

British Museum Showcases Omani Jewellery

ITM correspondent

The British Museum's 'Jewellery and costume from Oman' exhibition features a selection of 20th-century silver jewellery, weaponry and male and female dress from Oman. The exhibition explains the tradition of silverware in different regions of the country.



Detail of the coral and silver beads with gold leaf decoration on a Bedouin shibgat necklace. Central Oman, 1950s. © The Trustees of the British Museum

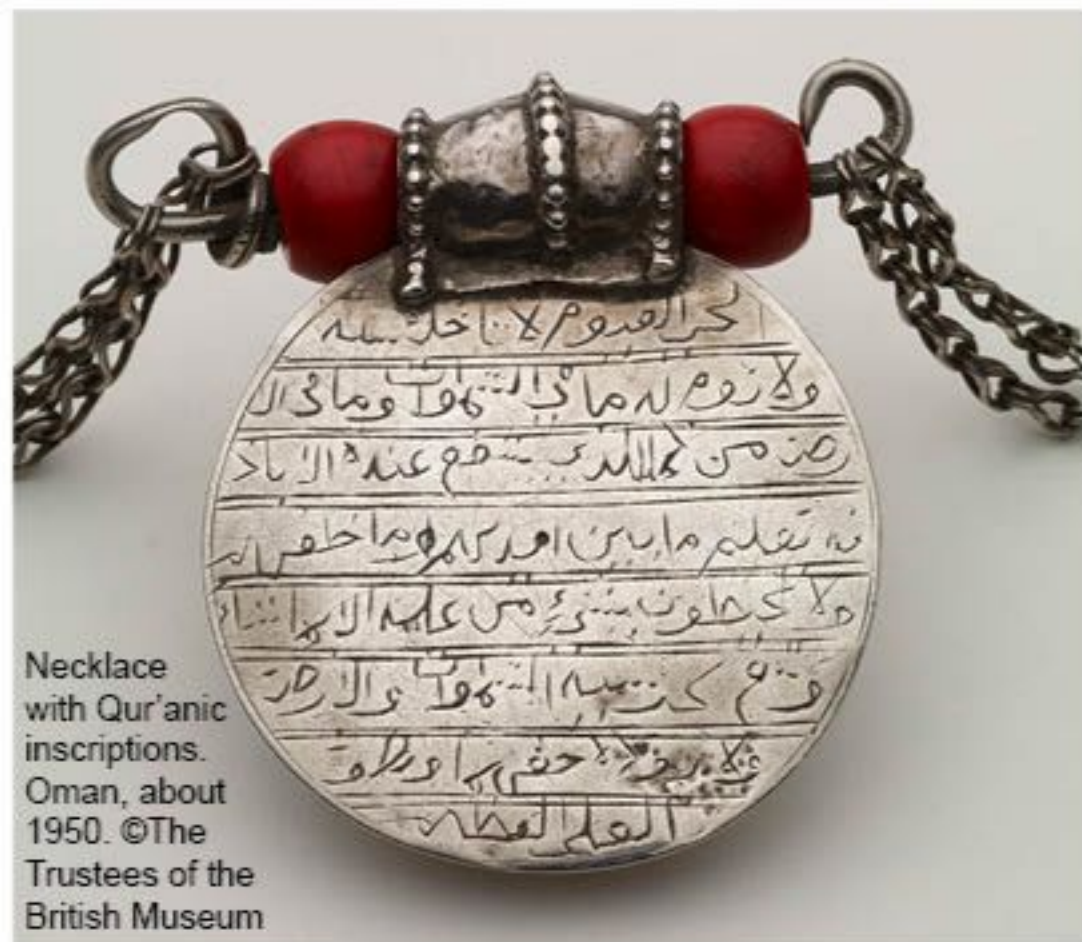
The display includes bracelets, anklets, necklaces, earrings, hair ornaments, kohl pots, and men's accessories. The jewellery is decorated with coins, coral and glass beads, and gold leaf

decoration, with many amuletic pieces incorporating elaborate Qur'an cases. Also featured are colourful embroidered costumes, including children's outfits, from different regions of Oman.

The exhibition shows the tremendous variety of Islamic costumes. In Oman each region has a unique dress-code

determined by its individual crafts traditions and ceremonies.

Clothes and jewellery vary according to age and social status. The comparatively light, brightly coloured caps worn by young children are replaced by ornate silver headdresses with earring hooks for teenage girls and khanjars, silver, curved daggers



Necklace with Qur'anic inscriptions. Oman, about 1950. ©The Trustees of the British Museum

Silver Baluchi anklets. Oman, about 1950. ©The Trustees of the British Museum



for older boys.

Being grand and weighty, these coming-of-age accessories enable wearers to command attention, whilst simultaneously evoking the responsibilities of adulthood.

For women, ceremonial jewellery does not end with the headdress: hollow silver bangles worn at the elbow, anklets filled with bells and large rings of all shapes complete the outfit.

The difference between a wealthy woman and her poorer counterpart often lies in the details of her jewellery. The price of silverware and jewellery is largely determined by the level of embellishment rather than by the presence of stones.

The Sultanate of Oman is a country with a history that stretches back to the third millennium BC. This display celebrates Oman's more recent heritage, focusing on



Silver Qur'an case necklace (hirz) with spiky beads and silver granulation. Bedouin, Northern Oman, 1950s. © The Trustees of the British Museum

objects of personal adornment and dress from the 1950s to the present day. Many of the objects were acquired recently by the British Museum.

Oman is the third largest country of the Arabian Peninsula, with its capital at Muscat. The country's landscape ranges from sand and rock deserts to mountain ranges and lush valleys. It has an extensive coastline that overlooks three main expanses of water.

Oman is renowned for its fragrant frankincense, dates, and magnificent sailing vessels, called dhows. Throughout its history, this seafaring nation of traders has linked the Middle East with Europe, East Africa, Iran, the Indian subcontinent and beyond.

'Jewellery and costume from Oman', British Museum, Room 2, Free, 21 January – 11 September 2011



Silver medallion (samt) necklace with niello and gold leaf decoration. Northern Oman, 1950s. © The Trustees of the British Museum