzibar), brass. 52. Architectural fragment with arabesque motif Bayt Al Greiza, Mogadishu, 1872 CE (Sultanate of Zanzibar), stucco. OMAN AND THE PAPAL STATES 53. The Travels of Sig. Pietro Della Valle into East-India and Arabia Desert Pietro Della Valle (1586–1652), translated by G. Havers London, J. Macock, 1665, ink on paper, leather binding. 54. Il Viaggio all'Indie Orientali (The Voyage to the East Indies) Vincenzo Maria Murchio (1626–1679), Rome, Stamperia di Filippomaria Mancini, 1672, first edition, printed book with woodcut illustrations. Oman And Italian Orientalist Painter 55. Arab Tambourine Player, Giuseppe Signorini (1857–1932), watercolour on paper. 56. Stato Del Gran Turco diviso ne suoi Beglierbati o Gouverni..., Giorgio Widman (engraver), Rome, Giacomo Giovanni Rossi and Cantelli da Vignola, 1679, copperplate engraving with colouring.

