

THREE DECADES OF OMANI ARCHITECTURE: MODERNISATION, TRANSFORMATION AND DIRECTION

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ABSTRACT

Oman has an old civilisation and rich culture, juxtaposed on the ancient trade routes. The sea-faring nation has been a melting pot of great civilisations of the Orient, Africa, Arab and West. Along with Oman's topography, climate, and socio-religious-economic context, these exposure and associations influenced its built forms, giving rise to a type of architecture often distinguishable from its neighbours as being Omani. Oman also has a fast growing economy creating a more literate and prosperous population with changed demands and taste. This brought major infrastructure developments and rapid urbanisation in the last three decades, with inevitable effect on the local architecture. Despite calculated steps at the beginning, an alien form overtook the rich traditional architecture.

This paper will trace the architectural transformations of the last three decades in Oman from a rich traditional style, and will highlight some of the reasons responsible for the change. In conclusion, the paper will make some recommendations aimed at positively define the direction the built-form of this emerging nation should take.



Muscat-an assemble of low-key white edifices on the rugged coast-line.



Formation of a bazaar in a rudimentary stage-a social space.



An opening on a seafront house in Sur Lawati the traditional trading quarter.